

उही विश्वास, त्यही खुशी थप सुविधाका साथ

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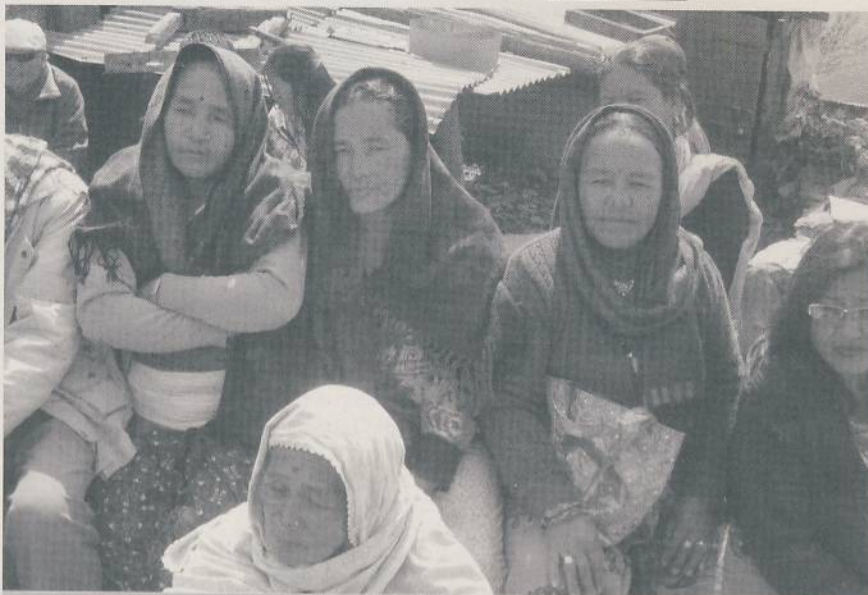
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नेपाल इन्भेष्टमेण्ट बैंक लि.
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It was a business as usual on March 8. The International Women's Day was celebrated with various programs across the globe. Nepal has also been celebrating the Day since 1975. In the last 37 years, a lot of transformation has taken place in the lives of Nepalese women. They have made tremendous progress in education, health and other sectors. There are many incentives to the women and the government is giving high priority to their uplift. Along with these notes of progress and hope, the situation remains somewhat despairing as well. In rural parts of the country and even in urban areas, violence against women continues to increase. In the name of witch, women in rural parts of Nepal are physically assaulted and killed. Nepal's HIV/AIDS prevalence is declining but the number of infected housewives is alarmingly rising. As more males are going abroad for work, they come back to infect their spouses. In this issue, we have brought women's Issues as the cover story. We invited various stakeholders to discuss the issues for the coverage.

Despite efforts of political parties, it is still uncertain whether the new constitution will be promulgated by May 27. If Nepal fails to promulgate the new constitution, the country will have to see a major political upheaval. This issue also looks into this matter. Along with this, we have also covered all other important political and economic issues.



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Indian Ambassador Visits Pension Camp

Jayant Prasad, Ambassador of India to Nepal, recently visited Butwal to review the functioning of ongoing Seasonal Pension Paying Camp at District Soldier Board, Phulwari (Butwal) and also chaired an ex-servicemen rally. Besides interacting with the veterans and obtaining first hand feedback about their problems; he also distributed various grants to veterans and monetary assistance to the war widows.

According to Indian Embassy press release, the concept of conducting Seasonal Pension Paying Camp was instituted primarily as a welfare measure for Government of India pensioners in the year 1959.

Pension Paying Office teams move to various parts of Nepal and distribute pension and other emoluments to pensioners. This platform is also being utilized to interact with Nepali officials locally deputed in that area, and resolve various issues related to its veterans/



serving soldiers. Currently there are 16 Seasonal Pension Paying Camps which are being conducted twice a year by three Pension Paying Offices located at Kathmandu, Pokhara and Dharan. Seasonal Pension Paying Camp, Butwal is the largest camp with dependency of approx. 13,000 pensioners.

As on date there are some 1,25,000 pensioners who are drawing their pensionary emoluments from various Pension Paying Offices of the Indian Embassy. Government of India distributes approx. NR 2000 crores annually in Nepal as pension to its pensioners.

Japan's Grant To School Sector Reforms

The Government of Japan has extended a grant assistance of nine hundred and thirty million Japanese yen (¥930,000,000), equivalent to approximately nine hundred and ten million, four hundred and seventy thousand Nepalese rupees (NRs.910,470,000) in Japan's FY 2011, to the Government of Nepal for the implementation of the Project for Basic Education Improvement in Support of School Sector Reform in Nepal.

Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Takahashi expressed his firm hope that the grant will contribute in meeting the national concern of the Government of Nepal and international commitments in the education sector emphasizing equitable access by 2015. In addition, he also hoped that the continued Japanese economic cooperation to Nepal would accelerate the socio-economic development programs of the Government of Nepal, thereby, strengthening the existing friendly relations between Japan and Nepal.

World Bank To Strengthen Debt Framework

The World Bank's Board of Executive

Directors has approved a number of improvements to the analytical framework used for assessing debt sustainability and allocating IDA resources in low-income countries. These improvements ensure the framework remains relevant given the changing macroeconomic landscape facing low-income countries.

The paper, Revisiting the Debt Sustainability Framework for Low-Income Countries, which also was discussed by the Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), provides a comprehensive review of the Debt Sustainability Framework (DSF), a joint World Bank-IMF tool used to conduct public and external debt sustainability analysis.

EASA Mission Visits Nepal

Representatives of the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) recently visited Nepal to conduct a technical assistance mission. The mission aimed at enhancing the regulatory capabilities of the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN). The two sides sought to develop a roadmap in the field of aviation safety oversight.

Bangladesh Embassy Observes Martyr's Day

Bangladesh Embassy in Nepal observed the Martyr's Day and

International Mother Language Day 2012 by organizing various programs. In order to observe the day, the Embassy drew up programs, including hoisting the national flag at half-mast, observance of one minute silence and prayer for the salvation of the departed souls of the martyrs, who sacrificed their valuable lives for the mother language and for the progress and prosperity of the country as well as for the global peace; discussions on the importance of the day; cultural program and buffet lunch.

According to a press release of Bangladesh Embassy, the meeting was chaired by the Ambassador of Bangladesh to Nepal Dr. Neem Chandra Bhowmik. In addition, some foreign diplomats accredited to Nepal, expatriates Bangladeshis and Nepalese dignitaries of different sectors attended the program.



ADB Pledges To Continue Support

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) will continue to support Nepal's economic reform and development agenda while the country strives to complete the ongoing peace and constitution drafting process, said ADB Vice President of Operations, Xiaoyu Zhao, at the end his three-day visit to the country.

"The scaling up of ADB's assistance to Nepal in the recent years testifies to ADB's strong commitment to Nepal's development and poverty reduction efforts," said Zhao.

During his meetings with Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai and other senior government officials, Zhao stressed that it was crucial for the Government of Nepal to stay on course on economic reforms to reduce poverty, address development challenges and work to achieve sustainable economic growth for ongoing peace and stability. ■

“Chaudhary Group Has An Eye On Hydroelectricity, Telecommunication And Aviation Sector”

NIRVANA KUMAR CHAUDHARY
General Manager, Chaudhary Group

You are the General Manager of the Chaudhary group, which carries a long history and pride. What are your feelings as a young man entrusted with the top job of a very big organization? Are you holding the position of GM just because it is your family business or have you been nominated for your competency?

I'm not in the position just because I'm in my family business or because it is my right. Chaudhary group carries a big historical legacy and after 150 years since its inception, it is now not only mine or my family's business. The group is a business organisation of the whole country. To lead such a big organization, the first thing you need is competency. The family legacy alone is not enough to get to the position. There are lots of big responsibilities associated with the top job. It is very challenging.



I take it as a very big achievement for my career as well at this age. Some of my friends are still hanging with their studies. So, I feel proud to have received the job.

What are your job responsibilities?

I look after all the operations of the Chaudhary Group throughout Nepal. My small brother Varun Chaudhary also looks after a few areas. And I'm also looking after many international business ventures. Overall, I have many responsibilities.

What are your new investments plans for the company, both inside and outside the country?

We are already thinking about investment in the power sector. Power crisis has hindered the overall development of the country. I and my company are very sensitive towards the country's current situation. So, to expand my business and to help the nation, we are making serious plans for investment in this area.

We have also started discussions with the international partners for the establishment of Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC). CG has also noticed that there are big opportunities in the telecommunication and aviation sectors in Nepal. We are also working to expand the Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs) of the CG group. Likewise, we are also planning to increase the real estate business.

Being a third generation businessman, what do you feel about the future of the country's investment environment and its productivity?

To say sincerely, the country's business environment has been worsening. This has happened due to country's fragile political environment. Labor problem is also causing problems over the last few years. Still I am optimistic. I see lots of hopes for people thinking about investing in Nepal. Chaudhary group will also act on this opportunity. With the improvement in investment climate, productivity will also increase simultaneously. (Karobar)

“Insurance Sector Has Grown Due To Competition”

BHARAT BASNET

CEO of National Life Insurance company

From your 25 years' experience in the life insurance sector, what can you say about the future of insurance business?

If a company celebrates its 25 years of establishment, it means that the company has been accepted in the market and has got a permanent status. We can feel that the society views National Life as their own company.

Although four decades have passed since the formal

establishment of the insurance sector, however, the business has taken place only during the last decade. There were lots of problems that were hindering the private insurance sector. People didn't use to trust insurance companies. But over time, insurance companies have proved themselves.

People have started taking Insurance sector positively and the business has also taken pace and it grew and I believe insurance sector will grow even more in the near future.

What is your experience of working with a few and then many competing companies?

Ironically, when there were a few companies, there was not much work. In the past four years, insurance sector took a big leap.

The market share of National Life grew to 19 percent from 8-9 percent. So, along with the increase in the number of companies, the insurance market has also expanded adequately. National Life is moving forward with a goal to lead the insurance sector of the country, but we still need to work a lot for that.

What are the main reasons that a customer should buy insurance from the National Life Insurance?

National Life is a company that has already proven itself. Along with satisfying both the investors and customers, National Life has fulfilled all its societal responsibilities.

Other companies are providing bonuses differently to different products but we are giving the same bonus rate in all types of insurance products.

We went to the market offering nearly all the international insurance products, so common people can choose their type of product from a variety. We also have the latest softwares, which makes transactions easier.

We are providing services in all 75 districts of the country from our 90 branches and with the help of more than 200 employees. Finally as we are providing quality service for more than 25 years, so I think customers will definitely choose National Life. (Karobar)

Investment Climate Is Not Good

SHYAM SUNDAR LAL KAKSHAPATI

Newly elected president of Hotel Association Nepal (HAN) Shyam Sundar Lal Kakshapati has said that Nepalese Businessmen have not been able to invest despite having surplus funds due to lack of security. He expressed his sadness over the deterioration of investment climate in the country.



President Kakshapati was speaking at a program organized by the Federation of Nepali Journalists, Palpa branch at Tansen. He said that political parties interfere with investing in various sectors like industries and hotels. Political parties come and ask for recruiting their cadres just after investing, so the businessmen still didn't have a good investment climate, he said.

He added only when businessmen can invest freely, the nation can take a new leap in development.

Interest Rates will Go Down

YUVARAJ KHATIWADA, Governor

The governor of Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) Yuvaraj Khatiwada has requested insurance companies not to depend only on the interests earned from banks. He said that only insurance companies that are able to diversify their investment will be able to increase their incomes.



“You should not think that banks provide better interest rates due to lack of liquidity,” he said at a program marking the 45th anniversary of Beema Sansthan. “The bank's interest rates will soon come down from the two digit mark.”

Compiled and translated By **DEBESH ADHIKARI**

Choice Of A Governance System



By DR. SURYA DHUNGEL

Differences still persist amongst the major political parties and Nepalese scholars as to what form of government Nepal should opt for. The Constituent Assembly is in dilemma. A reformed governance system, whether it be of parliamentary model or presidential model, or a combination of the two (mixed system)? Which one? Debates continue but political parties have very little time left to make a sensible and unbiased decision on it.

An agreement among all, at least in principle, has however been made in favour of a democratic system backed up by the principles of rule of law, human rights, separation of powers, independence of the judiciary, and inclusive representative institutions. No compromise on this! Commitments of the prevailing political forces of the country in these democratic values are reflected in the Interim Constitution (2007) and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which has received a constitutional space as Schedule 4. Federalism has now been added through the first amendment of the Interim Constitution that would determine the vertical form of government structure to bring the various units of government closure to the people, both in theory and practice as the notion suggests. Hence, federalism, if properly designed and handled, is an added impetus of participatory democratic governance to strengthen the polity through the principles of shared rule, self-rule and unity in diversity. But a clear linkage between the form of government and federalism has to be established at the outset if a system has to work. This is however totally missing.

Except authoritarianism, no democratic system ever fails unless it has been wrongly designed and improperly implemented. The problem lies with the political leadership and parties, and other stakeholders and hidden beneficiaries, whose commitments and failures are equally responsible for the success or non-functioning of a democratic system. Multiparty polity and press freedom, or freedom of association, in itself are never wrong in a democratic system. These are in fact bedrocks of democracy. But why do parties break up and wrong dissemination of information cause social anarchy and disorder? We cannot blame multiparty system for the excesses of specific political party and authoritarian behaviour of the political leaders. The Constituent Assembly itself does not have anything to do with its failure to produce a constitution in time; it is the structure and the failure of the actors and other stakeholders that are basically responsible for non-performance of the CA. The same is the case with the system of governance also.

In the world, there are tentatively forty three countries with full presidential system with no Prime Minister, the president acting as both Head of State and Government without accountability to the elected House, such as SA, Brazil, Liberia and Afghanistan. Twenty three countries have powerful presidents as Heads of the State with nominal powers shared with Prime Ministers, such as Armenia and Belarus. Semi presidential systems like France, Guyana and exist in about twenty seven countries. Whereas parliamentary system with a Prime Minister elected from the House as executive chief works in more than eighty five countries in the world, including parliamentary republic like Finland and India, and constitutional monarchies like Sweden, Denmark and Norway. Directorial system of parliamentary model like Switzerland and absolute monarchies, even theocracies like Iran, are not counted here. All systems are working in their own way, and the country specific situations are the determining factor for the success and failure of a democratic system. Hence, what are the country specific situations that demand a specific form of government in Nepal? That we should look for. Needs and specific characteristics of a

Country should in fact decide as to what we should opt for, not anyone's whims and emotions. Justifications must be placed before the people by CA and political advocates, and it should be convincing and practical, and conceptually sound.

Not only political parties, including UCPN-Maoist, even scholars like Professor Lokraj Baral and Professor Surya Subedi, once advocates of parliamentary system, have recently been found tilting towards Presidential System primarily on the grounds of stability and failed experiment of parliamentary system for the past seven decades. Some leaders, such as JN Khanal and Narahari Acharya, are even arguing in favour of directly elected Prime Minister, once unsuccessfully tried in Israel.

Dr. Rohan Idrishina, a constitutional lawyer from Sri Lanka and currently associated with UNDP in Nepal, has been heard several times sharing very negative experiences of Sri Lanka, and advising Nepalese not to jump for any untested system that may plunge the country into an authoritarian ditch. So was the experience of well-known Professors of Comparative Constitutional

Law from Kenya, Dr. Yash Pal Ghai and Jill Cottrell, who strongly feel, based on their global and specifically African experiences, that Nepal is not a right candidate for Presidential system. Nepal never experimented parliamentary system in a proper way except for eighteen months during late fifties, hence there is no question of failure of the parliamentary experience in Nepal. According to them, as was suggested by Professor Idrishina, it is wrong to suggest that Presidential system offers stability. Professor Ghai cites Africa as a worst case where out of fifty countries, all countries except four, are presidential and they all authoritarian and unstable. Compared to them, only four parliamentary states in Africa more stable. So does the experiences of Latin America indicate. Moreover, according to the World Bank study, comparatively countries with parliamentary system are less corrupt, as are indicated by New Zealand, Norway, Denmark, Finland and Singapore.

Scholars suggest, there are ways to reform system, rather than experimenting one system after another. Germany has devised mechanisms to prevent frequent change of governments by putting a rider on vote of no confidence motion. Frequent dissolution of parliament can easily be checked by preventing any dissolution with requirements of parliamentary approval or defining a minimum time gap. One Canadian scholar suggested: don't forget that you are a country with immense diversities and you have decided to go for a federal system. How can you accommodate the diverse groups without parliamentary devices? Can a single directly elected President for a fixed period represent the aspirations of diverse group? Perhaps, familiarity of the parliamentary system may be easily understood by the common people who are attuned to the parliamentary model even if that had never been duly implemented before under a free and fair electoral process. The Challenge of social inclusion is perhaps not the cake of Presidential system.

Whatever be the system we choose, it has direct relevance to the federal mechanism we devise. Equally important is the electoral process, and guarantee of inclusivity and fairness. Hence, if we eventually decide to experiment, rightly or wrongly, a presidential or a mixed system, then nature of federal legislature, provincial and local governments, and judicial structure and public administration will have to be immediately redesigned. What would be the democratic elements and components of checks and balances, have to be simultaneously worked out. Hence we must look before we leap. Let us have sufficient debate, although time is running out.

Dhungel is a constitutional lawyer

Scholars suggest, there are ways to reform system, rather than experimenting one system after another.



POLITICS

Uncertain Course

Even as the country inches closer to a grave crisis ahead of the May 27 constitution deadline, political parties are yet to show signs of making any meaningful compromise

By A CORRESPONDENT

In the midst of growing disputes among political parties on constitution writing and peace process, the bomb blast that killed three people near Singha Durbar secretariat in broad daylight serves as prelude to Nepal's possible scenario after May 27, 2012.

Although an unknown ethnic group took the responsibility for the blast, the event made a sinister hint that whether Nepalese political parties promulgate the new constitution or not, one group or another will be ready to oppose any move, pushing Nepal into another phase of turmoil.

Until five years ago, UCPN-Maoist party used to explode similar bombs in cities killing innocent people and terrorizing them. As Maoists are bargaining for integration, an unknown United Jatiya Morcha has surfaced as a new facet to carry the baton left by Maoists.

Despite political differences, all major political parties condemned the bomb blast, but they have not indicated that they could forge any compromise over the country's constitutional issues.

Although a high level political mechanism has been working to promulgate the new constitution by May 27, the indication is that it would have to go a long way before any agreement. Given the present political scenario,

Nepal will have to face another phase of political crisis.

"If the current political impasse continues, it is impossible for us to promulgate the new constitution by May 27," said Nilamber Acharya, chairman of the Constitutional Committee of the Constituent Assembly. "There is the need of an agreement among major political parties on fundamental issues like restructuring of the state, forms of government, judiciary and others to promulgate the constitution."

Nepali Congress leader Ram Chandra Paudel said UCPN-Maoist leaders are not sincere to their words and commitments. The reason? According to Nepali Congress leader Paudel, Maoists seem to be in a process to carry on with the deadlock till May 27. Similarly, CPN-UML leader K.P. Sharma Oli held the view that Maoists were uninterested to write the constitution.

"The Maoists are in no mood to let the constitution come into place within the deadline without continuing them in power," said Oli.

After holding the elections for CA four years ago, Nepal's political parties have extended the tenure of CA several times. The Supreme Court has already made it clear that any further extension of CA will be unconstitutional.

Given the Supreme Court's strict order, any extension of the tenure of the Constituent Assembly will definitely spark controversies. Even some civil society leaders like former speaker Daman Nath Dhungana have publicly announced that they will call people to rebellion against any meaningless extension.

Maoist leaders are still hopeful that they will find a political settlement at the last minute as in the past to avert the major political crisis. "PLA cantonments will be vacated within 2-3 weeks. The cantonments will be vacated within the proposed period, but there should be progress in the constitution drafting and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission fronts. Then the process of constitution writing begins," said UCPN-Maoist leader Prachanda.

Whatever be the remarks of Prachanda, only an eleventh hour miracle can avert the looming political crisis. As there is no possibility to have any consensus and agreement on political agenda, the wait is on for such a miracle. That type of miracle will be a statement about Nepal's major political parties and their role on the fundamental issues before the nation.

In course of prolonging political instability, even if Nepal produced a constitution, it will not guarantee the much needed stability. A long way to go for stability, in its real sense? ■

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Constitution Will Be Promulgated

By PUSHPA KAMAL DAHAL PRACHANDA

Our party is honestly and sincerely supporting the constitution writing and peace process. We don't want to deviate from our position. UCPN-Maoist has already sacrificed many things for the peace process. Other political parties, however, see our flexibility as a weakness. Constituent Assembly is our brain child and we don't want to see its dissolution without promulgation of the new constitution. There are regressive and reactionary forces active to discredit us and Constituent Assembly. I am almost certain that we will promulgate the new constitution, which will protect the rights of dalits, janjatis, farmers and oppressed classes.

I have to accept the fact that in recent days political parties are heading towards the right direction. Maoists are really committed to the peace process and promulgation of new constitution by May 27. Political parties need to work together for the betterment of the country. If we fail to promulgate the new constitution, it will encourage forces against us. Formation of high level committee among country's major political parties is a good indication. I am pretty sure that the new constitution will promulgated by the deadline. We don't have any alternative other than to promulgate the new constitution. We have made a lot of progress in the constitution writing and we can draft it in remaining three months. Other parties too need to realize the importance of the hour.

We are standing at the crossroads of Nepalese history. To institutionalize the achievements made during the People's War and People's Movement II, we must work together to bring the constitution in time. If we fail to promulgate the new constitution, people will blame us. We must act and work together to have the new constitution.

PLA cantonments will be vacated within 2-3 weeks. The cantonments would be vacated within the proposed period, but there should be progress in the constitution drafting and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission fronts. The parties must prepare an objective outline on the integration of combatants on the basis of a non-paper presented by the Army. We don't want to linger the integration process. The integration process must be honorable.

As per the demand of two parties, we have already decided that all the cantonments will be emptied in less than three weeks and that the Special Committee will take the initiative for that very soon. I want to make it clear to other parties that the ball is now in their court and they have to take drastic decision to fulfill their commitments. My party is committed to the peace agreement and that it will not take more than two or three weeks to empty the cantonments. I had forwarded a proposal at the meeting to complete the integration process within three weeks. I have proposed emptying the cantonments within three weeks. But such a decision should rather be taken by the Special Committee. Maoists have already shown enough flexibility to other parties and the time has come for other parties to take the decision which will help to promulgate the new constitution in time. If we failed to produce the constitution, all of us will be the loser.

(This is based on media reports.)



"We Cannot Promulgate The New Constitution By The Deadline"

NILAMBER ACHARYA

As less than three months are left for the promulgation of the new constitution, political parties are yet to agree on several important constitutional issues, namely, restructuring of the state, forms of government, judiciary and elections process. Chairman of Constitutional Committee of the Constituent Assembly NILAMBER ACHRYA, who played a key role in promulgating the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal in 1990, spoke to the media. Excerpts:

Less than three months are left for the tenure of the Constituent Assembly to end. How do you see the possibility of a new constitution by May 27?

Given the present political stalemate, we cannot promulgate the new constitution by the deadline. As the relations between major political parties are deteriorating, the situation is unfavorable for the writing of the constitution.

It is reported that political parties are closer to settlement. What do you say?

I have not seen any such situation. Just holding meetings and talking with each other would not be enough. Had they come closer, the fundamental constitutional disputes like forms of government, state restructuring, judiciary and elections system would have been settled a long time back. I have not even seen cordial relations within political parties. A faction of the ruling party comes to oppose the bill tabled by the government. This is a political tragedy.

What do you say about the regular meetings of leaders of major political parties? Is not it directed to consensus making?

There are a lot of differences. For instance, differences still prevail on peace process as it should have settled long time back. The agreement reached between political parties are yet to be implemented. There are many differences among them.

What are the problems?

One of the main problems is the failure of political parties to implement the agreement. There is a deficit of trust among the political parties. It is impossible to write the new constitution in distrust and mistrust among major political parties.

How much work has completed in the last four years by Constituent Assembly?

If you see, in terms of numbers, we have already settled a number of disputes. Except for the issue of state restructuring, political parties are very close to a deal in forms of government, judiciary and electoral process.

At a time when the constitutional related issues are debated outside the institution of Constituent Assembly, don't you think it is against the spirit of CA?

All the constitutional issues should have been discussed through the institutions under Constituent Assembly. It is not good to see the constitutional debates taking place outside the Constituent Assembly. Constitutional Committee and sub-committee are the legitimate bodies of the Constituent Assembly. Political parties need to make agreement to make these legitimate bodies more effective. Of course, political negotiations are good but it should remain within a political course.

What will be the political solution in case the CA fails to promulgate the new constitution by May 27?

It is not a question of Constituent Assembly. It is related to how we can normalize country's overall situation. If there is a good relationship among major political parties, the situation in the country will be normal whether there is constitution or no constitution. If the relations between the political parties continue to deteriorate, it is meaningless even if we have the new constitution.

If the relations between political parties deteriorate further, what will be the consequences?

No country will have peace as long as unless the relations between political parties are good. There is the need to have good relations among all the political forces to run the country smoothly.



Called For Judging

By YUBARAJ GHIMIRE

A few weeks ago, UN country representative Robert Piper invited leaders of ethnic groups for an exchange of views. The meeting discussed the place and rights of ethnic groups, among other issues, under the new constitution. There were angry outbursts against the 'non-ethnic groups', mainly the Bahuns and Chhetris. Some said 'we are the actual aboriginals' and the Bahuns and Chhetris are outsiders.

It is not yet known whether Dr Piper had these claims verified through cultural and historical evidences, or if at all he invited anthropologists to give more authentic versions of the claims that his guests in that particular meeting raised. But the UN and diplomatic system, with some honorable exception, have miserably been linked with the political and constitutional failure looming large in the country.

Each and every community, ethnic group, territorial group and individual minority have their own grievances, real or perceived, and most of them tend to blame the state for that. But neither the government nor the research groups have done any independent work into these aspects. Maoists succeeded in fuelling these grievances by projecting the monarchy, the unitary system of governance and the Hindu religion — and Hindu groups like Bahun, Chhetris and Newars dominating the state affairs — as the root of these grievances.

They took the help of the diplomatic community, church apart from some militant ethnic groups, to destroy what they thought were the strength of the 'old regime'. After all, Maoists always believed that demolition of the old state was absolutely essential to build 'a New Nepal', a progressive Nepal. The reference to Church activities is necessary as aligning with certain militant political groups cannot be listed as religious or philanthropic activities. That may even trigger a conflict between various religious, communal or ethnic groups in the future. Besides, the UN, international donors as well as the diplomatic community have also been supporting the anti-state activities and forces.

Maoist leaders have miserably failed the country and the people. They have been able to inject social and communal hatred. Nepali society's legacy as a 'culturally, socially and religiously tolerant' practitioner is on the wane. That's where right thinking Nepalese expect UN and the diplomatic community not to fuel caste, ethnic and social divisions. UN can help promote and protect the right of socially, culturally and historically marginalized, but it cannot be the judge to decide who fall into such category based on one sided or lopsided versions. The UN is expected to foster expanded version of identity based on citizenship and human rights and promote a sense of belonging to the state.

The UN system in Nepal has come not only under criticism, but also under disrepute because of some of the major aberrations in discharge of its international obligations towards a member state. That largely begins with the arrival of Ian Martin as Special Representative of the United Nations Mission to Nepal (UNMIN) in 2007 and his subsequent activities. It was followed by open advocacy of ethnicity based federalism by CCD, a UNDP funded project. Constitutional expert like Prof Yash Ghai employed by the UN to advise on

constitution making openly engaged in denouncing certain caste groups in Nepal, something that was not part of his job. The attitude of the people associated with the UN will eventually trigger a debate: Is UN a party, a dictator or a facilitator? Loss of UN's credibility or respect in a conflict stricken society or country will have larger and long term implications to all those who believe UN has a larger and respectable role to play in the globe.

Having a credible international agency, preferably the United Nations, as a mediator was part of the 12-point agreement that brought UNMIN and Ian Martin in Nepal, although the role assigned to them was much smaller than planned earlier. Yet, Martin did not conceal his ambition to get involved in Madhes issue also when agitation began there for more rights and autonomy to the region. He took full advantage of the prevailing euphoria, and sided with the new actors, especially the Maoists, on many occasions. Civil society leaders like Devendraraj Pandey and Shyam Shrestha went on record saying if the 'People's Liberation Army' was not there, the Nepal Army—in their words, the king's army—would have finished every political party and its leaders opposing the king. Martin picked up the thread from there.



Yes Pal Ghai

Now, the Young Communist League (YCL) and disqualified Maoist combatants are up in arms against Maoist Chief Prachanda demanding that they be given similar treatment (including financial benefits) like the combatants 'voluntarily retiring' and getting into the army. It is also revealed now that at least three thousand combatants were loaned to the YCL. This could not have taken place without the knowledge of Ian Martin and G P Koirala, hero of the peace process and Prime Minister between 2006 April and

August 2008, as well as Krishna Sitaula, the Home Minister and the most trusted aide of G P Koirala then. Some of the civil society leaders must have had the reason to feel happy about it, but Martin was not only wrongly briefed, he acted wrongly and objectionably. Moreover, both Koirala and Sitaula had been told by a person no less than Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai that the number of combatants was less than 8,000, but neither G P Koirala or Sitaula, nor any one else, raised the issue when 32,000 plus appeared for verification and 19,000 plus were certified as 'qualified' combatants. It was clearly a well designed understanding to inflate the number of combatants to terrorize the —other army—the king's army.

There are many lessons that could be learnt from history that using terrorism as a means for political change may be possible, but it would always be difficult, if not impossible, to dismount from that horse without sustaining major injuries. Prachanda faces that predicament as YCL cadres accuse him of betraying them in pursuit of his political ambition. Maoists, especially the YCL, will no doubt have the matter settled, as Prachanda has to be answerable, and there is no other escape route for him.

But the UN system in Nepal needs to respond to many of the allegations that are being directed against it. A failure to do so will only contribute to larger opinion, mainly in the third — as well as the conflict stricken countries, against the UN system. ■

ANTI-CORRUPTION DRIVE

Whim Or Rule?

The verdict delivered by a division bench of the Supreme Court against Jaya Prakash Gupta has triggered a wave of debates

By KESHAB POUDEL

"The court will not allow any corrupt person to walk free and it will deal with corruption related issues in accordance with the laws. My recent judgment was based on precedents and verdicts delivered by the apex court in the past," said Justice Sushila Karki, talking to Nagarik Daily, following the judgment against sitting minister Jaya Prakash Gupta on corruption charges.

The Supreme Court's division bench



Justice Karki (Left) and Bhatta

headed by Justice Karki and Justice Tarka Raj Bhatta handed out a one and a half year's jail sentence and Rs 8.5 million in fines to sitting Minister for Information and Communications Jay Prakash (JP) Gupta. The Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) had first filed charges against Gupta in 2002. The Special Court had issued a clean chit to Gupta in 2007. CIAA again filed a writ petition at the apex court as it sought a review over the Special Court's verdict.

Terming the verdict of the Special Court giving clean chit to JP Gupta erroneous, the Supreme Court directed the Judicial Council to punish judges Bhoop Dhoj Adhikari, Cholendra SJB Rana and Komal Prasad Ghimire.

Gupta is not the first politician proven guilty on corruption. Last year, the Supreme Court had sentenced former minister Chiranjibi Wagle to one and a half year's jail term and a fine of Rs 20.3 million after finding him guilty on corruption charges. A division bench of Chief Justice Ram Prasad Shrestha and Khil Raj Regmi delivered the judgment in March 2011.

The only question is: are the judgments based on the rule of law or on individual whim?

"Had not I dreamt of the god, the night before the verdict, I would not have inspiration to send former minister Chiranjibi Wagle to prison," former chief justice Ram Prasad Shrestha declared in a public meeting organised to bid a farewell to him. "I was directed by god to deliver the verdict."

Shrestha had openly made this statement in front of Nepal's prominent figures including judges, former bureaucrats and civil society members. However, no one raised the question: can a verdict directed by spiritual inclinations be valid. Similarly, the bench headed by chief justice Khil Raj Regmi directed the Special Court to re-hear the cases cleared by it on the ground of retrospective action. The bench ordered that the retrospective precedents cannot be applied in corruption related cases.

No society can tolerate corruption and no one can defend the corrupt people handed punishments guided by rule of law. However, Nepal's court system is often guided by political and populist considerations. Nepal's Supreme Court rejected to listen to the hearing on the political declaration of reinstated House of Representatives in 2006. The declaration deactivated all the constitutional provisions.

Given Nepal's previous records, the anti-corruption drive is often guided by political and individual whims rather than the firm commitments against corruption. From former prime minister and Nepali Congress supremo Girija Prasad Koirala to former ministers, bureaucrats and judges, most of those accused as involved in corruption scandals have linkages with Nepali Congress.

Although CIAA inquired two dozen ministers and filed the cases against a dozen, the commission chief handed a letter of clean chit to late Koirala after janandolan II.

During former King Gyanendra's direct rule, a high-level Anti-Corruption Commission even sent former prime

minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, Nepali Congress general secretary Prakash Man Singh and CPN-UML leader Ishwor Pokharel to prison. Following the apex court's verdict on the high level commission, former prime minister Deuba, Singh and Pokharel were acquitted from the scandal.

Even during the Panchayat days, former prime minister Dr. Tulsī Giri, former ministers late Dr. Harka Gurung, Dr. Bekha Bahadur Thapa and many senior high officials were accused in corruption charges.

If one can ask what makes other democracies different from Nepal in dealing with cases related to corruption, the answer is simple. Corruption related issues are often influenced by populist media and political whims. In broader sense, the rule of law is often ignored.

The interpretation of the laws and constitution often depend upon the political scenario. "There is a legal flaw in the verdict. This is directed against the wishes of Madhes. We will take necessary steps after going through the verdict," said Laxman Lal Karna, leader of Samyukta Madheshi Loktantrik Front.

In his article published in Nagarik daily, political commentator C.K. Lal questioned the rationality behind the verdict. He argued that corruption is often a luxury for elite classes.

However, other hailed the decision as historic. "This is an historic verdict. We have to salute the courage of the two senior judges of the apex court," said senior advocate Bishow Kanta Mainali at a program. "Civil society needs to back



JP Gupta

the court against any effort to make corruption as a political agenda by certain ethnic groups."

At a time when Nepal has been facing rampant corruption at different levels, what concerned authorities require is to promote the rule of law and institutionalize the institution working to prevent corruption. The anti-corruption drive based on individual whim and populism will create chaos and destabilize the political process encouraging corruption at all levels. ■

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

On Long March

For over a hundred years, we have celebrated the International Women's Day, taking place every March 8, all over the world. The first women's strike took place in New York on that day and a few years later it led to the inception of International Women's Day (IWD). The women took to the streets that day to protest against poor working conditions in the textile industry. So began the struggle in Western countries for women's emancipation and to end discrimination against them. But, what about the struggle of women in Nepal today? Since 1975, Nepal has been celebrating IWD along with the international community, using slogans for equal rights in all spheres of society. Now, out of 601 members of the Constituent Assembly, 33 percent are women. Despite so much of progress, the status of women is yet to change. What is lacking then?

By LARA SUYKERBUYK

Last week a mob killed a woman on charges of being a witch. This occurred in Chitwan, 100 kilometers southwest of the capital, Kathmandu. Similarly, a group of villagers physically assaulted a woman in Sindhupalchowk. Widows are seen as witches in Nepal and sometimes face horrendous repercussions – they are not allowed to wear red, the color of life and passion.

Nepal is one of the most significant recipients of international financial aid in South Asia. This funding has helped the country to make many improvements in the realm of women's empowerment. But still, much progress is needed. In the last three decades, the lifestyle of women in Nepal has gone through many changes. However, the change mostly happened in the urban areas. The lifestyles of urban women living in capital Kathmandu and rural parts of

Nepal are very different and there is a wide gap between them.

In terms of access to health, justice and education and rights, urban women get enormous opportunities, whereas rural women are still far behind. Nepal's women literacy has gone up. Half a dozen of laws and regulations are already enacted to protect the rights of the women but the woes of rural women are yet to be reduced. Women are still bearing the entire burden in rural parts of Nepal. Various studies conducted by national and international organizations have shown that Nepalese women are the most vulnerable. Whether the impact relates to climate change or male migration, the women suffer. When a Nepalese male goes abroad to work in a foreign country, he earns money for home, but then, sometimes, he also brings HIV back home. When a man

goes away, the women have to bear all the responsibilities.

Dr. Meena Acharya, a senior political economist and feminist, agrees that progress is happening: "Women's movement on the whole is undergoing a rapid fundamental transformation; along with the changes taking place in governance structure and political representation, it is focused on proportional representation, empowerment through affirmative action, freedom from violence, operation strategies, regulatory enforcement and capacity building.

Yet the women of Nepal still face a wide range of discriminatory practices that cloud their entire existence. For one, poverty overwhelmingly has a woman's face. The World Food Program estimates that 60 percent of all chronically malnourished people in the world are

women and girls. The major cause of this disparity is gender inequality; therefore, countries with the highest level of hunger tend to also have very high levels of gender inequality. In Nepal, more than 25 percent of the population lives under the national poverty line. According to the Human Development Index, Nepal ranks 138 out of 169 countries.

The country, which is home to the Himalayas, is a patriarchal society and most marriages are still arranged at a young age. As a result, a woman has little to no control at all about her life partner or about the direction she wants to take in her life. She is expected to live with her husband's family and is responsible for traditional roles such as taking care of the children and contributing to the family income through often back-breaking labor in the fields. Nevertheless, some strong independent women respect their family's will to marry and adjust their life as the culture dictates to them.

Unfortunately, women have less access and control over resources like property rights and services like health and education in this male-dominated country. These disparities diminish the capabilities among Nepalese women, worsening female poverty and leading to discrimination and violence.

Since 2002, many legal changes have been made to protect Nepalese women. For example, a law that year was enacted that serves to pass property to widows on the death of their husbands. The problem in Nepal is that there is a wide difference between a law being written and whether it is actually enforced. Polygamy is also illegal, but its practice is still widespread. The reason for that



Rural Women

could be that life for a single woman is even harder than for a married woman and it is a part of Nepalese culture. In 2009, a crime and punishment law was made to protect women who suffer domestic abuse, which can include physical, mental, emotional and sexual abuse.

Women's Foundation Nepal (WFN) says the social acceptance of violence against women is still wide spread; it is a terrible reality for many Nepalese women. WFN cites a recent study conducted by SAATHI which reveals that up to 81% of women in rural Nepal are victims of domestic abuse. In addition, 22% of the men questioned admitted that they think it is acceptable for a man to beat his wife, while 23% of women also believed wife-beating to be

acceptable. Much work still needs to be done to change their way of thinking. Women lack sufficient food, housing, rights, and opportunities. Malnutrition is likely caused by the prevailing practice of women eating last at family meals. Many people also suffer from anemia because of the lack of nutrients in their *daal bhaat* diet, which can be prevented by eating more spinach.

Nepal is one of the few countries in the world where women have a lower life expectancy than men.

The country has different castes and ethnic groups where the women have both a lower status and heavier workloads than men do.

In the rural areas, one can see women of all ages carrying a heavy loaded basket or 'doko' on their back. Similarly, women are also facing many problems due to depletion of water resources. They have to go miles to carry a bucket of water. Likewise, they have to bear all kinds of disasters too. Women work long, hard hours, which you can read on their



A Japanese Volunteer Working with community in Tanahun

weathered yet smiling faces. It is always hard to estimate their true age.

Many women suffer gynecological problems like uterus prolapsed because at an early age they have children and for carrying heavy baskets on their backs right after bearing a child. They are often too shy to consult a doctor. Stichting Veldwerk is an organization that helps women through organization of health camps in villages: "We conduct health camps to address the issue of uterus prolapsed in the villages to give them the opportunity to tell their problems to foreign doctors. We found out that they think that if they tell their problems to local doctors it will be revealed in the village."

The difference between urban women and rural women is striking. Only 11 km outside the capital of Kathmandu, women are less educated or even not educated at all: "The striking reason is that in the village areas there is a very strict culture where the woman has to stay in the husband's house, therefore she has a lack of education and lower economic status," says Stichting Veldwerk. Less than 30 percent of Nepalese women are literate, as opposed to about 57 percent of the men. Education is the base of a good and equal working society; the lack of education must be radically overhauled in order to get this dusty country to clear out its poverty and its let its true beauty shine through.

Along with government, the UN, INGOs and bilateral agencies have been spending huge resources to defend the rights of women and their health. They are ADRA-Nepal, The Asia Foundation, Action Aid, Apeiron, AIDOS, AVSF-Italy, Educate the Children, Equal Access International, FORUT-Nepal, NDI-Nepal, Oxfam GB Nepal, Planete Enfants, Saferworld, Shapla Neer, CEDPA, The Lutheran World Federation Nepal, United Mission to Nepal, World Neighbors, CARE-Nepal and Stichting Veldwerk Netherlands

This year, the global United Nations theme for IWD is 'Connecting girls, inspiring futures' when each country and numerous NGOs put women's needs, rights and accomplishments in the spotlight in their own ways. But will that alone suffice to bring changes and institutionalize them? ■

Lara Suykerbuyk is an intern from Belgium

"Climate Change And Gender Is Very Much Interlinked"

MEENA KHANAL

MEENA KHANAL is a joint secretary at the Ministry of Environment. Khanal has already participated several international climate changes meeting leading Nepalese delegation. Meena's career took her from working on eco-tourism in the Ministry of Tourism to to-day, the Joint Secretary, of the Ministry of Environment and their Gender Focal Point. Having received a graduate diploma in Women's Studies, Meena set out to research the linkages between gender and climate change, particularly in the context of Nepal. As Nepal is celebrating International Women Day, joint secretary Khanal spoke to various issue related to gender and climate change. Excerpts:

How do you see the gender and climate change issue?

Climate change and gender is very much interlinked. Realizing this, the government in support with the World Conservation Union (IUCN) is working to formulate a gender and climate change strategy to stress the need of gender-responsive policies and strategies in combating the climate change impact. We have recently organized a seminar to enhance capacity to understand and communicate the issues of gender and climate change.

How do you link climate change issue with women?

Women are among the most vulnerable communities to the impact of climate change due to lack of resources for facing changes to the natural disasters. So, it is important to empower women who have a lead role to play in coming up with mitigation, adaptation and reduction strategies to deal with the changing climatic patterns. According to a study around 50 percent of the population affected by climate change constitutes women, so it is essential to link gender equality with climate change to overcome the existing problems.



How much importance gender components is getting in climate change?

Due to lack of proper understanding and lack of experiences, the gender component is left in isolation in context of formulating policies, programs and strategies. This lacks in the government and other concerned stakeholders as well. I am happy to say that Nepal is now in the process of formulating gender based climate strategy. NAPA has acknowledged the importance of gender and women's participation. We can develop our strategy and programs under this framework. As eight countries across the globe have formulated gender-based climate strategy, Nepal also needs to have this.

What are experiences with COP and gender issue?

At the beginning, it was often difficult to have a voice in the outcomes. Having the support of other women delegates as well as the capacity building I gained confidence to be able to participate fully in the UNFCCC process. At COP13, it seemed that the prevailing belief was that in terms of climate change- gender didn't matter. It is matter of pride for me to say that gender is now one of the leading issues as COP 17 has already recognized it. Durban is another example. ■

'Women Are Backward Due To Unequal Treatments In All Sectors'

BALANANDA PAUDEL

Nepal is celebrating the International Women's Day by organizing various programs as in the past several years. With the national slogan, 'End of Violence against Women: Maintain Zero Tolerance,' Nepal is focusing its programs to reduce domestic violence. With good command over development issues, BALANANDA PAUDEL, Secretary at the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, a lead ministry dealing with women related issues, says the Day has its own significance. Secretary Paudel spoke to NEW SPOTLIGHT on various issues related to the International Women Day. Excerpts:

As Nepal has been celebrating the International Women's Day on March 8 annually, what makes this year's program different than in the past?

Celebrating International Women's Day is a regular program. We have been celebrating the Day on March 8 every year since 1975. This day is celebrated globally. The day has significance especially in bringing women related issues to the forefront for women's empowerment, women's development and their economic uplift. We highlight such issues on the day. This day will also help to generate awareness in the society about the problems faced by women. This day also gives an opportunity to disseminate information regarding women, to further reiterate the commitment to address their issues and work towards that.

This day also gives a chance to evaluate the overall programs of the past and find out the lapses and lacunas in the programs related to women's development.

Shed some light on this year's slogan?

'Connecting Girls: Inspiring Future' is the slogan of this year's International Women's Day. Nepal's own slogan for the day is 'End the Violence against Women: Maintain Zero Tolerance.' Our whole program will be directed towards these slogans.

How is the government celebrating the occasion?

As in the past, the government is celebrating the International Women's Day by raising the agenda related to women's empowerment and ending discrimination and violence against women. We also evaluate our own performance and interventions by reiterating our commitments. Nepal has made many achievements since Nepal started to celebrate the International Women's Day.

How do you look at the issues related to women's empowerment and uplift?

So far as the issues related to women's empowerment and uplift is concerned, they are multi-dimensional and multi-sectoral. They have social, economic, educational and cultural dimensions. Among others, we need to concentrate more on education and economic dimensions. There is the need to provide more opportunity in the education sector. Women are backward due to unequal treatments in all sectors. Thus, the state must provide further incentives through positive discrimination. When I was the education secretary, I took a decision for the establishment of Women's Education Fund. Under this fund, thousands of women have been receiving support. University Grant Commission and Higher Education Secondary Board provide scholarships to women through the money received from the fund. The intervention in education sector is a major thing.

What are other aspects of interventions?

Other equally important part is economic intervention. This includes rights to parental property, rights to employment and implementation of policy on positive discrimination. Along with economic and social dimension, we also need to strengthen programs to address social and cultural dimensions. Although the social and cultural dimensions are also important, it requires a long duration to change the social and cultural dimensions. They are related

to human psychology and approach and they need generation to generation of time to settle. Education and economic empowerment can be the point of new change. If we can make women educationally capable and economically self sustained, this will help to end the discrimination against women.

What are the instruments for interventions?

We have three instruments available to intervene in the process. The first one is a legal instrument. Under this, we can intervene in the process of discrimination by making the laws. By making laws, we can make mandatory provisions, the list of work to do and not to do. Law can be used as vehicles. Other is economic incentives and disincentives. Under this medium, we can encourage people to do good things and discourage people to do bad things. The current legal provision to give 50 per cent discounts in land registration and transferring property to women has made good impacts. This incentive can motivate people to transfer the property in women's names. The third important aspect is social tools. This is related to advocacy, dissemination of messages, development of women friendly curriculum and public campaigns. Through this we can generate awareness on women's issues and agenda. You cannot bring any changes through a single tool or a single institution. As I have already mentioned, gender and women make a multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional issue.

How do you evaluate the priority given to women's issue?

Although we have been saying women's issue is our priority issue, we are yet to identify priority sectors. We need to do a lot of work to make all the interventions implemented by various sectoral ministries women friendly. The Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare should be given a lead role by developing expertise.

What is your impression about the role of Nepal's development partners?

Various development partners

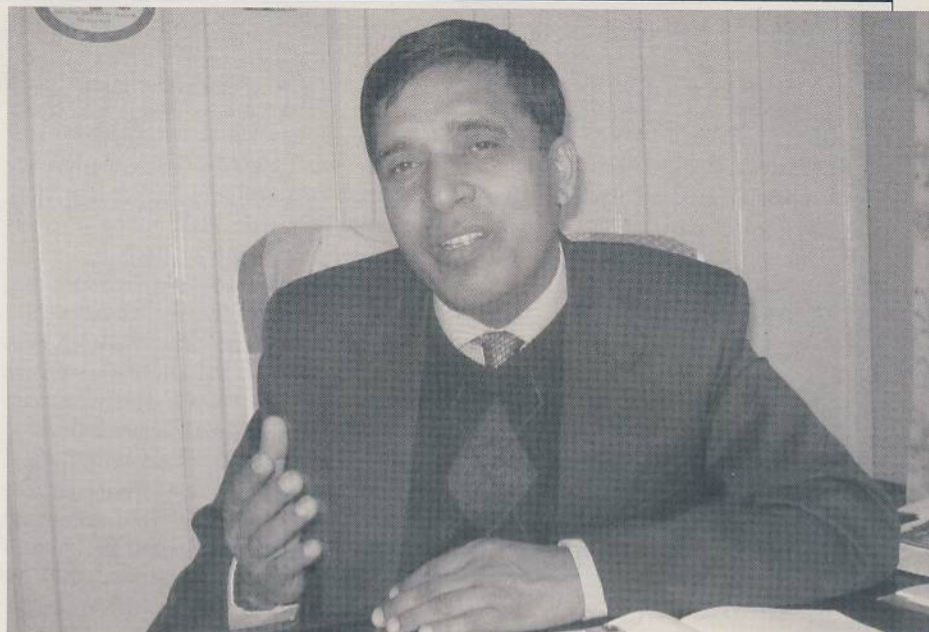
including bilateral, multilateral, UN, INGOs and NGOs have been working in the women's sector. The Ministry is now thinking about looking into where there are overlaps and gaps in working with Nepal's development partners. To make women related programs more effective, the Ministry has to look into these two important things. If there is a gap, the government encourages Nepal's development partners to meet the gap. If there is an overlap, the government will ask them to streamline. The Ministry also wants to look at no cost as what cost the services are delivered. Is it value for money or something else? We have to know on what cost they have been providing the services. It is important to know this.

How can you make women related programs more effective?

Women development programs need to be aligned with national priorities. Their interventions and activities should be aligned with national priorities. Paris Declaration also has called for this alignment. The declaration has also said that donor countries have to align the national priorities. The government and ministry have to clearly tell development partners about the priorities in women's sector. We need to be very clear on that. We have to communicate this to our development partners. We have to motivate them to align their programs to our priorities.

How do you see the government's institutional arrangements?

We need to encourage government's institutional arrangements. District Women offices are the arms and legs of this ministry. We need to empower district offices in terms of manpower, resources and activities. We have to realign, reprioritize and empower those offices. District Women Offices have been launching a very effective program in the rural parts of Nepal through a cooperative. We don't have to reach each and every house of rural areas. Through the cooperatives, the related district offices have been implementing the programs in economically, socially and culturally deprived communities. There are women cooperatives in all the VDCs and the ministry has been implementing



the programs through these cooperatives. They have already collected 1.6 billion rupees through more than 1300 cooperatives.

Why are women cooperatives important?

Cooperatives are self driven and self motivated movements. People are working for themselves. If this is so, we need to do more. The cooperatives encourage people to develop a loose relationship to do something for them. Cooperatives encourage people to get involved in economic activities. Women are organized under cooperatives in the villages and it is a medium to reach the villages. We can provide support to them through this. We have to make all these cooperatives as a vehicle to reach each household. For instance, when we have been raising the issue of women's violence, cooperatives can be used against violence. If we have to empower women, we must launch programs directed through them.

How gender friendly is the budget?

The Ministry of Finance has been working to formulate a gender friendly budget. Women's empowerment should be a priority sector. We are making plans but somebody else holds the budget. We need to reach out to each household. We cannot empower the deprived and needy women only by making this as an issue of certain elites. We need to shift women related agenda to the rural parts from

the urban areas.

How do you see the current violence against woman?

Recent trends show that the violence against women is not confined to rural areas. We have seen this violence in high class of urban society as well. Despite all the efforts, there are sporadic incidents of violence against women. The state needs to give protection to women by providing them safer homes to shelter victim women. The state needs to launch reactive and proactive works. Proactive nature of work includes providing incentives through the cooperatives.

Your slogan is maintaining zero tolerance of violence against women. How can you achieve it?

We want to do this through the cooperatives set up by Women Development Offices. We will launch the zero tolerance programs round the year.

What does the country need to do to make women's programs effective?

There are so many organizations working in women's sector and there is the need to have coordination between them. There is the need to have mainstreaming among the various programs. Nepal government has been launching various programs. We need to have priorities set for each. They need mainstreaming in terms of implementation. ■

'The Trend Of HIV Infection In Nepal Is Dramatically Changing From "Most-At-Risk" Women To "Low-Risk" Women'

DR. MARIA ELENA FILIO G. BORROMEO

DR. MARIA ELENA G. FILIO-BORROMEO, shortly called "Marlyn" has been working as the UNAIDS Country Coordinator for Nepal and Bhutan since late 2007. She spoke to NEW SPOTLIGHT on various issues. Excerpts:

As the world is celebrating International Women's Day, how do you see the state of women particularly in Nepal in terms of HIV/AIDS prevalence?

Let me first greet all our readers a Happy Women's Day not only on March 8, but in the next days ahead. We should make every day, a Women's Day! 2012 actually marks the 101st Anniversary of the International Women's Day and it's great that Nepal is joining the world in celebrating this very important event.

On the state of Nepali women, using the HIV/AIDS lens, I wanted to bring forth the reports from the National Center on AIDS and STD Control (NCASC) of the Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP). As of Aug 2011, a cumulative total of 18,535 HIV infections have been reported to

NCASC, and almost 36% are women. Among these women, 75% are housewives. If you look at the 2010 Estimated HIV infections by risk groups in 2010 released also by NCASC, you will also deduced that 27% are among women: 1% among female sex workers and 26% among remaining low risk women.

Clearly, the trend of HIV infection in Nepal is dramatically changing from "most-at-risk" women to "low-risk" women. In the context of HIV epidemiology housewives are classified as "low risk" Population since in general they only have 1 sexual partner. Their level of risk to HIV exposure Therefore is very much defined by the sexual (and injecting drug) practices of their husband. This Situation is alarming since the likelihood of transmitting HIV to unborn children will be high.

As there grows the mobility of Nepal's men, how safe Nepalese women are?

Following up on my response on your first question, most of those reported as "housewives" are apparently housewives of migrant workers. So this needs to be carefully studied and adequately addressed. Mobility, whether by men or women, is a vulnerability factor to HIV infection. While families and the country's economy as a whole enjoy the benefits of dollar remittances from migrant

workers, the social cost could be high at times.

As Nepal has reportedly made a big progress in stabilizing HIV/AIDS, how friendly is Nepal's HIV policy towards women?

Nepal has good policies in place- including having women-friendly policy and even third gender-friendly policy. The challenge as in other countries is the implementation of these policies so that the spirit and intent of these policies will be achieved. If you look at the 2011 July report of NCASC on antiretroviral therapy (ART) coverage, 43.1% are females, 56.5% are male and 0.3% is third gender. So women are reaching these life-saving medications.

During my first year in Nepal, the government had introduced the Free Universal Health Care policy with the aim of reaching "very poor", "destitute", "senior citizens", supported by "women community health volunteers". I recall reading a study a couple of years after, which found out that the increase in utilization of health care services within government-run facilities by women and girls is apparently evident because of this pro-poor health care policy. So this is a big progress in Nepal's policy implementation where concrete results are seen in the lives of women and girls.

How do you see the gender scenario in terms of HIV/AIDS?

Last year, UNAIDS Nepal supported a "Gender Audit of the HIV response in Nepal". This is in line with our "Agenda for Accelerated Country Action for Women, Girls, Gender Equality and HIV" developed to address the persistent gender inequalities and human rights violations that put women and girls at greater risk of, and more vulnerable to, HIV and that threatens the gains that have been made in preventing HIV transmission and in increasing access to ART. I can share with you the full report, but it noted that the country's response to HIV since it was first reported in 1988 had evolved. From a mainly health-focused response, a developmental, rights-based approach has been adopted through the years. However, it also noted that the response to HIV and AIDS to date has not been bereft of gender perspective altogether and much has yet to be done, to ensure that policies and programs on HIV and AIDS indeed facilitate gender equality.

How do you see the resources available in Nepal for HIV/AIDS?

Resources for HIV/AIDS in Nepal and in other countries would never be enough, I think.

There is always a clamor for more, more, and more. With the current global economic downturn, the smart and better way to go is to make more effective and efficient use of resources that are already available in the country.



According to the study on the "Resource Inflow for the HIV/AIDS Program in Nepal 2010" carried out by the HIV/AIDS and STD Control Board (HSCB) with technical support from UNAIDS and World Bank, Nepal had spent \$ 20.5 Million in 2009; and in 2010 about \$19.1 Million had been obligated, for HIV/AIDS response. The same study deduced that the HIV/AIDS response in Nepal is almost totally dependent on external support (more than 98% of funds come from external sources), but the trend is now on its downward direction. Hence, to preserve and sustain the gains on HIV/AIDS, it is absolutely necessary that domestic resources, both from the government and private sector, be mobilized. The country will now be developing a costed National Action Plan on HIV/AIDS and it will tell us how much resources/investment is needed to address the epidemic effectively and achieve down the road, the targets set in the National Strategy on HIV/AIDS 2011-2016, and midway the MDG 6 target 7 by 2015.

What is the total budget and what is the contribution of international community?

I refer you back to the study I mentioned earlier, the "Resource Inflow for the HIV/AIDS Program in Nepal 2010". According to this study, the contribution from external sources during the fiscal year 2009/2010 is a little over \$20 million.

Existing data has shown that HIV is gradually infecting housewife, what Nepal needs to do?

Nepal has vast experiences in reducing HIV infections among its population, so I don't think I need to mention what needs to be done. But on the issue of reducing, if not eliminating, HIV infection among housewives, a comprehensive, continuum of HIV prevention program has to be in place at all levels and specially for housewives, at the

community, family and individual levels. Multiple approaches at various entry points, is needed. If the profile of the housewives is that of the wives of migrant workers, which in Nepal is likely to be, then prevention program for migrant workers has to be in place in the whole migration process, which includes during pre-departure, while in host countries, and upon return or reintegration in their community.

Let me mention, as we are on this topic, that the UN Theme Group on AIDS in Nepal is seriously concerned about this emerging issue and had developed a joint UN initiative on "Reducing Migration related vulnerabilities and risk of HIV transmission among Nepali men and women". This is a 3-year initiative and one of its objectives is to strengthen cross border initiative between Nepal and India to enable the continuum of services such as sexual and reproductive health, HIV testing and counseling, prevention of mother to child transmission and ARV for migrants and their spouses. It is envisaged that this initiative will contribute to the national response with a focus on reducing HIV/STI/TB transmission among Nepali migrant populations in intervention districts.

How do you see the role of International agencies and local civil society organizations?

Everyone has a role in addressing HIV and AIDS. Certainly, the Government is on the driving seat setting the strategic direction of the response, based on what the epidemic is telling us and in the country's long-term development vision.

Civil society organization (CSOs) especially people living with HIV plays multiple roles in HIV and AIDS response. This had been seen in all countries around the world, including Nepal. Their engagement in accessing and/or providing prevention, treatment, care and support services is essential. They could also provide a forum to discuss controversial issues that help promote deeper understanding about HIV and related issues among decision makers and political leaders. In some countries, CSO pilots community-based intervention and once successful, the Government scales it up, to national level. CSOs could also play a vital role in advocacy particularly in helping address stigma and discrimination and in drafting national legislations that addresses these issues.

International agencies bring in and share good practices that have proven to work effectively in other countries or in other similar settings. They contribute by providing normative guidance, technical assistance, resource mobilization, capacity development and in some instances, funding support. ■

HIV/AIDS

Women are vulnerable

The recent data released by STD reveals the growing threat to women of being infected with HIV/AIDS, particularly for the housewives.

By KESHAB POUDEL

"I tell them that I used to trust my husband a lot, but I was not so fortunate. My husband betrayed me and now I am infected with HIV. You cannot trust anybody. Your husband might be engaging in unsafe sex practices and taking risks in India," said Prabha Dhanuk, from Accham district. Dhanuk is not the only one who faces such a situation.

Made with the support from UNAIDS, a report documents the contribution of people living with HIV and AIDS towards achievement in Nepal of Millennium Development Goal 6 and 7, many voices like that of Dhanuk were collected.

As a district that heavily relies on remittances earn from India, Accham district is badly affected by HIV and there are many women like Dhanuk. Those women say: "Even if we try to convince our husband to use condoms, they refuse."

UNAIDS recently released a fact sheet showing that HIV is the leading cause of death and diseases among women of reproductive age 15-49 worldwide. Nepal is also vulnerable in this context. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS among women in Nepal is also rising alarmingly.

According to the data released by National Center for AIDS and STD Control in August 2011, out of 63,528 people infected with HIV, 22,019 among them are women. As recorded up to August 17, 2011, out of 18,535, 4,939 are housewives. Only 104 female clients of sex workers are infected by HIV.

This data reveals an alarming rate of HIV infections among housewives. According to UNAIDS, the number of women living with HIV in Asia, has risen from 19 percent in 2000 to 35 percent in 2008 in comparison to men. Similarly, violence against women and girls is key driver of HIV epidemic. According to report, up to 70 percent of women experience violence in their lifetime. "Country studies indicate that the risk of HIV among women, who have experienced violence, may be up to three



Women in Accham District

times higher than among those who have not. Women, who are fear or are experiencing some kind of violence, are less likely to negotiate for safe sex, go for HIV testing, share their HIV status and access treatment.

Prabha Dhanuk also reports that women who keep condoms in the house may be targets of discrimination. People will say: "What the hell are you doing keeping condoms? Do you have sex with other men?" "We need to raise awareness," she says.

Generally, women are at a greater risk of heterosexual transmission of HIV. Out of 30,155-33,142 people that are injecting drugs in Nepal it is estimated that around 1,598-1,788 among them are female. At a time when Nepal's emigration rate of male continues to rise, it increases the risk of HIV infection from husband to wife. Even the female emigration is growing and it is reportedly around 4 percent. According to recent studies, women are more vulnerable to HIV infections. Although many steps have already been taken to stabilize the HIV infections, it is yet to reach vulnerable groups of people.

There need to raise awareness about the particular vulnerabilities of women and girls to HIV infection. Recognize the fundamental human rights of women living with HIV, including sex workers, women and girls who inject drugs and those in close settings as a prison.

As Nepal has been celebrating International Women Day by organizing various programs, it is yet to see how the government will carry out a program to contain HIV infection among women. ■

Women Activists Need To Advocate To Increase The Access Of Rural Women To HIV Prevention'

BINA POKHAREL

Having a long experience working in HIV/AIDS, BINA POKHAREL Social Mobilization Advisor UNAIDS spoke to NEW SPOTLIGHT on various issues related to women and HIV/AIDS. Excerpts:

How do you see women's role in general and role of women working to prevent HIV/AIDS particular in the last two decades?

The role of women in last two decades has been remarkably changed from a passive beneficiaries of welfare programs to the active participants of the development programs, as an agent of change. Women empowerment has been recognized as the most effective instrument for poverty alleviation and given top priority in the Interim Plan too. Women Development Programs (WDP) were initiated throughout the country, in all 75 districts. As a result women are more empowered and playing diverse role from policymakers to advocates to activist enforcing the access of women to information, education, legal and health rights. Almost 33 percent of the Constituent Assembly members are women who are actively involved in constitution making process. Enactment of Domestic Violence (Control and Punishment) Act, 2009 to put an end to domestic violence, ensuring social security provision for women in general and widows/single women in particular, issuance of the citizenship certificates parenting the name of the mother are some of the key achievements in this regard.

In spite of all these gains, there remains a major challenge for these women activists and leaders to strategically relate HIV and AIDS as one of the causes and consequences directly related to gender based discrimination and violence.

Are Nepalese women still vulnerable to infection of HIV?

Yes, in fact the vulnerability of women to HIV is increasing. Although Nepal's epidemic is said to be concentrated among the most at risk groups like people who inject drug, men having sex with men, female sex workers, estimated and reported data show that more women are being infected through their husband who worked as the seasonal migrant labors in India. As of the reported infection, 1 in 4 infected is a housewife who is perceived of having no risk behavior. The increasing vulnerability of women to HIV infection is because women know less than men about how HIV is transmitted and how to prevent infection, whatever they know is often not utilized in to practice due to their low status

in the family, their relative dependency and powerlessness to refuse sex or negotiate safe sex, especially in the context of marriage and the prevailing gender related violence and discrimination.

What is your overall impression about the HIV/AIDS policy towards Nepalese women?

Nepal's response to HIV and AIDS is guided by National HIV and STI Policy 2011. The objective taken by the Policy of protecting and promoting the human rights of the infected and affected and high risk groups by addressing the negative norms and values, stigma and discrimination associated with HIV is very relevant to guide the national response with direct impact on the lives of Nepalese women. Right to basic health, Human rights and gender are the directive principles of the Policy. It emphasizes for the gender inclusive and right based programming specially for women and children infected and affected by HIV and the prevention of infection from the infected mother to her child. Overall National policy has clear guidance for the national response to address the HIV related vulnerability and risk of Nepalese women. As per the Policy guidance newly endorsed National HIV and AIDS Strategy 2011-2016 also incorporates the domestic and gender based violence as an strategic areas to be addressed in addition to gender equality and human rights issues. However the effective implementation of the national Policy and strategy remain a challenge due to the political instability. Draft HIV Bill to protect and promote the rights of people infected, affected and vulnerable groups including women is pending since long.

Despite rising literacy, violation against women continues to rise. Do you see any link between violence and HIV infections?

Violence against women has been considered as a serious concern for increasing vulnerabilities of women to HIV infection. Violence against women is both a cause and consequence of HIV infection. Research has confirmed a strong correlation between sexual and other forms of abuse against women and women's chances of contracting HIV. Use of condom (male or female) is irrelevant when a woman is being beaten and raped. Moreover, forced vaginal penetration increases the likelihood of HIV transmission. In addition, the fear of violence prevents many women from asking their partners to use condoms,

accessing HIV information, and from getting tested and seeking treatment, even when they strongly suspect they have been infected.

Many women are in danger of being beaten, abandoned or thrown out of their homes if the HIV-positive status is known. If HIV-prevention activities are to succeed, they need to occur alongside other efforts that address and reduce violence against women and girls. Considering all these facts, UN General Assembly High Level Meeting on AIDS from 8-10 June 2011 in New York adopted a Political Declaration that includes Eliminating Gender Inequality as one of the ten targets to be achieved by 2015.

How do you see the role of Nepalese women activist in HIV/AIDS campaign?

As more of the women in rural areas being infected from HIV, women leaders, activist has a great role to play in integrating HIV and AIDS issue in to the ongoing women empowerment process/programs focusing on increasing women's access to economic opportunities and resources, strengthening their capacity to capitulate traditional gender roles and increasing women's political power and presence in decision making positions as all these are indirectly reducing the HIV related risk and vulnerabilities of women. To reverse the spread of HIV, women activist must address the critical role that gender relations plays in sexual and reproductive life, and how it affects HIV prevention. They should play catalytic role in ending the Gender and social inequalities that shape people's behaviors and limit their choices through effective policies and programs. Women activists need to advocate to increase the access of rural women to HIV prevention and treatment services on sexually transmitted infection, HIV testing and counseling, prevention of mother to child transmission, Anti retro-viral treatment and opportunistic infections. Women activist need to campaign for the strengthening of the existing institutions like Ministry of Women Children and social Welfare, National Women Commission for providing the social protection and livelihood support and National Human Rights Commission for the protection and promotion of rights of women infected and affected by handling the cases of violence through the redressal mechanism. ■



“Investment On Girls Is Not As Effective As On Boys”

-SHARU JOSHI SHRESTHA

SHARU JOSHI SHRESTHA, Programme Specialist for UN Women Nepal, has been working in the sector for a quite a long time. Shrestha answered to Lara Suykerbuyk.

Nepal is one of the biggest receiver of financial aid in South Asia. Is the funding working for women?

Financial resource is one of the sectors which contribute to bring change in women and girls life. From the fourth Global Women's Conference, finance has been considered as an issue for women's development. In Paris Meeting, donor community has realized that there is a gap. In Nepal, an initiative of classification of Gender Responsive Budget and gender analysis by Ministry of Finance (MOF) and Gender Budget Audit by Ministry of Local development has been initiated. Some ministries already have initiated Gender Auditing. To assess Aid Effectiveness for women's issue UN Women has done a review of 8 donor agencies, and the major finding is financial aid is not sufficient for gender equality and women's empowerment. Therefore, MOF has started mapping funding to make donor accountable. MOF has established Aid Management Information System (AMIS), where one of the components is to report in the gender marker by the development partners (DPs), which is making DPs and government more accountable for gender equality and women's empowerment.

What are the main problems you encounter in empowering women in Nepal?

Previously Nepal concentrated on fulfilling the basic needs of women which is food, shelter and clothing. But for empowerment, we have to address their strategic needs like dignity, opportunity and status to make them equal to men. I think we have to take two major approaches; one is building their capacity, second is economic empowerment. I think we have focused mostly on awareness raising and now our Nepali women want to be economically independent. Now aggressive intervention on economic empowerment is required. Women need non-traditional trainings, soft loans, new schemes, which is yet to be done. Also we have done a lot to ensure.

Has live changed for rural woman?

Awareness level is very positive change we see on rural women, it is very

encouraging. Now rural women are not as backward as we people think. Having said that situation of rural women of different geographical region, religion, cast and ethnicity are not similar. Women in far west may suffer from HIV & AIDS's more than tarai rural women. Micro finance has reached toward many women, it has mobilized women, now they are united but it is yet only MICRO. Our rural women have yet remained in small initiatives, which will put them in the periphery of poverty, but frankly saying it has not helped women to come out from the poverty and change their life in real sense. In fact due to foreign labour migration, men are not in the rural areas and it has further burdened—— rural women with additional responsibilities.

Why are women in the rural areas still less educated as in the urban areas like Kathmandu?

Poverty, early marriage, terms of reference used to the girls that they need to go to others household, or she is responsibility of in-laws. Many still think that investment on girls is not as effective as on boys. Such prevalence of patriarchal norms establishes a concept that she would not be the bread winner of the household so, it is not necessary to educate daughters. But we have move from that traditional feelings towards a more positive scenario, however, retaining women in higher education is still a challenge.

Why is there such a gap between rural and urban women?

I guess globalization, changes and interventions of the many programmes, access to schools in nearby areas are few reasons. In rural areas, distance also makes lots of difference. In urban setting, people are aware, they have seen educated women doing good in all sectors. They are also shouldering the financial burden of the household. Also, there is fear of naming and shaming of the families which do not send their daughters to school and colleges. In fact, in urban areas, even if women earn, it is still difficult to run the families, so it has become mandatory.

The UN theme of the International Women's Day 2012 is 'Connecting Girls, inspiring futures.' What needs to be done in Nepal to connect girls? What message/advice do you want to give to girls for their future?



The 2011 Population and Housing census projected that women constitute 54 %, to make women empowered or productive human resource, we have to invest in girls. If girls get secured life they become confident human being. And confident citizen not only make their life happy and successful but also contribute to the nation development. So for the development of the country, short cut formula is to invest in girls. So making a theme of International Women's Day as connecting girls for their inspiring future is a wise vision of the global community.

There are many acts that protect women in Nepal, why is there still discrimination?

If we see policies and laws, Nepal leads in South Asia. But when it comes to implementation, it is not effective. We have budgets at every VDC's, but it is not used for real cause. Government allocated 19% budget exclusively for women. We have equality in principle, in laws but in real sense, there is yet problem in substance, in result. I mean due to all laws and policies, there is equality in opportunity but not in real life results. We just say women and men are equal to be politically correct but in reality we again maintain the same patriarchal rituals. Without addressing women's role at home, violence, their access and control over resources, decision making and justice, making wonderful law will not work. For some period of time we need conscious effort to support women in all sectors. But having said that there are many positive changes in Nepal from the perspective of gender therefore, it needs to be acknowledged. I think now we need to focus our strength on the implementation of policies and laws to sustain the gains we achieve. ■

Upper Karnali Urgency To The National Debate

By DR. AB THAPA



The 4180 MW Upper Karnali Storage Hydropower Project, which can be regarded as the world's one of the most astonishingly attractive mega-project, is the nature's fabulously wonderful gift to the people our country. Its potential to generate annually 10,000GWh firm peaking energy can accrue per annum about 1,000 million US Dollars gross benefit to our nation if the firm peaking energy is priced at US Cents 10 per unit electricity (we should understand that the firm peaking energy is priced 2 to 3 higher than the energy for base load). This project operating at a firm head almost two times greater than the 12,800 MW Karnali Chisapani Project, which is highly acclaimed as a project to generate cheap electricity, would be able to generate electricity even at far lower rate - only 2/3 (two third) of that of the latter.

The Threat

Soon our government is going to take the final decision to award this project to a foreign company to build it as a simple run-of- river project that would be able to generate annually only about 1,000 GWh firm energy at far higher generation cost irrespective of the fact whether installed capacity of that hydropower would be 300 MW or 900 MW or even higher. As a result of such decision the viability of the 4180 MW Upper Karnali Project would be ended forever because the above described two projects are mutually exclusive of one another.

The prefeasibility study of the Upper Karnali Project was carried out by a team of international consortium of consultants under the supervision of advisors from the world's energy giant company BECHTEL. The World Bank was directly involved in providing financial as well as technical support. It has been clearly explained in the prefeasibility study report of the Upper Karnali Project with the intention to warn us that the construction of this project would preclude forever the viability of the 4180 MW Upper Karnali project, which can outright be considered as one of the world's most attractive mega hydropower projects. The chief advisor from the BECHTEL for the Karnali Project Mr. Paul Terrell had even published an article in local journal HIMAL to warn us not to compromise optimum development for the sake of a quick deal, which is obviously directly related to the Upper Karnali Project. As a result, the 300 MW Upper Karnali was not considered for many years as a

project to be implemented in near future.

An Enormous Loss

Our country would forfeit the opportunity of accruing 1,000 million US Dollars gross power generation benefits as explained earlier if the run-of- river Upper Karnali Project would be implemented. The annual gross benefit of the Upper Karnali Storage Project would be about three times greater than the gross benefit to accrue from the entire production of paddy in the whole Nepal, which was considered to be about 3 million tons in a year some years back , and if calculated at a rate of about US Dollars 125 per ton.

National Debate

It is quite clear why some foreign companies would like to grab our mega projects that have enormous global significance by exploiting the weakness of our government. Is not there an urgency to the national debate on Upper Karnali since the country's greatest natural resource is at stake? Equally critical might be the bewilderment of



Karnali River

many common Nepal, who would definitely be eager to get answer why our intellectual community, planners, media and most importantly economists are not seen to be even slightly concerned when our country is going to be robbed of its vast natural wealth by greedy foreigners probably in collusion with some of our own compatriots.

Why a Jewel in the Crown?

The Karnali river makes a big loop in its lower reach near a place called Asare. From here the river flows in the south-east direction for about 25 kilometers, after that the river makes a complete reversal in its direction. The river comes back to a point just two kilometers away from its earlier position near Asare. There is a drop of about 150 meters in Karnali river bed elevations between these two positions merely two kilometers away from one another. The narrow mountain separating the two courses of the Karnali flowing in opposite direction can be

made to serve as a high dam.

There are good sites to build a high dam at the very beginning of the loop. The dam built on such site will be an addition on top of the above described natural dam. Ultimately we have a unique type of giant dam that will have all the merits of a normal type high dam enabling to generate energy at exceptionally low cost on an enormous scale.

Excerpts from Pre-feasibility Report

The World Bank supported pre-feasibility study has clearly explained that the 4180 MW Upper Karnali Storage Project and the 300 MW Upper Karnali Diversion Project are mutually exclusive. The relevant excerpt from the World Bank supported study report is presented below:

Even when assuming that the KRIA run-of-river project (it indicated the small 300 MW Upper Karnali Project) is a sunk cost, it will be seen that a single large power plant (4180 MW) associated with the major storage project is less costly than the combined cost of the smaller plant at the same location (3532 MW) and a second power plant at the foot of the storage dam (348MW) discharging directly into the KRIA run-of-river project head pond. Based on this assessment it appears that the later development of the major hydro storage project at Site KRI (4180MW Upper Karnali Storage Project) would cause the KRIA run-of-river project to be effectively discontinued. There may be limited opportunity for secondary energy generation during the periods of spillage."

Posterity will not Forgive

It is quite strange that the local people dwelling in far-flung corners and even deprived of good basic education are seen to be aware of the importance of our water resources and are showing their concern about the losses to the nation in case the Upper Karnali diversion project is implemented. They are now protesting against the government's decision, whereas various parliamentary committees, INGOs, different institutions and individuals claiming to play important role in Nepal's water resources sector, and also media are not at all been seen troubled. Posterity will never forgive us if our policy making institutions failed to intervene in time to save the 4180 MW Upper Karnali Storage Project which is indeed the JEWEL IN THE CROWN among the world's most attractive mega hydropower projects. ■



Get It Straight

By ABIJIT SHARMA

The UPA government has been caught on the wrong foot on many issues in recent times. From corruption to rising prices and from squabbling among the alliance partners to a series of foreign policy goof-ups. As elections enveloped a number of states and its woes only increased in the desperation of wresting back crucial states especially in the Hindi belt. Adding to the woes was the issue of a different kind of minorities – the gays.

When it comes to gay rights, the Government of India can't seem to get it 'straight'!

During a hearing on more than a dozen petitions filed against legalization of same sex relationship in the Supreme Court last week, a government lawyer described homosexuality as 'immoral' and an 'unnatural offense'; only to be countered by his own government later, which said it did not share the view. The goof-up happened when the lawyer, as it turned out, was presenting the government's pre-2009 stance on the issue. After the Delhi High Court's decision in 2009 to grant rights to the homosexuals, the government had softened its view and had not filed an appeal in the Supreme Court to challenge the decision. In case of an appeal by a third party, it was decided that the government would not take sides and assist the court in settling the matter.

It is quite clear that the government is trying to play safe; more so now, with state elections going on. What's hard to believe is that it has actually toned down its view and now considers homosexuality perfectly legal. In other words, the issue has just been brushed under the carpet for the present.

Homosexuality largely remains a taboo in the Indian society. Religious groups have been sternly against it and the LGBT (Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transsexual) community is widely discriminated against, some even calling homosexuality a 'disease'. Quite understandably, most of them prefer not to publicly acknowledge their sexual orientation. This brings us down to another question; can the sentiments of majority consume the rights of minority? Definitely not. Instead, it is the duty of the government to provide solace to the discriminated minority. In addition, when the right to freedom and right to life of the homosexuals' are openly flouted, the government should be providing their firm support and not remain 'neutral'.

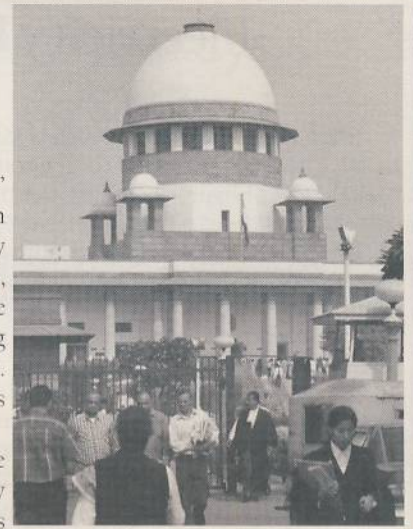
Another question that stems out while talking about the government's role is that if it has the right to legislate the personal choice of its citizens. What about the right to privacy? The problem here is the law. Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which prohibits same sex relationship has come under heat time and again. Gay rights activists have called for its modification given the fact that the IPC was made almost 150 years back, and the law needs to be changed according to the changing times. That was ultimately reflected in the Delhi High Court's order. Says Justice (ret'd.) Mukul Mudgal, "The issue was definitely within the purview of the law under Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC)". He adds, "But if the High Court's orders are to be followed, the law should not be applied

to 'consenting adults' anymore". To put it in another way, voluntary same sex relationship, do not fall under the jurisdiction of law going by the 2009 decision. But the government is far from enacting it.

Although the government is currently acting neutral, its behavior is not

enigmatic. It is highly likely that it would wake up to the issue and argue for its criminalization on grounds of morality and religion once again. In that case, question would arise if the government can be granted the right to define what's moral and what is not. The government is supposed to act as a law-enforcing agency and not a moral police. Also, calling for a ban on gay rights on religious grounds would not be wise. Ancient temples like that of Visvanatha in Khajuraho show clear traces of homosexuality. How would the government react then?

If the Indian state really comprises of an all inclusive society, then the way ahead is clear; properly implement the high court's orders irrespective of protests against it. The government needs to come out of its closet now. ■



Indian Supreme Court

दैनिक मौज्जातमा

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प्रिमियर फिनान्स कम्पनी लि.

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Electricity Bills Lost In Load Shedding

By JEEVA RAJ BUDHATHOKI



It is an irony for Nepal, which is said to have the potentiality to generate 83,000 MW of hydroelectricity, that its citizens do without power for as many as 14 hours a day. Lacking required investment and proper policies, the country now produces only about 800 MW of electricity. Without foreign investment, we don't seem like we can get rid of such a perennial problem.

In this context, two things are important for discussion here. The first is about the provisions in the Electricity Bill, 2009 and Electricity Regulation Commission Bill, 2009. They had been brought to the Parliament on 27 March, 2009. The second one is the delay in passing these bills.

Under the provisions of the Electricity Bill, 2009, license holding is the main issue and it is compulsory for the purpose of production, supply, distribution and commercialization of electricity and survey or physical studies of such purposes. For this purpose, a person can apply for the license of a project of less than 100KW and only an organized company is permitted to develop bigger projects. However, no license is needed for less than 3MW projects. Approval from designated authority will be sufficient for the small schemes.

Periods of license validity are maximum 5 years for survey, 35 years for production and maximum 25 years for supply, distribution and commercialization. Except for the production license, all others are renewable. Besides this, provisions also relate to selling, handing over and dismissing licenses. This Bill has opened the ways to invest in hydropower for national or foreign, public or private, single or joint venture companies. The investors will be exempted from VAT on import and export of the equipments used for the hydropower projects throughout the construction period. The foreign advisers and workers will get the facilities for customs duty, free visa, foreign currency exchange besides other things provided by the statute. The conditions of exempting tax and other facilities will be constant during the validation of license. If electricity is produced for commercial purpose within 13 April, 2019, income tax for seven years will be waived and for another 3 years,

only half the income tax will be imposed.

Nepal government can provide subsidies for electricity production in Rural Areas for up to 1000KW Projects. The government will also provide 12% of the royalty for the related district development committee and 38% for the other district development committees of that Region from where the government gets the royalty. This bill has also guaranteed not to nationalize property possessed by the investors. The government will help to displace anybody from his land or property, if that is needed in the course of establishing projects. But such persons should reasonably be compensated. Nepal government has secured the right on itself for producing and developing electricity and making contract with other license holders for this purpose.

The second aspect has to do with the delay in passing these bills. Among the causes, the first one is technical, in which, section wise discussion of all bills have taken place only in the legislative committee, with the legislative function of the Parliament.

Electric energy has been regarded as the prioritized industry and facilities have been provided accordingly. There is also a provision of one window facility provider committee which will provide all facilities from one window for the establishment of projects coordinating the whole different institutions and organizations of the government.

Similarly, the Electricity Regulation Commission Bill, 2009 has been brought simultaneously to complement the electricity bill and to establish a commission to regularize the electricity bill. The main functions of the commission are fixing fees, technical managements, preserving the interests of consumers, organizational capability building, recommendation and suggestion for policy making, monitoring and supervision and settlements of disputes.

The second aspect has to do with the delay in passing these bills. Among the causes, the first one is technical, in which, section wise discussion of all bills have taken place only in the legislative committee, with the legislative function of the Parliament. So, there seems to be some workload that a lot of bills are pending in the committee. To some

extent, the transitional period and unstable governments are also responsible for this. Four ministers have been changed since the bills were introduced in the parliament.

The main problem seems to have been debates on several issues, for example, 142 amendments, most of them related to institutional or procedural provisions. The core policy based debates comprise these questions. What is the electricity production for service or commercialization? What should be the policy, functions and roles of the government about involvement in production and development of electricity and hydropower? To what extent, should the rights of hydropower resources be vested in the local communities? To what extent, should the private sector and local level communities be involved in this sector? Is Parliament's consent needed or not in establishing Hydropower Projects near National Borders with a view to other sensitivities? These issues are mainly causing the delay in making decisions.

However, these bills are very important for economic development and growth and to relieve people from the power load shedding. The electricity bill introduced into the House, in its original form, seems liberal and based on market economy. To some extent, it looks friendly towards attracting foreign investment. Many private companies or NGOs are looking forward to its approval soon. Local communities are also interested because they have a role in taking decisions and running community based projects.

In conclusion, discussions in the committee have been going on for a long time but no decision has been reached yet. The Committee and its subcommittee have met for 11 and 8 times respectively within 3 years since the bills were submitted to the Parliament. Issues coming to the parliament are always debatable but it is necessary to develop a mechanism for consensus. The Parliament has the prerogative to amend bills but it had better taken decisions in reasonable times for the good of everyone.

Budhathoki is under-secretary at Constituent Assembly Secretariat.

India Needs To Introspect On Nepal Policy – Analysis

By DR D.N.S.DHAKAL AND DR. S.CHANDRASEKHARAN

Nobody needs an explanation about the intricate relationship between India and Nepal. The two countries are tied together by culture, religion, common heritage and geography.

Nepal was the only Hindu country until recently. Lord Rama from Aaudhya (India) married Sita from Janakpur (Nepal); Lord Buddha was born in Lumbini (Nepal) but received enlightenment in Gaya (India); and Nepal contributes as much as 40% of the flows in the Ganges, which is sacred, and a lifeline to Indian civilization.

Politicians, diplomats and even intellectuals seem to have lost track about the vision of India-Nepal relationship. The relationship between India and Nepal is immortal; no politicians or policymakers have the capacity to shatter it.

Nepal insists upon the need to revise the Indo-Nepal treaty of 1950. On the contrary, India believes that the revision would hurt a common Nepalese who, under the treaty, enjoys the right to live, seek employment, conduct businesses or own properties in India. Economic benefits to the Nepalese would increase as India becomes richer.

What is needed now is to set aside any ticklish issues and focus on what is needed and deliverable. Nepal needs Indian assistance to complete the peace process, inputs for re-writing the constitution, and rebuilding the economy devastated by a decade long civil-war.

India - Nepal Relations

India is no more a poor country. Its gross domestic product is inching to USD 2 trillion; its foreign currency reserve has passed USD 700 billion. India is the world's IT power house, and one-third of its plus billion people have per capita income of over USD 4,000. India has access to financial resources now which it did not have before.

The rise in economic and diplomatic

influence is not matched by its initiative to reach out to its immediate neighbors. Having a strategic partnership with developed and developing countries elsewhere will not pay high dividends in the long-run if India continues to lose ground in its neighborhood. The shifting world's economic and military power base to Asia is catching attention of Nepal, which shares a long border between the emerging economic and military superpowers: China and India.

Nepal needs investment to develop its infrastructures. The districts in the hills and mountains are not connected with roads. Millions of Nepalese today

in these regions are enormous; economic developments of these regions are mutually beneficial given the proximity of India's major consumption centers to north India.

Such a comprehensive development plan strategy would yield visible results. Visible results are necessary to manage trust deficits. A master plan with investment outlay of plus USD 20 billion would transform the western Nepal into a vibrant economic region, not only will transform the life of millions of poor Nepalese in the remote areas, but also give the north Indians access to sustainable supply of water, electricity, fruits, off-season vegetables and tourism resources.

India has the resources, and it is in its long-term interest to pursue this idea. What it needs to do is to establish a mechanism

India has an opportunity now to demonstrate its stewardship for growth and development in Nepal. Nepal needs comprehensive development plans: from agriculture to infrastructure, primary schools to primary care hospitals, and from hydropower to industries. No other regions in Nepal need immediate attention than Far-West and Mid-West regions.

are deprived of access to medical facilities because they have to travel on foot for days, if not for weeks, to reach to a nearest hospital. Millions of Nepalese today reel under unprecedented power cuts when its fast flowing rivers have potential to generate over 240 billion kWh of electricity. Some 20 plus districts in the Far-West and Mid-West Nepal are declared severely food deficit districts when technology and resources are available in India to produce food surplus. The situation insults the modern achievements in science and technology in India, and exposes lack of visionary thinking in the political class.

India has an opportunity now to demonstrate its stewardship for growth and development in Nepal. Nepal needs comprehensive development plans: from agriculture to infrastructure, primary schools to primary care hospitals, and from hydropower to industries. No other regions in Nepal need immediate attention than Far-West and Mid-West regions. Water resource developments

to manage the deepening trust deficit between Nepal and India, and take onboard Nepalese professionals and intellectuals in planning and implementation of such a massive, comprehensive development program. It requires the backing of the political class in India, a task force steered by development specialists and security experts, and networking in Kathmandu to market the idea across the political spectrum. It warrants a process with strategies and deadlines.

The emerging Asian political theatre requires creative thinking and receptive of new ideas. We all wish that India take comprehensive development initiative in Nepal, and keep away from the populist trend of distributing library books, ambulances and scholarships. India needs to revisit its Nepal policy; political, cultural and professional inputs are the need of the hour.

Dr Dhakal is a senior fellow at Duke Center for International Development, Duke University, USA

<http://www.curasiareview.com>



Cancer Hospital Bharatpur

Cancer Worry

The number of cancer patients is rapidly increasing, but many of them do not receive treatment.

By UMA KANTA KHANAL in Jhapa

"When my youngest son was born, my menstruation cycle discontinued and I started having difficulties in the uterus," Goma Thapa, 55, a victim of uterus cancer from Sanischare-2, Jhapa, shared her pathetic condition, sobbing.

Her husband was a public health employee. Even then, the treatment process was not easy for her. When her daughter took her to B. P. Koirala Institute of Health Sciences, Dharan, she was told by the doctors about her uterus cancer. She had to spend nearly six months in the B. P. Koirala Cancer Hospital, Bharatpur, during different phases of her treatment.

Goma's husband also had a bitter experience at the time of his wife's treatment in the hospital. "If I were not a staff of public health, it would have been much difficult for me to save my wife."

Dil Maya Limbu of Sanischare-2, Jhapa, also became a patient of breast cancer four years ago. She was taken to Kolkata for treatment thanks to her son, who is a staff of Indian Army. She said, "I

have got good treatment because of my family."

Doctors have said that she is now all right.

As no authentic figures about cancer patients are available, many speculations put the number at more than sixty thousand people in Nepal. According to doctors, more than seventy percent of the victims are deprived of getting proper treatment of cancer.

Doctors say more than twenty thousand people die of the disease yearly.

More than two dozen people are living with cancer in Sanischare-Arjundhara village of a kilometer area. Some of the victims have died of it.

In Nepal, Bhaktapur cancer hospital and B.P. Koirala Cancer hospital, Bharatpur, Chitwan are the two hospitals for the treatment of the disease. But the people residing in the rural and remote areas do not have access to these hospitals.

"The occurrence of cancer in the

human body has become dangerous problem now a days," the spokesperson of the Health Ministry said, "The communicable diseases are in the phase of eradication and control but the non communicable diseases like cancer are emerging as serious problems these days."

The victims of cancer say the hospitals do not provide enough services at the treatment of the disease. The victims, some of whom have already gone through several phases of their treatment have bitter experiences.

The cancer mostly occurs in the human body because of the habit of consuming unwanted things that harm the normal functions of the body. The persons who have the habit of chewing tobacco, who are alcoholic, and who are chain smokers have much risk of getting cancer, according to the physicians.

A consultant physician of Mechi Zonal Hospital, Dr. Pitamber Thakur said, "If any lump of muscle appears in any part of the body and the patient goes to the hospital for the treatment, it can be cured by the simple surgery. But, if the case becomes matured, it would be very problematic."

According to the physicians, the females are at a higher risk of breast and uterus cancer. They say when the women have sexually transmitted diseases, the women have numerous babies, and they have premature sexual relationship, have high risk of breast and uterus cancer.

Cancer is treated through chemotherapy, radiation therapy and surgery. Although the disease is treated through the different therapies, the treatment is much expensive for ordinary people. Goma Thapa's expenses in the treatment reached more than thirty lakh rupees which is not possible for the people of rural or remote areas.

The government's aid to the patients of cancer is not sufficient, the patients say. They get fifty thousand rupees after the submission of all documents to the health ministry. The health ministry recommends to the finance ministry for the aid. The spokesperson of Health Ministry said, "The treatment of cancer is going on as per the capacity of the state. But the state should extend its capacity for the victims of the disease." ■

BOOK

The Khasas of Nepal

By SHIRSHAK GHIMIRE

Identity is a fluid concept. There are no clear cut definitions or boundaries. Every person belongs to a minority in his own way. But politics of identity have found its roots in the country and flourished.

This booklet *Nepalka Khas Jati* [*The Khas People of Nepal*] authored by Dr. Bipin Adhikari provides a brief but illuminating insight into the long history of the Khas people namely the Chhetri, Bahun, Kami, Thakuri, Sarki, Sanyasi, Badi, Damai, Gharti Gaine and others, and their identity.

The author is not a historian by profession. Yet, this booklet provides a straightforward account of its subject matter based on almost all available historical sources. The significance of this work, however, lies in its attempts at debunking several myths and inaccurate perceptions about this ethnic group considered to be the dominant one in the multi-cultural country of Nepal. It has come to publication at a very relevant time, considering the current socio-political situation of the nation, where identity politics is almost paralyzing the country. This book cites many national and international reference materials including seminal works on Nepal's history written by noted scholars in the same pursuit. The net argument of the author is that the Khas people are as much indigenous to this country as the Kirant people, and there is little evidence to show who the first settlers out of these two communities are.

The first major contention of the author, who is a renowned constitutional expert of Nepal, is that the Khas people have lived in the Himalayan foothills for several millennia in an area stretching from Kashmir to Bhutan. The author has cited several sources in claiming that the Khas people were the early Caucasians who migrated into the Himalayas from Eurasia, at least over three thousand five hundred years ago. In doing so the author intends to debunk the popular perception that the Khas people had come over to the areas currently in Nepal to escape the Muslim invasion of India in the 10th to 12th century. He asserts that there is no tangible record or evidence supporting this theory.

Dr Adhikari has analysed plenty of references to prove his contention. Based on these references, he depicts the Khas and the Kirantis as two earliest tribes to settle in the Himalayan foothills. The epic Mahabharat is cited to show that the Khas and the Kirantis

had participated in that war, fighting alongside the Kauravas. Several ancient scriptures discussed by the author also seem to suggest Khas people as historically non-Hindus and thus "impure" people in the eyes of devout Hindus in the plains of the South Asia.

The second major contention of the author is that there is a strong distinction between the Khas people and the Vedic Aryan people. He puts forth a bold claim that the arrival of the Khas people preceded the Aryan invasion of India. It is thus asserted that the Khas people arrived along the Hindu-Kush and Himalayan range as a nomadic race and settled in the foothills. This is in contrast to the Aryans who settled in the fertile plains of Punjab and further south, along the Indo-Gangetic plains. The author cites several cultural differences between the Vedic Aryans and the Khas, showing that the early culture of the Khas people was more compatible to that of the local tribal cultures. It is amazing to note the analytical, social anthropological skills of the author in this regard.

An important question that arises is - how and why did the Khas people adopt the cultural practices and societal structures of the Hindus? The author writes that the Khas people were in contact with both the Buddhist and Hindu faiths. So the Khas people started off with coating their own practices with Hindu faith but the Hindu influence continued to increase. The author cites an old practice of the Khas people of keeping a "Masta" (similar to a clan deity or "kuldeuta") devoid of any form or idol. Such cultural practices were assimilated into the broader Hindu culture once the rulers started following Hindu traditions and claiming lineage from the influential old Kshatriya clans in the plains. It was basically done to get the recognition of the several powerful kingdoms in the plains.

The author maps the journey of the Khas people from a nomadic tribe to the Sanskritised dominant group of Nepal (although he does not use the word Sanskritization anywhere in the text. As it is known the Khas people have had a major contribution in the formation of Nepal. The turning point in Khas ethnicity as pointed by this booklet arrived due to the level of prestige attached to having Vedic/Aryan heritage which caused the Sanskritised rulers to abandon their true Khas ethnicity. This according to the book seems to have trickled down to the public who sought new



Bipin Adhikari,
Nepalka Khas Jati
(Biratnagar: New Nepal Research Centre, 2068/2011) (in Nepali)

roles in accordance with the Varna system. The enactment of the Muluki Ain by Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana in 1854 helped the social reorganization under Hindu norms. The author has pointed out that in spite of the Sanskritization, the hill dwelling Khas people with the rare exception of the Shah and Rana rulers, have avoided inter-marriage with their Hindu counterparts from the plains.

The book has attempted to gather a fresh outlook on the ethnic relations in Nepal. It is written that the Khas people were in contact with many of the other ethnic groups existing in Nepal but maintained a close association with the Magars and both the ethnic groups have many common characteristics. Similarly the usage of Khas language (now known as Nepali) is claimed to have been the common inter-ethnic mode of communication used even by the Malla Kings of Kathmandu valley.

Overall this book takes the focus away from the history of the Kathmandu valley which dominates most of the academic exercises regarding the history of Nepal. Hopefully this work will facilitate new discussions with regard to the ethno-cultural history of Nepal that will help dispel misconceptions and have a positive impact upon the current socio-political trends.

Despite its sharp analysis and presentation, the booklet is still a difficult reading for people who have limited understanding of Nepal's history. Its references at times look like short hand expression for people already familiar of Nepal's archives and records. The author can consider further elaborating his work giving it the shape of a full-fledged book.

Nevertheless, it is still an important piece of work. It can make any ethno-activist community which claims indigenous status to it at the cost of Khasas shy of its claim. Although the author does not make the comparison, the Khasas may have much claim for such a status than any other group in Nepal who arrived to settle in this land a couple of millenniums later than the Khas people. ■

Got Something To Say?

BY ADITI ARYAL



I strictly follow this columnist every week. More than being a vibrant and an inspiring writer, she is bold enough to speak her heart out and let the world hear it. With that, she can convince what she says effortlessly. But, sadly, not this time. Had she not contradicted what she herself said the last time, it could have deserved some pondering.

This is one instance which makes us fellow readers judge how the writers in people say things rather than what they say. To throw some light on what actually happened this time, as a sequel to her last writing, she merely contradicted her previous one, providing an insight into 'so much' of her thought about it and thus came up with alternative theories about the same.

In case of a writer as successful as she, she was lucky to have some more to write upon. More importantly, she was the luckiest because she could write! I imagine a situation where somebody had given the same speech and during the immediate session, apologized and gave up alternative theories saying he just decided to give it more thought.

Ever since early days, we have been reminded to watch our words. Leaving apart racist or sexist comments, the school days were where we could not speak out of turn and emphasize the same. To give it some thought, we also have been careful what to say, because most of us have feared speaking out the wrong answer believing it to cause embarrassment and make a subject of mockery.

Like most people call it *courtesy*, we hold on to our words and do not directly tell people what we want to. As elders put it, one of the four things that do not come back happens to be the spoken word. What is once said is said and cannot be undone. That probably explains why our early speeches were monitored stringently.

We are not unaware of how big shots have been held down for saying things they were not supposed to. Some, like words by the former US president have been compiled into books. Given any opportunity, he would not be able to call off his reputation. Just a Google search and dozens of other celebrities fall on the same track. Despite making international fools out of themselves they have personalized how important it is to know what you are speaking. While many do ward it off as 'publicity stunts' in today's time, we can still judge their ways of publicizing themselves.

Talking about people in the real world, we cannot take back what once is said. Apologizing does help, but definitely takes time. Time may heal the harsh wounds, but the scars are there to stay. This is where all our childhood socialization fits in. Not only should we maintain our habit of not speaking out of turn, but be careful enough to value our words and not in any way give out the wrong answer. The strict surveillance does not mean we do not at all speak what we have to but it definitely means to weigh our words. Giving it a more clever approach, we could play with words, giving it a sweeter touch.

And with it, come Plato and his famous line, 'Wise men speak because they have something to say, fools because they have to say something.' ■

Sathi Ma Timroo

Kajal films presents "Sathi Ma Timroo" as their 5th venture movie with "Bhuwan K.C" in the lead role, introducing his son Anmol K.C for the first time on screen

Release Date: 02-Mar-2012, Length: 2 hours Genres: Family

Director: Shiva Regmi Cast: Bhuwan K.C, Rekha Thapa, Richa Ghimire, Shirshak Sapkota, Anmol K.C



London Paris New York

London Paris New York is a film that captures the angst of the twenties, the most dramatic period of one's life - when you have to find a career, you have your first significant relationship and most importantly form your identity in this world.

Release Date: 02-Mar-2012, Length: 1 hour 40 minutes Genres: Comedy, Romance

Director: Anu Menon Cast: Ali Zaffar, Aditi Rao Hydari



Paan Singh Tomar

Paan Singh was a small town lad who went on to win the steeplechase at the Indian National Games for seven consecutive years. He broke the national record, a feat that was unsurpassed for 10 years!

Release Date: 02-Mar-2012, Length: 2 hours 12 minutes Genres: Crime Director: Tigmanshu Dhulia Cast: Irrfan Khan, Vipin Sharma, Imran Hashmi, Nawazuddin Siddiqui, Mahie Gill



The Artist

Outside a movie premiere, enthusiastic fan Peppy Miller literally bumps into the swashbuckling hero of the silent film, George Valentin.

Release Date: 02-Mar-2012, Length: 1 hour 40 minutes Genres: Comedy, Drama, Romance Director: Michel Hazanavicius Cast: Jean Dujardin, Berenice Bejo, John Goodman



Kahaani

Vidya Bagchi arrives in Kolkata from London to find her missing husband. Seven month pregnant and alone in a festive city, she begins a relentless search for her husband. With nothing to rely on except fragment from her memories about him, all clues seem to reach a dead end when everyone tries to convince Vidya that her husband does not exist. She slowly realizes that nothing is what it seems. In a city soaked in lies, Vidya is determined to unravel the truth about her husband - for herself and her unborn child even at the cost her own life.

Release Date: 09-Mar-2012, Length: 1 hour 30 minutes Genres: Drama, Thriller

Courtesy: www.qfxcinemas.com/ComingSoon.aspx





SHREE SHANTI VARSHA ANGREJI MADHYAMIK VIDYALAYA

Where Quality Counts

Shantibarsha English Boarding School has proved that a school can impart quality education even if it is far away from the capital

By A CORRESPONDENT

Shree Shantibarsha English Boarding High School has proved that it does not have to be a school in the capital to produce good students and impart quality education. In its twenty-five years' long history, Shree Shantibarsha English Boarding School has produced more than hundreds of students, who later went to serve in the medicine, engineering and other sectors.

"More than two dozens of our students are now medical doctors. Similar numbers of students are engineers. There

are many others of the school who are now working in other sectors. Established 25 years ago by an educational enthusiastic in Damauli, 100 kilometers west of capital Kathmandu, the school has changed the entire education table of Tanahu," said Damberdev Kaini.

Although the school faced the darkest period during the Maoist insurgency, it has been able to regain its past glory.

"Our school has achieved much

success in Tanahu district by establishing itself as one of the best schools in western Nepal," said Brisharaj Shrestha, chairman of the School Management Committee.

Attending as the chief guest at the school function, former

education minister Govinda Raj Joshi underlined the need to promote the private sector in education. "The duty of the government is to work just as the regulator," said Joshi. "Santibarsha English Boarding School has shown how public and private investment can thrive in education."

With over 1500 students, the school has its fame and prestige in Tanahu. It is the only private school producing such a large number of quality students in a short span of time. "We are encouraging the teachers to be stakeholders.

Despite competition, the school is thriving in Damauli. With its own building and committed teachers and enthusiastic guardians, the school is making a difference in the region. Run by local teachers and local parents, the school has proved that quality is the matter. ■

NATURE

Death Of Dolphin

The District Development Committee's decision to allow the rivers for fishing has put endangered Dolphins under threat

By UMID BAGCHUND in Dhangadhi

The endangered Dolphin in Mohana River in Kailali district is now under threat as the District Development Committee has already awarded a tender for a fishing group to fish in Mohana River and its surrounding waters.

Dolphins are known for their sophistication but their number is on a decline in the far western region. As soon as the fisherman start fishing in the river, it is almost certain that remaining dolphins will be disappearing soon.

Although conservationists from Kailali district have opposed the move, the DDC claims that it is necessary to

generate resources. Dolphins are found in Mohana, Patharaiya, Kada and Karnali River of far western region. Although Dolphin is in the protected animal list, the government is yet to carry out programs to protect them.

According to experts, the dolphin fish migrated to Mohana River from Karnali River. Kailas Lamsal of Western Terai Arch Land Project stressed the need to protect Dolphins through coordination among various stakeholders. The project has been supporting Dolphin conservation in Kailali district.



According to District Development Officer Gokarna Prasad Sharma, it is village development committees which are issuing fishing tenders to private fishing groups.

"DDC has done nothing in this regard," said Sharma.

Along with fishermen on the Nepalese side of the border, Indian fishermen are also killing dolphins.

If this continues, the species will be disappearing soon. ■

“I Value Honesty & Punctuality”

GOPAL PARSAD BANSKOTA

GOPAL PARSAD BANSKOTA, a name that only a few of us have heard of, is one such teacher who has made a difference in the lives of many of his students. He has also been recognized with various honors and awards for his outstanding contribution to Ratna Rajya School. He was born in a family of five brothers. His father passed away when he was an infant. His four brothers have been mentors, guides and strength for him since then. Being the youngest among the five, he was showered with a lot of love. He revealed during the course of his interview that the only reason he got educated was because of his elder brothers. Banskota now spends most his time home. He has gone through various health complications and says that the only thing that motivates him and gives him the strength to fight the illness is the love and affection that he receives from his family members. Banskota spoke to **SHRADHA GYAWALI**. Excerpts:

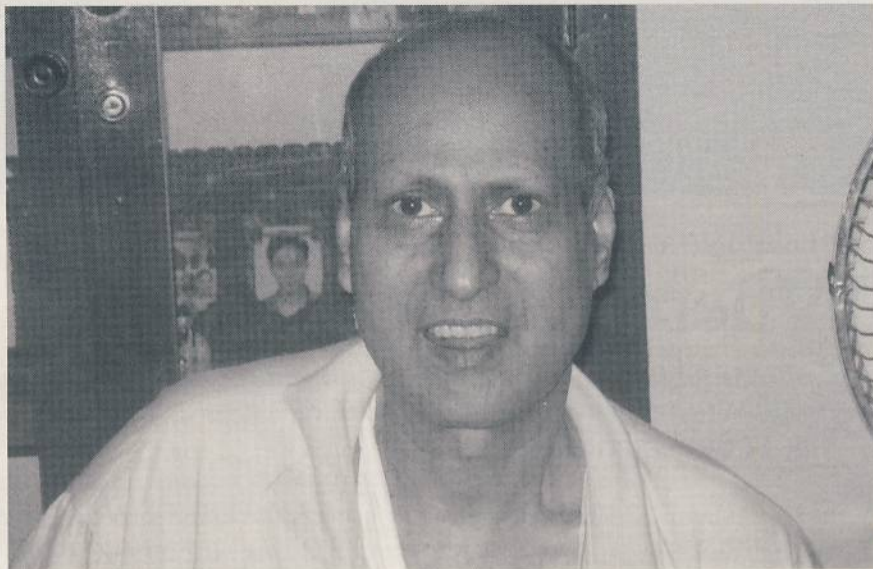
How is the world today different from what it was when you were a child?

There is a huge difference! The living standard of individuals, social relationships, exposure, everything is different from what it used to be in the past. People are now money oriented than they were before. There has been a change in family relationships too. People today are not working hard to succeed but rather to compete.

Of all the things you learnt from your elders; what do you think was most valuable?

Honesty and punctuality. I was always taught that one should be honest in every situation, no matter what. This lesson that I learnt as a child has helped me tremendously. To this day in my life I have never cheated or lied to anyone. Punctuality, on the other hand has been my strength. It has not only facilitated me to achieve what I worked for but it also helped me to set an example for my fellow students.

Over your experience, how have you seen the education system in Nepal evolve?



When I started working first there were no such things as student associations. Today, education has become a kind of politics in itself. Things have changed now. Teachers are not respected as much. There is indiscipline, which wasn't the case before. As part of the education system myself, I feel brokenhearted to see how the system has been degrading over time.

What accomplishments are you most proud of?

I always wanted to teach. Being able to teach, and at the same time succeed as a teacher has made me really proud. The day my student received a 92% in the SLC Examination, I felt gratified, my happiness had no limits. Not only this, I also sense a great pleasure on having dedicated my life to educating the less privileged children of our society.

How do you see the growth of education system in Nepal both in school and higher up in the technical level, like in the medical and engineering colleges?

Schools and colleges have been mushrooming. Every time you switch on the television all you see is advertisements of colleges and schools. Education has become a business rather than being a service. We should stop making profits out of education. I think the government should start controlling

and should start putting an upper limit to the number of schools and college that open up. Not only that the government should also evaluate the colleges and schools on certain parameters/ standards to ensure that the education sector is good and valuable for the students.

No one can put in words the definition of life as you can, hence how do you define life?

Life itself is a complex word and cannot be defined or put in words. To me, it's the things you achieve or the hard work and effort you put in to achieve those things that define life or at least give an essence to your existence. ■

NEW SPOTLIGHT

NEWMAGAZINE

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“The Demand Of Apollo Tire Is Good In Nepal”

-By SATISH SHARMA

Satish Sharma guides all aspects of Apollo's largest and most crucial market - India. Prior to this he was Chief of Marketing, where he is credited with Apollo's steady sales growth year-on-year at a CAGR of 18%+. Known for his innovative marketing initiatives, leadership qualities and for having instituted systems and processes which have enabled Apollo to achieve and build upon its market leadership. Shama recently visited Kathmandu to launch Apollo tires. He spoke with a group of journalist about Apollo Tires in Nepal. Excerpts:

How do you see the prospect of Apollo Tires in Nepal?

I think the broad portfolio which we have is in close synergy to the bane of the Nepalese market. Nepalese markets expand it very naturally between the two countries. Ongoing synergy and more importantly the portfolio we have help to make substantial differences in Nepalese market. It is not that the Apollo is not an unknown brand in Nepalese market so our equity is ahead of us. It is natural things for us to establish the operation to expand market in Nepal. Nepal is also growing up and there are huge demands of tire. There is potential to expand.

What is the position of the Apollo tire in Nepal?

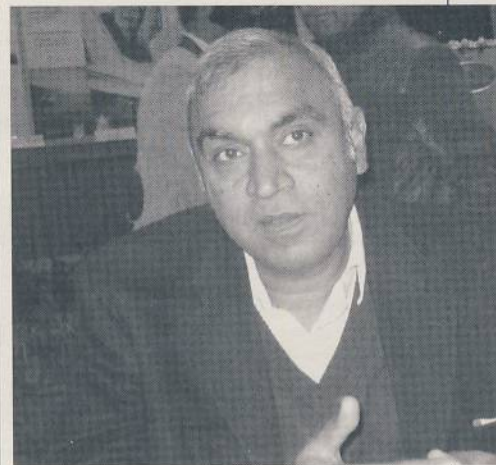
The demand of our tire is good in Nepal. I can say that many companies are now ahead of us. We are just starting seriously now. We would be rights of the top three years from now. Nepal is important country for us. Although we have to compete with many other tires, Apollo will establish itself in Nepal because of our quality product. Our products are superior to any other products. We are largest producers of tires in India and other largest producers of mini truck and number two producers of other tire products. It will not happen without acknowledgement of customers. As other too are doing well and it is going to be tough for us. Opening a service center in Kathmandu is first step. We want to be a major player in Nepal.

Do you think your company will make differences?

It is not easy and it is not necessary to be first to do things. You may hear the story of tortoise and hare. It is not necessary that it is always have to be first. There are many companies in India which started the production of tire many times back but now we are ahead of many products than some old companies. It is also matter of timing and companies priorities which make differences. We are hurry to come and do a good job here in Nepalese market.

What is your impression?

I am here to opening the Apollo point and which will be very good and modern format. Apollo is a global company and we export our tire to Europe, South Africa and East Asian countries. We have to do a lot of education and we have a lot of customer contact programs. We are thinking of a lot to do in Nepal. Our presence of a big team in Nepal in the



inaugural of Apollo Point exhibits the importance given by us. It is not that people will start to buy our product from tomorrow. As I have told you it will take time to firmly establish in Nepalese market. I am confidence that we can do it. I am sure that one year down the line, we will be stronger. Three years down the line we will be in leading position. ■

आफ्नो अधिकार प्रयोग गर्दा
अरुको अधिकारप्रति सजग
र सचेत हुनु असल
नागरिकको कर्तव्य हो ।



नेपाल सरकार
सूचना तथा सञ्चार मन्त्रालय
सूचना विभाग

Nepal's Health

-By BUDDHA BASNYAT, MD



In these days of political doom and gloom, there is welcome news about Nepal's health indicators. For sure there is tremendous room for improvement, but the World Bank's (www.Data.worldbank.org) health assessment of Nepal gives something to cheer about. This news has been unexpected but very welcome.

As the table shows, even though Nepal's gross national income (GNI) is three times lower than India's, Nepal's health indicators have surpassed India's when the opposite was true a few decades ago. In 1990 Nepal was behind in every development indicator; this phenomenal improvement appears almost paradoxical, given that Nepal is the poorest amongst the neighboring countries being compared. (The fact that there are some measurable indices to compare data and base these reports is reassuring as political "guff" is very cheap and profuse). What could have accounted for this improvement?

The government's health programmes and international and national NGO's will be quick to claim credit, but perhaps the contribution from hard-earned remittance sent directly to their families in village Nepal by self-sacrificing Nepalis doing menial jobs abroad may well be significant. This remittance may not be factored in the calculation of the abysmal gross national

income for Nepal. The improved health indices data is also in keeping with the recent finding (albeit, controversial) that Nepal's poverty level may have fallen by about 15%. Levels of poverty and health indices are in general correlated.

Although Bangladesh with somewhat similar GNI outpaces us in most of the categories, clearly Nepal appears to be the most improved player on the block. There is no question that there are plenty of lessons that Nepal can learn in the

	SOUTH ASIA				
	INDIA	PAKISTAN	NEPAL	SRI LANKA	BANGLADESH
GNI per capita (PPP, current Int. \$)	1990 297	543	1,200	11	1,210
2012 1,560	1,020	4,950	1,200	2,280	5,500
Life expectancy at birth (years)	1990 56	54	54	43	48
2012 68	67	67	67	67	74
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	1990 83	89	95	97	96
2012 48	35	44	41	70	34
Under-5 mortality rate	1990 113	163	135	141	124
2012 68	48	56	50	87	37
Maternal Mortality Ratio	1990 970	870	900	870	900
2012 230	300	200	300	240	19
Total fertility rate (children per woman)	1990 5.9	4.3	5.2	5.2	5.0
2012 2.7	2.3	2.5	2.0	3.5	2.3
Access to improved sanitation (%)	1990 15	19	11	38	75
2012 31	33	65	31	65	91
Infant immunisation (DTP, %)	1990 39	84	38	41	66
2012 46	94	56	82	80	85
Infant immunisation (measles, %)	1990 27	82	22	37	59
2012 71	95	57	80	52	91

field of health from the smart Bangladeshi people. Sri Lanka and China are way ahead of us, and in the coming years we need to strive to reach their level. It will be hard to come close to Sri Lanka and China. Sri Lanka spent tremendous amounts of money after independence on women's education and public health and certainly they are

drawing rich dividends now as a result of their health policy that they enacted decades ago. We clearly need to emphasize the importance of public health even so that in the years to come we will be where Sri Lanka is now.

Besides GNI, there is however one area where we fare very poorly, as is depicted by the highest level of maternal mortality ratio in comparison to the other neighboring countries. The high maternal mortality in village Nepal is a heart-rending tragedy that is enacted with an uncomfortable regularity. There is supporting data which reveals that each week there are 42 Nepalese women that die in childbirth. Mark Zimmerman MD, a captivating raconteur and the executive director of the Lalitpur-based Nick Simon's Institute expresses the beginning of this tragedy vividly: "In her home high in the mountains of western Nepal, a woman goes into labour to deliver her first child. She does it the same way that her mother did and her grandmother before her: on the floor, with only a relative to help". And sure enough, complications ensue.

With the newly-trained, more competent, and dedicated skilled birth attendants working in the hills of village Nepal today, hopefully the next World Bank's assessment will be much improved in the area of maternal mortality ratio too.

CNI MEET

Gujarati Lessons

Narendra Modi, Chief Minister of the Indian state of Gujarat, will be speaking at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI) as the key-note speaker at a program scheduled for the last week of March.

The AGM is being organized with the theme of 'Investment and Economic Transformation' where Modi is expected to share his experience regarding economic growth.

According to CNI, the visit is being organized hoping to find a new way towards the country's economic prosperity and change.

Modi is also scheduled to have talks with Nepali politicians and policymakers during his stay in Nepal.

Gujarat has become an investment destination for both foreign and domestic investors for some time now and is leaving all other Indian states behind in terms of economic prosperity. The western Indian state

is the fastest growing economic state of India with a double digit economic growth rate.

So, at a time when Nepal is preparing for Nepal Investment Year 2012/13 and seeking to embark on the path of economic progress, the visit holds a much higher importance as there can be a lot of things to learn from Modi and Gujarat.

President of CNI and chairman of Chaudhary Group Binod Chaudhary, who has been playing a significant role in Nepal's economic development, is the main personality behind this upcoming program. CNI has also been actively looking for new initiatives to bring the country's economy on the right track.

According to Chaudhary, the sharing of experiences by Chief Minister Modi, the architect of modern Gujarat, on economic transformation would help sketch plans for economic development of the country and help concretize them for the future.



Gujarat's Chief Minister Modi

"The exchange and sharing of the experiences of Modi with our political leaders, bureaucrats, businessmen, industrialists and other authorities concerned will be encouraging and helpful in our effort to build a New Nepal," said Chaudhary.

Along with the Industrial development, Gujarat has also shined in terms of infrastructural development. In a 2011 report, The Economist noted that Gujarat's infrastructure competes with Guangdong of China.

So, the most important lesson to learn from Gujarat is the linkage between power supply, good development policy, political stability and economic growth. If you have the former three, then investments will pour in and economic prosperity can be attained.

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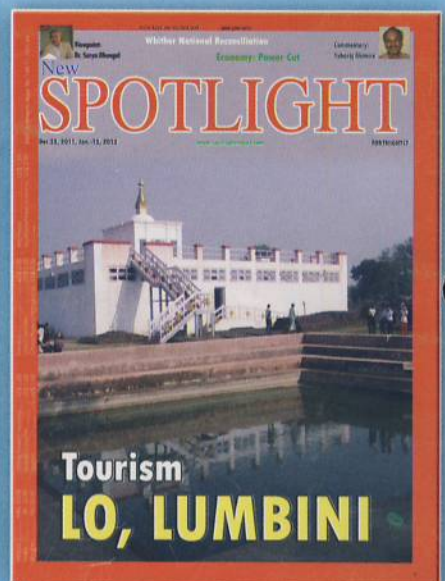
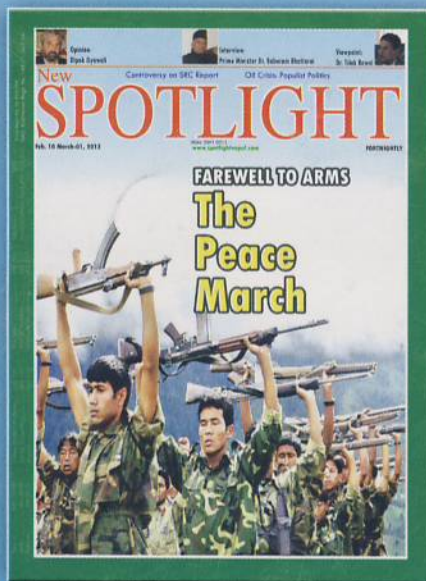
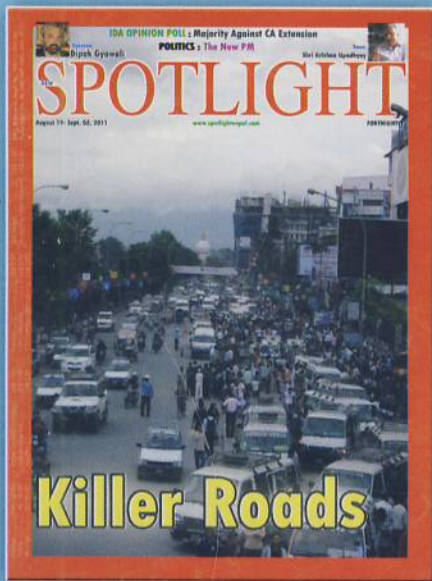
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