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Commentary:  
**Yubaraj Ghimire**

Civil Service : Major Reshuffle

INGOs: In A Fix



Viewpoint:  
**Hridayesh Tripathy**

# NEW SPOTLIGHT

May 27 June 16, 2011

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FORTNIGHTLY



## Constituent Assembly **• Hanging On Hope**



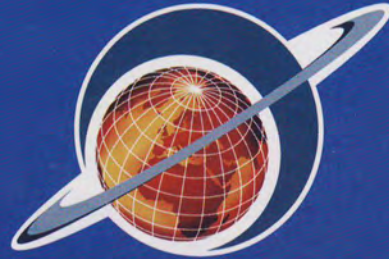
Special Issue:  
**World Environment Day 2011**





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## From The Editor

**T**he uncertainty over the fate of the Constituent Assembly has gone to the wires for the second time in a year. Consensus rhetoric apart, the political parties have done little to put into practice what they preached since the CA was first extended last year. As we went to the press we were not sure what would follow the 28 May deadline, nor are the actors involved in the high-voltage drama. They were playing their own roles and wanted others to dance to their tunes. Confusion continues to galore. The only thing that became a little clear this time was the drawing the lines along the communist and the non-communist camps. Although the camps had their own fissures, the communist camp dominated by the Maoists was under pressure from national as well as international quarters. What results this pressure will bring about will probably determine the course of politics Nepal will take in times to come irrespective of whether the CA will be extended or not.

*Keshab*

Keshab Poudel  
Editor

# NEW SPOTLIGHT FORTNIGHTLY

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Editor and Publisher : Keshab Poudel, Senior Editor: Alok Tumbahangphey, Senior Correspondent: Saroj Dahal, Correspondent: Uma Kanta Khanal, (Jhapa) Abijit Sharma (New Delhi), Reporter: Yogesh Gyawali, Nitish Dev Bhattarai

Marketing Manager : Madan Raj Poudel, Tel: 9841320517, Nabin Kumar Maharjan Tel: 9841291404, Photographer : Sandesh Manandhar

Cover Design/Layout : Hari Krishna Bastakoti

Editorial Office : Tel: 977-1-4430250 E-mail: spot@mail.com.np, P.O.Box: 7256

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## Trail Work Launched In Manaslu, Gorkha

The Nubri Culture and Youth Promotion Committee organized a three day 'Manaslu Festival' with the objective of promoting Gorkha district as one of the major tourist destinations in Nepal.

During this festival, the diverse heritage of this district were shown through ritualistic celebrations, traditional dances, horse races, archery competition and various other cultural programs. More than 2,000 people that included international tourists attended the festival inaugurated by Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation Khadga Bahadur Bishwokarma. Among other dignitaries were the ambassadors to Nepal from Australia and the Japan, during the opening of the Manaslu

Murari Karki-First Secretary of M o T C A (Ministry of Tourism and C i v i l Aviation), Neil Brosce- Deputy Country Director of DFID, Lakhpia Dhondup Sherpa- Chairman of Nubri Culture and Youth Promotion Committee, Hans Heijdra- Country Director of SNV in Nepal and Mr. Paul Stevens- Tourism Team Leader of SNV formally launched district level Great Himalayan Trail Development Program during the festival. The Nubri Culture and Youth Promotion Committee facilitated the district launch of the Great Himalaya Trail Development Program for Gorkha district.



## Indian Assistance for Rupandehi District

District Development Committee Rupandehi and Shree Rammani Multiple Campus Manigram signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Embassy of India for providing Indian grant assistance of NRs. 2.59 crores for construction of three storied building and provision of furniture for the campus under Nepal-India Economic Cooperation Programme.

According to Indian Embassy press release, this is the ninth development project in the Rupandehi being undertaken with the assistance of Govt. of India under Small Development Projects. Govt. of India has also gifted eight ambulances and two school buses in Rupandehi.

The project will be implemented by the District Development Committee, Rupandehi as per the norms and regulations of Govt. of Nepal and they will also be responsible for the quality and timely completion of the project. An oversight committee comprising representatives from the local development and administrative authorities have been constituted to ensure community participation in overseeing the projects for their effective and timely implementation.

## Raids Rescue Caged Birds

Bird smugglers, better beware! Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN) and Roots and Shoots Nepal (R&S) have started raids in which hundreds of birds have been rescued.

The raids took place during Buddha Jayanti. BCN and R & S, seeking consent from the District Forest Officer, raided the homes of three traders based in Boudha, Kathmandu. Indian traders Firoj, Raja and Naushad were found keeping 300 birds illegally.

Munia, Blossom Headed Parakeet, Baya Weaver and Budgi Gus were among the caged birds, some of which were suffering from serious health problems.

The birds will be rehabilitated at Animal Nepal's Chobar Animal Sanctuary. The non-indigenous species will be handed over to the Central Zoo.

Roots and Shoots representative Manoj Gautam said that the government's wildlife breeding policy, introduced in 2003, has provided a legal loophole for traders who use it to indulge in the trade of CITES-listed species.

"The policy allows licensed traders to breed wild animals," said Gautam. "They misuse the license to poach, breed and smuggle endangered animals. As the government's monitoring mechanism is weak, the policy has provided a fertile ground for the illegal trade of the CITES-

protected species."

## UK Supports Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia

The United Kingdom (UK) has reiterated its commitment to human rights and the eradication of discrimination globally, including on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

The UK has a long history of defending the basic rights and freedoms of the vulnerable and excluded, the Embassy said on the occasion of the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDHAO).

"We are committed to placing human rights at the heart of our foreign policy. Everyone across the globe, including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people, should be free to enjoy their full rights and freedoms," the statement said.

An example of this commitment in Nepal was the support for and partnership with the Blue Diamond Society and their efforts to promote rights and tackle discrimination. "The Embassy was delighted to welcome the Blue Diamond Society just over two weeks ago to join our celebrations of the wedding of Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge."

In his message to support IDAHO, British Foreign Office Minister Jeremy Browne said, "We are very enthusiastic about our position, which is that people should be able to love who they want, and they should be free to have relationships with whomever they choose. It is important for us that the message is heard loudly around the world."

## EU Reaffirms Commitment

The European Union has reaffirmed its strong commitment to the entitlement of all persons to enjoy the full range of human rights without discrimination.

Issuing a statement on the occasion of the International Day against Homophobia, High Representative, Catherine Ashton, on behalf of the EU, called on all states to end acts of violence, criminal sanctions and human rights violations against individuals because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

As part of its commitment to promoting and protecting human rights,

in June 2010 the EU adopted a "Toolkit to Promote and Protect the Enjoyment of all Human Rights by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) People".

### Call To Meet MDGs Deadline

As 2015 deadline to achieve the MDGs on health, including maternal mortality and child mortality, fast approaches, calls are growing for urgent action to improve human resource in health.

Nepal is one of 57 countries in the world with a severe shortage of human resource in health. Nepal has just 2 doctors and 2.3 nurses to serve 10,000 people - far less than the WHO recommended number. The rural situation is even worse.

In that context, Save the Children and Nursing Association of Nepal have issued a call for urgent action on human resource management - the weakest link on the health service chain in the country.

### WB Aid For Municipal Service Delivery

The World Bank has approved a US\$ 63 million assistance package for Nepal to help improve the delivery of basic services and prioritize infrastructure development in select municipalities as well as to construct a transmission line and substations to transmit power that will be generated in the Kabeli corridor in eastern Nepal.

The Urban Governance and Development Program: Emerging Towns Project will channel municipal grants and provide capital financing for the construction and rehabilitation of socio-economic infrastructure in six participating municipalities - Mechinagar, Dhankuta, Itahari, Lekhnath, Baglung and Tansen.

Additional municipalities may be added at a later stage with the expansion of the project. The project will also support institutional development activities in the six municipalities as well as three key central agencies - Ministry of Local Development, Town Development Fund and Department of Urban Development and Building Construction.

The Kabeli Transmission Project will construct a 132 kV transmission line that



will extend from Kabeli Bazaar in the north of Panchthar district to Damak in Jhapa district, both in eastern Nepal. Substations will be built in the vicinity of Kabeli Bazaar and at the towns of Phidim, Ilam and Damak.

The project's location is significant from the perspective of the strategic development of the Integrated Nepal Power System as it will open up the extreme east of Nepal for power sector development and will shorten the distance required to transmit electricity to the country's main industrial center around Biratnagar.

### BoK's Special Offer

In order to provide broader service to customers, Bank of Kathmandu (BoK) has launched the BoK Muddati Plus, a new fixed deposit account of NPR 10,000 at 11.5 percent yearly interest rate. The account can be opened for two to five years and is available for individual as well as institutional depositors.

According to a press release, the account now offers opening of fixed deposit for 1,3,6,9 months and has yearly interest rate ranging from 7 to 10 percent. BoK Muddati Plus and Laghu Muddati Khata offers, the facility of availing BoK Visa card to all depositors.

### EU Project To Speed Justice Delivery

Building Partnerships for Inclusive Justice Project' has been launched with the aim to build lasting relationships between key actors in both the state and informal system. A clearer division of responsibility between the two is expected to emerge through the building of mutual understanding and trust.

The project will enhance the efficacy of the justice sector as a whole, with a financial support worth EUR 514,000 by the European Union. The support constitutes 75 percent of the total project

cost amounting to EUR 686,000 (approx. NPR 68,600,000). The project will focus particularly on seven districts: Banke, Jumla, Kailali, Kathmandu, Mahottari, Panchthar and Sunsari.

International Alert, an INGO in the field of justice and security, is implementing the project in partnership with the Forum for Women Law and Development (FWLD) and Legal Aid Consultancy Centre (LACC). International Alert and the two other partners were selected through a competitive process from among 100 proposals that came as response to the Call for Proposals for Non-State Actors in Development - a Thematic Budget line that the European Union launched in 2010.

The project is a reflection of the continued commitment of the European Union to support access to justice to all Nepali citizens and specially vulnerable and marginalized groups. The project is meant to complement the earlier support by the EU to the Supreme Court and district courts, the Nepal Bar Association and the Nepal Judiciary Academy and the National Human Rights Commission.

### International Community Opposes Bandh

Seven members of European Union urged all the organizations to fully respect the right of organizations to express their opinions through any form of democratic and non-violent protest, which balances freedom of expression and freedom of association whilst respecting other rights (such as the right to education) and freedom of movement, as well as respecting the rights of others to differ in their opinions.

In a statement, they said, 'we, however, wish to underscore that Bandhs - whoever they are organized by - use the threat of violence to restrict freedom of movement and people's rights to a normal life, and as such cannot be approved of or supported. British Embassy, Embassy of the United States of America, Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, Embassy of Australia, Embassy of Denmark, Embassy of Switzerland and the Delegation of the European Union to Nepal signed the statement. ■





## EEC-Nepal Holds 6th AGM

European Economic Chamber of Trade, Commerce & Industry (EEC) - Nepal held its 6th Annual General Meeting (AGM). The AGM held under the leadership of Dibya Mani Rajbhandari chalked out a policy to guide the chamber for one year.

"We need to identify the products to increase our export to European Union. Of course, Nepal has trade surplus with EU which is among the largest trading partners," said Rajbhandari addressing the meeting.

AGM is being held at a time when job creation opportunities, foreign direct investment, and local investment require stable and peaceful environment that are far from reality in the country today. "It is in the interest of the country to make a strong policy in broad consensus from the business communities, political parties, policy makers and all stakeholders. There can only be economic surge in the country if the policy is strong, manageable professionally and supported by the government and all major political parties," said EEC-Nepal in its press release.

European Economic Chamber (EEC)-Nepal was established in 2005 to strengthen socio-economic ties between Nepal and the member states of the European Union. EEC-Nepal offers its services to companies, organizations, and associations especially in the field of business information maintaining contacts in 27 Member States of the European Union.

"EEC-Nepal has been making its efforts to bring the business group together. By increasing trade, we want to reduce the level of poverty," said Binayak Shah, general secretary of EEC-Nepal.

As far as foreign exchange earning is concerned EU is Nepal's largest trading block in terms of investment, trade, tourism and provider of development aid.

## WFP Nepal Office To Shrink In Size

Citing budget cuts, the World Food Programme (WFP) office in Nepal is preparing to shrink its size and operation. This decision is said to have been taken after the office could not raise NPR 4.30 billion or nearly fifty percent of its budget in this year. Due to this budget cut, the WFP is preparing to remove its regional offices, cut down its staffs and reduce the use of helicopters in transporting food. WFP officials have said that the office will decrease its budget within six weeks. Its plan to feed 1.8 million people this year will be revised in

the light of budget cuts as the office will now be able to serve only 1.2 million people.

## Alliance Against Bandhas

Tourism entrepreneurs and various civic organisations asked the government and all those calling for bandhas - enforced general shutdown - to not use bandhas to ask for their demands.

"Though we have urged political parties and other groups to avoid strike and bandhas during Nepal Tourism Year 2011, the trend of calling bandh has started again since last two weeks," said member of Nepal Tourism Year 2011 working committee Dhurba Narayan Shrestha.

Nineteen different parties had, earlier given written commitments to not call any strikes and bandha program during the tourism year.

"This Alliance will arrange different programme to protest against bandha and pressure government to ensure peace and security," Shrestha said.

"Tourist arrivals during April increased by 34 per cent but it could drop in coming days, if the situation continues," he said.

"During this season, a majority of the tourists are from India," he said, adding that Nepal Tourism Year 2011 attempts to bring at least 300,000 Indian tourists.

Nepal's major tourist markets are India and China both which have registered overwhelming growth in the recent months. "Currently, we have a number of Indian airlines which has made Nepal an easy travel destination for the Indian tourist," he said.

Jet Airlines, Kingfisher, Nepal Airlines Corporation, Indian Airlines, Spice Jet are the major flight operators on the Kathmandu-New Delhi route. Deccan Air is also scheduled to join in on this route by the end of this month informed Shrestha.



## NEW SPOTLIGHT

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## Incoming And Outgoing Indian Ambassadors

Jayant Prasad the incoming Indian Ambassador to Nepal who will replace Rakesh Sood, will serve in the office for two years. According to sources Prasad has already been handed



Rakesh Sood



Jayant Prasad

the appointment letter by Indian Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh with a fixed term of two years although Prasad is due to retire from the Indian foreign service after a year. Jayant Prasad is the son of former Indian Ambassador to Nepal, Bimal Prasad and is said to be not too keen on heading the Nepal mission. Having spent many years in European countries and with wife due to be promoted as chief secretary in the (Shiela Dixit-led) New Delhi government soon, he wants to spend the rest of time in India, sources said. He agreed to take the new job after being persuaded by his father and the Indian PM.

Meanwhile, outgoing ambassador Rakesh Sood has not returned back to India despite completing his term two months ago. Sources said that his departure had been delayed since there has been no vacancy of a position in External Affairs Ministry of India yet. One of the most senior joint secretaries in the ministry, Sood is expected to be appointed High Commissioner to the UK as was his predecessor in the Kathmandu mission, Shiv Shanker Mukherjee. However as the London office will fall vacant only in July, Sood is likely to continue as ambassador in Kathmandu until further notice. (Jana Aastha, 18 May)

## China To Continue 'Food For Work' Aid

China is to continue its food-for-work aid in Nepal's ten remote mountain districts. The decision was taken at a meeting in the Tibet's Dhongwasen. The aid had been started in 2009, in Rasuwa, Mustang, Dolpa, Darchula, Manang, Bajhang, Sindhupalchok, Dolakha, Dhading and Humla districts. According to the Chief District Officer of Mustang Yogendra

Raj Pandey, China has agreed to provide NPR 3 million worth of rice, sugar, wheat and salt to Mustang alone. China had been providing such aid, described as material assistance to the ten districts under an agreement signed two years ago. (Naya Patrika)

## 'Seven-point Deal Is New Version Of 12-point Delhi Accord'

Rastriya Prajatantra Party-Nepal President Kamal Thapa has dubbed the 7-point pact, that led to formation of the present government, between the chairmen of the UCPN-Maoist, Prachanda, and the UML head Jhulanath Khanal as the new version of the 12-point Delhi pact. According to him, both are aimed at establishing a totalitarian set up. He said that the Constituent Assembly, which was the outcome of the 12-point Delhi accord, has become a date-expired medicine. According to him, a new Constituent Assembly should be put in place through a fresh election. (Naya Patrika, 22 May)



Kamal Thapa



पढ्ने, पढाउने  
र पढ्न पठाउने  
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# D Day: Too Many Prophets Of Doom

By YUBARAJ GHIMIRE



There is hardly a political leader in Nepal who has not predicted that the country will plunge into disaster if it deviates from the line they advocated in a particular context and situation. Almost invariably the line they have been advocating, with consistency or lack of it, is the road map they thought would take them to the centre or periphery of power. Dr. Baburam Bhattarai was most vocal in the post 2006 phase shouting out loud that not even a coma or a full stop that the Maoists did not want, can be incorporated in the new constitution. Four years down the line Nepali Congress leader Ram Chandra Poudel recently reiterated the same sentiments, even in the words.

What they said was in total departure from the politics of consensus that their parties--Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists and the Nepali Congress and their chiefs had vowed to pursue together. The moment this division between the two parties that signed the historic peace accord in November 2006 became so apparent and public, everyone understood that the Congress had fallen into the trap of the Maoists.

The late G.P. Koirala confided this pain in his biography--*Afna Kura*--published a year after his death. He was candid, perhaps shy to admit in public while he was alive, that doing away with the 1990 constitution was wrong, and curtailing the power of the monarchy and inserting provisions for a constituent assembly election would have been much wiser and appropriate to move forward instead of bringing out a radical interim constitution. Although he seems to have realized that pushing the country to a constitution less state without a system of political accountability in place would invite nothing other than anarchy and chaos, this realization came a tad bit late.

For Dr. Bhattarai, demolishing the old regime in the belief that nothing new can emerge without totally destroying the old edifice and its remnants, was the essence of the political philosophy that he came to align with. However, it is time to analyze things and go for a course correction on the basis of our failures, uncertainties and the chaos that the failure has led to. This needs to be done before outside forces have too much of an influence and start dictating the Nepali actors, including the UCPN-M.

History cannot be repeated on 28 May. It will not be easy for the government to push its agenda for extension of the House tenure. Nor will the big parties be able to come together, as the Nepali Congress, buoyed by impressive show-up of the people

during a recent rally, find it easier to retreat from rigid public posture it has taken on hand-over of arms by the Maoists to the state within the deadline they have set.

What will be the impact if the House ceases to exist without delivering the constitution? Maoists, ML and the Nepali Congress in particular will be lumped together as the failure and betrayer for not giving the constitution on the time they promised. They will be projected by the people as solely and together responsible for the current mess and chaos. The group demanding revival of the 1990 constitution would gather more support in rebound as people do have a tendency to perceive

belatedly that the past regime were better than the ones that has just failed. Fading memory and forgiving nature of the society and the people may be the reason for that perception developing and influencing the human mind. Secondly, Mohan Baidhya Kiran will emerge as the leader of the UCPN-M as he consistently disapproved of Prachanda's turn-coat approach, and Bhattarai's tactical endorsement of politics favoring democracy. Baidhya can declare from a public platform that the relevance of the peace process is over. Bhattarai will greet it with silence, while Prachanda will still be in the forefront of those applauding Baidhya.

But how will the state--totally bereft of its authority--deal with the situation? A second faction of the 'pro-democracy' forces may approach the President to intervene like he did when Prachanda as Prime Minister sacked Army Chief Rookmangud Katawal. But

a large section of the populace and votaries of the 1990 constitution revival would put the blame together on Maoists while the other sides are likely to demand repressive actions against the Maoists in the event of their disrupting presidential intervention. Of course the legitimacy of such a move, if at all takes place, will be raised in the Supreme Court, but it will assume a much bigger political dimension and trigger polarization rather than being guided from the judicial forum.

So the President, political parties--mainly the big ones--need to take into account these factors and their growing unpopularity. Creating artificial fear, and projecting oneself as the only savior will not be acceptable for the people this time. The house term, even if extended arbitrarily considering narrow partisan interest will not be binding on the people, and that might trigger a new phase of conflict: the people vs the so called parliament vs big political parties. And history is replete with facts about who wins ultimately. ■



Dr. Bhattarai



POLITICS

# Extending Uncertainty

As Prime Minister Jhulanath Khanal's own party, UML, turns its back on him and a key ally the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum-Nepal, witnesses a vertical split the Maoists-dominated multi-party coalition suffers a critical setback ahead of a vote it planned to hold on the CA extension in the hope of bulldozing its way with a two-thirds majority

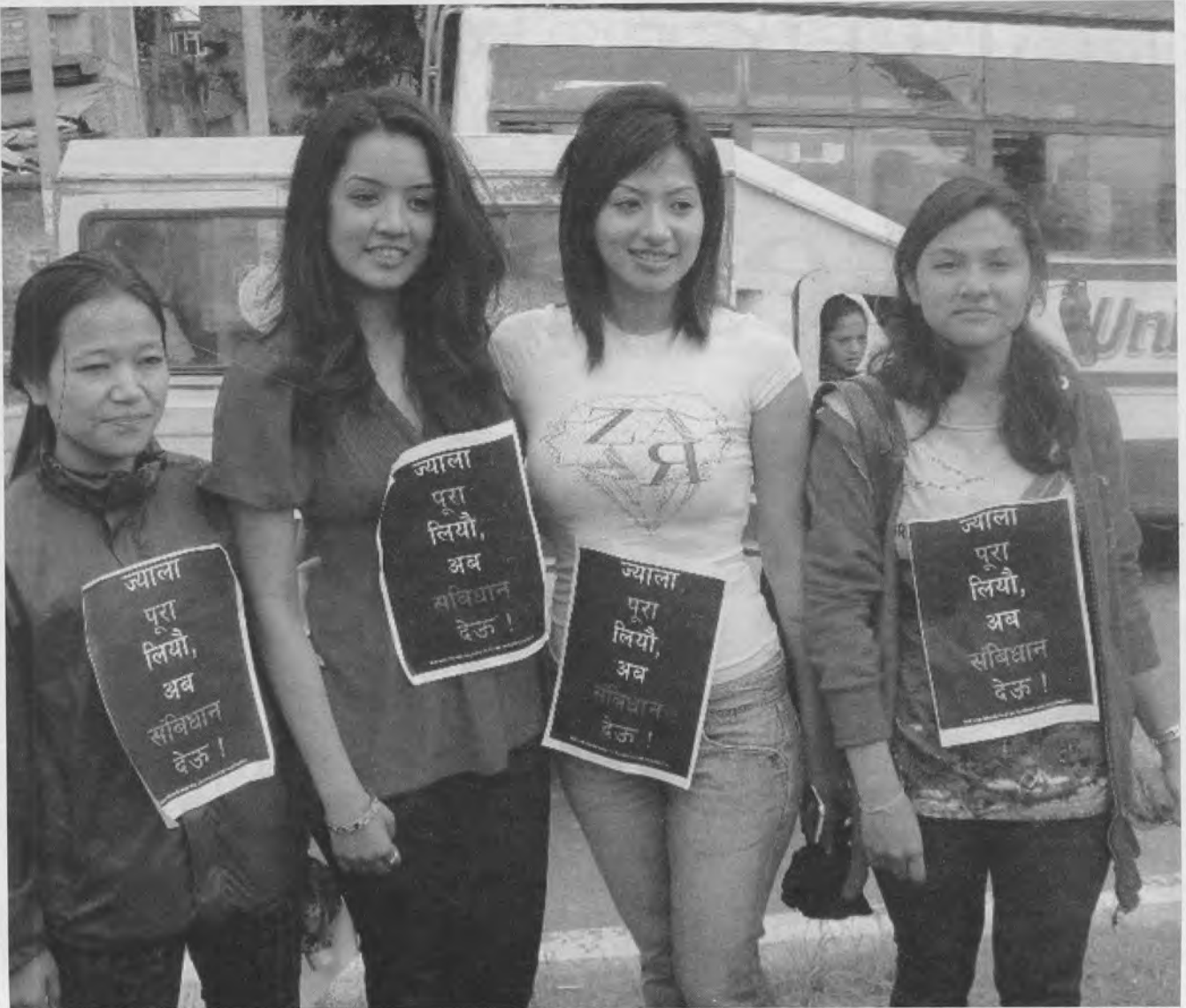
By SAROJ DAHAL

As of writing this the fate of the constituent assembly has remained hung in balance. But new developments have effectively threatened the fate of the government.

Five days before the CA deadline, one of the three key partners of the coalition government witnessed a third split in two years.

The vertical split of the Madhesi

Janadhikar Forum-Nepal led by deputy prime minister and foreign minister, Upendra Yadav, has sealed any hopes of the prime minister Jhulanath Khanal to push the CA extension agenda through



**Nepali Youth Demanding Constitution**

by a two-thirds majority.

The same day, the UML ruled out the extension of the CA on a mathematical basis and even decided to 'clear the decks', if necessary, for national consensus.

That was a clear signal to Khanal that he might have to quit.

The Nepali Congress has brought most of the small parties together against the move to extend the CA's life. They have insisted that the Maoists be disarmed and the previous promises be met before the extension.

The Maoists have been somewhat shown flexibility in dealing with the vexing issue of the combatants living in camps across the country.

Once bitten twice shy, the other

parties are far from assured.

The Maoists, on their part, are not sure if the other parties will treat them the way they have been so far. Separated from the combatants and the arms, the Maoists do not feel secure enough of a political space in the national politics.

The political developments in recent days have not been too favourable to the Maoists.

They have found themselves cornered from many quarters - national as well as international.

Not that the other parties are not in favour of the extension of the CA for which the Maoists are so desperate.

They would go for it, not sure of themselves what would follow if the CA is not extended, but on their terms.

The 'consensus' that they are insisting ahead of the CA extension would require the effective marginalization of the Maoists as an armed outfit. The Maoists are not prepared for it - unsure of the future as an out-and-out civilian outfit.

The Maoists believe that the other parties will ultimately fall in line with CA extension proposal. According to them, there is no alternative. But the others believe the Maoists have no other option to fall in line with the call for a total disarming of the former rebels.

Both sides may have stakes in giving the CA another short life, but as both indulge in brinkmanship anything can happen and plunge the country into a totally different course of politics. ■





# CA Extension With Condition'

By HRIDAYESH TRIPATHY

Nepal is in a very crucial political stage. The present CPN-UML – UCPN-Maoist coalition government led by Jhala Nath Khanal unilaterally registered an amendment bill in the Legislature Parliament seeking a one-year extension to the tenure of Constituent Assembly and Legislature Parliament. CPN-UML and UCPN-Maoist coalition even did not consult with opposition Nepali Congress. This unilateral move of ruling coalition indicated that they want to amend the constitution by two thirds majority which they believe is in their hands. If they just think the tenure is extended by counting two thirds vote, it will invite a major disaster in the country. Even if they extend the tenure by two thirds, it will neither help to write the new constitution nor bring the peace process to a logical end. I am clear that these parties do not have any intention to write the new constitution. There is no provision in the Interim Constitution for the extension of tenure in normal situations. We drafted the interim constitution hoping that the CA will draft the constitution within two years. At that time there was a strong commitment and consensus among all the political parties to draft the new constitution through CA.

In every country, Constituent Assembly is constituted to produce the written constitution. However, our case is different as we are unable to write a new constitution even after completion of two years and one year extension. It is unfortunate that leaders of three major parties namely Nepali Congress, CPN-UML and Unified Maoist have not made any sincere efforts to write the constitution. Actually, Constituent Assembly was nobody's wish. Monarchist always opposed the CA and they are happy to see the present state. Maoist party, which was in search of safe landing airport, found the slogan of CA as a best place to rest. Nepali Congress and CPN-UML also agreed on CA just to give safe landing to the Maoist. What I mean is that Constituent Assembly is not their choice. They don't have commitment. If they don't have commitment on CA, how can you expect constitution through CA? The present Constituent Assembly was imposed upon them. The present result is due to their inactions and non-commitments. Although

the Constituent Assembly election was held following a long sacrifice of people from all walks of life including Madheshis who supported the demand hoping that the new constitution will fulfill their demands to establish separate identity under the federal state. Madheshi people shed their blood for one Madhesh and one Pradesh with right to self determination. But, the recent activities of three major political parties have shown that they are least bothered about all these important questions. UCPN-Maoist, a revolutionary party which waged people's war for the demand of Constituent Assembly, gives

up its agenda and involves in the power politics. The party wants power at any cost without fulfilling its commitment expressed in comprehensive peace agreement. If the present situation continues, the CA cannot produce the constitution even after several rounds of extension. There is no justification to extend the tenure of Constituent Assembly in the present circumstances.

Constituent Assembly is needed for writing the new constitution, settlement of political disputes and concluding the peace process but our past experiences have shown that no one is serious to write the new constitution. There is no sense to extend the term just for changing the government. This is the reason Madheshi Front decided not to vote for the extension of CA in present circumstances. We have wasted the last three years for the sake of nothing. Even now extension of CA for a year is going to do nothing. Of course, some party may find time to change the government and another party may lead the government. The front has already decided not to go for the race of power. If three parties extend tenure of the CA without credible commitment on two agenda: constitution and integration of Maoist combatants,

it will be unacceptable for us. In case the three parties amended the constitution without our participation, we will go to the extent of mass resignation. If we do mass resignation, it will inspire major political government in Madhesh. Our front has already made it clear that we don't want to see that kind of situation to come. If parties sincerely agree to fulfill the demand of one Madhesh one Pradesh, and agree to conclude the peace process in logical way by integrating Maoist combatants, our front can consider. We will not vote just on the basis of written commitment but what we want is the implementation of the commitments. We want everything in cash and no one will vote in credit.

Major political parties have made the CA just as an airport for safe landing and they don't have a plan to fly. They don't have any fuel now to fly. They don't have destination and plan. What I am saying is based on my long political experiences and hobnobbing with major political parties. I have participated in all the agreements and I was directly involved in all the negotiations that have taken place between different political forces. I have very bitter experiences about political forces. I have not found their commitments towards the new constitution. As long as no major breakthrough can be made, it is impossible to extend the tenure of CA. We cannot vote for the extension of CA without concrete improvement of the peace process, which we see as a distant dream given the present mode of the government.

(Tripathy is a CA member and General Secretary of Terai Madhesh Loktantrik Party)



# Engaging Experts In Constitution Making

By ABHISHEKH ADHIKARI



The question of extension of the tenure of the Constituent Assembly (CA) has been in intense debate in Nepal of late. There are people who favour it. But there are also people who think the term should not be extended because the CA has not been able to deliver as expected. So it is important to consider ways to create a win-win situation for the people on both sides. Thinking out of the box can be an alternative – that means, giving credit to the CA for making the new constitution while at the same time engaging experts to complete the rest of the draft constitution. The draft can always be taken to the people for discussion and approved by a two-third majority in the CA. This is the right time to do it before people will lose faith on the leaders of the political parties. If people lose faith, the consequences could be devastating to the country, the people and their leaders. We cannot say that monarchy will not be resurrected. We cannot deny that foreign powers will not intervene in the vacuum thus created. It is quite certain that there will be no constitution by May 28<sup>th</sup>. There is also no guarantee that there will be a constitution in the next year or so even after the extension of the CA's tenure. An alternative to the CA without undermining its achievements should be a win-win situation for all.

It will not be fair to say that there was no work done by the CA members. Just that they have not been able to ink a constitution. There are plenty of materials for experts to make a constitution now. There is the expertise in the country. Taking the raw materials prepared by the CA, it will be wise to let experts draft the constitution.

It will be unwise to blame the CA for its failure to draft the constitution. To have the determination, dedication and devotion to draft a constitution is no child's play, especially, when there are such issues which could make or break people's future. Anyone would feel the burden of the responsibility of doing it. Most of the CA members are novice in law making. Experts have faltered over this responsibility. It requires an in-depth knowledge of the subject matter, understanding of experiences from different countries and implementing them in the context of Nepali soil. Many countries have brooded

over the making of constitution for considerable number of years.

Federalism has become a contentious issue in Nepal. The issue of federalism, although not unique in the world, is certainly new to us. To fathom the consequences of well defined federalism so far has been out of the understanding of a common man as well as experts in Nepal. The same is true with an ill-federated Nepal. Without knowing properly what we are getting into there is definitely a fear psychosis amongst all Nepalese. But we can always tread a path carefully – one step after another. There is no going back from federalism is for sure. It was legitimately resolved by the CA that Nepal is a federal democratic republic.



CA Meeting

Constitution drafted by experts on the foundation created by the CA will definitely not be influenced by the combatants' issues. Combatants' issue has been another obstacle in constitution drafting at present. The game of musical chair played by politicians cum CA members to form the government would not affect the drafting of the new constitution if the job is handed over to the experts now.

A need for a constitution has not been denied by any political party right now. They all seem to be working for it. They just do not seem to have the last adrenaline rush which is behind the success of every race. A federal state in Nepali context would be difficult to handle without a constitution. A reflection of the aspirations of all communities in the new constitution which is democratic and progressive is in the interest of Nepal and everyone seems to have realized it.

If natural birth is difficult, a cesarean is done to facilitate it. This is no difficult task for the doctors. Similarly, when the foundation is laid by the CA members to have the difficulties removed by the doctors of the constitution is an easy way and the right alternative to the failing Constituent Assembly. The new constitution will be drafted with the finishing touches of the experts on the grounds laid by the Constituent Assembly. A draft constitution thus prepared by the experts can be approved by the CA by calling the House. ■





## The Illusion Of A Participatory Constitution Building Process

By ANKIT DHAKAL

Emerging against the backdrop of a decade long conflict, the present constitutional process of Nepal has sought to differentiate itself from any of its predecessors in more ways than one. Among them, 'participatory' nature of the constitution building process has been highlighted as one of the most unique features of the current process.

It was realized that the past constitutions were produced purely by experts (Government of Nepal Act, 1948- drafted largely by Indian experts; Interim Government of Nepal Act, 1951- drafted by Indian experts; Parliamentary Constitution of 1959- drafted by Sir Ivor Jennings and experts; Panchayat Constitution of 1962- drafted by experts through constitution drafting commission formed by the king; Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal, 1990- drafted by experts through constitution drafting commission). The lack of a participatory process in realizing the aspirations of the

people was more than apparent from the past constitution drafting processes of Nepal. However, the current process has come with the claim of moving from a mere 'constitution making process' (expert written constitutional process) to a 'constitution building process' (participatory constitutional process).

The inclusive nature of the Constituent Assembly comprising of 601 members was amplified in such a manner that it overshadowed the issue of a genuine participatory constitutional process. The question to be asked is whether an inclusive process of forming the Constituent Assembly suffices for a 'participatory' constitution building process? If participatory constitution building process is to mean something more than a mere inclusionary process of CA formation, then the current constitutional process of Nepal has not reached far in capturing true participation of the people.

People's participation in the present constitutional process has been mainly limited to two rounds of public

consultations to be conducted by the CA in seeking to encompass the views of the people regarding the new constitution. However, out the two public consultations that were initially planned for, only one such consultation has been conducted in a hasty manner by cutting short the planned schedule. Besides this, one of the procedural committees 'Public Opinion Collection and Coordination Committee' was formed with the idea of encouraging public debate and receiving suggestions of the people. Similar to the suggestion received in the first round of public consultations, there was no mechanism of actually incorporating any of the suggestions received by the Public Opinion Collection Committee in the preliminary draft of the Constituent Assembly Committees. As a direct result of this, whenever the first draft of the new

issues concerning the new constitution has negated the participatory aspect of the constitutional process to a large extent. This culture has manifested itself by having an impact on two significant aspects of the constitution writing process. Firstly, it has limited the effectiveness of the Constituent Assembly due to its potential of overriding the achievements of the CA through political settlements at the highest level. As a reflection of this, especially the younger CA members have time and again expressed their frustration about their limited role within the Constituent Assembly. Secondly, excessive focus on 'senior leaders of political parties' for consensus on all key issues of the constitutional process has prevented the possibility of referendum in seeking direct participation of the

**Given the vast nature of transition that Nepal is going through, certain key issues should have been reserved for the people to decide directly through a referendum rather than settling all issues by a handful of political leaders.**

constitution will appear, it is will be void of suggestion/views of the people.

As far as public discussion about the new constitution is concerned; there has been no encouragement or space for it in the process. Awareness about the new constitution and public debates on constitutional issues has been left to personal and non-governmental initiatives without the involvement of the Constituent Assembly. The Constituent Assembly has also not been able to disseminate its achievements of the last three years to the people. On one hand, this has prevented effective public discussions from taking place, while on the other hand it has increased the frustration of the people due to lack of information. Also, prevalent confusion regarding the nature of federalism, state restructuring, forms of governance- both inside and outside the Constituent Assembly is the by-product of the lack of adequate discussion on such topics.

The culture of only the 'senior leaders of political parties' being capable of reaching binding settlements even on

the vast nature of transition that Nepal is going through, certain key issues should have been reserved for the people to decide directly through a referendum rather than settling all issues by a handful of political leaders. One can however understand the paranoia among the senior political leaders about seeking direct participation of the people through referendum, because of the lack of guarantee that their respective party interest will be upheld by the masses. This culture has therefore taken away the essence of a truly participatory constitutional process.

What has not been realized even as of now is that, it does not depend on whether or not a handful of leaders agree with the new constitution, but rather the ability of the people to internalize, own and uphold the spirit of the constitution. This can only be ensured by a truly participatory process. Therefore, mere tokenism of a participatory constitutional building process is one thing, while a genuine participatory constitutional process is another.

*(Dhakal is legal consultant)*

# Women on Top

By ABIJIT SHARMA



As the mercury level continues to rise in the Indian cities, the political circuit too has been generating heat.

To begin with, the results of assembly elections in two of the five particular states grabbed headlines. These were the states where two women changed rules of the political game indicating a new surge of women's influence in Indian politics.

In Tamil Nadu, in an unexpected result, the AIADMK crushed the mighty DMK by a huge margin. The Jayalalithaa-led AIADMK and its allies grabbed 204 seats out of the 234 seats wiping Karunanidhi's tainted DMK out of power. 'Amma' as she is famously called, is now set to become the Chief Minister of the state for the third time. What probably led to the humiliating defeat of the formidable DMK was the 2G scam in which one of its ministers A.Raja was, among others, found guilty. Despite the scam, many had expected that the strong base of DMK in the state would help the party in the elections. Those hopes were clearly belied. The future of Karunanidhi's party looks even more bleak as it is now expected to be locked in a bitter succession battle.

Moving up north, West Bengal woke up to a new era of Mamata Banerjee after 34 years of left rule. The railway minister made history by dislodging the longest serving elected

communist regime. Her Trinamool Congress-led alliance took 227 of the total 294 seats while the left could bag only 61. In a state where development took a backseat due to the complete negligence and absurd strategies and policies of the CPI (M), the rise of Mamata Banerjee has definitely ushered in a glimmer of hope. Calling the victory 'the second independence struggle', the 'Didi' vowed to work for good governance, focus on reconstruction and end atrocities in the state. Repeating her famous slogan attributed the success to the three Ms. 'It is a victory for Maa, Mati and Manush (Mother, Soil and People)'.

Women are clearly on top. With Mamata Banerjee and Jaya Lalithaa joining Shiela Dixit of Delhi and Mayavati of Uttar Pradesh the number of women chief ministers has doubled.

But there was a downside too - down south. Rajya Sabha member and DMK

patriarch Karunanidhi's daughter Kanimozhi was arrested and sent to Bihar jail over alleged involvement in the 2G spectrum case. She has been accused of masterminding the Rs. 200 crore kickback for her Kalaingar TV. If found guilty of crime, she could get a seven year jail term. She now joins some of her party colleagues like A.Raja and many other telecom officials in Bihar Jail. ■



Jaya Lalitha

## Quality Education: Missing Links

By RADHA PAUDEL

Regardless of the political system, and region, a quite popular statement is heard everywhere in the field of education, that is, 'Quality Education is the Foundation for Sustainable Peace and Development.'

The government has come up with various schemes for achieving that, as is evident from the School Reform Plan 2010. There are many provisions for enabling teachers, and school management. Equipping schools, reciprocal relationship with parents/community, briefly where equality and inclusive approach are stressed, are also extensively appreciated.

Despite such fantastic, ambitious plans and policies, schools, school management committees, parents and teachers are struggling in different ways unknown by the majority of the people and policy makers. For instance, most of the schools of Jumla have no furniture e.g. benches. Neither have they had enough classrooms, nor teachers, nor enough teaching/learning materials. Students have to sit on the ground inside and outside the classroom. School Management Committee neither knows its role, responsibility and right. The school was established in 2042. A new management committee is formed every three years with the representation of all political parties. Nowadays, the trend of students coming to school is gradually improving. This might be because the school has the provision of



midday meal program, and somewhere, free distribution of dress, and books. Unfortunately, the performance or the outcome is not satisfactory at all. Only eight students are demonstrating that they can live professionally or independently, out of 1250 students, in the life of school (25 years). Rest of the students are working in India, or in Nepalgunj as porters. Some of them are doing blue color work in nearby villages. The limited number of teachers help them in their personal tasks e.g. irrigating their land. Neither management committee nor parents raise any question against such practices. Parents are not aware about their roles at all. Three students come with single pencil or book if they are from the same house. Parents are always thinking that they are poor and illiterate so do not have any role or rights against the bad attitude of committee and teachers. Another big tragedy is that students represent only dalit (so called untouchable) communities as well as extreme poor from other castes. Most of the teachers are sending their children to boarding schools somewhere else.

This is only a representative case of educational practices existing in rural parts of Nepal. There is no single and common dream or vision about quality education. Each actor is blaming the other for failure and no one is ready to take responsibilities and be accountable. Even the district education office is not serious about such a devastating scenario of 25 years investment in education. To access quality and equal education is not just a matter of money, materials and geography but also the willingness of civil societies and government to connect the pillars of quality education; school, management committee and parents. The zero sum in terms of parent's empowerment/mobilization and the mechanism of accountable for management committee is always there. ■





# Kosi Canal Waterway: For Nepal-India-China Tripartite Link

-By Dr. A.B. Thapa

China is now the second richest country in the world with annual GDP of about six trillion US dollars equivalent. Many western economists have already started to predict that in not distant future the Chinese economy leapfrogging at an average rate of over ten percent per annum could even overtake the USA. It is now speculated that the mounting debt ridden US Dollar, which was established as the world currency in place of the British Pound, might be replaced by the Chinese currency.

At present China is embarked on new plans to accelerate further economic developments by pushing back the frontiers of science and technology. In one of the recent BBC programmes on China it was said that the China has even overtaken the USA in publication of scientific papers. The ultimate aim of such vigorous Chinese science and technology efforts are sure to have been directed to country's progress and prosperity through development based on full utilization of its natural resources. In this context the full scale exploitation of Tibet's vast still untapped natural resources could have hardly been out of the sight of China's highly skilled planners who are now going around the whole world in quest for opportunity to acquire the right to tap natural resources.

## Tibet's Accessibility

Exploitation of Tibet's vast natural resources would provide an excellent opportunity for China's rapid development but such task at locations in Tibet far away from country's developed eastern coastal areas would not be easy. Fortunately the Tibet could be more readily accessible from the southern side, and such convenience in accessibility would allow for the vast natural resources of Tibet to be exploited with ease in a way to benefit China and also the countries in Indian sub-continent. In this context the proposed Kosi Navigation Canal could be expected to play an important role in establishing Nepal India China tripartite link for the purpose of exploitation of Tibet's vast natural resources.

## Kosi Canal Waterway

Nepal and India agreed in 1997 to conduct a detailed feasibility study for developing a navigable canal waterway extending from Chatra in Nepal to

Kursella in Bihar, the meeting point of the Kosi River with the Ganges. The Kosi navigation canal will be linked to the National Waterway No.1 of India. The stretch of the waterway between Allahabad and Haldia has been declared the National Waterway No. 1 of India. The total length of this waterway is 1580 km. The National Waterway No.1 of India includes the Hoogly, Bhagirathi and the lower and middle reaches of the Ganges. This waterway can be broadly divided into three sections. They are the Haldia-Farakka, Farakka-Patna, and Patna-Allahabad sections, and the length of each of these sections is 500 km, 480 km, and 600 km respectively



## On Par with European Waterways

The use of the Kosi canal for navigation instead of the natural river course would allow the development of this very important waterway on par with the major waterways that exist in Europe and America. Some of the overwhelming advantages of the canal waterway linking Chatra with Kursella where Kosi merges with the Ganges are described hereinafter.

The distance would be short. The navigation canal would follow the shortest route to the Ganges river. The withdrawal of water from the river for irrigation or for other purposes would have to be significantly restricted, to maintain adequate depths if the natural river channel is to be used for navigation. In case of the navigation canal, the water required to maintain adequate depth would be very small. The entry point of the Kosi navigation canal flowing into the Ganges is near the extreme tail end of this river and thus the Ganges river channel is sure to be quite deep at this stretch, allowing the operation of relatively large river vessels. Very big river vessels would be able to reach Chatra in Nepal if the Kosi canal

waterway is also planned for operating vessels similar in capacity to those plying on the lowermost reach of the Ganges.

## Cheapest Mode of Transport

The coefficient of friction on water is very small. One horsepower can pull 4,000 kg on water while on road and rail it can move only 150 kg and 500 kg respectively. In European and American countries, inland water transport has established itself as the cheapest mode of transportation. In USA, where various modes of transportation freely competing with one another are equally developed, inland water transport has been found to be 5 times cheaper than railway transportation and 21 times cheaper than road transportation.

USA had about 25,000 miles of internal commercial navigable channels in 1968, of which 15,000 miles provided operating depths of nine feet or more. The nine-foot draft is considered standard for barge and towing industry operations in the USA. About 490 million tons of freight was carried in 1968 by all kinds of river ships in USA.

According to a study conducted on behalf of the German State Railway, to move one ton of goods in Germany by one kilometer, it costs 14 pfenings by rail and 29 pfenings by road, but just 4 pfenings by inland waterway. It shows that inland water transportation is the cheapest by comparison with other modes of transportation.

## Safety in Transit

Apart from being a very cheap mode of transportation, inland water transportation is the safest and the most reliable form of transportation with very little risks of pilferage, loss and damage of goods particularly in transit. Such a type of transportation is very convenient for moving goods and equipments that are very big and heavy. There are other inherent advantages of inland water transportation. Some of them are listed below:

- (i) Ability to open market for otherwise non-marketable commodities
- (ii) Stimulates industrial production.
- (iii) Ability to attract production facilities to water-oriented locations in the interiors and thereby aid in their dispersal from the coastal congested areas.
- (iv) Ability to fit services into production line processes for movement of raw materials. ■



Member Secretary Social Welfare Council Dr. Tschewang Sherpa (Center) Discussing on role of INGOs

## INGOs

# In A Fix

*Despite their contributions of over ten billion rupees in Nepal's development programs annually, International Non-governmental Organisation (INGOs) are facing problems in the government's dealing with them*

By A CORRESPONDENT

**A**fter holding files of more than 60 development projects for about nine months, the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare is said to have begun the process of their clearance. But the delay has already done the damage to Nepal at the international level sending a message that it is an uncertain place to work.

Sources said the ministry will start the process of clearance of the files but the situation is still unpredictable.

According to Association of International Non-governmental Organisations (AIN), working areas of AIN members cover all 75 districts and ecological regions and the delay the implementation of these projects will affect the livelihood of poor people.

Founded in 1995, AIN's role is that of an umbrella organization of 97 INGOs out of 191 INGOs registered with the Social Welfare Council.

Nepal's paradox is that when such a large number of development projects worth billion of rupees have been

pending at the ministry, Prime Minister Jhala Nath Khanal demanded more aid from rich countries for the development projects at the summit of Least Developed Countries in Turkey's capital Istanbul.

At a time when the government is unable to allocate necessary budget in development sectors and private sector is yet to develop the capability to invest in the development projects, INGOs are filling the gap by bringing resources to launch development projects targeting poverty alleviation.

"AIN members contribute approximately not less than 10 billion rupees annually. This is 6 percent of the development budget, 12 percent of foreign aid, 15 percent of foreign grants and 45 percent of foreign loans and 18 percent of deficit budget for the current fiscal year 2066/067," said Dr. Shibesh C. Regmi, vice president, Asia World Neighbours and member of AIN presenting his paper at an interaction.

In its recent interactions between members of Association of International Non-Governmental Organisations (AIN) and various stake holders including leaders of political parties, media



persons, government officials, and social welfare council, both the sides tried to inform about the present state.

AIN members expressed serious concern over the pending agreements of 36 International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) working in Nepal. They argued that a heavy impact was arising from the delay to approve the projects.

INGOs work with almost all key themes and issues, including health, disaster management, peace and reconciliation, climate change, food security, education, health care, livelihood and agriculture.

Although the Social Welfare Council Act clearly gives mandate to the council to make agreement and approve the project proposals submitted by INGOs, a cabinet decision has restricted the council jurisdiction and shifted final authority to the ministry. This cabinet decision authorizes the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare as the final authority to approve the projects.

According the Social Welfare Council Act any international social organization or person making agreement upon obtaining approval to function shall have to submit project proposal, as prescribed by the committee along with the detail description of the projects to the council. Any social organization, which desires to obtain financial assistance, shall have to make application as prescribed by the committee, along with letter of acceptance of the foreign organization providing assistance.

The council shall put the project proposal submitted at the meeting of the project evaluation sub-committee and grant approval within 45 days by amending and altering it, if required.

"INGOs are experiencing unusually prolonged waiting periods. These delays are incurred at the General Agreement level as well as Project Agreement level and the vast majority of agreements are held at the Project Approval and Facilitation Committee," said Achyut Luitel, AIN chair.



AIN'S Officials In The Discussion

Political leaders and government officials blame INGOs working in unaccountable manners. "There is the need to make clear guidelines and policies so that the government can monitor INGOs activities and their expenditures in Nepal," said Sarbadev Ojha, former minister of Women, Children and Social Welfare, who was said to be responsible for holding the files. "There has been rampant misuse of money in the last few years and there is the need to have a strict monitoring."

According to experts, INGOs operate under stringent accountability and other parameters. The programs/ projects undergo multiple monitoring and evaluation, and auditing. Besides, the international monitoring and evaluation, usually headquarters of INGOs and donors who fund INGOs projects, conduct their own evaluation. Additionally, the focal government body of the government of Nepal also conducts its own monitoring and evaluation of the projects implemented by INGOs.

Although all INGOs have accepted and are adhering to the regulations that request that projects be discussed and endorsed by District Development Committees (DDCs) prior to submission to the Social Welfare Council, the

ministry is currently holding them without citing any reasons.

"Delays in approving projects have extremely serious consequences which include but are not limited to serious repercussions on our programmes and the people we serve: lack of protection, lack of access to life-saving services that could result in injuries, life-long disabilities or even death," said an official at AIN.

Due to delay in the agreement, the foreign experts working in these INGOs are facing problems as their visas are expiring and cannot be renewed prior to the approval of the agreements.

As the government organizations are spending more time shaping political and country's structures, INGOs are taking the left out agenda as per aspirations of a large number Nepal's excluded, oppressed and poor population. ■

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The Word Lab

## CIVIL SERVICE

# Major Reshuffle

*Although the transfer of 26 secretaries is relatively based on performance, Nepal civil service is yet to build a mechanism to choose the right person in the right place*

By A CORRESPONDENT

**A**fter many years, Nepal's civil service has witnessed a major overhauling at the top level with the transfer of 26 secretaries in various ministries. Previously, transfers were normally made for few ministries. This time the transfer was major.

However, many civil servants held the view that the choice of secretaries was not at par with their experiences and academic backgrounds. Although chief secretary Madhav Prasad Ghimire was able to reassert his authority in the transfers, the criteria chosen for transfers put some secretaries 'as the right person in the wrong place'.

Purna Kadoria, who has been in the Ministry of Housing and Physical Planning for the last five years as a secretary, set a record as the longest serving secretary in one ministry. Promoted as an acting secretary five years ago, secretary Kadoria retained his position all the time: two different political systems and several ministers. He is known as an all-weather secretary.

The transfer of Lilamani Paudel from Prime Minister's secretariat to the Ministry of Home Affairs is regarded as a major change. Known for his decisive action and daring personality, Poudel, who saved Nepal from facing major national embarrassment by stopping efforts of Tibetan refugees to take the Tibetan flag to the top of Everest in 2008 Beijing Olympics, to the Ministry of Home Affairs at this juncture, is very crucial. After a few



Chief Secretary Ghimire

months, he was transferred from the ministry and was posted him in the Prime Minister's office.

With the request from Indian side, Nepal-India high level security talks were postponed for an indefinite period and Indians are raising the issues of fake Indian currency smuggling from Nepal, Air Marshal and most importantly extradition treaty. At the national level, Maoists move to acquit cases against Maoist cadres is another thorny issue.

Having served as a Nepali consulate general in Lhasa, Paudel knows the art of diplomacy and is capable enough to manage tough times. "I will work for the nation and protection of national interest is my prime concern," said secretary Poudel, who was summoned from Civil Service Mt. Everest Expedition Team to take his new position.

shedding, Paudel, who is also involved in the privatization process of Butwal Power Company, can contribute to involve private sectors in power development. Paudel also served in senior position at the secretariat of former prime minister late Man Mohan Adhikary.

Similarly, Tana Gautam, who was a secretary of National Vigilance Center, is transferred as a secretary to the Ministry of Irrigation. Active and dedicated to his work, Gautam, who completed his certificate level of Engineering from Engineering Campus, can contribute in policy level.

After staying for more than five months in jobless office of Nepal Trust, Shanker Koirala got transferred to the Ministry of Industry. Soft spoken Koirala, who was transferred to Nepal Trust from Ministry of Energy following

As a cadre of Ministry of Finance, Balananda Sharma Paudel's transfer to the Ministry of Finance would have been the most appropriate choice. However, he was moved to Ministry of Energy from Ministry of General Administration. He served more than 28 months in the Ministry and set a record of longest serving secretary. At a time when the country has been passing through long hours of load





**Secretary Public Service Commission Mainali**

dispute with Minister of Energy Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat on the appointment of chairman of Tamakosi Hydro Power Project, can use his expertise in the ministry.

Chhabiraj Panta was among a few lucky people to get lucrative but highly controversial ministry. Although he is going to complete his tenure in less than two months, he is transferred to the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation. Many see his transfer is related in lifting the ban on cutting trees.

Three months after Prime Minister Jhalanath Khanal assumed office, the cabinet meeting on last Saturday reshuffled responsibilities of 26 secretaries.

After the recommendation of a three-member committee of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Minister for Defense Bishnu Paudel and Minister for General Administration Yuba Raj Karki, the government reshuffled responsibility of secretaries.

Although he served almost three years in Home Ministry, soft spoken Govinda Kusum was sent to Prime Minister's Office to have some relief and relaxation. Secretary Krishnahari Banskota is among a few lucky secretaries who remained in his position as the finance secretary.

Secretary of Ministry of Commerce Purushottam Ojha has been transferred to the Prime Minister's Office. He was replaced by cadre of Home Ministry Sushil Jung Rana, who was secretary to the Sports and Youth Ministry.

Sushil Ghimire is also from the lucky few to get the top ministry. Ghimire

was moved to the Ministry of Local Development from Ministry of Information. Young and dynamic Krishna Gyanwali is sent to Ministry of Environment from Ministry of Local Development. Known for his expertise on agriculture, Ganesh Raj Joshi, who went to hand over the letter of dismissal of then army chief Rukmagad Katuwal as an acting defense secretary, moved to the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation.

At his last leg of career and known for his close association as a democrat, Shyam Prasad Mainali was transferred



**Energy Secretary Paudel**

to the Public Service Commission from Water and Energy Commission. Blamed for non-performing, Kishor Thapa, who secured first position in all his academic years, was transferred to the Election Commission. After serving less than four months, Shital Babu Regmi was transferred to the Water and Energy Commission from Ministry of Energy.

As someone who spent all his career in the aviation sector, Yagya Gautam is an asset in Nepal's civil aviation and tourism sector. However, he was sent to Election Commission after promotion and now he is transferred to the National Vigilance Centre as a non-performer secretary.

The sole woman secretary in the government, Brinda Hada, is yet to find a permanent place. She was transferred to National Information Commission when she had differences with the Minister for Women, Children and Social Welfare Sarbadev Ojha. Hada was transferred to another non-performing office Nepal Trust from National Planning Commission.



**Home Secretary Paudyal**

Similarly, Uma Kanta Jha was transferred to the Information Commission from Ministry of Irrigation.

Yubaraj Bhusal, father in law of NC leader Ram Chandra Paudel's daughter, and Soma Lal Subedi have been transferred to the National Planning Commission and the Prime Minister's Office (Reserve) respectively. Pratap Kumar Pathak was sent to the Ministry of General Administration, Shreedhar Gautam to the Ministry of Information and Communications and Similarly, as per the new assignment, Ananda Pokharel to the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, Sri Ram Panta to the Ministry of Youth and Sports,

Secretaries who retained their positions are Shankar Pandey to the Ministry of Education, Ram Hari Aryal to the Ministry of Science and Technology, Dhruva Sharma secretary at the Ministry of Peace and Reconciliation, Keshav Bhattarai secretary at the Ministry of Land Reform and Management and Chaudhari, secretary of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Bimal Wagle, secretary to Prime Minister's Office. Pramod Kumar Karki Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Shyam Dotel, secretary at Ministry of Culture and Defense secretary Nabin Prasad Ghimire.

Although transfer of bureaucrats is a normal process, due to political intervention, this time also some selection decision put the right person in the wrong place. ■

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY 2011

# Green Growth

Nepal's experiences with community forestry programs have shown how forests serve the people by offering all kinds of services and helping to reduce poverty by providing firewood and fodders. Despite all successful years of protection and preservation of forests through community mobilization, Nepal had a bitter taste last year as it lost huge forests due to over logging that prompted government to announce a ban on felling trees. Nepal, as all other countries around the world, is celebrating the World Environment Day on June 5, 2011 by organizing various programs with a slogan Forests: Nature at Your Service. As Nepal's over 14,000 community forestry user groups are facing the tough challenges to conserve the forests, how will this year's slogan sensitize the local community about forests which have been offering all kinds of services remain to be seen?

By KESHAB POUDEL

Population of Dhugen Village of Lalitpur, 10 kilometers east of capital Kathmandu, has seen a drastic change in their locality. The local people have turned barren mountains with small bushes into green dense forests reviving watershed as well as making it the main supplier of wood and fodders.

Baghmara Community Forestry in

Chitwan National Park is another example where the local communities have been taking a lot of benefits out of it.

From generating financial resources to producing firewood and fodder, farmers produce everything from the Baghmara Community Forestry to meet the needs.

Baghmara Community Forest has

become a model of sustainable community forest conservation in Nepal. Baghmara Community Forest is located on the northeast boundary of Royal Chitwan National Park in Bachhauli Village Development Committee (VDC).

The Baghmara was once a dense forest and a famous hunting ground for





### Nepal's Success Story A Model For The World

the tiger, and hence given the name Baghmara (Bagh-Tiger, mara-kill). Over the last 20 years, due to lack of attention from government authorities and increasing needs of the local people, the forest has been degraded and overgrazed.

Established in 1990 in an area of 32 ha, community managed ecotourism in Baghmara has been able to generate local guardianship in the conservation of the biological diversity of the area. The community forest has also increased the animal habitats, while still meeting a large percentage of the villager's demand for fuel wood and fodder.

#### Why Forests Matter

Forests support in climate change mitigation, help secure water quality and decrease the impacts of storms and floods while helping control erosion. Forests are the home of more than half of terrestrial species and forests also provide homes,

security and livelihoods of millions people.

In Nepal, more than 60 percent of total energy consumed by people and industry derives from forests such as fuel wood and charcoal. Nepal generates over a billion rupees in revenue from it. Nepal's forests are the home of world's many endangered species and provide home to tens and thousands of living things.

The conservation of forest has qualitatively changed the livelihood of people. Because of revival of water shed, women do not have to go a long way to fetch the water and feed their cattle. Similarly, the availability of fire wood also helps local community.

When Nepal is celebrating the World Environment Day on June 5 with a slogan showing the importance of forest in livelihood, the country has a reason to rejoice. The Ministry of Environment has

already formulated programs up to the district level.

Along with announcing the awards to persons involved in environment conservation areas, the Ministry will also organize rallies at the district levels with an objective to raise the awareness about the environment.

"Unlike in the past, we will focus our programs at the district levels and grass root level where problems related to environment degradation are more pronounced," said Purushootam Ghimire. "This year's slogan is very relevant to our country as Nepal has made a good progress in forest conservation."

#### World Environment Day and Forests

According to United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), beyond supporting the natural habitat, forests sustain economic growth. In 2004, trade in forest products was estimated at \$327 billion. Continued and uncontrolled

# "Coordination Lacking"

PURUSHOTTAM GHIMIRE

**PURUSHOTTAM GHIMIRE**, joint secretary at the Ministry of Environment and the focal point of UNFCCC, has been working in the environment sector for a long time. Ghimire spoke to **KESHAB POUDEL** on the issue related to the World Environment Day. Excerpts:

**How is the government of Nepal celebrating the World Environment Day?**

Well, unlike in the past, we are celebrating the World Environment Day this year by organizing programs at the grass root level. It will be celebrated by organizing various programs at the district as well as village levels.

**Why did you choose the district and village levels?**

Most of the programs in the past were confined to urban areas only. The message about the importance of preservation of environment failed to reach the district and village level. It is a fact that the people living in the rural areas are main sufferers of deteriorating environment as they are the first victim of any kinds of environmental implications. This is the reason we have realized the need to sensitize the grass root people about how deteriorating environment will affect their livelihood and health. What is the importance of sustainable use of natural resources and so on? This is a major shift in the government policy: from urban and capital centric to rural centric.

**Do you think this will change the state of environment?**

Of course. The World Environment Day is an international day to express some commitments at the national level and international solidarity regarding the preservation of environment. 5 June is the day to sensitize the community about the importance of preservation of their natural surroundings. I don't think you can change the state of environment by just observing the day on 5 June only. We need to take care of the environment all the time and there is a need for a long term commitment from all.

**How important is the day for Nepal?**

This day is important for all of us to

highlight challenges faced due to the degradation of environment. We have been celebrating the World Environment Day with certain slogans. We try to sensitize the people and create awareness on deteriorating environment. United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) annually issues a slogan to celebrate it.

**How relevant is the slogan for this year?**

This year's slogan is very relevant for Nepal. Given Nepal's successful programs of community forestry and forest conservation, this year the slogan is: forest, nature at your service gives a lot of message to us.

This indicates the importance of nature with the livelihood issue. Nepal government is also trying to give the message that we cannot live without nature as the forest and nature are basis of our livelihood. The message is also to clearly point out the need to protect the forest and nature. The message is loud and clear that we need to protect our environment for the future generation. Natural resources and livelihood are linked to each other. This year the aim of the WED is to sensitize the relations between forest and livelihood. We need to take benefits from the forest product by mobilizing it in sustainable way.

**Don't you think climate change has hijacked the environmental issues?**

I don't want to say it is hijacked but what I see is the overall environment issue is dominated by climate change. Since the donors are also focusing on the agenda of climate change, overall environmental issue is in less priority. If we are able to improve the environment, it will also contribute to minimize the effect of climate change.

**Don't you think that the climate change issue is also important?**

I am not denying the fact that climate change issue is not important. Even our government has been giving high priority to deal with climate change. What I think is environmental issue needs to be given



high priority. Of course, climate change has several implications on human life and society but we need to improve the overall environment to minimize the effect of climate change. Nepal's overall environment has been deteriorating due to several factors. From air pollution to degradation of forests, river pollution, all are helping to increase the temperature. As the population continues to grow, Nepal needs to take the environment as a number one priority. Nepal government has been doing its best to protect the environment.

**How do you emphasize the issue of environment?**

Environment is not an issue of Ministry of Environment as it has several linkages and this is a cross cutting issue. You cannot talk environmental issue in isolation as it is integrated with several government stake holders on it. Environment Ministry has been trying to bring the entire front together.

**What progress has your ministry made?**

In the last few years, Ministry of Environment has already completed a lot of important tasks. For instance, we were able to bring the National Adaptation Program Action (NAPA) to Climate Change document which identifies vulnerable areas for climate change. Similarly, we have already published several other books related to the state of environment. Status of



Climate Change in Nepal, Climate Change Vulnerability Mapping of Nepal and Climate Change Policy 2011 are a few of them. Now we are in the process to publish the state of environment of Nepal. Along with this, we will also publish handbooks explaining about various technical terminologies related to climate change.

What do you say about the level of coordination among various ministries in dealing with environmental issues?

I have to admit the fact that there is no coordination among various ministries working in the environmental sector. For example, under funds allocated by the Ministry of Local Development, Village Development Committees are constructing the roads all over the country in haphazard manners threatening the ecology. Although there is the requirement of environmental impact assessment to start development works, nobody is following it. Similarly, there is virtually no coordination between Ministry of Forest and Soil conservation with other ministries on implementation of programs related to environment. There is virtually no coordination at all among the various government and ministries and institutions. By using dozers and bulldozers people are digging the mountains, destroying fragile mountain ecology. These programs are destroying the village in the name of construction. Such roads are creating a lot of environmental problems. We have to decide what is our priority: environmental protection or construction of road? There is no coordination at all.

As the focal point, can't the Ministry of Environment take a role as a coordinator?

Look. The Ministry of Environment cannot have a role provided to perform the Environmental Impact Assessment. Our role is just limited to EIA. We don't have implementation arms at district levels. The Ministry of Environment is like an Island. This is just an Island within environment. The ministry does not have arms and legs. It has just a head. Where is its networking, arms, finger and legs? What can one expect from a ministry which is based in the capital? ■

deforestation not only has devastating consequences for the environment, the wildlife and communities, but for economies around the world.

Rather shockingly, 36 million acres of natural forest are lost each year. World Environment Day (WED) chose this year's theme, 'Forests: Nature at Your Service',

to encourage forest conservation and sustainable consumption for green growth, and in support of the UN International Year of Forests Initiative. Preserving forests throughout the world has to be in our collective consciousness so as to change our lifestyles.

Standing forests also conserve carbon while supporting the livelihoods of a large number of Indigenous Peoples and forest-dependent communities as well, providing essential ecosystem services such as habitat for biodiversity and provisioning clean water supplies.

UNEP urges governments should develop and implement policies that encourage sustainable use of forests. They should consider cordoning off areas inhabited by endangered species and promote forest restoration where they have been depleted.

#### Nepal's State

Dhungen of Lalitpur and Baghmara are not only two villages to see drastic changes due to preservation of forests. There are more than 14,000 user groups who are enjoying the fruit of forest conservation in Nepal tangibly contributing to improve the livelihood of people.

According to the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation, since 1980, about 14,000 CFUGs have been formed. About one-fourth of Nepal's national forest is now managed by more than 35 percent of the total population. Community forestry is now the second-largest forests management regime after government-managed forests. Currently, forest



**Livelihoods Comes First**

accounts 40 percent land of the country. Nepal's forest decreases at the rate of 1.9 percent and annual increase of 1.3 percent.

This year's World Environment Day's message has also a lot to say to Nepal where, otherwise, the coming generation may have to lose.

Unlike in the past, the WED will be celebrated around the country highlighting the importance of the environment in the day to day life of common people. From capital Kathmandu to district headquarters, various groups will celebrate the WED by organizing different programs.

"We want to utilize the WED as a day to generate awareness about the nature and environment. Realizing the need to generate awareness at rural parts of the country where the people have to suffer a lot due to degrading environment, we are focusing our program targeting the rural Nepal," said Purushottam Ghimire, joint secretary and chief of Environment Division of Ministry of Environment.

Forestry is an extensive land use system in Nepal. The forest and trees provide a vast array of goods and services to human beings. Forest and tree resources provide the basic commodities such as fuel wood, timber and fodder to the people and serve as an important ecological function such as biodiversity conservation, erosion control, and carbon dioxide consumption.

Agriculture is the mainstay of economy in the country as agriculture

and forestry together have a 32% contribution in total gross domestic product of the country. Nearly two-thirds of the country's total population depends on agriculture profession for sustaining their livelihoods.

The rate of forest depletion was significantly high up to nineties due to political, socioeconomic and administrative reasons.

The last National Forest Inventory (NFI) was carried out in early nineties in Nepal. According to that inventory, forest and shrub together cover about 5.83 million ha, which is 39.6% of the total land area of the country. The rate of forest area decreasing was 1.7% per annum during 1978/79 to 1994, whereas rate of forest and shrub depleting rate was 0.5% per annum during the same period. Since then NFI has not been done to update data on forest cover change.

Community Forestry (CF) policy has been implemented from the early eighties. Handover started to make it entirely accessible for the local people to manage and use national forests. The 90's was the decade of community forestry in Nepal and the policy and program also extended to the whole parts of the country. This policy has brought significant positive changes to restore denuded mountain landscape. Recent studies from 20 Terai districts (southern most districts) revealed that the rate of forest cover change was at an annual rate of 0.06% during the period of 1990/91 to 2000/2001.

If you ever wondered how it would be possible for you to save an entire forest then look no further than making simple lifestyle changes. Forests play multiple roles in our lives, including providing a source of livelihood, refuge for many species, and clean air for all.

As a result of the growing global pollution levels forests have often come to be referred to as the 'lungs of the earth'. This is particularly because deforestation and forest degradation account for nearly 20% of global greenhouse gas emissions, which forests would absorb if carefully managed.

Broadly, there are three main sources of forest degradation: commercial

logging, fires, and gathering wood for fuel. Insects and pests also cause considerable forest degradation.

Forests cover 31 percent of total area in Nepal and the livelihood of over 20 million people depends on it. Nepal generates huge amounts of revenue from forests.

#### WWF-Nepal's Support

Various donor countries are also supporting Nepal's forest programs. According to WWF, ever since WWF started working in Nepal, one of its priorities has been forest conservation.

To address the problems and issues of habitat loss, WWF Nepal Program has been working with local communities for the restoration and natural regeneration of forests and biological corridors through community forestry.

Majority of the poor people living in the fringe areas depend on subsistence agriculture and forest products for their livelihoods. The WWF Nepal initiated community forestry programs are aimed at enhancing community ownership of their forests while meeting their subsistence needs of forests products.

This, in turn, is aimed at winning their stewardship and support in biodiversity conservation. The restoration and regeneration programs have succeeded in reviving the once degraded biological corridors.

The success of the program could be seen from the increased wildlife movement in the critical biological corridors such as the Khata Corridor that links Bardia National Park with India's Katarnia Ghat Wildlife Sanctuary.

Community forest program in the mountain areas is very important as the growth rate of vegetation is rather slow owing to harsh environmental conditions.

Apart from fulfilling the needs of forest products of local people, new community forestry programs in the mountain protected areas are aimed at facilitating livestock grazing in a regulated way and helping them to produce non-timber forest products and medicinal plants for income generation.

#### Importance of WED

WED celebration began in 1972 and has grown to become one of the main vehicles through which the UN

stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment and encourages political attention and action.

Through WED, the UN Environment Program is able to personalize environmental issues and enable everyone to realize not only their responsibility, but also their power to become agents for change in support of sustainable and equitable development.

WED is also a day for people from all walks of life to come together to ensure a cleaner, greener and brighter outlook for themselves and future generations.

'Everyone counts in this initiative and WED relies on you to make this happen! We call for action - organize a neighborhood clean-up, stop using plastic bags and get your community to do the same, plant a tree or better yet organize a collective tree planting effort, walk to work, start a recycling drive... the possibilities are endless,' note experts.

As a resource, forests provide many important natural resources, such as timber, fuel, rubber, paper and medicinal plants. Forests also help sustain the quality and availability of freshwater supplies. More than three quarters of the world's accessible freshwater comes from forested catchments.

Water quality declines with decreases in forest condition and cover, and natural hazards such as floods, landslides and soil erosion have larger impacts. ■





UNLDC IV

# Time to Deliver

*The fourth UN conference on the Least Developed Countries concludes making pledges to support LDCs to help themselves. But will these pledges translate into action?*

By BHAGIRATH YOGI in Istanbul

For five-days (9-13 May), the Lutfi Kirdar Convention and Exhibition Center looked like a festival ground. Some 9,000 people, attired in their traditional dresses, had gathered in the historic city from around the world. The aim was to lobby with the western developed countries to commit more to support one of the poorest sections of the world's community.

"Solidarity, cooperation and partnership with the least developed countries, the poorest, most vulnerable and weakest countries and their people are not only moral imperatives, they are also economic and political ones... A successful renewed and strengthened global partnership that effectively addresses the special needs of least developed countries will contribute to the cause of peace, prosperity and sustainable development for all," said the Programme of Action adopted by the five day conference.

But, were the world leaders really committed to change the status quo? Evaluation of their decision regarding the Overseas Development Aid (ODA) and debt cancellation could be one of the yardsticks.

The Istanbul Programme of Action (PoA) called upon the donor countries to fully deliver on ODA promises made by them by 2015 and further enhance the resources to LDCs thereafter. "This commitment, when fulfilled, is expected to double the resources going to LDCs from 38 billion US dollars to almost 70 to 80 billion US dollars by 2015. And we have also agreed to an upward revision of resources going to LDCs after 2015," the PoA said.

Regarding debt cancellation, the Programme of Action called for an enhanced level of support for debt sustainability of the LDCs with bold and

comprehensive measures. "We are frustrated as the conference has failed to meet our expectations," said Dr Arjun Karki, spokesperson of the LDC IV Civil Society Forum. "The UN General Assembly Resolution 63/227 passed in 2009 had called on member states to mobilize additional international support measures and action in favour of the least developed countries. But this did not happen," he added.

## (Debt Scenario)

Officials, however, insist that the Istanbul conference should be seen as a



Deputy Prime Minister Upendra Yadav Addressing The Conference

step forward as it has pushed the LDC agenda higher in the international development discourse.

"The Istanbul conference has rightly put the issue of the LDCs high on the international agenda and also stressed the imperative need for giving a strategic focus to the concerns and expectations of the LDCs as the most vulnerable group of the international community," said Gyan Chandra Acharya, Nepal's permanent representative to the United Nations, who was actively engaged in the negotiations as the chair of Bureau of LDCs and group of 77 developing countries (G 77). "We hope that the full and effective implementation of this comprehensive yet action oriented program of action would result in a substantial change in the lives of the

people. With vigorous partnership, it can help half of the LDCs meet the criteria of graduation by 2020," he added.

The Programme of Action, among others, called for providing more support for market access through realization of the timely implementation of duty free quota free provisions for LDCs, reforms in the rules of origin, and clear commitment to enhance the share of assistance to LDCs for Aid for Trade; Establish stronger support mechanisms to promote foreign direct investment (FDI) to LDCs through setting up of new initiatives and partnership programs including by providing incentives to business community to invest in LDCs; and provide support for accelerating the progress towards attainment of all MDGs especially with provision of technical and financial support; and for its further progress beyond 2015 in education, health, shelter, sanitation, gender equality and empowerment and social protection.

The LDCs, on their part, committed themselves to combating corruption and good governance. The host country, Turkey, announced that it was willing to host a mid-term review of the PoA in 2015 by inviting all the stakeholders.

## Nepal's Participation

Though Prime Minister Jhala Nath Khanal had to cut short his visit to Istanbul due to simmering political crisis back home, officials said Nepal had an opportunity to show its leadership skills and brush up its profile as a leader of the LDCs. And, what would the conference mean for millions of poor living in Nepal?

"This summit provided a forum for both LDCs and development partners to share their concerns, which is a good beginning," said Deputy Prime Minister Upendra Yadav, who led the Nepali delegation after premier Khanal returned Kathmandu. "If we could have relative political stability in the country, we could easily graduate out of the LDC status within the next decade," he added.

Though LDC leaders like Yadav asked for strong international support to help at least half of the 48 LDCs to graduate by 2021, many at the conference were less enthusiastic towards such outcome. ■



Risky City

## EARTHQUAKE

# Hit Risk

*Experts warn a major earthquake might hit Kathmandu any moment, yet preparedness to minimise the risk is far too slow*

By NITISH BHATTARAI  
and ELIEN VAN HEE

**I**f a major earthquake, let's say, measuring 8 on the Richter scale, occurs in the Valley, the scale of damage and death will be unimaginable. According to experts, the casualty figures will be more than half a million.

Due to massive damage in the infrastructure, rescue and rehabilitation will be much more difficult.

Despite such dire warnings from experts, haphazard construction is yet to slow down in the valley. The number of multi-storied buildings constructed without following any standard poses a major risk during the period of earthquake like disasters.

Nepal is in a high risk of being struck

by an earthquake of 8 Richter scale in magnitude. The rapid population growth, haphazard building constructions and unresponsive political situation are likely to give this expected disaster even worse outcomes. Despite efforts to improve the knowledge and communication between all the involved organizations, there is still a long way to go in terms of preparedness even as the clock is ticking.

The last earthquake with a magnitude around 8 in Nepal (and Bihar) was in 1934. It took a toll of over 8500 lives. Research has shown that earthquakes of that force occur with an average of every eighty years. So the next one, luckily already a few years late, will bring more catastrophes.

## Status quo

It is a common phenomenon for less developed countries to have the presence of a lot of aid organizations. National and international, governmental and non-governmental, there is a big offer in the development sector of Nepal.

They all try to make a difference, but their goals are so spread out, that the general status of the country stays the same.

It was obvious that there was a need for collaboration. In 1996, Disaster Preparedness Network (DP-Net) was created as a loose association of several organizations whose working areas are linked with disaster management.

"We are a consortium, funded by NATO and currently we have 24 partners," explains Lubha Raj Neupane, program coordinator of DP-Net. "The two keywords of the consortium are 'information' and 'communication'. Scientific information can make Nepal stronger against disasters like floods, drought, landslides and the most outspoken ones: earthquakes. The findings can, with the help of the partners, be distributed to the people of Nepal, so the outcome of the earthquake would be better than expected today."

## Knowledge

But what can be expected? That is still a wild guess. Scientific information that is available is quickly dated because of the strong population growth.

It is calculated that in Kathmandu Valley 40 000 people will be killed and 90 000 will be injured by an earthquake with a magnitude around 8, that is with the assumption of a population of one and a half million. But current predictions speak of a population of four million people in the Valley.

One of the partners of DP-Net is National Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET). They want to improve the knowledge and awareness to reduce the impact of future earthquakes. Their goal is to have 'Earthquake Safe Communities in Nepal by 2020'. But again the same thing, even this specialized organization is not able to give up-to-date information.

Although there are reports, for



example, about vulnerability assessment of hospitals and schools. But no one seems to know what other impacts would be, if earthquake actually hit. And knowledge is of course the first step to make proper preparations. The need for a push from the highest political ranks is bigger than ever.

Nepal has experienced huge earthquakes a few times. Still people forget the implications linked to an earthquake. People don't have awareness in many areas. That is why building constructions are not up to the standards. The government has introduced building codes, but enforcement is a big problem. However, many buildings which were already built before were not up to those standards.

The general people tend to evade the standard rules to save money. The improper practices are done by unregistered contractors who are not bound by the law to follow the standard rules and regulations. The main problem is that these contractors solely depend on their own experiences. They are not technically educated for the building profession. Unfortunately these kinds of contractors are mostly used by the middle class families, the dominant population in the valley.

The other common problem is that the people do not consult the engineers and even if they do consult the engineers, they do not follow the engineers just to save a little money. Hence, the buildings, especially in the valley, are vulnerable to earthquake damage.

#### Politics

And that is where it gets difficult. Due to the current political problems, there are many other priorities such as security and constitution.

"The Ministry of Home Affairs makes efforts, but the amounts of resources are still not adequate," Pitambar Aryal, the director of the Disaster Management Department of the Nepal Red Cross Society, said.

"My opinion is that the armed police force, the army and the police need to be equipped so that they can do the heavy rescue when earthquake hits, before the



**Unplanned Urban Growth**

international assistance arrives."

Besides the availability of the materials, Aryal also mentions the lack of awareness. "Nepal has experienced this kind of earthquakes a few times. Still people forget the implications linked to an earthquake."

Because of the rapid population growth, schools and hospitals are bursting from the ground. The speed is the extra factor why buildings are still not being built to the earthquake-standards. Aryal adds: "Basically, earthquakes don't kill people, buildings kill people."

#### Commitment

But the communication between all the different parties is slowly improving. "Very recently there has been a high level of sensitization among the stakeholders and we have regular meetings," says Aryal, "especially in Kathmandu Valley". The Valley is very vulnerable because the area used to be a lake. The consequence is that the ground has a lot of soft sediments, which will turn in to liquid during the shaking of an earthquake. This process is called liquefaction and that will harm the bad support structures of

buildings even more.

The government has the Nepal Risk Reductions Consortium where last year the Prime Minister and the minister of Home Affairs were involved, with all kinds of stakeholders. Home Affairs has also set up a new Act about the situation, because the last one was from 1982. But the case is set on a hold at the Ministry of Law and Justice.

"Because of the political situation at the moment, the Act does not get reviewed, because an institution is of course more important", explains Aryal. "So there is some kind of commitment, but bringing commitment to action requires resources. And that is what Nepal is lacking. Of course we can't prevent the disaster, but we must be able to better prepare us."

Nepal's development partners have been also supporting Nepal's efforts to enhance the preparedness level. Under the leading position of United Nations Development Program (UN), Nepal's development partners and International non-governmental organizations have been supporting and conducting programs. ■



High Level Meeting

HIGH LEVEL STAKE HOLDERS MEET

## Planning Family Prosperity

*A high level meeting of Family Planning stakeholders in Nepal drew the conclusion that the concept of family planning needs to be revived and revised*

By A CORRESPONDENT

**E**ven in more than four decades after the implementation of family planning programs in Nepal, the idea is still regarded as a process of sterilization against big family. In these decades, the use of family planning has brought drastic changes from a high fertility rate of over 6 to present trend of more than 3.

Family planning is regarded as a medium to control population rather than taking it in its broader sense of family management for prosperity and happiness in human life.

At a function organized by the International Council on Management of Population Programs (ICOMP) and the Population Association Nepal with support from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation (USA), Nepalese

lawmakers, scholars, experts, high level government officials and media persons shared their ideas about how to regard family planning in the changing context.

Ignorant about the new development and state of Nepal's family planning issue, Nepalese lawmakers actively took part in the interactions expressing the views on why family planning mattered to Nepal. The two days' high level consultation, among others, extensively addressed the issues of population management, uses of contraceptives and implications of sterilisations and mediums of family planning.

At a time when Nepal has already made some good progress in family planning sector, parliamentarians, secretaries of ministry, policy makers, academics, media persons and NGO

activists discussed current demographic situation and status of family planning program in Nepal, successes, changing needs and challenges.

The meeting started with the presentation of two papers. Dr. Ram Hari Aryal, secretary to the Ministry of Science and Technology, presented the first paper on demographic situation in Nepal. Likewise, Dr. Govinda Subedi, president of PAN and Ananda Tamang, executive director of CREHPA, presented a paper on the status of family planning and reproductive health in Nepal- successes, issues and gaps.

"I expect that this meeting will help discuss various gaps that existed in the way to achieve the goals of quality services of family planning in Nepal and South Asia," said Wasim A. Zaman, Ph.D. Executive Director of ICOMP, at the opening the session. "Enhanced commitment of leaders to quality Reproductive Health and Family Planning will help us attain the MDG goals," said the chief of Malaysia based ICOMP.

Nepal's lawmaker Ratna Gurung recommended that concrete measures and initiatives should be pursued for engaging men for supportive roles for family planning. Similarly, another lawmaker Hari Roka stressed on the need of educating and mobilizing the local institutions, including schools, for sharing the message of family planning. Lawmaker Indrajeet Rai and former vice speaker of parliament Chitra Lekha Yadav also shared their views.

Although Nepal has made certain progress in family planning, the time has come to fine-tune it in the changing context. "There is the need to revitalize family planning program focusing on all levels," said Chitra Lekha Yadav, Former Deputy Speaker and Treasurer of Nepali Congress. CA member Dr. Indrajit Rai proposed that quality of life of the people is the key issue and that needs to be addressed in a



comprehensive manner.

"Family planning is essential for happy family and there is the need to have a focused program now," said former health minister Bhakta Bahadur Balayar. Presenting his paper at the workshop, Dr. Ram Hari Aryal, secretary to the Ministry of Science and Technology, pointed out that the present age structure of Nepal is heavily weighted toward young age groups and rapidly growing population in the future.

The participants identified their own roles in strengthening the positive messages of family planning in a redefined way to meet the local context. The two days workshop held on 16-17 May 2011 drew some major conclusions that family planning needs to be in priority in an integrated approach taking due care of family happiness, women's empowerment and trained and responsible human resource at the community level.

Following intense discussions on national issues, the last day session discussed on the issue to present in the SAARC level meeting. Moderated by Dr. Aryal and Dr. Wasim Zaman, the participants suggested that the regional level meeting should include experience sharing programs.

Prof. Dr. Ram Sharan Pathak, Prof. Bal Krishna Mabuhang, Dr. Padma Prasad Khatiwada and Panchakumari Manandhar, and Dr. Nilu Aryal, division chief of family health division of Ministry of Population of Health, also shared their experiences.

"Family planning issues need to be seen in the present context. Nepal needs to reorient its traditional approach of just looking at it as a matter of population control. Family Planning is also part of family prosperity and happiness," said Dr. Navin Thapa, maternal health expert. Assistant Lecturer of Population Division of Padma Kanya Campus Bhagwati Shedhai shared the conclusions of the program. ■

## "Lot Of Changes Are Positive"

Dr. RAM HARI ARYAL

Secretary to the Ministry of Science and Technology Dr. RAM HARI ARYAL, who is also renowned population expert, spoke to **NEW SPOTLIGHT** about the state of population in Nepal and family planning. Excerpts:

**How do you evaluate Nepal's population policies?**

Population policies have become the integral part of development in Nepal since the first plan, 1956-61, and they have been explicitly linked in the development planning since the third plan, 1965-70. Although the first and second plans focused on resettlement issues, the third plan focused on introduction of more systematic family planning in 1968. From fourth to seventh plan, they addressed both family planning and development as an integral part to control population growth rate and manage migration.

**What major changes have happened over the years?**

In 1992/97, the eighth plan developed the revised population strategy and addressed consequences of high population growth rate and focused on economic and social development to reduce the fertility. Ninth plan stressed the need for Population Perspective Plan and develop small and quality family norms, integrate population concerns into development process and manage migration. Nepal has passed through several stages of the process.

**What is the demographic situation of Nepal now?**

One can see a lot of positive changes. Fertility has drastically declined -- it is now 3.3. And age at marriage has gone up among both males and females. The census will bring more interesting results. According to Family Health



Survey Report 1996, contraceptive use now reached 48 percent. Legalization of abortion also helped to reduce the fertility.

**How do you look at the progress in terms of infant mortality?**

Infant mortality rate has also declined over the years, as it is now 48 deaths per 1000 lives. Nepal's population size is going up. It is very interesting to see the patterns of population as the number of young population is still higher.

**What are the demographic challenges before Nepal?**

One of the challenges is high population growth rate. Another problem is early marriage and early child birth. Nepal needs to focus to reduce this. There are also challenges for increasing old age population and displaced population. There is the need to reduce high infant mortality and maternal mortality. The uneven distribution of the population will also create the problems as there is rapid urbanization and migration is causing challenges. One of the major opportunities lies before Nepal is demographic bonus and population momentum. ■

# The Wonders Of Soap

-By BUDDHA BASNYAT, MD



It is hard to imagine that microbes on your hands and body can cause diseases. This concept of germs and diseases has to be hammered home by your mother when you are still a toddler. Perhaps, uncomfortable though this may sound, it would be great if these germs were not microscopic and we actually saw them moving on our hands and body; this way we would be certain. Anyway in our country where infectious diseases abound, there is no doubt that the frequent and generous use of soap will keep diseases at bay. If people could be convinced to buy and use soap and

eating and before feeding infants. Fieldworkers provided 2 to 4 bars of soap per household and the soap was regularly replaced.

In the eleven "control" slum neighbourhoods, no soap was distributed, instead these households received pens and paper. The control group was free to continue using soap as they had done in the past, but received no health education. Every week for one year the fieldworkers visited the families in the study sites to see if the instructions were being adhered to, and they collected data.

compared to the control group.

What was surprising (but disappointing for Proctor and Gamble) was that just using soap properly was good enough to decrease the diarrhea and pneumonia rates in children. The triclocarbon antibacterial agent in the soap did not give any extra protection. These findings were stunning because despite the poverty, illiteracy, overcrowding and continuing to drink and wash with contaminated water, if you just used plain soap properly for washing, the benefits were clear cut. This became a milestone paper that was published in the Lancet in 2005 with Stephen Luby, who now works in Bangladesh, as the lead author. Proper usage of soap enhances the capacity of water to solubilise and remove pathogens from the hands to reduce both respiratory and digestive problems.

More than three and half million children die due to diarrhoea and respiratory infections every year in the developing world such as ours. Using soap generously clearly ameliorates this condition. People have strong ideas of purity in South Asia and wash themselves frequently. But generous usage of soap is a must. Just washing the "involved" hand after defecation is not good enough.

**The triclocarbon antibacterial agent in the soap did not give any extra protection. These findings were stunning because despite the poverty, illiteracy, overcrowding and continuing to drink and wash with contaminated water, if you just used plain soap properly for washing, the benefits were clear cut.**

teach their young ones the health benefits derived from this, we will have gone a long way. The story below illustrates the amazing qualities of the humble soap in a simple but scientific manner.

Proctor and Gamble, the consumer product conglomerate, helped carry out a study in the slums of Karachi to see if a new antibacterial soap could prevent diseases in the community. Fieldworkers for the study fanned out in the twenty five randomly chosen slum neighbourhoods in Karachi distributing soap, some with the antibacterial agent (triclocarbon) and some without. The two different soaps looked exactly alike. They encouraged people to use the soap generously and wash their hands in these five situations: after defecation, after cleaning an infant that had defecated, before preparing food, before

After one year the study was analyzed. The children in the households that received soap and proper instructions had a 50% decrease in pneumonia rates and 53% decrease in diarrhea rates

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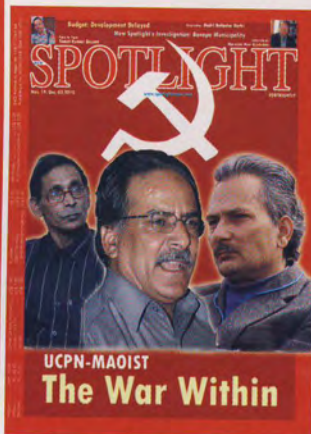
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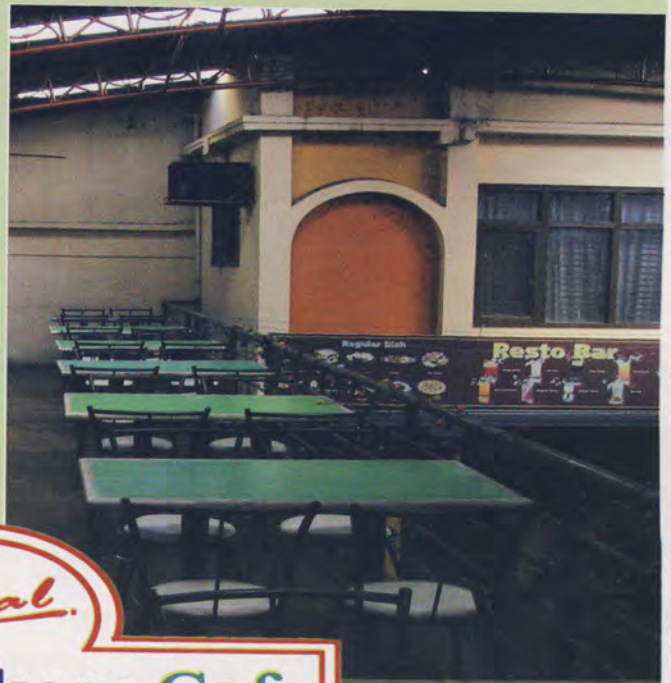


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