



OPINION
Dipak Gyawali



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Kulman Ghising



VIEWPOINT
Atul K Thakur

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MUSTANG

Monarchy, Monk, Monastery

INSIDE



INDIAN ELECTIONS
Interest In Nepal



TORNADO IN BARAA
A New Threat



RUSSIAN FOOD FESTIVAL
Taste of Russia

सर्गों आदर्श ॥ जागरिक

बाद बाद

जसले अरुको भलाईमा आफ्नो खुशी खोज्दछन्
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On the auspicious occasion of
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*I would like to express my heartfelt
best wishes & greetings to all the
students, parents, employees,
teachers and well-wishers
for their peace and prosperity*

Dr. Tilak Rawal
Chairman

ग्रामीण लघुवित्त संस्थाहरुको सहयोगी निकाय साना किसान विकास लघुवित्त वित्तीय संस्था लि.

लघुवित्तको कार्यक्रम मार्फत ग्रामीण समुदायको आम्दानी एवं रोजगारीका अवसरमा अभिवृद्धि गरी गरिबी निवारण गर्ने कार्यमा सघाउ पुर्याउने उद्देश्य लिएको यस बैकले देश भरी नौ वटा इलाका कार्यालयहरु र केन्द्रीय कार्यालय मार्फत ६९ जिल्लामा साना किसान कृषि सहकारी संस्था लि.हरु र समान प्रकृतिका अन्य लघुवित्त संस्थाहरु मार्फत थोक कर्जा उपलब्ध गराउँदै साना किसानहरुको सेवामा समर्पित रहँदै आएको छ । साथै नेपाल सरकार तथा दातृसंघ/संस्थाहरुबाट प्राप्त स्रोत परिचालन गरी संस्थाहरु मार्फत सामाजिक तथा सामुदायिक कार्यक्रम संचालनमा सहयोग एवं संस्थाहरुको सवलीकरणका लागि नियमित परामर्श सेवा तथा अन्य प्राविधिक सहयोग जस्ता कार्यहरुमा समेत सहयोग पुर्याउँदै आएको छ । यस बैकको वेभसाईट www.skbbbl.com.np बाट थप जानकारी लिन सकिने छ ।



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केन्द्रीय कार्यालय सुविधानगर, काठमाडौं ।

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Notes From The Editor



Nepal has faced different kinds of disasters in the last decades. However, Nepalese government system is yet to learn to effectively handle the rehabilitation and recovery process. The government has again repeated its mistakes in the case of recent tornado victims of Bara and Parsa. Despite the presence of central, provincial and local governments, Nepal Army and Nepal Police remained the backbone of rescue and relief distribution after the disaster. Although the government and political leaders visited the sites and announced heavy relief packages, including house construction cost, the victims continue to live in the open sky with limited food. With NGOs/INGOs, having well qualified experts with them, the government could handle the whole disaster well with their mobilization.

Although the current Nepal Communist Party led government is democratically elected, some of its recent decisions and activities have created questions over the democratic and liberal credentials. Issuing a written order to present monthly salary chart of employees of media as a prerequisite for press accreditation reveals the government can go against free press to any extent. In the name of minimum wages, set by itself for working journalists, the government is intruding into freedom as if it is sympathetic to working journalists. This move will ultimately divide the media house and working journalists, finally ruining the flourishing media which is hostile to the government. However, we have decided to cover Mustang as our cover story. Similarly, we also cover all other contemporary issues, including the elections in India as part of our story. As Nepalese are celebrating New Year, we wish to extend the season's greetings to our readers and patrons: Happy and Prosperous New Year 2076.

Keshab Poudel
Editor

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POLITICS

Predictably Unpredictable

Given the recent trend of Nepalese politics, it is not surprising to see certain unpredictable political events

BY KESHAB POUDEL

Nepalese politics never moves or makes progress on any logic. No one sees any political logic behind the unification of two arch rival communist parties led by two radicals, KP Sharma Oli and Pushpa Kamal Dahal.

United just a year ago, PM Oli and former Maoist leader Dahal have been walking side by side backing each other. It looks very unusual and illogical to see the hobnobbing Oli and Prachanda.

However, Nepali Congress leaders Sher Bahadur Deuba and Ram Chandra Poudel, who have been in the same party for almost six decades, have been on a fight to finish course. Deuba and Poudel share everything, including ideology and values. But, they don't share the strategy.

Welcomed and greeted by large numbers of common people, former King Gyanendra has spent quite a good time in Ilam District, bastion of two politicians NC leader KB Gurung and NCP leader Subhash Chandra Nembang, both played a key role in abolishing the monarchy. Republican and secular Nembang won the election, consecutively four times, from a constituency where devoted Hindu and former King Gyanendra has a big size of followers.

When former Prime Minister Deuba launched the election campaign asking vote for his party to prevent authoritarian communist party coming to power, all his party colleagues termed Deuba's slogan on the rise of authoritarianism as hollow. Given the democratic constitution, it sounded foolish to think that way.

None of the above political anecdotes has any logic, but real politics in Nepal is illogical.

After the unification of two communist parties, Prime Minister K.P.Sharma Oli and former Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal are busy consolidating their power base in the party through centralization.

As the party is complete under the command of Prime Minister Oli and Prachanda, even former CPN-UML leaders and Maoist leaders are completely sidelined in the new equation. Former UML leaders Madhav Nepal, Bam Dev Gautam, Jhalnath Khanal and other dozens of senior most leaders are nowhere. On the Maoist side, Narayan Kazi Shrestha, Agni Sapkota, Janardan Sharma and Hari-bol Gajurel are nowhere.

All these recent political events, with no logical sequence, indicate that Nepal's political process is heading towards unpredictable situations and alliances. With the visit of former King Gyanendra in eastern parts of terai and hill districts in the presence of large numbers of people to greet him indicated that Monarchy's fame has not faded yet in Nepal.

Similarly, Deuba's judgment that communists are the threat to democracy and they will try to restore a totalitarian regime seems to be closer to reality. Police atrocities committed against peaceful rally of Rashtriya Prajatantra Party disclosed that communists are intolerant to pluralism. Nepali Congress issued a statement condemning the police atrocities against the peaceful marcher of RPP. The recent brutal action by police against peaceful demonstrators of Rashtriya Prajatantra Party's worker has raised its democratic credential.

The government is interfering with the freedom of press linking minimum salary to accreditation of journalist. National Security Council

Amendment Bill proposed by the government has already created furor. As per the bill, the prime minister is given the sole responsibility to mobilize army even without any consent of Army chief. Main opposition party has already termed this bill as an indication of the government of authoritarianism.

As Prime Minister Oli is consoli-



Former King Gyanendra in Panchtar

dating political power within his party and government has taken several steps to limit the press freedom and rights of people, nothing can be ruled out.

The government is gradually using its two thirds majority to centralize power. Given the recent activities of the government, it seems that former Prime Minister Deuba's election campaign warning that communists will impose authoritarian system has come true.

Italy's political philosopher Machiavelli says politics is a game of logic. However, Nepal is an exception where logic has no role in the political course. If logic works, Nepal has the most liberal constitution, with check and balance. If it fails, the situation is unpredictable.

NEWSNOTES

Brigadier General Bigyan Dev Pandey Takes Charge Of Nepal Army's Spokesperson



Director of Public Relations and Information Directorate of Nepal Army Brigadier General Bigyan Dev Pandey took the charge of spokesperson from his predecessor Brigadier General Yam Prasad Dhakal amid a function at Nepal Army headquarter.

Newly appointed spokesperson General Pandey has hailed the role played by outgoing spokesperson General Dhakal during his role as spokesperson at a function organize to welcome General Pandey and farewell General Dhakal. General Pandey is a son of Nepal's renowned journalist and former chief editor of Gorkhapatra and author late Bal Mukunda Dev Pandey.

Major General Jhankar Bahadur Kadayat was chief guest of the program.



Minister Pun Calls Czech Businessmen To Invest In Nepal

Czech Ambassador to Nepal Milan Hovorka said that Czech Republic wants to invest in Nepal's hydropower sector.

In a discussion with Minister of Energy, Water Resource and Irrigation Barsha Man Pun at Singha Durbar, ambassador Hovorka said that some Czech companies are interested to

invest in solar and hydropower sectors given Nepal government creates conducive environment for investment.

Ambassador Hovorka also said that Czech Republic also wants to collaborate with Nepal in irrigation and modern water pump.

Minister Pun said that Nepal is ready to collaborate with Czech Republic in the areas of Waste Management, Smart Meter and Smart Grid. Minister Pun said that Nepal has made several amendments of act to make Nepal friendly to foreign investors. He called Czech private sectors to come to invest in Nepal.

RCSC Program To Mark Birth Anniversary Of Nikolai Gogol

Nepal Russia Literary Society in association with Russian Centre of Science and Culture organized a

Program Dedicated to "210th Birth Anniversary of Nikolai Gogol".

Ballet Show "Tchaikovsky: Swan Lake" was shown to the audience. The program was commenced by Chandrakanta Acharya, General Secretary of Nepal Russia Literary Society. Chief Guest Tejeshwor Babu Gong, Writer, Ex President, Nepal Russia Literary Society offered garland to the photo of Nikolai Gogol.

Yuliya Androsova, director of Russian Centre of Science and Culture, welcomed everyone and she also highlighted about works and achievements of Nikolai Gogol.

Navaraj Budathoki, Director, Shailee Theatre shared his experience about Gogol's play show in Nepal. Satirical Poem Recitation was done by Laxman Gamname, Poet from Shisno Pani Nepal. Documentary about "Nikolai Gogol" was also shown to audience.



Himalayan Consensus Summit 2019 Concludes

The Himalayan Consensus Summit 2019 has highlighted the need for an innovative, people-centred and sustainable approach to realize a secure and dignified future in the Himalayan region.

UN Resident Coordinator Valerie Julliard said the basis for people-centric development is the core message of sustainable development goals.

"The future generation is what we make of our common action," she said and underlined the need to rewrite history through response to the youth population.

Swiss Ambassador Elisabeth von Capeller said Nepal has a niche advantage of climate and cultures and viewed that the country will benefit immensely if it prioritized high value crops, making the most of knowledge intensive employment.

Veronica Cody, Ambassador of European Union to Nepal, said investment made to shape people's skills defines the economy as well as the future of the country.

Director of ILO Country Office for Nepal, Richard Howard, presented a snapshot of the findings from the Global Commission on the Future of Work report which stresses that technology, climate change and demographic shifts are key forces transforming the world of work.

"Transforming economies for decent and sustainable



work should strengthen the social protection floor that should include the 2 billion people working in the informal sector,” he underlined.

US Embassy Announces Visa Reciprocity

Mike Mussi, Consul of the U.S. Embassy, joined Director General of Immigration Eshor Poudel to witness the handover of the first five-year, multiple-entry tourist visas issued by Nepal to American citizen travelers.

The United States has issued five-year visas to Nepali travelers for many years. With the handover, Nepal has adopted the same visa terms for American visitors, greatly facilitating the closer and deeper linkages between the U.S. and Nepal.

Visa reciprocity is a standard and long-standing principle in visa policies worldwide. The United States Government and the Government of Nepal have been working toward establishing reciprocity for all types of visas since October 2017.

Establishing parity in the visa regimes between the U.S. and Nepal provides an opportunity to increase the number and frequency of American tourists and business representatives visiting Nepal, which will benefit Nepal's economy. Tourism makes up a significant portion of Nepal's economy.

Over 90,000 U.S. citizens visited Nepal last year, an increase of 15 percent over 2017. As Americans receive reciprocal tourist visas -- multiple entry, five-year validity -- they will be able to come to Nepal easily and more often.

Similarly, American students and scholars are eager to study and conduct research in Nepal. Parity in our visa regimes means that more Americans will have the opportunity to study and research at Nepali academic institutions and participate in educational and cultural exchanges.

Speaking at the handover event, Mussi said, “Longer visa validity and lowered costs are good for both America and Nepal. It will increase economic activity and exchanges between our countries while enabling opportunities to explore even more connections between our people.”

Tibet Then And Now, Sixty Years Of Progress

Ambassador Hou Yanqi held a Photo Exhibition to Commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the Democratic

Reform in Tibet in Kathmandu, Nepal.

In the inaugural session, Ambassador Yanqi highlighted the progress made in Tibetan Autonomous Region of China in the last 60 years. She said

that Tibetan Autonomous Region had made a big jump in economic development.

Speaker of the House of Representative Krishna Bahadur Mahara attended the reception as Chief Guest.

Sponsored by Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Nepal, China Association for Preservation and Development of Tibetan Culture, the exhibition was organized by World Cultural Net, Nepal.

Shrestha Elected As NBA President

Candidates of National Lawyers' Association affiliated to the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) won 23 out of 25 posts of office bearers of Nepal Bar Association, including the post of the president and seven out of eight vice-presidents.

NBA President Chandeshwar Shrestha won the NBA presidency with 4,022 votes. His nearest rival Sunil Kumar Pokharel secured only 3,873 votes.

The post of NBA General Secretary, however, went to Democratic Lawyers Association candidate Lila Mani Paudel who secured 4,178 votes against his NLA rival Surendra Bahadur Thapa's 3,701 votes.

Candidates of Nepali Congress affiliated DLA won only three posts. DLA candidates won the posts of general secretary (Lila Mani Paudel), Province 5 vice-president (Sunil Kumar Shrestha) and Madhesi open category member candidate (Manoj Kumar Chaudhary).

Among the NLA candidates who won the post of vice-presidents are Man Bahadur Rumdali (Province 1), Ram Chandra Singh (Province 2), Ishwari Prasad Bhattarai (Province 3), Surendra Thapa Magar (Gandaki province), Min Bahadur Mahat (Karnali province), Umesh Prasad Bista (Far-west province) and Raksha Basyal (women's category).

NLA candidate for Treasurer Rudra Prasad Pokharel also won the election. Of the NLA candidates for members who won the election are Mohan Sashankar (Dalit), Pancha Narayan Mandal (Madhesi, outside valley), Bina Kumari Singh Chaudhary (indigenous nationalities), Badri Narayan Nagarkoti (indigenous nationalities), Kalpana Kumari Bhandari (women's category) Anju Kayastha (women's category), Shiv Raj Pandit (outside valley) and open member candidates Ganga Sagar Khatri, Bhimsen Banjara, Bhuwan Prasad Niraula, Prakash Maharjan, Bal Krishnga Gaire and Khimanand Adhikari.



BUSINESS BRIEF

NIBL Opens New Branch In Pepsicola Town Planning

Nepal Investment Bank Ltd expanded its 79th branch office in Pepsicola Town Planning of Kathmandu Metropolitan City ward 32 amid a function today. The bank also started 112 ATM from today.



The branch office was inaugurated in presence of board of directors of Bank Prajnya Rajbhandari, Surya Prakash Lal Shrestha, Niranjan Lal

Shrestha and Bhubaneswar Prasad Shah and Chief Executive Officer of the Bank Jyoti Prakash Pandey. The bank open this branch under its expansion scheme to reach rural parts of Nepal.

The branch will offer all kinds of financial transaction service as par the demands of local people and the bank has a provision of locker.

Nepal Is Safe And Secure For Investment: Binod Chaudhary

Industrialist and chairperson of Chaudhary Group (CG) Binod Chaudhary has urged foreign investors not to miss opportunities to invest in Nepal. He said that security and trust are only reasons to make Nepal the headquarters of his group.



“The time has come for now to disseminate different messages to the world,” said Chaudhary, Member of Parliament and chairperson of Chaudhary Group. He expressed his special regards to those who come to work with him. “We are experiencing that sky power is lucky because it is a big thing to collaborate with private sector.

Nepal is capable to guarantee the investment in Nepal.”

Satish Kumar Moore Elected As A New President Of CNI

The Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI) concluded its 16th annual general meeting (AGM). The AGM had been inaugurated by Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli.

In a media statement issued today, CNI said that the annual gathering, held under the leadership of outgoing CNI President Hari Bhakta Sahrma, ratified various proposals.

The AGM also elected the president, vice president and members of various national councils for the next term of three years.

The AGM has elected a 38-member national committee that includes Satish Chandra Moore as



president and five vice presidents. As per CNI's constitution, the senior vice president is automatically elected as the president of the confederation for the next term. Likewise, Anuj Agrawal, Bishnu Kumar Agrawal, Nirvana Chaudhary, Krishna Prasad Adhikari, Rajesh Kumar Agrawal, Sulav Agrawal have been elected as vice presidents.

On the occasion, Sharma congratulated the newly elected committee and wished them the best. Similarly, President Emeritus of CNI Binod Chaudhary, also congratulated the newly elected committee members. He also urged the office bearers to work further for the economic and industrial development of the country in the coming days.

Canadian Ambassador Nadir Patel To Trek Everest Base Camp

As Nepal has announced to celebrate the year 2020 as Visit Nepal year to bring two million tourists, Nepal Tourism Board has already started to market Nepal as a brand globally organizing various programs.

As Nepal Tourism Board is encouraging various programs, the decision of Canada's Ambassador to Nepal Nadir Patel to start his trek to Everest Base Camp from April 5 is one of the significant events.

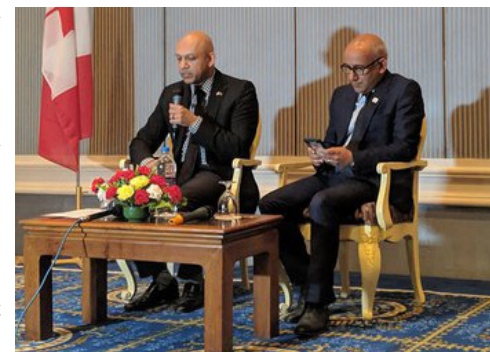
With an objective to promote Nepal's tourism sector and see the development works, Canadian Ambassador to Nepal Patel left to Everest Base Camp with his small team for trekking. Other aim of Ambassador Patel's trek to Everest Base Camp is to promote bilateral relationship.

“The Everest Base Camp trekking of Canadian Ambassador to Nepal Nadir Patel is a very significant event to promote Nepal's tourism sector in Canada. This will immensely promote Nepal in Canada,” said Deepak Raj Joshi, Chief Executive Officer of Nepal Tourism Board. “We expect more events like this as our slogan Naturally Nepal, one is not enough,” said Joshi.

“We have approximately 14000 Canadian residents visiting Nepal annually. That number is relatively constant for years. I certainly believe that my trip will generate interest back in Canada as well,” said ambassador Patel at a press meet.

“First of all, I do believe that my visit to Nepal as non-residential ambassador is short. I think spending a couple of weeks in one part is to make a genuine commitment to the country and contribute to promote and strengthen the relations and promote the country I have been serving as a non-resident ambassador.”

“My wife did this trekking in 2012 and she trekked



around the world and we both trekked some places in the world. She said this trekking is by far most spectacular trekking for her. The experiences shared by my wife have motivated me to take this trek. This is no better way to highlight Canada Nepal Relations at the people to people level. I will possibly go up to the mountain to see more spectacular views of Mount Everest,” said ambassador Patel.

“As you can see, the relationship between the Canada and Nepal is flourishing as strong and robust with a lot of activities in the last year. We can see great and warm welcome from government of Nepal and people of Nepal. As an ambassador, there is of course no better way than to take the relationship in the greater height like the Himalayas. This is why I am taking this trek with a small team.”

Himalaya Airlines Starts Its Flight To Abu Dhabi

Himalaya Airlines, an international air carrier, is set



to commence thrice-weekly flights from the hub in Kathmandu to a thriving and bustling city – Abu Dhabi. The new service is a part of the airline’s commitment to boost the

connectivity of Nepal with Middle-East countries.

The inaugural flight H9 567 departed from Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) at 21:30 hours (local time) and touched down at Abu Dhabi International Airport (AUH) at 00:53 hours (local time) carrying a total of 148 passengers. The return flight from Abu Dhabi H9 568 departed at 02:31+ 1 (local time) on April 01, 2019 and landed at TIA at 08:41 hrs (local time) carrying a total of 150 passengers. Himalaya Airlines has appointed Fishtail Travel and Tourism as their GSA for UAE.

New Menu At Hyatt’s Rox Restaurant Kathmandu

Rox Restaurant at Hyatt Regency Kathmandu is presenting many new dishes on its à la carte menu, showcasing the best of Western and Continental Italian cuisines. Trendy, individualistic and very stylish, Rox Restaurant is the signature outlet of the hotel, located on three levels.

The team at Rox believes that the new menu will be an indulging affair for gastronomic aficionado and will give diners an unique culinary experience.

According to a press release issued by Hyatt Regency Kathmandu, the restaurant’s culinary team, has created sumptuous dishes, with highlights like Rox special salad, Traditional tenderloin lasagna, Risotto alla Milanese, saffron, Marinara , Rox special pizza , Oven baked Tuscan style whole Himalayan rainbow trout , Wood- fried chicken, spelt risotto, onion, rosemary jus and Zabaione on the sweet side

“We source the finest ingredients from around the

world and use our own herbs grown in the hotel garden to cook authentic cuisines for our guests, delivering memorable dining experiences,” said Chef Dhiraj Khadka, Sous Chef at Rox Restaurant.

Chef Dhiraj Khadka, whose expertise in Italian cuisine comes from a culinary journey spanning more than 16 years. Having worked in international hotels like Jumeirah al Naseem, Jumeirah at Etihad towers.



Nabil’s Debenture

Nabil Bank has announced the signing of the issue management agreement with Laxmi Capital Market Ltd under which Laxmi Capital will manage the issuance of debentures to be issued by the bank.

Nabil Bank is going to issue debentures worth Rs two billion with a face value of Rs 1,000.

The management of both public issuance and private placement shall be done by Laxmi Capital.

The agreement was signed by Nabil Bank’s CEO Anil Keshary Shah and Rajiv Sapkota, CEO of Laxmi Capital.

Nepal, Bangladesh Power Cooperation Vital For Connectivity

Minister for Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation Barshaman Pun has said that cooperation between Nepal and Bangladesh in power sector is a vital component of connectivity between the two neighbouring countries.

Addressing the 3rd Nepal-Bangladesh Business Forum, Minister Pun said that the need for cooperation in power sector between Bangladesh and Nepal was realised a long time ago. “The energy ministerial level visits between the two nations in 2014 and 2016 had laid the foundation to frame cooperation in power sector between the two nations,”

Ever since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1972, the relations between the two countries have been based on cordiality, goodwill, mutual understanding and cooperation that spread across political, economic, tourism and education arenas, Minister Pun told the participants after inaugurating the Forum, which was jointly organised by the Embassy of Bangladesh in Kathmandu and the Asian Institute of Diplomacy and International Affairs (AIDIA).

The 3rd Nepal-Bangladesh Business Forum had the theme, ‘Navigating the Next Phase with Socio-Economic Cooperation.’



Sri Darji *Versus* Mr Tailor: Nepal's *Déjà Vu* Development Debate

How wrong were Nepal's social and environmental activists – to think that the development debate had ended in the mid-1990s with the successful battle against Arun-3. Here was a good, natural hydro development site ruined by bad donor project economics, and where neither Nepal's politicians nor the foreign development community seem to have learnt any lessons (see: <http://www.water-alternatives.org/index.php/alldoc/articles/vol6/v6issue2/207-a6-2-4/file>). Now, a quarter of a century later, a new generation is having to fight that battle all over again.

This *déjà vu* state of play was on vivid display at the 3rd National River Summit at Rakam, Aathbisa, Karnali at the end of March. It was a gathering of over 200 river activists and their national and international friends, led by the redoubtable river runner Megh Ale and his Nepal River Conservation Trust. The rift that came to the fore was on how the so-far undeveloped and rather pristine Karnali river was to be exploited for economic gains, mainly of the Karnali region. The dominant view that prevailed – since this was after all a Summit organized by conservationists – was that values such as whitewater rafting, fishing as well as the Kailash-Karnali sacred river route should be preserved and sensitively developed so as not to foreclose other types of development possibilities. The opposite view asked for rampant hydropower development that

would funnel much of Karnali into tunnels leaving behind dry and desolate water courses as the primary route to prosperity. It was championed by almost all local and provincial politicians, many of whom also happened to be contractors and owners of bulldozers and excavators. The view that there are alternative and more sane development pathways was anathema to this excavator-loving crowd.

The Karnali Declaration 2019 passed by the Summit did bring out for public debate some of those alternative



BY DIPAK GYAWALI

views ignored by the dominant nexus of contractor-politicians, hanged be their socialist or communist pretensions. Foremost among them was the need to recognize the river's value for tourism (rafting, kayaking), protecting fishing for local marginalized communities by banning commercial, often outsourced fishing practices such as blasting and pesticide-poisoning, as well as spiritual and aesthetic needs of Hindu-Buddhist communities for whom Kailash-Mansarovar as well as *tirthas* along the way are sacred. This valley is the most natural route to Mt Kailash

which is already seeing a huge influx of pilgrims, especially from South India and which has led to a boom in income for hotel owners and the local economy from Nepalganj to Hilsa. It also recognizes that floods, slated to increase in intensity and frequency due to climate change, harm settlements especially in the floodplains, to protect against which it advocates measures for protection other than costly but ineffective *taar-jaali* bundling embankments.

The Summit also gave voice to the most voiceless of Nepal's riverine communities, the Majhis and Rajis who

used to eke out a living transporting people across in dugout canoes, doing subsistence fishing and also panning for gold. Their livelihoods have been devastated by normal development of bridge building and river diversion for hydropower – all much-needed projects, no doubt – without providing alternative means of

livelihood. While Nepal's hydrocracy loves to celebrate with official pomp the International Water Day on March 22 with programs in Kathmandu and forgets about burning local water issues for the rest of the year, the Majhi representative at the Summit mentioned the third Tuesday of the month of Falgun (often falling in early March) when this community literally worships the river that gives them sustenance. It seems the local *gaonpalikas* of Kamalamai, Barahakshetra and Manthali have already recognized this as a local holiday. The Summit



Author delivering his keynote speech at the inauguration of the 3rd National River Congress

asked that such traditional festivals, including *Sithi Nakha* in Kathmandu Valley (on 8th June this year), *Chhat* in eastern Tarai after Tihar in the autumn, the *Muhan Puja* of Karnali before its brushwood dam diversion in early spring by the Tharus of Rajapur together with other unappreciated water festivals of Nepal's many ethnic groups be recognized as Nepal's actual and real Water Days.

The most important rift was seen with the Upper Karnali hydropower project, granted illegitimately by the 2006 Loktantricksters to an Indian private company by violating constitutional provisions, not to produce electricity for Nepal or the Karnali province but for export to Mughlan. Southern activists do not go by the "No Dams!" slogan of Northern activists: they argue for "No Bad Dams!", leaving themselves the political space to support good ones proposed by their antagonists even while opposing bad ones. So it was in the case of Upper Karnali, seen popularly as a neo-colonial, anti-Nepal type of development where Nepal gets little benefit but bears all the costs (see: <https://www.spotlightnepal.com/2016/06/02/upper-karnali-highway-to-serfdom/>). While the Indian developer shows no capacity or intent to develop it as per agreement – it has already defaulted multiple times, and has reportedly "sold" its license for the 600MW Upper Marsyangdi-2 to a Chinese company for three billion rupees – local politicians still think it is going to bring them "development". They fail to recognize that such a fate might also befall Upper Karnali, which the developer in dire financial circumstances will use to pay off its debts. That wholly unnecessary price will ultimately have to be paid by the Nepali consumers. The Summit Declaration describes such developments as *ku-bikas* (mal-development) and not *su-bikas* (or apt-development).

Indeed, one of the significant items in the Declaration mentions that some 6000 MW of potential hydropower development is possible in the tributaries of Karnali, which is more than sufficient not only for the needs of Karnali province but also for that of Nepal for the foreseeable future. Thus, there is no need to dam the mainstream of the Karnali right away: it is much wiser to leave it free-flowing for the time being and leave the decision on damming the mainstream to the future generation of Nepalis to take when and if they feel that might be necessary. The argument is similar to that which currently roils the Mekong in the debate about damming the mainstream. This author was a member of the Mekong River Commission's panel of experts reviewing its basin development plan. What emerged was that damming the mainstream would irreversibly damage Mekong's fisheries which provides almost half the protein consumed by the poorer within the basin while the electricity produced by all the proposed eleven mainstream dams would only account for less than three years of growth in electricity demand between Vietnam and Thailand. Would you destroy your poor population's rich protein source for that measly amount of "mal-development"? That is a question which will haunt Nepal too in the future, and which can only be addressed by a fully scientific and transparent cumulative impact assessment as part of Nepal's basin development plan.

This rift in perception between what is apt- versus mal-development divides not only Nepali experts but also its international aid partners; and it was painfully palpable with USAid that provided much of support for this 3rd River Summit. Its experts too – best personified by two gentlemen with the same surname deriving from the Anglo-Saxon haberdashery profession whom I chose to call Sri Darji and Mr Tailor – stood on opposite sides of this perceptual divide. Sri Darji, an old Nepal hand with Peace Corps antecedents spoke Nepali and understood what alternative development could mean, especially for Nepal's marginalized poor. On the other hand, Mr Tailor, a corporate lawyer, who if he had come 20 years earlier, might have profitably represented the late but not lamented Enron. That marauding company was promoted by the then US Ambassador with all the might that comes from representing a super-power: she lobbied during her 4-year stint to have the development license for the 10,000 MW Karnali awarded to Enron, forgetting all other areas of cooperation that the people of Nepal and the US might have been happier to see developed. Mercifully she failed, but the short-sighted Nepali politicians she almost succeeded in



3rd National River Summit camp site at Rakam, Karnali

brow-beating still rule the corridors of Singha Durbar and Birendra Convention Hall.

That tragic history of yore is indeed repeating itself, this time as a total farce. Western development agencies, in the Age of Brexited Trump, have now practically given up the pretense of independent development professionalism and have become raw policy arms of their respective foreign ministries. Now, with a 23% cut in State Department/USAid funding by the Trump administration, with the nomination of David R. Malpass, former Under Secretary of the US Treasury and a recorded critic of the World Bank and its socio-environmental programs as its new president, the road-map ahead is depressingly clear. Nepali socio-environmental activists will now have to rely on their own indigenous ingenuity because nice Sri Darjis are an endangered species soon to be eaten alive by the corporate Mr Tailors of global finance. The old generation of activists can only tell Nepal's new generation that the fight against the old World Bank of the 1990s was a much easier one: its political masters at least had some socio-environmental values that they could be held accountable to. Not any more with the new ones on the horizon!

INDIAN ELECTIONS

Interest In Nepal

As a close neighbor, Nepalese are closely watching India's Lok Sabha elections with full enthusiasm

BY A CORRESPONDENT

As Nepal shares so many things with India, including culture, religion, democratic system and open border, it is natural for Nepalese people to have interest to see India's Lok Sabha Elections.

As elections process in India begins with the first phase elections concluded close to Uttarakhand state of Nepal and other few constituencies, Nepalese living in those areas have direct impacts in their livelihood with the closure of border 24 hours before the elections.

The hustle and bustle of campaigning came to an end in 91 Lok Sabha constituencies spread over 20 states and Union Territories which have gone to polls marking the start of the mega seven-phase electoral exercise.

Voting for Lok Sabha was held in constituencies of Nepal's neighboring states and Assembly polls were also held in Sikkim.

People will vote for all parliamentary constituencies in Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Uttarakhand, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Lakshadweep, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Telangana.

As the largest democratic country in the world, people from around the world are watching the democratic exercise, participated in by over a quarter of the population in peaceful manner.

Although Nepalese cannot vote in Indian elections, Nepalese people too have their own preferential political parties. As a country of Hindu Majority, Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) and its leader Narendra Modi, who is the first prime minister to pay four visits in Nepal, is a clear choice.

However, most of the political



leaders close to power still prefer Rahul Gandhi led Indian Congress.

The 2019 Indian general election is scheduled to be held in seven phases from 11 April to 19 May 2019 to constitute the 17th Lok Sabha. The counting of votes will be conducted on 23 May, and on the same day the results will be declared.

The first phase of the elections starts from April 11 and will end 19 May, with the second phase on 18, third on 23, fourth on 29 April, fifth on 6 May and sixth on 12 May and Seventh on 19 May.

The voter-verified paper audit trail (VVPAT) system which enables electronic voting machines to record each vote cast by generating the EVM slip, will be introduced in all 543 Lok Sabha constituencies.

A total of 17.4 lakh VVPAT units will be used in as many as 10,35 and 918 polling stations during the elections. On 9 April 2019, Supreme Court of India gave the judgment, ordering the Election Commission of India to increase VVPAT slips vote count

in five randomly selected EVMs per assembly constituency, which means Election Commission of India has to count VVPAT slips of 20,625 EVMs

According to the Election Commission of India, 900 million people were eligible to vote, with an increase of 84.3 million voters since the last general election in 2014, [making this the largest-ever election in the world. [16] 15 million voters in the age group of 18-19 years are eligible to exercise their right to vote for the first time.

शुभकामना

नयाँ वर्ष २०७६ को सुखद अवसर
मा समस्त ग्राहक वर्गमा सुख,
शान्ति, समृद्धि, सु-स्वास्थ्य,
दीर्घायुको हार्दिक मंगलमय
शुभकामना व्यक्त गर्दछौं।



नेपाल टेलिकम परिवार

FIFTEENTH 5-YEAR PLAN

High Expectations

The government releases the fifteenth 5-year plan with ambitious goals

BY A CORRESPONDENT

With a high and ambitious goal, National Planning Commission has released the 15th 5-year plan to make Nepal a middle-income country by 2030, qualifying for going beyond the LDC status.

Pushpa Raj Kandel, vice chairman of National Planning Commission (NPC) said this during the first meeting of the National Development Council (NDC) held after the country adopted the federal

said Kandel.

Speaking at the meeting, Finance Minister Yubaraj Khatriwada, said political and social stability can guide the government's long-term vision to achieve the targeted goal. "We need to improve the implementation capacity that will directly affect per capita income and sustainable development."

"The government will achieve the targeted goal by accelerating development works of major indi-

provincial and local level governments," he added.

The government is close to achieving the goals set in current 14th periodic plan. Earlier, NPC had set a target to achieve a minimum average economic growth of 9.4 per cent per annum in the next five years.

However, the economy can grow up to 10.1 per cent per annum in the next five years based on different scenarios, as per the draft of the 15th periodic plan.

Similarly, the draft of the periodic plan envisions that the country's agriculture sector can witness an average growth of 5.6 per cent per annum in the next five years while the industrial sector can witness average growth of 17.1 per cent per annum. Likewise, the services sector is expected to witness 9.9 per cent growth per annum in between fiscal years 2019-20 and 2023-24.

Moreover, the government has plans to reduce the unemployment rate by three percentage points, which at present stands at 11.4 per cent. Likewise, it has planned to reduce the multi-dimensional poverty index by five percentage points, which at present stands at 28.6 per cent.



system of governance.

"The country's per capita income in current fiscal year will increase by seven per cent to \$1,074, which stood at \$1,004 in the previous year. Kandel further said that at the end of fiscal 2042-2043, per capita income will reach \$12,100,"

cators like rail, roadways, tourism, agriculture and electricity, among others. In the current fiscal year we were primarily occupied with formulating and amending the necessary laws. From the coming fiscal the government will increase budget expenditure with coordination of

ECONOMY

Service Sector Performance

The World Bank Says Nepal Will Grow 6 Percent Over The Medium Term

BY A CORRESPONDENT

Nepal's GDP growth is projected to average 6 percent over the medium term. According to the latest edition of World Bank's the South Asia Economic Focus, Exports Wanted says that the services sector is forecast to benefit from strong tourism and manufacturing will be supported by the opening of Nepal's largest cement factory next year.

The report says South Asia holds on to its top spot as the world's fastest growing region, with growth set to step up to 7.0 percent in 2019, then 7.1 percent in 2020 and 2021, but the region needs to increase its exports to sustain its high growth and reach its full economic potential, says the World Bank in its twice-a-year regional economic update.

The latest edition of the South Asia Economic Focus, Exports Wanted, finds that the region's growth, while still robust, is mainly driven by domestic demand, which in turn swelled imports and far outstripped exports, further widening trade gaps and current account deficits, and triggering currency depreciation in some countries.

"South Asia's exports performance has dropped in the last few years to languish at far below its potential and while growth still looks robust we are concerned about whether this can hold up over the longer term," said Hartwig Schafer, World Bank Vice President for the South Asia Region. "To ensure growth in the long run, the region

needs to integrate further into international markets to sustain its upward growth trajectory, create more jobs, and boost prosperity for its people."

Across South Asia, imports grew much stronger than exports in the last two years, reversing the region's exports dynamics of the early 2000s. Strong domestic demand, fueled by a consumption and investment boom, resulted in high import growth of 14.9 percent in 2017 and 15.6 percent in 2018, which is nearly

citizens with the skills they need to compete on the global market. It would be good to be creative and relentless in all these efforts."

The report offers a positive outlook based on recent months as export growth is picking up from its low levels, even outpacing imports growth in the third and fourth quarter of 2018. This recent acceleration of export growth, combined with a slowdown in import growth, is expected to continue in 2019 and beyond, with both rates eventually



THE WORLD BANK

twice as high as the region's export growth. In comparison, exports grew by only 4.6 percent in 2017 and 9.7 percent in 2018.

"To ensure growth in the long run, the region needs to integrate further into international markets to sustain its upward growth trajectory, create more jobs, and boost prosperity for its people," said Hans Timmer, World Bank Chief Economist for the South Asia Region. "Efforts should include trade liberalization, spurring entrepreneurship, and equipping

converging at an average 11 percent growth rate.

But despite this recent progress, South Asian countries still export only one-third of their potential, and the gap is widening. The report estimates that the region's export gap widened over time, standing at over 20 percent of GDP in 2017, as South Asia did not fully take advantage of a favorable international global trade environment and remained on the margins of global value chains.

Fear Of The Hornet's Nest

The recently reported remarks at a Holi revelry by Shashank Koirala, General Secretary Nepali Congress, demanding a referendum on the issues of religion, federalism and republicanism has certainly raised a rumpus not only in the opposition but also amongst the leaders and members of his own party. Taking these points by turns one may have doubts on federalism republicanism in that these adoptions may be costly exercises as these will create many 'big shots' or VIPs in all the provinces. These pseudo neo-autocrats with inflated egos will all start to function with various demands thereby making this a costly exercise. Another point is that even decentralisation had been announced and partly implemented during Panchayat rule but the sad part was that the central authority was not prepared to let go of the reins of power. As far as Republicanism is concerned, the present attempt by the current VIPs to replicate the modalities of power as practised by monarchs of a by-gone age as they travelled within and out of the country has become a headache for the population at large. There is the air of haughtiness, a don't care attitude and "Anything ex-rulers did, we can do better."

As far as secularism is concerned it was put in the preamble of the Constitution with the forethought that such placements cannot be changed! When the proposed constitution was presented to the people, over 80% of the respondents gave the feedback that Nepal should revert back to being a Hindu Rastra. External pressure from abroad had brought all this about! One definite solution for sorting all this out is by a referendum as has been suggested by the NC General Secretary. One major question is how many of the 'Big Wigs' of all major parties who brought all this about are prepared to accept that they did injustice to the Nepali people and are prepared to retrace their steps?

The very first referendum in Nepal was on 2nd May 1980 during the Panchayat days when the population at large was considered uneducated and had to choose between the golden colour of non-partisan Panchayat and the blue of party based Democracy. The golden colour won.

The French constitution apparently states that any major decisions in National affairs must be made following a referendum. The European Union, since its inception in 1972 has had no less than forty-eight referendums concerning various aspects of governance. The first referendum in the United Kingdom was in 1975 when 67.2% of those taking part decided to join the Common Market which later became the European Union (EU). The present focus of the world is on the second referendum which the UK had in 2016 on whether UK should leave the EU. To get things in perspective, individuals over 16 years living in the UK, irrespective of whether they were



BY HEMANG DIXIT

citizens or not were allowed to vote. After a vote of 52% to 48% of the overall 72.2% participation, it was decided that Brexit was the way forward. However it was claimed that much disinformation and 'fake figures' had been resorted to for bringing this about. Now, almost after much discussion over the course of three years, Brexit has become a headache for PM Theresa May whose many attempts to get decisions to be accepted by the UK House of Commons have failed. Her request now is extension of the Brexit date.

The coming days are crucial too and a large number of people are demanding a new referendum, a third in UK's history. Does a new referendum, if it does come about, also signify a more significant participation by the people in decisions which will affect their lives? Will this be a trend for the future?

As one goes over what has happened in Europe one realises that the referendum as a reflection of the peoples' will has to be maintained. Greenland, a territory of Denmark opted out of the EU as early as 1972. Both Norway with an indecisive vote in 1972 and Switzerland following votes in 1997 & 2001 are still not members.

In Nepal the talk of Federalism has been coupled with the threat of secession of certain Southern parts of the country. A recent understanding with force advocating that has been reached but as this force has been called a 'Janmat Party' one is totally at a loss to figure out what all this means. Yes there is the possibility of a Referendum on the horizon but the question on most peoples' lips and minds is what this will be all about. It cannot be just a single issues but various ones on which the Nepali citizen must be allowed to express his or her views. The big worry is whether this will be akin to throwing a stone at a hornet's nest? Is this what prompted the NC Gen. Secretary to state publically that it was all a 'slip of the tongue'? Or is it 'remote control'? It is anybody's guess.

Why there should be opposition to the referendum makes one wonder? Are not the regular elections, which one has to periodically hold and make the people vote in many mini parts of the country not also decision making acts on the performance of who is serving that particular area as a representative? So why not go for a referendum now?

As a post script one might even note that in 1922 Benito Mussolini had imposed fascism in Italy. In 1946, following World War II, a referendum held in Italy however decided not to restore the monarchy in the country. Are we in Nepal ready to take such a test?

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Making Progress

With his appointment as the Managing Director of Nepal Electricity Authority, Kul Man Ghising has changed the energy scenario

BY A CORRESPONDENT

After disruption of construction of the project for four months by Dharan sub-municipality, the construction work of 220 kV Kosi corridor Transmission line project has resumed.

Since last November, the sub-municipality has created obstruction on the construction of transmission line, agreeing to allow the work through the same route.

Similarly, the 132-33 kV substation constructed at Marki Chwok of Tanahu has changed. Following the completion of construction of sub-station, Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) has started the distribution of electricity to Gorkha through it.

After the completion of Marki Chwok substation, the construction of 132 kV Middle-Marshyangdi-Dumre-Damuli Transmission line has also completed. The 132 kV double circuit Middle Marshyangdi-Damauli-Marshyangdi Transmission has already been changed earlier.

Whether it is 132 kV Kabeli or 220 kV Chilime-Trishuli, Trishuli-Matatirtha or Marsyangdi Kathmandu, Khimti-Dhalkebar 220 kV and Dhalkebar-Mujaffarpur 400 kV, all the transmission lines were waiting for action.

These were a few strategically important transmission lines completed in the last few months. Following the appointment of managing director of Nepal Electricity Authority, Ghising has made a virtually impossible work possible in getting rid of the decade-old chronic loadshedding. Similarly, he also pushed many disrupted transmission line projects and hydropower projects under the construction.

When Ghising took the charges of MD, 36 MW Chameliya Hydropower Project started production, 60 MW Trishuli 3M is in trial and Kulekhani III is in final stage for production. Similarly, doz-

ens of transmission line projects including cross border Dhalkebar Mujaffarpur Transmission line were also completed.

Apart from this, MD Ghising has also made Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) into a profitable public utility. MD Ghising has shown that management skills of an individual can make a difference.

As MD Ghising has been working to make many impossible works possible, a group of people who have been reaping benefits by delaying and stalling the projects and others, who benefited from over 5 billion rupees of business of battery and inverters, were waiting to defame him.

Kosi Corridor

According to Rajan Dhakal, project head, there were obstructions in 17 towers. "After a series of meetings and discussions, ward chairman and other people agreed to allow the construction of the transmission line," said Dhakal. "The project will take necessary precaution to minimize the effects and carry out a number of community based development activities."

Chief Minister of Province 1 Sherdhan Rai took personal initiation and discussed the issue with ward chairs and municipal mayor and deputy mayor. He also inspected the construction site.

After a letter issued by deputy mayor of sub-municipality Manju Bhandari requesting NEA to relocate some towers from current position to save tourism spot in Bishnupaduka, the construction work was stalled. NEA has insisted that any change in the alignment will delay and raise the project cost hampering to evacuate 550 MW of electricity burdening the country.

Managing Director of NEA Ghising also took several steps to convince

the local bodies that any obstruction in the project construction will be dearly as the government has to pay money to the promoters who are building hydropower for failing to evacuate the energy.

Constructed by Nepal Government and NEA with the support from Indian Exim Bank's concessional loan, the route of the line followed Bhedetar-Choti, Moran Sardu watershed, Tamakham, Salbote, Chindi, Dandabhanjyang Gorkha Memorial Park, Jalkanya Community forestry.

NEA has already signed PPA with 28 projects with 516 MW of power. As these projects are in different stages, the completion of Kosi Corridor is very crucial for the projects.

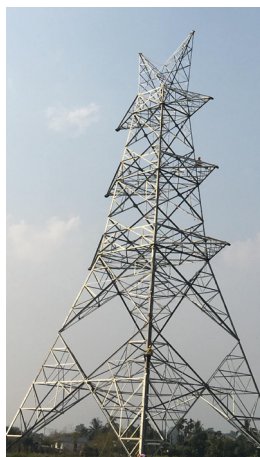
According to Dhakal, they will start laying the string within a few days. Total cost of the project is 37.5 million dollar. The project will complete by the end of 2019.

Marki Chwok Substation Charged

In eastern part of Nepal, NEA is working. Following charging of Marki Chwok Substation, the problems faced by Gorkha including voltage drop, frequent line tripping and low voltage will reduce, said MD of NEA Kul Man Singh Ghising. Previously, the power to Gorkha was supplied through 33 kV Damauli-Dumre- Aanbu Khairani Transmission line. As the line is too long, Gorkha faced problem.

Now on the distance of transmission line is reduced and Marki Chowk substation will supply electricity through Abukhairani. "With the reduction of supply length, it will reduce system loss, voltage drop and tripping," said MD Ghising.

Furthermore, the electricity supplied through 132 kV can be stepped up to 220 kV Marshyangdi-Matatirtha Transmission line through Marki Chowk substation to send to Kathmandu. 220 kV Marshyangdi-Matatirtha Transmission line project is constructing 132-220 kV substation in Marki Chowk.



If Ending Chronic Load Shedding And Making A Nea Profitable Venture Are Crimes, I Am Ready To Face Charges: Kulman Ghising

There are many policies and regulations needed to make in relation to Nepal Electricity Authority. Our team has been working day and night to solve the problems.

Since I was given the responsibility of MD, our team has been working day and night to improve economic conditions, serving mainly to end the load shedding from the first day. We have done what we were supposed to do.

Now, the loadshedding has completely been removed from households and industries. Although this is a dry season, we have been using the electricity. Of course, there is a technical difficulty; we need to do more work to improve the quality.

Within this fiscal year, we will charge 50/60 substations to improve the quality of electricity supply. A few new projects will be completed soon. Trishuli 3 A and Kulekhani III are at the process of completion. We are completing many sick projects.

Many other projects are in the process of completion. We are launching new project as well. We have been working to fulfill government's target to provide access to electricity to all Nepalese in four years. Community and NEA's employees are evaluating what we have been doing.

Despite all these works, some persons, in responsible positions, are issuing statements ignoring what was the state of load shedding in the past and what is the present state. Ending load shedding is possible because of support given by the government, NEA's team work and community's backing. We have completed two tasks including making NEA a profitable institution from a heavy loss and ending load shedding.

Those people, who were enjoying in NEA's loss and load shedding, have been desperately making efforts to defame our team. Every disinformation and defaming activities have been taking place under the involvement and backing of the people responsible for load shedding. They have been mobilizing and using media and all concerned people how to weaken the team and defame us. We know all this.

No one cared when NEA was losing Rs. 9 billion. Why all of them suddenly started questioning our intention when NEA has made profits and ended the load shedding? Nobody believed in early days that ending load shedding was possible. Even the employees of NEA did not believe that NEA can be made into a profitable venture. Some people are still saying that the current profit is due to the government subsidy. They are disseminating disinformation.

There are charter accountants and Auditor General's office who audit our account. However, a fifth grade employee is questioning the process. This shows that there is



a conspiracy within to defame us.

So far as trade union is concerned, there is a provision to hold the elections in every two years by management. No one has right to launch disinformation campaign against management to postpone the election.

Those who have been playing the game placing NEA in crisis are trying to defame us. I have objections against the disinformation campaign against us. There is a media campaign saying that NEA's MD accumulated huge property. There is an agency to investigate the charges. There is news that MD received 6 million as meeting allowances, holding 13 meetings a day. Is it possible to make such things? I was appointed through an agreement to evaluate the working performance. There is agreement under which the government evaluates work performance. There is a committee under joint secretary. I am receiving monthly Rs.200, 000.00 incentives. I collected 600,000 allowances last year including the meeting of promotion committee. They leaked the information added one zero to it.

I have been taking allowances, incentives and salary as part of the law in a transparent manner. Everyone can read and see it. In the past, NEA's MD was helpless under a group of employees. There was anarchy. This was the reason NEA was in loss. Those, who were in the process to completely destroy NEA, are again in the forefront. I challenge them to come with any proof of corruption and irregularities; I am ready to face them. Otherwise, those who have been accusing me with false charges should be punished.

I will maintain the chain of command and overcome the wrongdoing. I am committed to strengthen and make NEA financially strong.

Statement based on MD's press meet.

TORNADO IN BARAA

A New Threat

As tornado enters Nepal through devastation in Bara and Parsa, the government needs to develop a new strategy for future

BY A COREEPONDENT

From earthquake to flood, landslide, storm, fire, lightning, GLOF, Nepal has all kinds of disasters and the country has prepared early warning systems and other ways to cope with these disasters.

However, the entry of Tornado was first recorded in Nepal only now. Led by Madan Lal Shrestha, former director general of DoHM and academician of Nepal Academy of Science Technology, a group of scientists found that the storm was tornado.

At a time when there was confusion over the cause of last week's storm, Department of Hydrology and Meteorology (DoHM) officially declared that the tornado was responsible for the devastation at Bara and Parsa districts last week.

DoHM with the support from Small Earth Nepal took an initiative to investigate the destructive storm in Bara and Parsa Districts. Led by Madan Lal Shrestha, former director general of DoHM and academician of Nepal Academy of Science and Technology, a group of scientists found that Bara's windstorm was tornado.

A preliminary report made public by the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology said that it was the first recorded tornado in Nepal. "We will publish its full report within a few days," said Director General of DoHM Sarju Kumar Baidhya. "Our preliminary findings were based on sufficient evidence in the disaster hit areas that matched common signs of tornado."

"The windstorm raced up to a stretch of 30 kilometers on the same path without causing any damage to structures that were even slightly away from its path, a tell-tale sign



of a tornado," said Shrestha. "This is the most important clue, as only tornadoes among the high-velocity storms move on a certain trail.

"The width of the trail was around 200 to 250 meters, which is another unique feature of a tornado," said Shrestha, who is also a former director general of DoHM, and studied the disaster with the support of an organization — The Small Earth Nepal — which collected satellite pictures of the area from EU's Sentinel Satellite.

The satellite recorded pictures of Nepal every five days and scientists studied the pictures of the area before and after the storm.

"Like a normal tornado that lasted from five to 20 minutes, the Bara and Parsa windstorm also lasted for a very limited time. But the intensity of the wind was so strong that it even uprooted trees and overturned trucks. Such devastation

is possible only by tornadoes," said Baidhya.

Dhiraj Pradhananga, meteorology expert and assistant professor of meteorology at Tribhuvan University, said the topography of Nepal normally did not allow formation of such a rare weather situation. It is exceptionally rare in Nepal, as formation of tornadoes needs massive amount of weather instability, he added.

Pradhananga, who is also a member of the investigation team, said the westerly wind took cumulonimbus cloud, which normally brings rain and thunderstorm in the country, from Pokhara through higher atmospheric pressure towards Bara and Parsa districts that day.

Given the recent reports, Nepal will have to be more alert and the government needs to put in place mechanism to deal with such rare weather conditions in the future.

GERMAN SUPPORT

Renewable Energy

As Nepal and Germany are celebrating sixty years of establishment of diplomatic relations, Embassy of Germany in Kathmandu organizes German Energiewende

BY A CORRESPONDENT

Out of Nepal Electricity Authority's total generation of over 562 MW, two German supported hydropower projects, Middle Marsyangdi 70 and Marsyangdi 69, make a contribution of almost 20 percent in total. Both the projects are peaking projects supplying electricity at the peak hours.

Similarly, German Government, through KfW, is also supporting the construction of transmission line. Add to Germany's support to renewable energy to Nepal, KfW is also supporting construction of 220 kV double circuit Chilime-Trishuli hub transmission line.

Germany remains a major development partners of Nepal supporting Alternative Energy Promotion Center (AEP) to distribute off grid energy and expand bio-grass and solar home system.

Whether off grid or on grid, Germany's support is very important. Inaugurated by Minister of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation Barsha Man Pun, a two-week program, The German Energiewende, Transforming Germany's Energy System, travelling Expo and Talk Program helped to understand transformation of energy sector in Germany.

The travelling exhibition illustrates the Germany's economic transformation towards reusable energy. Through the exhibition, Germany is playing a major role in climate protection and brings a message to Nepal, "let us work together on green energy."

Addressing the program, Energy Minister Pun thanked German govern-

ment for supporting Nepal's energy sector. He expressed the hope that through this kind of support Germany will continue to help Nepal in energy sector.

German Embassy in Kathmandu is organizing a 16-day exhibition titled "The German Energiewende: Transforming Germany's energy system." The exhibition takes place inside the premises of Information and Communication Technology Center, Pulchowk Campus, Lalitpur from 12-26 April 2019.

The world is moving in the direction of clean and renewable energy sources. Germany is leading the movement with an objective of achieving carbon neutrality in 2050. Nepal too has potential in generation of renewable energy through tapping

have been achieved and what challenges remain? It should also be an occasion to discuss challenges, we share and show appreciation for the efforts of the government of Nepal to create conducive environment towards climate friendly energy in the country.

The interactive travelling exhibition has already toured more than 80 locations in about 30+ countries and has been seen as overwhelming across the world. It is expected to be visited by students from schools and campuses, professionals working in renewable energy sector, policy makers and academics as well as anyone with interest in latest developments in renewable energy. The exhibition will be open to all free cost.

The exhibition is accompanied by a photo story about 60 years of friendship between Nepali and German citizens. The inspiring portraits of volunteers and business owners are a great way to experience intercultural exchange and tell the story of close friendship.

Germany through GIZ is supporting Alternative Energy Promotion Center (AEP) in promotion and development of renewable energy technolo-

gies in various municipalities and rural municipalities. The energy exhibition can be helpful in generating interest and sharing the innovative project ideas suitable for Nepal among students and academics.

As Germany remains a major partner supporting energy sector in Nepal, the exhibition will help Nepal see how Germany's energy sector is transforming.



in to various sources like hydro-power and solar energy, but also working toward energy efficiency.

Ambassador of Federal Republic of Germany Roland Schäfer interacted with media at German Embassy regarding the sector.

The energy exhibition illustrates the German economy's transformation towards energy sources. What is the energy transition, what milestones

ECONOMY

Growth To Reach 6.2

Asian Development Bank predicts Nepal's economy will grow 6.2 percent in the current fiscal year

BY A CORRESPONDENT

Just after holding Nepal Investment Summit weeks ago, Nepalese officials have another event to feel jubilation about. With the announcement of Asian Development Bank that Nepal's economy is set to grow 6.2 percent in the current fiscal year, officials have a reason to be optimistic.

As Nepal is expecting to go for high growth, ADB's recent announcement gives them a sigh of relief. Presenting its 13th five year plan, the government has forecast that Nepal's per capita income will reach \$1,400 by the end of the 15th periodic plan in fiscal year 2023-24.

The government has stated that Nepal will graduate from the least developed country status to the league of developing nations by 2022 and to a middle income country by 2030.

Nepal's economy is anticipated to grow at 6.2% in fiscal year (FY) 2019 and 6.3% in FY2020, says the latest Asian Development Bank (ADB) Nepal Macroeconomic Update.

"The outlook is for a stable growth on the back of strong domestic demand, fueled by a larger budget allocation to subnational governments and accelerated post-earthquake reconstruction," said Mukhtor Khamudkhanov, ADB's Country Director for Nepal. "Challenges to smooth implementation of fiscal federalism and maintaining fiscal discipline at large could pose potential risks to the outlook. Nepal has the potential to achieve and sustain higher growth rate over a long period of time if these challenges are addressed."

The agriculture sector will likely grow from 2.8% in FY2018 to 4.5% in FY2019, owing to a good monsoon that is expected to boost paddy production to 5.5 million tons, a rise of 8.4% from the previous year. The industry sector is expected to expand by 7.1% in FY2019 buoyed by improved electricity supply and efforts to improve the investment climate. And the services sector will likely grow by 6.4% in FY2019 with the expansion of wholesale and retail trade, hotels and restaurants, and financial intermediation.

The update says inflation is projected to rise to 4.4% in FY2019 from 4.2% in FY2018, partly reflecting somewhat higher inflation expected in India, stable oil prices, and higher government expen-

ditures under the new federal structure.

Revenue collection has primarily increased on higher import growth and an improvement of the tax system. The budget as of mid-January 2019 is in surplus by NRs173.3 billion owing to strong revenue growth and a marginal slowdown in recurrent expenses. Though capital expenditure has surged in the fiscal year through mid-February, its execution stands at only 22.5%. This could again lead to a spending spree in the last month of the fiscal year, undermining the quality of capital projects, says the update.

With rising trade and current account deficit, Nepal increasingly faces the risk of external sector instability. Data



up to mid-February 2019 show that trade deficit has surpassed net invisible earnings, widening the current account deficit to \$1.5 billion, marginally up from a deficit of \$1.4 billion in the earlier period. The current account deficit is projected to widen further to 9.3% of gross domestic product in FY2019, up from 8.2% a year earlier on increased imports of capital and consumer goods and services, notwithstanding a healthy growth of remittances and stable oil prices, says the update.

"Given the growing importance of the services sector in Nepal's economy, coherent actions are needed to bridge trade deficit via export diversification in the services sector," said Manbar S. Khadka, ADB's economist for Nepal. "A host of issues pertaining to infrastructural, institutional, and procedural barriers need to be addressed to promote the services sector."

Asian Development Outlook 2019 shows that capital expenditure rose by 28.0% with reform to budget implementation, and recurrent expenditure climbed

by 34.3% on transfers to subnational governments (SNGs) equal to about 8.0% of GDP, as well as election expenses. Reflecting buoyant tax revenue from high import growth, revenue increased by 19.1% to equal 24.2% of GDP.

Credit to the private sector grew by 22.3%, with a significant share going to wholesale and retail trade, manufacturing, and construction. Nepal Rastra Bank, the central bank, sought to tighten credit by enforcing banks to maintain the loan to core capital plus deposits ratio at 80% and lowering the ratio of mortgages and consumer loans to purchase value, which moderated lending for real estate and vehicle purchases.

"Continued rapid growth in imports, particularly of construction materials and capital goods, reached 27.5% in FY2018, pushing the trade deficit to \$10.9 billion and taking it as a percentage of GDP from 34.5% in FY2017 to 37.7%. Despite healthy remittance growth at 10.5%, the current account deficit ballooned from \$95.4 million in FY2017 to \$2.3 billion, equal to 8.2% of GDP," said the outlook.

With no major electric power cuts since May 2018, more manufacturing firms have launched operations, and capacity utilization has improved at existing plants. Construction gained momentum in the first half of FY2019, to mid-January 2019, and will 3.19.3

According to ADB, the trade deficit will widen further in FY2019 as domestic demand pushes up imports of oil and other products, and as the economy continues to struggle with its low manufacturing base and weak export competitiveness. The current account deficit is projected to deepen from 8.2% in FY2018 to 9.3% with increased imports of capital and consumer goods and services, and despite lower oil prices and healthy growth in remittances.

"Average annual inflation will edge up from 4.2% in FY2018 to 4.4% in FY2019, having averaged 4.2% in the first 6 months of FY2019. Inflationary pressure will be kept largely in check by increased crop production, better supplies of goods and electricity, subdued oil prices, and expected moderation of inflation in India," states ADB's Report.

MUSTANG

Monarchy, Monk, Monastery

With the abolition of monarchy in 2008, the special privilege and status given by Nepal's Monarchy to King of Mustang, who agreed to peacefully merge politically with Nepal, also came to an end. However, Upper Mustang's religion, culture and landscape continue to attract people from around the world. Thanks to the continual patronage of former Raja of Mustang Jigme Singhi Palbar Bista and his family members, Buddhist Monks and ancient monastery, Upper Mustang is able to retain its glory of past. With her own love to Mustang's monastery, religion, culture and landscape, Dr. Susanne von der Heide from Himal Asia, has been backing all the efforts of people of Upper Mustang for the preservation and protection of heritage and monastery.

By KESHAB POUDEL

With its unique topography, culture and religion, Upper Mustang has a special place in Nepal and the world. Written in numbers of book and visited by numbers of travelers, it is where, on a few occasions, one can find a great opportunity to see monarchy, monk and monastery together.

Thanks to Dr. Hide's support, a young artist Tsering Phonjo Gurung from Mustang was able to bring all the important parts of Mustang at the Taragaun Museum in Boudha.

Over 75 paintings of artist Gu-

rung, displayed at the exhibition, showed landscape, monastery, religious practices, people and monk together in the form of paintings.

President of the Mustang Shakya Buddhist Association 27th Chokye Trichen Rinpoche and Jigme Singhi Palbar Bista, former Raja of Mustang, jointly inaugurated Landscapes of Mustang with paintings by Tsering Phonjo Gurung at Taragaun Museum in Boudha.

The presence of highly respected 27th Chokye Trichen Rinpoche and

former Raja Jigme Singhi Palbar Bista and monks from Mustang and other art lovers demonstrated the importance of the painting exhibition in the context of preserving Mustang's Buddhism, culture and landscape.

Jointly organized by Himal Asia Foundation and The Mustang Shakya Buddhist Association, the exhibition saw artist Tsering Phonjo Gurung displaying 70 paintings, at a range from \$150 to \$ 300.

Addressing the inaugural program, former King Jigme Singhi Palbar Bista said that the paintings



27th Chokye Trichen Rinpoche and former Raja Bista

reminded about the landscape and culture of Upper Mustang and exposed these to the outside world.

Former King Bista said that paintings displayed at the exhibition represented the ethos of Upper Mustang, including and its surrounding in a beautiful way.

The painter depicted cave, monasteries and various aspects of Tibetan Culture in the surrounding areas of former capital of Mustang Lo-manthang in a clear way.

Having been actively involved in the restoration and preservation of monasteries and Buddhism of High-Himalayas of Nepal Dr. Susanne von der Heide from Himal Asia said

that Tsering Phonjo Gurung is a very talented young artist from Upper Mustang. She said that this is the right place to encourage young artist like Gurung to continue his work. Known for her dedication to promote culture and religion of Himalayan region, Dr. Susanne said Gurung is an emerging painter who has already acquired mastery in Tibetan paintings and arts.

Addressing the program, vice president Ven.Tsering Tashi thanked Dr. Susanne for her contribution and support to preserve and conserve the historical monasteries of Upper Mustang.

Although there are great transformations, artists like Gurung have

been working to preserve and protect the culture of Upper Mustang and its surroundings.

Born in 1981 in Chosar, Upper Mustang, Nepal, artist Gurung loved to paint and his talent was discovered. At the age of 16, he began his Thangka painting training with Lhakpa Lama in Chosar. Having worked with wall painting restorer in Luigi Fieni at the Thubchen Gompa, he is not only a skilled Thangka and Landscapes painter but also has worked at different Monasteries all over Nepal to decorate these places with wall paintings. He recently painted Phuntsong Tahi Choeling Gompa in Pokhara.

“Today is really a wonderful day for me because today I got such a wonderful opportunity to present my art in front of you, distinguished individuals. To portray my homeland Mustang through my art has been my long-term dream. To be honest, I must say that my dream has come true it is not because of me myself, but obviously it is due to the kindness of Dr. Susanne and the Mustang Sakya Buddhist Association. I also like to thank respected Gen Tsering Tashi, the vice president of Mustang Sakya Buddhist Association, for his support, guidance and inspiration.”



Tiji Festival

Photo: Ghanshyam Gurung, PHD.

Attended by residents from Mustang and diplomats based in Kathmandu, the inauguration program was followed by the Garsar Cham Lama Dance, which was performed by the monks of the Choede Monastery from Lo Manthang Mustang.

Restricted Areas

Located in the Northern part of Nepal, Upper Mustang has been a restricted area for foreigners for years. The landscape and culture of Upper Mustang are similar to that of Tibet, as geographically, it is a part of the Tibetan plateau.

Mustang was only open for visitors after 1992. Before this, visitors were not allowed to enter the forbidden kingdom of Mustang. The area is a perfect destination for a generous scope is offered for visiting Buddhist Monasteries.

For exploring ancient Buddhist monasteries, Cave and Tibetan influence culture, life style of people and beautiful landscape, Mustang is the best place. In his paintings, Artist Gurung grasps all these important aspects of life of Upper Mustang.

He also painted Lo-manthang ancient Buddhist monasteries, Cave and other important of Mustang.

Upper Mustang

Earlier, when the border was open to south, winter was the time for

trade with Tibet. Now-a-days, the greater part of Upper Mustang's villagers trek south after the October harvest and spend the cold months earning livelihood in Pokhara or Kathmandu.

Livestock is the most important source of Cash income. People keep the cattle for milk, meat and fuel. Large herds of goat and sheep are driven to the southern part for sale at the end of Summer. Dzopa, a crossbreed from yak and cow, plough the fields. Horse and mules are used to carry the people and loads.

Monasteries and Festivals

Religion plays an important role in the life of Upper Mustang people. Festivals like Lhosar (Tibetan new year, Jan/Feb), Saka Lugka (Rise for timely rains and a good harvest Feb/Mar) or Duk Chu (Monk's dance and prayers for a prosperous next years Nov/ Dec) structure the Passing seasons. On various occasions lamas are called to perform rites in individuals houses. Tiji Festival is the great



festival among the Mustang people. A famous, 3-day, Tenchi festival trekking is celebrated in front of the King's Palace. All festivals of Mustang are celebrated according to the Tibetan calendar. Tiji is held normally in the month of April or May.

Upper Mustang's Religion

The glimpses in Upper Mustang belong to the Ngro Subject of Sakya Buddhism. Each village of Upper Mustang has monasteries which are over 800 years old. Kag Chode Gumpa in Kagbeni, Tsrang Monastery, Jampa Monastery, Thubchen Monastery, Ghar Gumpa, Luri Gumpa are the famous monasteries in Upper Mustang.

Much of the history of Mustang is about legends rather than documented facts. However, it is believed that Mustang or the Kingdom of Lo was once a part of Ngari area of Tibet and a loose collection of feudal estates.

Though the people of Mustang live within the geographic boundaries of Nepal, their history is also tied to Tibetan religion and culture, geography, and politics. It was often closely linked to adjoining kingdoms of Western Tibet and, during other periods of history, politically linked to Lhasa, the capital of Central Tibet. Lo was incorporated into the Tibetan Empire by Songtsen Gampo, the most famous Tibetan king.

Much of Ngari became a part of the Malla empire (capital Sinja in western Nepal) by the 14th Century.



Dr. Susanne Von Der Heide (left) with Rani Usha Raje Scindia

COVER STORY

From the 15th century to the 17th century, Mustang had control over the trade between the Himalayas and India because of its strategic location.

In 1380, Lo became an independent kingdom under Ame Pal. The last royal family traced its lineage for 25 generations, all the way back to Ame Pal.

Ame Pal oversaw the founding and building of much of the Lo and Mustang capital of Lo Manthang, a walled city surprisingly little changed in appearance from that time period. The only remnant of these kingdoms is the still-intact Kingdom of Lo, an area corresponding to the northern third of Mustang District.

In 1769, the army of Prithvi Narayan Shah, the first King the Gorkha Kingdom and the Shah dynasty, unified what was a land of many small kingdoms to forge the kingdom of Nepal. Before that, much of present-day Mustang was ruled by kings from Jumla, a region to the southwest, and independent kings and feudal lords.

At the end of the 18th century the kingdom was annexed by Nepal and became a dependency of the Kingdom of Nepal since 1795. Nepal was like a confederation of 22 and 24 Rajyas till 2017, that is, 1959 AD.

Only after the promulgation of *Rajya Rajauta (Petty States and Rulers) Ain, 2017* and the *Rajya Rajauta Ain*” (*Rajya System Abolition Act*) of 2019 V.S. (1961), Rajas were abolished and few Rajas were still given cultural and religious rights. Mustang is one of them.



Up until 2008, the Kingdom of Lo or Upper Mustang was an ethnic Tibetan kingdom and a suzerainty of Kingdom of Nepal. The suzerainty allowed for a certain level of independence in local governance from the Nepalese central government.

The last official and later unofficial king (raja or gyelpo) of Mustang was Jigme Dorje Palbar Bista (1930–2016). Bista succeeded his father Angun Tenzing Tandul in 1964, and whose lineage dates back to Ame Pal, who founded the Kingdom of Lo six and half century earlier. He died in 16 December 2016 after living a retired life largely in Kathmandu since 2008 when Nepal abolished its own monarchy.

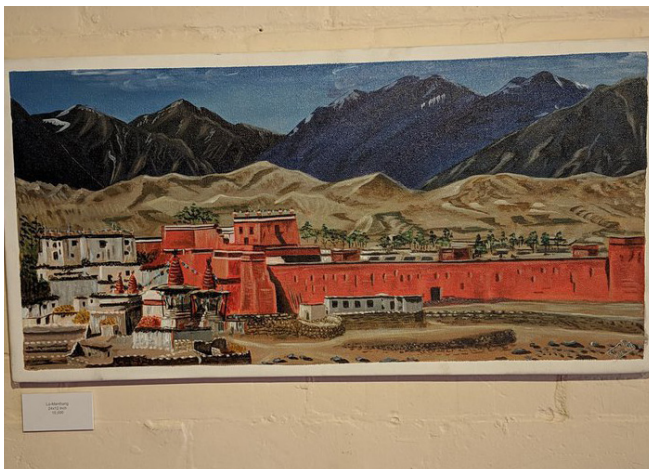
One fascinating feature of the paintings was also the depiction of cliff dwellings. According to estimates, Mustang Caves or Sky Caves of Nepal are a collection of some 10,000 man-made caves dug into the sides of valleys in the Mustang.

Several groups of archaeologists and researchers have explored these stacked caves and found partially mummified human bodies and skeletons that are at least 2,000–3,000 years old.

Explorations of these caves by conservators and archaeologists have also led to the discovery of valuable Buddhist paintings, sculptures, manuscripts and numerous artifacts belonging to the 12th to 14th century. The caves lie on the steep valley walls near the Kali Gandaki River in Upper Mus-

tang.

In 2007, explorers from the United States, Italy and Nepal discovered ancient Buddhist decorative art and paintings, manuscripts and pottery in the Mustang caves near Lo Manthang, dating back to the 13th century.



In 2008, a number of 600-year-old human skeletons were discovered by a second expedition. They also recovered reams of invaluable manuscripts containing writings from both the Bon religion and Buddhism, some of which were illuminated.

Research groups have continued to investigate these caves, as it is not clear who built the caves and why they were built. According to a theory, they may date back to 8–10,000 BCE when Mustang was much greener.

Artist Gurung painted stupas, in decorative art, depicting various forms of the Buddha, often with disciples, supplicants and attendants, with some mural paintings showing sub-tropical themes containing palm trees, tigers and birds.

At a time when Upper Mustang is connected by road and there is growing interest among scholars on the history, culture and and life, the painting exhibition assumes a greater significance.

With Dr. Susanne von der Heide's personal initiative, artist Gurung has been able to bring monarchy, monk and monastery together to preserve uniqueness of Mustang.

EU SUPPORT Green Bungmati

European Union (EU) Supports A Project In Bungmati For Sustainable Tourism And Green Growth

By A CORRESPONDENT

After earthquake, Bungmati has remained quiet most of the time. Although it continues to carry its own tradition, on Saturday, March 30, Bungmati came with a different and distinct identity.

Local people were rushing here and there, displaying their traditional foods, drink, culture, dance and folklore, welcoming the ambassador of European Union to Nepal Veronica Cody, offering her food, wine and taste of culture.

Visiting with locally elected leaders, including the mayor of Lalitpur Metropolitan City, ambassador Cody not only visited the project sites but also felt the warmth of people and tasted the food.

People's overwhelming response to EU ambassador Cody was understandable. With the support of EU, the traditional city, which was on the verge of collapse, has totally revived again.

For people of Bungmati, EU has come with a project for sustainable tourism and green growth. Similarly, Sri Lanka came there with a project three years ago to rebuild the centuries old Bungmati Temple.

As the Temple, which is now slowly taking shape, making the areas as a tourism hub next to Patan is the best option. With its charm as one of the oldest cities in the outskirts of Patan, Bungmati, which has historically separate cultural identity, was facing collapse after earthquake of 2015.

The city landscape, which once was surrounded by green fields, too disappeared with growing urbanizations. At a time when Kathmandu's oldest city is searching its identity, European Union agreed to rescue the city as ready for sustainable tourism.

Encouraged and enthusiastic by

EU's helping hand, people of Bungmati are now trying to revive the old town's cultural glory and its past introducing the city as sustainable tourism destination and for green growth.

EU Ambassador to Nepal Veronica Cody said that the action contributes to enhance the institutional capacity of the local government and communities to put



the beautiful Bungmati town firmly on the radar screen of the tourism industry.

Visiting Bungmati, Lalitpur on 28 March to take stock of the progress of Sustainable Tourism and Green Growth for Heritage Settlements of the Kathmandu Valley (Parya-Sampada) project funded under SWITCH-Asia intervention of the European Union, she highlighted that the project more specifically aims in bringing more tourists, supporting the government's effort to celebrate "Visit Nepal 2020", a national tourism year committed to promote tourism industry and enhance local tourism as associated industries.

Ambassador Cody said that the project also aims to promote sustainable development, reducing poverty and contributing towards climate change

mitigating, addressing current global challenges and opportunities in the light of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, more specifically SDGs 5, 8, 11 and 12, supporting the Government of Nepal in the achievement of SDGs in a timely manner.

Bungmati is selected as a prototype out of 52 heritage settlements in the Kathmandu Valley, which has a huge potential to showcase heritage conservation and sustainable tourism through green growth, sustainable reconstruction, entrepreneurship development of women and youth, investment and product innovation.

The project is implemented by UN-Habitat in partnership with Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies, the Netherlands, Centre for Integrated Urban Development, SAARC Business Association of Home-based workers Nepal, and Lumanti. National Reconstruction Authority is joining hands to provide backstopping support for the reconstruction works at Bungmati.

This comprehensive initiative was kicked off in May 2018 in partnership with the Government of Nepal and Lalitpur Metropolitan City, and is expected to be completed by 2020.

This initiative is an effort to support the post-earthquake recovery process, to regain the lost momentum by restoring Bungmati as a pilot case to its previous stage by conservation and creating sustainable tourism opportunities, mainly to improve livelihood of the community by capitalizing on culture, local cuisines, festivals, rituals, music, local stories, etc. for the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (home stays, cafes, and handicraft shops, etc.), especially youths and women.

Mesmerizing Mountains

The comfort at home, office and, in particular, city life was suffocating. There was no struggle for basic instincts. The food was provided for. Shelter was there. Warm clothing and heater were keeping cold at bay. But the essence of everyone of us is still natural. Either I had to climb up the ladder of success to get 'success high' or it was meaningless being stagnant. This suffocating comfort triggered by absence of work for a week made me go on a trek. This time around I went to see Mardi Himal, Machhapuchure (Fishtail) and Annapurna. I knew the travel would last from anything between five to seven days.

I reached Pokhara on Friday (March 22, 2019) afternoon. I took a local bus to Kande from Pokhara. There was another trekker in the bus who hadn't noticed me. All Nepalese must have looked all the same to the French



BY ABHISHEKHADHIKARI

This time I interacted with lots of people from different parts of the world. I doubt we meet the standards required to cater to these people, whose love for Nepal brings them to our motherland. As I started my journey I had the opportunity to meet three Britons. Rebeca, Kate and their friend and I also had the opportunity to talk about global politics.

They were unanimously disappointed about the conservative attitude taken by Britain in Brexit. Maybe their roots made them think differently. Kate and Rebeca have Irish origin and their friend has roots in Turkey.

Upon reaching Pokhara we parted our ways. Our destinations were different. Kate, Rebeca and their friend were going to Annapurna Basecamp. I spent the first night after leaving Kathmandu at Rest Point Hotel & Restaurant,



lady. I got to know Orianne later when both of us spent the night at the same guesthouse at Forest Camp the next night. Orianne is an interesting person. Her love for mountains brought her to Nepal the sixth time. She is planning to summit Lhotse peak coming May. So in the meanwhile she is carrying heavy backpack and wandering around Nepal's most well rated hills.

Kande. The house owner, the lady of the house and their daughter, also a nurse at Chitwan, gave me a complete family comfort and love. Gurudatta Bharati and I chatted till dinner time. Bharati and I shared some similarities. Bharati had worked as a mediator for a number of years. After the local government was elected and the people's representatives were leading the justice committee his role

as mediator was overshadowed. He is seeking a meaningful role for his expertise as a mediator in the present local government structure.

After looking at the early sunrise I bade goodbye to the man of the house who was collecting water in the wee hours. Earlier when I had reached the hotel I was informed that limited water was supplied to the household there. I was warned spending water had to be done cautiously. Later I realized it wasn't as dire as I had imagined. The fact that water is scarce in Kathmandu causes anxiety at the very warning of water being unavailable.

After an hour or so from Kande I reached Australian Basecamp. Machhapuchure, Annapurna South and Himchuli were standing tall right on the north and I was awestruck for the first time during this trek. I had stopped there for breakfast. I couldn't contain my excitement after seeing the mountains and started making calls back home to parents and friends. I just wished they understood the surge of feelings within me at the sight of mountains so close and so magnificent. Himchuli stands tall at 6441 meters, Machhapuchure at 6993 meters and Annapurna South at 7219 meters above sea level.

Puran Chettri offered me fresh and delicious Roti and Channa Aloo for a decent price of Rs.200. After breakfast I had to burn some energy. So a walk was a must for two reasons. To proceed further and to burn some energies. Passing through Pothana I reached Deurali, the crossroads where people going to Annapurna Basecamp and Mardi Basecamp meet. Deurali too has a stunning view of the same mountains on a clear bright sunny day. It was a sunny day when I reached there without the traces of clouds. I refilled my bottle with hot water there. As a person who is concerned about deteriorating environment I was glad to



know that mineral water bottles were not sold in the area. But it did have a cost. At High Camp where the water is scarce and snow is melted for water banning mineral water bottles completely could adversely affect the tourism itself. A sustainable approach needs to be taken.

As I was about to proceed further from Deurali an old cow-herder demanded medicine from me. He was in pain because of the fall that he had couple of days ago. Not knowing precisely what the remedy was I applied ointment to the affected areas. He blessed me.

The path thereafter, was forest trail. Surprisingly I didn't see any animals though the old man had complained about his cows being eaten by a tiger. I reached Dund famished. The teashop was intimidatingly crowded by ladies. A lady was guiding a guy who was busy cooking. It just occurred to me they could be from the famous 'three sisters' trekking group. I verified it and I was glad to have met these bold ladies who are providing employment, training, encouragement and service to the trekkers. This lunch was in a very unexpected place.

The next stop after lunch was Kokar (Forest Camp). I was advised by Sumit, a bro, to rest at Forest Camp that night. I stayed at Mardi Guest House. There I used the facility of a hot water shower not knowing where I would get that opportunity as I ascended further.

At Mardi Guest House I got introduced to Mo, an Italian medical student, Orianne, the French lady who is expecting to summit Lhotse, Chun, a Netherlander of Vietnamese roots, Carola also from The Netherlands, Indabar from Israel, a Nepali couple and Sobhakar Subedi, a guide. We developed a bond that would come handy during our trek. We discussed our issues and the do's and don'ts during the trek.

On the third day I proceeded early at quarter to seven from Mardi Guest House. By half past twelve I had reached



High Camp. On the way I stopped at Low Camp (Humal) to have breakfast as I watched the grandeur of Machhapuchure. There is a teashop before Badal Danda. It has a good view as well. From Badal Danda the forest trail ends and the view of the mountains is uninterrupted. Provided the sky is clear of clouds.

There was an uncertainty whether to go to The View Point the next morning. The trail was slippery because of the snow and a Japanese citizen had recently slipped and fallen down eight hundred meters to his death. I didn't have the claspers necessary to walk on snow and ice. So I gave up the idea to go to The View Point. I didn't want to unnecessarily risk my life. The view of Annapurna South, Himchuli and Mardi Himal from High Camp was magnificent as well. The other peaks that could be seen from The View Point was Annapurna I, II and III. That I had seen from Annapurna Basecamp some years ago. After appreciating the view and respecting the mountains for what they are, I decided to head back. The comfort of the city life was too luring now that I had experienced and challenged myself in harsh conditions. I was once again falling prey to comfort.

Descending wasn't difficult. I didn't have any health issue. I followed back the same trail till Forest Camp. From Forest Camp I took a different route. I reached Kalimati through forest trail. As assured I was expecting to find vehicle or a shelter there. However, I didn't have the patience to wait for another vehicle after one didn't stop to give me a ride. I decided to walk till Lumre. It took me around one and half hour to reach Lumre from Kalimati. From Lumre I caught up a four o'clock public bus and reached Pokhara the same evening.

It was a wonderful experience walking in the wilderness yet interacting with people from Oman, Britain, France, The Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, Brazil, Malaysia, Israel and other places of the world within a span of couple of days.

FRENCH BUSINESS DELEGATION Promoting Business

French Business delegation has shown interest to invest in Nepal

By A CORRESPONDENT

As Nepal and France have been celebrating the 70 years of establishment of diplomatic relations, business to business relations are also taking a new shape.

With the recent initiatives, in the area of aviation, security press and other business between the two countries, prospects are diversifying.

The French Embassy in Nepal in collaboration with Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) organized a Nepal-France Business Forum on April 9th with a view to increasing trade, commerce, and investment relations between Nepal and France.

Welcoming the delegation, Finance Minister Dr. Yubaraj Khatiwada urged the French business communities to come to invest in Nepal. In a meeting organized by Federation Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dr. Khatiwada said that Nepal is conducive for foreign investment.

The visit of French business group has a very significant aspect. They arrived in Nepal just a week after the conclusion of Nepal Investment Forum.

Jean – Marc Fenet, Head of Regional Economic Service at the French Embassy in India, accompanied the representatives of the French companies to Kathmandu which comprised the following companies: AETS Consultants, Bureau Veritas, Gemalto, IDEMIA, IN GROUPE, LUMI-PLAN ITS India Pvt. Ltd., POMA India,

Mecamidi HPP India Private Limited, TRACTEBEL ENGINEERING PVT. LTD., THALES NSEA PTE. LTD., Thales India Pvt. Ltd., L'OPERA and PERNOD RICARD INDIA (P) LTD. The French companies came from a diverse background and most of them were from "Smart City", "Agro" and "Aviation" sectors.

The main objective of this visit, which is a follow up to the recently held Investment Summit 2019, is to explore trade and investment opportunities in Nepal and is one of the major events in the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relation between Nepal and France.

At the program organized by the FNCCI, Minister for Finance, Dr Yuba Raj Khatiwada, and the CEO of Nepal Investment Board, Maha Prasad Adhikari, talked about the current Nepali business/investment climate, opportunities, and legal reforms, amongst others.

A Business to Business (B-2-B) meeting was also organized by the FNCCI in which the French companies had a chance to meet and discuss business with the Nepali private sector.



BHARAT SHARMA

Open Space Advocacy

At a time when open space is disappearing, Bharat Sharma continues his mission to save open space

It was at the time of Maoist insurgency. The population of Kathmandu started to expand. People from the other districts started to shelter in Kathmandu as it was considered safe. As the demography started to swell, people started to reside and then began the rise in the number of houses in Kathmandu. This unplanned urbanization was unabated and started to grow haphazardly. The land demand soared, so did the real estate prices however, the open spaces remained as it is – constant.

Dr. Bharat Prasad Sharma has long been an advocate for open spaces. He has voiced his opinion for better urban planning since his days at Department of Urban Development and Building Construction from where he retired as Deputy Director General after more than 30 years of service. Sharma insists that the current status of open spaces in Nepal is beyond worrying. Open spaces, from an urban environmental point of view, can be seen

as those spaces underneath the sky including landmasses and also wetlands and forests. Sharma, explains that open spaces are crucial in an urban context not just for biological reasons but also important from an aesthetic point of view. He says, “In an urban context 10 to 15% of the total habituated area is a must to be designated as open space. In the past, Hindus would donate lands for cows to graze in as faith and hence came into existence the spaces such as Gaucharan. However, open space is a physical attribute and needn’t necessarily be religious. In the Nepalese context, there are religious open spaces like the Bahal and Bahil in Kathmandu and also secular open spaces like Tundikhel.”

He further adds, “In the past, these spaces could easily accommodate the demography, today, we are in an Open Space crisis.”

Open space function also enables social interaction. Traditionally, the Newari people would worship the Bhadrakali temple and make their way to Tundikhel to enjoy a feast. Similarly, spaces like Durbar Square still function as conversation place, market place and a recreational point.

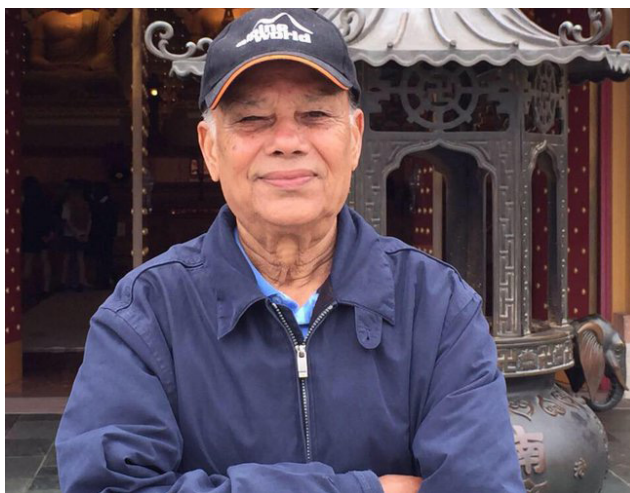


BY PRATYUSH MISHRA

Recalling the 2015 earthquake, Bharat Sharma adds, “Open spaces are handy in times of distress and natural calamities for people to seek refuge in those spaces. The irony is that the open spaces that we so need are not increasing but decreasing. People are encroaching the open lands to build towering structure.”

Sharma has repeatedly criticized the government’s move to grant permission to build a view tower at Ratnapark. He says, “Today, one Tundikhel isn’t enough. We need many Tundikhels if we are to take into account the population of Kathmandu. As it is, the open spaces in Kathmandu are few and are not evenly distributed. If what open space we have left were to be occupied with buildings and concrete then we would be approaching towards a scene where this city will see urbanization at the cost of the environment and the quality of life”.

The city of New York started to plan Central Park as



its population was growing and the people were looking for spaces to escape the claustrophobic alleys and the high rise. Similarly, the 620 acre Hyde Park substituted as a military camp during the Great Plague. The 2088 acres Bois de Boulogne, was the idea of Napoleon III who was impressed with London’s Hyde Park and saw that the city of Paris has no parks in the quickly expanding east and west of the city. As mentioned, most urban cities

have at one point of time realized the importance of open spaces, a prerequisite for an expanding city. It is certainly the government’s task to monitor, control and formulate policies regarding the Open Spaces. Today, the river domain along the Bagmati and Bishnumati has eroded, encroached by slums, and yet the government hasn’t decided on how to shelter the slums. Land plotting and towering structures are mushrooming right alongside the spaces in Lainchaur and Tundikhel. The attempts to urge the government to look towards this grave issue has been recurrent but with little to no policy preparation towards conserving and building other open spaces, the future with such unplanned urbanization is sure to be grim.

We Do Not Believe That Getting Into “Gladiator Fights” On International Information Security Is The Right Option To Pursue At The Un



BY ANDREI KRUTSKI KH

Against the backdrop of the habitual – even ritual – anti-Russia propaganda, some voices of reason have been heard lately among American experts. Of particular interest in this regard is the recent article by the Daily Beast titled “This Hotline Could Keep the U.S. and Russia from Cyberwar”. No doubt, for the professionals who have closely followed the development of the situation this publication will hardly be an eye-opener. What is important is that the article openly admits that the absence of a depoliticized expert dialogue between Russia and the U.S. on international information security is not only a road to nowhere but also a dangerous course fraught with further misunderstanding and a risk of a large-scale conflict.

Those are not emotional conclusions, but rather plain facts cited by American security officials who have for-

merly worked or still work at the administration, overseeing the issues of cyber security, i.e. by those who know the situation on the ground and, by virtue of their occupation, are bound to be utterly pragmatic.

If security officials and the expert community in the U.S. actually share this opinion, this is the case when it is hard to argue with the colleagues, even though they are “on the other side of the fence”.

Six years ago, in 2013, we managed to reach agreement on establishing a direct line of communication between Russia and the U.S. in the event of cyber incidents. Basically, the system was modelled on a similar mechanism that had been in place during the Cold War for dealing with traditional military incidents and enables a prompt information exchange at all levels from institutional to political.

Since its establishment, the communication channel has been used, and more than once. In fact, during the Obama administration, we maintained a vibrant dialogue on cyber issues both at the routine technical level and in the format of full-fledged consultations. Physical meetings of experts enabling them to engage in direct discussions on emerging issues were held. Even a special high-level bilateral working group was established under the Russian-American Presidential Commission.

As for the operation of the “hotlines”, the most vivid example is the address of the American side during the U.S. presidential campaign in autumn 2016, in which the U.S. expressed concerns over the intrusion into its electronic infrastructure. Our response was prompt as usual, and an exchange of the relevant technical information took place. Our National coordination center for computer incidents, which is in charge of the line, as early as last December, announced its readiness to reveal the content of the correspondence to general public, subject to consent of the American side. We sent the relevant proposal to Washington through diplomatic channels early this year. The response was in the negative.

The Russian Foreign Ministry’s spokesperson offered an exhaustive explanation on the issue at her briefing last week. For my part, I can only add to this that our proposal to publish the above-mentioned correspondence was an unprecedented step, an example of true transparency, which our partners tend to invoke so often. Russia has nothing to fear – nor do we have anything to conceal. We are ready to open the correspondence for examination by the general public both in Russia and the U.S., the mass media, and experts, so that they could draw their own conclusions on what really happened. But at the moment, we cannot publish this data because of the refusal of the American side. The pretext for the refusal was the so-called «sensitivity» of the data. It is highly unlikely, however, that any information that is more «sensitive» for the U.S. than for Russia could be found there. Frankly speaking, this approach rather shows that they are unsure of their position, since it would be much harder to disseminate information accusing Russia of «having a hand» in cyber intrusions if true facts were made public.

However this is not the end of this absurd story. We decided to directly address the US audience about the Moscow view on the situation around the “hotlines” and proposed a number of the leading US mass media to publish this article. We told them: we just give you “direct speech”



and you comment on it in any way you like. If you don’t like our proposals, if you don’t believe us - put it on paper and let the readers judge.

First, these media showed the interest in the matter, asked us for the details, claimed that they were ready to publish the article. However, then they apparently got a stop light and refused, giving no explanation. They got cold feet maybe.

This is a matter of emotion while we want to be pragmatic. I once again agree with our U.S. colleagues (Michael Daniel, Chris Painter and Luke Dembosky), whose opinions were referred to in the article, that it is not enough just to set up emergency hotlines. For them to work effectively there should be a dialogue between those who maintain their day-to-day operation as well as a broader conversation on issues related to international information security.

Officials in Washington often say that, allegedly, there is «not enough trust» for this. The question is why would there be any trust if you keep avoiding any discussion on the matter? We have repeatedly proposed to hold bilateral consultations, but all our proposals have been rejected. At times things get absurd, as a year ago in Geneva, when the U.S. canceled a bilateral meeting two hours before it was supposed to begin, even though the delegations were already there. One might think that talking face to face seems so appalling to our partners that they would rather transmit their grievances through the media.

However, this issue is beyond routine politics, mutual poking or any subjective factors. Today, just as 50 years ago, we talk about preventing a cyberincident from escalating into a full-scale military conflict between Russia and the United States. If the established emergency “hotlines” bolstered with dialogue between experts stall for political reasons, we will face the risk of another Cuban Missile Crisis, only this time it will be triggered by information and communication technologies, not warheads, and events will unfold in a matter of minutes, leaving little time for both sides to make their decisions. It sounds like a science-fiction film, but actually it has long been our reality.

I want to believe that the U.S. recognizes this as well

as Russia does. At least, the opinions expressed by the U.S. experts provide us with reasons for hope.

We also seek the same openness, democracy and constructive dialogue as we cooperate with the U.S. on cyber issues at multilateral fora. This year, two dedicated negotiating mechanisms are expected to be established to deal with international information security: the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG), which all the UN Member States can join, and the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE). It is interesting to note that even though the first one is being established on Russia's initiative, and the other, de jure, on America's; in fact, both groups were first proposed and sponsored by Russia, while Western countries were sceptical about the UN track and took every opportunity to criticise it. Nonetheless, the reality is that the UN will now have two groups working in parallel, and it is essential that we define today the principles of their interaction.

We do not believe that getting into «gladiator fights» on international information security is the right option to pursue at the UN. Russia, just like any other state, is interested in ensuring that these groups work in a complementary, non-adversarial, constructive and cooperative manner.

Out of common sense we suggest that it would be best to “share the burden”. According to this plan the OEWG is to focus on major political tasks concerning the majority of the international community: the rules of responsible behavior of states in the information space, confidence-building measures in this field, assistance to developing states and the future format for the negotiations on this matter (a standing committee of the UN General Assembly or Security Council, or some other option).

As for the GGE, it could in its turn address, as a matter of priority, an equally important, yet more specialized issue of applicability of the existing norms of international law to the information space.

Harmonization of efforts is the second pivotal principle of coexistence of the two groups. Their discussions should be non-politicized and pragmatic, and there should be complementarity rather than competition between their outcomes. The mandate of both the OEWG and the GGE demonstrate that the groups are to address an enormous set of issues, which can only be achieved with constructive engagement of all participants.

I would like to stress that back in November 2018, we offered such plan - a kind of programme of joint actions - to the United States. We suggested, as we had done many times before, that we should meet and discuss these matters. As before, we have not received any reply. There is not much time left before both groups set to work. We can only hope that our partners' common sense prevails and they will take advantage of this window of opportunity before it closes. We stand ready to engage in the dialogue.

(Author by Andrei Krutskikh, Ambassador at Large of the Russian Federation, Special Presidential Representative for international cooperation in information security, published in the Kommersant business daily on March 27, 2019.)

RUSSIAN FOOD FESTIVAL Taste of Russia

Organised by Russian Culture Center and Radisson Hotel Kathmandu, the first Russian Food Festival 2019 showed food and culture of Russia

By A CORRESPONDENT

Along with its diversity in geography, culture and lifestyle, Russian Federation too has diversity in food. This is what Nepalese people have seen in the five-day long Russian Food Festival held in Radisson Hotel, Kathmandu.

Prepared by renowned Russian Chef Denis, Hotel Radisson offered over dozen different Russian foods to the visitors. Inaugurated on 6th of April with attendance of over 500 people, the first day was the day to know and see Russia. Along with food and Vodka, a group of Nepali artists and Nepal based Russians showed folk dance, Piano, Violin, Fire acts and musical performance.

Yuliya Androsova, director of Russian Centre of Science and Culture, said that the food was also a part of identity of nation like literature, art and music. She said that each nation has its own food and Russia is not an exception.

“Being a big country, Russia had food varieties in numbers and tastes as well. Along with food festival, there is also the cultural and musical show,” said Director Androsova, addressing a press conference at Hotel Radisson on Russian Kitchen Day 2019.

She said that Nepali artist and Russian expatriates living in Nepal will also perform dance and cultural show. Director Androsova said that Russian Kitchen Day 2019 will also include Russian Folk Dance, piano, violin, fire art and musical performance.

Hotel Radisson Kathmandu was hosting a week long Russian Food Festival 2019, beginning on April 6 and concluding on April 12 at Hotel Radisson Kathmandu.





With the celebrity Russian chef Denis Perevoz and his assistant Chef Shmakov hailing from Moscow in charge of the event, Hotel Radisson Kathmandu was hosting the food festival, which is for the first of its kind in Nepal. “We are determined to showcase the best of Russian Gastronomy in terms of taste, flavor, presentation and overall delight. The buffet layout by our chefs will purposefully serve finest dishes like Borscht, Pozharskaya, Salted herring, Okroshka, Stroganof for the ultimate wholesale feat,” said Hotel Radisson Kathmandu in its press release.

“The motive of the festival is to enhance and promote the amalgamation of Russian Culture and Russian food, introduce the Russian Gastronomy to the people of Nepal,” said General Manager Subrata Banerjee.

Replying to the queries of journalists, celebrity Russian chef Denis Perevoz said that he will provide world class Russian food from different parts of Russia. “We have set menus with 10 different foods but they will represent the general food of Russia,” said Chef Denis. Russia is a big country and it has a wide diversity of food.”

Chef Denis

Denis is a well-known Russian chief combining his fundamental knowledge of classic cuisine, innovative approach to food technologies and modern ways of serving. During his 20 year career, he gained valuable experience working at several reputable restaurants in Russia.

Graduated from Russian State University of Trade and Economics and Russian Tourism Academy as food process engineer, his dedication led him to train with some of the world’s leading

chefs in World’s renowned restaurants including Paul Bocuse in France, La Pergola Restaurant in Italy and Arzak restaurant in Spain.

Utpal Kumar Mondal, Executive Chef of Radisson Hotel Kathmandu, said that Russian Chef Perevoz is a world class Chef with wide experiences. He said that they will offer a world class Russian food during the festival.

“Radisson Hotel Kathmandu Takes an immense pleasure to host the Russian Food Festival 2019 at the The Fun Café of Radisson Hotel from 6th April 2019-12th April to promote Russian culture and cuisine to local and international guests,” said a press release.

The eventful festival will provide a Russian cultural demonstration comprising of Russian décor in the restaurant, traditional dance, music, instrumental performances and a special Fire Act all the way from Russia on the opening day of the festival.

“Traditionally dressed ladies and gentlemen will welcome the guest while they take a shot at the Russian Vodka Station listening to the mesmerizing BALALAIKA being played through the channels. Forget me not calls the CAVIVAR Station, me too travelled from Moscow to tantalize your taste buds,” said press release.

The invitees for the opening day of the festival will be the dignitaries, important socialites of Kathmandu and diplomatic community. “The price of the Russian buffet is Nrs, 1999+24.3 percent taxes. Master class entry fee is NRs 2499. 00 net,” said the Hotel. “There will be special package for Russian Standard Vodka, Beer, buckets and many more.”

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Getting Federalism Right In Nepal

In a multi-party democracy like Nepal, it was anything but unusual to plan of an action to think of 'provinces' as the clusters of good governance and equitable growth. With having the past of a unitary state, the transition was not easy and it became obvious as the new Constitution made the provisions that gave the signal of major political shift with 'decentralisation' coming-in to force. While the hiccups placated and the states entered into living existence, the void remains on the accountability side where just having the Constitutional provisions for a decentralised polity under the federal system are not enough. It is worth reckoning that the Constitutional provisions per se don't bring to the fore, a clarity about the center-states relations and allocation of responsibilities.

What rather the Constitution offers constitute a legitimacy for the formation of the provinces in Republic of Nepal. However, the long-term vision for strengthening the governance framework is completely missing in the grand text, equally it goes indifferent on giving the provinces a mandate to be financially self-sustainable and aligning further with the national developmental framework.

For effectively channelling the federal system in Nepal, the role of institutions is going to be crucial. To cope with the emerging challenges, among others, the traction would be required from Election Commission, Supreme Court, Planning Commission and President's Office. Essentially, these institutions have to function in non-partisan manners and above the narrow political considerations.

Though the provision for provinces was primarily made through the consideration on ethnic and community driven demands, in later course, it also relied on lingual and political-economic factors. Essentially, such fundamentals keep in limit the possibilities of organic growth among the provinces.

Still, it would be a misnomer to think of the provinces merely as 'decentralised power-centres', having no other vital aims than challenging the traditional ruling elite classes of Kathmandu. Indeed, the provinces should be counted for offering promising scopes and possibilities that could assist in fulfilling the rising aspirations of masses.

Strikingly, in recent years, Nepal's polity and economy have been mostly driven through the 'activism' rather the aspirations of masses. The close observers of contemporary history would agree on the point that the country has been in grip of a void caused by the aggression of activism and suppression of mass aspirations, sadly the pattern is now firmed-up and mainstreamed.

Ironically, Nepal had opted for an under-defined Presidential System after hurried abolition of Monarchy – and made it a belief that the new institution has little to do with the core statecraft. This was a sort of big loss, since the institution of Monarchy it had replaced was a living organ of state and with great outreach capacity at home and in the world. The lawmakers must give heed on this.



BY ATUL K THAKUR

Undeniably, the other pressing concerns remain the growing adulteration in political culture and supremacy of 'identity' that weigh more on reaction and less on substance. Alas, the unresolved issues of Madhesh are fated to be dealt with the new vicious pattern that rarely cares for historical and existing realities.

In search of solutions, often it is cited that Madhesh should be given autonomy in some ways. It wouldn't help the system to make Madhesh region autonomous within the Unitary Republic of Nepal,

this will be simply like giving away without addressing the genuine issues.

The solution has to be in tandem with realistic proposition and the demands for devolution in greater way can be addressed through ensuring functionally sound governance provisions. Also, the realisation has to be there that only by making the system much more inclusive, a United Nepal will prosper as wishful. Appeasement in any manner will maximize the gain of reactionary and opportunist elements, the masses just look for an inclusive set of order under the existing national framework. Moreover, for getting the federalism right, the provinces have to create their productive bases inside the allocated territories. Some of them, which are geographically placed near the Indian borders facing the parts of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal should be made the points of sub-regional economic co-operation.

The advantage with the open borders should reflect on in economic terms, so far, the outcomes have been below the potential. An infrastructural haul in both sides of the borders is a long-pending work to be finished at priority basis, further bringing-in the policies to thrive on the truly friendly border regime shall create a new basis of healthier

economies and people-to-people ties between the two countries.

Making and unmaking of provinces would heavily depend on their propensity to walk with the time and not allowing the bad politics win over good economics. As the heart of matter, the

What rather the Constitution offers constitute a legitimacy for the formation of the provinces in Republic of Nepal.

provinces have to emerge as the 'zones of hope' rather the 'dark clusters'.

At the cusp of big change, there should be a careful consideration on leveraging the productive side in peripheries. In process of adopting as new as a system like 'federalism', the centre that is in Kathmandu must show flexibility in approach and let the provinces play formidable roles in nation-making. The time is for initiating and sustaining the pure work, nothing else!

Atul K Thakur is a New Delhi-based columnist with keen interest in South Asian affairs, he also works on public policy. The views expressed in the piece are personal. He can be reached on: summertickets@gmail.com

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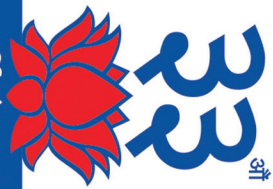
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