

Interview: Nilamber Acharya

NEW SPOTLIGHT

March-19, April-01, 2010

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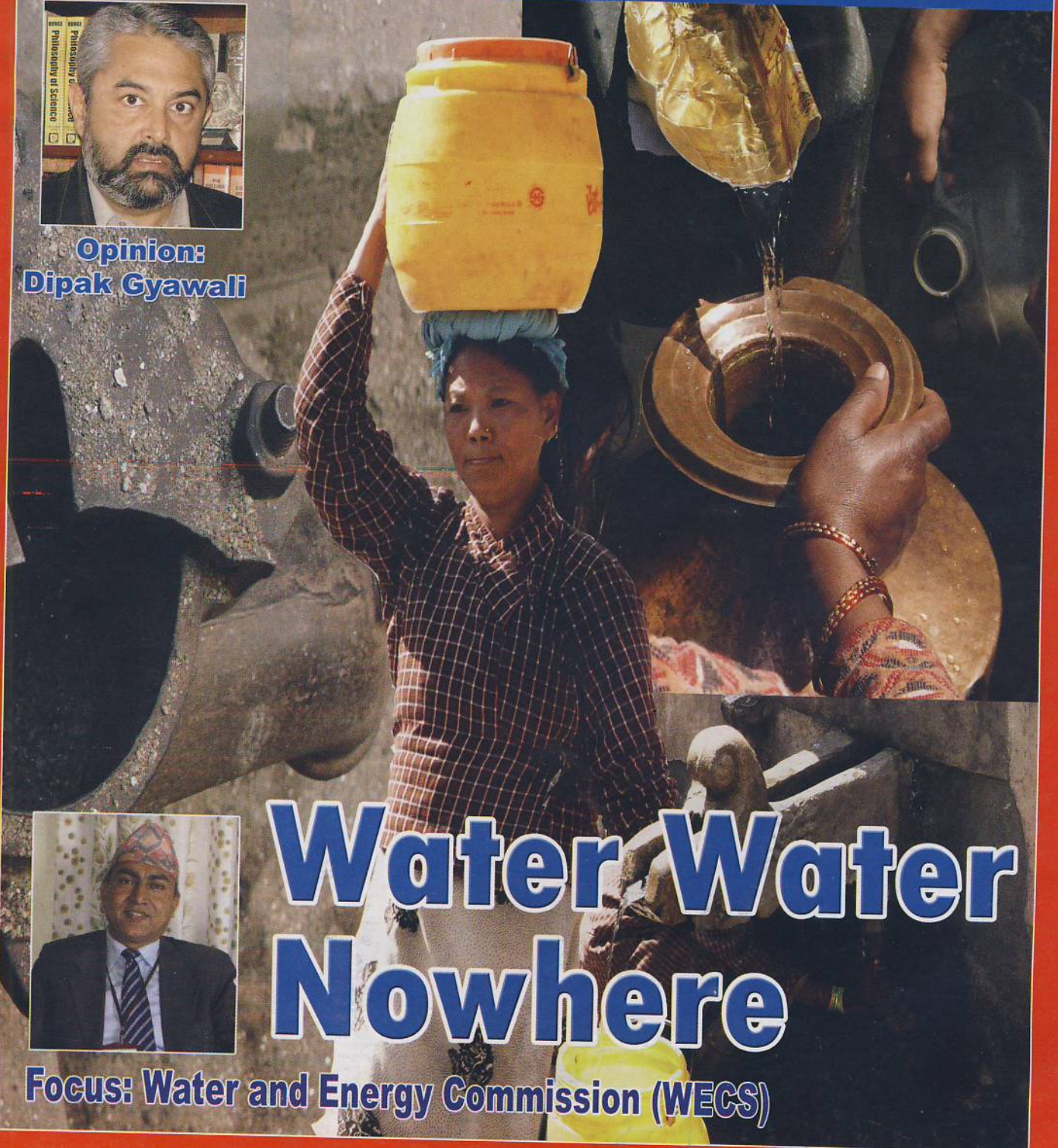
NEWSMAGAZINE



Opinion:
Dipak Gyawali

Water Water Nowhere

Focus: Water and Energy Commission (WECS)



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Editor and Publisher : Keshab Poudel, **Senior Correspondent:** Saroj Dahal, **Reporter:** Pradipti Bhatta, Abijit Sharma, Aditi Pandey
Marketing Manager : Madan Raj Poudel, Tel: 9841320517, **Photographer :** Sandesh Manandhar **Guest writer :** Alvaro Castrillo Schneider

Cover Design/Layout : Hari Krishna Bastakoti

Editorial Office : Tel: 977-1-4430250 E-mail: spot@mail.com.np, P.O.Box: 7256
Office : Kamal Pokhari, Thir Bom Marg, House No. 559/144 (Opposite to Himlal Hospital)
Printers : Pioneer Offset Printers (P.) Ltd., Dillibazar, Kathmandu. Ph: 4415687
 Kathmandu DAO Regd. No. 148/11/063/64, Postal Regd. No. 07/066/067
 US Library of Congress Catalogue No. 91-905060



NIBL Opens 39th Branch

Nepal Investment Bank Limited (NIBL) opened its 39th branch in Lalbandhi, Sarlahi on March 4. The newly opened branch will be linked through ABBS (Any Branch Banking Services) to all other 38 branches in the country.

The key services provided by the branch include deposit and credit facility, foreign exchange, retail banking, import, export, letters of credit, guarantees and remittances, among others.

The new branch was opened as per the Bank's policy to extend quality banking services within all major pockets of the country, both within and outside the Kathmandu valley.

The bank plans to extend its access to rural areas as well as urban centers, whereby extending banking service for larger chunk of population, in the days ahead.

USAID Delivers \$5 M Food Aid

The United States, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) delivered the final shipment in food assistance meeting a commitment of US \$5 million made in July 2009, for the UN World Food Program (WFP) operations. This food is used to support livelihoods of both conflict and drought-affected people across eight districts of Nepal. The food arrived in batches over the past six months with the last consignment arriving in February.

"Recent declining agricultural production has depressed many rural economies and increased the spread of hunger throughout Nepal. Our contribution demonstrates the United States' long-standing commitment to the welfare of the Nepali people." said USAID Director Dr. Kevin A. Rushing. "The 5 million dollars in assistance

provided more than 3,500 tons of basic food staples, including rice and peas to Nepal's vulnerable poor, through World Food Program."

Including this commitment, USAID has contributed food worth US \$12.7 million over the past year to WFP in Nepal and plans to continue to help address Nepal's food security concerns. USAID's food assistance helps conflict and drought-affected people across the country and also Bhutanese refugees in Eastern Nepal.

"We are grateful for this timely contribution and the continued support from USAID. This is an acknowledgement of both the seriousness of the deteriorating food security situation in Nepal and commitment to provide relief to families that remain extremely vulnerable to hunger," said Richard Ragan, WFP Country Representative.

He further added, "This support has been extremely critical in meeting the needs of more than 450,000 people; however Nepal still requires additional assistance especially because of the growing number of hungry people in the country."

Japan's Assistance for Community Access Project

The government of Japan extended a grant assistance of nine hundred and ninety million Japanese yen approximately eleven million, two hundred and one thousand US dollars (US\$11,201,000), or about eight hundred and seventeen million, seven hundred and forty thousand Nepalese rupees (NRs. 817,740,000) to the government of Nepal, for the execution of the Project for the Improvement of Community Access in Japan's FY 2009.

Under this project, a total of 35 river-crossing structures will be constructed on 11 rural roads in five districts, namely, Mahottari, Sindhuli, Ramechhap, Kavrepalanchok and Sindhupalchok in the Central Region of Nepal. These river-crossing structures are to be built at high priority places, where local people are stranded in their villages during the rainy season due to strong river-currents caused by the flood and debris flow. To address these difficulties, single lane motorable bridges with a total of 3

suspension bridges, 6 truss bridges, 3 reinforced concrete bridges, and 23 continuous box bridges will be constructed over the rivers.

In this context, a set of Notes was signed and exchanged between Tatsuo MIZUNO, Ambassador of Japan to Nepal, and Rameshore Prasad Khanal, Secretary of the Ministry of Finance, on behalf of their respective governments.

Ambassador MIZUNO expressed his hope that Japan's continued support to Nepal's economic and infrastructure development will help improve the well-being of Nepalese people and continue



to promote the peace process for New Nepal. This support will also help to strengthen the existing cordial relationship of friendship and cooperation between the people of both nations.

Japanese Grant

The Embassy of Japan has decided to extend a grant of fifty-four thousand, eight hundred and seventy-six US Dollars (US\$54,876), equivalent to approximately four million, thirty thousand, and ninety-three Nepalese Rupees (NRs.4,030,093), to the Kankalini Multipurpose Service Center (KMSC) for the implementation of the Project for Drinking Water Facilities at Lohajara under the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) scheme of the Government of Japan in Japan's fiscal year 2009.

A Grant Contract to this effect was signed and exchanged between Japanese Ambassador to Nepal Tatsuo MIZUNO and Mrs. Nunu Devi Jha, Chairperson of Kankalini Multipurpose Service Center (KMSC).

The Grant will be utilized for the full-scale boring, procurement of essential equipment, construction, and installation of one 150m deep tube-well, one water storage tank, 21 public tap stand posts,

and about 7 kms of distribution pipes in Lohajara in Saptari District. Approximately 2,000 people in this village will directly benefit from this project.

Korean Volunteers

Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) has dispatched four new KOICA Volunteers to work in Nepal for two years. They arrived in Katmandu on March 5, 2010 and were welcomed by the Resident Representative, Ms. Youngah Doh and other officials of KOICA Nepal Office.

These new KOICA Volunteers will be assigned in different government organizations within and outside the valley and will share Korea's experience and knowledge in Environment Engineering, Radiography, and Pathology etc with the Nepalese people.



After their arrival they will undergo 8 weeks of local adaptation training organized by KOICA Nepal Office which focuses mainly on learning the Nepali history, language, cultures, lifestyle, socio economic political situation and visiting cultural sites which will help them to adapt in their new working environment and localities. However, they are officially set to start their duty from May 01, 2010 in their respective organization.

A total 45 KOICA Volunteers from different backgrounds are currently working in various governmental organizations and are engaged in fields such as nursing, medical technician, childhood education, computers, agriculture, automobile maintenance, social welfare, special education etc and are getting recognition and respect for their efforts and contributions.

Pakistan Embassy Celebrates 50th Anniversary

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Nepal, a new book Buddhist Gandhara in Nepali language was launched by Pakistan's ambassador to Nepal Syed Abrar Hussain. The program, organized by Pakistan Study Center, was attended by people of various walks of life.

The Embassy of Pakistan, Kathmandu marked the 50th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Nepal this year. The diplomatic relations between the two countries were established in March 1960 and the two sides agreed last year to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the relations in 2010.

According to a press release, the Embassy plans to hold the various programs during the Golden Jubilee year 2010. The events include Ambassador of Pakistan Essay Writing Competition for Nepalese students with cash awards for the winners, Ambassador of Pakistan Golf Cup Tournament, single Country Trade Exhibition titled "Made in Pakistan", Cultural performance by a Pakistani singer/musical group in Nepal and launching of a book on Common Words in Nepali and Urdu languages, speech contest among Pakistani students in Nepal, Pakistan Day celebrations on 23rd March, inauguration of Pakistan-Nepal Chamber of Commerce.

Japan's Assistance for Quality Education for Children

The Government of Japan has decided to extend a financial assistance of eighty-eight thousand, two hundred and eighteen US Dollars (USD 88,218), equivalent to approximately six million, three hundred and ninety-eight thousand, four hundred and fifty one Nepali Rupees (NRs 6,398,451) to Save the Children Japan in Japan's Fiscal Year 2009 under the Grant Assistance for Japanese NGO Projects scheme of the Government of Japan.

Save the Children Japan (SCJ) will implement the Project for Quality Education for Children Affected by

Armed-conflict in Dang and Surkhet Districts in coordination with the District Education Offices and three local NGOs, namely, the Society for Environment Economy Development (SEED), the Social Awareness Center (SAC), and Women for Human Rights (WHR).

The Grant Assistance for Japanese NGO Projects is a scheme to provide financial assistance for the implementation of social and economic development and emergency humanitarian assistance projects to be undertaken by Japanese NGOs in developing countries and regions.

The Grant Contract relating to this project was exchanged between Mr. Tatsuo MIZUNO, Ambassador of Japan to Nepal, and Ms. Ayano SUZUMURA, Resident Representative of Save the Children Japan - Nepal office.

BoK's New Program

After Ajay Shrestha taking charge as the new Chief Executive officer, the Bank of Kathmandu announced two new schemes. Under the campaign Save for the Future, the bank announced two saving accounts.

At a press conference, CEO Shrestha said that the campaign is being introduced to inculcate and promote saving habits among all the Nepalese with a strong belief that small savings would help meet bigger needs of the future.

"Not limiting ourselves to larger business, we have been rendering our services to medium, small and micro finance activities," said CEO Shrestha.

Global, Yeti Airlines In New Venture

The Yeti Airlines and Global Bank Ltd jointly introduced e-ticketing services recently. As per the new services, customers of the Global Bank Ltd. traveling to Pokhara, Bhairawa, Biratnagar, Janakpur, Dhangadhi and Nepaljung from Kathmandu will be able to purchase tickets through internet.

Likewise, the members of Yeti Airlines Sky Club will be able to open accounts in any of the bank's branches in zero balance, gain 50 percent discount in debit card cost and enjoy free of cost internet banking service. ■

Déjà vu Politics of Tragedies, Farce and Impunity

– Dipak Gyawali

It was sad when the euphoria ended, and with it the politics of selfless volunteerism that inspires and readily invites public respect. A motley collection of supposedly liberal social democrats (Congress), moderate parliamentary communists (UML) and Tarai-based parties had made a mockery of government. Instead of doing the constitutional duty they were mandated to, they spent their time jockeying for power, appointing their party faithful to public office, and milking every perk they could lay their grimy hands on even while the country burned.

No! This is not about the current UML-led coalition but a similar one led by Sher Bahadur Deuba in 2002. Or was it the perfidy of other “musical chair” coalitions between 1995 and 1999 led by the very same politicians we see making a hash of politics today? This sense of having seen them all before engaged in the same shenanigans has now seeped down to levels of mass cynicism, youth nihilism and religious escapism. The Bearded One that our revolutionaries invoke unceasingly once said, “History repeats itself, first as a tragedy and the second time as a farce!” The second and third parliaments between 1995 and 2002 were tragedies: the current constituent assembly is quickly morphing into a farce.

A question all Nepalis have to now ask is: how can you build a New Nepal with the old politics of failed leaders with vacuous vision? The Loktantrick project has sprung leaks even before hitting the May 28 iceberg, the adulatory media glee club has fallen silent and the rats are seen deserting the sinking ship. The country might soon be left constitution-less, passport-less, aircraft-less, fuel-less, water-less in addition to being chronically electricity-less since none of these basic public necessities were the real priority of the new political masters. All major players of this failed project are currently scrambling to position themselves on any high ground they can reach so that they can play the blame game. Unfortunately, in this round, there is no musical chair left with any moral standing. Suffice it to recall two recent pathetic attempts.

The bitter truth is that the current crop of failed leaders, with whom the public were long fed up, were put back into power in April 2006 mainly by the civil society leaders who infused them with a heavy dose of public credibility expending their own political capital in the process. Today, that

civil society is irreconcilably divided into extreme left and moderate left; and, desperate to distance itself from the erstwhile idols, it has resorted to cheap street pressure *dharna*. Its real strength and usefulness, however, given the intellectual background of its membership, would have been to examine the points of current impasse in constitution making, find a common middle ground, and bring the parties to a position of compromise. But that would require hard work, the shedding of the revolutionary posturing by their charismatic leaders and possibly earning the wrath of their erstwhile idols. Hence, they have instead opted for meaningless *khabardari* sloganeering which the polarized politicians cannot do anything with, and which the public has refused to buy this time around. Desperate to draw a crowd, they even had to bring in a third sex “lady boy” as chief guest of the *dharna*, which, it was reported, drew a large crowd of two hundred amused onlookers!

Another re-positioning to safety is seen in the Firanghi “international community” that backed the regime change of the Mughlanis. Google the name Pascoe of the UN and you will see screaming headlines on the need to “humanize the Nepal Army”, which is already too human with all the attendant frailties, but still maintains the discipline and integrity to remain confined to the barracks as per the peace agreement. What of the NATO army crusading in the Middle East that is thoroughly robotized with inhuman drones that blow up Afghan civilians to smithereens? And is there no need to “humanize” the Maoist PLA who abduct and kill civilians in UN camps and promote the killers to central committee membership? But I digress. An organization that cannot even count to five thousand, but like a kindergartener doing first math jumps immediately to 19000, keeps underage fighters in camps for three years of paid training and then discharges them to find employment in any of the mushrooming 106 armed gangs, has already made moves “to blame the victim”, to say that Nepalis are incompetent (‘boring’ was the word used), that Nepal is a ‘failed state’. However, no questioning will be done of the Firanghi role in dismantling the Nepali state for their ‘democratic project’, that being a matter of impunity.

Three items of political

philosophy – republicanism, federalism and secularism – provided the fig leaf for regime change and formed the basis of the current project, but these imported idealisms started unraveling as they met Nepal’s ground realities. Always a fringe ‘boutique left’ agenda, they were pushed into the mainstream when the center and center-right stampeded to the left end of the spectrum, vacating the moderate mean and creating a dangerous vacuum on the right. Republicanism was proclaimed as the means of doing away with feudalism, even though the Nepali state has actually been long under the control of the comprador bourgeoisie. In reality, to replace it, hereditary feudalism blossomed in all the main parties as leaders became never retiring barons who would promote their siblings and progeny to various dukedoms. Decentralization was the need of this ethnically multi-mosaic country, but federalism became the unexamined mantra; and now the constitution writing process is in fatal limbo as its votaries seek to backpedal. Secularization was already underway in the Hindu kingdom, but secularism became the Trojan horse for extreme left’s atheism and the missionary zeal of the Abrahamic proselytizers in their joint attack on all Nepali cultural symbols. Because this ill-considered effort has left the majority feeling insulted, an emotional backlash is now damaging the process of secularization even as the votaries of secularism do a volte face and engage in buffalo worship.

A good constitution seems impossible within the mandated deadline, with the set of unresolved issues and under current crop of leaders bereft of political vision. But is the hope of rescuing the Loktantrick project through an abridged version possible? No matter how short or long, a constitution can only be an organic whole with parts synergistically complementary; and to deliver something that is less than that is a bit like a girl saying, “I am only a little bit pregnant!” Nepalis can look forward to a spring full of excitement, as in an household where the eldest unmarried daughter has missed her period. ■





UN Under Secretary Pascoe (Centre) : Defending role

UNCP-M

War Dividend

As the former warring party is accused of making money out of the government-funded ex-rebels' camps, the monitoring UN is caught in a fix

By **SUSHIL SHARAMA**
with **SAROJ DAHAL**

The UN under secretary general, Lynn Pascoe, accused the (ruling) Nepalese parties of shifting the blame on the UNMIN to cover up their mistakes.

The reference was to the government's anger at the UNMIN over the latter's refusal to furnish the 'latest' number of Maoist combatants in the UNMIN-supervised camps.

Two days later, the government shot back. The cabinet termed Pascoe's remarks as a violation of the diplomatic norms.

The war of words between the Nepalese government and the UN was merely a reflection of growing mistrust between the government and the Maoists whose chairman Prachanda

praised the UNMIN for "a supportive role."

The UNMIN may have a point in refusing to furnish the number of the combatants.

But the government can not be blamed either for seeking the exact number of combatants living in the camps.

Under the peace agreement, it is the government which has to bear all the expenses of the combatants.

It is not bound to bear the expenses of the political party the combatants belong to.

There are credible grounds to suspect if the money given by the government has reached all the 19000 combatants who had been verified by the UNMIN.

According to the combatants who deserted the camp, "the latest count in the Maoist register in the camps put the number at 12000."

The government also cites reliable sources as saying that there are 40 per cent less combatants than the original number to which the government had been providing 150 million rupees a month.

Officials at the ministry of peace say, many combatants have left for home, abroad or joined other outfits.

That the number of disqualified combatants also turned out to be far less than the original number has also bolstered the government officials' claim.

If the claims are true, 60 million rupees go to the combatants that do not exist. In other words, the money goes to the Maoist coffer.

Besides, out of a monthly pocket expense of 5000 rupees of a combatant the party collects 1000 rupees as "levy".

That is 10 million rupees a month.

The Maoists deny the officials' claim. The Maoist commander, Nanda Kishor Pun 'Pasang' said only 44 combatants have left the camp.

The government has challenged the ex-rebels for a re-count. It has also appealed to the UNMIN's assistance.

Both have rejected the demand.

For the Maoists to say no is understandable, because the current arrangement has worked out to be a good deal for them.

But the UNMIN's referring to the peace agreement provisions to challenge the government's request has landed it in an unenviable position of being seen as a Maoist ally.

And the timing could not have been worse. Only two months before its repeatedly extended tenure ends without credible signs of a successful end to the peace process, the row the UNMIN has found itself trapped in will do no good to the image of the world body. ■



Maoist Leaders : New move

NO-TRUST MOVE

The Maoist Dilemma

Frustrated at failure to oust the 'foreign masters-installed government' the Maoists now pin hopes on winning over the smaller domestic parties

By SAROJ DAHAL

March 12 Friday afternoon. Constituent assembly chairman Subhas Nembang is sharing his birthday party with reporters over a cup of tea and cookies at his chamber. In came an uninvited guest.

The man was none other than Maoist chief whip Posta Bahadur Bogati. He came there not to wish a happy birthday to Nembang. Bogati had a different agenda, but returned without discussing it in the presence of the reporters.

The agenda became public two days later. The Maoists wanted a special session to move a no-trust motion against the 22-party coalition of prime minister Madhav Kumar Nepal.

Signatures were collected to petition the president for a special session of parliament.

As of writing this, however, the move has not been officially public.

Top leaders have been giving conflicting views on the issue.

Vice chairman of the party and deputy parliamentary leader, Narayan Kaji Shrestha 'Prakash' flatly denied any such move.

"All we want to stress is a consensus to ensure the new constitution on time. Nothing less nothing more."

But it was no secret that behind the closed doors the Maoists had been discussing the no-trust motion with a number of smaller parties.

Madhesi Janadhikar Forum co-chairman Jaya Prakash Gupta confirmed this, though without committing the party's support to the Maoists' move.

It is this non-committal of the smaller outfits that has been keeping the main opposition from making its move officially public.

Admitted the Maoist spokesman Dinanath Sharma, "a majority is not certain yet."

With 236 own MPs, the Maoists are

short of 65 for a majority support to vote the government out of power on the floors of the parliament.

Unless one of the two largest parties, the Nepali Congress and the UML, throw its weight behind the Maoist move, the Maoists will have to bank on several unpredictable smaller outfits.

Apparently, the party does not want to take chances.

A loss in the vote will effectively close the rationale of its demand for a Maoist-led government.

It is not for nothing that the prime minister Nepal and the ruling parties' top leaders have been challenging the Maoists to prove their majority against the government.

Key international community members are also not in favor of a Maoist return to the helm of the government.

The odds are against them. But chairman Prachanda and a section of the Maoist leaders are for playing 'the parliamentary game'.

They believe that it is a win-win situation for them.

If the government fell that will be naturally be a happy culmination of an almost a year long battle.

Even if the move failed, the Maoists would hope to been seen as following the peaceful parliamentary path – and dispel the doubts over its intention of a popular revolt to capture power through the streets. ■

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NRB : Under pressure

IMF REPORT

Remittance In Red

The IMF team advises government not to depend too much on remittance

By *SANJAYADHAKAL*

After two weeks of diagnosing the 'ailing' economy of Nepal, the high-level team of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has given an important prescription.

Don't depend too much on remittance – is what the IMF's team told the government at the end of their diagnosis.

Addressing a special presentation on remittances, the IMF team leader Laura Papi, chief of the Asia Pacific department of IMF, said that the growth rate of remittances was going to decline in the coming days.

In the years between 2006 and 2008, the average growth rate of remittance had crossed 30 percent.

But due to the setback caused by the global economic crisis, the year 2009

saw this growth rate decline to less than 20 percent.

"Going forward, this growth rate is expected to be around ten percent only," said Papi.

"The good times when the remittance will take care of a lot of things is coming to an end," she warned.

This means a major adjustment will be necessitated by the government.

"Its direct impact will be the decline on the level of consumption, which will bring down imports," said Dan Nyberg, economist at IMF.

Likewise, receding remittances would affect the financial system, the deposits will come down.

The indirect impact would be the tremendous decline in revenue that the government collects as custom duties and import duties.

The remittances, currently, occupy

20 percent of the total GDP.

What even a small change in its inflow can do to the economy was evident recently when its decline was marked by sudden loss in Balance of Payment (BoP).

The remittance is not as stable a source of income as exports but are more stable compared with Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), Papi said.

She, however, strongly advised the government to explore the avenues to stimulate domestic growth to avoid total dependence on remittances.

Fixed Exchange

The IMF team, at the end of their consultations and meetings with Nepali officials, also had another very significant message to send.

Addressing the press meet at the end of their stay in Nepal, the IMF officials said that the fixed exchange peg that Nepal has been adopting has been an anchor of monetary stability.

More importantly, when asked if the IMF believed Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) needed to depreciate Nepali currency vis-à-vis Indian currency, with which it has the fixed exchange rate, Papi said that the current fixed exchange did not need to be changed.

Her remarks were significant especially since it came at a time when voices for depreciation of Nepali currency have been heard even at official level.

"The peg should remain the key macroeconomic policy priority, and monetary policy needs to be fully consistent with this objective. Interest rates need to be maintained above those prevailing in India and the Nepal Rastra Bank's (NRB) liquidity management needs to be strengthened," she stated.

Her statement has eased the pressure on the central bank, which is facing a bad IC shortage – presumably triggered by the hoarding by certain quarters, which again were prompted by the calls for depreciation of Nepali rupees.

The IMF team also concluded that the current crisis faced by Nepal was not as bad as has been made out to be.

"Nepal is witnessing the delayed impact of the global crisis. It could expect to recover in 2010/11," the IMF officials said. ■

DRINKING WATER

Few Drops To Drink

As political parties are keenly debating political and constitutional matters, an overwhelming number of people in the capital city and several other parts are facing an acute shortage of water. The demand is for outstrips the supply. From the prime minister's quarters to the house of a commoner, abundant supply of water is nowhere to be found. The rhetoric of politicians urging people to wait till the completion of Melamchi project has never sounded hollower. Even if Melamchi water were to come to the valley, the residents would still face the scarcity

By **KESHAB POUDEL**

Twenty six years ago when a group of activists, including former vice-chancellor of Tribhuvan University Surya Bahadur Shakya, leader of Civil Society Movement for Peace and Democracy Dr Devendra Raj Pandey, and former ambassador Kedar Koirala, led a demonstration demanding adequate supply of drinking water in the capital city, the then prime minister Marichman Singh assured the demonstrators that the Melamchi Drinking Water Project would meet their demand. Singh said that the

project would be completed by 1995.

Fifteen years past the deadline, when Constituent Assembly members met Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Housing and Physical Planning Bijaya Kumar Gachchhadar, the minister made a similar pledge.

Since Singh's declaration, all prime ministers have been saying that the Melamchi project will be completed to solve drinking water problems of the valley.

Interestingly, the contract for the tunnel of the Melamchi Drinking Water

Project was signed just a year ago. Given the political uncertainty and chaos in the country, nobody is certain that it will be completed by 2013, the latest deadline. As Nepal's policymakers continue to harp on Melamchi as a long-term solution, tapping other water sources has been an abandoned idea at best.

The past twenty six years have seen the country coming in for major political upheavals. A republican setup has replaced the active monarchy. As politics dominates all sectors of



Source of Water : Over-crowded Scene

Nepalese life, drinking water shortage, even if it hits everybody, is not a priority issue. Moreover, the state of water supply has gone from bad to worse since the first slogan chanted in 1985 by a group of agitators under the banner of Consumer Protection Forum with a demand for smooth water supply.

Although Dr. Pandey and his colleagues have been organizing several political demonstrations over all these years, they are yet to unite for the cause of drinking water which they championed early on. The view that bringing the new constitution and political change is an answer to all the ills facing the nation just rings to hollow to be true.

Bogged down in issues like forms of government, restructuring of the state, fundamental rights and judiciary, political parties and members of Constituent Assembly seems to be least bothered about the looming drinking

water crisis.

“Our priority is now to make the constitution. If the constitution is made in time, all the problems will be settled,” said UCPN-Maoist leader Prachanda, addressing a rally of women, who had assembled to celebrate the International Women’s Day. When Prachanda addressed the mass, a number of common people were in a queue for water just one hundred meters west of the Open Air Theater.

As Nepal celebrated the World Water Day with the slogan of quality water, an overwhelming number of capital city residents shared worries whether they would get water for the next day. A rush of people, waiting for hours and hours at the traditional water spouts and beside the modern day water tankers, to fill their pitchers and buckets with water stood in testimony to their worries. Women, girls and children suffered the most in the face of this crisis.

“We need to look out other sources besides Melamchi. If we cannot supply water in the capital, how can we claim that we will provide water for all by 2015,” said Rajendra Aryal, president of Federation of Drinking Water and Sanitation Consumer.

Ground Water Depletion

Due to over extraction of ground water, the water level has already gone down. Many traditional water spouts have already dried up. Due to construction of the houses, the recharging of the ground water is low and people have to rely now on 90 million liters of water supplied by the Kathmandu Upatyaka Khanepani Ltd (KUKL). For the economically well to do families, water supplied by private tankers is fulfilling the needs. Some of them are using the water extracted from the ground.

“We are supplying maximum water. The supply may further decline in April and May if there is no rain,” said

spokesperson of KUKL. "Despite the load shedding, we are able to supply water on rotational basis."

According to KUKL, the demand of water is more than 240 million liters per day. However, there is just 90 million liters of water available for distribution. The leakage is as much as 40 percent. This is the reason a consumer has to wait for four days to get his or her share of water.

Because of several constraints, water supply has become a good business venture. From mineral water industries to tanker-water suppliers are doing a booming business. There are more than 80 mineral water industries operating now to supply bottled water and, more than 300 water tankers supplying more than 22 million liters of water from various sources.

As the traditional sources of water have mostly dried up, city dwellers rely water supplied by Kathmandu Upatyaka Khanepani Limited (KUKL), in rotation basis of two hours a week or supplied by private tankers. Because of prolonged loadshedding, further difficulties arise in maintaining coordination between water supply and electricity supply.

Scarce Commodity

As water sources are shrinking, water has become a scarce commodity. For economically weaker sections of the people, they have to depend upon the various sources, including the water supplied by KUKL. The people who are financially capable depend upon water supplied by private tankers. Even the prime minister's residence has to depend on the water supplied by KUKL's tankers.

Frustrated by the apathy of the political leadership, policymakers and civil society, water users' groups recently declared that they will call another agitation calling better supply of water. It will be like another revolution, attended by a large number of consumers.

The average daily demand of the Kathmandu valley residents is not being met. The gap between the demand and supply will continue to widen over the next ten years. The current water supply system suffers substantial and widespread leakage of around 40

"Tap Valley's Water Too"

Umesh Pandey

UMESH PANDEY is the director of Nepal Water For Health (NEWAH). Pandey, a well known singer and former national football player, has had a long experience in the water and sanitation sector. He spoke to *New SPOTLIGHT* on water supply related issues. Excerpts:

How do you look at the water supply situation of the Kathmandu valley?

Water supply situation in the valley is very bad. Everyone can see it. Nobody really needs to explain the state of water supply.

What do you see is the reason behind this?

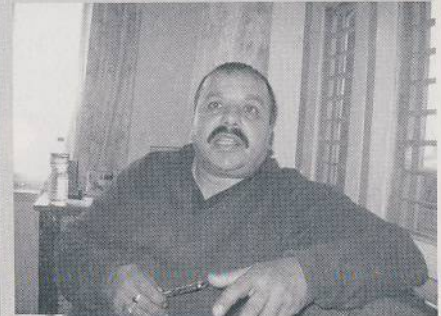
It is a failure of the government to implement the projects and works to conserve the water sources of the valley. We have spent a lot of time and a lot of money for mega projects like Melamchi. We developed a concept that Kathmandu would not have adequate water without bringing a mega project like Melamchi. That is not the truth at all. Of course, Melamchi can be a good project but it is not only one project which should be given such a high priority.

Given the shortage of water, who suffer the most?

Poor people are suffering a lot. Rich people can get water from various sources, including fetching water from tankers. One can see a large number of private tankers supplying water to rich households. However, you can see a large number empty buckets lying at the public taps. Many families do not sleep just to get a bucket of water. Water is now a scarce commodity and it is getting expensive also. In this context, we need to concentrate the efforts to provide drinking water to the poor too.

What solution do you see other than Melamchi?

There are many resources in the valley which are yet to be tapped. Tapping the small resources can still provide enough water to the thirsty population of the valley. Rainwater harvesting is a good solution for Nepal since we have abundant of water



during the rainy season. We can also meet a huge demand of water by utilizing this.

Are there still other resources?

I have read many reports and I have interacted with many people who say that there are many untapped water resources in the valley which can still meet the demand of the valley. We can utilize the traditional water spouts, wells and other such sources which used to be major sources of water supply of the valley.

Don't you think that these sources have all dried up or are drying up?

Of course, water level has gone down because of overuse of ground water by individuals and misuse by various big hotels, housings and other local industries. I think we can still revive such traditional sources to meet the demand. The rivers of the valley, where people used to take dip, are now polluted. If we manage them properly, we can even clean the rivers.

Every year we celebrate the World Water Day. What is the importance of the day?

We are celebrating the World Water Day this year with the slogan to supply quality water. In the past, we stressed the need to supply abundant water. Now we want to supply quality water.

What is NEWAH doing in this regard?

We have been working in remote parts of Nepal. Recently, we also developed a plan to do something for the urban poor. As an organization having long experiences in working for the rural poor, our experiences can be useful for others to replicate. We are also trying to put the water right as fundamental rights in the constitution.

percent. The supply of water is less than 50 percent in the dry season.

The crisis will be more severe as the possibility of recharge of ground water is gradually diminishing. More than 50 percent of present agriculture land has already converted into urban area and 60 percent villages are semi urban.

From harvesting rain water to use of local small streams, there are many reliable alternatives to fulfill the short-term demands of water. Given the over domination of Melamchi, it seems to be nobody's priority to go for small projects.

Nobody's Agenda

People of all levels in the Kathmandu valley are facing the scarcity of the water whatever the situation may be; supply of drinking water is yet to be an agenda for priority. Although a motion was registered in Constituent Assembly by members who represent the valley, the motion is yet to be tabled for discussions.

"In the broader political and constitutional making process, the water supply agenda is ignored. We have been making our own efforts to put the pressure on the government. Due to the pressure, something has really changed," said CA member and Nepali Congress leader Prakash Man Singh. "Of course, constitution making is an historic agenda but we are also taking up the problems faced by people."

Whatever NC's Singh said, members have not shown any concern over the water crisis in the valley. The session of Legislature Parliament was stalled for six months on the question of civilian supremacy but no parliamentarian has shown any guts to boycott the parliament for the human cause.

During the last two and a half decade, the country has seen many political upheavals and experimented three constitutions and three different political systems, from one party Panchayat to parliamentary democracy and republican democracy, with the growing population in the valley. What Kathmandu valley has not seen is the progress in infrastructures built to supply the drinking water.

Melamchi Mantra

Some argue that the present water



Scarcity of Water : Ritual Phomenon

supply crisis is a failure of the successive governments not to go for other alternatives than harping on Melamchi.

"If you put all the eggs in one basket, this situation is inevitable. Had the government gone for small and medium scale water sources, the country would not have to face the present situation," said Umesh Pandey, director of NEWHA.

Government officials still hold the view that there is no option but the Melamchi to supply water in the valley. The Melamchi Water Supply Project consists of a scheme to bring water into the Kathmandu valley in three phases from the catchments of the Melamchi, Yangri and Larke rivers through the 28

km long tunnels and latter two tunnels. The three phase water supply will be 510 m liters of water per day.

Melamchi is a good mantra to harp whenever there is a dispute. So far as the construction of tunnels is concerned, it seems that it will take a much longer time. Melamchi Project, which was envisaged to maintain water supply in the valley, continues to face obstruction one after another causing the delay in the project completion.

As political demonstrations continue to dominate the country's agenda, valley's drinking water supply is not going to be solved any time soon. There is politics everywhere but not a drop of it worth drinking for the parched throats. ■

Writing The Constitution Is not Difficult If There is Consensus

NILAMBER ACHARYA

NILAMBER ACHARYA, chairman of the Constitutional Committee, is all out making efforts to build consensus among members. But given the differences over so many issues, it is getting increasingly difficult for him to write the constitution in time. Acharya spoke to New SPOTLIGHT on the problems facing constitution making. Excerpts:

As the deadline for the promulgation of the constitution is approaching faster, how sincere do you think is the political leadership about this?

I summoned the senior leaders of major political parties and apprised them about the situation. I found all of them were sincere about promulgating the constitution in time. Although they did not take part in initial meetings on early days, they have shown their commitments now. This is a good beginning. I am happy to say that we are able to set the consensus ball rolling.

Do they seem prepared to sort out their differences?

That is the major crux. Political leaders have not shown any indication that they will back out from their party stands. If they come up with clear cut visions and stands, we can write the constitution in time. About three months are enough time to draft the constitution.

Do you still see the possibility of promulgating the constitution in time?

If political leaders don't develop consensus on certain core political issues, it is impossible to write the constitution. Given the present scenario with differences on all fundamental issues, the Constitutional Committee cannot produce a draft in just less than a month. Given the current political deadlock, I don't think we can produce any draft in time. I cannot start the drafting process until there is a certain agreement among major political parties on fundamental issues.

This means you cannot prepare the draft in time?

There are widespread disputes and disagreements. How can we write a new constitution in such a situation? There is the need of consensus at least on the forms of government, the structure of the state, judiciary and commissions. There are wide differences on all reports of thematic committees, except one report.

If there is political consensus, don't you think the constitution will be promulgated?

I have already told you that writing the constitution is not difficult if there is consensus. If political leaders agree on the basics of the constitution, nothing is impossible.

So, it all depends on political consensus. Right?

Yes. Political leaders are now in the driving seat.

If that is the case, what is the use of the elected Constituent Assembly?

The constitution is a not purely a legal document but it is also a political document.

How are political leaders responding to you since you organized meetings of senior leaders of the political parties?

All the political leaders have expressed the commitments that they are ready to support in promulgating the constitution in time. This is a good gesture but they need to translate it into reality.

What do you mean by reality?

You cannot write the constitution without agreement on certain issues. Political leaders must agree whether they want to write the constitution by following constitutionalism. Whether they want to follow liberal political system or not? All such basic things need to be settled.

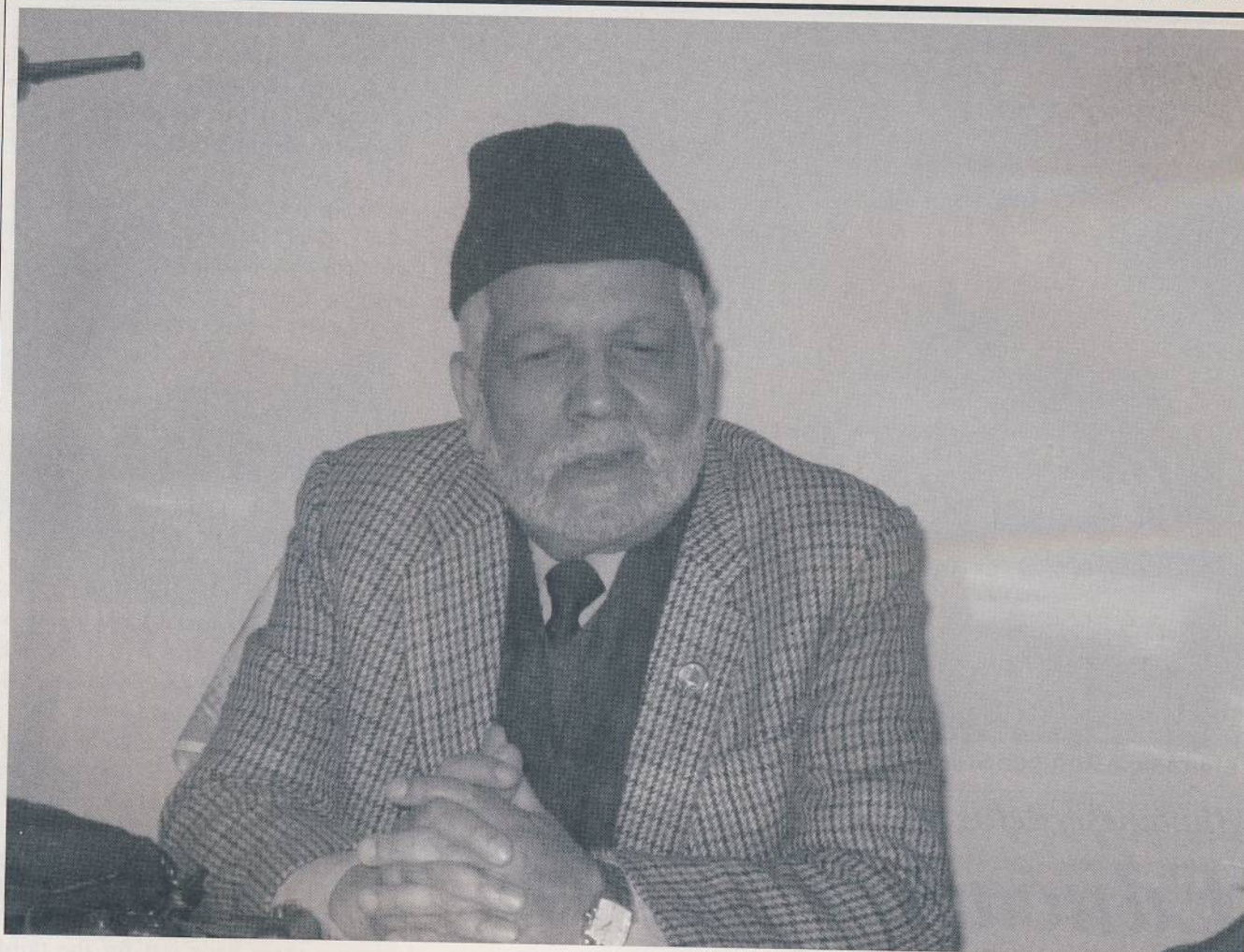
Is it possible to write the draft of the constitution on the basis of concept papers?

How can we write a single draft when there are differences in almost all issues? Only one draft of the committee of division of natural resources has produced a consensus document. At a time when there are differences over issues like the number of constitutional commissions, I don't think we will be able to write the constitution in time.

It is said that the ball is now in the court of the Constitutional Committee to produce the first draft of the constitution. How do you look at the comment?

According to the regulations of the Constituent Assembly, we have certain roles. The first role is as a thematic committee, that is, to prepare the thematic paper on the preamble of the constitution, flag, national anthem and national symbol. The other role of the committee is to integrate all the concept papers and drafts prepared by other thematic committees. After completion of the first role, we took up the second role to integrate the drafts of all four committees on Magh 21. Except the drafts from panels on

Political leaders have not shown any indication that they will back out from their party stands. If they come up with clear cut visions and stands, we can write the constitution in time.



Constitutional Commission and Natural Resources and Revenue Distribution, we received no reports of other committees.

Why was this delayed?

There is a provision in the regulation that the reports of the thematic committees need to be passed by CA after discussions before sending them to CC with suggestions and recommendations. Only after the completion of this process, we can begin to draft the constitution. Since there are wider disputes in all the reports, CA did not pass any of the report.

Don't you see there are possibilities to lessen the differences?

Although they are serious disputes, it is possible to lessen the differences. As you know, the differences are on the basis of political ideology. I have already told you that it is the political leaders who can take the final decision.

Given the political consensus among major political parties, will you write the constitution in time?

If there is an agreement among the major three

political parties UCPN-M, Nepali Congress and CPN-UML, we can promulgate the constitution in time. Along with these three major political parties, there is also the need of agreement among all 22 parties represented in the CA.

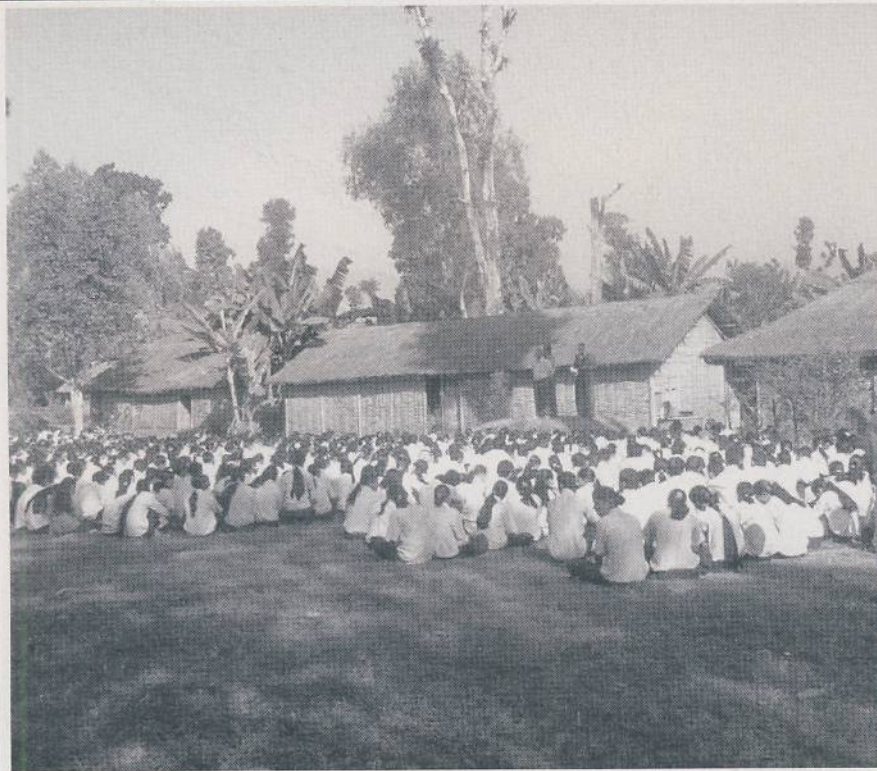
If the CA does not promulgate the constitution in time, what will be the consequences?

We still have time to write the new constitution and promulgate it by the deadline. Since we have been making every effort to meet the deadline, there is ample reason to be hopeful.

You finalized the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990, how do you compare the situation then and now?

The constitution of 1990 was drafted by the nominated body of dozens of people and now 601 members are taking part in the constitution making. There are major differences now and then. In 1990, political parties had agreements on basic issues like constitutional monarchy, parliamentary democracy, free press and independence of judiciary. This kind of agreement is not there this time. This is the reason there are wider differences in all the issues. ■

There are major differences now and then. In 1990, political parties had agreements on basic issues like constitutional monarchy, parliamentary democracy, free press and independence of judiciary.



Bhutanese Refugee Students : Decreasing Number

Bhutanese Refugees

Education Suffers

After the resettlement process began, the number of the Bhutanese refugee students has been decreasing and it is said that the entire education programme for the refugees has been adversely affected.

By **UMAKANTAKHANAL**
in Jhapa

More than 26 thousand Bhutanese refugees have been resettled in the third countries like the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand etc. As the refugees' resettlement continues, students and teachers in the schools of the refugee camps are among those leaving for the third countries and those in the camps are a changed lot now-a-days.

A project of Caritas Nepal, which implements the education programme of the UNHCR, said that the behaviour of the students of the Bhutanese refugees has totally changed: They do not pay heed to their studies.

Caritas Nepal, Damak office, data show few students who appeared the sent up test for the SLC examination from different camps got through. Only 179 out of 1,597 students passed the test. The pass percentage is 11.

The chief of Caritas Nepal, Damak, says the poor result was because of their mentality that they would be resettled very soon. "They are going to the other world. They do not come to the classes. They bunk the classes. In the first hour they are in the class, but in the second hour they are absent from the class," says Father Amalraj.

He says that the interest of the refugee students to study was in the high level but it has become just

opposite.

Caritas Nepal claims that it regularly visits the schools of the refugee camps and says that the behaviour of the students is beyond the control of their parents.

Father Amalraj says, "I have seen many students. Even the girls, who seemed more obedient earlier, are not obeying their parents now."

He says that if this continues the entire programme of educating the Bhutanese refugees' children will be affected.

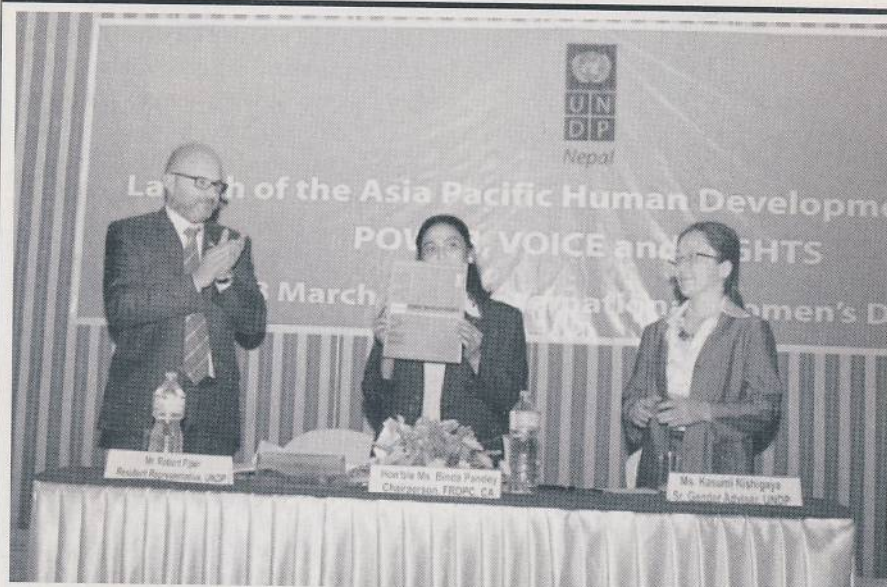
When the programme of resettlement in the third countries began in October 2007, the number of the Bhutanese refugee students was thirty two thousand and thirty five. By the end of 2008, the number decreased and it was twenty seven thousand three hundred and sixty seven. And five thousand three hundred and twenty students left for the third countries in the year 2009.

Caritas says approximately five thousand students are leaving the camps yearly to the third countries. Not only students but also teachers are flying to the third countries. According to Caritas, among eight hundred and fifty three teachers, five hundred and seventy three have left for the third countries but Caritas could only recruit four hundred ninety four teachers for the schools in the camps. It is the major factor that has affected the education system in the camps.

According to Caritas Nepal, the refugee students not only bunk their classes, they are also getting more violent in their demeanour to their teachers.

Father Amalraj has many examples. "A student used violence against the assistant head teacher. He gave a blow on the nose of the teacher. He was profusely bleeding. When the class teacher was asked about the student, the student was unknown even to his teachers. This means the students admitted in the schools are bunking their classes."

Caritas has emphasised even if the refugees are resettling in the third countries, the Bhutanese refugee students should be attentive in their studies which would assist them in the third countries too. ■



State of Women: Matter of concern

WOMEN

Unfair Deal

Despite having made some real gains, Nepalese women remain far from achieving a status at par with men

By **ABIJIT SHARMA**

South Asia's gender gap indicators show that women in the sub-continent compare with women in the African Sub-Saharan. Only 36 percent of South Asian women participate in the labor market. The figure is far below the global average of 53 percent.

The whole of Asia-Pacific region, along with South Asia, has the second lowest percentage of women parliamentarians in the world.

Several South Asian nations still do not have laws on domestic violence.

Women in this part of Asia lack power in all three areas regarded as the most important in producing gender equality: Economic power, political voice and legal rights.

Surprisingly, Nepal's statistics on women show positive signs in all the three areas – meaning the conditions of women have definitely improved over time. The percentage of Nepalese women in the labor force is 59% compared to 53% for entire South Asia.

According to NLSS 2004, women make up 11% of the total contributors of remittance, which provides a great support to the economy of Nepal.

Similarly, 1/3 quota secured for women in the constituent assembly undoubtedly proves that political voices of women are getting stronger.

The government has provided many legal rights related to women. One good example is the decision to issue citizenship on behalf of the mother instead of the previous provision requiring the father to do so.

Nepal also has an impressive figure in the ratio of female-to-male primary school enrollment. The figure for Nepal is 95 compared to 93.6 for the whole of South Asia.

Despite all these developments, progress appears lopsided. For example, there is a huge difference in the earnings between men and women, with women earning only 60% of what men earn, while doing the same job.

Legally, although Nepal adopted the Domestic Violence Act in 2009 and

embarked on the implementation of an anti-domestic violence programme across the country, cases of domestic violence, especially in the Terai, are frequently heard. This inequality has set back the country's development and can even act as a hindrance in the way to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

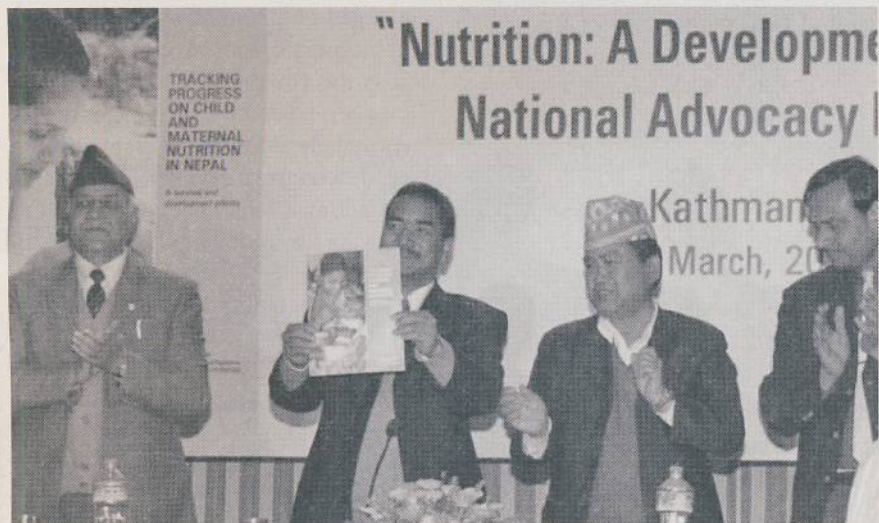
At a program to launch a report by UNDP, 'Power, voice and rights: A turning point for gender equality in Asia and Pacific', UNDP Resident Representative, Robert Piper said, "Due to the persisting gender inequality, progress is negated, and also depriving the countries a significant contribution from women."

The report states that gender equality is a right, gender equality is good economics and gender equality promotes democracy. Without ensuring equality, development for Nepal cannot be ensured. So, what can be done to improve the condition of women in Nepal?

The report provides possible solutions. Firstly, in order to ensure economic power of women, economic policies to support gender equality must be crafted, so that men and women get equal opportunities in labor market. If women are financially secure, they stand in a more negotiable position, and hence, they will be able to support themselves. Secondly, political participation of women should be boosted through quotas with legal compliance mechanisms, civil service, political party reform etc.

The report also suggests that in order to ensure legal rights of women, gender-equitable laws should be pursued. Gaps between laws and legal practices should be closed down and every law related to women should be implemented thoroughly. Women in Nepal are very much disadvantaged due to cultural, moral and religious values and ethics. Hence, old laws and practices need to be reformed. Laws on women in owning and controlling assets need be set up.

The report clarifies that gender equality equally benefits both men and women, and hence asks civil society, media, academic institutions, religious organizations etc. to help in fostering new attitudes to remove gender stereotypes. ■



Releasing Report : Dismal Picture

Malnutrition

Thought For Food

Although Nepal has made some achievements in child health, a recently released report reveals that unless under-nutrition is tackled, real progress will be elusive

By A CORRESPONDENT

Nepal has several gains to boast in the health sector, especially in the areas of infant mortality and immunization coverage.

Lives of millions of children have been saved thanks to some sustained efforts.

But the picture is not all rosy. The Nepal Nutrition Report Card, launched at a high level meeting recently, has found that every second Nepali child is malnourished.

Amidst a gathering of all the stakeholders, Minister for Population and Health Mahesh Chaudhari said the report was the first of its kind which disclosed that an overwhelming number of Nepalese children were under-nourished.

Members of donor communities, who have been spending most of their resources on the Constituent Assembly, expressed their commitment to support programmes aimed at providing nutrition to the children.

Highlighting the magnitude of malnutrition in the country, the report,

launched by the Department of Health Services, was released at a meeting organised to discuss the central role of nutrition in development and the urgent need to scale up efforts to address child and maternal under-nutrition and realise the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

The report "Tracking Progress on Child and Maternal Nutrition in Nepal" noted that while commendable progress had been made in addressing micronutrient deficiencies, not enough had been done to tackle general malnutrition given the scale of the problem.

Nepal has made slow, but steady, progress in cutting poverty in the past decade. However, unless radical efforts are taken, pervasive child and maternal under-nutrition threatens to derail Nepal's development progress. Approximately 1.7 million children, or nearly half of all children aged under-five in the country are stunted or suffer from chronic malnutrition.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Yashovardhan Pradhan, Director General of Department of Health Services, said,

"The fact that one in every two children is suffering from chronic malnutrition has severe consequences for the intellectual capacity of the country. Nepal will always be deprived of its full potential if this is not addressed. This is a very serious concern for all."

The UNICEF Global Report highlighted that for children under five, the period of greatest vulnerability to nutritional deficiencies was very early in life: from the womb and continuing until the child was two years old.

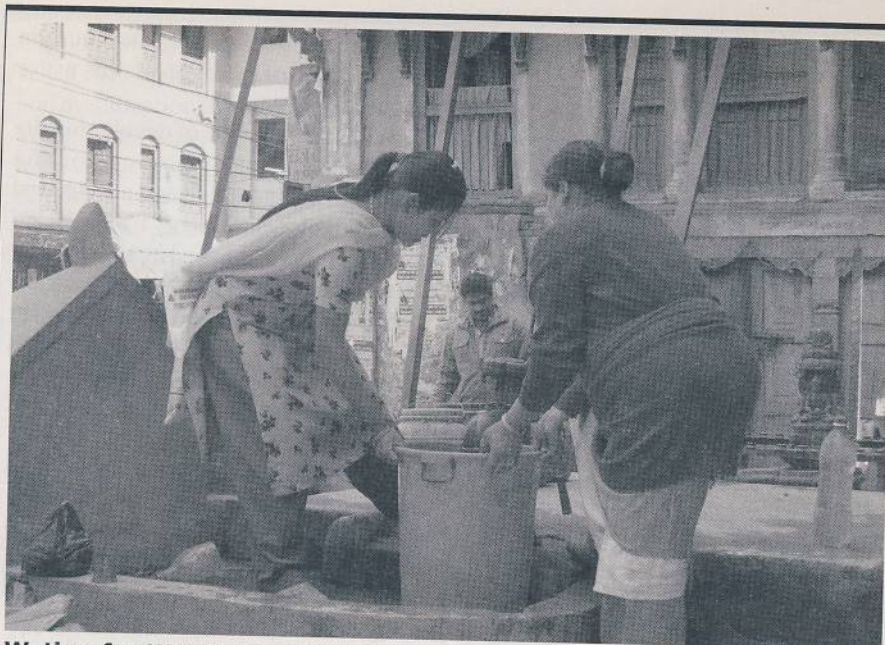
This period is also when the brain develops significantly. If a child is undernourished during this critical window of opportunity, the intellectual damage done is irreversible.

Recognising the magnitude of the problem and centrality of nutrition to the country's development, the Government of Nepal, with support from development partners, recently conducted an assessment and gap analysis of the nutrition sector, which showed that under-nutrition was more profound and broader than just a health issue. There is a need to strengthen the institutional framework and capacity; increase resource allocation to scale up and sustain proven nutrition interventions; and there is a need to stress multi-sectoral actions to tackle the underlying causes of under-nutrition. It was also highlighted that nutrition will receive strong prominence in the upcoming national health sector plan.

The meeting, attended by government agencies and major external donor partners, highlighted the importance of adequate food security in tackling malnutrition. Persistent high food prices, the financial crisis, coupled with recurrent droughts in many parts of the country, have worsened food insecurity with wider implications for nutritional security in the country.

In her address to the meeting, UNICEF Representative, Ms. Gillian Mellsop pointed out that Nepal, as a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child "has a moral and legal obligation to protect children."

The meeting concluded with the participants pledging to 'act now' to protect children from the ill effects of under-nutrition. ■



Waiting for Water : Depleting Sources

Kathmandu Aquifer Depleting Under Ground

As the nature follows its ground rules, the quality and quantity of underground water have suffered due to overuse and pollution.

By **ADITI PANDEY**

Underground water is used all around the world for various purposes. Nepal has also been using its rich sources of underground water like 'dhugne dhara', common wells and hand pumps to meet its need for clean, safe and usable water. Residents of Kathmandu valley also make use of ground water.

As our historical records suggest, Kathmandu valley is believed to have been a huge lake in the past. The valley had a large amount of water in its bedrock, or was home to an aquifer. Kathmandu denizens learnt to use underground water from the very beginning.

Unfortunately, as the nature follows its ground rules, the quality and quantity of water have suffered due to overuse and pollution.

Underground water is used in

Kathmandu by a few farmers for irrigation, by people who have lost hope in the government run taps for household purposes and by hospitals and industries as a backup or for their own purposes. As scarcity of water grows in many areas of the city, the usage of underground water has increased massively. As a result, the balance of recharge and extraction of water from the aquifer has been affected.

A study by the Bureau of Rural Science in the year 2001 estimated the recharge rate of Kathmandu's aquifer to be 40,000 to 1.2 million m³/year, which is approximately 20 times less than the estimated amount of water extracted every year.

Decrease in water level has been well recognized by the locals of the city.

Bigyan Dev Pandey, a resident of Nakkhu, Bhanisepati, shares that previously water filled up from the 17th

ring of his well, but in five years, he was bound to add 8 additional rings to his well to find water.

Another local, Mrs. Bina Neupane, a resident of old Baneshwor, complains that she was forced to use ground water as it became impossible for her to wake up at 2 a.m every morning to collect tap water.

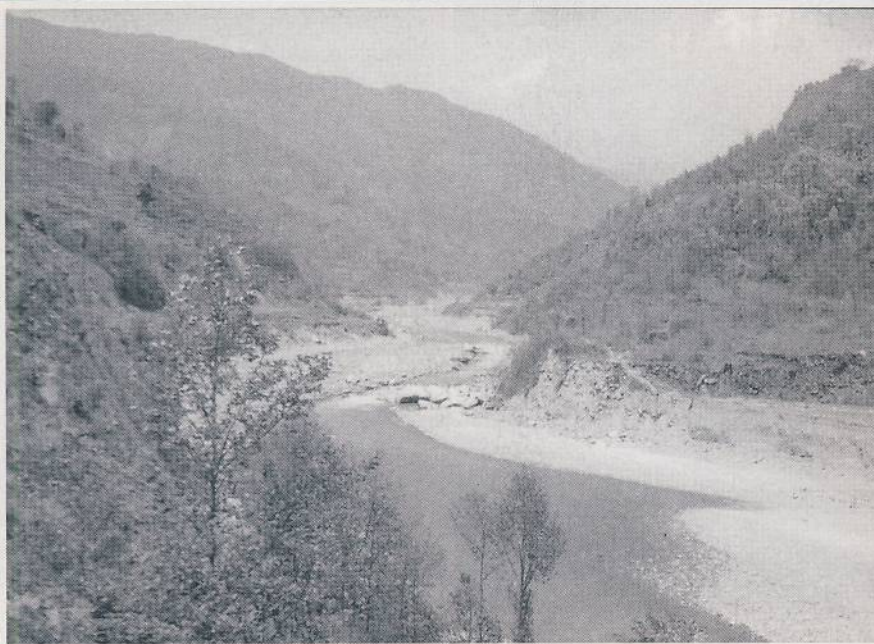
With its deteriorating rivers, haphazard urbanization and unplanned industrialization, Kathmandu valley is suffering from severe water crisis. As a result, the quality of underground water is also deteriorating.

The WHO guideline for the amount of iron (Fe) contamination in usable underground water is 0.3 mg/L, but some parts of Kathmandu showed iron contamination up to 26 mg/L. In addition, further research showed Ammonia (NH₃) contamination was up to 37.41 mg/L. Presence of ammonia indicates water pollution due to human activities or natural decay processes. It indicates seepage of sewage water where maximum bacterial decay of nitrogenous organic wastes occurs. Other pollutants such as Nitrate and Manganese have also been identified in the underground water of Kathmandu, making water treatment a compulsion.

Underground water reserves have a very slow rate of movement and are non-turbulent. The aquifer of our valley is both confined and shallow, and its movement is very little. Thus foreign contaminants are not properly diluted, making it impossible for the aquifer to cleanse itself naturally.

On the contrary, for the people of the valley, it is better to be late than never. They need to first start with the basics. Control of misuse and exploitation of water, proper treatment of water before use, sufficient supply from other sources besides ground water and spreading awareness amongst people are the first few *must do's* to save Nepal from further water crisis.

This article is a first step to share information and knowledge about how to start good practices. It is your turn now to contribute a little from your side, for many small contributions can make a huge difference! ■



WATER AND ENERGY COMMISSION

Continuing Relevance

When Nepal begins to function fully as a federal state leaving behind the unitary legacy, conflicts will be bound to happen over the use of natural resources. Severe power and drinking water shortages in the midst of the new phenomenon of climate change will be tougher to tackle. In that context, the long experience of Water and Energy Commission Secretariat (WECS) can be of great help.

By A CORRESPONDENT

Thirty five years are a long enough time for an institution to prove its utility. The Water and Energy Commission (WECS), which celebrated its 35th annual day function recently, made strategies and policies and, in some cases, implemented programs in the water resources sector over all those years. Although it saw many ups and downs, it never lost its relevance.

Speakers at the anniversary function hailed the role and contribution of WECS in formulating and guiding the water resources strategy. They stressed the need to give it a special position in the changed political context as the country transformed from a unitary state to a federal republican setup.

"In the federal republic of Nepal, WECS has an important role to play from

management of resources to sharing water. Given its expertise and institutional capabilities, it will play the role effectively," said Energy Minister and Chair of WECS, Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat.

"The institution has modified itself in the past as per the need of the country."

Although Nepal has water resources at hand, the country continues to face three chronic problems related to shortage of water: long hours of load shedding, scarcity of drinking water and lack of irrigation.

"Expertise and resources available in the country need to be utilized in the broader interest of the country," said Dr. Dinesh Chandra Devkota, member of the National Planning Commission.

"WECS has proven its utility in the past and it has to play an important role in the future," said Devkota. "WECS can

be made an apex body in the future in the question of sharing of the water resources."

With the objective of developing the water and energy resources of the country in an integrated and accelerated manner, Water and Energy Commission (WECS) was established in 1981.

Conducting various important studies with the support from different international as well as government organization, WECS formulated the Water Resources Strategy in 2002 and National Water Plan in 2005.

"WECS was envisaged to develop and formulate water resources strategy with an aim to create an apex body to see the development and implementation of plans on water and energy resources," said former secretary *Bhutanese* Kumar Pradhan. "Since WECS has institutional capabilities as well as expertise, it should be given the role to implement projects and settle the disputes on sharing the water resources."

From the study on Glacier Lake Outburst to formulating the water plan and strategy, WECS has been also involved in flood forecasting as well as river basin management. It also played a role in providing suggestions and guidance regarding the multi-purpose mega and medium scale projects.

"Of course, WECS has a number of challenges in the future to keep it as an independent body but it has to bear bigger responsibilities in the future. At a time when there are possibilities of disputes during the question of water resources sharing, WECS is going to be the only organization capable to handle them," said Laxman Ghimire, former water resources minister and chief whip of Nepali Congress.

The situation that paved the way to establish Water and Energy Commission thirty five years ago has not changed now. After the promulgation of the new constitution for federal Nepal, the situation will be more complex in the context of utilization and mobilization of natural resources by the provinces and local bodies.

"Water is the country's major resource. Only through the utilization of water, the country can be made rich. In this context, an organization like WECS has more important role to play in the future," said Minister of State for Power

Chandra Singh Bhattarai.

In the context of sharing, utilization and mobilization of water resources, the Water and Energy Commission –which has expertise, experience and information- is going to be all important.

To assume a role of independent central authority, WECS will need to have more legislative or constitutional mandates.

“It should be given certain degree of legal or constitutional role at the central level, particularly in planning and policy making. As stated in the National Water Plan 2005, the WECS can play an important role in preparing the long and short term water planning,” said Suryanath Upadhyaya, water resources expert. “In the changing context, WECS should be given the role in technical clearance of the projects as well as advisory role in negotiations.”

Chaired by Minister for Energy, WECS includes secretaries of various eleven government ministries, two experts in the field of Water Resources and Energy from nongovernmental organizations, dean of the Institute of Engineering Association, and the Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industries representative as members.

“Since a commission like WECS which was set up under the executive order has no use, there must be a legal or constitutional provision to guide the WECS,” said Somnath Poudel, water resources expert and former executive secretary of WECS secretariat. “WECS can be made apex body in water resource sector.”

WECS provides assistance to the concerned ministries in formulating policies and objectives to be included in the perspective/periodic plan related to the water resources and energy sector. It also provides suggestions, recommendations and guidance with regard to the multi-purpose (mega and medium scale only) projects development as well as to irrigation, hydropower, drinking water, industrial use of water, flood management and water navigation, and also regarding the promotion and development of such mega and medium scale projects and protection of environmental aspects relating to above sectors.

“You cannot run an institution like WECS on an ad hoc basis. The Nepalese

tradition is that the commissions are made for temporary purposes. If WECS has any utility there in the changed context, it should be made an apex body in the constitution to see all the water resources related issues,” said Dr. Navaraj Khatiwada, a development expert.

According to regulations, WECS’s functions, duties and rights are to review and cause to review the multipurpose, mega and medium scale water resources projects before they are sanctioned by the government of Nepal and recommend for their implementation as well and to help formulate necessary policies and strategies conducting study, research, survey and analysis with regards to various aspects of water resources and energy development keeping with the priorities and targets of the government of Nepal.

In broader functions, it also analyzes bilateral or multilateral projects relating to the development of water resources and energy, to formulate policies in this respect and to review the detailed study and analysis of such projects. It also enacts the necessary laws pertaining to the development of water resources and energy. Its duty is also to forge coordination among national and sectoral policies relating to water resources and energy sector.

Although WECS has broader mandate, it is now under the Ministry of Energy. “Since WECS is not an implementing agency for projects related to water resources and energy, it is an apex body to generate opinion and coordinate among various ministries, NGOs and INGOs working in water resources and energy sector. It is unjustifiable to place the WECS under a particular ministry,” said Senior Divisional Engineer Shishir Koirala.

International Support

Along with the government of Nepal, international agencies are also supporting the WECS to perform its research. The World Bank has provided support to WECS for the formulation of Nepal Water Resources Strategy and Preparation of the National Water Plan. The Bank is currently supporting WECS for institutional and policy support from improved water management under irrigation and water resources management. Asian Development Bank, Japan International Cooperation Agency



and UNDP are also supporting WECS in various sectors.

The World Bank has provided a loan assistance under the Nepal Irrigation Sector Project for the formulation of Nepal Water Resources Strategy and the preparation of the National Water Plan. Presently, the Bank is supporting WECS for institutional and policy support for improved water management under Irrigation and Water Resources Management Project. Similarly, ADB has been providing technical assistance in various country study and research programs conducted by WECS including preparation of draft resettlement policy.

According to WECS, ICIMOD has initiated GLOF assessment and mitigation study of potential dangerous glacier lakes in Nepal.

WWF-Nepal has been providing assistance for initiating formulation of the Koshi River Basin Management Program (KRBM). The KRBM is piloting integrated River Basin Management approach in managing water and related resources in Koshi River Basin as guided by National Water Plan, 2005.

WECS is regarded very high profile because of its designation as a focal point for research and pilot activities by UNESCAP, ICID, WCD and others. Member of the International Commission on Large Dams and acting as a secretariat of the ICOLD-Nepal National Committee, WECS is a focal point of BIMSTEC.

From national and international perspectives, WECS has its own recognition at all levels. In the changing context, the time has now come to make WECS and independent apex body to look after all the issues related to water resources. ■

“The role of WECS will be much more important in the federal structure”

- KISHORE THAPA

KISHORE THAPA, Secretary at Water and Energy Commission (WECS), is well known person. Having long experiences in various fields, secretary Thapa spoke to *NEW SPOTLIGHT* on various issues regarding WECS. Excerpts:

In the past WECS has played very important role in policy making in water and energy sector. What is the current status of WECS?

The Government of Nepal has recognized WECS as the apex body in water and energy sector and has assigned several responsibilities to it. After formulating National Water Resources Strategy-2002 and National Water Plan -2005, WECS is now focusing on energy sector and is currently preparing National Energy Strategy. The draft document is ready and is in the process of approval by the government. WECS is also supporting the National Planning Commission in the process of formulation of the next Three Year Interim Plan and is focusing on water and energy sector.

Nepal has been transforming from unitary state to federal state, what role do you perceive for the organization as WECS?

The role of WECS will be much more important in the federal structure of the country. Since rivers are the life lines and unifying factor for the people living in different geographical regions, irrespective of caste, religion and ethnicity. Since rivers do not follow any political boundary, the water resources of the country which is abundant at present should be managed at the local level. While managing water resources of the country, first of all we should know how much water do we possess, where does it exist? In what form? And what are the potential uses of water? In the federal structure, there may be conflict in water use in between different provinces and between local government and provincial government. WECS as a central water planning agency will keep the national water account and develop water allocation

system. It will serve the central, provincial and local governments in the management of the water resources at respective levels.

As Nepal is in the process of constitution writing, how do your organization supported in constitution making?

WECS was invited in discussion held by various committees of the Constituent Assembly. Some of the noteworthy contributions made by officials of WECS were in Natural Resources Allocation Committee and National Interest Safeguard Committee. WECS was also requested by the former committee to review the report prepared it and make any suggestions or comments for amending it. WECS, in partnership with Jalasrot Vikas Sanstha (a non-profit organization), organized a two day discussion program for reviewing the recommendations of the Committee. About 25 eminent water resources experts had participated in the discussion and provided their valuable input. WECS likes to contribute in the other dimensions of the constitution like state restructuring and conservation of natural resources and heritage.

As Nepal is celebrating World Water Day, how WECS can contribute?

WECS is taking a lead role in the celebration of the World Water Day. Actually we are organizing a weeklong (March 17-23) events to observe the day. A National Organizing Committee, consisting of government officials, semi-government officials, representatives of the private sector and NGOs has been formed under the Chairmanship of the Secretary of WECS. WECS will guide and support all the stakeholders involved in conservation and development of the water resources at national, regional and local level.

Since climate change is going to affect Nepal's glaciers, how will it affect Nepal's energy and water sector?

Climate change will have adverse effect on water as well as energy sector. Melting of glaciers due to temperature rise will lead to formation of glacier lakes

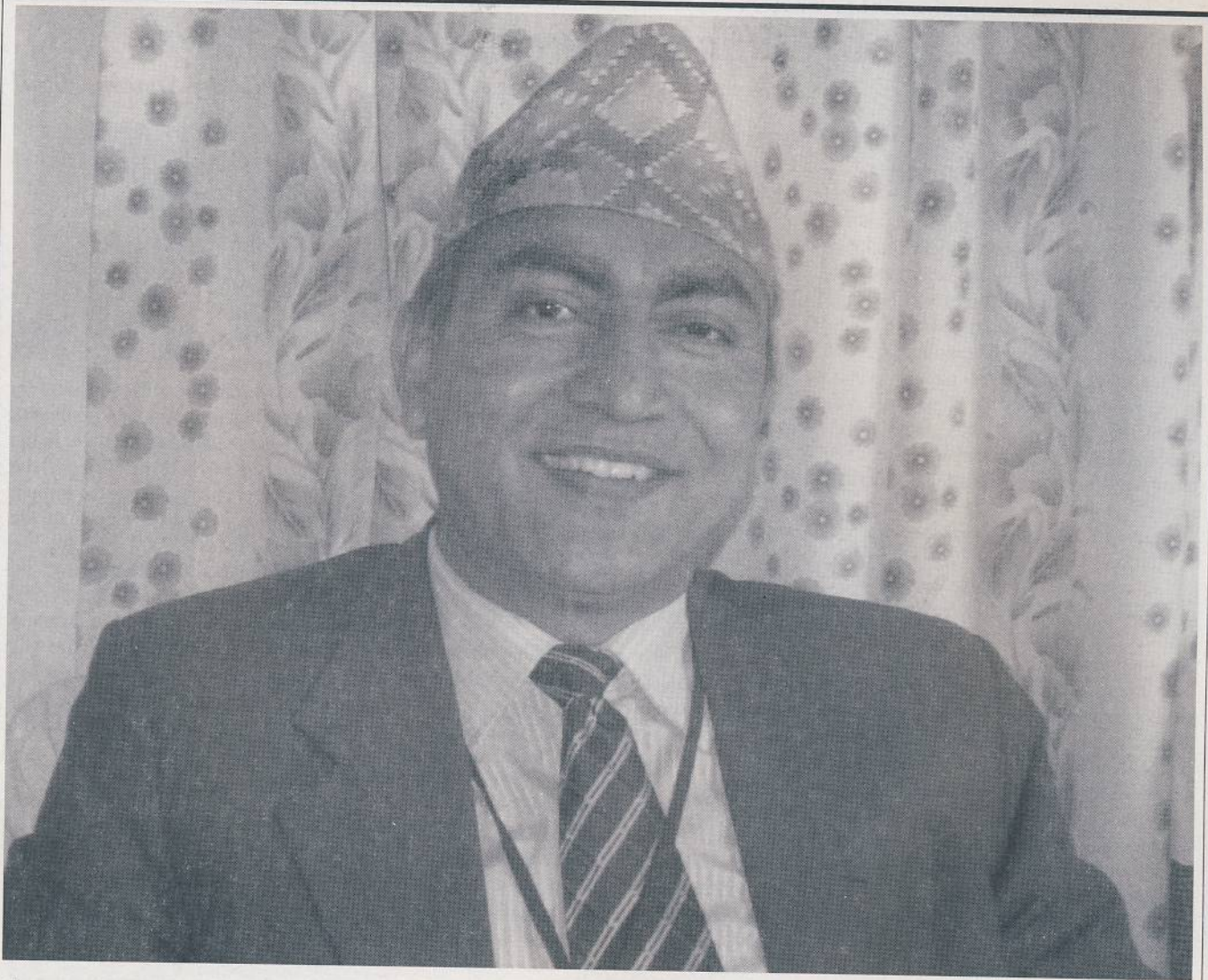
that may trigger Glacier Lakes Outburst Flood (GLOF). GLOF will have devastating impact on our physical infrastructure, particularly hydro-power stations downstream. Although the magnitude of rainfall will not decrease, higher intensity of rain may lead to flash floods. I have received some positive information from ICIMOD that the number of glacier lakes has decreased from 2323 to about 1450 and only three glacier lakes are potential threats. This is good news for all of us but we have to be always alert.

How an international organization has been supporting WECS in its efforts?

WECS is a popular institution for the donor community. It received technical and financial support from CIDA for more than two decades. It has received support from other donors like the World Bank and ADB. Currently the World Bank is supporting Irrigation and Water Resources Management Project. WECS is implementing Component C of the project which includes capacity building of WECS and formulation of National Water Resources Policy and amendment in the existing water resources legislation. Currently, we are negotiating with GTZ for launching a program for energy efficiency.

As a pioneer organization having expertise on water and energy issues, what role WECS can play?

WECS can play vital role in the water and energy sector of Nepal. WECS's expertise on river basin planning and management, modeling of water use and allocation, development of multi-purpose projects and trans-boundary water issues will be very useful for the government agencies as well as private developers. It can provide technical support on resettlement and rehabilitation programs in hydro-electric projects, water optimization in river basins and resolution of the conflict between different competing uses of water. No other institution in the country can provide a holistic overview of the water sector of Nepal than WECS. On



the energy side, WECS is developing its capability in strategic planning of the energy sector, energy efficiency, demand side management and optimization of different sources of energy.

Nepal has been facing water as well as energy crisis? How do you see the future?

The present crisis is the result of our inaction of the past. During the last one decade we could not do much in harnessing our water resources, particularly hydropower. The electricity supply could not match the ever increasing demand because of the nature of our hydro-electric projects (Run of River type). In order to get out of the vicious circle, we have to add more projects in a shorter span of time and develop transmission network to evacuate the energy generated from different power stations. I served as the coordinator of the task force to

formulate Twenty Year Hydro-electricity Development Plan. During the study, I found that if we honestly work hard, the country can generate 1815 MW of electricity by the year 2014 out of which 1645MW will be available for domestic consumption and the rest for export. The next five years will be crucial for the energy sector of the country. As morning shows the day, this period will show whether we can generate 10,000 MW in ten years or 20,000MW in twenty years, which various governments have pledged in recent years.

In which area WECS is involved now?

WECS is involved in piloting of Integrated Water Resource Management concept in Koshi River basin and is collaborating with WWF in livelihood improvement through wise use of water. We are finalizing the draft of the National Water Resources Policy and National Energy Strategy. We are

upgrading our institutional capacity in river basin planning and management and trans-boundary water management. We are working on Twenty-year Hydro-electricity Development Plan and river basin planning of the major river basins of Nepal. In the next two years we will start a new project on the improvement of Bagmati basin. ■

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Looking At Climate Change Through Water

Dr. Ravi Sharma Aryal

Climate change has become a serious threat to the existence of human civilization and environment. Water is an integral component of climate change and the primary medium through which it exhibits its impacts. With the world facing growing water challenges in many regions, the effect of climate change on future societies cannot be understood without examining this most vital resource (water) of our planet. Changes in our water resources are shaped to a great extent by a number of key externalities. Among them is the climate change. Decisions taken far from the conventionally defined water sector have a tremendous influence on water resources and how they are used or misused.

Climate change directly affects the water cycle and, through it, the quantity of water resources available to meet human and environmental demands. This can lead to both floods and drought. Rising sea levels have a serious effect on coastal aquifers, a major source of urban and regional water supply systems, and higher water temperatures and changes in extremes can exacerbate many forms of water pollution, water supply reliability, health, agriculture, energy and aquatic ecosystem — all will feel the impact of these changes to the water cycle. The demand for water to meet these needs is also affected by climate change.

The importance of water to sustainable social and economic development cannot be underestimated, yet many countries are already facing multiple water challenges, all of them compounded by climate change.

Climate change is a reality. All countries must adapt to climate change and particularly developing countries like Nepal are vulnerable to climate change and many of them will be hit the hardest and the earliest. The impact will be seen in increasing water stress in many regions, more extreme weather events and the potential for large population migration.

Mountains are among the regions most affected by climate change, and some of the clearest evidence, such as the shrinkage of glaciers, comes from mountain areas. Mountains provide freshwater to half of the world's population for irrigation, industry, domestic use and hydropower. Climate change will affect the availability of water. In many cases, this will mean less water when it is most needed.

Thus climate change is experienced most directly through its impacts on water availability. The effects of climate change

are likely to aggravate the situation. Nepal is one of the most vulnerable countries, as its present water resources management technologies and capacities are inadequate and insufficient.

Adverse changes in internal, inter-jurisdictional and trans-boundary water can put food, social, health, economic, political and military security at risk. Government policy on key water services and functions must prioritize strengthening competencies and institutions, and ensuring the infrastructure investment necessary for the long-term water security. But policy choices and other decisions made outside the water domain are also crucial if we are to change and improve how water is allocated and used, as well as making the adaptation to new, more efficient management systems more effective and less costly.

In Nepal, rises in temperature related to global warming are associated with changes to rainfall patterns (example-less frequent but more intense rainfall events), increasing frequency and intensity of floods, changes in monsoon on and offset, longer dry spells and drought events, increasing storms, and growing threats from Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOF). Anthropogenic climate change is exacerbating the situation by depleting the water of Asia, including that of the mighty Himalayas. It is not only depleting the resources but also increasing the water induced disasters as well. Some studies have revealed that the intensity and frequency of water induced disasters are increasing rapidly. As a result, disasters like prolonged drought, inundation, landslides, etc. are crippling the country's economy. At the same time, our snow reserves are depleting thereby affecting the supply and demand situation of the country as these reserves are of utmost importance as it supplements water during the dry season. Climate change in mountains will thus have important implications for irrigation, urbanization and industrialization, and hydropower generation.

Temperature and precipitation in the form of rainfall and snow largely determine the hydrological cycle, including runoff. Changes in these factors will thus impact freshwater supplies from mountain areas and have implications for water availability in the lowlands.

Recently, Copenhagen Accord has recognized climate change as the greatest challenge for all the counties of the world. The Accord expresses a strong political will

to urgently combat climate change. Urgent need for adaptation by Least Developed Countries, Small Island Developing States and vulnerable Countries in Africa has been re-stressed.



There is a commitment of \$30b for three years (2010-2012) from developed countries for mitigation and adaptation actions in the developing countries with priority for the most vulnerable countries despite the amount being little, compared to the need of the developing countries.

Nepal should quantify her vulnerability to adverse impacts of climate change and assess the needs for adaptation in numbers for accessing the resources from the developed countries. This accord also had opened some opportunity to the low emitting developing country like Nepal with a high hydropower potentiality, the zero emission energy.

Water is the life line of all people. Managing water with the principle of Integrated Water Resources Management could help us to tackle freshwater related climate change effect. Water and Energy Commission (WECS), the *Think Tank* of the Government of Nepal is heavily focused on these days on the study of Water Resources, framing National Water Plan and Strategy together with preparing Energy Sector Policy. WECS as the Central Authority of River Basin Office is also engaged now to establish River Basin Offices in different parts of the country to study on water cycle system following the principle of IWRM.

Finally, climate change impact on the water has become a serious challenge for the existence of human being. There are several implications for Nepal too. This will mean water should be used more efficiently, increasing storage capacities, and establishing, or re-visiting, institutional arrangements for sharing water equitably within and between nations.

There are major impacts on water due to climate change and it is now time to adopt proper measures to reduce its impact on our society. Similarly, Government of Nepal should establish a Specific Authority to study on the impact of climate change and adaptation in Nepal and introduce Climate Change Policy as soon as possible to cope with the issues. ■

SAFJUAA Meeting

The third reunion of South Asian Federation of Japanese Universities Alumni Associations (SAFJUAA) ended on March 14th in Kathmandu with a common commitment to making the South Asian region more peaceful and prosperous by involving the Japanese graduate alumni members and associations.

Delegates and alumni associations of Japanese universities from countries like Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka were part of the re-union.

With an aim to share experience of various Nepalese experts, who went to Japan for study, the conference gave an opportunity to discuss the various development issues and challenges faced by their own countries.

From senior bureaucrats to scholars and others, the gathering is unique with the participation of people of various walks of life. One of the important parts of the conference was that it brought all the experts of South Asian countries having similar challenges and situation.

“SAFJUAA is an association which is and will always help in strengthening

culture among their countries and the whole region.

Japanese ambassador Tatsuo Mizuno expressed his gratitude for



SAFJUAA Meeting : Sharing Experiences

relationships between the member countries and also their relationship with Japan,” said Keshav Shrestha, President of Japanese University Alumni Association Nepal (JUAAN).

Delegates from all the participating countries vowed to use their expertise gained in Japan in promoting Japanese

holding such an ‘innovative’ meeting.

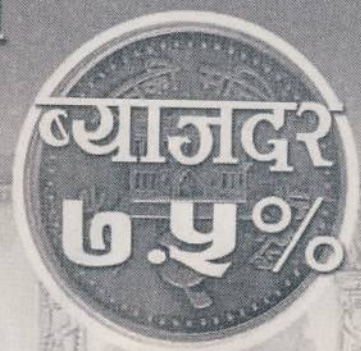
“All South Asian countries have their own problems,” he said, adding, “This alumni association meeting provides a platform for discussing the problems and can also help in coming up with solutions.”

By **ABIJIT SHARMA**

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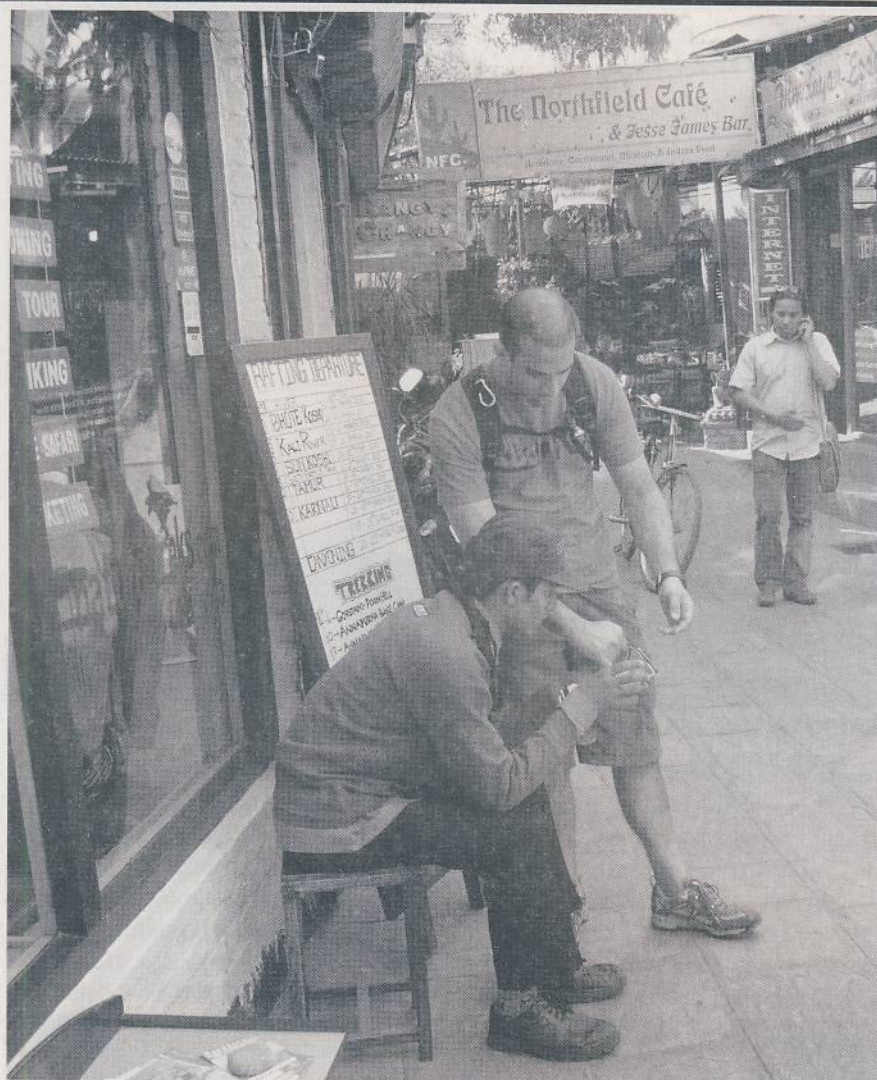
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Nepal Tourism Year 2011

A Million-Visitors Question

Perched on the high mountains, with rich cultures to show off, Nepal can indeed attract a million tourists next year

By *ALVARO CASTRILLO*

On February 26, Kathmandu streets heard a phrase resonating in the air: Nepalese Together for Tourism. The year 2011, the nation declared, would attract over one million tourists.

With a history of more than six decades of tourism, Nepal has already invested a huge amount of money for the development of infrastructure, including hotels, destinations and other products.

The snowy mountains and the cool

environment lure the tourists to choose Nepal for their travel here. When they arrive in the country, they become fascinated by the friendship and the lifestyle of the people.

Friendly and easy going are some adjectives with which visitors have described the people once they visited Nepal.

"I find something special here that I have not found in other countries in Asia," says Ania Pitchard from the United States, who came to Nepal looking for a travel challenge. But after coming here, Ania Pitchard finds, the

wonderful Nepalese people are a greater attraction.

"They are very focused in their families, especially in the countryside," she says of her encounters. "The peaceful lifestyle shocks the tourists from 'hurried' societies."

Anna Harding, an Australian, is volunteering in Nepal and agrees that the relaxed society and lifestyle of Nepalese offer something different.

"When I arrived, I became really shocked about the dust and the pollution of Kathmandu, I felt a kind of chaos as my first impression," says Harding. "But during my time here I have discovered a deep culture and a lovely lifestyle, very well summed up by the concept of *Nepali time*."

It is obvious that the Himalayas are the ace of the match of Nepal 2011. Max Holm came from Sweden to Nepal to experiment trekking in the Himalayas. By his point of view the country has to improve the care of the environment and clean the omnipresent rubbish in cities and mountains.

"I found a nice trekking in a gorgeous nature here and a charming people, but all this is soiled by all the pollution and rubbish."

These three tourists point out the need of political stability. Instability and the violent image of strikes, they say, deter many potential tourists.

Yet the country has several aspects that work to make it hit the record mark of a million visitors next year.

Every tourist who comes to Nepal goes with a personal and unique adventure, one million of these and many other stories with them. In the three consecutive years, Nepal has seen half a million tourists visiting the country.

"We can bring a million tourists without any difficulty," said Yogendra Shakya, coordinator of Nepal Tourism Year 2011. "Nepal has places, hotels and all other capacities to cater to such tourists."

Tourism entrepreneurs are hopeful about the prospects, given the number of tourist arrivals in the country in the month of January and February. The number of tourists increased over 30 percent compared to the previous years despite political uncertainty.

If the number of latest tourist arrivals is any indication, the grand launching of Nepal Tourism Year 2011 promises that the mega event will be a great success. ■



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- Suraj Singh Thakuri
TV Personality/Director

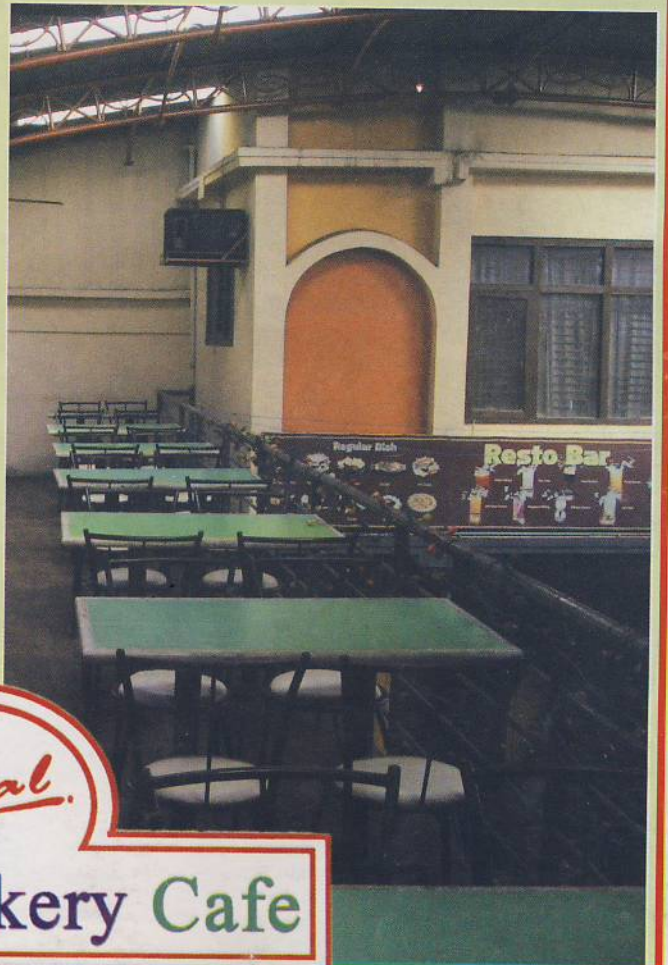


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