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VIEWPOINT
Dr. Tilak Rawal



OPINION
Dipak Gyawali



PERSPECTIVES
Binod Chaudhary

New
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June 28 - July 18, 2019

GBIA
**On Speed
After Recovery**

INSIDE



NEPAL AIRLINES CORPORATION
Expanding Wing



INTERVIEW
Shailendra Sigdel



JAPAN'S NEW EMPEROR
Nepal Connection

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सुविधा युक्त चल्ती खाताबाट कारोबार

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इमेल: himal@himalayanbank.com

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मुलुकहरुमा मात्र जाऔं ।**



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Editor and Publisher
Keshab Poudel

Contributor
Sabine Pretsch

Design/Layout
Sahil Mokthan, 9863022025

Marketing Manager
Madan Raj Poudel
Tel: 9841320517

Nabin Kumar Maharjan
Tel: 9841291404

Editorial Office
Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: 977-1-4430250
E-mail
spotlightnepal@gmail.com
P.O.Box: 7256
Website
www.spotlightnepal.com

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Notes From The Editor



At a time when the country has been passing through several bleak scenarios, including the delay in the completion of development projects, one exception, close to completion, is Gautam Buddha International Airport (GIBA). GIBA rose from a virtual state of collapse to show how a project can be revived even from the brink of such a situation. Constructed under the financial support of Asian Development Bank, GIBA is going to be a nationally and strategically significant achievement for Nepal. Apart from promoting tourism and economic activities in the region, the airport will be an alternative to Tribhuvan International Airport as well. Although there are several issues to write about, we have decided to write about GIBA as the cover story of this edition.

Following the decision of the government to withdraw the Guthi Bill, the controversy and resistance of the people came to an end. However, this type of public pressure will rise again in case the concerned ministries register the bills without broader consultation and consensus. Guthi Bill has taught a good lesson to the concerned ministers that there is the need to have intensive consultations with public stakeholders to bring the new bill. Although this is the time for the concerned ministers to work cautiously, ministers have been indulging in several insignificant issues. With the intervention of Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli himself, a major crisis was averted at the last minute. Media persons have been holding the demonstrations demanding withdrawal of Press Council Bill and Media Bill. Similarly, former vice chancellor of Tribhuvan University opposed the University Umbrella Bill. From opposition to civil society and common people are opposing the government. At a time when there is growing opposition and disenchantment of the people, Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli needs to review the whole affairs, including the performance of ministers.

Keshab Poudel
Editor

CONTENT

NEPAL AIRLINES CORPORATION

Expanding Wing 5

NEWSNOTES 6

BUSINESS BRIEF 8

VIEWPOINT

Dr.Tilak Rawal 10

OPINION

Dipak Gyawali 14

ARTICLE

Dr. AB thapa 17

JAPAN'S NEW EMPEROR

Nepal Connection 18

BRI CONFERENCE

Brainstorming Benefits 21

INTERVIEW

Shailendra Sigdel 22

INTERNATIONAL YOGA DAY 2019

Going High 32

PERSPECTIVES

Binod Chaudhary 33



COVER STORY: On Speed After Recovery

25



PM'S EUROPE VISIT : Untimely

12



GUTHI AGITATION: People's Power

16



UPPER TAMAKOSI: Major Breakthrough

30

Expanding Wing

The commencement of flights to China by Nepal Airlines Corporation (NAC) will bring a new dimension in Nepal's tourism sector

BY A CORRESPONDENT

With four aircraft, including two wide bodied, NAC has already shown how strategically important the national flag carrier is for the country's tourism sector, particularly to end the monopoly in price by foreign airlines.

Thanks to the decision to increase frequency of flights in Kathmandu-New Delhi sector, foreign airlines' mission to increase the fair by three folds from Rs.15000.00 to almost Rs.50,000.00 has been foiled. After the shutdown of Jet Airways flight to Kathmandu, the prices reached to that level, which was more expensive than to fly to Bangkok.

Following the increase of additional flights by Nepal Airlines, the price range has gone down to around Rs.30,000.00. NAC's decision was very significant in the present context when a large number of India's holiday makers are planning to come to Nepal.

China flight

With two wide-body and two narrow-body aircraft, Nepal Airline is expanding its wings to different destinations of Asia including Japan, Korea, China, and Saudi Arabia, for now.

With the monopoly of Chinese Airlines, the fair for the Chinese tourists to travel to Nepal is higher. The commencement of regular NAC flights from Kathmandu to Chinese cities is likely to reduce the current fair to China.

As China is the second largest market for the country's tourism industry, regular flight operation to China is expected to boost the tourism sector.

Nepal Airlines is expected to bring in more Chinese tourists in 2020 to support Visit Nepal Year 2020 campaign. "If everything goes according to plan, flights to China will begin soon," said Navaraj Koirala, joint spokesperson for NAC. "Besides, we are preparing to operate com-

mercial flights to Riyadh in Saudi Arabia and Seoul in South Korea."

As the national flag carrier has completed flight preparation to China, NAC is set to operate flights to Guangzhou as planned before. The airline will be operating flights to Guangzhou Baiyun International airport and all the process to commence the flight has been completed.

Nepal Airlines Corporation (NAC) has taken various steps to increase the number of international destinations. Under its new strategy, NAC is adding seven flights to New Delhi, making the number

training has already started by appointing senior instructor captain.

Disrupted for the last two years, the training of co-pilot has resumed. One co-pilot has completed his training and now CAN is processing license endorsement work. Three others are also receiving the training.

There is a lengthy process to use pilots for operation even after completing simulator training and license. To be eligible for regular flights, a pilot needs line clearance from instructor pilot. For this, he or she has to fly certain hours with the instructor pilot.

After adequate human resources for narrow-body planes, they will be promoted to fly wide-body aircraft. NAC is working to train more Nepalese human resources for wide-body planes. Nepal Airlines has

already taken the initiative to recruit human resources through Public Service Commission. The process of appointment is at the final stage.

NAC's Engineering Department is going to start maintenance of the aircraft from July, currently taken by International BCT Company. After this, NAC will save Rs.5 to 6 million. In another milestone, NAC's Continuing Airworthiness Management Department received IESO certificate following a successful audit. This shows NAC is always concerned to provide secure flights and is capable to provide quality service.

In the area of Ground Handling, NAC's ISAGO's was already renewed by IATA's supervision. This shows that NAC is not behind any other international airline in terms of ground handling.



21 flights a week.

NAC has already increased 3 flights recently and is operating 14 flights a week now. NAC has already got a slot to fly 21 flights and it will increase additional seven flights within a month.

Currently, NAC is using narrow-body aircraft for seven flights and wide body aircraft for other seven flights in New Delhi sector. Similarly, NAC has also increased one more flight to United Arab Emirates, flying four flights a week.

To increase the internal flights, NAC has already endorsed Approved Training Organization (ATO) to train pilots in Nepal. To operate the Y 12 aircraft regularly, two senior pilots are now getting the training and they will start flying within the month. To operate NAC's twin otter, NAC is adding human resources. Under this,

NEWSNOTES

COAS General Thapa Returns Completing Visit To China

Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Purna Chandra Thapa



returned following completion of his week-long official visit to People's Republic of China. Chief of General Staff Lieutenant General Sarad Kumar Giri welcomed COAS General Thapa at Tribhuvan International Airport

upon his arrival.

During his official visit to China, COAS General Thapa also paid a courtesy call to General Wei Fenghe, State Councilor and Minister of National Defense and met General Li Zuocheng, Member of Central Military Commission, Chief of Joint Staff Department, CMC and other high ranking Chinese military and defense officials.

COAS General Thapa has also signed MoU with China to receive Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Response-HA/DR. Under the MOU China agrees to provide 150 Million RMB to Nepal army to purchase Heavy Mechanical Bridge, Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Equipment, Rescue Kit and other necessary vehicles from China.

A press release issued by Public Relations and Information Directorate of Nepal Army says Nepal Army believes that this kind of high level military leadership level meeting will further strengthen the existing friendly bilateral military to military relations and further enhance understanding between Nepal Army and Army of People's Republic of China.

KOICA Supports Hygiene Kit And Sports Materials To Deaf Children

To memorize International Children's Day, KOICA, KAAN



and KOICA volunteers organized a joint voluntary program to support the students of Central Higher Secondary School for Deaf, Naksal

According to a press release issued by KOICA, the main objective of the

program was to celebrate international children's day together by supporting hygiene KIT (for dental hygiene) as well as providing sports materials to the school in order to enhance the extracurricular activities of the school.

Established in 1966 in a room in a local hospital by an ENT doctor, Central Higher Secondary School for Deaf is the first deaf school established in Nepal.

Now it is running its program up to bachelors level. The total number of student under High School is 371. Although it has been established since long ago but it hasn't been receiving the proper support from the organizations yet. KOICA-KAAN chose this deaf school to support hygiene kit as well as other sports materials (indoor and outdoor games) worth around NPR 284,000.00 on the special event where KOICA Nurse volunteers demonstrated on dental hygiene and also organized a special fun games with the student and KOICA Alumni members. The teachers of the school were also provided with the dental hygiene training and it is expected that the teachers will continue this train-

ing throughout this week to train all the student of the school from preschool to Grade 12.

Sunghoon Ko, Country Director of KOICA Nepal office presented his remarks highlighting the importance of International Children's Day. Likewise, KONAN and KAAN also shared their views. There was an intensive participation of around 400 people. KOICA volunteers were also actively engaged to support in sports activity to entertain the students.

JICA Workshop On Slope Protection

A workshop on "Biological Soil Crust Method for Slope Protection" for disseminating Japanese Technology to the Department of Roads and other related Nepalese agencies was organized by Nikken Sohonsa Corporation and Nippon Koei Co. Ltd. with the support of JICA.



This workshop is part of "Collaboration Program with the Private Sector for Disseminating Japanese Technology for Environment-friendly Slope Restoration with Soil Algae" project implemented by JICA. The project carries out Slope Restoration with Soil Algae along the Sindhuli Road and mid-hill highway, by promoting vegetative succession by spraying Biological Soil Crust produced from the cosmopolitan soil algae. The project in collaboration with the Department of Roads commenced from April 2019 and will complete by August 2020.

Thai Embassy Celebrates Her Majesty Queen's Birthday

On the auspicious occasion of Her Majesty Queen Suthida Bajrasudhabimalalakshana's birthday, on 3rd June 2019, the Royal Thai Embassy in Kathmandu organized a well-wishing ceremony at the Royal Thai Embassy.

At the ceremony, attended by the Embassy's officials, representatives from Thai Airways International Public Co., Ltd., and Thai community in Nepal, Thai Embassy and Thai community jointly donated money and basic supplies and provided lunch to a care centre, 'Manav Sewa Ashram', where underprivileged people are given shelter, medical care and counseling.

Dzong Monastery Restoration In Mustang

U.S. Ambassador Randy W. Berry and Provincial Parliament Member Mahendra Bahadur Thakali inaugurated the restoration of the 16th century Dzong Chode Shedup Choepel Ling Gompa-or Dzong Monastery-at Dzong Village in Mustang.

Through the Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP), the U.S. Embassy contributed \$100,000 out of the \$123,681 budget for restoring and seismically strengthening the historic site, which was severely damaged during the 2015 earthquakes.

The Dzong Gompa Management Committee (DGMC) will contribute the remaining \$23,681, and the Heritage and Environment Conservation Foundation Nepal (HECFN) will carry out the restoration, scheduled for completion by September 2020.



According to a press release issued by the U.S. Embassy in Nepal, through extensive consultations with the local community and the DGMC, HECFN will seismically strengthen the structure while preserving centuries-old paintings within the monastery. The project will employ local artisans and provide on-site training to local youth to sustain maintenance of the monastery after the project is completed.

Development Partners Reaffirm Commitments To BOGs

Development partners have reaffirmed their commitments to the principles of accountability, impartiality, transparency and inclusion: Revised Basic Operating Guidelines.

The Basic Operating Guidelines (BOGs) were first introduced in Nepal in 2003, in the context of the armed conflict and revised with minor changes to the wording in 2007.

The BOGs were developed as a way to keep development space open and ensure the security of staff. The BOGs were successful and effective for development work to continue by clearly explaining the operating principles to all actors concerned in a clear and comprehensible way.

The current revision of BOGs has been undertaken in recognition of the federalised context of Nepal, which has meant a difference in the way the development partners and their implementing partners operate.

The Co-chair of the BOGs, UN Resident Coordinator Valerie Julliard stated: 'I am pleased that the Basic Operating Guidelines have been revised to reflect the fundamental changes

which have taken place in Nepal, this includes the federalization process, but also the focus on increasing development efforts at the national, provincial and local level. It reaffirms the commitment to the principles of Accountability, Impartiality, Transparency, and Inclusion.'

US And UK Partner To Combat Human Trafficking In Nepal

The development agencies of the United States and United Kingdom announced a partnership that will support the Government of Nepal in reducing human trafficking. This new partnership between the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) will expand USAID's ongoing Hamro Samman Project to support the Government of Nepal's efforts to combat human trafficking in 10 districts.

Speaking at the ceremony, USAID/Nepal Mission Director Amy Tohill-Stull noted, "The American people are committed to countering trafficking in persons worldwide. For over a decade, USAID's support has enabled Nepal to strengthen 49 policies to prevent human trafficking, prosecute traffickers and protect and rehabilitate survivors. We are pleased that DFID has joined our partnership, as our collaboration will enable us to expand our efforts to address this serious issue."



Japan To Construct Improvement Of Water Supply In Pokhara

Ambassador of Japan to Nepal Masamichi Saigo participated in the foundation stone laying ceremony for the Project for Improvement of Water Supply in Pokhara (Kaski).

For the project, jointly funded by the Government of Nepal and Government of Japan, Bina Magar, Minister for Water Supply, laid the foundation stone. Ms. Yumiko Asakuma the Chief Representative of JICA Nepal Office also attended the ceremony.

The Government of Japan has extended 4.813 billion Japanese Yen (approx NRs.4.834 billion) grant assistance to the Government of Nepal for the implementation of the project under Japan's Official Development Assistance.

Under this Grant Assistance, the Project will construct a sedimentation tank, water treatment plant, reservoirs and overhead tanks along with the rehabilitation and construction of water transmission lines and distribution networks. The project will also take soft components into account, thus ensuring a supply of quality drinking water to the city dwellers of Pokhara. The components of this Project will have the capacity to filter 41 million liters of water per day and are expected to be completed by 2021.

On the occasion, Ambassador Saigo noted that Pokhara is a naturally gifted city with splendid mountains and picturesque lakes. This Project will attract many visitors to the city and will encourage them to stay longer and return there frequently.



India Provides Rs. 1.6 Billion To Earthquake Restructuring

Manjeev Singh Puri, Ambassador of India to Nepal, handed over a cheque for a sum of NPR 1.6 billion to Finance Secretary of Nepal Dr. Rajan Khanal in presence of Finance Minister of Nepal Dr. Yuba Raj Khatriwada.

The amount has been released towards reimbursement of part payment of 1st and 2nd tranches of housing reconstruction extended by Government of India (GoI) to 50,000 housing beneficiaries in Nuwakot and Gorkha districts. India has so far reimbursed a total of NPR 4.5 billion to Nepal.

Government of India (GoI) is partnering with United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) for providing Socio-Technical Facilitation to the house owners to ensure that they rebuild their homes as per the Government of Nepal's earthquake resilient norms.

During the program, Government of Nepal expressed its appreciation for the sustained and generous humanitarian support extended by Government of India for post-earthquake reconstruction.

On the occasion, Ambassador Puri thanked the Government of Nepal for the partnership and reiterated that the people and Government of India remain committed to completion of post-earthquake reconstruction of projects in Nepal.



BUSINESS BRIEF

Radisson Hotel Kathmandu Organizes CSR Initiatives

Radisson Hotel has been celebrating the month of



June as their CSR month particularly dedicated to doing responsible business with themes “Think Planet”, “Think Community” and “Think People”.

The hotel organized "Make a Difference Campaign" on 19th of June, 2019 from 3:00 pm to 4:00 pm. Make a difference campaign launched on 22nd October 2018 to 31st March 2019 worldwide by Radisson Hotel Group and was adapted by all member hotels across the globe to donate US\$1 per room night to SOS Children's Villages.

Radisson Hotel Kathmandu donated USD901 to SOS Children's Villages, Sanothimi as a part of the campaign. In the handover ceremony, Kiran Pant, HR Director of Radisson Hotel Kathmandu, highlighted key importance of sustainable partnership between companies and social units to strengthen and enhance the social well-being in the national and international level.

Ishwari Prasad Sharma, National Director of SOS Children's Villages Nepal expressed gratitude towards the impactful initiative after receiving the donation amount from Deepak Man Pradhan, Rooms Division Manager of Radisson Hotel Kathmandu. Radisson Hotel Kathmandu has also been providing scholarship to students at SOS Children's Villages Sanothimi.

The hotel organized “Support in Special Children's Mobility Campaign” on 20th June, 2019 from 11:30am-1:00pm. The main highlight of the campaign was the handover of 5 special wheelchairs to children with permanent movement disorders at Cerebral Palsy Nepal.

India-Nepal Economic Partnership Summit In Sikkim

In order to explore the trade and investment opportunities and to participate in the economic development of both



India's Northeast Region and Nepal, PHDCCI under aegis of its India-Nepal Centre (INC) / State Development Council (SDC) and in association with the

Embassy of Nepal, New Delhi, India will organize “India-Nepal Economic Partnership Summit” on 28th June at Hotel Lemon Tree, Gangtok, Sikkim.

The Summit will focus on the sectors where India-Nepal co-operation can be further boosted through proactive

and sublime “East Connection” to achieve the desired goals for Nepal's economic development –Tourism; Agriculture & Food Processing; Energy; Infrastructure; Healthcare; Education, Skill Development & Start-ups and Services.

The Summit is aimed to host the key industry and government stakeholders from both the countries who are either already involved with the industrial development of Nepal or have genuine urge to be part of it.

Nabil Bank To Support KMC Flower Towers



Nabil Bank Ltd and Kathmandu Metropolitan City have exchanged an agreement in setting up of Flower Towers in the traffic islands of Kathmandu.

CEO of Nabil Bank Ltd Anil Keshary Shah and chief executive of KMC signed and exchanged the agreement in the presence of mayor Bidya Sunder Shakya in KMC office.

“Nabil Bank is pleased to be supporting Kathmandu Metropolitan City under the leadership of Mayor Bidya Sundar Shakya in setting up of Flower Towers in the traffic islands of Kathmandu. Using state of the art urban agriculture techniques as part of our Greenovation initiative these will add vibrant colors and natural beauty throughout our city,” writes CEO of Nabil bank Anil Keshary Shah on his Facebook wall.

Himalayan Travel Mart 2019 Concludes

The 3rd Himalayan Travel Mart (HTM 2019) concluded successfully at Soaltee Crowne Plaza Kathmandu attracting more than 700 delegates from 43 different countries; including 150 international delegates and national stakeholders.

The four-day event is the biggest and Nepal's premier international



travel and tourism trade show organized and executed by PATA Nepal Chapter in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Nepal Tourism Board, PATA Headquarter, Nepal Airlines and the other prominent Tourism Organizations of Nepal.

The mart was inaugurated by Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli on June 6th, 2019. Addressing the inaugural ceremony, PM Oli emphasized the immense tourism potentialities with diversified tangible and intangible products and services including Cultural Heritage, Art and Architecture, Pilgrimage, Yoga, Ayurveda, Meditation, Holistic Retreats, etc., with pristine nature, unique climate and the most hospitable people which are unparalleled to attract people with various interests from around the world.

PATA Nepal Chapter felicitated HTM Featured Award by PM's hand to Late Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Rabindra Adhikari in loving memory and recognition of his dedication and relentless efforts in uplifting the development of tourism in Nepal.

Doug Scott, a renowned British mountaineer, was also awarded in recognition of his Lifetime Efforts and Contribution in the field of Mountaineering and Tourism in Nepal. The cultural performances by an artist troupe from far western Nepal (Chhaliyas) and Sursudha added an impressive ambience to the inaugural ceremony of HTM 2019.

Hyatt Regency Kathmandu Resumes Its Operation

Closed for a week following strikes by its workers, Hyatt Regency Kathmandu has resumed its operation.



The management expressed the hope that this kind of situation would not arise in the future.

“As a result of unlawful strike by the union leadership and

the colleagues at the hotel not being able to join their duty in spite of repeated requests by the management, the hotel remained inoperable for a few days and suffered substantial damage in terms of loss of business and image. However post a letter issued by the Labour Department asking all concerned to resolve the issue amicably, the associates at the hotel have now been allowed to resume their duties by the union,” said a press release issued by Director of Public Relations, Taragaon Regency Hotels Ltd.

“The associates themselves have also assured the Management in a gathering at the hotel on June 19, 2019 about their commitment to support in refraining from such unlawful activities in the future and working towards promoting Nepal as a destination especially with Visit Nepal 2020 being planned in a grand way by the Government of Nepal. The hotel also seeks the support of the union and their Central Committee to not hamper hotel's operation in the future and should any issues arise it will be amicably resolved through dialogue within the concerned stakeholders rather than affect the business of the hotel, which is detrimental to the tourism industry, and the image of Nepal,” writes the press release.

NIBL's Acquisition Of Jebil Finance

A special general meeting of Nepal Investment Bank Ltd (NIBL) has decided acquisition of Jebil's Finance. The meeting was called for acquisition of Jebil Finance.

The meeting approved the acquisition proposal, as per a media release. While NIBL's paid-up capital is Rs 12.59 billion, that of Jebil's Finance is Rs 840 million. The share swap ratio has been set at 100:33. After the acquisition, the paid-up capital of NIBL will reach Rs 12.89 billion. NIBL's total deposits after the acquisition will reach Rs 147 billion and total credit will be Rs 132 billion.

The board of directors and chief executive officer of NIBL will remain the same after the acquisition. The promoter-public ratio post acquisition will also be maintained at 69:31.



Hotel Yak & Yeti Celebrates International Yoga Day

Hotel Yak & Yeti organized an event on the occasion of International Yoga Day 2019. International Day of Yoga, referred as Yoga Day, is celebrated annually on 21 June since its inception in 2015.

According to a press release issued by the Hotel, Yoga has been practiced for thousands of years as a life philosophy to join the individual self with what practitioners call the Divine, Universal Spirit, or Cosmic Consciousness. The practice of yoga leads an individual to a sense of peace and well-being.

To celebrate International Yoga Day, we invited our in house guests and our hotel team to join us in a yoga session. We had 55 participants, we started off with warm up session, followed by group interactive activities and subsequently with yoga Asanas and meditation. The event was concluded with a healthy breakfast buffet.

The session was conducted by Neeva Pradhan who is the Director of Corporate Programs and Events, Art of Living Foundation in Nepal. She organizes and coaches Corporate Leadership Development Trainings and Yoga Sessions for various institutions under “Excellence at Workplace, Nepal”.



Budgets Of Federal Nepal

Little more than two weeks after the government in Kathmandu presented the annual budget for the entire nation, all seven provinces presented their annual budgets for the fiscal year 2019\20 in their respective provincial assemblies. The budgets focusing basically on development of infrastructure, promotion of tourism and development of agriculture, have a combined outlay of Rs.260 billion. Province-3 has the highest (Rs. 47.6billion) and Province-7 has the lowest (Rs.28.16) expenditure proposal. Provincial budgets seem to have followed the footsteps of central budget, which is seen, among others, by the authority given to members of all legislative assemblies to spend around 9 percent of development expenditure. The money allocated per member ranges from Rs.1.2 million in Gandaki to Rs.30 million each in Province-2, Province-3 and Province-7. Money under this head accounts for just 0.58 percent of the budgeted capital expenditure in Gandaki and is as high as 16.66 percent in Province-2 followed by Province-3(14.44 percent) and province-7(12.17 percent). With the sole exception of Gandaki, which had not provisioned any money under this head last fiscal year, all other provinces seem to have done their best to keep assembly members happy, probably inspired by the federal budget, which has significantly increased the amount under this head to Rs. 60 million per member. We can simply hope that the money thus allocated in different budgets is less misused.

Indeed, from the standpoint of funds availability, Nepal is likely to take a big jump because seven provincial and the federal budgets have a combined outlay of around Rs.1800 billion, which is 37 percent more than the appropriated total outlay of Rs.1315 billion and 41 percent more than the likely actual expenditure (Rs.1271billion) in the federal budget for this fiscal year. Talking specifically of capital expenditure side, a similar pleasant situation exists as not only the federal budget but provincial governments have generously allocated huge sum under this head. The federal budget has Rs. 408 billion under the capital expenditure head, which is 30 percent higher than the appropriated sum under this head in 2018\19 and about 50 percent more than what the concerned agency thinks the actual capital expenditure would be by the end of this fiscal year. When lumped together, the eight budgets (1 federal and 7 provincial) will have about Rs. 500 billion to be expended as capital expenditure in the country, which is a significant jump and could do a lot, if properly spent, in achieving the growth target of the budget. Local bodies are also coming up with their expenditure plans. Private sector investment will also contribute in a significant way as long as the investment friendly environment exists in the country. Right kind of environment will have to be created and utmost attention will



BY DR.TILAK RAWAL

have to be paid to the implementation side of these proposals. However, looking at the lackluster performance related to budget implementation in the past and somewhat disturbing\confusing current situation, easy implementation of the budgets is not seen.

The seven provinces have made their second budget public after Nepal embraced federalism. This fiscal year is turning out to be disastrous in terms of budget implementation because only less than 25 percent of the money made available is likely to be spent, the result being huge unspent money lying idle with provinces. The huge unspent reserves have been carried forward for the next fiscal year, which ranges from Rs.4.78 billion in Province-7, Rs.8.94 billion in Karnali and Rs.7.70 billion in Province-2. Karnali's budgetary allocation for the next fiscal year is still relatively substantial at Rs.34.35 billion, which is more than what is made available for Far West (Rs 28.16 billion) and Gandaki (Rs.32.13billion). There is no doubt that Karnali needs lots of resources to develop physical infrastructure and create other conditions necessary for exploiting its vast natural resources but the money provisioned should not remain unspent. Therefore, along with huge fiscal transfer from the federal government each year, it will have to be technically backstopped from Kathmandu. It is sad that a province which needs special attention so that it could be at par with other provinces soon, has to declare huge unspent reserve, the highest amongst seven provinces. Probably, in view of the huge unspent money with provinces, the federal government has allocated less for provinces for the next fiscal year, which has prompted some lawmakers to accuse it of being against federal system of governance. Along with this accusation, it is also observed that not only the seven provincial governments but the government in Kathmandu has also failed, by its own admission, to spend the money allocated under different heads. For example, till the end of the eleventh month of this fiscal, government was able to spend only little more than 46 percent of Rs. 313 billion kept under capital expenditure head. In its half yearly review of the budget, government had slashed capital expenditure, probably realizing unsatisfactory performance, to Rs. 265 billion. It is now apprehended that even this new figure may not be achieved. Indeed, not much sense is seen in hiking the budgetary outlays the reason to suggest that the government in Kathmandu should not have hiked the budget so much, from Rs. 1315 billion in fiscal 2018\19 to Rs. 1533 billion in 2019\20. Likewise, not much sense is seen in increasing capital expenditure, from Rs. 313 billion in 2018\19 to Rs. 408 billion in 2019\20 when a sizeable chunk of the budget has remained unspent so far, forcing government to admit that capital expenditure would be around Rs. 271 billion

in the current fiscal year. Even in the face of this bitter reality, it is perplexing that the federal budget has been inflated so much. Total budgetary outlays increased by Rs.36 billion (Rs.1279 to Rs. 1315 billion) between fiscal years 2017\18 and 2018\19, while it increased by Rs. 218 billion between fiscal 2018\19 and 2019\20. Likewise, capital expenditure has also increased by about Rs. 100 billion without any meaningful changes in the delivery mechanism and at a time when the overall situation still looks quite unsatisfactory and confusing. It looks like Prime Minister Oli and his close stalwarts will have to struggle a lot within the ruling party itself to facilitate convergence of divergent views on issues faced by the nation and their party.

Some controversial bills presented in the House have created a havoc both within and outside of the Parliament. The bill related to media has already invited lots of criticism and protesting journalists, demanding withdrawal of the bill, have been supported by different organizations and political parties. The government is yet to take a decision. More serious than this was the Guthi (Trust) Bill the submission of which in the National Assembly invited mass protests by people, especially from the Newar community, which flared to areas beyond the Valley as well. The protesters argued that if the Bill was enacted into law, it would not only adversely impact people's culture, tradition and religious practices but also allow the land mafia to capture Guthi land. The major opposition party Nepali Congress openly supported the protest and demanded withdrawal of the Guthi Bill. Under immense pressure from different quarters, the government decided to withdraw the controversial Bill. Despite the announcement, however, thousands of people gathered at Maitighar Mandela the very next day. Fully convinced that this was a move by the government to undermine Newari culture and tradition, the assembled protesters demanded complete scrapping of the Guthi Bill. Indeed, leaders have to learn to make quick adjustments when their actions tend to become too costly, remembering very well that in certain cases even a strong parliamentary majority cannot be of any use to get the intended job done. The Guthi Bill registered on April 30 was formally withdrawn from the Upper House on June 25. This reversal may not be taken as a setback for anyone. On the contrary, those running the show in the country, often accused of inadequate homework before making decisions on important issues, should do their best to manage growing discontent. It is noticed that lawmakers of the ruling party have been occasionally taking the liberty of alienating themselves from the decisions of the party and the government, which became very evident in the current case as some disgruntled lawmakers of the party went to the extent of demanding resignation of some ministers. What has happened in recent times should be taken as lessons for future works so that what has occurred now does not recur. Indeed, internal situation does not look promising and stable nor is the current

external environment encouraging.

The trade war between China and US is far from over, which has begun to hurt businesses on both side. American companies have urged President Trump not to extend tariff to additional goods from China because additional tariffs have already driven up retail prices, squeezed profit and made American firms less competitive on the global market where these firms have to face rivals that do not pay higher taxes on components bought from China. It is a matter of common sense that American businesses are paying the import tariff and the increased cost is passed on to their customers both within and outside of the United States. Trump has already imposed 25 percent tariff on 250 billion dollars in Chinese goods and this could be extended to additional 300 billion dollars in goods from China. It is hoped that trade negotiations between the two countries will resume little before or soon after the Group of 20 summit in Osaka on June 27-29 where the two

Trump has imposed fresh sanctions on Iran and threatened it of total obliteration. We can simply pray that things do not go much beyond the US retaliatory cyber-attack against Iranian missile control system so that situation does not seriously deteriorate in the Middle East\Gulf, which could further complicate matters in Nepal with depleting foreign exchange reserve and alarming trade and current account deficit. Internally, late and inadequate monsoonal rains, projected to be 30 percent less this year, and reported shortage of chemical fertilizers may negatively affect paddy output, a major contributor to Nepal's gross domestic product. May Lord Pashupatinath continue to save this nation and its people?

heads of government are expected to hold talks on complex trade issues. Let us also hope that the trade row, now in initial stage, between India, about to be declared the fifth largest economy in the world, and US does not flare much. It may be noted that India has recently announced retaliatory tariff on American goods getting into India. In addition to these trade-related issues, some other latest incidents in the sky and water below are very worrisome. Two oil tankers were attacked in the Gulf of Oman in the second of June, sparking fears of a full-fledged conflict between Iran and the United States. After this attack in the Gulf through which passes one-third of the global oil, fossil fuel prices have begun to soar. To further complicate the

situation, Iran shut down a US spy drone near the strategic Strait of Hormuz, with the two nations at odds whether it was in Iranian or international airspace. President Trump did nice by calling off the planned air strikes on Iran which would have killed around 150 people. Trump has imposed fresh sanctions on Iran and threatened it of total obliteration. We can simply pray that things do not go much beyond the US retaliatory cyber-attack against Iranian missile control system so that situation does not seriously deteriorate in the Middle East\Gulf, which could further complicate matters in Nepal with depleting foreign exchange reserve and alarming trade and current account deficit. Internally, late and inadequate monsoonal rains, projected to be 30 percent less this year, and reported shortage of chemical fertilizers may negatively affect paddy output, a major contributor to Nepal's gross domestic product. May Lord Pashupatinath continue to save this nation and its people?

(Dr. Rawal is a former governor of Nepal Rashtra Bank)

PM'S EUROPE VISIT

Untimely

As there is a tectonic shift in Nepal's neighborhood and world, PM KP Sharma Oli's recent Europe visit had a little justification

BY A CORRESPONDENT

"I believe that the Prince will be successful who directs his actions according to the spirit of times, and that whose actions do not accord with the time will not be successful," wrote Nicolo Machiavelli in his Prince. He

Russia and India on board, indicating a place for a new order in the region and world. However, Nepal's political leaders seem to be unprepared for this.

Prime Minister of India started his maiden visit from Indian Ocean

Minister Oli's visit to England was historic. However, raising unprepared and untimely issue of revisiting Tripartite Agreement on Gurkha recruitment with his British Counterpart and caretaker prime minister Theresa May in London, Prime Minister Oli generated irritations.

For the communist parties and communist leaders in Nepal like PM Oli, the demand to seek abrogation of Nepal-India 1950 Treaty and Nepal-England and India Tripartite Gurkha recruitment Agreement have been fundamental slogans. They believe that both the issues are necessary to raise their nationalist credentials in Nepal. This hangover is still at the back of the mind of Prime Minister Oli, who spared his limited time to create controversy.



PM Oli (left) & British PM Theresa May

also said that prudent Prince always focused on overcoming irritations.

If one takes stock of the government through the glass of Machiavelli, Prime Minister Oli's recent actions are not heading towards the right direction as per the current global and regional diplomatic moves.

At a time when Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi is rigorously pushing neighbor first approach and Nepal's northern neighbor China is coming closer with India and Russia, Nepal needs to adjust its tunes with the spirit of time.

Nepal's northern neighbor China is pursuing a new diplomacy taking

Iceland nation Maldives and Sri Lanka and his foreign minister chose Bhutan as the first destination of foreign visit. Modi then attended the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in Bisekk. As India is moving with new message, Nepal is losing its significance in India's foreign policy regime.

Oli In London

After almost a decade, Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli is the first prime minister to pay an official visit to Nepal's two important friendly nations of Europe, France and United Kingdom.

In terms of the two hundred years old diplomatic relations, Prime

remarks on centuries old traditions, Britain's Prince Harry gave private audience to PM Oli at Kensington Palace, London, giving high importance to Nepal and Nepalese Prime Minister.

Visit to France

At a time when Nepal and France have been celebrating 70 years of establishment of diplomatic relations, Prime Minister Oli's visit to France was highly important. However, Prime Minister Oli's decision to cancel month-long prepared and proposed agreement between Nepal and French Satellite company to operate and manage the country's own satellite was another diplomatic blunder.

Nepal and France signed two separate Memorandum of Understandings for establishment of Security Printing Press and manage own satellite in March with the French assistance.

Although PM Oli met French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe and discussed several important issues, the visit of Nepalese prime minister to such an important country like France completed in a bitter conclusion.

After Rana Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana, Prime Minister Oli was second prime minister of Nepal to pay visit to both the important nations of Europe. Interestingly, Oli used rail way to cross English channel and Rana used steamer.

Domestic political compulsion was more or less similar to Oli with so many political rivals; Rana had maintained his dignity and country's dignity during his visit.

Failure From Neighborhood

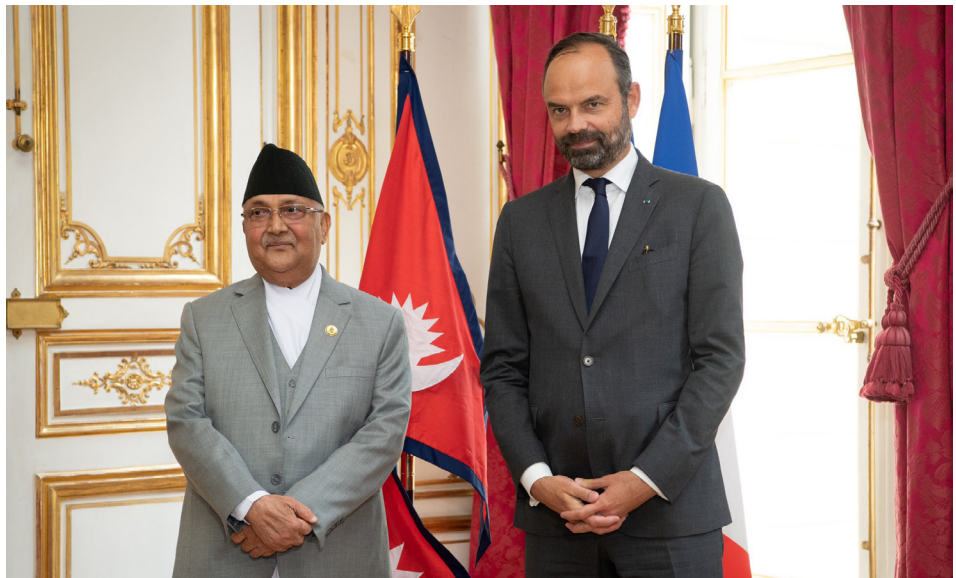
It is said that a country which can handle the relations well with her immediate neighbors can handle all diplomatic tasks with better results. As Nepalese leaders are unable to develop better understanding and trust with the close neighbor, it is unlikely that they will maintain better relations with others.

Since there were bitter and harsh comments coming from PM Oli's party cadres and some Nepali Congress leaders, who promulgated the current constitution in a hurry and haste in 2015, through social media and mainstream media on the appointment of S. Jaishanker as foreign minister, Prime Minister Oli and his party failed to establish trustworthy relations with Prime Minister Modi and his foreign minister S Jaishanker.

This is the reason Indian leaders avoided to intensify bilateral activities. Although Foreign minister Pradeep

Gyawali sent congratulatory message to his counterpart through official channel, he did not use tweeter to congratulate his counterpart. These events show that the level of mistrust is growing beneath the carpet.

After taking oath for the second tenure, Prime Minister of India Modi visited Maldives, Sri Lanka and Bishkek. Following the visit of India, Nepalese prime minister KP Sharma Oli chose to visit Switzerland, United Kingdom and France.



PM Oli (left) & French PM Edouard Philippe

As Nepal has not sincerely made any reconciliatory efforts from top level and all political spectrums, it is a long way to go before establishing "trustworthy" relations again with India. For all the visits of four countries, Prime Minister Oli was unable to bring any tangible results.

As Machiavelli said in his Prince that nobody wants a doubtful friend who will not support him at the time of war or peace observation, Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's recent four visits did not produce better results for him as well.

Internal Politics

According to foreign relations expert, it is a normal phenomenon for the foreign policy of any country to be strongly affected by domestic political and economic factors. This is certainly

the case for Nepal.

With the backing of two thirds of majority, PM Oli's government is one of the most powerful. However, it is so weak due to lack of coherent internal support in his own party and country.

Back home, Prime Minister Oli also felt big jolts in his absence. During his visit to India, Co-Chair of Nepal Communist Party Pushpa Kamal Dahal revealed that there is a power sharing agreement under which PM Oli has to transfer power to him after completion of this year.

Prachanda's political bombshell reduced the political bargaining power of Prime Minister Oli during the bilateral talk with India. When Oli was visiting United Kingdom and France, there were massive protests in Kathmandu against the government move to control Guthi through new legislation.

At a time when Prime Minister Oli was addressing Oxford Union, praising freedom of speech, freedom of press and human rights, Nepalese journalists and human rights activists were demonstrating in Kathmandu, pressing for withdrawal of Press Council Bill and Information and Press Bill.

As Machiavelli said about actions according to the spirit of times, Prime Minister Oli also needs to review whether his actions are as per the spirit of times.

Lessons From The Guthi Movement 2019

As this essay is being written, our two-thirds majority communist government is in the formal process of withdrawing the anti-tradition Guthi “usurpation” bill it tabled in parliament last month. It followed the wholly unnecessary use of force against peaceful demonstrators at Maitighar Mandala on 9th June (in which this writer too participated on behalf of Nepal Guthi Sanrakshan Pucha) that angered all who support preserving the Guthi institutions, and which they felt the bill was trying to destroy by nationalizing Guthi trust land as well as the institution itself.

Such was the level of distrust among the public towards the current government – especially with its past actions of violating agreements reached with doctors and educationists – that the planned June 19th demonstrations went ahead despite the government’s announced withdrawal a day earlier. Withdrawal is not enough, they said: it needs to be scrapped *in toto* because of the malefic intentions embedded within its very genes. In terms of numbers, it is said that this was the largest gathering of demonstrators since the 2006 protests.

The concept of the Guthi has Lichhavi origins way back in early 5th CE as an egalitarian institution requiring consensual decisions to manage its commons, both natural and cultural. It is found all over Nepal but is strongly ingrained in Kathmandu Valley’s Newar society where almost all social practices from birth to coming-of-age, marriage and death are managed by Guthi membership. In modern terms and without quibbling about legal and semantic differences, Guthis can be understood as modern day trusts or CBOs (citizen-based groups), the management of which either through Guthi Sansthan or through modern-day NGOs via the Association Registration Act 2034 has proven to be rather dismal.

Especially problematic were ancient Raj Guthis, temple and other religious trusts set up by kings of yore, which prime minister Chandra Sumshere tried to formalize in 1921 through the formation of the Guthi Sansthan. It survived the collapse of the Rana regime and worked well into the mid-Panchayat period because the rulers had a strong sense of *Devashwa*, i.e. that belonging to the Gods which could not be messed with or used for personal ends without incurring bad *karma*. However, an atheistic and anti-tradition/anti-history communist government did not shy away from meddling in it. It first tried to do so a decade earlier with the Indra Jatra festivals and rituals at the



BY DIPAK GYAWALI

Pashupati temple but failed; but this time around, a once-burnt, skeptical public was not willing to give it any benefit of doubt.

For this writer, the June 19 movement had its origins a bit further back in time. Some 13 years ago, under the leadership of former TU VC Kedar Mathema and the support of Dwarika Hotel’s Ambica Shrestha, some of us banded together to form the *Nepal Guthi Sanrakshan Pucha*. We believed that Nepal’s cultural uniqueness (“*Nepalipan*”) was impossible to

maintain without this unique institution; but it also needed serious reforms to inspire modern Nepali youth mostly unaware of its crucial role in sustaining *Nepalipan* over the last two millennia.

Our achievements, other than just being there in an otherwise arid landscape of heritage preservation as forlorn sentinels, were very modest: given that most of us were busy with other campaigns (Kedarji with education reform, Bharat Jangam with anti-corruption and me with water and energy issues), we did manage to bring out a small book and some five years ago delivered a memorandum to the land reforms minister. In that memorandum we argued primarily that the Guthi Sansthan that was supposed to manage Guthi assets as a sacred trust was incapable of doing justice to that role, that Guthis be handed over to the Guthi trustees themselves to manage with some government monitoring mechanism to prevent misuse, and that Guthis be encouraged to go beyond religious rituals and also work towards running charitable hospitals for the poor and free educational establishments for deserving young talents.

Things lay dormant for our Pucha until last winter when, at a Social Science Baha meeting, Pratyoush Onta and I agreed to organize a discussion at Martin Chautari on the value of Guthis in helping generate new knowledge through support for research. It was a tall order and organizing a mutually agreed time was like herding cats: it kept getting delayed until it was finally fixed for June 5. Kedar Mathema, Bageshwar Rajopadhyay (a Pucha member and hereditary priest of the Laxmeshwar temple at Teku) and myself were to present our case before a discerning audience at Chautari. Things suddenly heated up about a week before this otherwise maybe even a boringly academic meeting: Pucha secretary Bharat Jangam got a phone call from senior lawyer and Kangress MP Radheshyam Adhikari about a bill creating a new Guthi Authority brought before the Upper House suddenly and surreptitiously. It

GUTHI AGITATION

People's Power

Almost a week of protests led the government to pull out the Guthi Bill

BY A CORRESPONDENT

The massive assembly of the people in Kathmandu last week in protest against the Guthi Bill has shown how even a government with a two-thirds majority has to bow down before the people, withdrawing the Bill, which the stakeholders claimed aimed to control religious and cultural rights of people.

Despite the efforts of some fringe groups to make it a demonstration by a small community, the organizers were able to show that Guthi Bill was a national issue not only related to Newars but a broader part of Nepal's identity. Disassociating from political parties and communal groups, the agitators distributed national flags.

"We did face a lot of pressure to make our agitation against Guthi linking to Newar Community only. Guthi is a heritage and culture of Newars, but it has national existence," said Ganpati Lal Shrestha, convener of National Identity Protection Joint Struggle Committee NIPJSC, who led the mass demonstration.

Although it was registered by Minister of Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation Padma Kumar Aryal on April 30 at National Assembly aiming to replace the old Guthi Act, it came to public notice through National Assembly member Radheshyam Adhikari.

"It is very important when talking about guthis to be clear whether one is talking about the Guthi form of land tenure or the guthi institution. There is a historical connection, but the two things need to be kept distinct. Much of the outrage and incomprehension that has been generated by the proposed law arises because of confusion between the two. The form of land tenure is found all over Nepal. Any land, whether donated by a

King or anyone else, that is dedicated to a religious purpose is held under guthi tenure, and therefore, under normal conditions, no tax is due to the state. Under abnormal conditions (when a war was on, for example), rulers did sometimes tax or even seize guthi lands," said Prof David Gellner.

Including some of the highly objectionable provisions, the Guthi Bill aimed to tighten the grips of the state to people's institutions through an authority. Basically, the aim of the bill was

was going on, Police entered with water baton to disperse the mob and some of activists were arrested on the charge of disrupting the public space.

Intervention of police was the point of beginning. Statements of Minister of Information, Communication and Technology against Guthi terming it as a remnant of feudal society fueled the agitation.

After police intervention, youth of Kathmandu summoned all 80 different Guthi stake holders and constituted National Identity Protection Joint Struggle Committee NIPJSC under the convener Ganapati Lal Shrestha.

"Irresponsible remarks by Ministers and NCP MPs further provoked the agitators. Our Guthi is not a remain of feudal system. Our Guthis are our pride and our heart," said Shrestha.

After formation of NIPJSC, the agitation against Guthi Bill intensified at Kathmandu Valley attracting a large crowd. Step by step, a small group meeting held at a hotel room and a protest organized in a mandala became the largest demonstration after the 2006/2007 movement.

Although it has subsided now following the withdrawal, the bill has revived the attachment of people towards Guthi. As a community, Ministers and majority of members in the government do have a nominal knowledge of Guthi and religion and people's sentimental attachments towards it.

Coming to power, harping on populist slogans like ending dual rights of land, land to tenants and cultures and religions are remains of feudalism, the government minister's recent remarks have shaken the communist ideology badly.



to give ownership right to the tenants particularly in areas like Dang, where Swargadwari Trust has almost 1200 Bighas of land.

MP Adhikary, a constitutional lawyer representing Nepali Congress, shared highly controversial clauses with his party colleagues and people working in the sector like Bharat Jungam.

Guthi Puch, which was led by former vice chancellor Kedar Bhakta Mathema, called a meeting of different stakeholders for the discussion on the bill. With the initiative of a group of young conservationist, activists organized protests at Maitighar Mandala on 8 June.

General Secretary of Puch Bharat Jungam, Dipak Gyawali, academician of NAST and former minister, Ganpati Lal Shrestha addressed the gathering of small group of people. As the address

BETRAYAL OF NATIONAL INTEREST

Nea Killing Dudh-Kosi Irrigation Potential



BY DR. AB THAPA

It was indeed a great historic achievement that our then government was able to convince India to revise in 1966 the Kosi Treaty. The revised treaty has granted our country absolute right to use the entire water of the Sun-Kosi basin for irrigation in our Terai. The total dry season flow of the Sun-Kosi including the flow of the Dudh-Kosi river is needed to meet the demand for irrigation of the Eastern Terai region extending from Kosi river to Parsa in the west.

It is reported in local newspaper that the NEA (Nepal Electricity Authority) is going to implement the Dudh-Kosi dam project to generate electricity. It would be quite horrific if our own institution, the NEA greatly praised for resolving present energy supply problem, implements the Dudh-Kosi dam project to generate energy that would completely ruin the potential of the Dudh-Kosi river to irrigate our eastern Terai.

The 1966 Revision of Kosi Treaty

The Gandak River Treaty signed between Nepal and India in 1959 had completely curtailed our country's right to use freely the water of rivers in Gandak basin within our territory except in three months of the monsoon season when all Gandak tributaries are in full spate. There was a widespread condemnation of that Treaty within Nepal. Few years later our country started serious negotiations with India to revise the Gandak and Kosi treaties.

Very few know about the revision of the Gandak and Kosi treaties. The Gandak Treaty was revised in 1964. After this revision the restriction imposed on use of Gandak water in Nepalese territory has been considerably relaxed. Next, our then government succeeded in securing the revision of the Kosi Treaty. The 1966 revised Kosi Treaty is a landmark treaty entitling Nepal absolute right to use the entire water of the Sun-Kosi and the Kosi river in whatever way Nepal may wish. Thus, India has without any reservation recognized Nepal's absolute right to use the entire flow of the Kosi and its tributaries.

Surprisingly, there is still a hangover of the bad feeling among most of Nepalese from the 1959 Gandak Treaty biased against Nepal's legitimate right. Still people suspect foul-play in Kosi Treaty.

Indian Recognition of Nepal's Absolute Right

The Clause 4 of the revised Kosi Treaty guarantees Nepal's absolute right to use the entire water of the Kosi: *Clause 4 - HMG shall have every right to withdraw for irrigation and for any other purpose in Nepal water from the Kosi river and from the Sun-Kosi river or within the Kosi basin from any other tributaries of the Kosi river as may be required from time to time. The Union (India) shall have the right to regulate all the*

balance of supplies in the Kosi river at the barrage site thus available from time to time and to generate power in the Eastern Canal.

Thus the revised treaty allows Nepal to draw for irrigation or any other purposes the entire flow of the Kosi even to the extent of drying up the river and virtually to cut off totally the water supply to the existing Kosi barrage and also to any other barrages to be built in India in future. It should be remembered that Nepal would have to use for irrigation the entire dry season flow of the Sun-Kosi and Dudh-Kosi river if multipurpose storage dams are not built to augment the dry season discharge.

Sun-Kosi Dam Site

The site of the Sun-Kosi dam to be built for diverting the entire flow of this river onto Terai plain had been identified based on several past studies. The dam site is located just downstream of the confluence of the Sun-Kosi and the Dudh-Kosi rivers that would allow the diversion of both these rivers. The place is called KURULE. Renowned expert on Himalayan geology Dr. J.B. Auden was initially involved in selection of this dam site.

The first technical team investigating the Kurule dam site in 1947 was led by renowned hydraulics expert Dr. N.K. Khosla from the Government of India. The team found this site to be suitable for building even a high dam.

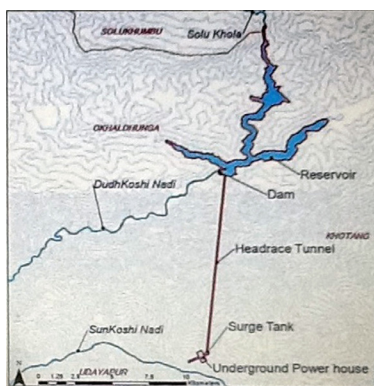
The idea of diverting Sun-Kosi for irrigation in Terai was first put forward in 1968. This study was conducted under UNDP/FAO assistance. The study had identified Kurule as the appropriate site for diversion of the entire flow of the Sun-Kosi river including the Dudh-Kosi flow onto Terai.

A Master Plan study on the Kosi river water resources was prepared by JICA technical team in 1985. The study has identified

Kurule as the site for the diversion of the Sun-Kosi onto Terai.

Killing Dudh-Kosi Irrigation Potential

The entire dry season flow of the Sun-Kosi and also the Dudh-Kosi river must be diverted onto Terai if the vast area of the Eastern Terai from Parsa district to Kosi river is to be irrigated as envisaged in the FAO/UNDP supported study. Unfortunately the proposed Dudh-Kosi dam project would be drawing Dudh-Kosi river water for power generation from a point upstream Kurule (the confluence point of the Sun-Kosi and Dudh-Kosi river) and discharging it back into to Sun-Kosi further downstream the Sun-Kosi dam site at Kurule. Thus the Dudh-Kosi river water would be completely out of reach for irrigation in Eastern Terai.



JAPAN'S NEW EMPEROR

Nepal Connection

Having visited Nepal in 1987 as Crown Prince, Japanese Emperor Naruhito has a special connection to Nepal

BY A COREEPONDENT

Since Japanese Emperor Naruhito visited Nepal as Crown Prince in 1987, Pokhara has drastically changed. What has not changed is the availability of water.

It is said that Emperor Naruhito was thinking more intensely about water and environment following his encounter with a woman carrying a bucket of water up a hill. While returning to Oxford University, emperor Naruhito started the championing the cause of water and environment.

"While trekking to Sarangkot, Emperor Naruhito saw a woman carrying a bucket of water, then the crown prince realized the time and difficulties for women to fetch water in Nepal. Kind hearted Emperor Naruhito asked many questions expressing concern over the state of water," said one of the retired Royal ADC, who had escorted him in his entire trip.

"I am pretty sure that Emperor Naruhito might have memory of that

state visit when then King Birendra had himself joined later in Chitwan with his brother then Prince Gyanendra," said the retired Army General, who wants to remain anonymous.

A retired general of Royal Nepal Army still remembered the smiling face of emperor Naruhito, greeting common and poor folks of Pokhara during his trek in Sarangkot area.

"When I saw 59-year old Emperor appear on the balcony of the Imperial Palace in Tokyo, alongside his wife, Empress Masako, and other members of the imperial family after ascending to the throne, it reminded me of spending gracious days, escorting the royalties of Japan and Nepal."

Water Plan In Pokhara

As Nepal has abolished monarchy and declared itself a republic, with many changes happening in Pokhara over 32 years, what has not changed is the state of drinking water supply.

What a coincidence, Ambas-

sador of Japan to Nepal Masamichi Saigo participated in the foundation stone laying ceremony for the Project for Improvement of Water Supply in Pokhara (Kaski) on 10 June.

For the project jointly funded by the Government of Nepal and Government of Japan, Bina Magar, Minister for Water Supply, laid the foundation stone in presence of Yumiko Asakuma, the Chief Representative of JICA Nepal Office.

Improvement of water supply in Pokhara is the first Japanese supported project in Pokhara just over a month of ascension to the throne by Emperor Naruhito.

The Government of Japan has extended 4.813 billion Japanese Yen (approx NRs.4.834 billion) grant assistance to the Government of Nepal for the implementation of the project under Japan's Official Development Assistance.

Under this Grant Assistance, the



Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako

Project will construct a sedimentation tank, water treatment plant, reservoirs and overhead tanks along with the rehabilitation and construction of water transmission lines and distribution networks. The project will also take soft components into account, thus ensuring a supply of quality drinking water to the city dwellers of Pokhara. The components of this Project will have the capacity to filter 41 million liters of water per day and are expected to be completed by 2021.

“We are grateful to learn that their Majesties, the Emperor Emeritus and Empress Emerita, and His Majesty the Emperor have bonds with Nepal. His Majesty the Emperor visited Nepal in 1987. There are some photographs at the embassy, which we share with you for this special occasion today. I learn that His Majesty visited Nepal when he was Crown Prince, and he spent time here visiting city areas as well as mountains,” said ambassador of Japan to Nepal Masamichi Saigo.

“It is said that His Majesty developed further thoughts about the water problems of the world through this visit. He mentioned his experience later at lecturers. Particularly, he saw women and children fetching water when he visited Pokhara, and thought about their difficulties, such as that it might take a long time for them to carry water back to their homes,” said Ambassador Saigo, addressing a reception in his residence recently organized to celebrate the ascension of the new Emperor of Japan.

“His Majesty studied the history of water transportation in Japan and in the UK and his interest has been broadened in relation to water in society and people’s lives. His interest ranges from water supplies, and protection from floods, to relations with the environment, public health and even education.”

Emperor Naruhito and Princess Masako

Emperor Naruhito and his wife Empress Masako are a modern couple. Both have studied overseas. What one



can expect is that their outlook towards Nepal has remained close.

On April 30, Japan’s ailing 85-year-old Emperor Akihito abdicated, and was replaced the following day by his 59-year-old son, Crown Prince Naruhito.

Japan has the oldest continuous monarchy in the world. The recently retired Emperor Akihito was the 125th in a royal line of succession officially founded in the 7th century. According to Japanese legend, however, the Chrysanthemum Throne dates back 2,600 years – to the country’s founding in 660 B.C. by Emperor Jimmu, a descendant of the Shinto sun goddess, Amaterasu.

Emperor Naruhito, The Environmentalist

Emperor Naruhito – long a

global advocate for clean water – presented his research, conducted at Oxford University, on medieval English water transport.

Emperor Naruhito has continued to develop his environmental pursuits since. In 2007, he was appointed honorary president of the United Nations Secretary General’s Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation.

Emperor Naruhito’s global civic engagement shows how this royal sought to steer his own course in life. His wife, Masako, is also unlike any empress in Japanese history.

The daughter of a diplomat and fluent in several languages, Masako graduated from Harvard in 1985 with a degree in economics, and later studied law at the University of Tokyo.

Reiwa Era

As they have close connections with Japan and Japanese monarchy, Nepalese government and people of Nepal have also attached a great importance to monarchy in Nepal. Even Nepal's former Royal family members including former King Gyanendra who hosted Emperor Naruhito during his visit to Nepal expressed his high regards to him and his outgoing emperor.

New government of Nepal also gives high priority to Japan as an all-weather friend of Nepal. Minister for Foreign Affairs Pradeep Kumar

been enjoying cordial and friendly relations marked by mutual respect, trust, understanding and cooperation ever since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1956.

"My visit to Japan last year and the return visit of the Foreign Minister of Japan His Excellency Taro Kono within two months of my visit have helped further nurture our relationship," said Minister Gyawali. "I am confident that the new Reiwa Era, that is interpreted as a beautiful harmony will be successful in developing harmony among different countries and

governor of Nepal Rashtira Bank Himalaya Sumsher Rana, the great great grandson of former prime minister Deb Sumsher Rana, expressed that he felt privileged to address the program of Nepal Japan relations started by his own great great grand father Deb Sumsher.

He said that first batch of Nepalese students were sent to Japan over a hundred year ago during the tenure of his great great grand father. He also mentioned that Nepalese students

were received in Japan then by Saigo, expressing to see now Saigo as an ambassador of Japan to Nepal.

Presenting a paper, Prof. Dr. Khadga K. C. on Reiwa Era, Japan's Role and Prospect in Changing Global Power Dynamics touched upon almost all aspects of Nepal-Japan relations. Valuable



Gyawali said that Nepal is happy to see that our friendly country Japan has entered a new era after the accession to the throne by His Majesty Emperor of Japan Naruhito in May 1, 2019.

Delivering a statement at a Symposium on Reiwa Era: Japan's Foreign Policy and Nepal-Japan Relations, Minister Gyawali said that there will be high-level representation from Nepal in the coronation ceremony of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan in October this year.

In a program organized by Japanese University Alumni Association, Nepal (JUAAN), minister Gyawali said that Nepal and Japan are traditional friends. Both countries have

civilizations. It will be successful in promoting commonalities that bind us together."

Addressing the program former ambassador of Nepal to Japan Dr. Madan Kumar Bhattarai said that there are a lot of opportunities and possibilities for Nepalese students in Japan. He said that Japan's beginning of new era following the accession to the throne by His Majesty Emperor of Japan Naruhito will bring peace and prosperity throughout the world.

"Since current Emperor of Japan Naruhito visited Nepal in 1987, he is well aware about Nepal and Nepalese people," said Dr. Bhattarai.

Addressing the program, first

able comments by eminent discussants threw light on the importance of the topic.

From ancient civilization to current, Professor Dr. K.C elaborated the different phases of Nepal-Japan relations. He also said that the present emperor has very much attachment with Nepal as he learnt the importance of water when he visited Nepal in 1987.

As Japan starts new era with Naruhito's ascension as the new Emperor of Japan, Nepal-Japan relations continue to flourish further, taking new heights. For Nepal, Emperor Naruhito's old connection is a significant part.

BRI CONFERENCE

Brainstorming Benefits

Fourth International Conference on Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) concludes, hoping to see actual investment

BY A CORRESPONDENT

At a time when there is a growing concern over geo-strategic and economic implications of BRI, Nepal-China Friendship Forum, a Nepali think-tank, hosted a 2-day International Conference on BRI.

The conference made efforts to highlight that BRI aimed to improve infrastructure and connectivity for a country like Nepal.

“South Asian countries can take huge advantages from the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative,” said Minister for Foreign Affairs Pradeep Kumar Gyawali while addressing the international conference, Belt and Road for Development and Prosperity of South Asia, in Kathmandu. He said that the Belt and Road Initiative offers a win-win situation for the participating countries by creating new economic opportunities.

Belt and Road has achieved global importance as increasing number of countries and international organizations have entered into cooperation with China to become a part of this initiative, said minister Gyawali, adding, “The Belt and Road Initiative has been established as the most important initiative of the world. This is a fact of our time. The Belt and Road Initiative is an inclusive concept which aims to promote shared benefits, good governance, enhanced railroad connectivity and sovereign decision-making of the relevant countries.”

Gyawali said that South Asia holds tremendous potentials for economic development as countries in this region have many commonalities on language, culture and civilization while

they are striving for sustainable peace.

“We want to develop ports, railways, highways and information ways under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative. Landlocked countries like Nepal want to reap benefit from the enhanced connectivity,” said minister Gyawali.

Highlighting its implications for the South Asian countries, Chinese

shared interests and win-win cooperation. No countries have fallen into debt trap since China launched the BRI,” said the ambassador.

Delivering a keynote speech, Member of Parliament and president of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal of Bangladesh, Hasanul Haq Inu, highlighted the priorities of foreign policy of Bangladesh, saying that his country is pursuing a balanced foreign policy on the basis of mutual benefit and friendship.

He said that Bangladesh has been engaged in regional and multilateral forums like Belt and Road Initiative, Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and these forums are important to promote regional and bilateral connectivity among the countries.

“Belt and Road Initiative provides mutual benefit to the participating countries in the field of connectivity and physical infrastructure development,” said Chairman of the Nepal-China Friendship Forum Kalyan Raj Sharma, who was delivering his welcoming remarks,

“BRI is upholding the principles of mutual support and win-win cooperation. It is creating various economic opportunities for South Asian countries including Nepal,” said Sharma.

Sharma said that Nepal, as a participating country of the BRI, is working with China to improve its people's livelihood and bring more Chinese FDI to the country.



Ambassador to Nepal Hou Yanqi said the South Asia region plays an important role in the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative.

“We want to have more meaningful cooperation with South Asian countries under the BRI framework. We are currently constructing the China-Pakistan Economic Cooperation and Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka,” said the ambassador.

“Glad to attend the Fourth International Conference on Belt and Road for Development and Prosperity of South Asia. China will further enhance cooperation under BRI to promote the economic and social development with neighbors including South Asian countries.”

“The Belt and Road Initiative follows the principle of mutual benefit,

"Local Capacity Important"

SHAILENDRA SIGDEL, an Independent Management Consulting Professional, has over three decades of experience in governance sector. Executive Director of Foundation for Development Management with a demonstrated history of working in the management consulting industry, he has skills in Policy Analysis, Organizational Development, Public Policy, Economic Development, and Capacity Building. Strong business development professional, a graduate from the University of Birmingham, Sigdel spoke to **NEW SPOTLIGHT** on current political and structural transformation in Nepal. Excerpts of his interview:

How do you see the present state of governance?

Nepal has been transforming from the unitary to federal state with three tiers of government. Naturally, Nepal is in an early stage. There are some good and some bad experiences. Visiting almost ten districts in the last six months, I have seen positive signs. Local levels and provinces are in the process of building institutions.

As Nepal has been receiving support from Nepal's friendly countries in all political transformations, don't you think Nepal needs such support again?

Look. I have a very different perception regarding this. We need the support Nepal's donors want to give, particularly in the areas of operationalizing the institutions. We have enough experiences and consultants for this. I don't think Nepal needs support in the process like governance reform. Even recently published International Development Cooperation Policy has clearly visualized the areas for donor's support.

Nepal's current budget has allocated huge money under concurrent title and there is a big budget gap for institution building. Don't you think donors support can supplement us?

Donors can support us to build the infrastructures of local levels and provinces which are in the dire needs. What I mean is we don't need budget to launch Gender Equality and Social Inclusion, Governance and Capacity Building training. We are ourselves capable to do this. My experiences of working more than three decades have shown that donor's investment has not brought desired changes in these sectors. Of course, some consultants have benefited from this. However, these programs have very little implications. Although recently released International Cooperation Policy urges donor agencies to support Nepal's infrastructure building process, some donors have already brought the projects in the governance, training, capacity and JESI sectors. Big donors like USAID, DFID and Swiss Development Cooperation have already launched the pro-

jects in these sectors. I don't find any rationale as these are no more the priority areas of the government.

The challenges currently at the local and provincial levels are different than what donors see. They can support the basic themes. Since many Rural Municipalities and Municipalities do not have buildings to carry out their functions, donors can support them to construct the buildings and other basic facilities to operationalize their programs. Giving support to make policies is neither sustainable nor wanted by local levels.

How do you see the achievements?

Nepal has made major achievements in the last three years. One of the achievements was holding the elections of local, provincial and central levels. After the elections, there are now functional local level governments. Nepal has now certain basic level institutions. Whatever one says, what I find is that the elected representatives have commitments and determination to do something for the country. We can see enthusiasm and encouragement. Some elected local representatives have been implementing even their own vision. Of course, some are still lagging behind. Local level leaders are complaining that they don't receive support from central and provincial governments to implement their visions. They have many excuses.

Despite all these shortcomings, what I found is that if the mayor of municipality and chairman of rural municipality are dynamic and competent, even within the current constraints, he or she is performing well. The mayors of Waling Municipality and Tillotama Municipality have been showing that there are ways to work. They have been performing absolutely well.

As an established governance expert, how do you see the current state of delivery system of local level and provincial level governments?

Despite the existing legal and policy constraints, some local level municipalities are doing really well. This is not because of the institutions but quality of individu-



als. Following the visits of some local levels, what I drew was the conclusion that leadership is very important. In municipalities, where the political representatives are dynamic and visionary, they have been producing quite good results. Waling Municipality and Tillottama Municipality are two good examples.

How do you see the local levels?

Local levels are now unable to recruit the employees because of lack of Provincial Level Public Service Commission and they don't hire more because of lack of authority. However, Waling and Tillotama have been filling the employees by recruiting them on contract basis. They are recruiting young professionals. They also pulled the old staff. The mayor of Waling has developed a new scheme for solid waste management. He is generating 8 to 9 million rupees in revenues from solid waste.

What does the constitution say?

The constitution of Nepal has specifically stipulated the roles, responsibilities and rights of all three tiers of government. There is more confusion because of lack of acts, regulations and policies. If there are exclusive functions, the government should provide exclusive acts without any delay. In the sectors like health, education, registration of day to day affairs fall under the local level. The current problem is provincial level government because it is the new entity. Since the local government has existed there for long, they don't have to face institutional problems. However, provinces are recently created and they are new.

How do you see the situation?

The situation is that neither local level government respond to province nor the central government. Federal government has its own institution. The provincial level does not have any existence capacity. The quality of legislature at provincial level is less competent than the local and central level. For instance, sixty percent of the members of province 2 cannot write their name. There are ambiguities of roles and responsibilities. The tendency of the institutions to see themselves as supreme is also creating the problems. There is yet to have the rapport as visualized by the constitution among three tiers of government. This is the biggest challenge.

The leadership of provincial government is very crucial to build the rapport between center and local level. If the chief minister is dynamic, he or she is there to bring the results. The chief minister of Province 6, Shanker Pokharel has been performing extremely well. In province 7, they don't have human resources. They are running the provinces with 3 or 4 staff

How do you see the commitment of Leadership?

There is commitment on the part of the leadership to do something. However, there is no conducive environment even if they do have a lot of budget. If we want to make local levels effective and efficient, we need to support them to increase resources, raising their capacity. We have to enrich their capacity. Shortage of staffs is another handicap. As long as the centralized mindset exists at central and provincial level, nothing can change. Smooth functioning

INTERVIEW

is difficult, as long as the mindset remains the same.

How do you see the federal system?

The federal structure is moving in the right direction but it will take time. It will take another ten years to see matured federal structures. Coming five years will establish the institutions. It takes a lot of time for the governance level to take hold. In many places, corruption has devolved from central to local level. It is said that the user committees are most corrupt at local level. How to reduce the corruption is a major challenge. Other challenges are who will monitor local governments. Theoretically, they are monitored by people. If they do right, the people will choose them again, if they do wrong, people will reject them. There is the need to have a monitoring mechanism in between.

What role can CIAA play to reduce the corruption?

Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority is responsible to stop corruption but it is not possible for CIAA to reach all 735 governments. Whole monitoring of the government is very challenging. Other problem is District Coordination Committee. On an average, the government is spending Rs.20 million for DCC but they are like defunct organizations. Nobody listens to them as there is no specific constitutional and legal role for them. They should be given a role of facilitator between province and local level. DCC has a very important role to play. There is the need to give a certain role to DCC even amending the constitution and law. There is the need to make DCC capable and there are enormous opportunities to utilize DCC.

How do you see the foreign aid?

If Nepal Government does not want intervention, why should donors come in the governance reform? International Development Cooperation Policy has prioritized infrastructure development, employment generation, livelihood, climate change and disaster. It does not mention governance, capacity building, and JESI as their priorities. There is no sense to run the training for local level.

How do you see the role of MOFAL?

For example, MOFAL has drafted model acts and distributed to the local level. What local government has done is they change the name and place and implement all the model acts. Local levels are very critical about MOFAL. They said who are MOFAL to direct them arguing they are independent governments and they are not under any government. If the MOFAL wants to give certain directions, it should come from Office of Prime Minister not MOFAL. If things go this way, it will bring a major conflict between

MOFAL, Local level and Provincial level. There will be conflict between provincial and central and provincial and local levels. If we don't think seriously about this, it will create more problems. Direction should come from Prime Minister through provincial government. MOFAL has no constitutional right. There is the need to change attitude.

What solution do you suggest?

The solution is to work as per the concurrent function defined by the constitution. There is the need to promulgate the acts, regulations and policies are directed by the constitution. It will settle everything. There must be clear cut outlines.

There is a complaint that provinces are trying to centralize power through activating the past district level offices. How do you see this?

DCC has no role in the constitution. The constitution does not understand District Education Office, Agriculture Office, Irrigation Office, etc. In many areas, regional office, knowledge management and forest offices are coming. They are not necessary. There is the need of interaction among province and local levels. That is what is lacking except in province 3 where chief minister Dor Mani Poudyal is holding the meeting in every six months. He is calling meetings and consulting representatives.

Who will take such an initiative?

Central government can make an umbrella act. Provincial Council needs to be activated. Constitutional experts and media colleagues need to closely work. There is a crisis of confidence. There is a lack of idea. Chief minister's office in Far West organised a sports tournament. If we are unable to do something, it will further create the problem. There will be further conflict. How will we monitor local levels. Local level leaders are renting cars and other things. There is the need to have a monitoring mechanism. We do have knowledge in the local level. The question is who will organize them. Governance issues are there, administrative college and Kathmandu University can help here. We are unable to bring the system on right track. I say this after I visited 25 districts and 75 rural and urban municipalities.

How do you see role of deputy mayor?

Deputy mayors are unable to work. They have been given five rights but they don't have the capacity and nor do they have the support from the mayor. In terai overwhelming majority of mayors are illiterate. Deputy mayor was not a choice of women. There are deficiencies in the capacity of deputy mayor. Politically elected women should not be given judicial role.



GAUTAM BUDDHA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

On Speed After Recovery

Financed by Asian Development Bank, Gautam Buddha International Airport (GBIA) shows how the fate of a project can change for the better while development partners and implementing agencies are working in collaboration. From almost a stage of collapse due to various technical, financial and other reasons, GBIA recovered its lost pace of progress and is nearing completion now. If the project continues to maintain the current speed of work, it will be complete by coming December, opening enormous opportunities for western parts of Nepal

By KESHAB POUDEL

As the speed of construction of GBIA increases, the face of tourism entrepreneurs of Lumbini area has brightened up. The project will open enormous economic opportunities to the tourism and other sectors of the region.

For those who saw the debacle of the project two years ago, with the project virtually at a stage

of collapse, it is unbelievable to see it gradually completing work on infrastructure, like towers, runway, taxi way, office and cargo building.

During a recent high-level visit to the project site, one could see the satisfaction on the face of Asian Development Bank's country director Mukhtor Khamudkhanov, who has been playing an important

role to complete the project in time.

"Given the current pace of construction and hard work of project officials and contractors, there is ample reason to believe that the project will complete in its schedule," said country director Mukhtor Khamudkhanov.

With so much happening, one can see a very satisfactory state-



GBIA Tower

ment coming from higher officials of the Civil Aviation Authority.

“If the current level of progress is maintained, we are expecting to complete the project by December and start technical testing of the airport and certification process,” said Rajan Pokharel, Officiating Director General of Civil Aviation Authority Nepal (CAN). “What I can say now is that the project has survived thanks to close cooperation between ADB Nepal Country Office, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation and CAN.”

As five 5-star hotels are already in operation and seven others are at the last stage of construction, GIBA is going to be a game changer in the province 5 in terms of tourism promotion and other economic activities.

Declared as a national priority project, the airport, though delayed

by a couple of years, will improve Nepal’s international image as well.

Although all the concerned officials have contributed enormously, young and dynamic project manager Prabesh Adhikari and Naresh Pradhan, Project Officer (Transport), Nepal Resident Mission, Asian Development Bank, are the key players to deal with issues on the ground and push the project.

One can see visible impacts in the project with the presence of young engineer of CAN Prabesh Adhikari. “I had to fight tooth and nail from time to time with municipal and other officials to maintain the supply of stones quarried,” said Adhikari, who saved the project last month, opening the restriction placed by Tillotama Municipality, which had stopped the supply of stones. “Due to the difficulty, contractors are now carrying stones from Bara and Parsa,”

said Adhikari, with a great sense of satisfaction.

Situated 20 kilometers from Lumbini, birthplace of Siddharth Gautam, the airport will be expected to bring more tourists in the region, paving the way to boost Buddhist tourism in Nepal.

“As everything is as per schedule and all the works, including the purchase of navigation equipment is going on the right way, what I can say is that the dream to see international flights from GBIA is not far away,” said Shrestha.

Boom In Tourism

As the tower of airport is in nearly complete, star hotels are also in a rush to complete their work to get up and running. While marketing for spiritual tourism is yet to be launched globally, tourism entrepreneurs have jumped with over 20 billion investment in the hotel sector.

“This airport is going to be a lifeline for us. As we have invested such a huge money in the hotel sector, our survival will depend upon the smooth operation of the airport attracting the Buddhist pilgrims and visitors,” said Chandra Kishor Shrestha of Hotel Association of Nepal, Lumbini. “The project has been revived from a near stage of collapse,” said Shrestha.

Not everything is smooth, though. Lumbini is the birthplace of Gautam Buddha and important religious place, but it is just a part of a Buddhist circuit. Out of four important spiritual places, three places are in India.

With near completion of runway and taxi way, GBIA, second international airport of Nepal, will be ready for operation in 2020. The question is what strategy Nepal government will adopt to make Lumbini a spiritual and tourism spot depends on the viability of tourism industry.

“I have already constructed five star hotel with investment of over 2 billion rupees. For operation of the hotels, we need to bring more tourists in Nepal through GBIA,” said Pawan Halwe, a hotel entrepreneur. “The government must support the promotional activities all over the world.”

Other travel agents and hotel industrialists are looking for more economic benefits. “As private sectors are rushing to invest in the tourism industry, the timely completion of the project is a key to all us,” said tourism entre-

preneur Sanjaya Bajimaya. “Realising the importance of airport for the economic development of the region, all the entrepreneurs, including FNCCI, are also working closely supporting the project activities.

With the investment from Asian Development Bank, many livelihood projects are currently under way in Lumbini area. “With an aim to share the benefits of tourism to improve the life of people living in the area, we have been conducting various programs like skill development training. Supported by Asian Development Bank, such training helped to improve the livelihood of people. With the handover of over dozen electric rickshaws, local people are taking the benefit,” said Chief Executive Officer of Lumbini Development Trust Saroj Kumar Bhattarai.

For people from big hoteliers to small entrepreneurs, the project currently under going through South Asia Tourism Infrastructure Development Project (SATIDP) has also been helping the local poor to make their livelihood better.

Suma Patipal, a woman entrepreneur, has been earning Rs 40,000 (400 dollar) a year additionally after taking a skill training through the project. “We are expecting to generate more money after more tourists begin to arrive in Lumbini,” said Patipal, who has already supplied small consignments to foreign countries as well. “The good part of the training is that it helped me to understand market mechanism and enhance skills of making bamboo buckets and other products.”

Other Benefits

Gautam Buddha International Airport (GBIA) will have take-off and landing facilities for large aircrafts such as Airbus A340 and Boeing 777. This will help reduce the existing air traffic congestion at Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA), Nepal’s only international airport.

At a time when Nepalese agriculture products have been facing stiff competition in the global market because of the transport cost, GBIA will help to reduce the current rate of the cost of air transport.

“Nepal Trade Integration



COVERSTORY

Strategy (NTIS) 2016 has identified a list of goods and services in which Nepal has a revealed comparative advantage. These include lentils, cardamom, ginger, medicinal and aromatic plants, among others,” said Manbar Singh Khadka, Economic Officer, NRM, ADB.

“Presently, these items are largely exported to India via road. But, export diversification of such high-value low volume products via airways will be feasible once the Gautam Buddha International Airport comes into operation. Off-season vegetables and horticulture products can be airlifted to Gulf countries via GBIA. This airport can be an avenue to uplift Nepal’s trade with the rest of the world. “

Nepal has signed bilateral air service agreements with a number of countries including Cambodia, Japan, Vietnam, and Sri Lanka where Buddhism is practiced. Presently, Buddhist pilgrims from these countries visit Lumbini via TIA or India.

If this new international airport comes into operation, then tourists from those countries can directly fly in and out from Bhairahawa, Lumbini. In sum, the airport will help propel Nepal’s tourism sector by bringing in more tourists. With the operation of new international airport, migrant workers to



ADB's country director Mukhtor Khamudkhanov

Malaysia and Gulf countries from the Terai belt of Nepal can fly out directly from Bhairahawa for overseas employment.

SATIDP

Launched by Asian Development Bank, the objective of South Asia Tourism Infrastructure Development Project (SATIDP) is to develop and improve tourism-related infrastructures in Nepal, India and Bangladesh. In Nepal, the project aims to develop the Nepal portions of the footsteps of the Lord Buddha circuit by focusing on Lumbini.

According to ADB, the international works are directed at enhancing the connectivity to Lumbini, destination improvements of Lumbini and capacity development of relevant public sector site managers and communities.

The GBIA is a part of the connectivity enhancement project aiming to enhance air access to Lumbini. Under the upgrade of Gautam Buddha Airport to international standards, the

components include construction of a new runway, exit taxiway, and apron pavement, rehabilitation of the existing runway for conversion to parallel taxiway, refurbishment and expansion of existing terminal building as a domestic terminal building. Similarly, the project also includes the construction of new international terminal building, new control tower, custom and cargo building and crash fire rescue building.

Indirect benefits

Agglomeration effects will take off in terms of more hotels, beds and breakfasts and agro-processing industries being set up along the economic corridors. The exploration and development of other touristic destinations in the Terai belt of Nepal will gain momentum. These developments will help increase local employment and boost regional and national economy at large.

“The upgrading of the airport will help in further developing nearby Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha, into an attractive cultural and tourism destination. The international airport is expected to give a big boost to tourism in



Lumbini by linking it to international tourist circuits in South Asia. It will not only increase the number of visitors to Lumbini from the traditional markets of India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, but also potentially from the People's Republic of China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea," said Mukhtor

bini, destination improvements in Lumbini, and capacity development of relevant public sector site managers and communities," Mukhtor Khamudkhanov, ADB's Country Director for Nepal, said.

ADB has provided \$55 million (\$42.75 million loan and \$12.75 million grant) to the Gov-

completed, and the construction of international terminal building and other land side structure work is progressing well," said ADB country director.

Construction Activities

Faced with several difficulties in the last five years, the construction of the project suffered from time to time due to issues like quarrying and conflicts of contractors. Even last month, the construction came nearly to a halt following the decision of Tillotama Municipality to double the prices of stone and sand collected from Tinau River.

Apart from physical construction, ADB is also considering making it Nepal's first green airport powered by solar energy. "We are installing solar panels in the

vacated land to generate at least 10 MW of solar power to sustain the operation at airport," said Shrestha. "We are planning to visit an airport in Kerala which is completely solar powered."

As machines build the infrastructure, including taxiway and runway and workers are finishing the tower and other office buildings, people in the region are watching the project with high hopes. For government of Nepal, completion the project will be a major achievement.

Khamudkhanov, ADB's Country Director for Nepal.

"It will also serve as an alternate international airport for Nepal in the event of poor weather conditions or in case of natural calamity affecting Tribhuvan International Airport. GBIA will have 3,000 meters long runway, equivalent to TIA, which will be able to cater similar aircrafts that are operating there."

Supported by the ADB under the South Asia Tourism Infrastructure Development Project, GBIA will provide alternative airport to Tribhuwan International Airport, which has been facing congestions due to increasing numbers of flight.

"Through this project, ADB is helping Nepal, India, and Bangladesh improve infrastructure and services in key tourism sites. In Nepal, the Project aims to enhance the connectivity to Lum-

ernment of Nepal to upgrade the Gautam Buddha Airport in Bhairahawa to an international airport with higher air safety standards. The government has declared it a national pride project.

"We are very happy with the recent project progress. As you are aware, there were delays in the past, but as you will see the construction has taken up the pace in the last year with the current cumulative progress of 70%. The pavement work of the main runway has been



Inspecting construction work

UPPER TAM AKOSI

Major Breakthrough

Despite the high cost incurred due to high interest rate of Nepal's public sector lenders, the successful installation of Lower Vertical Shaft is a major breakthrough

BY A CORRESPONDENT

After several weeks of hard efforts, contractors and project engineers have finally installed the first Lower Vertical Shaft of the 456-MW Upper Tamakosi project.

With the successfully installation, bouts of happiness and celebration were seen among people in the project site. Happier lots included Nepal Electricity Authority Managing Director and Chairman of Upper Tamakosi Company Kul Man Ghising and Chief Executive Officer Bigyan Shrestha.

Installation of Lower Vertical Shaft is one of the most complicated and technically challenging parts of the project. Therefore, it was technically a major breakthrough.

Two Vertical Shafts have now been successfully installed. It took seven hours to install first Pipe, which is 5-meter long, with 27 tons.

Second pipe was also installed at the lower bend penstock. After the installation, there is the need to go for welding and concrete work. Then installations of other pipes will begin.

There is the need to install 74 pipes, in 372 long lower pen-stock shaft. "After successful installation of pipe in lower vertical shaft, the uncertainty about the installation has come to an end," said MD Ghising. He said that the installation was technically very challenging. "Even the rope of the crane broke lifting the pipe. Following the event, there were more uncertainties whether the crane will work or not. Now, the challenges have already been overcome," said Ghising. "We have a target to start the first 76-MW unit by January 2020.

In the last two years, MD Ghising has already made many impossible

projects possible. When he took the charge of NEA MD, Chameliya was virtually at the state of collapse. In just a matter of six months, the project has started to generate electricity with frequent interventions.

Recently, two chronic projects, Trishuli 3 A and Kulekhani III, have also completed the trial and are in the process of commercial generation. With his frequent personal efforts and interventions, numbers of strategically important transmission lines, which were at the stage of disruption, have been charged.

Although construction of the project is a team work, the MD has a major role to play as its facilitator. MD

enues to the future.

Following the delay by the lot II Indian contractor Texmaco Rail & Engineering Limited, Upper Tamakosi Hydro-power Limited was handed over to ANDRITZ HYDRO, the contractor of lot 3, under a tripartite agreement with no additional cost.

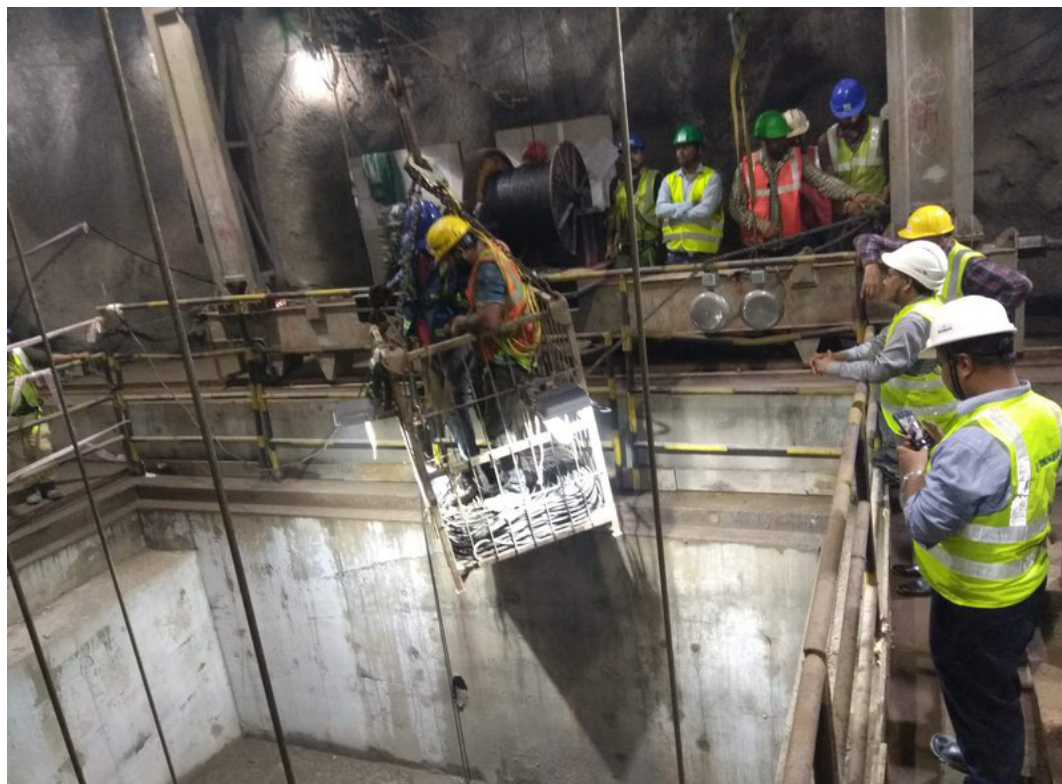
Ghising's Visit

As per the direction of minister of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation Barsha Man Pun, NEA's MD Ghising has been visiting the project site and acquiring the progress report. Since last March, MD Ghising has been visiting the project site monthly and giving necessary direction on the project.



Ghising has played his role successfully in a very adverse environment for the development. Aimed to be completed in the coming fiscal year, Upper Tamakosi has seen the recent technical breakthrough opening av-

During the visit, MD Ghising discusses the progress and challenging side of installation of lower Vertical Shaft and upper vertical Shaft. The finishing work at dam site in Lamabagar, tunnel and transmission line are



going in parallel. The construction of all infrastructure is in the final stage.

High Interest and High Cost

Contradictory to the proponents of some individuals to use Nepalese Financial Institutions to make project in the country's resources to make the project cheap, Upper Tamakosi's experiences have shown that it is just a myth.

Delayed by earthquake of 2015, landslides and Madhesh agitation, design change and poor performance of lot 2 contractors of Hydro mechanical, the project has already paid 21.74 billion rupees as interest to the public financial institutions in the last eight years.

According to sources with the project, out of its total 73.68 billion rupees expenditure, Upper Tamakosi Company has already paid 21.74 billion as an interest of construction period.

Aiming to start generation from January 2020, the project cost will further escalate in case of failing to meet the deadline of March 2020. Although the project was supposed to complete two years ago, the construction got delayed because of earthquake and landslides and weakness of contractor of lot 2.

The project was completely disrupted by the earthquake for two years due to construction of tunnel road to dam sites, and change in design and fluctuation in dollars rate.

Started in 2065/66 to complete in six years, the initial cost was 35.29 billion rupees without interest and 48.51 with construction period interests. The company said it faces additional Rs. 12 billion due to depreciation of dollar and price escalation. Rs. 7 billion added due to depreciation of Nepalese currencies against dollar and Rs. 5 billion due to escalation of prices.

As a provision of Security Bond Regulations 2073, the company cannot increase its share. Thus, the burden of loan has gone up. The interest rate of the financial institutions has increased. Upper Tamakosi Company signed the agreement with the interest rate of 11 percent earlier with early review. Since the signing of the agreement, the company has been paying 10-12 percent annual interest rate. However, Nepal Government's and NEA's interest rate is fixed with 10.5 with risk premium.

Lender financial institutions have reduced interest rate for 2075 with 11 percent. NEA has urged

Nepal government to consider to reduce interest rate. The government has invested 11.8 billion, Employment Provident Fund 10 billion, Nepal Telecom 6 billion, Citizen Investment Fund and National Insurance Corporation 2-2 billion each with total 31.8 billion loan.

The project generated 10.59 as equity. Among the promoters share, NEA has 41, Nepal Telecom 6, National Insurance Company and Citizen Investment Fund 2/2 percent. Public has 15,

residents of Dolakha 10 and Depositor of Employers Provident Fund, NEA's employees and employees of lenders hold 24 percent shares.

The project has upgraded 35 kilometre Chairkot-Singati road with investment of one billion rupees. The project also constructed 29 kilometres road, 7 bridges and a tunnel from Singati to Lamabagar dam site.

Using this road infrastructure, ten hydropower projects with the capacity of 5 to 200 MW hydropower are under construction in Tamakosi river basin by private sectors. The road constructed by the projects has greatly benefited people living in northern parts of Dolakha district to uplift their livelihood.

Although it has been immensely contributing to the overall development of northern Dolakha district, Upper Tamakosi is suffering from the high interest rates of internal lenders like Employment Provident Funds. This interest is much higher than any multilateral agencies or Exim Banks. This proves that construction of big projects depending on Nepal's own resources is just a myth.

Going High

International Yoga Day 2019 concludes with programs at the highest point of the world to lowest point

BY KESHAB POUDEL

As International Yoga Day (IDY) 2019 has its own significance in the world, this is special for Nepal. Led by the team of Indian Ambassador to Nepal Manjeev Singh Puri, a group of people, including the locals, performed Yoga at Namche Bazaar and Everest Base camp.

For the first time, Yoga was celebrated at the Base Camp of Mount Everest, 17600 feet above the sea level. India's Bharat Sharma and other mountaineers performed Yoga in the backdrop of mighty Mount Everest. The Indian mission in Nepal organized the Yoga event at Nepal's Namche Bazaar, gateway to Mount Everest, the highest peak in the world.

Similarly, Yoga Day was celebrated in Hisham's Palace, the City of Jericho, which has been continuously inhabited as the 10,000-year-old city and also at Dead Sea, earth's lowest elevation.

Hosting IDY at the highest point of the world, that is in Nepal, is itself a reason to rejoice. The words of warmth and greetings from Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli and Prime Minister Narendra Modi were another milestone of IDY 2019.

Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli offered good wishes through a tweet to all to make life healthy and happy through the Yoga on the occasion of International Day of Yoga (IDY 2019). PM Oli termed Yoga as a one of the foremost achievements of ancient culture for the mediation.

Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi retweeted in Nepali to his

counterpart Oli saying "remarkable gesture by my friend, PM Oli to lead the Yoga Day celebrations in Nepal."

From exchange of wishes at political level and performing yoga at highest point of the world, a large number of common people also celebrated Yoga Day at iconic Janaki temple in Janakpur.

Hundreds of Yoga enthusiasts, including Deputy PM Upendra Yadav, Governor and CM of Province 2 joined the celebrations.



Ambassador Puri

"I thank people across the world for joining the International Day of Yoga celebrations. World over, the first rays of the Sun are being welcomed by dedicated Yoga

practitioners, it's a beautiful sight. I urge you all to embrace Yoga and make it an integral part of your daily routine," said ambassador of India to Nepal Puri.

The fifth International Yoga Day is being celebrated across the world from the base camp of Mount Everest to dead sea, lowest point of the world.

Similarly, it was also organized in Washington monument, from Eiffel tower in Paris to Wuhan China with full force and enthusiasm. The event is also being celebrated in Pakistan, particularly in Lahore.

At the United Nations, Yoga was celebrated with the theme Yoga for climate change and celebrated with gusto at the UNGA. Syed Akbaruddin said, "The UN has a special place in the remarkable growth of Yoga in our lifetimes. It was here that an ancient practice was transformed into an annual global observance. Hence we always observe the occasion with zest and fervour at the UN."

The United Nations proclaimed June 21 as the International Yoga Day on December 11, 2014, and the resolution proposed by India was co-sponsored by a record 175 countries.

On the occasion of International Yoga Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged the world to embrace Yoga and to make it an integral part of one's daily routine, asserting that the focus must be on wellness as well as protection from illness.

As a part of same civilisation, International Yoga Day is also a good opportunity for Nepalese to remember their social and cultural foundations.

Budget Missing Ground Reality

As per the new constitution, this government has presented its budget the first time after elections with a two thirds majority. The government defines the current fiscal year as a base year for prosperity. Brought within this periphery, the fiscal year 2076/77, the second budget, sets three targets. Those include livelihood of people, economic growth and to make Nepal a middle income economy by 2030. However, if one can analyze the budget, it seems that the budget talks many big things, missing the road to long term development targets.



BY BINOD CHAUDHARY

to present example from Vietnam to Ethiopia. However, we are unable to implement it in practice. Thus, we cannot make progress in development sector till creating a conducive environment to cut down revenue in concurrent expenditure and use for development process.

Stress for Technology

Nepal needs to move following the change in global economy. The world has entered into Digital Economy. There is the need of a huge investment in information and technological sector.

Concentrated on Concurrent Expenditures

There is the need to bring fundamental changes in the face of the current budget to accelerate the pace of development process of making Nepal prosperous. Budget should be development-centric. But our budget is concurrent expenditure-centric. The budget should limit 60 percent for capital expenditure and 40 percent for concurrent expenditure. Our budget is exactly the opposite. Out of total Rs.1532 billion budget, Rs. 957 billion (62.4 percent) is allocated to concurrent and only Rs.459 billion (26.6 percent) is allocated to capital expenditure. We cannot push the country to speedy development from this kind of reverse budget.

Gigantic Government

Due to use of technology, other governments become more efficient and small. But, our government is swelling. Central, province and local governments need to spend huge amounts of money for salaries and other benefits. We should have to think about downsizing the government but we are yet to do so. There is a risk that the revenue cannot meet concurrent salaries and benefits and the government will have to take foreign aid for this. To meet the growing expenditure, the government increases the tax. To increase revenue, the government is encouraging import. Nepal is turning into a country with highest tax rate in the world. Looking at these trends, there is a high risk before the economy. The intention of state seems to add taxes to existing taxpayers rather than expanding the base of tax.

Need To Drastically Reduce Concurrent Expenditure

There is a challenge to drastically reduce concurrent expenditure. There is the need to break revenue versus concurrent expenditure. There are many experiences in the world where the countries have achieved high economic growth and fast development, creating employment opportunities following the end of peace process. We used

Lets Start From Ourselves

For the modernization of economy, issues like Payment Gateway, Digital Economy and exercise of paperless government are not there just for preaching. Government offices, parliament and departments under the ministries need to show exemplary roles. We need to look at our face in the mirror to see where we are. How much the budget can contribute and help is in those issues? This is a time to think seriously. I am very much disappointed in this matter.

Wish for Self Reliant Economy

Our industrial production has been declining. We are not in a position to achieve progress through small corrective measures. Our economy is expecting new strategy to take off. We can make Nepal an international hub for education and health sector. For this, we need to give up our narrow thinking and follow liberal policy. We need to march ahead in education and health sector collaborating with internationally renowned institutions. The government needs to play the role of a facilitator. The government has to collaborate for necessary infrastructures, human resources and technology.

To achieve the government's development target and implement them, there is the need to have a conducive environment. The government needs to enhance the capability of national industry to compete with Indian and Chinese products. Otherwise, many things written in the budget will just be confined to the budget book.

The growing apathy and hate of young generation to the government and nation is the result of country's failure to do some visible work for them. There is education but there is no skill as per the qualification and no employment as per the skills. Young generations are compelled to leave their houses for employment.

Special Economic Zone

Since last few years, the priority has been given to

PERSPECTIVES

establishment of special economic zones. Why did they fail to be efficient in the past? Why the special economic zone of Bhairahawa failed to attract private sector and investment? There is a need to take a deep study on this. There is a need to take a study of how special economic zones are effective in India and China. We shall implement their good experiences here. The policy followed by India for its economically backward state may be exemplary here. Economically and socially backward 6 and 7 Provinces need special offers to establish special economic zones.

Employment Generation

For decades, Nepal has been presenting programs to generate employment in home. We have implemented the youth employment fund concept a decade ago. There should have been results giving employment to tens of thousands of youth. However, the fund has confessed that that its programs are ineffective. Again the current budget expresses that there will be structural changes in National Youth Council and fund to make them effective.

There is also a provision to start Prime Minister's Employment Program to generate employment and prevent youths from going abroad. The government apportions 31 million for this. Provision 67 of the current budget also says that to implement Prime Minister's Employment Program effectively, unemployed registered with employment information center will be mobilized in development activities. The budget has allocated Rs. 5.1 billion for this.

If this amount is used to generate the employment in productive sector, it will generate sustainable employment opportunity. But this budget's policy is directed to fulfill temporary results not for long term results.

The implementation of speedy and sustainable development and promotion of more investment will be a way out to solve unemployment problem. For this, there is the need to boost the morale all of investors.

Trade Deficit

Each budget brings new thinking to reduce the trade deficit. However, the annual trade deficit is growing. During the fiscal year 070/71, our annual export was Rs. 91 billion in 074/75, the export has declined to Rs.81 billion.

Rail and Navigation

The current budget says that DPR of railway to China and India will be complete, giving way to start the construction. The current budget says that the DPR will be complete within two years. This shows the level of ambiguity at high level.

Tourism

Tourism development is an important sector for the overall development. However, we are unable to improve the situation at Tribhuvan International Airport. Improvement of TIA will be a prerequisite for tourism promotion and development. There is the need to hand over the management of TIA to internally renowned group or companies. There is the also need to improve the state of domestic airport. There should be one tourism destination in each province. There is the need to operate airport in Taplejung to provide alternative to North Bengal and Sikkim. There is the need to stress quality tourism.

Smart City

Instead of establishing new smart city, it is better to make established city as a smart city. Look at Kathmandu, it turns into a pond after rain. There are wires hanging all over. We are unable to manage the sewerage and the road are full of holes just a few days after improvement. Let's start on this side of smart city. Let's make the mayor powerful and responsible for city management.

Agriculture

We have been importing vegetables, flowers and fruits from India. Prime Minister Agriculture Modernization Program should address this problem. Practically speaking, our poor farmers are competing with Indian farmers who receive heavy subsidy from government. The situation is that imported rice and vegetables are more cheaper than our own products. We need to liberalize to give cash subsidy to farmers.

Private Sector

To use the strong side of private sector, the budget needs to build adequate and honest basis. Instead of concentrating on power generation, the government needs to give priority to the construction of new transmission lines. There are not enough projects. As expressed in the budget, there is the need to change the attitude to look private sector.

Investment in Infrastructures

How long does it take to pass from Naubise to Nagdhunga? How many times have we expressed commitment to improve the road? Forget about big projects, it has been taking years to complete small projects. The main thing right now is to assure that infrastructure projects will complete in scheduled period.

Binod Chaudhary is the member of the House of Representative. Excerpts of translated version of the views delivered by Chaudhary in a recent session of the House of Representatives.



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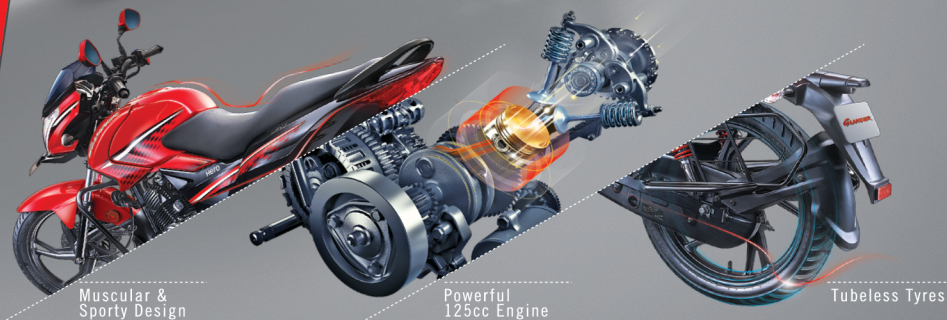
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