



Viewpoint:
Dr. Surya Dhungel

Whither National Reconciliation

Economy: Power Cut

Commentary:
Yubaraj Ghimire



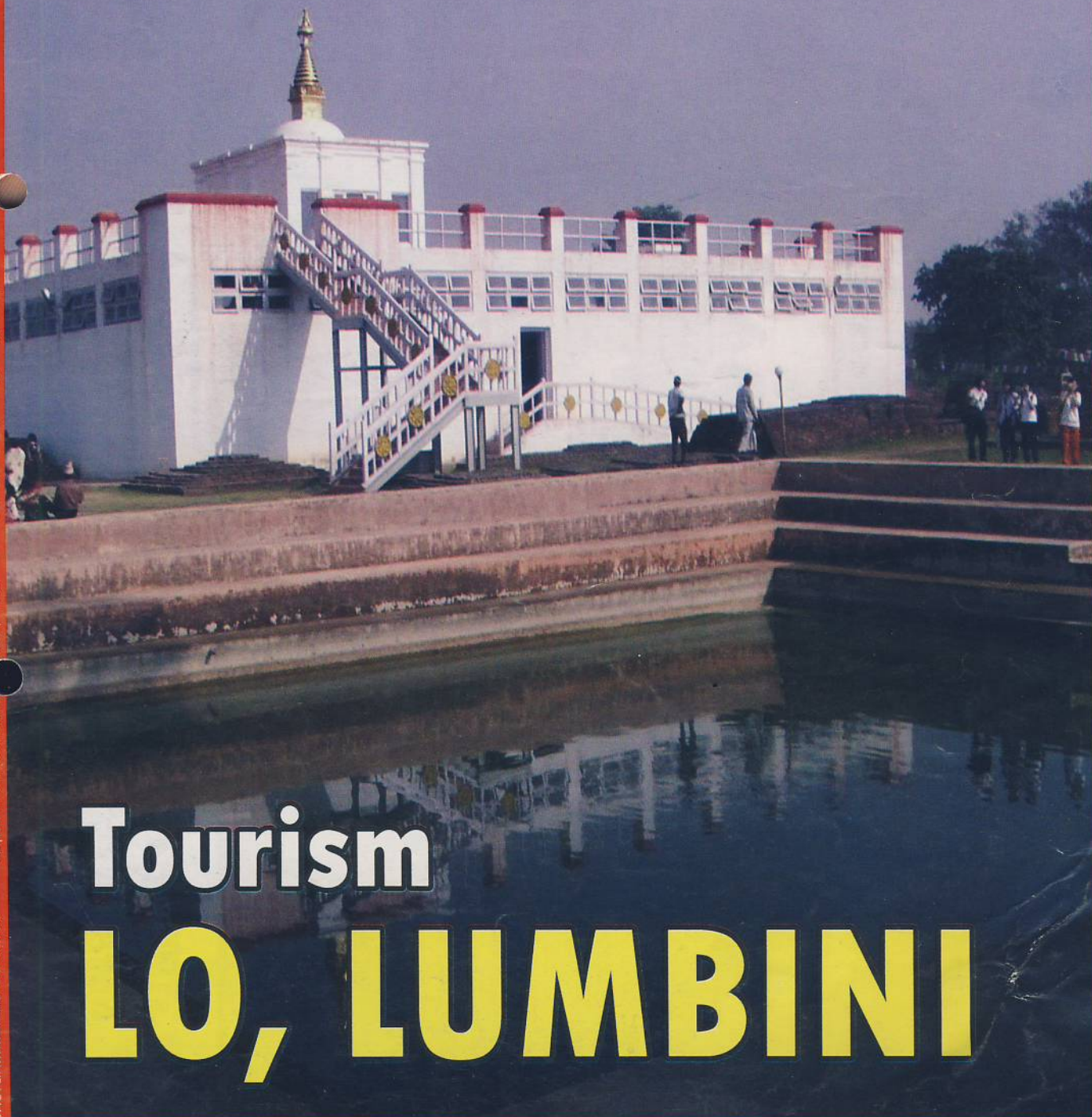
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From The Editor

Nepal has made significant progress in tourism sector this year. At the close of Nepal Tourism Year 2011, Nepal hosted over 700,000 tourists in the country. This is itself a big achievement in tourism sector. Nepal Tourism Year 2011 faced several hitches from the early stage. The budget allocated for the program was released just a few months back. Along with this, the plan to strengthen national flag carrier, adding two more aircraft, was foiled at the last minute. Despite these bleak aspects, one needs to recognize the progress made by the organizers. As Nepal has already announced Visit Lumbini Year 2012, the campaign to promote the tourism in Nepal will take a new turn.

It is unfortunate that when more than a dozen of poor people have already died due to cold wave in Nepal's southern plains, no political party has felt a pinch about this. However, Nepali Congress, Nepal's major political party, called a general strike ignoring the suggestions given by various organizations and even heads of diplomatic mission. This showed the apathy of political parties towards their citizens. This was not the first time Nepali Congress organized such *bandha* against the wishes of the people. In a country where impunity is the rule and everyone is making the mockery of rule of law, establishing democratic culture is a long way off. Nepal's present political context is that all political forces share the same value, that is *bandha*. There is no difference in liberal Nepali Congress, radical Maoist, moderate CPN-UML and other many regional and ethnical parties as they resort to this practice.

As Nepalese Christian Community are celebrating Christmas, We would like to wish our readers and well wishers happy Christmas and Happy New Year 2012.

Keshab Poudel
Editor

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Chinese Ambassador Called on prime minister Bhattarai

Chinese ambassador to Nepal Yang Houlan called on prime minister Baburam Bhattarai last week. The two sides cordially exchanged views on the development of China-Nepal relations and specific projects in bilateral cooperation.

According to Chinese Embassy's website, Prime Minister Bhattarai stressed that, the Nepali side attached great importance to developing the friendly and cooperative relationship between Nepal and China, unswervingly supported China's interests and concerns on Tibet-related issue, and was willing to make joint efforts to continue to deepen the mutually-beneficial



cooperation in various fields between the two countries.

Ambassador Yang said that China and Nepal always understood each other, respected each other, and supported each other, and the bilateral relations were developing smoothly. The Chinese side wished to make joint efforts with the Nepali side, to continue to push forward the Comprehensive Cooperative Partnership between China and Nepal.

Nepal Selected For Millennium Challenge

The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) in Washington, D.C., has selected Nepal as eligible to develop a Threshold Program. In making its decision, the MCC board cited the recent landmark agreements on the Comprehensive Peace Accord.

"We welcome the MCC's decision, which recognizes the progress that Nepal has made to advance peace and increase prosperity for its people. We look forward to the Government of Nepal's leadership in working with MCC and the Embassy in designing a threshold program that will continue to advance the government's efforts to create a democratic state focused on meeting the needs of the citizens of Nepal."

"We are delighted that the MCC determined Nepal's performance in these policy areas merited recognition with eligibility for a Threshold Program."

Sri Lanka To Renovate Rest House

Considering the century-old friendship between Nepal and Sri Lanka, and the increasing number of devotees and pilgrims visiting the sacred sites of the birthplace of Lord Gautama Buddha in Lumbini every year from Sri Lanka, it is necessary to operate and maintain the Sri Lanka Pilgrims' Rest in Lumbini in good condition, Sri Lankan Embassy said.

The Pilgrims' Rest was providing accommodation and serving the pilgrims over more than a decade.

On behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka, Thosapala Hewage, Ambassador of Sri Lanka to Nepal, signed the agreement and on behalf of LDT, Acharya Karma Sangbo Sherpa, Vice-Chairman signed.

According to Embassy of Sri Lanka, with this 30 year lease, the "LDT of Sri Lanka", which was formed by the Government of Sri Lanka is making arrangements to reconstruct the Rest. Once it is completed, it is easier for Pilgrims' to come and stay at the Rest at



cheaper rate where they not only can stay but can prepare their meals with cooking space and utensils and enjoy other facilities available at the Rest.

Opening Door To Justice For Dalits

The United Nations Human Rights Office in Nepal (OHCHR-Nepal) organized a regional symposium on access to justice for victims of caste-based discrimination on December 14.

Challenges, lessons learned and good practices from Nepal were shared with participants from the country and other South Asian nations. The Office's report

-Opening the Doors to Equality: Access to Justice for Dalits in Nepal - served as the basis for the discussion.

EU Funds Agriculture, Nutrition Project

The European Union has funded 'Agriculture and Nutrition Extension Project (ANE) and launched it for implementation in four districts of Nepal - Nawalparasi, Rupandehi, Rukum and Surkhet districts and one district in Bangladesh with an EU Assistance of NRs 400.8 million.

The project aims at improving the food security and nutrition of the poorest and vulnerable households, especially women and children by introducing and facilitating the adoption of productive and environmentally sustainable agricultural technologies which improve beneficiaries' livelihoods as well as at creating and/or improving market linkages to improve food and nutritional security of both rural producers and urban consumers in four districts in Nepal and one district in Bangladesh.

South-South Knowledge Sharing

As part of the World Bank's efforts to foster knowledge sharing on issues of local governance and decentralization in Nepal, a South-South experience exchange titled Next Generation Reforms in Decentralization and Local Governance has been initiated by the Bank, with a focus on innovations and implementation challenges. The initiative seeks to bring together delegates from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Tanzania and Uganda to discuss contemporary issues, share experiences and strengthen South-South cooperation on local governance and decentralization issues. To this end, a workshop on "Next Generation Reforms in Decentralization and Local Governance" was organized in the State of Kerala in India on December 6-8, 2011.

A high level Nepalese delegation comprising Kamal Raj Pande, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Physical Planning and Works; Reshmi Raj Pandey, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Local Development; Dr. Mahendra Subba, Director General, Department of Urban Development and Building Construction; Girija Prasad Gorkhaly, Deputy Director General, Department of Urban

Development and Building Construction; Yoga Nath Poudel, Under Secretary, Ministry of Finance; and, Sushil Gyewali, Executive Director, Town Development Fund, participated in the workshop.

Pm Bhattarai Launched JNU Alumni

Prime Minister Dr. Baburam Bhattarai launched the Alumni Association of JNU- Nepal Chapter (AAJ-Nepal) on 17 December in Kathmandu.



AAJ-Nepal is the first ever international chapter of JNU with more than 150 members that includes distinguished personalities from all fields in Nepal including the Prime Minister. Professor Alka Achaya, International Student Advisor, JNU was also present at the occasion.

Nepal Switches On

First 'Renewable Energy Village'

The Government of Nepal, with support from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), is switching on the country's first mini wind-solar hybrid power system in the Dhaubadi village of Nawalparasi district.

For the villagers of Dhaubadi, the electricity from the mini-grid means less time and money spent on their search for firewood or travel to the nearest town to buy costlier kerosene. "Modern energy has the power to transform lives and communities, often in unexpected ways. Electricity eases a hard life by allowing women to cook and clean, and children to study or play after dark. Through television, cell phones, and computers, electricity increases connectivity, bringing marginal communities into the mainstream with information and development," said S. Hafeez Rahman, ADB's Director General for South Asia Department.

The project is based on 'energy systems' planning approach and has installed two sets of 5 kW wind turbines complimented by 2 kWp of solar PV panels to satisfy the village's electricity demand of 43.6 KWh per day. It has also

provided solar cookers, solar dryers and biogas systems to the villagers.

Capacity Development Training On ECD

In a country where drop out and repetition in grade one is a serious issue, graduates of Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres have proved that dropout rates in primary grades can be reduced if children are put to ECD centers. Building on the research findings, a training of trainers (ToT) was organized to enhance the skills of ECD focal persons and coordinators from across the country.

The 10-day national Training of Trainers was organized by the Ministry of Education/Department of Education in partnership with Save the Children, UNICEF-Nepal, UNESCO-Nepal and MASHAV (Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation) between 05 and 15 December, 2011.

A total of 28 ECD focal persons and coordinators from the District Education offices, Ministry of Education, National Centre's Education and Development (NCED)'s training centres, and different local NGOs took part in the training.

Ms. Sarah Wilner and Ms. Aviva Ben Hefer from the renowned Mount Carmel Training Center (MCTC)-Israel were resource persons for the training.

According to the Department of Education's Flash report 2011, there are 33,404 community and school based ECD/pre-primary centres in Nepal providing service for 1,056,430 children. This is 73% of the target age group of children aged three to four years.

Embassy Marks 40th B'Desh Victory Day

The Embassy of Bangladesh in Kathmandu observed the 40th Anniversary of the Victory Day of Bangladesh by organizing a flag hoisting ceremony to start the celebrations. This was followed by recitation from various holy books and reading out of the messages from the Prime Minister, president and foreign minister of the country.

Bangladeshi Ambassador to Nepal Nim Chandra Bhowmik highlighted the importance of the day in the history of Bangladesh.

Industry Minister Anil Kumar Jha was

present during the event where he shared his experience of visiting Bangladesh.



The historic contribution of the Father of the Nation of Bangladesh, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in establishing Bangladesh as an independent nation was also remembered during the day, according to a statement issued by the embassy.

North Korean Leader Kim Died

Kim Jong Il died of a heart attack Saturday caused by overwork and stress, according to North Korean media. He was 69 — although some experts question the official accounts of the date and place of his birth.

North Korea's anointed heir, Kim Jong Un, led a solemn procession of mourners Tuesday to the glass coffin of his father and longtime ruler —

a strong indication a smooth leadership transition was under way in the country known for secrecy and unpredictability.

State media fed a budding personality cult around his youngest known son, hailing him as a "lighthouse of hope" as the country was awash in a "sea of tears and grief."

The bier was located in a hall of the Kumsusan Memorial Palace, a mausoleum where the embalmed body of Kim Jong Il's father and North Korean founder Kim Il Sung has been on view in a glass sarcophagus since his death in 1994.

Kim Jong Il's 27-year-old son and heir, Kim Jong Un, wore a black Mao-style suit, his hair cropped closely on the sides but longer on top, as he walked with much older officials in suits and military uniforms. ■





“Future Of Banking Connected With Peace”

Ashoke SJB Rana is the CEO of Himalayan Bank Ltd.

How is the bank's current financial position?

The bank's financial position is strong. Our total capital is NRS 2 billion. We have more than half of our capital in the reserve fund. We have NRs 44 deposit and we have invested nearly 43 billion. We have been giving investors 25-30 percent return. Bad debt ratio is also less than 5 percent. We are working to bring the amount of bad debts down.

What are your investment priorities?

We are focusing mainly on the industrial sector. We are also giving priority in building commercial complexes.

Aren't you interested in Hydro power sector?

Yes, we are interested in the hydro power sector. However, it requires a huge investment; even if all the banks in Nepal invest in Hydro power, we can only produce 60 MW of electricity. Lone investment is not enough we need collective investment.

What are the specialties of Himalayan Bank?

We have a good credit rating. We are the biggest bank in terms of opening LC's with international banks. We have customer centered deposit offers. But, the big thing is belief and trust and we have the trust of people.

What are the main challenges in banking sector?

The main challenge is obviously security. Now, no customer feels himself secure. We have no peace, no constitution. Government is not able to spend the development budget. So, in this scenario what can banking sector expect?

You are the president of Nepal Bankers' Association (NBA) as well, now the liquidity crisis has eased in banks but there have been rumors that investment has not increased likewise. What is the fact behind this?

Yes, the liquidity has certainly increased. Loan-deposit ratio is nearly 70 percent. This is a normal situation. To earn high profits, investments were made in real estate and it had effected the overall situation. Once, the 20 percent investment from the real state returns we can invest in more productive sectors.

Do you see any need of improvements in the regulation done by the Rastra Bank?

The role of Rastra Bank is satisfactory. They should make the merger process easy and simple and should reduce the taxes.

Do you see any improvements in the financial sector after the merger of financial institutions?

Merger is really important in the current scenario. The bigger the organization, the lesser will be the operating cost and the organization can provide better service.

Gorkhapatra Daily

NIBL Signs Deposit Insurance Agreement

Nepal Investment Bank Limited has signed a deposit insurance agreement with Deposit and Credit Guarantee Corporation today. Jyoti Prakash Pandey, General Manager of Nepal Investment Bank Limited and Bhola Prasad Sharma Adhikari, General Manager of DCGC, signed the agreement on behalf of respective institutions. After this agreement, as many as around four lakh individual depositors from NIBL will be eligible for Deposit Insurance Scheme.

The agreement covers the bank's small deposits up to Rs. 200,000.00. According to the deposit guarantee regulation, in case of bankruptcy of a financial institution, all the individual depositors will be insured up to maximum amount of Rs 200,000.00 and will be paid the total deposited amount not exceeding Rs. 200,000.00 and interest per depositor within 90 days from the date the institution goes under liquidation, by DCGC.

The agreement is in compliance with the current fiscal year's monetary policy and budget that requires the commercial banks also to get their small deposits insured. The provision not only protects small depositors' money in the bank but can also benefit financial institutions as they can assure depositors regarding safety and recovery of the deposits even if the institution collapses.

Machhapuchhre, Standard Finance Merging

Machhapuchhre Bank Ltd. and Standard Finance have asked for official permission from the Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) to merge with each other. These two financial institutions took the decision last Saturday and requested NRB to allow them to merge within Chaitra of this year.

Sources at Rastra bank have said that NRB is planning to allow these two institutions to undergo merger as soon as possible.

UDB Faces Liquidation

Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) is preparing to liquidate United Development Bank (UDB) which failed to improve its financial position even after six months since it was declared crisis-ridden for the second time.

If NRB sticks to its decision, UDB will be the third financial institution in the country that will face liquidation after Nepal Development Bank and Samjhana Finance.

NRB records show that UDB got into trouble after its executive chairman, Rabindra Bahadur Singh, took NRs 65 million of the total paid-up capital for his personal use. NRB's high officials have stated that there is no possibility of improvement in the bank's current situation.

CAN InfoTech Kicks Off In Banepa

Midas CAN InfoTech 2011 is being held in Banepa. It is organized by the Computer Association of Nepal (CAN). The main attraction of this event is supposed to be the newly developed products in the information technology field along with various IT services including Wi-Fi Internet service, software, anti-virus, web-hosting, etc.

Businessmen in CAN Info Tech are offering mobile phone, DVD player, 3-D TV, LCD/LED TV and monitors, laptop, pen drive, printer, digital camera and desktop computers at discounted prices in the various 60 stalls of the fair. ■



The Supreme Court In Constitutional Politics

DR. SURYADHUNGEL

In less than twenty years the American Supreme Court changed its judicial policy of restraints reinforced by Justice Frankfurter in *Colegrove vs. Green* (1946), as 'self-imposed limitation upon judicial power... to enter the political thicket'. The dissenting opinion of Justice Black became majority view within two decades in *Wesberry vs. Sounders* (1964). Not only the leading judgment of *Baker vs. Carr* (1962) providing affirmative answer under Equal Protection Clause, the Warren Court went further in *Reynolds vs. Sims* (1964) 'to fashion a new American Constitution' through judicial amendment. Treaty termination issue in *Goldwater vs. Carter* (1979) was treated by court as 'non-judicial political question' through judicial self-restraint. No wonder President Woodrow Wilson once appreciated the judicial statesmanship and vision of the Supreme Court by saying, 'the Constitution has been more than "a mere lawyer's document, it has been a vehicle of the nation's life"'.

The Indian Supreme Court turned out to be more progressive in dealing with 'political question' issue since 1973 while shaping the New Indian Constitution through 'basic structure doctrine' through *Keshavanad Bharati Case*, which has now been expanded to even designing 'free and fair electoral process, and the sovereign, democratic, republican structure' (*Kihota Hollohon vs. Zachilhu*, 1993). Judicial Activism in India has emerged as a big challenge before the representative Parliament, a co-equal organ, in constitutional competency as well as in safeguarding the rights of the people. Nepal is no exception to this.

The Interim Constitution of Nepal has given more leverage to the judicial branch than any other modern Constitutions of the world. The wisdom of the Nepali Constitutional draftsmen and revolutionary restored parliament is immanent in the Interim Constitution 2007 which coined the Article 100 (2), as it says: *The Judiciary of Nepal shall be committed to this Constitution by recognizing the concept, norms and values of the independent judiciary, and by realizing the spirit of democracy and the aspirations of the people's movement (ie, jana andolan)*. The very core task assigned to the Nepali Judiciary by the Interim Constitution is to help realize the 'spirit of democracy and the aspirations of *jana andolan*', which in fact happens to be the basic feature of the Interim Constitution. By virtue of this very provision, the Constitution makers have barred the politicians to criticize the Supreme Court on the ground of it entering into 'political thicket'. The only limits on the Supreme Court on the issue of political question are thus the 'doctrine of judicial self-restraint', 'principles of justice' and the 'written words of the Constitution' itself. The irresponsible utterances and actions of the political wing therefore always tilt the constitutional balance in favour of judicial wisdom. Hence, the judiciary needs to be more responsible and accountable to the Constitution and *jana andolan* than ever before.

Theoretically, all democratic countries with a written Constitution recognize the concept of constitutional supremacy. The scheme of constitutional governance in these countries is laid down in the concept of separation of powers, the rule of law and exclusively safeguarded fundamental human rights. While the civil law countries rely much on the wisdom of the representative legislators in clearly formulating the words of the Constitution and law, the common law countries on the other hand trust the independent and impartial judicial tribunal for giving the final meaning to the words of the Constitution. Hence civil law courts simply apply laws for the parties in dispute. But the common law courts develop 'court jurisprudence' in the form of judicial precedents through judicial creativity and interpretism, which are missing in sub-servient socialist judiciary also. Such systemic differences have immensely strengthened common law courts in general. Problems occur only when politicians fail to respect the Constitution and rule of law, and when judges also cross the boundary to enter the 'political thickets' and expound new constitutionalism.



Supreme Court

The Supreme Court in the case of *Vijay Shakyaa and Kamalesh Dwibedi vs. Prime Minister* (18 Kartik 2067 BS) entered the 'political thickets' without any judicial restraint and mishandled the 'political question' issue involved in the case by unduly endorsing the power of the Legislature-Parliament to amend the Interim Constitution under Article 148. This amendment power was used to extend the tenure of the Constituent Assembly for an unlimited period. Trapped in the task of writing the wrong, the Supreme Court dived its nose further deep into constitutional politics under the thickets of "doctrine of necessity" in subsequent cases filed one after another by *Bharat Jungam and Balkrishna Neupane* during the past several months to nullify the ninth and tenth constitutional amendment bills extending the CA's tenure as passed by the Legislature-Parliament. The dilemma of the court was how to balance the interest of the nation engulfed in transition under the Interim constitutional framework with the extra-constitutional actions of the coequal branch, the Legislature-Parliament. The responsibility of the court was big because the divided house of the politicians had put both the Constituent Assembly and the peace process into hostage.

Despite several weaknesses, both substantive and procedural, the Supreme Court eventually offered three options before the CA and the coalition Government, again under the weak and fragile 'doctrine of necessity', however, supported by another doctrine of 'reasonable expectation' of reciprocity from co-equal branches of the state. The nation has accepted now that last extension of six months is reasonable for CA to complete its tasks. And references to other three options, such as referendum, fresh electoral mandate and other possible

B.P. Koirala's National Reconciliation

Relevant Forever

His courage, conviction and conscience on nationalism and democracy make B.P. Koirala relevant even 28 years after his death

By KESHAB POUDEL

constitutional discourses to resolve issues given by the Supreme Court are in fact judicial directives to the legislature-parliament, Government, CA and other stakeholders to examine the words of the Interim Constitution between the lines, to review CPA and all other agreements in order to find out ways to produce a new Constitution within the specified timeframe. It's the challenge before the legal luminaries, not the politically partitioned *amicus curies* assigned by the Bar Association, to rightly advise the reluctant CA.

Political scientists strongly resent against the concept of judicial supremacy in the exercise of state power. Popular supremacy for them is reflected through the representative institutions, whether it be the elected parliament or the national congress. The Constituent Assembly is of course a sovereign representative body but its exercise of unlimited constituent power will be reflected only in the Constitution that it produces in a prescribed manner. The amending power of the prevailing Constitution, however, is a legislative function which, in the case of Nepal, an odd legislative wing of the Constituent Assembly, called Legislature-Parliament, is allowed to perform. Amending power is always limited.

In conclusion, when the post conflict nation in transition is languished in absence of political statesmanship and visionary leadership, thanks to the Supreme Court for its attempt to open avenues through judicial discourse, again to borrow the words of Woodrow Wilson, for its 'judicial statesmanship' with vision displayed during crises. Critiques of the judgment on tenth amendment are welcome, but the court's views shall prevail. However, the politicians and CA members must not forget that all justices as citizens of Nepal have equal right to exercise constitutionally permissible sovereign power in the interest of nation, as much as a CA member thinks he or she has as an elected representative. The Supreme Court spoke because the CA members failed to respond to the historic opportunity. It would be unfortunate if CA appeals to the Supreme Court to review its special bench's opinion, as reported in media.

Dr. Dhungel is a Constitutional Lawyer, and may be reached at (dhungel_sps@yahoo.com)

Eminent constitutional lawyer Ganesh Raj Sharma, who edited a number of books of B.P. Koirala, once questioned Nepali Congress supreme Girija Prasad Koirala at his residence in Dhobidhara: Why shall the Nepalese remember the present set of political leaders in the next fifteen years?

Girija Prasad Koirala, who was leading Nepali Congress government at that time, avoided the answer. Sharma posed this question in the context when Nepali Congress was organizing National Reconciliation Day throughout the country remembering late B.P. Koirala in 2000.

Sharma, who has seen many ups and downs of Nepali Congress and ins and outs of Congress leaders, was convinced that Nepali Congress may have drawn the conclusion that there is no leader who stands for conviction and conscience to uphold the ideals of democracy and nationalism.

What Sharma considered a decade ago came true. Although B.P.'s brother Girija Prasad Koirala led Janandola I and II up to declaration of Nepal as a Republican, Federal and Secular state and he was the longest serving prime minister in the history of Nepal as almost 8 years in power in 15 years of politics after the restoration of democracy, he was nowhere to be remembered except for the recent peace award bestowed by Dilliraman Regmi Foundation. Seasoned politician Koirala, who was projected as a candidate for Nobel peace award, shared the peace award with much junior politician CPN-UML leader Madhav Kumar Nepal.

Even 28 years after his death, people of all ages and all spectra of Nepalese politics remember B.P. Koirala though he was in power less than 16 months and he spared his entire life in prison or in exile in India.

Whatever the circumstances he faced, elder Koirala never compromised with his conviction on National Reconciliation and he dared to speak his conviction upholding the values of liberal democracy and nationalism. However, all his colleagues including his own brother G.P. Koirala sacrificed everything to go to the power.

B.P.'s colleagues reaped the benefits of power by compromising the ideals but what



Late BP Koirala

they lost is identity and ideals. After joining hands with populist communists sacrificing ideals of democracy and nationalism, the same populism swept them.

"If democracy and nationalism have to be saved, we cannot afford to give in to populism. To save democracy we may at times have to take unpopular decisions and make the people accept them. Of course, that will have to be done not through autocratic methods but by convincing the people," said B.P. Koirala in his interview to Indian journalist Bhola Chatterji.

Today, Nepali Congress stands at a place where even radical communists like UCPN-Maoist and another communist party CPN-UML condemned it for their violent act. The general strike called by Nepali Congress and violent act resorted to by its cadres on Monday surpassed that by the radical communists in destruction.

"It is shameful for us to identify as a follower of liberal Democratic Party when even communist oriented left reporters who were groomed in the ideology of violence commentary are teaching Nepali Congress its democratic ideals," said a senior Nepali Congress leader. "I feel very strange when US educated Dr. Minendra Rijal or older generation congress leaders Sushil Koirala, Arjun Narshing K.C., Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat

and son of B.P. Koirala Shashanka Koirala were justifying violence. This is the bankruptcy of the country's largest democratic party. We have inherited this from our great republican leader Girijababu."

As B.P. Koirala always said that Nepali Congress will lose its identity if it gave up nationalism and democratic ideals, this is what is exactly happening to it. By launching the joint agitation with communists in 1990 against the traditional force of monarchy, Nepali Congress deviated from its ideology of reconciliation. In Janandolan II, under late GP's leadership, Nepali Congress joined hands with violent Maoists against monarchy and liberal democracy. Even founding leader of Nepali Congress Krishna Prasad Bhattarai quit the party after this decision.

Despite declaring Nepal as a federal, democratic, secular republic, nothing has substantially changed. Nepal continues to face a series of political instability one after another. In this process, many political leaders have swept in and out of power.

Along with the institution of monarchy, Nepali Congress and its ideology were swept away by destabilization. Whether saint prime minister Bhattarai or supreme leader of Janandolan I Ganesh Man Singh or supreme leader of Janandolan II, no one was spared by the radical wave. Portrayed by Indian Prime Minister Dr. Man Mohan Singh following the Janandolan II as a statesman of South Asia, late Girija Prasad Koirala's legacy has already faded away.

As Nepali Congress is gradually proving itself as irrelevant after compromising its ideals, the popularity of its leader B.P. Koirala and his policy of national reconciliation are going high. Nepal has changed from monarchical state to republican, unitary to federalism, what has not changed is Nepal's geographic location. This is where the policy of national conciliation fits so well.

The message B.P. sought to give homemade national reconciliation and national unity based on mutual trust and understanding was to give stability to nation and national leader. However, foreign designed consensus founded on mistrust and suspicion will only push the country into prolonged political crisis.

As Sharma said younger people don't know even the name of leaders who led Janandolan I as Nepal's political leaders have not left anything that they will be remembered for by the next generation of people. As Nepal is remembering B.P. Koirala and national reconciliation day, will the present day national actors rise to the occasion and take a momentous decision so they can be remembered in the next fifteen years? ■

Nationalism and Democracy

The statement B.P. Koirala gave on return from foreign exile on December 30, 1976:

After a pretty long period of exile, we are returning to our country. On this occasion, I would like to say a few words to the countrymen.

Today, our country is in a national crisis. All have realized that this crisis is getting heightened since the last few years. As a result, the very national identity has been endangered. Others have also admitted this. All including the King have from time to time referred to the danger posed to national identity. We are returning to home after realizing this grave reality. We think that the lack of national unity is a major factor for such a national crisis as a result of which foreign elements have started to become successful in playing their dirty games and making Nepal a center of international conspiracy. National unity can be achieved only through a collective campaign and efforts of all Nepali people. Such a collective campaign does also lay the grounds for the institutional base for the emotional unity of the Nepali people. If the sloganeering alone could do this, the national unity would not have suffered so much nor our country would have landed in such a miserable condition in the last sixteen years. Today, there is selfishness, communalism, individualistic practices and the tendency to have external-tilt is rampant in the country. In such circumstances nationalism becomes the first casualty.

Till yesterday, our struggle was confined to the attainment of the people's democratic rights. That's why, we emphasized more on the democratic side. Today, there is a new dimension added to it. A dual responsibility has befallen the Nepali Congress. This second responsibility is, safeguarding the national identity. We have visualized two fold faces of today's Nepal: Nationalism and Democracy.

It means the Nepali people should take the responsibility of restoring democracy as well as safeguarding the nation. If we talk of only one responsibility we will be following the wrong track by being one-sided. And, if we emphasized only on the restoration of democracy, we will not be contributing to addressing this national crisis. Moreover, we may even fall into the trap of the foreigners by such one-sided action. Similarly, if we talk of the nationalism only, we will be repeating the same 16-years-old hollow slogans of nationalism, and will be siding with the authoritarianism. Such a hollow slogan of nationalism cannot generate an internal willpower in the countrymen to safeguard the nation. Therefore, we need now to understand that the national unity can be built on the

foundation of democracy only. And the foundation of the democracy can be cemented by the economic development and the just economic system. Therefore we feel that nationalism, democracy and economic development are interdependent on each other.

It is well known that the Nepali Congress has taken historical and serious decisions from time to time in the national interest. The decision to wage the 1951 revolution and its executions are some examples. After finding that there was conspiracy to put off the elections forever, it took the leadership of national campaign for the holding of the elections. We received the cooperation from various parties in that campaign. Nepali Congress launched the resistance movement for democracy after the cruel and the fatal blow dealt to democracy in 1960. And today, we have taken this historical decision seeing the crisis the nation is facing. This is in accordance with the tradition of the Nepali Congress.

In the history of every nation there comes such moment when its people have to risk their lives to safeguard the national identity. We think, such a moment has come in Nepal today. Our well-wishers had advised us not to return Nepal seeing the dangers involved in it. We would like to tell them that we have taken this historical decision because the likely danger to our lives is nothing as compared to the danger to the nation. The workers of Nepali Congress have also shown the example of unprecedented courage and love towards nation by returning to the motherland following the party directives.

In this hour of national crisis, all of us should get united by forgetting and ending the past unhealthy debates, experiences and differences. Our program should be directed by the feeling that we will no more exist in the absence of our nation. I do not know what fate awaits me after I return to the country. Through this statement, as the Chairman of Nepali Congress, I would like to appeal to the entire countrymen that let us all unanimously unite in the pious task of defending the nation, its progress, happiness and prosperity of the people. If I get an opportunity, I will put forth my feelings before His Majesty also. The responsibility to save the nation is the common responsibility of all.

Jai Nepal!

Bishweswor Prasad Koirala

Dec. 30, 1976

(This excerpt has been reproduced in order to re-emphasize the importance of national reconciliation)



WEN JIABAO VISIT ROW

Media Mix

From announcement to postponement of the reported Nepal visit schedule of Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, the media made their own interpretations

By A CORRESPONDENT

It was prime minister Dr. Baburam Bhattarai who disclosed in November 15 with the Nepalese media that Chinese premier Wen Jiabao would pay an official visit to Nepal. A month later, it was again he who reported to the media about the postponement of the visit.

As the Chinese side remained tightlipped, nobody knew what was cooking during the one month period between Bhattarai's two announcements. Media reports were full of speculations and calculations.

"The cancellation was an outcome of the total immaturity and diplomatic misconduct at the highest level of the government," said Rajeshwar Acharya, former ambassador to China.

Some see it as a violation of diplomatic etiquette by prime minister Bhattarai who prematurely disclosed on November 15 about the visit of the Chinese premier. According to the prime minister, Wen was scheduled to arrive in Nepal on a three-day official visit on December 20.

In a dramatic turn when Nepalese and Indian media were speculating about the possible outcomes, possible treaties, agreements and implications,

Chinese officials remained tightlipped. Even Chinese media did not seem to notice the panicky media interpretations.

In his book on China, Henry Kissinger describes China's approach to diplomacy and international negotiations characterizing it as a "thorough analysis; careful preparation; attention to psychological and political factors; quest for surprise; and rapid conclusion". These features characterized Mao's approach to Nehru's brinkmanship on the McMahon Line in 1962, which drew on the lessons from a 1300 year old war against Indian rulers during the Tang Dynasty (which also involved the Licchavis of Nepal). It consisted of "a massive assault to produce a shock that would impel ... an end to Indian military probing for the foreseeable future".

Something similar seems to have happened this time too with the sudden "postponement" of Wen Jibao's visit. Said analyst Dipak Gyawali, "Only this time, China seems to have succeeded in delivering its message to the Indo-US axis without wasting a single shot."

The blame game goes on in Nepal

after the postponement of the reported visit. India's Jawaharlal Nehru University educated Nepalese prime minister Bhattarai, whose fragile coalition survived in a thin majority supported by reportedly pro-Indian parties from Nepal's southern plains, was in defense.

"The visit was not cancelled but it was postponed due to internal problems in China," said prime minister Bhattarai's personal secretary Bishwo Dip Pandey, citing prime minister's discussions with the Chinese ambassador to Nepal.

Others disagree. "Prime minister Baburam Bhattarai was responsible for the cancellation of the visit," said Tanka Karki, former Nepalese ambassador to China. Bhattarai disclosed the date of the visit without following a basic diplomatic practice. This embarrassed the Chinese. Even foreign minister Narayan Kazi Shrestha did not act accordingly," said Karki.

The Himalaya Times writes, "But sources suggested that possible protests by Free Tibet campaigners were not the only reason behind the cancellation of the visit. A political source claimed that even some ministers from Madhes-based parties were of the opinion that this was not the right time for receiving such a high profile dignitary. Besides, the Chinese side was suspicious about the future of the incumbent government, as its coalition partners and some leaders from PM's own party were pitching for a unity government."

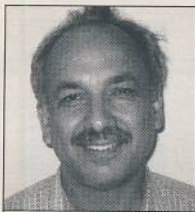
Republica Daily writes though the visit had not been formally announced by either side, Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai had told media last month that his Chinese counterpart was visiting Nepal from December 20, something contrary to the Chinese tradition of making public such visits just a couple of days beforehand. And preparations by both countries were underway accordingly.

"Though he was supposed to visit Nepal this month, the date had not been finalized," said Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Narayankaji Shrestha, adding, the visit will be rescheduled through diplomatic channels.

Kantipur reported that Chinese ambassador Yang Houlan handed over a letter to foreign minister Naryan Kazi Shrestha cancelling the trip to Nepal.

One analyst said this is a Mandarin diplomacy. "Chinese got what they wanted without doing anything," said a Nepalese diplomat on condition of anonymity. Chinese tested the nerves of Nepalese leaders and its neighbor."

Here ends the game but it is now the turn of the media to speculate and guess. ■



Resignations Galore

By YUBARAJ GHIMIRE

Nepal's current politics is largely power-centered. Ideology and idealism have not only taken a back seat, but become almost extinct in the concerns of politics and politicians. Those in power do not hesitate to act as overt or covert stooges of outside forces even if that means working in detriment to national cause and interest. But of late, some young people from at least three major parties—Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (UCPN-M), Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) and Nepali Congress have tried to give an impression that they are not all that happy with the way things are going on in Nepal. Their conscience, it seems, has begun to prick them.

Radheshyam Adhikary of NC and Agni Kharel of UML have resigned from the Transitional Justice Committee of the Constituent Assembly, Lekhnath Neupane, former president of the Maoist-affiliated students union, has quit the party expressing serious dissatisfaction over the conduct of party's top leaders and the politics they pursued.

Krishna Belbase, a Maoist leader, quit as the head of Tribhuvan University's International Relations Department, and like him Bharat Pokharel quit as the head of CEDA expressing their differences with the conduct of their parties over national affairs. But Adhikary and Kharel have not made the reason of their quitting the Transitional Committee public. And, is what they did was enough? Apparently they resigned because they differed with the government's draft bill on formation

of the Commission on Disappearance as well as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Baburam Bhattarai, the biggest beneficiary of the dual standards that the international community has adopted on human rights in Nepal, has been able to rope in the power hungry Nepali Congress and the Madhes Parties in first granting general amnesty to cases—murder, torture, disappearance, plunder and capture of property—committed by the Maoists and all political activists and getting the two commissions to endorse these political decisions.

Ambassador DeLisi may have given many saintly advices to Nepali Congress whether to go on a bandh or not, but through his silence, or mildness of disapproval of over the general amnesty issue, he may face the anger of the victims of conflict. Thankfully, Nina Pillari, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has belatedly issued a warning that the UN may not approve this act of condoning crimes by Maoists and the Nepali Congress, the two parties that signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA)- six years ago, but the two parties are eager to give an indecent burial to that accord now.

In essence, Sushil Koirala-led Nepali Congress has deprived the family of Muktinath Adhikary, a pro-Congress human rights activist and High School teacher from Lamjung, killed by the Maoists brutally, of ever getting justice. Koirala has condoned the murder of 13,000 plus people, and his hands are as stained by blood as are Prachanda's now. Why? All that in the name of completing the peace process and constitution making? But what will the constitution founded on denial of justice and institutionalised crime deliver? Ambassador DeLisi's comment on his Facebook site would be worth watching. Is he happy with the way his favourite Nepali actors are pursuing the right to life and liberty in Nepal?

Yes, Bhattarai's sole motive is to continue in power. He faces internal threat to his government. His Deputy Prime Minister and some members of the cabinet, like Bhattarai himself, sabotaged the scheduled visit of Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabo. Why was it necessary for them to sabotage this visit? Bhattarai inappropriately leaked the visit date. Gachchhadar not only refused to see the Chinese delegation which had come to discuss preparatory arrangements for the visit, but also warned the Prime Minister that Wen Jiabo may not get enough security as required. What was the basis of his assessment? Did he discuss the issue with senior Home Ministry and Police authorities, or it was in his personal interest to have the visit stalled? Moreover, United Democratic Madhes Front's warning to withdraw support from the government on the eve of Wen Jiabo's proposed visit was clear in its intent given its timing. Bhattarai, Gachchhadar and the UDMF are exploring forming an alliance against a larger section of the Nepali Congress, UML and Maoists, in the hope that

Bhattarai may continue as PM by breaking all the parties if the UCPN-M central committee asked him to quit on December 23.

But what will affect the course of constitution making and the peace process is how Nepali actors use their conscience, expertise and commitment to it. What Kharel and Adhikary did gives some indication.

That is why Bhattarai is in a hurry to have his way with the four-point agreement including Madhesi youths'

integration en masse in the Nepal army, and withdrawal of the cases. By the twin acts, he wants to establish himself within the Maoists party as well as Madhesi groups. Resignation by Adhikary and Kharel, therefore, have come as a mild challenge to this gross violation of Human rights and sweeping immunity that will be granted to Maoists and Madhesi activists.

But their resigning from a committee will not mean anything unless they get their respective parties around to their views and general principle of rule of law that impunity and the rule of law, impunity and the spirit and principle of constitutionalism do not go together. You cannot have a democratic constitution by killing the basis and right to justice.

Baburam Bhattarai has always been an unadulterated advocate of killing of political opponents and denying justice to those who differ with him. A TRC on his terms, and mass withdrawal of cases just because Sushil Koirala agrees to Bhattarai's proposal have to be seen as an act of NC-Maoist willingness to endorse crimes against humanity. Nina Pillai, by warning against any such step, has expressed the silent voices of many Nepalese, suppressed under fear of reprisals. A puppet TRC with a mandate to endorse the unconstitutional decision of the government backed by Nepali Congress and the Maoists will legitimise crimes of all types, including murder in the future.

This is also an occasion to ponder, at least for those occupying high and mighty chairs of the Constituent Assembly, including the speaker, and chairman of the Constitutional Committee, to show some degree of 'conscience' or let impunity prevail in the name of creating conducive atmosphere for completing the twin processes. ■



CA Members Adhikari (Left) and Kharel

NC Compelled To Call Bandh

By ARJUN NARSHING K.C.



There is no doubt that Nepali Congress still holds the ideals of liberal democracy and we always oppose the violence. We held two rounds of talks with prime minister and home minister regarding the incident. Our party even proposed about the incident in the meetings of four political parties. However, nobody listened to us. Sometimes, one has to take very bitter decisions in politics. This time also political circumstances compelled us to take a very unpopular and harsh decision. It is the compulsion of Nepali Congress to call the general strike. When a party worker was attacked inside the prison and the government does not take any legal actions, a party cannot remain silent. It is not only the question of death of our party worker but it is also the question of deteriorating law and order situation. Our party has called for a general strike as a protest against the death of Tarun Dal, chairman of Chitwan district, Shiva Poudel.

When the government turned deaf ears to our sober request to take action against the culprits involved in the incident and our frequent request to fulfill our four-point demands, Nepali Congress central working committee had no option other than to take the issue in the street. As a nature of our party, we have taken utmost possible restraints and made our strike peaceful. Our party considers bandh as a satyagraha, as our leaders have paid all their attention to make the general strike peaceful. We are very much concerned that our general strike should not create any panic and terror in the mass. This is the reason we focused our attention to make it peaceful. Our effort helped to make the general strike peaceful.

Nepali Congress also wants to give the message that its commitment towards liberalism and peaceful politics is not its weakness. The party can also show the strength in the street if it is required in politics. This is a lesson for all. Our strike is just for one day and now we will put pressure on the government to fulfill its promises, issued through the press release.

As a main opposition party, Nepali Congress has to play a very crucial role in the present transition. To raise the issue related to security and safety of the citizens is the main duty of the party. We have fulfilled our responsibility as an opposition party. Nepali Congress has shown that its strength is not only in the parliament but it is in the street also.

Nepali Congress knows that our decision hurts our Nepali friends as well as well wisher diplomats. I would like to request all our friends and well wishers to understand our political compulsions. I would like to remind all that we are able to make our strike peaceful with minimum damage.

As a main opposition party, Nepali Congress got sympathy to its demands, and a large number of people spontaneously supported. Our demand is simple and easy to address as we have made it clear that the government should provide security to the common people. In a situation when an inmate is unsafe in the country how can a commoner walking in the street be secure?

KC is NC Central Committee Member as told to Newspotlight

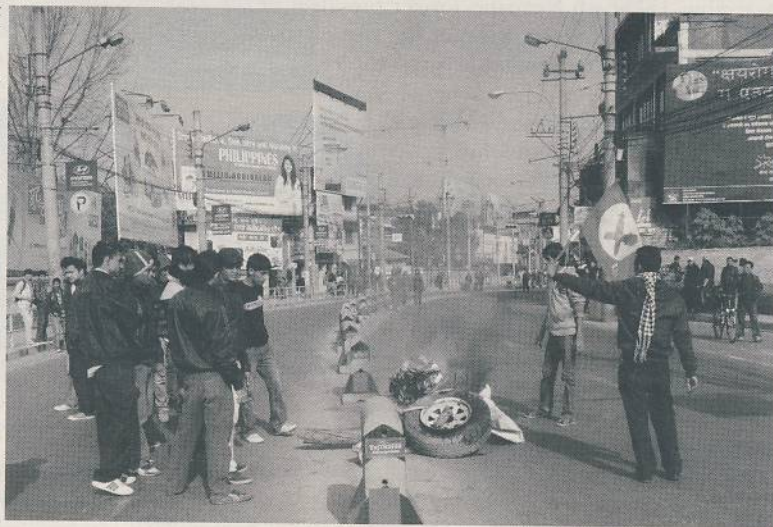
'Bandha Is Unfortunate'

SCOTT H DELISI



"The NC Central Committee has called for a bandh Monday 19, December. If this means a repeat of the intimidation and violence we saw on Saturday, I think this is unfortunate.

Ultimately, it is up to you as Nepalis to determine the values you want to shape your political culture, but these actions affect your friends as well. The US recently lifted the travel warning for American citizens hoping to visit Nepal and we are actively seeking to bring American investors here. This type of political violence puts our efforts at risk and threatens to recreate the atmosphere that led to the travel warning in the first place.



Nepal Bandha

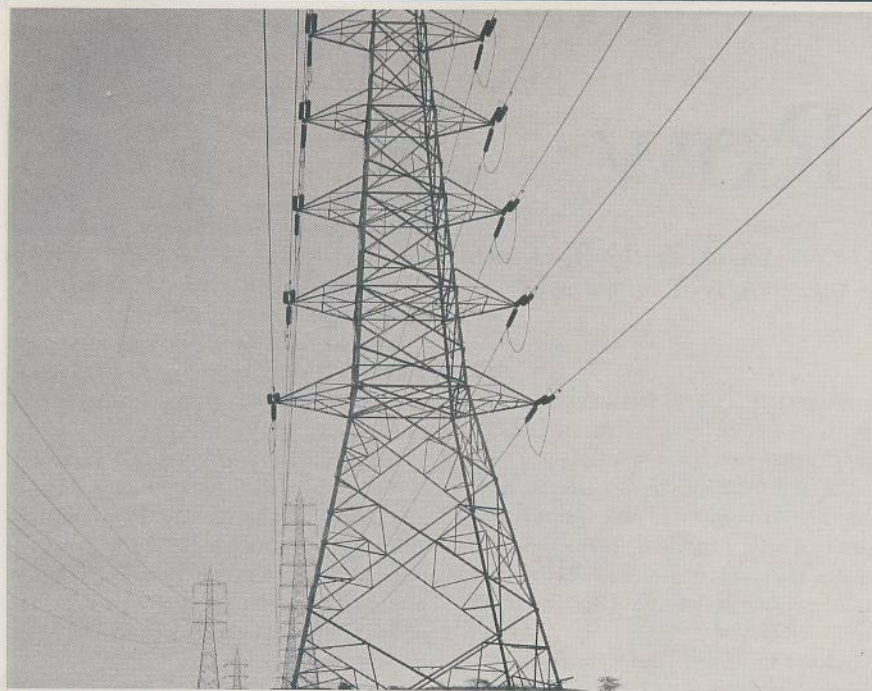
We have said before, and say again, that we do not condone the use of intimidation and violence by any party. We hope that the NC leadership will reconsider its decision and instead choose a path for peaceful protest that does not restrict freedom of movement for others and that is consistent with the values of a party that has been an advocate for democracy for decades. As always, I welcome hearing how all of you see this issue."

That's how US Ambassador to Nepal Scott H DeLisi called for Nepali Congress (NC) to withdraw the strike that the party had called for Monday.

DeLisi, who had also pressurized the UML sister organizations earlier to call off the strike that they had called, wrote on his Facebook status that burning the vehicles of taxi drivers trying to earn a living is not an answer.

"Demonstrations are one thing, but violence and harming others are different. Just as we urged the UML leadership to speak out recently I hope that the Congress leaders, who pride themselves on their long support for democracy, will tell their students that violence directed against their fellow citizens is NOT part of the democratic vision of the NC."

From Face Book



POWER CUT

No End In Sight

The crippling power cuts are here to stay even beyond 2017

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

When a senior government official was asked for his candid answer on when the load shedding will go away, a senior politician recently got a rude awakening. "Not in our lifetime, sir," the official told at a parliamentary Public Accounts Committee (PAC) meeting.

Though ministers and many officials at the Ministry of Energy or Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) continue to claim in public that the power shortage will end after four/five years, it is now an open secret that the power cuts may not end even after those many years.

This week the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) announced the schedule of daily ten hours of load shedding. The number of hours of load shedding in the peak dry season of March/April in 2012 will reach around 18 hours a day.

And this problem is going to persist for a number of years. Here is why.

The first reason is the ballooning demand versus stagnant supply. This

year the peak demand is estimated to cross 1050 MW while the supply at dry season will be less than one third of the total installed capacity of nearly 800 MW. While demands rise by 100 MW a year, additional supply did not even come close to 50 MW this year.

Questions may arise that the new power projects in the offing could solve the problem. But, that does not look too convincing.

At present, around 800 MW of new projects are on the floor. If everything

goes as planned - and that is a big if in Nepal's current context - they would come into operation in or around 2017.

However, there would be twin trouble lurking in the horizon by then. Number one, the demand will have soared by such an extent that the additional generation will not mean much.

Number two, and this is more important, almost all of the additional 800 MW will be of run of the river variety.

The RoR types of hydropower projects have one big problem. They run in only one-fourth of their capacity during dry season. The 800 MW will effectively mean only 200 MW in winter season when rivers run almost dry in Nepal.

"As such, we will still have load shedding after 2017. While there may be excess power during wet season and we might have to spill energy in rainy season, the load shedding will continue to haunt us in winter," said Balananda Poudel, Secretary at the Ministry of Energy.

"Unless we realise the dream of constructing big reservoir type hydro power projects, our internal production alone will not help us to fully overcome load shedding," he said.

And this dream has remained only 'dream'. Projects like 750 MW West Seti or 600 MW Budhi Gandaki have become necessary to end power cuts. The West Seti would require over 1.3 billion dollars to construct. For Budhi Gandaki, first of all, there needs to be detailed study.

Another solution the officials have been touting is the import of power from India. That, too, appears easier said than done. The other option of thermal plants is way too expensive.

The conclusion being there is no short cut to ending power cuts. ■

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CIVIL SERVICE

Transfer Row

In power short of four months, the present UCPN-Maoist coalition government transferred more than 800 civil servants shaking the civil service badly

By A CORRESPONDENT

A District Forest Officer was suddenly transferred from Siraha to Dolakha. His mistake was that he rejected the payment of extra money spent by the minister of state for Forest and Soil Conservation. The Forest and Soil Conservation minister has also transferred a dozen other District Forest Officers for as flimsy reasons.

The Ministry of Housing and Physical Planning has set another record. Its minister reportedly threatened to assault secretary at the Ministry of General Administration for declining to accept his proposal to transfer divisional engineers.

The situation is similar in the Ministry of Local Development and Ministry of Education where education minister and spokesperson

parliamentary State Affairs Committee (SAC) that transfers of over 800 senior civil servants happened in just 3 past months.

"I have to admit the fact that unlawful transfers are rampant in various ministries," said Ghimire, expressing his helplessness against the menace. "I am unable to stop the transfers made in violation of the Civil Service Act."

According to officials at the Ministry of General Administration, around 200 officials have already been transferred after the formation of the present government three months ago. Officials said the Ministry of Physical Planning and Works has sought transfer of 50 officials and the education ministry for 41.



SAC Meeting

of UCPN-Maoist transferred secretary Shanker Pandey just a month before his retirement by violating the Civil Service Act. According to the act, a secretary will not be transferred if his tenure ends within three months.

"It is unfortunate that I was transferred less than one and a half month before my retirement," said former secretary Pandey, who submitted his resignation expressing dissension over the decision.

Despite public statement by prime minister Baburam Bhattarai opposing the frequent transfers of the bureaucrats, chief secretary Madhav Prasad Ghimire revealed to

Although the State Affairs Committee (SAC) of parliament has directed the Ministry of General Administration (MoGA) to furnish details of the transfers — that was made violating the existing legal provisions — and cancel them within 15 days, nobody is listening to it.

"The meeting directed the ministry to submit within a month to this committee a report on the implementation of the committee's decisions," said Ramnath Dhakal, chairman of the SAC, after the meeting.

According to Civil Service Act, civil servants are supposed to be transferred once

a year, and the MoGA has to give a prior approval to a ministry for transfers and deputations.

The parliamentary committee had invited the government



Secretary Hada

secretaries upon receiving complaints about massive bribery for transferring civil servants to lucrative positions. The committee had questioned why the secretaries yielded to pressure from ministers in violating the legal provisions.

There have been altogether 894 transfers in the last four months alone. According to SAC, most of the transfers violated the existing legal provisions. The Ministry of Local Development has topped the list of ministries to transfer civil servants. The ministry transferred 128 civil servants in the last four months alone.

Similarly, the Ministry of Information and Communications transferred 122, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives 81, Ministry of Home Affairs 74, Physical Planning and Works 55, and Forest and Soil Conservation 44 civil servants.

"We have created ministries unnecessarily. I have been transferred to so many places," said Brinda Hada Bhattarai at the Ministry of Irrigation. A secretary gets transferred to less lucrative ministries if he or she doesn't obey the order of the minister to transfer civil servants," she said. Hada Bhattarai was transferred to at least five ministries in her four years tenure. She has already served PMO, Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, National Planning Commission, National Trust, Information Commission and now she is a secretary at Ministry of Irrigation.

"We are always under pressure every time when there is a change in government. We have to face trade unions also," said Keshav Bhattarai at the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation.

Defending themselves against the accusation of negligence, secretaries blamed politicians for exerting enormous pressure for transfers. Pratap Pathak at MOGA argued that politicians exert enormous pressure for transfers.

Similarly, Chief Secretary Madhav Ghimire pointed out the need for amending the existing laws to regulate the transfers of civil servants. Lilamani Poudel at the Prime Minister's Office attributed the rampant transfers to impunity. "It takes more than six months even to transfer a peon for dereliction of duty," Poudel said. ■



GORKHALAND

Agitation Again

Despite the tripartite agreement in last July, the Gorkhas of Darjeeling have resumed their Gorkhaland agitation again

By UMA KANTA KHANAL in Jhapa

Although Gorkhaland agitators signed the agreement with the West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee a few months back on the promise of autonomy to the hills, they don't seem ready to settle with it.

At the time of the tripartite agreement, the Gorkhas of Darjeeling and the Terai were enthusiastic.

When the chief minister of West Bengal Mamata Banerjee was addressing a mass meeting in Siliguri on July 18, the Gorkhas of Darjeeling continued clapping. She was telling that Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong would get a good future.

It is already five months after the agreement was signed to get Gorkhaland Territorial Administration in Darjeeling. When they started facing the administration, they are now feeling this was not their aspiration.

The youth wing of the Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha has now declared the renewal of their movement for 'Gorkhaland'.

"It is time to renew the movement for Gorkhaland as the newly-formed Gorkha Territorial Administration (GTA) will not be able to fully meet the aspiration of the hill people," Gorkha Yuba Morcha chief Priyabardhan Rai told a rally at Mongpu.

Rai emphasized that the Gorkhas should not forget the demand of more than a century. He also announced a series of agitation programmes further.

GJM chief Bimal Gurung's wife Asha, who heads the women wing of Morcha, also has support to the newly declared agitation.

Pointing towards the chief minister Mamata Banerjee's promise to turn Darjeeling into Switzerland, GJYM organizing Secretary Siddhant Rai said, "We don't want Switzerland. Give us Gorkhaland and we will turn it into something better than Switzerland."

But the central Gorkha leaders were not in the programme during the declaration of the agitation.

The speakers in the programme said that they will keep a close watch on the state and centre henceforth.

The youth organization is supposed to hold a series of public meetings and rallies across the three Hills subdivisions and in the plains of Siliguri from January 17 till February 5. A signature campaign will also be undertaken from January 1 to 30 to garner support for a separate state.

"These agitations are to make the youths of the Hills aware of the statehood demand and the need for it. We will also take this opportunity to strengthen our party units across the region," said Priya Bardan Rai - General Secretary of GJYM.

On February 12, the GJYM will announce the strategy to take the Gorkhaland demand forward.

The demand of Gorkhaland has also been raised with the task force of a non-political organization - Bharatiya Gorkha Parisangh union leaders and leaders of the opposition in Delhi. ■

Wake Up To Chinese Dragon In Nepal

By SHISHIR GUPTA



For the record, the cancellation of Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's high profile official visit to Nepal and Myanmar next week was due to domestic compulsions or what has been described as economic and budgetary issues back in Beijing. While the cancellation has caused serious embarrassment in Kathmandu with Baburam Bhattarai government looking forward to economic and infrastructure assistance, it has also skewed the balancing game often played in the sandwiched Himalayan kingdom.

The script never changes in Nepal only the actors do is the political thumb rule in Kathmandu for balancing both Indian elephant and Chinese dragon. The Nepalese media has put this cancellation of three day visit to economic and political instability in Kathmandu but the reasons apparently were multiple. The cancellation was due to threat to Wen's security, danger of a fiery reception at the hands of Tibetan refugees, high public bidding by Nepal government spokespersons on the outcome of the visit and a degree of lack of Chinese confidence in present Nepalese leadership.

This apart, other concerns could be much closer to the border with western embassies often using the hippy capital to watch events in Tibet—just 150 kilometres away on the all weather 988 km friendship highway to Lhasa. Beijing on its part has denied any political motives to this cancellation and used Myanmar cancellation as an example to dismiss any diplomatic conspiracies.

Yet one cannot help wondering whether the cancellation of Chinese built and aided Myitson hydroelectric project on Irrawaddy River headwaters by the Myanmar junta in September 2011 is the reason behind Wen's calling off his visit to Burma.

For the moment, I will confine myself to Nepal as it shares 1751 km long open and porous border with Indian Hindi heartland and Chinese inroads into Kathmandu is a matter of serious concern to New Delhi. Advent of Chinese interest in Nepal seriously began after their supporter King Gyanendra was forced to give up power on May 28, 2008 and Beijing suddenly found itself friendless in Kathmandu as they were opposed to Prachanda's men and had labelled them as anti-government forces. The other reason was pro-active attitude of western embassies led by the US in Tibetan affairs in Kathmandu. The fact is that Beijing was reconciled to Nepal-India relations due to historic linkages but could not afford to have westerners pry into Tibet from Kathmandu watch towers. The net result is that overt moves by westerners in Kathmandu forced Chinese to counter for space in Nepal, which in turn raised hackles of India. Even though Wen's cancellation has left red faces in Kathmandu, the bottom line is that Beijing is building leverages in Nepal must faster in comparison to New

Delhi. The process of integrating Nepal with 3,105 km long Western Tibet Highway and Qinghai Tibet Rail (QTR) has begun with work on four more cross-border linkages in progress apart from the Friendship highway. The QTR is being extended to Yadong, close to Nepal border, and the process to have a gas pipeline all the way up to Kathmandu is progressing fast and the day is not far when Kathmandu will tell Indian Oil Corporation to take a hike.

The Chinese pro-active engagement is in sharp contrast to the Indian lethargy. The cross-border road linkages are poor, the planned rail linkages with Nepalese Terai are on drawing board and there are hardly any high visibility Indian infrastructure projects in Kathmandu. While New Delhi is stopped playing the Viceroy after the exit of Ambassador Rakesh Sood and his government supported policy of political interference with an aim of not allowing the Maoists to come to power, India needs to wake up as the Kathmandu game is going out of hand. The Foreign Direct Investment of Indian

While India's new Ambassador Jayant Prasad is trying to recover the lost political ground, the Chinese are working with single minded dedication to link Nepal with Lhasa and counter Dalai Lama's friends in Kathmandu.

private sector is falling in Nepal and has dipped below 50 per cent of the total investment, the hydro power

projects are work in progress and even the military to military links are weakening as compared to the past. The security situation on India-Nepal border is precarious, yet not only one of the four proposed integrated check posts on the international border has been completed. It is clearly evident that the Indian leverage in Nepal is declining with the Chinese linkages on the rise. The age-old links between Nepalese and Indian politicians and political parties have virtually disappeared and Beijing appears a more attractive destination to Nepalese for economic growth than New Delhi.

Given the paralysis in the UPA government decision making, the India-Nepal relations continue at the same indifferent pace as foreign policy is not a priority area for Raisina Hill as it grapples for day to day political existence. The classic example is that it took UPA government more than eight months to replace Sood despite Prime Minister Manmohan Singh agreeing to his replacement in wake of serious criticism of the then ambassador in January 2011. While India's new Ambassador Jayant Prasad is trying to recover the lost political ground, the Chinese are working with single minded dedication to link Nepal with Lhasa and counter Dalai Lama's friends in Kathmandu.

Even though New Delhi may cock a snook at Nepal over Wen's visit cancellation, the very thought of Beijing building roads and dams in Terai is enough to send shivers down the Indian spine. After all, only 45 kilometers of Siliguri chicken neck separates Nepal from Bangladesh.

Courtesy: blogs.hindustantimes.com

From NTY-2011 To Lumbini

Carryover 2012

Despite several hurdles and difficulties, Nepal Tourism Year 2011, which is nearing its end, is able to send the message in the international tourism market that Nepal is a safe place to visit. This is for the first time in Nepalese history that Nepal has been able to lure such a large number of tourists in a year. Nepal Tourism Year 2011 showed that Nepal has enough potentials and opportunity for tourism. As Nepal is celebrating 2012 as Visit Lumbini Year, Nepal's effort to attract tourists continues

By DEBESH ADHIKARI

The much happening year of tourism, year 2011, is nearing its end. Despite much progress in tourism, the 1 million tourist goal, set by the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB), however, will not be surpassed this year.

It is said that setting unreachable and unachievable goals results in failure. However, for those who dream for the stars, even if they fail they will end up in the sky. "We are able to achieve what we perceived. Our experiences have shown that Nepal can bring a million tourists without any difficulty," said Yogendra Shakya, president of Club Himalaya and National Co-coordinator, Nepal Tourism Year 2011.

Others too agree that Nepal Tourism Year 2011 has rejuvenated international market and popularized Nepal as a safe destination. Looking at the current scenario, Nepal is set to miss out the

tourism goal by a whisker. But, So far in 2011, tourist arrival numbers are promising and encouraging, to say the least. The country has already welcomed more than eight lakhs foreign visitors, said tourism entrepreneurs.

Despite having limited aircrafts flying into the nation, tourist arrivals by air also shattered all past records. Some 501,264 tourists visited Nepal in the first 11 months of Nepal Tourism Year (NTY) through airways alone.

Hotels in and around the Kathmandu valley have all been packed in this tourist season. Now, with improved arrivals, the existing infrastructure is proving inadequate, say hoteliers. Positivity is running high among tourism entrepreneurs. Hoteliers have also registered record breaking revenues and have expanded their business to the limits.

According to Nepal Tourism Board, in the first 11 months of this year, international visitor arrivals to Nepal averaged a growth rate of 21.5 percent. With the growth in tourist arrivals, international airlines have also launched new services in Nepal and have nearly doubled the number of airlines flying into the country than during the conflict era.

Not only oversea market, the arrival of tourists from Nepal's two neighbors has increased drastically. Nepal tourism year has been encouraging as there has been strong tourist arrivals from China and India. Though Indian tourists usually dominate the numbers, there has been a strong increment in the number of Chinese tourists as well.

According to the figures released by the Immigration Office, Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA), arrivals from

Tourism Future Depends On Politics

ADITYA BARAL

Nepal Tourism Year 2011 is drawing to a close with its target to bring a million tourists being a realistic one. In that context, NEW SPOTLIGHT spoke to ADITYA BARAL, Director of PR and Publicity and Spokesperson of Nepal Tourism Board. Excerpts:

The number of tourists visiting Nepal drastically increased in the last one year. Is this a result of Nepal Tourism Year 2011 or Nepal Tourism Board's regular efforts?

There was a widespread spontaneous enthusiasm amongst the Nepali and foreigners (mainly Nepal loving and other concerned) to celebrate this particular year with some sorts of events, festivals or other activities. These sorts of programs were either run within the country or outside regularly. These events and activities, of this magnitude, happened for the first time, spreading the words about the tourism year, within and abroad. Someway, these activities attracted the domestic and foreign tourists. Consider these as micro level activities. On the macro level, the country was trailing to a transition towards peace with exercises like completing verification process of PLA, forming bodies for addressing contentious issues of constitution, improvement in the human rights activities, improving law and order and, most importantly, the visits made by the heads of

various global institutions and the governments. They were able to create headlines in our local and international media which indeed have shown that Nepal is peaceful and moving towards the establishment of mature democracy. All these activities boosted the morale of donors, investors, Nepal lovers and the airlines and hence political development in consonance with the massive promotional activities also gave massive support and good chance to NTY 2011 to take credit for the increment of tourist to Nepal.

As Nepal Tourism Year 2011 is a few days away from coming to an end, what program is Nepal Tourism Board promoting to continue the momentum?

Celebrating tourism year is to provide an impetus to the tourism industry for its substantial gain and growth. What NTY has been doing over the last year is a part and parcel of Nepal Tourism Board's activities and these are like the head and tail of the same coin. NTB as a promotional body will leave no stone unturned to perpetuate all the activities carried on by NTY to sustain the growth and instill more confidence to the potential Nepal sellers and visitors. So, NTB will carry on its tourism development activities irrespective of NTY. We have extended our network through



NTY and encouraged more people to reach inaccessible but promising markets. Government's announcement of celebrating 2012 as Lumbini Year is another shot in the arm to mitigate the challenges of perpetuating the promotional methods under the flagship of peace, culture and spiritualism—all under "land of lord Buddha". So, the basic strategy is the same, to promote Nepal but the theme will be different for 2012.

What is Lumbini Year? How many tourists can Nepal expect during the year 2012?

India reached 132,652, up 40.5 percent while Chinese tourists amounted to 40,244, up 74.4 percent.

There have also been growths in arrivals from Sri Lanka and Pakistan with a growth rate of 16.6 percent and 16.8 percent respectively. But, Bangladesh registered a negative growth of 8.6 percent in the first 11 months of 2011.

Similarly, other Asian countries—Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea and Thailand—have also registered growths with growth average of nearly 15 percent in the first 11 months compared to last year. Likewise, European and American tourist arrivals are also on a rising trend. **Yet to reach the limits**

Increase in tourist arrivals this year

cannot be credited to the effects of NTY alone. There were no significant promotional activities about the NTY in the international arena before the start of the tourism year and even in the early half of this year. Due to delay in the release of the promotional budget, the international publicity campaign also got delayed.

"Although international promotion initiative started late due to certain circumstances, we were able to get the budget for the Nepal Tourism Year 2011 (NTY 2011) and started international promotion. This will increase the number of tourists next year," said secretary at the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation Dr. Ganesh Raj Joshi.

Others hold similar views. "The delay in the release of budget also hit the target of the NTY 2011 to bring in one million tourists," said Yogendra Shakya, National coordinator of the NTY 2011.

The growth in tourism might also be due the prolonged peace in the country despite political instability. And if there



Tourist in Chitwan

One of the main objectives of Visit Lumbini Year 2012 (VLY-2012) is to invite the world to work towards creating a peaceful society through Buddha's peace message, and to make the birthplace of Buddha a centre of global attraction, ultimately inviting more numbers of tourists to Nepal. Officially, no announcement has been made about the expected turnover of the pilgrims in Lumbini right now. The government has not fixed any goal post for this campaign, however, our concerted effort through extensive promotion would maintain the growth rate achieved in the year 2011.

How do you assess the effectiveness of Nepal Tourism Year 2011?

Honestly speaking, NTY has created a huge awareness about the importance of tourism among all strata of the society including politicians, students, government officials and laymen which is a big achievement in itself. It has been successful to include the people from President to the primary school students. It has given a positive message worldwide about the social, political and economical transformation taking place in Nepal. Cancellation of negative travel advisories by almost all countries including US can be termed as an achievement of NTY. The overall survey shows that the people had spontaneous inquisitiveness to present something in the name of NTY and this enthusiasm remained for a whole year, so this was big success in terms of creating awareness, driving market, enhancing Nepal's brand image and regaining the confidence and

will be peace and political stability, hopefully 2012 will be another landmark year in tourism. Not only because the government recently announced that Nepal will be celebrating visit Lumbini year 2012, but also history suggests the same.

Back in 1998, when Nepal celebrated Visit Nepal 1998, around 463,684 tourists visited the nation. But, in the year after — 1999, tourist arrivals surprisingly overshadowed 1998 and increased to 491,504.

The same can be expected this time around as well, the promotional activities for the NTY 2011, took off only in the later half of the year, advertisements about the NTY have also been just recently aired on foreign television channels like BBC and CNN. So, we can expect promotional activities to make some impact and help in raise the number of tourists in the upcoming year. Plus, the U.S. Department of State has cancelled the Travel Warning for Nepal, which was issued on January 12, 2011,

trust of all. Now the challenge is to perpetuate these positive vibes.

It is reported that Nepal Tourism Board failed to launch some campaigns due to internal problems. How did this affect Nepal's marketing and promotion?

All programs of Nepal Tourism Board are run according to its annual operation plan which is ratified prior to the starting of the Fiscal Year, most of the time, with the endorsement from the industry through its private board members. So, all the ratified programs are run as per the operation list which is transparently issued to whoever seeks it. It is a public document. Until and unless there are compelling causes which hamper the programs, there is no point of not launching its targeted programs.

What do you think Nepal should do at this point to bring a million tourists?

Reaching a target of a million tourists within a year is difficult because tourism is a trade dealing with humans. We cannot drag humans. But it is also not impossible provided we keep our house in order. That means proper law and order should be maintained and supportive logistics and infrastructure should also be in order. However, it can be achieved more easily if political situation moves in the right direction. We should have a strong political will to strengthen the national carriers with the latest fleet of aircraft that connect Nepal with Europe and other long-haul countries. National carriers run as per our

said an NTB official.

Along with that, to carry forward the momentum gained in this year, Tourism minister Lokendra Bista Magar recently announced that Nepal will be celebrating various tourism campaigns each year focusing on major tourist destinations till 2020.

Now, the government should analyze the weaknesses of NTY 2011, learn from the mistakes and take better steps to help tourism foster. When the economy is discouraging, there is no other alternative than focusing on growth through tourism.

"Though the number of tourists visiting the country has been increasing, we, the private sector representatives in the NTY 2011 program implementation committee, have not been fully satisfied with the scenario," he said.

He expressed his serious concern over the violation of general understanding between the previous government and NTY implementing committee. According to him, there had been a five-

need and market, whereas overseas carriers run for profit. And, we should let our aviation policy go as per the international rules.

Do you think Nepal has enough hotels and airlines to cater to a million tourists?

When tourism started in Nepal, there was hardly any hotel here. Big hotels started to open in Nepal gradually when the flow of tourists increased substantially. As far as I know, accommodation is not a problem because all tourists don't spend their night only in Kathmandu or Pokhara. The existing capacity of airlines is more than enough to bring one million tourists by air. However, more than 60% of seat capacity has been occupied by Nepalese travelling abroad. So, it is imperative to have more air-seats to accommodate tourists wanting to come to Nepal from tourist generating markets.

Given the current statistics, how do you see the future of tourism in the coming year?

Tourism industry is unpredictable but it is amazingly resilient. So the future course of tourism depends on the development in political scenario of Nepal. Given the current statistics and scenario, I am hopeful about the future of tourism in Nepal. What we all need today is a strong political, social and economical commitment from all to make tourism industry a vibrant one that eventually brings economic revolution in the country provided we become astute to harness it productively.

point agreement including buying two aircrafts for the Nepal Airlines Corporation.

"Along with others, Nepal Tourism Year 2011 (NTY-2011) helped to promote Nepal in the international market. The NTY 2011 provided opportunity for publicizing Nepal in the international market," said Joshi. "There is the need of



Tourism and Civil Aviation Secretary Joshi

proper infrastructure to boost tourism sector all over Nepal.”

Due to the delay in approving the budget from the NTY 2011 implementation committee, advertisement plans in international media, including BBC and CNN about NTY 2011, has yet to materialize.

Despite so many shortcomings including lack of aircraft with the national carrier, delays in budget allocation and the release of budget for promotion of tourism year at the international level, the progress made by Nepal is tremendous.

Lumbini Year 2012

Nepal government is all set to launch the Visit Lumbini Year 2012 on January 14 in a bid to spread Gautam Buddha's message of peace across the world and develop the Buddha's birthplace as a peace city and a global Buddhist center.

According to the Ministry of Federal Affairs, Constituent Assembly, Parliamentary Affairs and Culture, the cabinet had decided to mark 2012 as the Visit Lumbini Year about two months ago.

The government will launch the Lumbini year at the concluding ceremony of the Nepal Tourism Year 2011 on January 14, Rishi Kesh Niraula, undersecretary at the ministry, was quoted by Sunday's *The Himalayan Times* as saying.

More than 600,000 people — about 500,000 Nepalese and the rest foreigners — visited Lumbini, one of the country's 10 sites listed on the UNESCO World Heritage Site, in 2010. The Lumbini Development Trust officials expressed hope that Lumbini will receive 140,000 foreign visitors this year.

As Nepal is focusing the tourism in Lumbini for 2012, it will create more opportunities in the adjoining village of Lumbini. As villages in the mountain route have been taking the benefits of tourism, there is the need to expand it further in the remote areas.

“The need now is to promote rural tourism for improving livelihood of the rural people by creating jobs there,” said secretary of Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation Dr. Ganesh Raj Joshi.

“The event like NTY 2011 has been supportive for linking local rural tourism products to the tourist generating domestic and international markets.” ■



Destination Far West

Lake To Look At

The far-western media center organized a program to explore tourism prospects in the region

By UMID BAGCHUND, in Kailali

From Khaptad National Park to Saipal Himalayas and National Wildlife Reserve, the Far western Region has enormous possibilities to attract foreign tourists. Even the Jakhor Tal, a lake, of Kailali district is a potential draw.

Despite the potentiality, the region has remained out of sight of visitors. Aiming to inform the world on this, Destination Far Western Region has been launched as a campaign. In an interaction program organized to promote the Jhakhor Tal of Kailali, various speakers highlighted the potential of the Kailali District as tourist draw.

“There is an enormous possibility to attract many tourists with destinations like the Jhakhor Tal. What we lack is a long term strategy to promote tourism. We are ready to invest to build tourism infrastructure in the far west,” said Gopal Hamal, Central Member of Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industries.

Another businessman said, “After successfully establishing the slogan, the Destination Far West, the time has come now to market the tourism potential of far west region. We will continue to support any effort to bring tourism pie to the far west,” said Dinesh Raj Bhandari president of FNCCI Kailali District.

Along with the expansion of the airport in Dhangadhi, a number of good hotels have come up in Kailali district. Jakhor Tal of Kailali holds out hope to become an attraction for tourists as it lies in the center of the far western region.

“The time has come to construct infrastructure for Jhakhor Tal. It is the right place for investment as the area surrounding the lake is very attractive,” said Maya Prakas Bhatta, managing director of Jagdamba Hotel.

According to records, very nominal tourists are visiting the far western region.

“We need to formulate a master plan for the Jhakhor Tal with a clear policy such as where to get the permission to start the project and all that,” said Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Managing Director of Devotee Hotel.

At the program attended by various stakeholders, district based government officials also took part in the discussions.

“There is a need to make an all-out effort from all the people in the district to promote the Tal,” said Chief District Officer Kailash Kumar Bajimaya.

“Dhangadhi Municipality is ready to provide all kinds of support to make the Tal a tourist destination,” said Narayan Prasad Pandey, executive officer of Dhangadhi Municipality. “Far west has enough flora and fauna,” said Satya Narayan Chaudhari, field director of Western Terai Arc Land Project.

Kailali District general secretary of Community Forestry Users Group Nepal Radhika Malla stressed the need of community participation. District Forest Officer Hemanta Sha said the forest department is ready to hand over the land to community.

Senior Superintendent of Police Bijaya Raj Bhatta, tourism expert Surya Saran Regmi and Bimal Dahal also attended the program.

At the function chaired by this reporter, who is also the chairman of Far-Western Region Media Development Center, various other speakers including the local media persons, members of community forestry user groups, and tourism experts attended the program. Editor of Sudur Pashchim Daily Mohan Sharma delivered the introductory remarks where participants discussed on the issue. ■

Is India's Economic Bubble About To Burst?

By **JOHAN VAN SLOOTEN**

Amidst all economic doom and gloom from the US and Europe, growth figures from the upcoming economies in the rest of the world – including China, Brazil and India – have remained a breath of fresh air. But how long will these “new” economies be able to come up with good news? Or will the American/European crisis pose a real threat to these countries?

In recent weeks, China and India presented new economic growth figures that weren't as bright as they had been over the past few years. First, China's

property bubble seems to be deflating. “It is bursting,” Chinese economist Andy Xie even said in the Financial Times this week. He predicted prices may fall by as much as 25 percent soon, as sales volumes are sliding and property prices are falling sharply.

Also, stock indexes in Shanghai have fallen by 30 percent since May, and even by 60 percent since 2008. “That's as much in real terms as Wall Street from 1929 to 1933,” a spokesman from French bank Société Generale stated this week.

India

But China is not the only so-called “Bric” (Brazil, Russia, India, China) country that is facing tougher economic times. The Reserve Bank of India – the country's central bank – issued a warning earlier this week for continuing high inflation rates and an unprecedented 18 percent slide in the value of the rupee in the last few months.

India's inflation rate in November was 9.1 percent, which undermines the RBI's goal to drop the inflation rate to 7 percent by March 2012.

Rupee

The falling value of the rupee to the dollar is another headache for the RBI. Since July, the rupee has slid by 18 percent, although economists say that this development is beyond India's control. “The behavior of the rupee is the reflection of the behavior of the dollar,” C. Rangarajan, chairman of the Prime



Minister's Economic Advisory Council, said to press agency Reuters. “There is little that Indian policymakers can do about this.”

“The rupee is subject to the whims of global investors, who are buying the dollar as a safe haven from the euro-zone debt crisis,” he continued. It makes the rupee less interesting for international investors, resulting in a slide in its value. Economists think the rupee will fall further in coming months.

Output

Another threat to India's economic growth is the slump in the country's industrial output, which dropped five percent compared to last year. It was the first fall in over two years.

In fact, the Indian government had expected a growth rate of 9 percent by March next year, but now analysts say India will struggle to grow even 7 percent. While this figure is still much higher than in Europe or the US, it is the lowest growth figure for India in a number of years.

Parliament

To add to India's growing monetary worries, both the RBI and parliament seem hesitant (or unable) to act swiftly. Parliament has not yet decided on measures to lift some economic pain, as politicians simply cannot reach agreement on which measures should be taken.

Meanwhile, the RBI is unable to ease monetary policy, something that national banks in other countries such as Brazil and China have already done.

Next victim?

Economists now fear that India and other Bric countries may be the next victims of the worldwide economic crisis. For India, smaller growth would have a disastrous effect on employment and income, as many Indians would lose their jobs if the economy falters.

European austerity measures

Another threat to India's economy are Europe's austerity measures to ease the euro-debt crisis. Harvard University professor Amartya Sen told the Financial Times on Thursday that this would lead to a “spiraling catastrophe”, as these measures will result in lower demand for Indian products and services.

“Given that these austerity measures will continue for the next decade or so, the outlook for India's economy is not bright,” Mr Sen added. ■

Courtesy: Radio The Netherlands

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WOMEN WORKFORCE

Scarce Recognition

Although Nepalese women have contributed a large share in remittances, the state, society and a section of civil society workers do not recognize their contributions

By **DEBESH ADHIKARI**

Nirmala Pariyar (name changed), 30, a woman representing the *dalit* community, returned last year generating about one and a half million rupees in jobs abroad. With the money, she started growing vegetables in her home district of Dhading.

Mother of two, Pariyar was lucky enough to return with such a huge amount of money. Along with the money, she brought a painful story with her. Her main complaint is that there is hardly anyone who recognizes women's contributions and treats them equally with males.

Following denial to her to leave the country through Tribhuvan International Airport, she was compelled to choose a riskier route. She left for Lebanon from Mumbai Airport.

"There is no respect for women in Nepal. There is injustice for women who want to go to work abroad. Whether you are in the International Airport or in the border point, you have to reply to several senseless questions to the police, the posts of anti-trafficking NGOs and others as if you are going to land in a brothel," said Pariyar. "Of course, there are incidents of landing illiterate women in brothels but all are not going to go that way. But generally, respect for women is lacking."

Some women like Pariyar who go for foreign employment through other ways have returned empty-handed with many traumas of rape or sexual harassment. Many women who go for foreign employment through the legal ways have good stories to tell.

Because of improper or a lack of pre-departure orientation and skills training, some women have also been the target of human trafficking.

Although there are places created to train women, they rarely register for the training because they work abroad illegally. There are 53 training centers clustered in Kathmandu, but they are inaccessible to women in remote

districts, who are the most likely to go for foreign employment.

"Women migrant workers have been on the rise in Nepal in recent years. It is unfortunate that this hasn't increased their socio-economic standing because of a lack of rights at home," said Saru Joshi, regional program coordinator of U.N. Women-Nepal.

"Recently released Nepal Living Standard Report III shows that women have made a greater contribution in the remittances in Nepal. It is unfortunate that it is yet to be properly recognized," said Joshi in an interaction program recently.

"The government has created policies to ensure women have equal rights with men, but that Nepal is still a patriarchal country, cultural and social traditions have limited the policies' implementation," said Joshi.

According to government data, Nepali migrant workers remitted over 3 trillion rupees in 2010/011. Out of total Nepal's migrant workers, Nepalese women consist of 15 percent. Although globally women migrant workers occupy 50 percent, Nepalese women's percentage is insignificant.

"Therefore, the government should have concrete policies to govern the rights of women," Joshi says.

Despair pervades when many women land in desperate and troubled situation for having left for foreign employment without proper training and knowledge about the country's legal system.

Saraswasti (name changed) has a story to tell as she was sent back to the country from Saudi Arab when the owner of the house attempted to rape her. "If this had happened to me here, I could have gone to the police, but in his country, I couldn't do so. He imprisoned me in his house and kept on raping me."

Saraswati, who now earns a living as a tailor to support her son, says she doesn't recommend any woman to go abroad for foreign employment.



"I went there to become financially independent," she says. "But for women, foreign employment isn't what you think it to be. They treat us like animals, not humans."

She says she encourages women to find jobs in their own countries instead.

Many Nepali women who leave the country for work return with stories of exploitation. As a result, some recommend working at home instead, insisting that it's more feasible than women realize. Others report having positive experiences with foreign employment, as long as women get the right job and know the language and laws before departing. The government banned women from working in the Gulf for safety reasons until last year and has established training centers to prepare migrant workers, but some say more needs to be done. Others say the answer is to strengthen women's rights at home.

According to Pourakhi, a local NGO for women migrant workers, there are 70,000 Nepali women working in Saudi Arabia, 30,000 in Kuwait, 14,000 in Israel and 15,000 in Lebanon. Of all the women, 80 percent end up as domestic helpers and 90 percent are without proper documentation.

Meena Shrestha, 29, of Biratnagar, recently returned from working in Dubai, where she says she had a positive experience. She says she is aware of several women being sexually exploited in foreign countries, but that women can make themselves less vulnerable by knowing the language, the laws and their rights in the foreign country. She also says some jobs are more prone to sexual exploitation than others.

Manju Gurung of Pourakhi said that as of 2011, more than 100,000 Nepali women were working abroad in the Middle East without proper documentation. ■

Risks Behind India's Military Buildup

By Zi Mo

India has decided to focus on building defense in this period. In the recently adopted 11th Five-Year Plan, it decided to spend 8.2 billion U.S. dollars purchasing equipment from foreign countries to improve its fighting capabilities.

The Sweden Stockholm International Peace Research Institute said in a recent report that India has become the world's largest arms importer, a veritable arsenal made up of imports from many different countries.

A retired Indian Air Force general said India's rising international status required it to develop a long-range attack capability that some big countries own.

In-service officers insist that India's

weapons will not pose threat to any country in the region as it exercises a policy of never attacking first.

Indian officials and scientists claimed that their Agni-V missile is the "killer" for a certain country, which obviously shows the intention of seeking regional balance of power.

India has strategic ambitions and hopes to play an important role in world affairs, so it cannot tolerate these internal and external security environment constraints. It is the Indian goal to continue to strengthen the military and possess a military clout that matches its status as a major power.

However, how many missiles is enough is a question for all governments

in the missile era.

India felt pleased by America's strategic focus shift toward the Asia-Pacific region and began to get close to America, but thinking this move will contain its imaginary enemy would be naïve.

In the context of the eastward shift of global economic power and the changing Asian geopolitical pattern, India should cooperate with the neighboring countries instead of being hostile to them and should reduce its own "persecution mania" to play a role on the world stage in the future.

There is no real winner in wars and peace opportunities must not be wasted. This is the wise judgment.

Courtesy: People's Daily

Equity: The Next Frontier In Climate Talks

By SUNITA NARAIN

In 1992, when the world met to discuss an agreement on climate change, equity was a simple concept: sharing the global commons—the atmosphere in this case—equally among all. It did not provoke much anxiety, for there were no real claimants. However, this does not mean the concept was readily accepted. A small group of industrialised countries had burnt fossil fuels for 100 years and built up enormous wealth. This club had to decide what to do to cut emissions, and it claimed all countries were equally responsible for the problem. In 1991, just as the climate convention was being finalised, a report, released by an influential Washington think tank, broke the news that its analysis showed India, China and other developing countries were equally responsible for greenhouse gases. Anil Agarwal and I rebutted this and brought in the issue of equitable access to the global commons. We also showed, beyond doubt, that the industrialised countries were singularly responsible for the increased greenhouse gases.

In 1992, it was accepted that the occupied atmospheric space would need to be vacated to make room for the emerging world to grow because emissions are an outcome of economic growth. This acceptance recognised the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities in reducing emissions. A firewall was built to separate those countries that had to reduce emissions to make space for the rest of the world to grow. That year in Rio de Janeiro, the world was talking about

drastic cuts of 20 per cent below the 1990 levels to provide for growth as well as climate security. Even in that age of innocence, the negotiations were difficult and nasty. The US argued its lifestyle was non-negotiable and refused to accept any agreement specifying deep reductions. In 1998, the Kyoto Protocol set the first legal target for these countries much below what the world knew it needed to do.

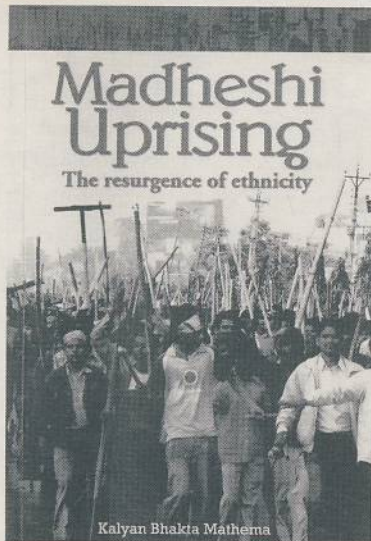
Two decades later, the idea of equity has become an even more inconvenient truth. By now there are more claimants for atmospheric space. Emerging countries have emerged. China, which in 1990, with over a quarter of the world's population, was responsible for only 10 per cent of annual emissions, contributed 27 per cent by 2010. So, the fight over atmospheric space is now real. While the rich countries have not reduced emissions, the new growth countries have started emitting more. In 1990, the industrialised countries accounted for 70 per cent of the global annual emissions. In 2010, they accounted for 43 per cent but this is not because they have vacated space. The new growth countries—China in particular—have only occupied what was available. Emission reductions proposed 20 years ago have still not been committed or adhered to. In fact, in most already industrialised countries emissions have either stabilised or increased. In coal and extractive economies, like Canada and Australia, emissions have risen by 20 per cent and 46 per cent respectively.

The world has run out of atmospheric space and certainly of time. Will the rich, who contributed to emissions in the past and still take up an unfair share of this space based on their populations, reduce emissions? Or will the emerging countries be told to take over the burden? This is the big question, and an inconvenient one at that.

And mind you climate change is not the problem of the present but past contributions. The stock of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere has a long life. This means that any discussion on how the carbon cake will be divided, must take into account those gases emitted in the past and still present. So while China accounts for 27 per cent of the annual emissions, in cumulative terms (since 1950) it still accounts for only 11 per cent. Similarly, India contributes 6 per cent to the annual global emissions, but is only responsible for 3 per cent of the stock. The rich countries, with less than a quarter of the world's population, are responsible for some 70 per cent of this historical burden. This stock of gases is responsible for an average global temperature rise of 0.8°C and another 0.8°C in future, which is inevitable. To keep temperature rise below 2°C, the world needs to cut emissions by 50-80 per cent below the 2000 levels by 2050. Now equity is no longer a moral idea, but a tough challenge.

But this is because they forget that climate change is the market's biggest failure. We cannot use the market for its repair. To avoid catastrophic changes it is essential to reach a collaborative agreement, which will be effective. And cooperation is not possible without fairness and equity. This is the prerequisite. Take it because we must.

Courtesy CSE's Fortnightly News Bulletin



Madheshi Uprising
The Resurgence Of Ethnicity
By Kalayan Bhakta Mathema
Price: Rs.450.00
Published by Mandala Book Point
Pages:137

Book

On Madheshi Uprising

Several books have been written on Madhesh Andonal but Kalayan Bhakta Mathema's book intensively discusses the reasons behind the uprising

By A CORRESPONDENT

Nepal has seen several kinds of uprisings following Janandolan II of 2006. Sudden uprising in Madhesh in 2007 was one of them. Various scholars have written a number of books explaining the reasons behind the Madheshi Andonal, but author Mathema has his own version on offer.

The book analyzes the 2007 Madheshi uprising, the identity based antagonisms that fueled it, complex motivations of the participants of the uprising, the insensitivity and political miscalculations of the Nepalese state and intelligentsia.

The book offers a multifaceted examination of Nepal's terai region's complex social diversity, political history and process of alienation of Madheshis from the rest of Nepal. Organized into six chapters, the book discusses various movements between 1950 and 2008 launched by various Madheshi groups.

According to the author, the book synthesizes some of the findings from the research work the author carried out for his thesis writing for a Master's Program in Sociology. This may be the reason there are certain lapses in information regarding the uprising.

Springs Of Life
A Perspective On
Hope, Faith & Trust

By Tara Dahal

Published by Tara

Dahal, Email:

Anthology-

Dahal.live.com

Price: Rs.150

Pages: 43

Poetry

Perspective on Hope and Faith

Young poet Tara Dahal describes the various modes of human being

By A CORRESPONDENT

Poetry is the best way to explain somebody's feelings and observations about life and events. This is what Tara Dahal shows in her collection of poetry Springs of Life. Collection of 43 poems, Tara's book gives various perspectives on hope and faith.

"This collection of poems reflects my personal feelings about many themes, material, moral and spiritual, and about my own conceptions through the prism of my personal knowledge and experiences, my national locations and thoughts about the world," writes poet Tara Dahal in her preface.

This is not her first collection of poems as she has already published two poetry named Sunami and Mother's Tree in the past.

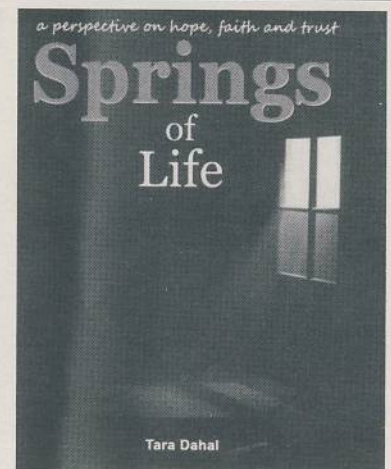
"I am not a trained poet, certainly not a refined one with poetic associations, not even one in contact with them. But reading poems inspires me to write," writes Dahal.

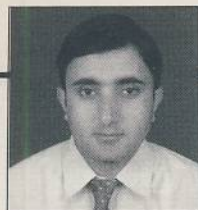
"Themes of her poems touch nature, love lives and culture of the country. Unlike the majority writers, Tara has something distinct and special. She should be marked out from the crowd. Her poetic symmetry and wetness of expression keep match with the harmony of consciousness and that is peaceful, people who are enlightened and the life that has value and noble meaning. One of the outstanding features of Tara's poetic work is that her emotions are restrained and guided by the philosophy of life rather than being a mere individualistic monologue. She possesses the ability to turn any issue into a poem with the use of beautiful imagery, symbolism and smiles. She envisions world wisdom," writes renowned critic prof Dr. D.P. Bhandari.

Tara Dahal depicted the human suffering, love to nature and her surroundings as well as desperation of human being. In her poem Kissing Mother Earth, she attempted to describe various nature of earth about drought, rain and land.

"The author is present in every poem of the book, where the words often gush out desperately to give voice to her spirit. If in writing a poem, the poet becomes a discoverer as Robert Frost assumed, the reader also becomes a co-discoverer here while reading them...." writes Anand Aditya in his foreword. The poetess is utterly serious about each theme she dwells upon, but almost everything she records does contain a grain of hope, too, no matter how deeply it may well up from her despair within."

Poetess Tara Dahal's poems are interesting to read as they show a connection between the poetess and mother nature. She attempts to describe all the situation, scenario and thinking in the form of poetry and shows her talent to describe the situation. ■





Drinking Water & Sanitation: A Goal Hard To Score

By **BALKRISHNA POKHREL**

Safe drinking water and sanitation facilities are the basic necessities of human beings. The General Assembly of UN has declared water and sanitation as fundamental human rights. Similarly Nepal has ratified five major international Human Rights treaties directly or indirectly related to water and sanitation, making these not only basic needs but also human rights.

Worldwide, an estimated 884 million people lack access to safe drinking water and a total of more than 2.6 billion people do not have access to basic sanitation. Studies also indicate about 1.5 million children under the age of five die each year and 443 million school days are lost because of water- and sanitation-related diseases.

A large number of people from different countries are deprived of safe drinking water and sanitation facilities even as a huge budget is being invested in this sector.

In Nepal, a majority is still out of access to safe drinking water and safe latrines. As per Department of Drinking Water and Sewage (DWSS) data of 2010, drinking water has reached 80.0 percent population while the households having access to latrines are limited to 43.04 percent. However, only 17.91 percent of water supply schemes are well managed, 38.85 percent of schemes need minor repairs, 11.82 percent of schemes need major repairs and 21 percent of the schemes are required to be reestablished.

Every year around 10,500 children under age 5 die only from diarrheal disease in Nepal. Seven out of 10 worst diseases in Nepal are related to poor water and sanitation, resulting in more than 50 percent of total deaths due to disasters, according to the Ministry of Health records of 2008.

Nepal has made a commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to increase the access to safe drinking water to 73 percent and access to sanitation facilities to 53 percent by 2015.

Similarly Nepal has developed the national goal to provide basic water and sanitation facilities all over the country by the year 2073 BS. A large amount of money is being invested from the governmental and non-governmental sectors for providing safe drinking water

to adequate amount of safe drinking water and sanitation facilities, awareness should be raised.

Poor participation of users during various stages of the project, inactive users committees, no systematic decision making process, no provision of operating staff /Village VMWs during O & M, weak relationship between WUSC and the implementing agency are among the problems contributing to the present conditions. This shows that social capital formation is essential for the functionality and sustainability of the water projects.

In this regard if we analyze the present status, it seems quiet difficult to achieve the set goals. A large number of population is deprived of water and sanitation facilities on the one hand and a huge number constructed schemes is becoming defunct due to the lack of the budget for maintenance and lack of awareness and organized efforts of the users.

To expand access to water and sanitation with social justice for all people of Nepal, certain steps have to be taken. It is essential to amend the different acts, regulations and policies related to drinking water and sanitation, to make the government more responsible and accountable and organize and empower the drinking water and sanitation users. Functionality and sustainability of the schemes and increment in the sanitation and hygiene coverage are possible only by way of empowerment of the users and participation of them in all stages of the project. It is time we put one stone on the wall from our own side and civil society organizations emphasize the empowerment and awareness of users to solve the policy level issues and practical problems in this sector to make government accountable on the other.

The author is the Program Manager, Federation of Drinking Water and Sanitation Users Nepal (FEDWASUN)



Drinking Water Tap

and sanitation facilities for which numerous drinking water and sanitation projects have been completed and several are ongoing.

It is well understood that for a developing country like Nepal financial resource is always a constraint. If the universal coverage of water supply is to be achieved by the year 2017, the repair/maintenance budget should be increased dramatically. Based on the fact that budget allocation for repair work is substantially low, an enormous amount of financial resource is required to achieve the functionality of defunct schemes, thereby meeting the MDG target.

Nepal's WASH (Water Sanitation and Hygiene) sector is fragmented and characterized by lack of effective and sustainable management systems resulting in an enlarging backlog of projects needing rehabilitation. The sustainability of the schemes is in shadow due to the lack of technical support for user groups and lack of local resource mobilization for regular maintenance. So to ensure the long term sustainability of existing water supply schemes and to achieve universal access

The Body Of Spirituality



By ADITI ARYAL

There are always some questions for which nobody has answers. People then delve deeper into spirituality. By doing so, they not only get away from their stressful and cumbersome lives, they also begin a search for their real selves. With so many TV channels bombarding us with so many things, including motley of programmes on spirituality, it is a safe guess to take that there are still many people these days choosing the spiritual path.

During a recent discussion on importance of academic excellence, this very popular yoga *guru* was referred to as an example. What was said was that without proper academic qualifications, this *guru* was famous and made big by guiding people into proper health practices, normally by ways which would not have been otherwise possible. Some weeks after the same conversation, it was surprising to see the same *guru* holding a fast and then escaping, clad in women's attire, for various political motives. He is just an example.

Thinking hard as an audience, it makes no sense to me why spiritualists and the *gurus* want to get involved in politics or for that matter anything outside their area of relevance.

Hearing elders around me talk, I have always been asked to see these spiritualists from a very bright side. They guide meek individuals into religious paths, very commonly referred to as divine. An individual for some unknown reasons is full of himself and these people help him weave his way out of self indulgence. Not a very religious and a spiritual person myself, this usually does not make sense to me. I guess religion, no matter which, guides an individual into being a good human himself and binds him with certain moral norms. It is really amazing to know that religion demands a person to be indifferent to conscience and all other emotions considered natural biologically. Moreover, this needs to be achieved with the help of some great spiritualists, who claim to be faultless themselves.

Not that I have met and talked to

many spiritualists and religious healers, but I can still make sense out of what I see in my normal life. People are mostly attracted to finding ways to be closer to God. This desperation to godliness is what helps spiritualists exploit them. Not all spiritualists have good motives. Not all are experts at what they do. On the other hand, all may not be frauds. And like always it is a matter of faith and reverence. But if you see from where I see, you will find none.

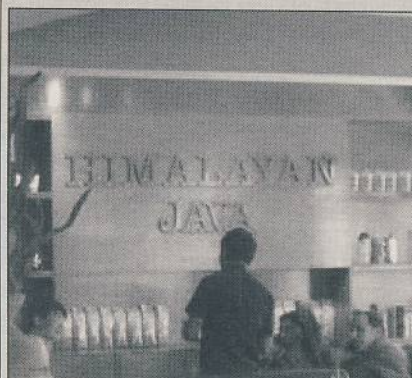
As far as I know, spiritualists are said to be divine themselves. Moreover, they need to be away from all temptations and the material world. Then why is it that they are tempted to be famous? Why is it that they refuse to live in a normal shack like their predecessors did? Most importantly, why do they speak their hearts out on national television, and not meditate somewhere alone in the cave of the Himalayas? The answer is very simple. They ain't no saints!

Believing to be self-accomplished and unnecessarily confident in what they say and do, again they violate their own teachings. I remember being taken to one such event long back where this renowned lady was speaking all highs of

her own leader. Nobody there even for once thought how unrequitedly she was talking about some third person most of us there did not know. Also, instead of doing what she was supposed to, she proved that she was not to a large extent what she should have become after all these years of preaching and practising what she herself had been saying.

It is indeed very difficult to recognise whom to believe and whom not to. Religion does till date has a huge impact on us, however, has that impact receded over time? We have found ways around religion. With each passing year, we evolve only to become more normal humans. Every instinct is natural. Why then should we find ways to become less humane by letting go off our natural reactions and emotions? And if it is salvation and peace we are looking for, there are better ways. If these spiritualists themselves are not what they are supposed to be like, how can they guide us on the right track? This is where we need to let natural biology do the job, and react to each stimulus like we are supposed to. That does not, in any religion, count as sinful as long as it is ethical and moral.

Himalayan Java



Himalayan Java has been providing quality services for more than a decade now as the first Specialty Coffeehouse in Nepal. It operates with a mission to promote Nepali coffee industry.

It is located in the heart of the city and is a unique place where customers can socialize with each other in a comfortable and relaxing environment while enjoying the best brewed coffee or espresso and pastries in town.

It is open 7 days a week and serves mainly continental cuisine at a reasonable price. The restaurant offers wireless/Wi-Fi internet service as well.

Java is also a member of Specialty Coffee Association of America.

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Kathmandu, Nepal

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Web: www.himalayanjava.com



APFNet

Forest Enterprise Focus

With support from Asia Pacific Network for Forest Management and Rehabilitation (APFNet), Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal (FECOFUN) is launching programs to develop forest enterprises

By A CORRESPONDENT

At a time when Nepal's community forestry has successfully maintained forest resources, Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal has been launching a major program for sustainable forest management under the support from Asia-Pacific Network for Forest Management and Rehabilitation (APFNet).

Asia-Pacific Network for Forest Management and Rehabilitation (APFNet) was established in 2007. Proposed by China and co-sponsored by Australia and the United States, it was agreed by the 15th APEC economic leaders meeting in September 2007 in Sydney. It was incorporated in the Sydney APEC leader's declaration on climate change, energy security and clean development to enhance capacity building and strengthen information sharing on sustainable forest management in the forestry sector in the region.

APFNet has been supporting Nepal since 2010 in three different themes. They include sustainable forest management and bio-diversity conservation, forest governance at local level and green enterprise at local level to generate green employment.

"The projects use all tools and technologies for biodiversity conservation and sustainable forest management. This will help maintain the supply of forest products. The good governance component promotes the governance concept at the community level and also encourages democratization of the user groups. The forests can generate the human resources, forest product resources and economic resources. With this, community level enterprises will be established that can ultimately generate the green employment," said Subhas Devkota, project manager of the project.

With support from APFNet,

FECOFUN has been implementing the programs in 21 districts across the country. The districts are from eastern, central, western, mid-western and far western regions. From early stage of conservation, Nepal's over 19,000 user groups are now waiting for programs for sustainable forest management.

Since the launch of the Network, activities have been designed to promote capacity building and information sharing on sustainable forest management and rehabilitation in the Asia Pacific Region. FECOFUN was chosen to launch the project because of its successful mobilization of community in sustainable forest management.

"We are successfully launching the project in the country. Our experiences have shown that this APFNet model will help to transform Nepal's community forestry movement. We have already made progress in protection and now we want to learn sustainable management for the economic uplift of the people involved in conservation. APFNet is very useful for us," said Devkota.

As a pilot program, the project is covering 105 community forests all over the country. Under the program, the project has already launched schemes like how to manage the forests sustainably, and bio-diversity conservation.

"We have been organizing training, workshop as well as helping groups to restructure their organizational status to accommodate the issues like bio-diversity conservation and sustainable forest management. As long as the user groups do not follow the practice of good governance making their transactions transparent and their programs do not target the marginalized and poor population, sustainable forest management is impossible."

At a time when Nepal's community user groups are gradually moving ahead from successful management of forest, the tools they are getting in good governance including public hearing and public auditing through APEFNet are very useful. ■

Greening Jobs

-GANESH KARKI

GANESH KARKI, general secretary of Federation of Community Forestry Users' Nepal (FECOFUN), is a well known person in the community forestry movement. Karki, 48, has spent more than 15 years to establish the rights of the community over the forests. As Nepal's bio-diversity is under threat, Karki spoke to NEW SPOTLIGHT on various issues. Excerpts:

How are forest users groups contributing to conserve Nepal's bio-diversity?

Look, once you protect the forests, you conserve bio-diversity. After the community's involvement in the forest protection and management, you can see a lot of changes, including the revival of many extinct plant species as well as wildlife animals. The number of leopard, wild boar and deer has increased drastically in the hill areas because of preservation of the forests. Similarly, many plants which were virtually in the process of extinction are coming back. Fifteen years ago, our mountains were barren and landslides were a common phenomenon. Protection of forests supported regeneration and harvesting of plants. The trees and plants in the government forests are in the process of disappearing. However, the situation is very much different in community forests.

Community manages over 25 percent of country's forest-covered areas and there are over 17,500 community groups around the country. More than 1.6 million households, with about 10 million population, are involved in them.

What is green employment?

In the first phase, community forestry focused on conservation. Then came various models of management. The issues related to governance dominated the third phase. Now, the focus is on sustainable forest management and enterprises. Local people cannot take benefits by just protecting it and expanding it. There is need of a sustainable forest management. We need to utilize the protected forests by sustaining them. One forest and one industry policy is directed to this —

whether the forest is related to natural herbs industries, timber industries or other products. For the improvement of the livelihood and economic situation of the local people, there is the need to utilize the forest products. Green employment means generation of employment opportunity by green industries.

How can Asia-Pacific Network for Forest Management and Rehabilitation can help your scheme?

APFNET is actually related to sustainable forest management. Under this program, FECOFUN is now trying to introduce some projects to help address climate change and promote economic and social development. This scheme will help increase the employment opportunity by enhancing the capability of the forest user groups. Some of our user groups have already established Nepalese paper industries with the participation of marginalized women groups. If we can establish small forest industries within the area of community forestry close to forests, it will transform livelihood of millions of Nepali. We have already pushed some enterprise programs.

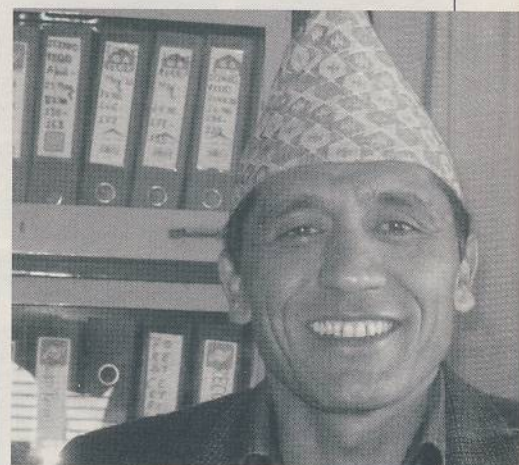
What is the stage of APFNet?

We are now in the process of implementing it. Under this project, a community user group will be given necessary support to establish forestry-related enterprises. As Nepal has already shown a successful way for forest conservation, the APFNet's support is very important as it will help our user groups learn how to grasp the opportunity through forest related enterprises.

What does APFNet do?

APFNet promotes transfer and sharing of experiences and expertise in sustainable forest management and rehabilitation. It also helps address climate change and promote economic and social development. Proposed by China and cosponsored by Australia and the United States, the APFNet was agreed by the 15th APEC economic leaders meeting in September 2007 in Sydney.

What are the challenges of community forests now?



Political instability is one of the major problems of the community forestry management. Due to political instability, there is a frequent change in the forest policy. The government is also curtailing the right of community forestry groups. The forest sector is now without policy as the tenure of twenty-years master plan has already lapsed. There are good laws, and policies but there is always a problem in their implementation.

How do you look at the role of user groups?

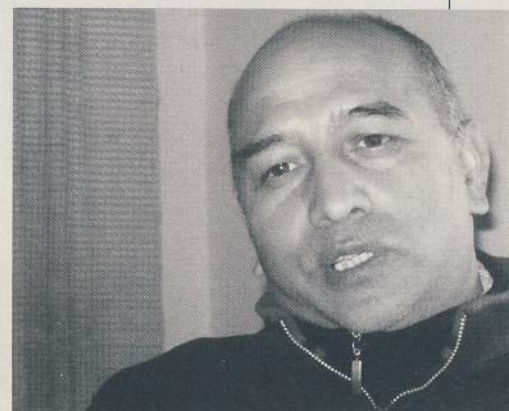
There is no doubt about the need of good governance in all sectors. There must be the rule of law. There are certain lapses in the process of handing over the forests to user groups.

What is REED?

Reed is one of the components to support the conservation efforts. We have to look at various aspects of REED which are related to global warming. Forest is one of the major factors to reduce the global warming. The forest has no alternatives. We cannot reduce the global warming without forests. Other factor to contain global warming is renewable energy which includes micro-hydro, solar, improved stove, bio-gas. Nepal has two important factors. We have been launching pilot programs in Gorkha, Chitwan and Dolakha. There are challenges ahead. The rich countries are puffing a lot of pollution. Community forestry is a major element to reduce the global warming. I don't think Nepal can benefit from carbon trade. ■

For One Forest, One Enterprise

SUVAS CHANDRA DEVKOTA



At a time when Nepal's community forestry has successfully maintained forest resources, Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal has been launching a major program for sustainable forest management under the support from Asia-Pacific Network for Forest Management and Rehabilitation (APFNet). SUVAS CHANDRA DEVKOTA, project director of APFNet, spoke to NEW SPOTLIGHT on various issues related to APFNet. Excerpts:

For how long has APFNet been supporting Nepal?

APFNet has been supporting Nepal since 2010 for a project. The host country of this project is China government. This net is managed by Chinese government. It has been supporting Nepal in three different themes. They include sustainable forest management and bio-diversity conservation, forest governance at local level and green enterprise at local level to generate the green employment. The projects use all tools and technologies for biodiversity conservation and sustainable forest management. This will help maintain the supply of forest products. The good governance promotes the governance concept at the community level and also encourages democratization of the user groups. The forests can generate the human resources, forest product resources and economic resources. With this the community level enterprises will be established that can ultimately generate the green employment.

What is the status of the project at this juncture?

We are now implementing it in 21 districts across the country. The districts include eastern, central, western, mid-western and far western region. We are monitoring mid-western region with the center in Kathmandu. The district includes Sindhupalchok, Bhaktapur, Kathmandu and Kavre, Dolakha and Sindhuli. This is the center of these districts. Biratnagar is the center of the eastern region. The eastern region covers Morang, Sunsari, Dhankuta and Ilam. Dang is the center for mid-western region which covers Dang, Pyuthan, Salayan, Rolpa and Jumla. Dadelhura is based in the far western region. Dadelhura covers Darchula, Dadelhura, Baitadi, Bajhang and Accham.

How is the program doing?

We are successfully launching the project in the country. Our experiences have shown that this APFNet model will help to transform Nepal's community forest movement. We have

already made progress in protection and now we want to learn sustainable management for the economic uplift of the people involved in conservation. APFNet is very useful for us.

What is the coverage like?

We have not been covering all user groups in the district as we have targeted five community forests. We have 105 community forests all over the country. In these community forests, we have been launching programs like how to manage the forests sustainably, bio-diversity conservation, etc. We have been organizing training, workshop as well as helping them to restructure their organizational status to accommodate the issues like bio-diversity conservation and sustainable forest management. As long as the user groups do not follow the practice of good governance making their transactions transparent and their programs do not target the marginalized and poor population, sustainable forest management is impossible. We have applied various tools of good governance including public hearing and public auditing. We have invited all stake holders. We have also the criteria and indicators for good governance.

What is the difficulty?

Due to lack of financial and forest resources, we cannot establish only one forest enterprise for all the user groups in the district. We are working to build a cooperative among the user groups. By this, we are pulling the financial and forest resources in one place to establish the forest enterprise. We have already completed the business plan and we will establish at least 10 enterprises by end of February.

What is the main thrust of APFNet?

One forest and one enterprise is the slogan. This is tied up with APFNet. We cannot practice a sustainable forest management without optimally utilizing the community forests. I don't think the livelihood of the people can be uplifted without commercialization of forests. If one forest one enterprise is impossible, we can make enterprises pulling many forests in one place. This is our thrust. FECOFUN is a pioneer organization which introduced the concept of green employment. Nobody wanted to listen to this in the early days. Now everyone is chanting the slogan of green employment. It is a pride for us. We have now 17,685 User Groups. This is just a pilot project. What we want is the sustainability of green employment. Many concepts die once projects

wrap up. But APFNet's concept is different as it aims for longer and sustainable schemes in green employment.

What are your working models?

We are not imposing user groups to follow us: what we have been doing is proposing to them various models. It is up to user groups to decide what they want. Our support will be to enhance the capacity building and strengthening information sharing on sustainable forest management. It is the user groups that have to take the decision whether they want to follow the cooperative model, the company model or another model. User groups have to take a decision looking at their own situations. This is just a small pilot project and we cannot support them in all the aspects. As long as user groups do not take the initiative, the project cannot do anything. We have identified 12 enterprises. Out of this 75 percent of the investment will be user groups. Our support will be for the technical capabilities for those marginalized and poor. If this pilot project is picked up at the national level, it will really generate green employment throughout the country.

What is your experience so far?

We have visited some parts in China under the program. We saw bamboo plantation in the community level. The user group sold this bamboo through national level cooperatives. Even our user groups can form a national network among the forest enterprises. The tragedy is that the government mechanism has not been supporting us. Last year more than 100 million rupees, which was allocated for green employment, froze. APFNet is stressing for cooperation among all different sectors including community, private sector, donors and government. We cannot sell the products without the help of private sector as they have the expertise and know the market. ■

Cholera Controversy

-By BUDDHA BASNYAT, MD



Cholera like typhoid is spread by fecal oral transmission and is endemic in Nepal. The bacteria, *vibrio cholerae*, produces a potent toxin which may lead to severe dehydrating diarrhea and death in 12 hours. Clinically however a cholera-bug infected person may span a spectrum from being an asymptomatic carrier to a severely debilitated patient. Even in the medical profession, many did not know that a cholera carrier (just like a healthy typhoid carrier) existed until the Haiti outbreak.

Most bacteria when taken by mouth are killed by the acidic environment of the stomach. (This is one reason why people who take anti-acid medicines for their gastritis or peptic ulcer disease are more prone to bacterial gastroenteritis because the acid medium is not there). The cholera bacteria that survive the stomach acid can reach the small intestine helped by their tail or flagella and cling on to the mucus membrane lining the small intestine. In the small intestine is where the cholera bug wreaks havoc by discharging toxins and causing sometimes-unending diarrhea. The cholera bug that enters the water supply system will continue to infect other people who drink the contaminated water. So in an outbreak situation it is important to identify the source of the outbreak even so that the illness can be prevented from spreading. Of course in the first place if the hygienic conditions are excellent, the cholera bug should not spread.

Cholera, although a localized phenomenon in South Asia for centuries, has demonstrated the ability to spread internationally. Ten months after the devastating earthquake of Jan 12, 2010 in Haiti, cholera raised its ugly head there for the first time in a century. The outbreak afflicted 300,000 people and claimed 4,500 lives and continues to be an ongoing problem. The source of this cholera has been a topic of serious debate. There are three theories.

The first suggests that subsequent to the earthquake, ocean currents from the Gulf of Mexico arrived with the

pathogen to the shores of Haiti. The second hypothesis holds that a local non pathogenic strain endemic in Haiti naturally mutated into a virulent pathogen. The third and controversial theory attributes the spread of cholera in Haiti to an infected human (possibly a carrier) from an endemic country outside of the Americas.

The controversy about the origin of the pathogen was important enough to trigger the formation of an independent panel (comprising of four experts) by the United Nations. The recently-published final report from this panel implicates no individual or country. However it unambiguously notes that the cholera bacteria was in all likelihood introduced into Haiti with a pathogenic strain of the current South Asian variety, thus supporting the third hypothesis above.

The report makes important recommendations for all United Nations personnel and emergency responders travelling from cholera endemic countries which includes India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal. Crucially it recommends that these personnel receive a dose of appropriate antibiotics before departure or be screened with a sensitive method to confirm absence of asymptomatic carriage.

Because most of these countries may not have a sensitive method of screening, a clear option would be to check with a knowledgeable physician and have administered a one day prophylactic, effective antibiotic course (of either azithromycin or doxycycline) before departure. This indeed may be an option to strongly consider before the "s—hits the fan" again! ■

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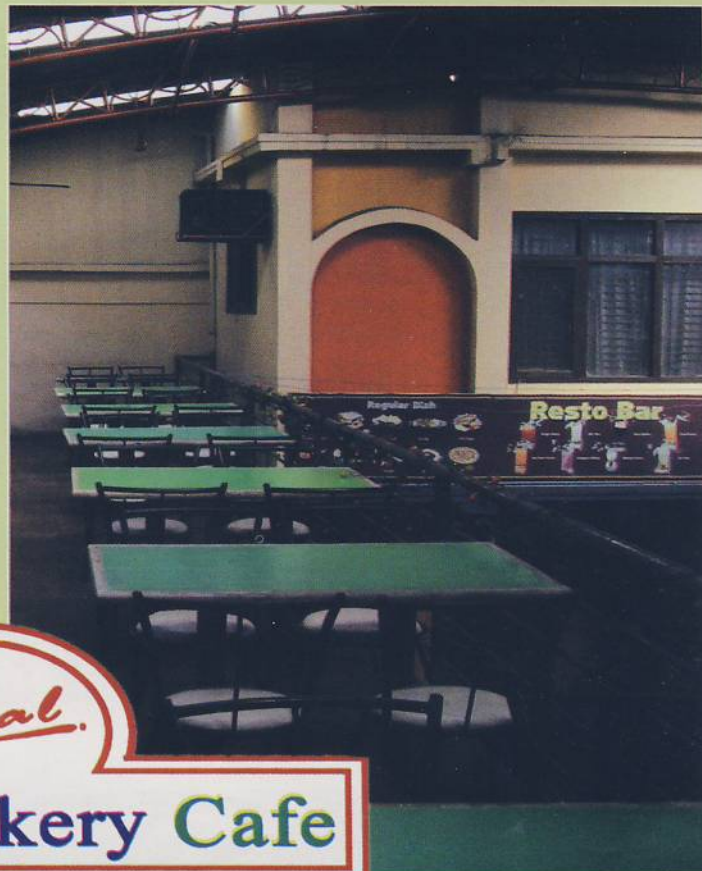


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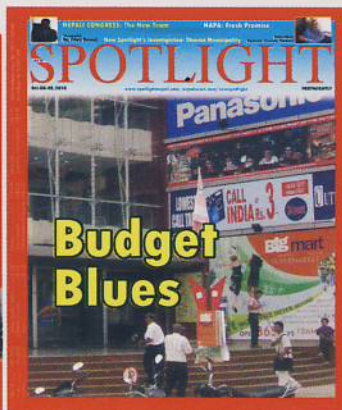
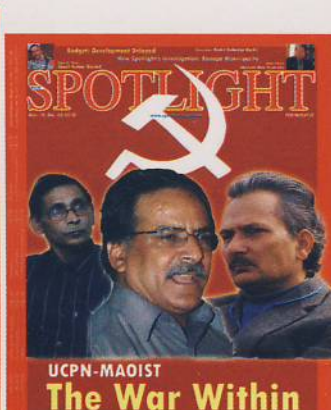
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