



OPINION:
Dipak Gyawali



INTERVIEW:
Pitambar Prasad Acharya



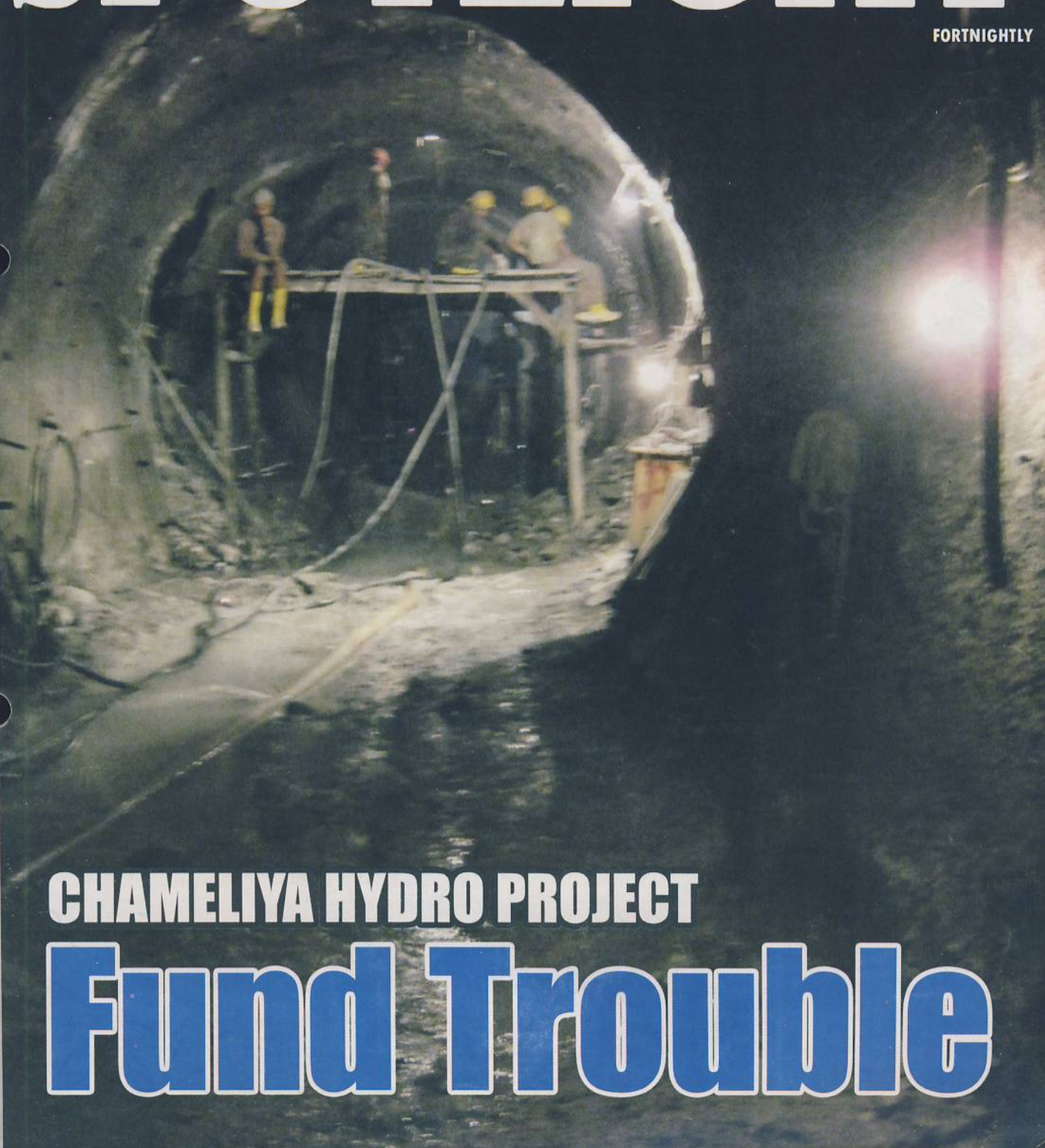
VIEWPOINT:
Dr. Shambhu Ram Simkhada

New

SPOTLIGHT

Apr. 26 May 09, 2013

FORTNIGHTLY



CHAMELIYA HYDRO PROJECT

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 Bhutan..... NU. 75.00
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From The Editor

Despite the agreement among the political parties to push for elections, the date is yet to be announced. It is still uncertain when the elections will be held in Nepal. Although political parties have been stressing November 2013 for holding the crucial polls, the current political situation makes them unlikely. As the political instability prolongs, it has been creating a lot of problems for ongoing development projects. Constructed under cooperation from Korea, Chameliya Hydro-Power Project is one of the casualties. Due to frequent political strikes and a month-long far-western strike of 2012, the project work got delayed. It is facing further hitches due to the reluctance of Korea-Exim bank to release the necessary funds. Although the project was supposed to complete by 2013, its schedule was revised up to March 2015. In case of any further delay in the release of funds, the project's future will be uncertain again. In this context, we have looked at various aspects of the project as our cover story of the week. This project has shown the importance of political stability for the success of development works. The edition also includes other regular features.

Keshab Poudel
Editor



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A Walk For Peace

The Embassy of Israel in Kathmandu organized 'Shalom Peace March' from the 'Wall of Peace' at Social Welfare Council at Lainchour to the Embassy of Israel in Lazimpat.

The march was organized to promote the message of peace and harmony, and to celebrate 65th Independence Day of the State of Israel. Ambassador of Israel to Nepal Hanan Goder along with Embassy staff, members from Shalom Club, distinguished guests and people from various walks of life marched together for peace.

Speaking after the march, Ambassador of Israel to Nepal, Hanan Goder said, "This is just a small effort made by Embassy and Shalom Club together to spread the message of



peace and brotherhood. Peace is beautiful and it is what we all desire. Peace is that one weapon with which all miseries and evil forces like war and crimes can be stopped."

President of Shalom Club Nepal, Dr. Rabindra Kumar Shakya, expressing his delight to be a part of the peace walk, said, "A country can't be developed in an absence of peace so, we all must strive for peace."

Nepali Art Selected For Display In U.S. Embassy

U.S. Ambassador to Nepal Peter W. Bodde has announced that the work of eight Nepali artists will be displayed on the walls of the U.S. Embassy. "Visual art is one of the very best ways to promote mutual understanding between Nepal and the United States," he said, emphasizing that this kind of creative collaboration helps to strengthen the partnership between the two countries.

The pieces were selected through an open competition announced in March. In total, 140 pieces were submitted for consideration by artists across Nepal.

National Day Of Israel

The Embassy of Israel in Kathmandu marked the 65th Independence Day of the State of Israel on 16 April 2013. A gathering organized at Hyatt Hotel, Kathmandu, saw high ranking Nepali government officials and diplomats together to celebrate the event. The chief guest for the event was Parmananda Jha, Vice President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal.

Speaking during this important occasion, Israeli Ambassador to Nepal Hanan Goder said, "The long friendship between Nepal and Israel will last long into the future. The two nations may be far in geography but are close in their hearts."

The State of Israel declared independence on 14 May 1948 after fighting for almost two millennia for a separate state. Israel is the Jews realization of their dream homeland.

Nepal was among the first few bold countries to establish diplomatic relations with Israel already in 1961. This year, the diplomatic relations between Israel and Nepal marks the completion of 52 years of fruitful cooperation.

U.S. Ambassador Supports Teach For Nepal

U.S. Ambassador to Nepal Peter W. Bodde announced a \$75,806 (65 lakh Nepali rupees) grant in support of Teach For Nepal, a movement of university graduates and young professionals working towards ending educational inequity in Nepal. Teach For Nepal will place 30 young Nepali teaching fellows in government schools in Lalitpur district beginning later this month.

"Teach For Nepal fellows are poised to be some of the most powerful agents of change in this country's education landscape," said Ambassador Bodde. "By empowering talented young people to transform the lives of children in some of Nepal's most under-served communities, this program will create the momentum necessary to push this country toward its goals of prosperity, stability, and opportunity."

The organization's two senior leaders, CEO Shisir Khanal and Head of Training Swastika Shrestha, are both graduates of American universities. About their commitment to the cause of

education, Ambassador Bodde said: "Shisir Khanal and Swastika Shrestha are great examples of young Nepalis who have returned from abroad with innovative ideas and a willingness to do their very best for the future of their country."

The announcement was made at a public launch at Hotel Shanker with members of Teach For Nepal's leadership council and supporters, including the Ambassador of Finland and former Vice Chancellor Kedar Bhakta Mathema. The U.S. Government's grant to Teach For Nepal will support the organization's initial training and ongoing professional development for the inaugural corps of 30 teaching fellows, in addition to the recruitment of the next cohort of fellows.

British Ambassador Arrives

Andrew James Sparkes CMG has arrived in Kathmandu as British ambassador to Nepal. He succeeds John Tucknott MBE. Sparkes has recently finished a secondment to the European Union as Deputy Head of the largest EU civilian mission in the world, the EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo. Prior to that he was Her Majesty's Ambassador to Kosovo, having previously served as Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Congo. On his arrival in Kathmandu, Sparkes said he was, "very happy to arrive in Nepal as British Ambassador. Looking forward to taking our special relationship forward and to helping Nepal's leaders in the coming months to achieve a stable and inclusive framework on which to build prosperity for all. Naya barshako hardik shubha kamana!"

Indian Assistance For School Building

The District Development Committee Makawanpur and Indian Embassy Kathmandu and Shree Janakalyan Higher Secondary School signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for providing Indian grant assistance of NRs. 42.21 million for the construction of a two - storied school building under Nepal-India Economic Cooperation Program.

The project will be implemented by the District Development Committee, Makawanpur, in accordance with the existing norms and regulations of the Government of Nepal. They will also be responsible for ensuring the quality of construction of the project and its timely completion. In addition to this project, three projects in Makawanpur have already been completed with Indian assistance of NRs. 39.8 million. India has also provided four ambulances and four school buses in the District. ■

"Fncci Wants Energy Programs In Election Manifestos Of All Political Parties"

Suraj Vaidya
President of FNCCI

What does FNCCI want in the coming elections?

The Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) wants the political parties to include energy development programs in their election manifestos.

We want all the political parties in the country to come up with economic programs, prioritizing the energy sector development, so that we can gradually reduce energy deficit in the country. We will start negotiations with the top leaders of the political parties soon.

How will FNCCI lobby for this?

FNCCI will request the political parties to forge consensus on common minimum economic agenda for sectors like tourism, agriculture, energy and service.

What about Nepal's trade?

There is the need to promote trade with India and China, and we have already started a process to form a tripartite high-level team. We are already in talks with the Indian business leaders in this direction. We will also hold talks with our Chinese counterparts to form a high level think tank which will play a vital role in promoting trade among the three neighbors.

What is your view on the growing labor dispute over fixing the minimum salary?

The private sector was not in a position to fix the minimum remuneration of Rs. 12,000-Rs. 15,000 per month as demanded by the trade union representatives. We are for increasing the minimum remuneration on the basis of inflation rate calculated by the government. Most of the factories will be closed down if the remuneration is increased as demanded by the trade unions.

NRB Says 'No' To Political Donations

Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) has said that banks and financial institutions should stay away from donating funds to political parties as the cost of making such contributions would ultimately be passed on to depositors, reducing their chances of fetching higher yields on money that they park in banking institutions.

The banking sector regulator's comments have come a day after Rajan Singh Bhandari, president of the Nepal Bankers' Association, an umbrella body of commercial banks, told Republica in an interview that the central bank should be clear on whether banks could donate funds to political parties.

Bhandari, also the CEO of Citizens Bank International, was expressing his views on donation drive launched by a few political parties several weeks ago during which millions of rupees were demanded from commercial banks in the pretext of holding general conventions.

"Maintaining the relationship with political parties, supporting their activities and donating funds to them by coming under their influence are acts that do not fall under the jurisdiction of banking," Bhaskar Mani Gyawali, spokesperson of Nepal Rastra Bank, told Republica. "However, banks and financial institutions are free to engage in social welfare activities and fulfill their corporate responsibilities."

KIST, Vibor Seek LoI To Start Merger

KIST Bank and Vibor Bikas Bank have sought the letter of intent (LoI) from Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB), the banking sector regulator, to take the merger process between the two institutions to a logical end.

Once the LoI is extended, both the financial institutions will conduct due diligence audits, which will give detailed view of the financial health of both the institutions. "Once this is complete, both the institutions will have to file an application to obtain final approval for merger from the regulator," the official said. KIST, a category 'A' financial institution, and Vibor, a category 'B' financial institution, had formally launched the merger process on March 21 by signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU).

The MoU was signed by Kamal Prasad Gyawali, managing director of KIST Bank, and Dr Roop Jyoti, vice chairman of Vibor Bikas Bank. Following this, a merger committee was formed, which is working on completing the consolidation process within the next five months. So far, both the institutions have obtained a green signal to initiate the merger process from all shareholders.

South Asia Regaining Momentum But Facing Risks, World Bank Says

South Asia is regaining its economic momentum, but the recovery in the world's region with the largest number of poor people could falter in the absence of a stronger investment climate, said the latest South Asia Economic Focus report of the World Bank.

According to the report, the combined growth of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka was just 4.7% in 2012, substantially below pre-crisis levels. A pick-up to 5.5% can be expected in 2013 with ongoing efforts to regain fiscal space and boost private investment. But given the uncertain global environment, it will be important to strengthen the investment climate.

"How countries manage their economies in the face of uncertainties in the global environment will be critical not only for addressing near-term current account and fiscal deficits but also for tackling South Asia's long-term challenges," said Martin Rama, chief economist for the South Asia Region at the World Bank.

NPC Vice-Chair, Members Quit

Citing serious differences with the government, all members of the National Planning Commission (NPC), including its vice-chairman Deependra Bahadur Kshetry, have resigned from their posts.

Along with Kshetry, other three members of NPC Janak Raj Shah, Dr Shiba Kumar Rai, and Dr Abdur Rahim Mikrani announced their resignation at a press conference at NPC's office.

The resignations came a day after the UCPN (Maoist) leaders, at the High Level Political Committee meeting, agreed to the removal of political appointees in several government bodies.



Old Ca In New Bottle

By Dipak Gyawali



An experienced expat once kindly remarked that Nepalis love grand ritualistic form over meaningful substance which they often disdain as petty, and that this is why foreigners find the country so Shangrila-esque and quaint. As a guest, he was being very diplomatic: Nepalis themselves have a much more rude expression to describe this pathology – *syalko huinya*, the unison howling of canines after one begins to bay. The proof of this is the current non-discourse over elections.

A year after the ignominious collapse of the Constituent Assembly (CA), the country is still on its politically rudderless drift, and nary a 'Land Ahoy!' on the horizon. All the main parties are now further apart on major issues than in 2006, more distrustful of their former '12-point Delhi deal' comrades-in-arms, less willing to bank on the peoples' verdict and hence more fearful of elections. They are also seeing a growing rift between their top leaders and their rank-and-file. Furthermore, having given up the right to lead a caretaker government for election purposes, they know they have little chance of misusing the government funds



Dissolve CA

and machinery during elections; but, given that the loyalty of ex-bureaucrats newly become ministers is suspect, they are not so sure their opponents won't. And yet dutifully the party oligarchs keep mouthing, and a highly partisan corporate media loyally parrots, that they are all for election, that it will happen, that election is the salvation for Nepal and the solution to all ills faced by the country. One gets the surreal feeling that the hardly dozen or so party oligarchs that the media continue to lionize think the CA of yore still exists, and why not? After all it "existed" as a zombie well past its two-year mandated life, serving them and their patronage dispensing so well, and letting them off scot-free from having to answer difficult questions. Why should they be faulted for living under the happy illusion that the façade is still "there"?

salvation for Nepal"; "Consensus is just around the corner"; "Eighty percent of the constitution is already made"; "Federalism will forever assure absolute inclusiveness"; and so on. Consider the last one which is the overt issue on which the CA collapsed. Nepalis want decentralization and local government that serves their everyday need, not an undefined, half-baked federalism which will tear apart mixed communities that have been living more or less peacefully over the centuries. No party was able to define what that federalism was and how major groups such as the Dalits and hill castes would be accommodated. Even more shameful, no major party advocated strengthening local bodies and speedily holding local elections to municipalities, VDCs and the districts. Highly personalized, a step higher than even 'centralized', the parties and their reigning oligarchs saw the possibility of new and younger leadership emerging from such decentralization as a threat to their positions. No democrats these oligarchs, why would they want elections that may displace them in May or November or any other time?

It is said that the hardest thing to do is to convince others when you yourself are not convinced of what you are saying. That and also to try and awaken someone who is only pretending to sleep. And this pretense comes through loud and clear. The Nepali public is very skeptical today because it has heard similar mass baying by the political coyotes before: "CA is a once in a lifetime event"; "CA is the ultimate

but what they do that proves this point. Look at the recently concluded Nepali Kangress's Mahasamiti meeting. It was unable to decide any policy line on any major issue facing the country's politics which would convince its large support base of now quite apathetic voters to go out and vote for the grand old democratic party. On the contrary, keen observers saw plenty of indications that the vast majority of its members have distinctly recognized that the party made a big mistake in becoming the political porters of the Maoists in 2005. The CA was a bad and impractical idea, a sentence implanted by the Mughlani handlers into King Tribhuban's speech in February 1951, which BP Koirala and King Mahendra had, in their sagacity, done away with in 1958. The collapse of the CA in May 2012 was just another proof that these two towering nationalists were right then and continue to be right today. Going for another CA without first asking why the old one failed and taking corrective measures to make sure those factors, including incompetent individuals are eliminated, is tantamount to repeating history, this time around as a farce.

Similarly, getting rid of the country's age-old cultural

identity by declaring it secular without permission from the people seems to be weighing down the Kangressis with guilt, fear and trembling about what their erstwhile voters might say if they went for elections. Hence the need felt by the party oligarchs to trot out a Hindu swami as chief guest during the inauguration of Mahasamiti. It would have been politically more honest and praiseworthy had the party debated that issue, put it to a vote and gone to the people with a firm conviction as party line. That political courage was totally lacking in the Kangress, and is absent in the UML and Madhesi leadership as well. The Maoists, especially of the Cash variety, speak with so many tongues it is impossible to say what the party stands for other than the aggrandizement of its oligarchs.

The Kangress Mahasamiti meet on the Gandak in Nawalparasi was remarkable on several other counts. It was so badly organized that an estimated thirty to sixty percent (depending on whom one talked to, the establishment or the dissidents) of the members did not bother to stay back for policy discussions the next day. The given reasons were that there was not even proper drinking water supply or food or sleeping arrangements and mosquito repellants. The implied reasons were that the party leadership had no courage to "let a thousand flowers bloom" through free and frank discussions about the mistakes of the party over the last half dozen years and how to correct them. How, a voter might ask, can a party that could not supply drinking water to its delegates or manage a meeting of a few thousand people manage the country?

The remarkable "achievement" of the Kangress Gandak meet was its belated by half century education on water resources. It seems many of the delegates took the opportunity to visit the Gandak barrage and see for themselves how Nepali farmers are suffering with its mismanagement, how Nepali lands at Susta are being

encroached upon and soon. Because this was a treaty done by BP Koirala, they felt they had to sing its praises and close their eyes to its malevolent impact on Nepal and the miasmatic rancor it has left behind that prevents Nepalis from believing that such treaties with the Mughlanis can be beneficial to Nepal. Had the Kangress bothered to even acknowledge the concerns of the farmers of the Gandak water users association, who have been agitating for the decades, they would have graduated into reality ages ago and not fallen headlong into the mistakes of Tanakpur-Mahakali in 1996 or with the Arun and Karnali after the regime change in 2006. However, this time on the banks of the Gandak the Kangressi members got a personal education that did not translate into any kind of collective party wisdom on this vital issue.

The closing of eyes towards real substance and making merry with illusory forms is not limited to parties only. At a recent jamboree of the FNCCI, the businessmen of Nepal got leaders of Nepal's major political parties on the podium to sing paean to

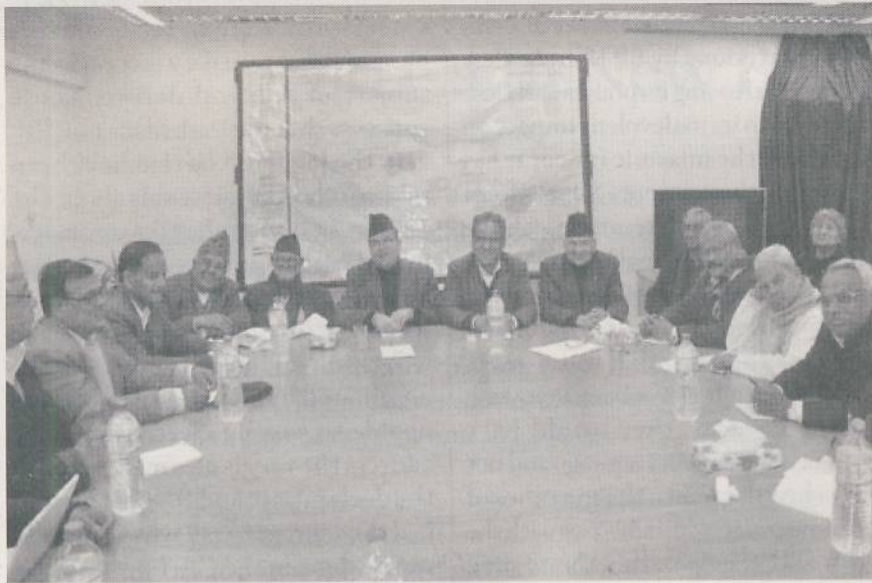
a declaration on water resources promising not to make water projects a subject of political debate. Those parties such as the Dash Maoists, RPP-N or the Janamorcha that have been asking relevant questions about the dis-benefits to Nepal and its consumers from these bad projects were either not invited or did not bother with the sham. The CA, into which most of the worthies of FNCCI had been nominated by all major parties, was unable to pass an electricity act to address the very issues mentioned in the declaration; and FNCCI has not had the courage to ask why. If it could not be done in the CA, how would it be done by dancing to a declaration on a hotel podium?

As the Stockholm water prize laureate Tony Allan asks, how is water the stuff of life if it is not political? One must ask of Nepal's political parties an even more remarkable question: how is election the lifeblood of politics when its basic substance – election for what, how, with what voters, for which form of representation, and to do what – has been taken out of the debate and replaced by a *syal ko huinyan*? ■

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Four Party Meeting

ELECTIONS

No One's Agenda

Although a month has already passed since the formation of the election government, it is yet to make any concrete move

By A CORRESPONDENT

President Dr. Ram Baran Yadav is in his hometown Janakpur for rest. Similarly, chairman of Council of Ministers Khil Raj Regmi is busy making administrative and other changes, including initiating the dialogue with various political forces. The Election Commission is busy in meetings. Leaders of political parties are very much uncertain about their coming course of action.

What all these indicate is that no one is seriously working in the priority areas. As per the agreement, the priority of all political forces should be to hold the elections of Constituent Assembly by November as they have already missed the deadline of June.

Given the present political scenario, it is now almost uncertain whether to have elections in coming November.

"This government is not serious to hold the elections and it is performing like an elected government," thundered Maoist chairman Puspakamal Dahal

Prachanda. "Instead of dilly dallying, the government must work to announce the election date."

In an all-party meeting, chief election commissioner Nilkanth Upreti asked political parties to create the a conducive environment to hold the elections in November. Since a group of political workers led by CPN-Maoist has been disrupting the voter registration process throughout the country, it hampers the initial process of issuing the voter identity cards. Similarly, another political group led by Madheshi Janadhikar Forum, which is negotiating with the government, demanded the dissolution of four party high level mechanism as a pre-condition to hold the elections. The overall political scenario is yet to improve.

"We will not take part in the elections without dismissal of the present government led by chief justice Khil Raj Regmi and formation of the

government on the basis of all party roundtable meeting," said Mohan Vaidya, CPN-Maoist leader. "We have already requested president Yadav to dismiss the present government."

Although other political parties are also making efforts to woo the CPN-Maoist to take part in the elections, they are yet to see any progress in this direction. "We will convince the CPN-Maoist to take part in the elections. If they continue to choose their own stand, they will lose their own political identity," said UCPN-Maoist leader Prachanda.

As the political disputes grow, president Dr. Ram Baran Yadav has already directed chairman of the Council of Ministers Regmi to initiate negotiations with other political parties.

"The government will hold further negotiations with political parties to create conducive environment for elections," said president Yadav at his residence in Janakpurdam.

Whether one likes it or not, creating conducive environment for holding elections will be a far cry.

Although leaders of political parties are travelling to different parts of the country to mobilize the workers, they too are yet to make any determined move for elections. The situation is that all political parties are championing the elections, but no one is making sincere efforts.

"Elections Commission can hold the elections in conducive environment. It is the political parties and government which need to work to make all the necessary arrangements," said an elections commissioner on condition of anonymity. Of course, we have now acts and necessary laws to start the elections process. However, they are alone not enough. Even in the past, the election was postponed several times due to misunderstanding among the political parties over the date."

As all who matter are busy with their own schedules, the elections seem to be no one's agenda at the moment. ■



Peace In Part

Integration And Rehabilitation Of The Maoist Army Combatants

By DR. SHAMBHU RAM SIMKHADA

Of the 19,602 Maoist Army Combatants (MACs) verified by the UN Mission in Nepal (UNMIN), 1400 (70 officers and the rest in other ranks) who opted and qualified for integration into the Nepal Army (NA) are undergoing training. A separate Directorate in the NA will accommodate them. Others have returned to civilian lives choosing voluntary exit and cash payment. The seven cantonments and 21 satellite camps with weapons stored in containers and used for security of the camps and senior Maoist leaders are safely in possession of the State. So, the Special Committee responsible for the SIR of the MACs has been dissolved after completing its work. Why did this part of the peace process succeed amidst the failing politics in Nepal?

Political Leadership: Management, Integration and Rehabilitation (MIR) of rebel army combatants is one of the most vital parts of any post conflict peace building. Which way peace processes go often depend on it. Successful MIR depends on many things but political will is the key. SIR of the MACs too could not have succeeded without it.

- Prime Ministers' Coordinating role, caliber of the Special Committee members and their access to top leadership were vital. Intellectual and professional strength of the Technical Committee members and willingness of the leaders to listen to them and go beyond narrow political dogmas and party positions were also important.

- The Nepali Congress (NC), the driving force of the peace process initially but increasingly marginalized after the CA election, retook the intellectual, political and operational leadership in the SIR of the MACs. President Sushil Koirala's stand "the NC has given everything, it is now the turn of the Maoists to concede" and General Secretary Krishna Sitaula's emphasis "nothing will move forward until the SIR of the MACs is concluded" brought I & R back to the centre stage. This view of the main opposition was effectively articulated by Ram Sharan Mahat and Minendra Rijal supported by Ishwor Pokharel and Bhim Rawal of the UML in the Special Committee. Pragmatism of members Jaya Prakash Gupta and Jitendra Dev of Tarai-Madhesh parties and Barsha Man Pun from their own party helped the Maoist Chief Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Prime Minister Dr. Babu Ram Bhattarai to finally move decisively. Dahal was convinced that resolving this problem was crucial for progress in other areas, prolonging it further would backfire on himself and his Party. Bhattarai made it the topmost priority of his Prime Ministerial agenda. Cooperation of the new NA leadership, goodwill of the international community and supportive role of India contributed significantly. But, why did these things come together here not elsewhere?

Intellectual Ownership: War begins in the minds of men and it is there that peace building must start first. With growing interest and role of the international community in internal conflicts and their resolution, a large body of knowledge is available on MIR of rebel army combatants. Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and Security Sector Reform (SSR) are the most frequently used tools. These concepts have been

developed in one set of circumstances but the nature of internal conflicts and terms of their resolution are different. Successful SIR of the MACs needed skillful application of the tool-kits available internationally or taking national ownership with power of new ideas.

- In the beginning, Maoists did not want to hear of DDR while other parties rejected any SSR. So, the DDR-SSR debate or their sequencing delayed the process. Had the SIR of the MACs been completed quickly as envisaged in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) or at least prior to the Constituent Assembly (CA) election Nepal's peace process would have moved forward faster and not encountered the problems it is facing today.

- This author had argued all along that getting stuck in the DDR-SSR debate would lead us nowhere and identified **Numbers, norms, modalities and ranks** as the four core issues on which agreement was needed. These views were submitted to the Special Committee and also published later. (**Integration and rehabilitation**, the Kathmandu Post 19 May, 2010).

- Amidst the delay UNMIN's mandate was terminated. Gradually the discussion inside the Special Committee and outside started to move beyond the DDR-SSR *mantras* and focus on the core issues. Significant work was done when Madhav Kumar Nepal was the Special Committee Coordinator. The Maoist party handed over the cantonments to the Special Committee. A separate directorate in the NA with four core functions to accommodate the MACs was proposed. The Technical Committee of the Special Committee was transformed into its Secretariat. One of its members, a retired Lt. General of the NA with experience in peace keeping was appointed Coordinator. Rehabilitation packages and Cash-for-Peace (payments for MACs wishing to leave the camps voluntarily) were worked out. A 24-7 Situation Centre was established at the Secretariat and teams composed of the NA, Nepal Police, Armed Police Force and the MACs replaced UNMIN monitors in the field. A new code of conduct for the MACs was also agreed. So, the fear that the whole peace process and the SIR of the MACs would unravel after UNMIN left was disproved, creating national confidence.

- These were significant achievements. But there was no real progress on the ground as reflected in the following. *"Five years on, the state continues to spend a lot while the MACs continue to suffer the indignities of life in temporary camps and uncertain future. Handover of cantonments made headlines but there is no clarity on the chain of command and reporting. Thank God nothing untoward has happened after UNMIN left and SC Secretariat was supposed to have started the monitoring work. But the Secretariat has been unable to fulfill its core TOR, ascertain the actual number of MACs in the camps and prepare profiles for I & R. Discussion on weapons has not even started. Politicians expect input from experts to move the process forward while the secretariat leadership is happy to rest with its new realm, waiting for instructions. Any wonder, deadlock on the core issues identified so long ago continues?"*

- To facilitate agreement specific suggestions were made on the four core issues. Packages on rehabilitation and

options on institutional arrangement for effective implementation were also presented. Most crucially, attempt was made to force the attention of the key actors to the urgency of resolving the deadlock. "MIR of the MACs is the indicator of conflict transformation from violent to peaceful competition for power, foundation of all agreements and the goal of the peace process. That makes the resolution of this problem so crucial. There is no definite pattern of sequencing, which comes first, numbers or norms, which is more important for R? These concepts can be used to move the process forward with flexibility or block progress with rigid positions. Should integration take place into the security forces or in the much talked about NA directorate? There is no agreement on the core issues. Rehabilitation is in the back burner. Meanwhile the UCPNM leadership wants to go ahead with regrouping amidst objections in their own party and doubts from others on how it can start without agreement in the Special Committee on some fundamentals of I&R. Why is there so much confusion? Wars may be fought by and among armies but war and peace are essentially political decisions. For sustainable peace in war-torn societies, mindsets need to change first from war to peace, bullets to books and bread, rebellion to reconciliation, reconstruction and rehabilitation. Without the mental transformation, debate on I&R can be murky, discussions on numbers, norms, modality and rank confusing. In this confusion, some feel helpless while the skillful in tasting the fruits of chaos develop interest in its perpetuation. It takes leadership of wisdom and courage to lead society out of the quagmire of chaos, confusion and conflict". (.....Transformation from Violent Conflict to Peaceful Competition for Power, the New Spotlight, 30 September, 2011).

- On 01 November, the Seven Point Agreement of the political parties decided on the core issues (**numbers**: a maximum of 6,500 to be integrated into the NA; **norms**: all interested MACs to fulfill the standard norms of the NA with concessions on age-3 years, education-one level and marital status; **modality**: individual entry and **rank**: maximum major, the Special Committee to decide on the demand of some higher rank). There was agreement on the NA Directorate with three core functions, paying 5-8 lakhs in two installments by account payee cheques for those opting for voluntary exit as well as packages for rehabilitation.

Operational Partnership: Following political agreement, the Secretariat completed re-verification and regrouping simultaneously in all seven cantonments and 21 camps. 17,052 MACs were given new Special Committee ID cards with 2,550 found missing. Just over 9,000 chose integration with less than 8,000 opting voluntary exit. Only a handful chose the rehabilitation packages. Next phase of work reduced the number of camps to fifteen. The closed camps were handed over to the NA and the APF. The third phase work led to the handover of the weapons containers and perimeter security to the NA. Finally, a selection process ascertained the number of MACs opting and qualifying for integration. The rest were given cheques for voluntary exit. So, within a short time the Secretariat fulfilled its vital responsibility without major problem and this part of Nepal's peace process was completed.

- I & R of large number of MACs at 28 locations in the physical terrain, political environment, work culture and mindset of current Nepal was a management nightmare. Logistic and manpower needs were huge. Careful and detailed operational planning and preparations were crucial. One small problem in one area could spread and delay or even derail the process. So, tact in handling each individual case was vital.

- In this huge, complex and sensitive task, integrity, hard work and dedication of the members of the Secretariat

played the most crucial role. Their sense of mission and commitment to *the larger good* overrode many personal grievances, several administrative shortcomings and political differences.

- Operational experience of the Coordinator, partnership of other members and the staff to go beyond the call of duty made this project successful. Cabinet Secretary Madhav Ghimire, Member Secretary of the Special Committee, helped "de-bureaucratize" many things that could have otherwise been stuck. Readiness of the security forces, especially the NA fulfilling the instructions given to them often at short notice is praiseworthy. On the whole, this experience proved that with leadership and motivation Nepalese can handle difficult tasks as effectively, if not better than trained, experienced and highly paid international experts.

Issues for reflection: This stage of work has been done. But some issues for reflection remain:

- The UCPNM has formally renounced violence and the CPN-M is today defending multi party democracy and separation of powers and so unlikely to return to violent politics in the current situation. Reports on the MACs undergoing training and opting voluntary exit are also positive. Prolonged political transition must not be allowed to adversely affect the transformation of the Maoist parties and influence the former MACs inside the NA and active in politics and society.

- Would it have been better for the country in the long run to integrate more MACs into the closed environment of the NA with rigorous retraining or sending them into society with cash? The Special Committee took a risk in offering generous monetary incentive for voluntary exit. How to minimize the risks of the former combatants being misused by some violent political groups or criminals in the future?

- Why did so few MACs choose the rehabilitation option? Would a monitoring mechanism be useful in case the MACs opting voluntary exit needed and sought help? Reflections on these and other questions would have been useful before or may still be necessary now.

Conclusions: Post Cold-war conflicts are mostly internal in the developing world but the intellectual tools for conflict resolution and peace building are developed elsewhere. Financial support and operational leadership also come from mainly multinational arrangements. External roles interfaced with local interests can create problems of intellectual ownership, political leadership and managerial expertise. Nepal initially faced these problems. But, driven by the *power of ideas*, political will took back the intellectual ownership making this part of Nepal's peace process a truly nationally driven exercise. Finally political leadership supported by operational partnership led to the success of the SIR of the MACs.

Nepal's political conflict is far from over. Despite some dilemmas, the significant contribution of the successful SIR of the MACs is in transforming violent conflict into peaceful competition for power, at least for now. But then the transition should be managed well and completed soon. Otherwise things we consider success today may unravel tomorrow. Hopefully, sooner than later, with some measures of *healing the wounds, wiping the tears* and finally promulgation of the new democratic constitution, Nepal's peace process can be theorized as a new model of restoring peace in conflict torn societies.

Dr. Simkhada, a member of the TC/Secretariat of the Special Committee, can be reached at simbins@gmail.com

FOREIGN AID POLICY

Taming Donors

If the recent ideas floated by the Ministry of Finance are any indication, the government seems to be considering pulling some strings on foreign aid. The question is: At what cost?

By A CORRESPONDENT

The recently released Human Development Report-2013 has pointed out that Nepal's Human Development Index (HDI), in the 157th position, second to war-torn Afghanistan in South Asia, with Nepal's HDI value at 0.463, which is far below the South Asian average of 0.558, is grim.

According to Human Development Report 2013, Nepal's HDI indicators are still poor compared to South Asian average in every front. Nepal's mean years of schooling is 3.2 compared to 4.7 for South Asia and expected years of schooling is 8.9, compared to 10.2 South Asian average. South Asia's average GNI per capita (PPP) is 33,343 and Nepal's is 1,137 which is far below the low HDI of 1,633.

Whether anyone likes or does not like the argument, Nepal requires some sort of stability in the policy to make the difference in changing its overall development scenario. However, the recent activities of the Ministry of Finance have indicated that the politically-rocked Nepal's development agenda will be badly shaken in the coming days.

"As Nepal's political instability has already shaken economic growth and political stability will be less likely in the coming years, any drastic change in the current foreign aid policy is likely to further disrupt the overall growth," said financial experts.

Although the government is yet to issue any formal remarks on foreign aid policy on Nepal, the recent write-ups written by the officials working in the International Economic Cooperation and Coordination Division at the Ministry of Finance have indicated that there is something cooking inside the Ministry.

"Still, the overall picture of aid

effectiveness is not encouraging. As a result, there is doubt about whether foreign aid is actually needed in Nepal. Before we decide, we need to understand the structure of Nepali economy. The Nepali economy is characterized by structural bottlenecks, large fiscal and external deficits, and significant imbalances between savings and investment. In such a scenario, foreign aid could act as important support if it is vigorously negotiated by prioritizing the interests of the country," writes Hari Prasad Sharma, section officer at the International Economic Cooperation Coordination Division at the Ministry of Finance in his recent article in *My Republica*.

Sharma's write up draws the conclusion that foreign aid in Nepal failed to make tangible progress. Just a week after the first article, Kailash Raj Pokharel, an Under Secretary at the IECCD, Ministry of Finance, has come up with another article in *The Kathmandu Post*. "Nepal has been receiving foreign aid for the last sixty years and the many projects and programs implemented through this aid are now showing good results in infrastructure, irrigation, education, health and agriculture. There have been discussions and debate on whether foreign aid in Nepal has achieved its intended objectives. So what kind of change has aid brought to Nepal?" Sharma questions.

"However, a small amount of foreign aid does not have much effect in transforming the country. We need to

stimulate the private sector, together with internal government resources while applying effective aid management tools. If we need aid, we also need to be practical and realistic about our capacity. Sentimentality without being backed by strengths does not help in mobilizing investment. Aid does not come with altruism and aid is not unlimited. It cannot be used forever and needs an exit at some point in time," Sharma draws the conclusion.



Finance Minister Shanker Koirala

According to sources inside the Ministry of Finance, the government is planning to bring a new foreign aid policy to limit the role of Nepal's development partners, particularly the western donors, in their investment in social sectors. According to the sources in the Ministry, donors have been bypassing Ministry in disbursement on aid. Out of 454 foreign aided projects, 114 projects get the assistance through government red book and 340 from outside.

According to recently released Finance Ministry's report on foreign aid, there are many drawbacks of foreign aid in Nepal. The report stresses the need to maintain the restraint on the flow of aid. "We want to see transparency in foreign aid mobilization," said finance minister Shanker Koirala.

The statements and reports coming from the Ministry of Finance is likely to raise the antenna of Nepal's development partners. At a time when the country's overall internal resources mobilization is just enough to feed its own employees and Nepal's private sector players are yet to have the capital to finance, any shortcoming on foreign aid is likely to derail the progress. ■

China In Nepal

By YUBARAJ GHIMIRE



As Nepal waits for elections, Beijing is stepping up its engagement. Nepal's political actors usually play hide-and-seek with the people. That the country has not had local body elections for the last 15 years and that the election to the second Constituent Assembly is promised for November, after the first one failed to deliver a constitution, makes it easy for the leaders to avoid the people for now. But for how long?

As in any country too dependent on the outside world, Nepal's leaders are making frequent visits abroad to convince other states that "we are on the right track and heading towards the right destination". The "right track" at the moment is the CA election under the chief justice, and the

reservations about the Maoist agenda of "ethnic federalism" and the principle of strong provinces and weak centres as endorsed by many European countries, as well as India.

While leaders of other parties are also to visit China soon, Prachanda will be making a trip to Delhi, ostensibly to give the assurance that the Maoist party does not believe in cultivating China at the cost of India any more. But to the larger world, including China, the Maoist leadership works more closely with India. China deliberately chose not to invite Prachanda's deputy, Baburam Bhattarai, during the nearly two years of his premiership, apparently because of that suspicion.

China's invitation to top Nepali leaders also indicates it's going to adopt a policy of high-level engagement with Nepal, slightly different from India's officialdom. Moreover, China has told Prachanda that under no circumstances should the Western world be "instigating Tibetans" in Nepal. China is clearly asserting itself.



Maoist Leader Prachanda (Left) and Chinese President Xi Jinping

right destination is the delivery of the much-promised "People's Constitution". Since the track was a common agenda of the four major parties, in full endorsement of major donors and the international community — including the US, EU and India — the outside world has to share the optimism of the Nepali actors.

Maoist Chief Prachanda embarked on a week-long visit to China, beginning April 14, to seek China's involvement in Nepal as part of his vague vision of a "joint strategic and developmental partnership". China, as per the Maoist account, promised all support for Nepal's development and constitution-making. But it's also a message that India's decisive, if not monopolistic, influence in Nepal on security and strategic matters is clearly on the wane, with China emerging as an equal player. India is perceived as too focused on Nepal's internal politics, especially during the last eight years of high hope and poor delivery on political stability and economic growth. Moreover, China has strong

their courage to go to the people. At least three influential parties — the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists, Madhesi Janadhikar Forum and Federal Socialist Party — have not only refused to participate, but they have also demanded the immediate removal of the CJ-led government, which is a prestige issue for the four major parties and their international allies. Elections do not look possible when the major parties are so rigidly positioned.

Aware of the likely mass hostility, Prachanda announced before leaving for China that he was going to get big investments from the north and the south, which would generate huge employment. Given the regular habits of Nepali leaders to promise and not deliver, people are not taking these promises seriously any more. Prachanda and the four parties will have to realise that while it may be possible to mislead the people for some time, ultimately they will be judged by what they say and do or do not do.

(Courtesy: *The Indian Express*)

CHAMELIYA

Power Delayed

At almost the final stage of its completion, the Chameliya Hydro Power Project is facing severe financial crisis due to the delay in payment by Korean-Exim Bank. Due to political disturbances and some new technical problems, Chameliya's initial schedule for completion was revised from May 2011 to a new deadline of March 2015. As there is a hiccup in the reimbursement of the additional funding from Korean-Exim Bank, it is now uncertain if the project will meet the new proposed deadline

By KESHA POUDEL

Reporting From Sikhar Village Of Darchula

Although Chameliya Hydropower project is the first of its kind constructed far from the capital with a concept of helping balance the regional development, the project has faced severe political, financial, geological and technical hiccups in its six years of construction period marking one after another delay in the commencement of work

It is a first major project which has

started during the period of politically most troubled time in the history of Nepal. Kicked off during the major political change of 2006, Chameliya encountered major technical difficulties when it faced geological constraints after squeezing occurred for a length of about 843 meters in the tunnel and a big hole was caused by landslide in the penstock zone.

Along with 32 days of far-western

strike of May 2012, the disputes in land acquisition for transmission lines also delayed the project. The additional landslides and the hole inside the penstock tunnel further complicated the project work. There are ways to tackle the technical and geological difficulties. However, recent financial problems are getting out of control of Nepal's authority.

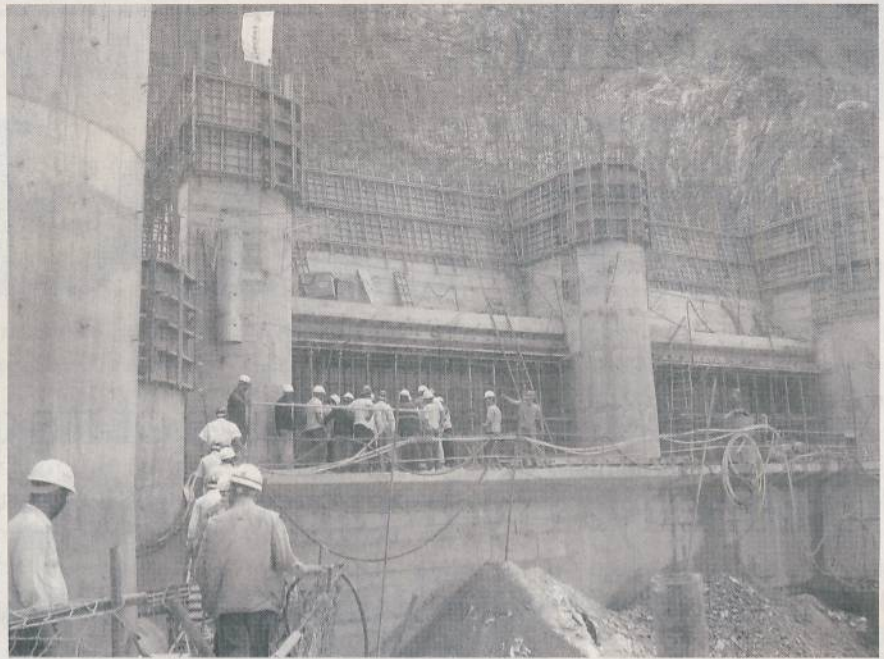
Korean Exim Bank, the main funding

agency for the hydro-mechanical components, has shown reluctance to allocate the US\$10.7 million additional funding, incurred due to the delay of four years and the additional technical problems.

The project was delayed by political disruptions and technical and geological problems occurred during the period and the estimated cost has gone up. Its revised cost has now reached US\$158 million from the initial estimated cost of US\$99.9 million.

As additional problems in the electro-mechanical components have surfaced, it is Korean Exim Bank which is responsible for the payment. However, the Korean contractors and Korean consultants do not get the money on the failure of Korean Exim Bank to release it.

Nepal Electricity Authority has been constantly writing letters to Korean-Exim Bank to provide additional costs. After increase in the price, Korean Exim Bank sent a review mission in December 2012, which principally agreed to provide the additional funding when the matter was discussed at the Ministry of Finance. "Korean-Exim Bank is now expressing reluctance in payment," said Ram Chandra Pandye, general manager



Dam Site

of NEA's Generation. As per the agreement from Korean-Exim Bank, the consultant and NEA jointly took a decision to extend the completion date up to 2015 March.

Korean contractors KHNMP have already proposed to steel lining in the 70 meter long portion of the tunnel built for penstock. They are demanding advance payment to initiate the work.

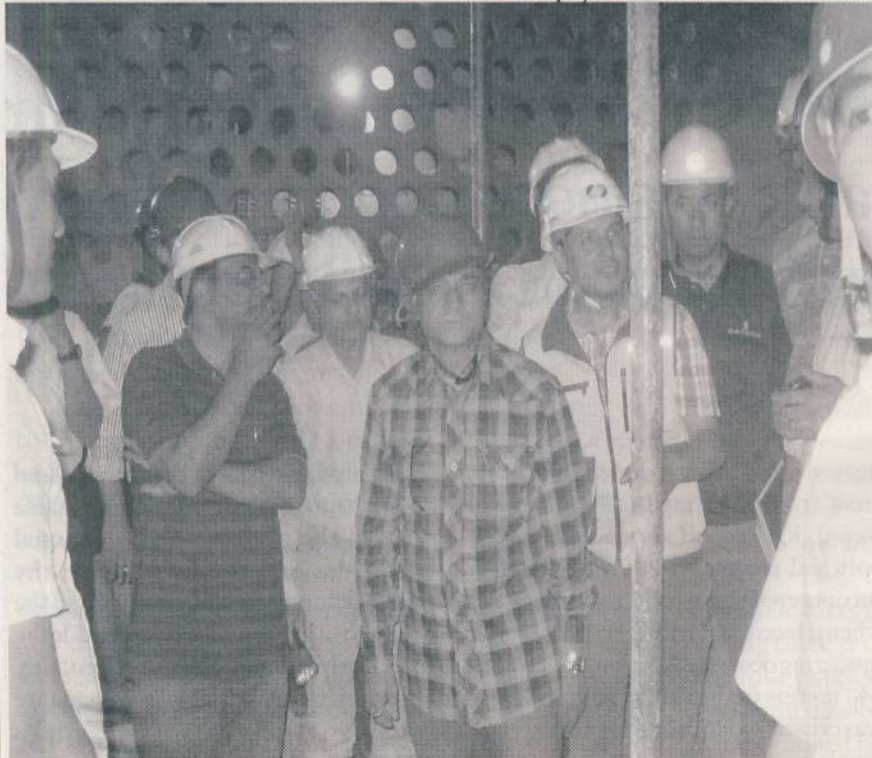
KHNMP has already forwarded conditions that it needs advance payment before May to complete the project in the revised date of March 2015. Otherwise, the project will see a further delay causing huge losses to NEA. KHNMP is demanding 30 percent or 1.1 million dollars of the total cost of 3.8 million dollars to install the additional penstock pipe.

"Korean-Exim Bank is yet to fulfill its commitment. If the Bank fails to release this amount of money to KHNMP, the project will not meet its new revised deadline of March 2015," said Pandye.

According to Pandye, there is a deep hole ranging from 6 to 25 meters in the 70 meter area of penstock pipe. Korean consultants have recommended that concretizing alone cannot guarantee the safety of penstock and it required steel lining for protection. If there is a delay in month, it will push the project back. As the rainy season is coming closer, any delay in the work will make the future of the project uncertain. Last year's month long shutdown pushed the project behind by six months.

"Initially, Korean-Exim bank was positive but it is yet to release the fund," said Pandye. "If Korean-Exim Bank delays the payment by a month, the project will be delayed for another year."

According to Pandye, the bank said this is the new loan and it will take another



Inspecting Tunnel

'We Need To Be Optimistic'

HARIRAM KOIRALA

four to five months for approval suggesting NEA and Nepal government to make arrangement for later reimbursement from Korean-Exim Bank. NEA has requested to pay 30 percent amount from 3 million dollars.

The dream of far western region to have a major power project seems to be on hold due to all these hassles. Started with an aim to balance the regional development activities, Chameliya hydro power project is the first major project constructed in far-western region with a capacity of 30 MW.

According to Human Development Index and overall development index, far-western region fares much worse compared to central, western and eastern regions. In the power sector, almost all investment is confined to central and western regions.

At a time when Chameliya Hydro Power Project is facing severe financial crisis at the final stage of its completion, a high-level mission headed by secretary of Energy Hareram Koirala has visited the project, inspecting sites and meeting contractors and consultants. The five-member high level commission consists of two board members of Nepal Electricity Authority, a senior official from Ministry of Energy and senior official from Nepal Electricity Authority. It intensively discussed the issue related to completion of the project as soon as possible. The high level delegation led by secretary Koirala and board members duo Manoj Kumar Mishra and Bibek Tated agreed to write the letter to Korean-Exim Bank.

The construction of civil works including main tunnel, dam sites and

HARIRAM KOIRALA, secretary at the Ministry of Energy, recently visited Chameliya Hydro Power Project, leading a high-level delegation to make a breakthrough. Koirala spoke to **NEW SPOTLIGHT** on the issue.

What impacts have your visit made?

After discussions with the project officials, consultants and contractors, we have been able to understand the problems faced by the project. We have issued a 12-point direction necessary to take steps to complete the project.

Do you think the project will be completed in time?

I am hopeful that the project will be completed in the revised time period. The Ministry is ready to provide the necessary support to the project. NEA has to bear a huge loss in case the project does not meet the new timetable.

What has your mission done to address the problems related to financial and technical issues?

We have acknowledged the problems and decided to direct all the concerned agencies to work on a war footing to settle the problems, including those involving the funds. We have also decided to request Korean-Exim Bank to make the

semi underground powerhouse began in January, 2007 with target of



necessary arrangements to release the funds. I am hopeful that Korean Exim Bank will support us by releasing the fund for Korean contractors and Korean Consultants.

How hopeful are you about the project?

As over 90 percent of civil and other work has already been completed and the solution has already been found to address the tunnel squeezing and pen-stock, I think the project will be completed in its revised schedule. This is in the interest of all. The Ministry and NEA will take the necessary contingency measures to complete the project. We need to be optimistic and all the employees and people involved in the project need to work hard to meet the deadline.

completing by May 2011. Due to political unrest, it was rescheduled for June 2013.



Meeting at Chamaliya

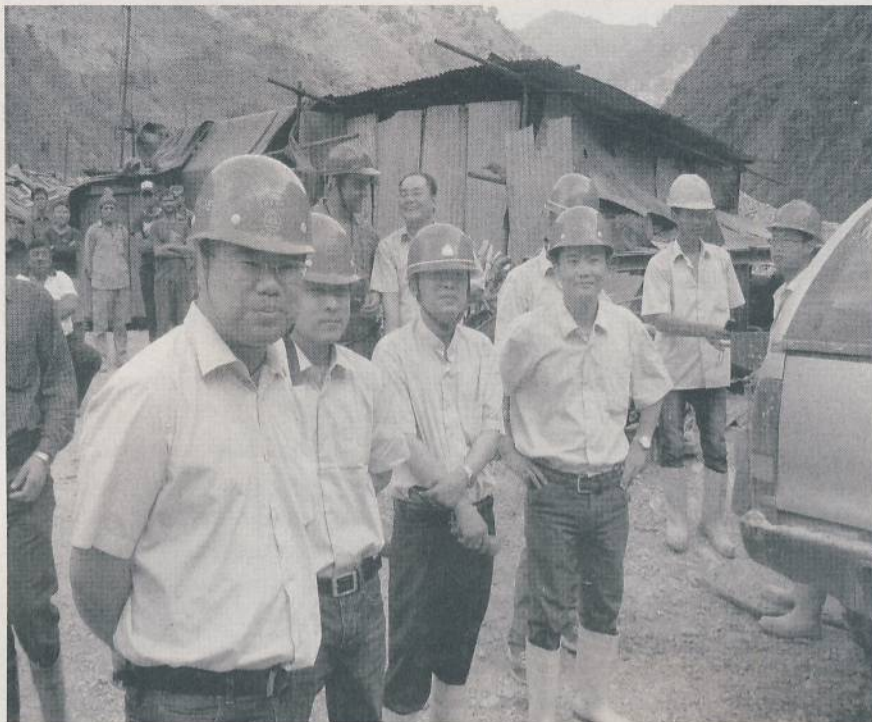
Similarly, electro-mechanical and hydro-mechanical and Balanch-Atteriya 132 K.V Transmission line work started in May 2009 by Korean contractor K.H.N.P. Korea with the target to complete it December 2011. It was rescheduled for August 2013 due to political unrest and other technical reasons.

Even the Korean consultants are not paid for 18 months due to the denial of Korean-Exim Bank to release the funds.

Initially, the cost of the project was 99.9 million dollars with soft 45 million US dollar soft loan from Korean-Exim Bank for electro-mechanical, hydro-mechanical, construction of 132 K.V transmission line and other equipments and consultants. Nepal government and Nepal Electricity Authority agreed to put 7.55 million dollars remaining budget for the project. Similarly, it was initially estimated 47.35 million dollar for civil works, land acquisition and compensation, camp construction, management, administrative and environment and engineering.

However, the recent revised cost of the project is estimated to be 158 Million US dollars due to disturbance in work, design amendment, and geological obstruction.

The detailed engineering study and tender report were prepared with assistance from Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA). The process was completed by KOICA



Chinese Workers at Dam site

appointed Hyundai Engineering Company Pvt. Ltd and Korea Water Resources Corporation as consultants with participation of Nepal Electricity Authority.

About 95 percent of the construction of dam and spillway and concreting has been completed. Digging of intake is completed and 54 percent concreting, digging of connecting tunnel is complete with 99 percent concreting, digging of two dissenting basins completed and 100 percent concreting. Main tunnels breakthrough in May 21, 2012 and 93 percent concreting completed.

Under the project, 18 kilometers of road is constructed with five bridges and one cause way. Head work, powerhouse, tunnel, tail race, land acquisition and transmission line tower are other works of note.

Due to

geological factors, squeezing occurred for a length about 843 meters from adit 3. The trial treatment for squeezing has already started but it is yet to proceed to delay in payment. Despite financial constraints, the contractor has already started the trial treatment.

Many people in far western region see this project as a gift of Korean people to people of far-western Nepal. Since Korean government supported the Chameliya Project by providing assistance to detailed engineering study and tender, the soft loan of Economic Development Cooperation Fund, Korea helped to implement the project.

It has already made drastic change in the region and after the completion of the project, it will help to make far western region as an economically potential region for industry and investment. The infrastructure built through the Korean cooperation will definitely bring drastic changes to the far west which is still a backward region.

As Nepal government has its own financial procedures to mobilise the funds, the project cost will go up by many fold in case Korean Exim Bank fails to release the required resources for the project in time. ■



Korean Contractors



Education: The Singapore Lesson

By GUNA RAJ LUITEL

I wasn't properly getting up from my bed when I got a call from an aspiring student leader. It forced me to think about Nepal's education system.

"The Student Union (SU) election is round the corner," he was elaborating. "Please arrange a space for my interview in your newspaper?"

I was speechless, but not surprised. Many of our politicians and other professionals request journalists to publish their interviews in newspapers. He had cited some anecdotes which just kept me quiet.

"You know very well how media helped Gagan Thapa to be a successful youth leader. Please help me to be like him," he was telling me.

The caller might have been correct to some extent. But Thapa's political success doesn't owe only to the media, although many of his own

political comrades think he's been raised and cared by the media. This young man has dared to be different. Even his powerful leaders were dead against him when he was pleading for a republican state. He is a dynamic youth and has surely tried his best to be on way to his destination.

There's a meaning on recollecting these experiences. We don't have meritocracy in our society. Education has been marred by the political activism. If a society doesn't believe in meritocracy, its people resort to the favoritism. We can see this everywhere in our day to day life.

The society based on favoritism doesn't give a damn to anyone who is not in power. If you're out of power, they don't care you. But again if you are there you'll be gheraoed by these people who are the aspirants. We don't need quality in education if we are hell-bent to finish meritocracy and establish a society of favoritism.

Even in our universities and colleges,

we don't have sufficient facilities to provide a hands-on education. Many of private colleges look very tall and impressive in cosmetic beauty. But they lack the proper academic environment. We can't assume what exactly is going on inside the tall buildings.

Our one and only Tribhuvan University has the glorious past, but the education standard of most of the faculties is too poor. Being a government university it has huge infrastructure and



properties. But it's not been managed well and doesn't look good when anyone from outside Nepal wants to see the greatest university.

Why do the government and the university management want to keep this university in such a pathetic state? When I see universities and campuses abroad in the best state, I feel so good and want to compare them with our own. They are well cared and kept as national treasures. They look vibrant, like best tourist places. Universities are the centers of excellence and people always feel good with their alma mater.

What happens in our place? Students want to cheat in exams. Teachers want to skip classes. There's no environment for research and innovation.

Our government has given up its education system and it's been entirely dependent on private education. Private education system has surely helped to enhance the overall quality of education. But it's not at par with the international competitive market. To achieve this goal,

the government should give a maximum priority on education.

At the end of 2012, I had a chance to observe Singapore's system of education through a grand international conference dedicated to technical and vocational education and training, TVET 2012. Even some of the German participants were mesmerized by the overwhelming success of Singapore on this field because they adopted this system from Germany.

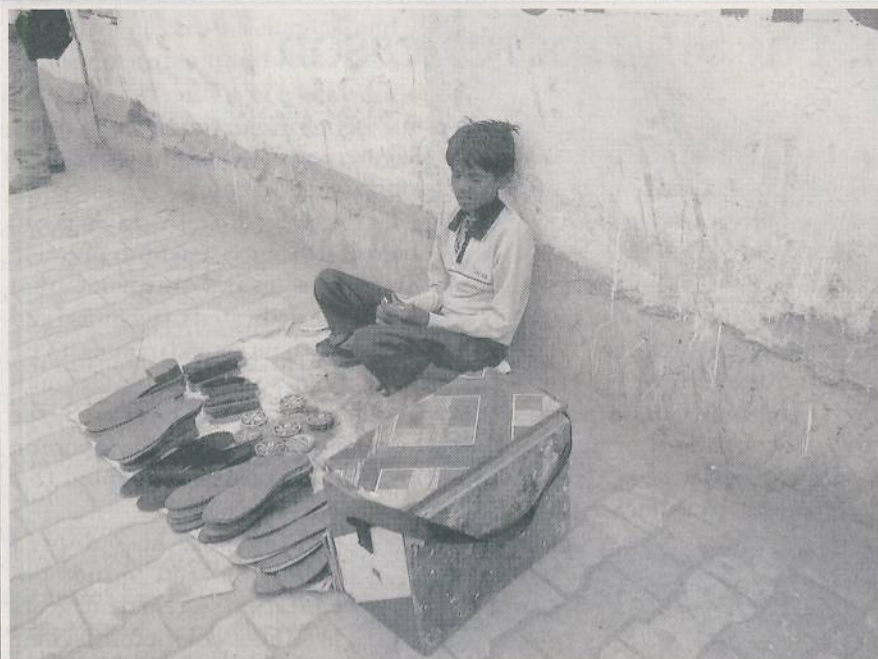
Singapore has adopted 'hands on' and 'minds on' education system to make its products competent. Their universities and vocational institutions are collaborating with famous companies like Rolls Royce. If your students are already making jet engine in your class, then surely your country moves faster.

Our leaders often mention that they're going to turn Nepal into Singapore. But Singapore is made with mindful and

practical lessons they've drawn from various countries. This kind of education has turned Singapore a high-earning country around the world. Singapore government spends huge money for educational institutions.

But where are our governments spending from the state coffers? They want to spend it to their party cadres, so called organizations in the name of martyrs and other beneficiaries of their parties. Look at the spending of our four prime ministers Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Jhala Nath Khanal, Madhav Kumar Nepal and Babu Ram Bhattarai. Altogether, they've distributed almost Rs100 crores.

If we had spent this money to develop an institution to produce the best human resources for the country, we would have made a lot of difference. The poor condition of our vocational training institutions could be improved. If we don't set up the best education system in our country, then we'll only be producing politicians to ruin the country. ■



CHILD LABOR

Search Serious Solution

By ARYAA RAJOURIA

A 12 year-old boy is not officially eligible to work, but Deepak is shining hundreds of shoes at New Road, the heart of Kathmandu, on a daily basis. He is one of a thousand of child laborers.

Originally from Gaur, the district headquarter of Rautahat, a town near the Indian Border, Deepak, on talking to him, offers many perspectives that stand out. His family is obviously very important to him. He left Gaur and came to Kathmandu with a friend in order to support his family. He has three younger brothers and one younger sister. He is determined to work every day, no matter what festivities take place. He taught himself his occupation, fixing shoes and handbags. He works as a cobbler on the sidewalks of New Road. He has worked there for 6 months and claims he lives with his friend.

In Kathmandu, he makes around two hundred to three hundred rupees a day. He cooks for himself. Every month,

he sends his family three to four thousand rupees. He says his family is devastatingly poverty stricken.

His father is a cobbler back home, while his mother is a housewife. Neither of his parents has ever been educated. Sometimes the municipality people come and harass him. It is illegal to open a stall on the sidewalk, yet he does it anyway.

He looks up with serious eyes and says, "The worst thing is when the people don't pay me after I fix their shoes or bags. Sometimes, they force me to fix their shoes and yell at me. They walk away without giving me money."

Deepak has never been to school. He can only write his first name, in Devnagari script. He is satisfied with his work and says he would rather work than attend school. When asked if he'd go to school if he didn't have to work, he looks surprised and nods. He would get an education if he were given a chance.

Deepak, an average child laborer in

Kathmandu, is only looking to survive while looking out for his family members that live miles away. However, he is still a child. In his free time, he says, he loves to play football in the nearby ground. If he didn't have to work, he says, he'd spend his days roaming about. Like most child laborers, Deepak never received a formal education. Thus, he is unaware about child labor laws. He doesn't even know what child labor is.

Ensuring that children like Deepak get to experience their rightful childhood, there are many things the community and the government can do. First and foremost, all children should be ensured a minimum level of education. They can never improve their position in life's station if they do not get some education. It should be mandatory for children to attend school until at least the 10th grade. By that time, they will have a minimum amount of knowledge of the world in order to survive comfortably.

Thirdly, there should be a place where children can get their basic needs fulfilled. If they are given food, water, and an education, they won't have to be working until they're at least 15 years of age. This will have the children become healthier, educated, and satisfied citizens. Since these children are the leaders of tomorrow, our country then our world will improve along with them.

The Children's Act of 1992 protects the physical and mental development of the Nepalese children. It also outlaws physical abuse and tries to protect children against child labor and the abuses that may come with it. This law states that children that are below the age of 14 are not allowed to work. To work as a laborer, one must be at least 16 years of age.

The Labor Act of 1992 and the Labor Rules of 1993 prohibits minors to take part in hazardous employment. The International Labor Organization

(ILO) headed the Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act of 1999. It amended the mistakes of the 1992 Labor Act. It prohibited children below the age of 14 to take part in any form of employment. The Kamaiya Labor Prohibition Act of 2001 prohibits bonded labor and frees laborers that have been bonded.

The government has made child labor laws in such a way that if followed child labor will be extinct. However, these laws are like the rules of children. Whoever participates in open child labor is ignored. There is no action taken against these criminals. This is where policemen come in. Policemen need to make helping citizens, especially children, their priority. If they don't make sure that the labor laws are strictly followed, there is no point in them.

However, there is another side to child labor we usually don't see. The most important and usual cause of child labor is because those children's parents are so underprivileged that they can't provide for the family without some economic help. Thus, they send their children to earn an income, which is desperately needed. Those parents don't send their children to work instead of school because they want to, it's because they have to. The parents love their children very much, that's the reason they send them off to work. Without the income a child makes, the entire family could face starvation. Instead of having their children go to school and facing hunger, they send the children to work so the entire family can eat. For example, Deepak's family benefits a great deal from the couple thousand rupees he sends them every month. His siblings are fed and nourished. They have shoes in the summer and jackets in the winter. Even though he has to work long, laborious hours, the welfare of his family improves abundantly.

Since child labor is sometimes



Child Labour at Brick kiln

necessary for a family, the government has to eliminate child labor without leading a family to starvation. The rules and regulations that the government has about child labor are respectable, yet they do not help the labor's family in any way. If we got rid of child labor without thinking about the large number of the Nepali population that would economically be ruined without it, we would be creating a famine.

The topic of child labor needs to be taken more seriously. The government should do something, but it should not be left only to the government to make a change. Us, the citizens, need to take action. There is something every one of us can do to make life easier for these children and their families, and we

must do all we can. Helping these children will take a fair amount of our time, money, and thoughts. However, it is absolutely necessary to help them if we want to develop a better tomorrow. A child is a child no matter where or when he was born. He deserves all the cuddling, love, and lessons that we, the lucky ones, take for granted. There is an abundance of frivolous materials and activities that we take part in every day. It is time to go beyond that and make a difference. It is time to go out there and give every possible child the emotional, physical, and mental stability a childhood provides.

Aryza Rajouria is an intern

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Nepal In The Accounts Of Early Jesuit Travellers

By BIPIN ADHIKARI

Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) was the first European who reached Central Asia and India between 343-323 BC. The British exploration, which began about the end of the 18th century triggered by the East India Company, is quite new.

Cornélius Wessels' *Early Jesuit Travelers in Central Asia: 1603-1721* [The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1924] gives an insight into the often forgotten pioneering travel and discovery by Jesuit missionaries in Central Asia, especially Tibet. The book is not on Nepal as such. However, the stories included also have some interesting references about Nepal.

Compiled by Cornélius Wessels, who was a Dutch Jesuit, it is an anthology of geographical, historical and cultural information collected by the Jesuit visitors during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The book is also a valuable source of information for anyone interested in the early exploration of the Himalayan region. The great Himalaya trail is one of the longest and highest walking trails in the world. Winding beneath the world's highest peaks and visiting some of the most remote communities on earth, it passes through lush green valleys, arid high plateaus and incredible landscapes. When the book was first published in 1924, it was said to be notable and was read with interest by all concerned. Even now, for whom the history matters, the book offers interesting insights.

Wessels analyses the travel accounts of Bento De Goes (1602-1607) who is mainly remembered as the first known European to travel overland from India to China, via Afghanistan and the Pamirs. The account of Antonio De Andrade (1624) who was the first known European to have crossed the Himalayas and reach Tibet, establishing the first Catholic mission on Tibetan soil, is the just another story in the book. There is an other interesting account of the Tsaparang Mission (1625-1640). At the time of the Mission, it was the capital of the ancient kingdom of Guje in the Garuda Valley, through which the upper Sulej River flows, in Ngari Prefecture (Western Tibet) near the border of Ladakh. The Khasas of Nepal had ruled the country for a long time.

The book also has additional

accounts of Francisco De Azevedo (1631-1632), Stephen Cecilla and John Cabral (1626-1632), John Gruber and Albert D'orville (1661-1664) and Hippolyte Desideri (1714-1722). The most interesting journeys are those of Stephen Cacella and John Cabral who visited Gyantse and Shigatse, John Grueber and Albert d'Orville (1661-64) who travelled from China through eastern Tibet to Lhasa to Kathmandu and then went on to India, and of Hippolyte Desideri (1714-22) who travelled from Kashmir along the Tsangpo to Lhasa. Desideri was in Lhasa during 1716-1721. The book also includes a comprehensive map of such travels by Dutch cartographer C. Craandijk.

John Cabral was the first European to traverse Nepal. He left Shigatse (now the second largest city in Tibet) in 1628 and traveled through Nepal on his way back to the Jesuit mission at Hugli on the Ganges Delta. "It [the object] was, in the first place, to discover this new route through the Kingdom of Nepal, in order that the mission might be continued through it, as the road through *Cocho* [Cooch Behar in the foothills of the Eastern Himalayas] is so dangerous and uncertain. I have also come [to Hugli] to settle some affairs in connection with this mission, which I think may become one of the most glorious of the Society of Jesus; it is the gate to the whole of *Tartary*, China and many other pagan countries."

"The road to these countries is not through *Cocho* but through Nepal, which borders on *Mogor* [Mughal empire]. In *Patana* [Patna] and *Rajmol* [Raimahal] the road is perfectly safe and is used by many traders. The king gave me a captain to conduct me to Nepal. The latter carried letters and presents for the king of Nepal requesting him to help me in whatever I might need, as he esteemed me highly. This was done by the King of Nepal and very kindly he directed me to *Patana*."

Some seventy pages are devoted to Hippolyte Desideri alone in the book of Wessels. He travelled by the Kuti road to Nepal, reaching Kathmandu from Tibet in December 1721. It was a little before the Gurkha conquest of the Kathmandu Valley. After a brief stay in

the Valley the journey continued to Patna and onwards through India to Madras. The description of Nepal, which is one of the earliest yet discovered, is unfortunately brief.

Nepal has been mentioned here and there. The three cities of Nepal - Kathmandu, Patan and *Bhatgaon* - is set forth with the customary fullness, while the character, religion, language and dress of the people are likewise passed in review. Desideri points out that the country became closed to the foreigners after the Newar dynasty was overthrown by Gorkha ruler. Nevertheless, it has been mentioned that one Pandit Hariram, Explorer No. 9 of Montgomerie (Journey to Shigatse) managed in 1871 to cross the *Thung La*, and left a dramatic description of the sufferings he endured on the mountain, which he attributed to emanations from the soul. At one place, further

down in the plains of Nepal, he also mentions about deadly *Oi* [*Aulo* in Nepali], which he describes as a sort of influenza active during summer, which takes many lives every year.

At times, Desideri seems to be opinionated as well. He relies on many hearsay information. He describes about the wandering Lamas or mendicant monks, and others who profess magic and make money in the Himalayan region. There is a reference on the free use they make of implements formed from human bones, such as trumpets, drums, cups and rosaries. He also gives a reference of the corpse of a Nepalese who was rescued from the water. The person had died at Kuti and had been thrown into the river, by some Tibetans, with the object of stealing the skull and turning it into a goblet. About Newars, he says, "all have deceit written on their faces. ... They are cowardly, mean and vagarious, spend little on their food, and are dirty in their habits." However, he states that the people of Nepal owed no allegiance to any foreign power.

Cornélius Wessels' *Early Jesuit Travelers in Central Asia* is a must read book. It is clear that these travelers were writing about people who were pagans in their eyes. Nevertheless, it has wealth of information to help us understand the Himalayas and the people living there.



School Sanitation: An Issue at Shadow

By BALKRISHNA POKHREL

Sanitation is considered as fundamental human rights of human being as well as the identification and the process of life of the civilized citizens. Human development and dignified lives are possible only with access to safe drinking water, adequate sanitation and improved hygiene. Due to the lack of adequate sanitation there will be adverse impact on health, education and working environment which leads to the adverse effect to entire development of human beings. There is close relationship between healthy lifestyle of the human beings and sanitation and sanitation plays a vital role to develop the self esteem and prestigious life of human beings in the society.

Although Nepal has the poorest functional drinking water and sanitation coverage for its population in South Asia, Nepal Government has made the commitment to have the universal coverage of drinking water and sanitation by 2017 and to increase the access of sanitation facilities up to 53 percent by the year 2015. But if we analyze the present statistics only 62 percent of the Nepalese people have access to the sanitation facilities. This means each day more than 10 million people defecated openly in Nepal. Every year in Nepal, 10,500 children under the age of five die due to sanitation and drinking water related diseases, more than half of which are girls.

School is the first step of socialization and development of a child. After admitted in the school a child needs the facilities of sanitation and hygiene as equal as the quality education and child friendly environment for the entire development. School determines the entire behavior of the children and new hygiene and sanitation behavior learned at school can lead to life-long positive habits of the children and which may positive influence for family and entire community.

Although water and sanitation facilities in schools is fundamental for

promoting good hygiene behavior and children's well-being, but the situation is quite different. According to the statistics among 28 thousands community school only 18 thousands schools have toilet facilities. But the coverage of functional toilet is very low in community schools. The number of the school which has the separate toilet to the girls' students is only 20 percent. If we see the situation of toilet of private



school, there are no appropriate toilets in those schools.

According to the education regulation of Nepal a toilet has to serve at most 50 students i.e. ratio of the toilet to student is equal to 1:50. But in reality a school has been serving 127 students in an average, which is more than two times than the standard set by the government. In some of the schools more than thousands students are forced to use even a single toilet.

The burden of not having sustainable and effective sanitation system falls most heavily on girls. Due to the lack of inadequate sanitation facility in the school for girls students, dropout rate among adolescent is high, so girls are denied from education. Due to the lack of toilet facilities students are forced not to drink enough water which caused the increase numbers of diseases. Due to the lack of proper toilet facilities in the school most of the students are compelled to defecate in open spaces and are exposed to severe health hazard risks as well as seen as the pollutants of environmental sanitation.

Current research shows that the

economic returns on successful sanitation projects are very high, both on a macroeconomic level and a project/household level. It is calculated that the return from the sanitation sector is nine times more the investment. Similarly proper hand washing in the critical time may reduce 45 percent of diarrheal diseases and the proper education of hygiene can reduce 36 percent of harmful disease. So it's essential to think and act about this.

Despite this situation, this sector is being neglected. There are many reasons behind the situation. The main reason for this is lack of coordination between concerned stakeholders and lack of monitoring. Similarly lack of awareness to the parents and students and carelessness also leads to

this situation. So there should be strong coordination among sector stakeholders and the parents should create the pressure for the construction and use of safe and hygienic toilet. It is equally important to monitor the situation of sanitation and hygiene from the government line agencies and parents themselves. Similarly it is equally important to conduct sanitation and hygiene promotion program at the school and community level.

Every child has a right to sanitation and hygiene. Lack of adequate sanitation facilities has a negative impact on education, health, dignity, security and economic growth. In this regard it is essential to increase in the allocation of budget for toilet construction in school and to promotion of sanitation in hygiene and to contribute to the national target of the government of Nepal. So all of the concerned stakeholders should sensitize and ignite in this matter. So its time to think and act in this matter and to bring the issue of sanitation and hygiene at the main stream of development.

*Pokhrel is Program Manager
Federation of Drinking Water and Sanitation Users,
Nepal (FEDWASUN)*

“Micro-finance Will Be Key Factors In Reducing Poverty”

PITAMBAR PRASAD ACHARYA

PITAMBAR PRASAD ACHARYA, Executive Director of the Development Project Services Center (DEPROSC-Nepal), is a well-known name in Nepal's development and microfinance sector. At a time when the contributions made by foreigners in the success of Nepali people are being lauded, Acharya stands as a proud Nepali, who has made a difference in the area of poverty reduction through micro-finance. Acharya's interview excerpts:

Since you are one of the pioneers in establishing a micro-finance institution to eradicate poverty, tell us about the state of micro-finance now.

In the beginning, we were quite successful to run the micro-finance institution. However, the situation has been getting worse in the sector over the last few years. After the induction of trade unions in micro-finance, including in the NGOs, the situation has deteriorated. In my case, trade unions have not been working as per their mandate. This hampers the process of expansion of micro-finance. I am not opposing trade unions. What I want to stress is that they must follow their own norms and act beyond individual and sup-group interest. Our experiences have shown that micro-credit is one of the most successful medium to achieve poverty reduction. We have been running micro-finance for the last 16 years. Even during the conflict period, we were very successful to operate the micro-finance schemes. It is unfortunate now that the environment is not conducive for its expansion. We are running our institutions as they were three years ago. I do not say that nothing is happening, but what I can say that our progress is much slower now. If trade unions think of programme, this sector will expand further. Micro-finance has remained one of the core programs since the beginning. Microfinance is one of the means to bring the poor out of poverty. As long as trade union organizations work as sister organizations of political parties, nothing will be possible. They need to work professionally. I am in the micro-finance sector since 1996. I started my work from Bariyarpur and Potiyahi village of Rautahat district.

What are the challenges now?

One of the challenges before us is to discipline the trade unions. If they continue to create troubles, nobody will come to put their money with our institutions. The management cannot do anything to expand the micro-credit in a situation when the trade unions appear as radical and anarchist. If the state cannot help us, I will not be able to do much as an individual. It is unfortunate that the state is not helping us. The state needs to intervene to maintain good governance in micro-finance sector. Due to non-cooperation and threat from trade unions, we are unable to perform the audit. Trade unions have been saying that they will create obstructions

in the audit until their demands are fulfilled. You can understand what would be the situation of financial institutions without the annual audit. Frankly speaking, we cannot do anything without the cooperation of state in the present context. Actually, the money collected by us is the money of the people and the state. We are collecting the savings from the people and getting the loans from individuals and various institutions. If we cannot move smoothly and with discipline, this will definitely hamper micro finance. Thus, what I want to say is that Nepal Rastra Bank, as a regulatory body, should support us to discipline the trade unions.

We want to make micro-finance sector more productive and poor oriented. We still want to work in the remote parts of Nepal.

It is globally proved that micro-finance can help reduce the rural poverty. As a person working in the micro-finance sector for the last one and a half decade, what does your experience say?

Of course, micro-finance will be key factors in reducing poverty. The situation in the rural areas has changed now. Till a decade ago, there were only a few micro-finance institutions. There has been a mushrooming growth of micro-finance institutions over the years. However, most of them are city-centric and they are yet to go to remote and rural parts of the country. The environment has further deteriorated due to unhealthy competition. We are yet to go to mountains and Himalayan region. Microfinance is not a charitable, but a social business. We cannot go in mountains and Himalayas due to heavy cost involved in it. Nobody will go to such remote areas without the support from the government. The operation cost of rural areas is high. There must be a clear-cut policy, how the government would like to support for its expansion in those areas. The state has to fix everything, including the salary. We are ready to pay the salary and other benefits as fixed by the state. What we want is a conducive environment. We can make a lot of difference to uplift the rural life. Micro-finance also helps to empower the women and change the education and health status. In rural areas, the lending sector is major area of exploitation. After implementation of micro-finance scheme, such exploitation also comes to an end.

How do you look at the role of the trade union?

Due to trade unionism, we are facing difficulties in carrying on with our expansion program. We are very much worried with the situation. DEPROSC-Nepal is an NGO. However, there are three trade unions within it. We are facing difficulties in dealing with them. You cannot plead for all unions. There are contradictory views. Trade unions are now affiliated to political parties and they work as party

sister organizations. Moreover, trade unions bargain against the minimum regulatory process like statutory audit. Tell me how we can work in such a situation. If we transfer staff, they decline to go new places. The state needs to intervene to discipline the trade unions.

What is the state of DEPROSC?

There are 52,000 clients under DEPROSC micro-finance. We have also a bank which was opened ten years ago. The bank is functioning well. We have a transaction of 1.1 billion rupees. Out of this, Rs. 400 million is the deposit from the public money. We have also taken loan from commercial banks to invest in rural Nepal. The loan invested by micro-finance produces a major contribution in enhancing

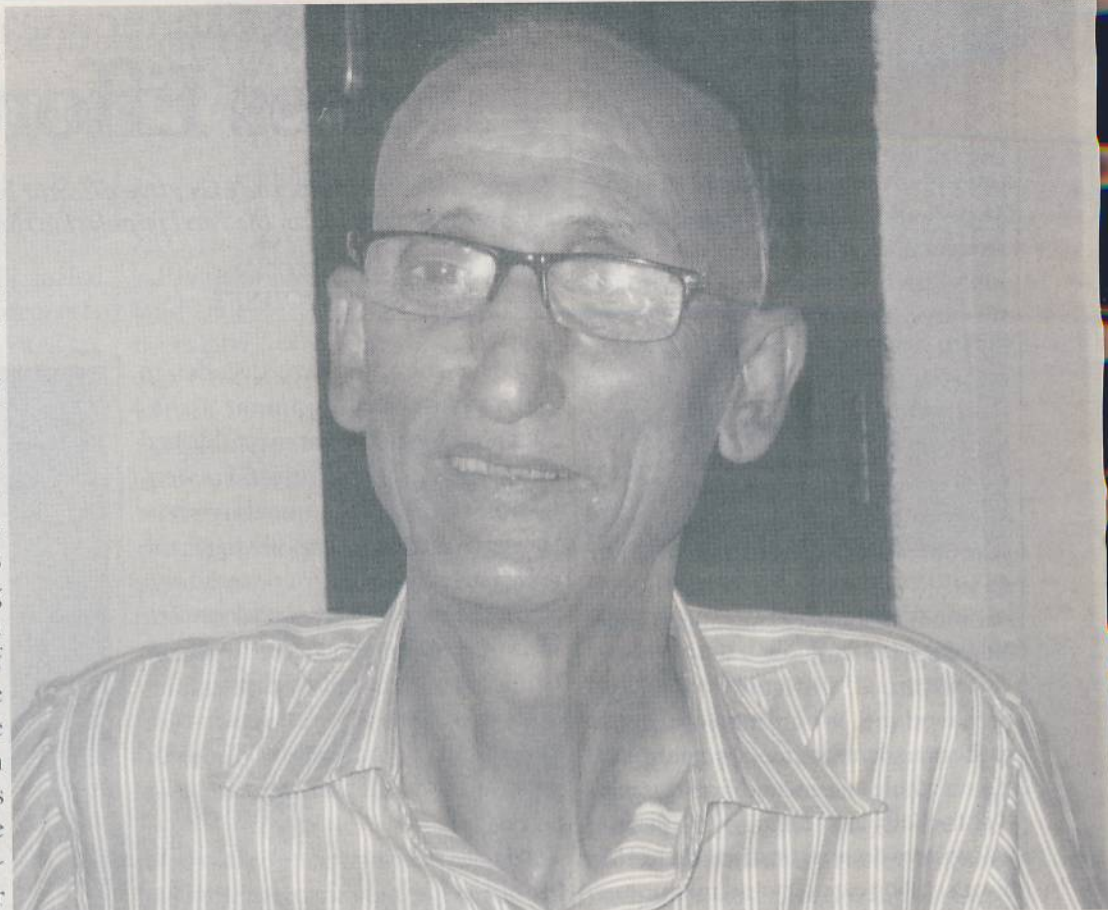
production, and eradicating poverty. However, we need a conducive environment to expand our programs. This is the reason we are calling for intervention by the state.

In how many districts is DEPROSC working now?

We have been running micro-finance in 11 districts. We have been implementing development programs in other 20 districts. Under the partnership with NABIL bank, we are investing the money in rural parts. With support from various organizations, including NABIL, DEPROSC and other NGOs, we have raised 160 million rupees in capital and applied for Nepal Rastra Bank registration. However, our proposal has been pending in the bank for last three years. With the paid up capital of 160 million rupees, we want to establish NADEP bank. Our aim is to institutionalize the micro-credit by DEPROSC. We are yet to get the permission. We hope Nepal Rastra Bank will give us the permission in time. We have already completed the process needed to get the permission for a bank. It is Nepal Rastra Bank to decide on it. As soon as Nepal Rastra Bank issues permission, we will start to provide services in the remote rural parts of Nepal. We will also work in nine remote districts classified by Nepal Rastra Bank.

Since you have been providing such a large number of employment opportunities and serving the poor people, how do trade unions come here?

The present trade union act says that employees can form



a trade union in an organization having eight employees or more. It is the right of every employee to open the trade union. I warmly welcome their presence in the office. However, they have to work as an organization protecting the interest of trade unions not as a bargaining hub for an individual, sub-group and sister organizations of the political parties. I am not against the trade unions, if they support management to enhance the quality and make it more transparent. I am only against the undisciplined act in the name of trade unions. There must not be politicization of trade union work.

Having spent such a long time serving the people, don't you get upset when your work is disrupted by undisciplined workers?

I don't feel anything bad in the day time. When I go to bed, I feel upset, not because of trade unions, but because of my inability to expand our programs in rural and remote Nepal. Had I been allowed to work smoothly, our institutions would have reached in many rural parts of Nepal. It is very sad to see trade unions are even obstructing the audit. How can you raise funds without an audit? Everybody wants audit report to fund us. I was trapped in an odd situation.

You have been working in rural parts of Nepal serving the interest of people? Why do political parties obstruct your program?

In my whole life, I have been involved in a number of

PITAMABER PARASAD AHCHARYA

Tireless Efforts

Despite all difficulties, the executive director of DEPROSC-Nepal remains committed to transform the rural population through micro-finance

By A CORRESPONDENT

programs, and my projects are always apolitical. We invite the representatives of all political parties in our programs. I would like to appeal to all political parties not to treat trade unions as their sister organizations. They should not be made something like student unions. The country will suffer a lot if there is such damage. We used to have 700-800 employees in DEPROSC, but we have now little more than 300. Due to disruptions created by trade unions, 500 people have lost the employment opportunity. Even we are not pretty sure whether our programs will move or not. Last year, our offices were shut down for 120 days. We want a conducive environment for work and support from Nepal Rastra Bank.

Despite all difficulties, we have been working. We are moving to mid-western region with food program. We have a whole system and institutions. If somebody asks us to go to Karnali, we can revive our institutions there. We have a strong capacity and manpower with us. We need to go for rural and remote parts of Nepal. That is our vision. NGOs should go to rural parts of Nepal. Our targets should be the areas where the government fails to reach.

How do you view the future?

If the present trend of trade unionism continues, it will have far reaching consequences in the areas of microfinance. It is very sad that we are unable to implement our poverty alleviation programs because of obstruction by the trade unions. I have been requesting the friends in trade unions to follow their work ethics. We are not getting support from trade unions. It is unfortunate that even the state is not supportive our case.

What about your bank?

Since the last three years, I have been visiting Nepal Rastra Bank time and again, making efforts to open another micro-finance bank. It is very sad that Nepal Rastra Bank is yet to permit me. We are expecting that the central bank will issue a license to us.

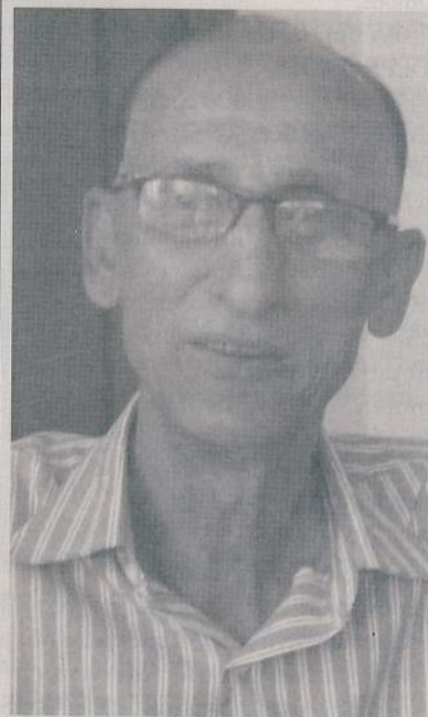
After spending two decades in Agriculture Development Bank, Pitamber Prasad Acharya established the Development Project Services Center (DEPROSC-Nepal) to serve the needy and poor people living in the rural parts of Nepal.

In the two decades, Acharya went from place to place and region to region, particularly in the hills and mountains of far-west and mid-west regions. He also started micro-finance as part of his program to lend money to the poor people.

He was sad when trade unions held his office for 120 days. Despite this pathetic situation, Acharya has never been tired as he continues to work in the interest of the poor through the micro-finance sector. Nepali people, who don't tire while lauding the models of micro-credit promoters from other parts of the world, however, are yet to recognize a person like Acharya, who has proved that micro-finance can bring change in the livelihood of the poor.

With over 50,000 members, his microfinance schemes have made a lot of change as thousands of people were able to come out of absolute poverty with that support in the period. Since the last three years, his speed to reach more poor people in rural areas has been obstructed following regular interventions from the trade unions.

DEPROSC-Nepal's micro-credit institutions were shut down for 120 days by trade unions affiliated to various political parties. This is one of the worse situations he has ever felt in his life. Despite difficulties and challenges,



Acharya's objective to serve the interest of rural poor is yet to die.

"I will continue to work for the poor and vulnerable people. Whatever the cost I have to bear, I want to contribute something to change the life of the poor people," said Acharya.

As he served for more than two decades in Agriculture Development Bank, he entered the micro-finance sector very reluctantly. "I had to work day and night. Once you start micro-finance, there will be little time left for you. The time passes so quickly, even faster than the day and night. My experience is that once you are involved in the micro-finance sector, you will not find time to live a life luxury. There are billions of rupees in the hands of our friends who want to put the money in micro-finance bank," said Acharya.



Diplomat's Drawings

By ARYAA RAJOURIA

As the sun began to set hazily at half past five on the 19th of April 2013, a fairly large crowd gathered in front of Siddhartha Art Gallery, Babermahal Revisited. These people were anxiously waiting for the much-anticipated art show to open. This show was different from most, as the artist was known more in Nepal as an ambassador. The art show featured works by Marcos B. Duprat Ribeiro, the ambassador of Brazil to Nepal.

Sangita Thapa, the curator and owner of Siddhartha Art Gallery, and Kunda Dixit, the editor of the Nepali Times, introduced the art show saying many positive things about the ambassador and his work. Before the doors to the gallery were officially opened, the ambassador spoke himself. In a very delicate form of English, with a slight Brazilian twang, he expressed his gratitude. He was grateful to be here, in Nepal, and to have his art showcased.

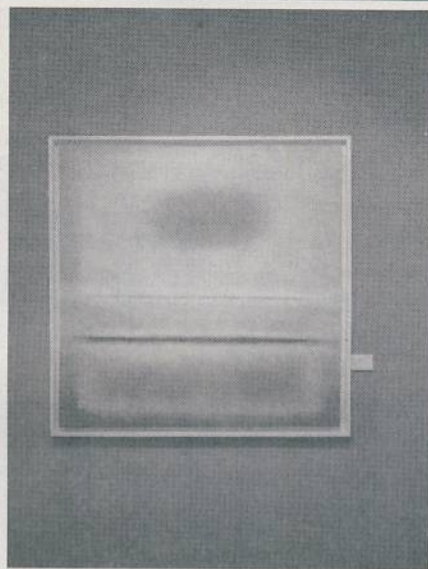
The envoy mentioned he had previously been the ambassador to nine other countries. How did Nepal stand out from the rest? As he said, "Nepal is very special, I see the possibility of beauty everywhere." With that, the doors of the 'Genesis of Color' opened.

This particular art show had 25 works by Duprat himself. Out of the

25, 5 were painted between the years 1997 and 2010. The rest were created after Duprat's arrival in Nepal. He called these pieces of works, his 'color landscapes'. He used mostly oils. The use of oils allowed him to layer and add depth to his work. Where does he get his ideas in order to make such masterpieces? He declared, "The quality of light in the Kathmandu Valley and the mystical proximity of the high mountains have been a significant source of inspiration in the making of these works."

Most of his images are formed with use of pastels. However, some include rasher, harsher, brighter colors in order bring out details. The older the work, the darker the colors used. In his most recent works, pastel colors are mostly visible. Once in a while, the pastel routine is unexpectedly broken with a brilliant hue. Almost all the pieces have light integrated within them. The light in the painting is accentuated by using different, unforeseen colors. In the sky, flowery pinks and grape-tinted purples are added along with the usual sky blues and whites. These images use many different quantities of lights, space, and color.

Mountains are in abundance within his painting. In some, majestic



mountains are seen standing strong above clouds while in other, the sun is lavishly painted, along with the sea. The brilliant, luminous sun dominates the canvas bringing with it a sense of tranquility and serene authority. The sun and sea are drawn from different perspectives, creating a layer-like look that of sedimentary rocks. Narrow pathways and large windows are depicted in profusion. Rivers and stones are created with such delicacy that the movement of the water is almost visible.

There were a few works that especially stood out. One painted canvas was named, "Sky and Sea". In this particular one, the large sun is vividly shining in the middle. The horizon is visible and the sea lies beneath it, tucked neatly. This painting is done mostly using pale pastel colors. However, a bright red hue placed right under the horizon, breaks this monotonous pattern. Gentle, unexpected color bursts such as this red, cause specific details to stand out.

Brazil is a country known for the Amazon River and its love for soccer. However, with an artistic Ambassador like Ribeiro, Brazil may be known for its art too. The ambassador's art exhibition will remain till the 2nd of May 2013. If you happen to be around that area anytime soon, the gallery should be a necessary stop. ■





PRISM WORK

No Waste

With funds from the European Union, PRISM has been able to enhance the works of garbage collectors

By HANNEKEVAGENENDE

Sakhiva Khatun, who lives in a slum at the bank of Bagmati River in Teku, at the heart of capital Kathmandu, is serving the people by cleaning the garbage from different parts of the city. Although she supports the cleaning of the city without any formal job, Khatun is yet to receive any recognition or respect from the government and the public.

"All people hate us and even stray dogs bark at us. It looks like we are the most hated people in the city," said Khatun. "I have to wake up every day at 3 in the morning to collect garbage from various parts of the city. People often shout at us when we collect their wastes, which is very humiliating."

Sakhiva Khatun is one of many waste pickers.

Ram Pukar Das, 38, from Janakpur, has a similar story to share. We

continue to clean the city but what we want is respect and good treatment. According to an estimate, there are 10,000-15,000 waste pickers and 700-800 Kabadis (waste/scrap dealers). Although these workers play a vital role in dealing with the waste generated in the Valley, the profession is considered shameful and degrading, and its contribution is unrecognized by society as well as local and state authorities.

To encourage and recognize their work, EU Ambassador to Nepal, Dr. Alexander Spachis recently gave away safety equipment to a group of waste pickers in Patan melting with them. "I am very happy to be with all of you. Like in all cities of the world, your role and duty is most important. Everybody needs to respect your work," said Spachis who distributed the safety

materials for 26 informal workers and 150 formal workers with Lalitpur Municipality.

With the support from European Union, Practical Action has been launching Poverty Reduction of Informal Workers in Solid Waste Management (PRISM) Project with five other partners like Centre for Integrated Urban Development (CIUD), Solid Waste Management and Resource Management Centre (SWMRMC), UN-Habitat Water for Asian Cities Program Nepal, Nepal Reuse and Recyclable Goods Entrepreneurs Association (NRRGEA) executing the project.

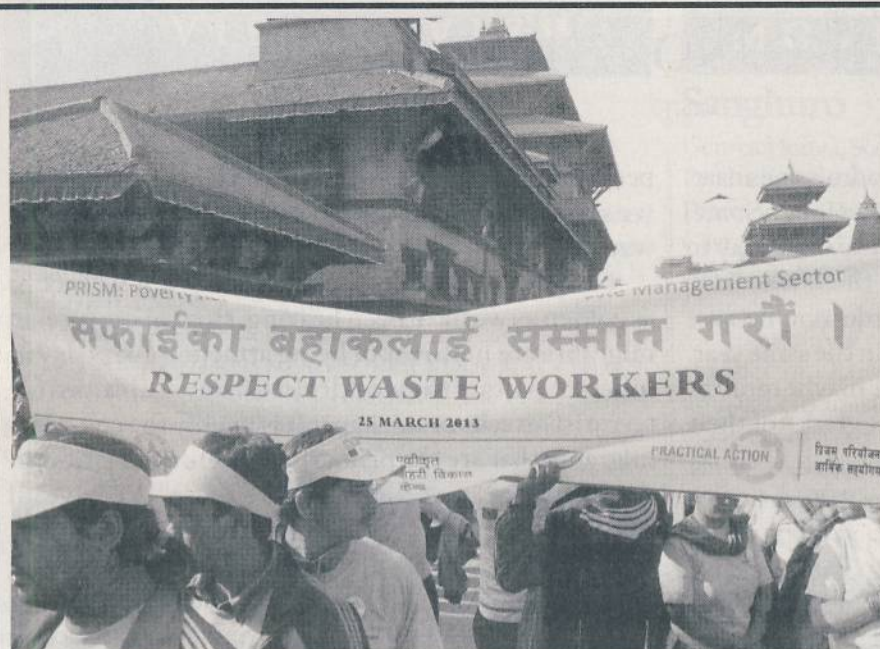
Since its inception two years ago, the project has been organizing various programs to recognize the works of waste workers by providing them safety related matter. This was the part of the program when EU ambassador to Nepal Spachis provided safety equipment to the workers.

"After implementation of the program, we have seen a lot of change in the quality of the workers," said Achyut Lunitel, Regional Director, of the Practical Action, South Asia Office.

According to a study, urban waste pickers are among the poorest people in Kathmandu valley. Most live in squatter settlements along the riverbanks. They are exposed to many health risks through unprotected handling of waste materials, and due to their poor living conditions. Working in 5 municipalities of Kathmandu valley, the overall objective of the PRISM is improving the living conditions of informal workers in the solid waste management sector.

The project targets around 4,000 waste workers, with all having an increase in health and safety leading to better health outcomes, 2,000 having increased incomes, and 1,000 having access to affordable health care and insurance. "We expect that at least 50% of beneficiaries will be women."

Approximately 10,000 to 15,000



people in Katmandu Valley work in the solid waste management sector. Informal waste workers (IWWs) belong to the poorest of Nepali society and are highly vulnerable to health problems because of their daily contact with hazardous substances. On top of that, they are stigmatized by everyone, despite their vital contribution to the environment. PRISM is a joint project between the European Union and the UK-based INGO Practical Action. Through workshops and campaigns PRISM tries to improve the IWWs' perilous living conditions and attempts to raise awareness to both society and these waste workers. In one year, the project is coming to an end. But did it pay off?

The EU-funded project, which is in its second year, is being jointly implemented by Practical Action, Centre for Integrated Urban Development, Solid Waste Management and Resource Mobilization Centre of the Nepal Government and the Lalitpur Sub metropolitan city with the goals of addressing many cross cutting issues such as health, education, skills development.

The project is directly linked with the informal workers in the four major cities – Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Bhaktapur and Kirtipur and aiming at

benefitting five thousand waste pickers in the Kathmandu valley. “This is a unique project to address the issues related to informal workers of solid waste,” said Amrita Shakya, Director General of the Solid Waste Management and Resource Mobilization Centre. “Society needs to recognize the works they have done.”

Nabin Bikash Maharjan of the Centre for Integrated Urban Development (CIUD), implementing partner for this project, explains the necessity of the initiative, which is funded eighty per cent by the European Union. “Many things are going wrong in the solid waste management sector,” he states.

According to Maharjan, they just make enough for their day-to-day life due to a lack of bargaining skills. He emphasizes the importance of IWWs entering groups. “These people make an average wage of 200 rupees per day. They sell what they collect to a scrap owner, who will give them just enough money for the day. Most of them are unable to save.”

By way of accessing a group, PRISM teaches an IWW about programs and activities such as microfinance. Further, one of the main goals of the project is to increase the IWWs income with 30 per cent. But how will that be sustainable in the long

term? “For example”, says Maharjan, “one group of 35 IWWs has set up a business plan for a plastic tearing machine.”

With objectives such as these, PRISM directly helps at least 4,000 informal waste workers in the Kathmandu Valley. A striking finding appeared during a baseline survey that almost half of the IWWs are of Indian origin. Maharjan explains why, “There is an open border between India and Nepal and Indian comes to Nepal and are likely to end up in this work.”

With these men, the awareness campaigns concerning health and safety definitely have paid off. “If we don't wear our safety equipment, we can cut ourselves on metal or glass,” Das says. Although these youngsters enjoy their work, it is their dream to start a brick business.

Next year, the PRISM project will end. Nearly all stakeholders agree that three years won't suffice. “At least ten years are needed for a project like this,” Sarala Shrestha says. Project Manager for Practical Action Nepal, Srijana Devkota Adhikari agrees. “There is enough money but too little time. We have already worked non-stop on this for twenty months. It took us over a year only to identify 4,000 IWWs. Slowly but surely, we are seeing the results. We piloted this project but the municipalities need to make it sustainable,” she says. ■

NEW SPOTLIGHT

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Home Is Like Nowhere Else



By ADITI ARYAL

As the deadlines to apply for college admissions near, prospective students are becoming anxious. Some, rejected in the past by colleges of repute, will pray to find a good college to go this time. For those who have decided to skip a year or two, it is even harder now because so many other graduates are applying in the same year. And some will decide to let go a year or maybe more to improve their SAT score or get subject grades of their choices.

perhaps these values become instilled in us so well that we start to see the country and her people in similar ways.

But once we move out for study or work, it will not be as golden as we have been hearing. How many foreign migrants are in threat of being attacked every day in different parts of the world? How many are blamed for terrorist attacks or mishaps? It is mainly the countless migrants that are the primary suspects and victims in

cases like these. We have all been witness to so many Nepalese citizens being trafficked, sold or illegally sent to many countries in attraction and promise of a better life for studies or work. Some are stranded in a different place than as promised and are left to fend for themselves. Women, particularly maids, in the Arab states have always been telling about how mistreated they are; made to work for as much as twenty hours in a day, beaten, sexually assaulted and underpaid.

Amazingly, we are ready to work as hard as we can in



Countless paper works fill up the free days. So much of money is pooled in for attempts to get in, let alone get selected and move out abroad. The fear of having to face embarrassment for being rejected by the college of your choice cannot be surpassed and it builds more like paranoia over time. And after getting a seat in the college of your choice, the pain of having to move away from family is very depressing. And all this, year after year, repeats because our home country cannot do enough in terms of education to lure us to stay home for our higher studies.

How many of the total students having passed high school decide to stay back out of choice? A handful. We are molded in ways that we want to move out for higher studies and for work. We are made to learn that there is nothing in here to attract us; no opportunities, no basic amenities, no praise for talents and no rewards for hard work. We are taught that the ever unstable political system is corrupt and favors only the ones in power. And

foreign lands but when it comes to doing the same amount of work here we do not. We may work as petty laborers outside, leave everything we own and still be happier than we are here. We bask in the pride of all the remittance money we get back home but it does not ever occur once to us that we should be making all this money here, at home. We should be creating opportunities to work in different arenas of work. Entrepreneurship should be encouraged and fostered. More than that we as citizens should realize the importance of not migrating and help develop the economy by the same hard work we have been giving elsewhere.

We need to stay here and study our nation well before trying to explore the geography of the world. We need to know where and why do we stand and try and change that by knowing our country well not the working and functioning of some multinational. And most important of all, we must learn to love the nation we were born to and preserve what is left of her. ■

MOVIE REVIEW

Ek Thi Daayan



Ekta Kapoor has earned the title of a prolific producer, attempting films on varied subjects in a relatively short span — biopic [THE DIRTY PICTURE], gangsters [SHOOTOUT AT LOKHANDWALA and ONCE UPON A TIME IN MUMBAAI], horror [RAGINI MMS], laughathons [KYAA KOOL HAIN HUM and KYAA SUPER KOOL HAIN HUM], realistic [LOVE SEX AUR DHOKHA]... the enterprising producer now adds yet another genre to her remarkable repertoire: Supernatural thriller. A genre that's intimidating as well as thrilling.

Do ghosts/spirits exist? What about black magic? Is it a myth? Does it really work? Last year, films like RAAZ 3 [a fading actress indulges in black magic to settle scores with an upcoming actress], TALAASH [the spirit of a dead woman kills the perpetrators of the crime] and more recently, AATMA [the fight between a woman and her dead husband over their child] took the spectator into the world of aatmas and spirits. EK THI DAAYAN may come across as yet another fare that talks of ghosts/witches, occult and the likes, but it is, perhaps, the first Hindi movie that presents witchcraft most realistically. Also, it's one of the most eerie experiences to unfold on the Bollywood screen.

Bobo [Emraan Hashmi] is India's leading magician. But unknown to even his girlfriend Tamara [Huma Qureshi], Bobo's life is falling apart. His constant hallucinations leave him with no option but to seek psychiatric help. Going through hypnosis, a terrifying story about his childhood surfaces involving a sinister power called 'Daayan', who has not only destroyed his family, but also promised to return to haunt Bobo.

Bobo chooses to ignore it and move on with his life. Just when his career and love life is at full throttle, enters the irresistible Lisa Dutt [Kalki Koechlin]. Bobo is convinced that she is the daayan. But is she, really? Or is he just losing his mind?

There is something out there that is inexplicable, that is beyond the realm of human comprehension that EK THI DAAYAN taps grippingly. First-time director Kannan Iyer steps forward to offer something radically different in this genre and for those who believe in daayans — even those who don't — will take to the plot instantly because Kannan's storytelling is lucid and graspable. The flashback portions in the first hour are noteworthy, with Emraan revisiting his childhood. At the same time, Kannan ensures that there's a love story running parallel to the main story, besides integrating the mandatory songs in the narrative, thus steering clear of being labeled 'dark and dry' in the process.

(Courtesy: Bollywood Hungama)



MOVIE PREVIEW

Sanghuro

Genres: Drama, Social

Producer: Sameer Mainali

Director: Joes Pandey

Cast: Deeya Maskey, Aruna Karki, Dayahang Rai, Rabi Giri, Shushank Mainali

Sanghuro is the Psycho-social conflict of characters that leads unusual circumstances and raises many unsolved questions.. Desires which have been kept hidden from our consciousness for long are bound to surface at one point or another in our lives. When this happens, a conflict emerges. The new Nepali film Sanghuro deals with such a story. Release Date: 10-May-2013



Iron Man 3

Genres: Action, Adventure, Science Fiction

Director: Shane Black

Cast: Robert Downey Jr., Guy Pearce, Gwyneth Paltrow

Tony Stark uses his ingenuity to fight those who destroyed his private world and soon goes up against his most powerful enemy yet: the Mandarin. Release Date: 10-May-2013



Aashiqui 2

Genres: Romance

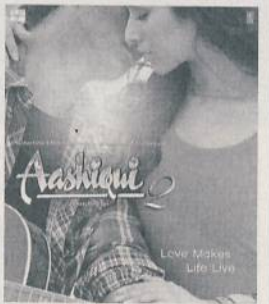
Producer: Bhushan Kumar, Kishan Kumar, Mukesh Bhatt

Director: Mohit Suri

Cast: Aditya Roy Kapoor, Shraddha Kapoor, Shaad Randhawa

Aashiqui 2 is a musical love story with Rahul Jaykar (Aditya Roy Kapoor) and Arohi Shirke (Shraddha Kapoor) as the lead characters. Aashiqui 2 takes you through a musical journey of two lovers who go through love and hate, twists and turbulence, success and failure in their lives.

Release Date: 26-Apr-2013



Bombay Talkies

Genres: Drama

Producer: Ashi Dua

Director: Karan Johar, Dibakar Banerjee, Anurag Kashyap, Zoya Akhtar

Cast: Amitabh Bachchan, Rani Mukharjee, Randeep Hooda, Katrina Kaif, Anaita Nair

Bombay Talkies is an anthology film consisting of four short films by prominent filmmakers

Release Date: 03-May-2013



Myadhe Joro, Aka, Typhoid Fever



By BUDDHA BASNYAT, MD

Nepalis suffer so much from typhoid fever that we have a colloquial name for it, Myadhe Joro. Observant patients in the preantibiotic era found out that the fever caused by typhoid usually lasts for about 3 weeks; there was a certain time frame (myadh). So if you could hold off not succumbing to your illness in that time frame, you made it. Typhoid or enteric fever annually affects some 27 million people in the world with at least 300, 000 deaths. The bulk of the problem is in "hamro" South Asia, that is India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal. We have the dubious distinction of being the typhoid capitals of the world.

The bulk of the problem is in "hamro" South Asia, that is India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal. We have the dubious distinction of being the typhoid capitals of the world.

Typhoid is basically a disease brought about by poor hygiene, that is it is caused by fecal oral transmission. Eating and drinking bacteria (salmonella typhi and paratyphi) contaminated food stuff is easy to do in Nepal. Intriguingly, typhoid fever is human specific. So our loyal friends the dogs are spared, thank heavens; otherwise all dogs in Nepal would be dead of typhoid.

Shah kings to Everest summiteers to Nepali prime ministers to the Nepali villager have had a taste of this illness. In fact it used to be so common that as a health professional if all you knew in terms of fever was how to

effectively treat typhoid fever, your practice would be a grand success, "mala mal"! Typhoid fever came to the limelight in the world stage some year ago because salmonella typhoid resembling DNA was extracted from some of the skeletal remains of victims of the Plague of Athens (450 BC) suggesting it could be a cause of that famous plague.

Because drugs are easily available over the counter, drug resistance (especially drugs like ciprofloxacin) is a problem. Amazingly older drugs like chloramphenicol are making an effective comeback in the treatment of typhoid.

For prevention, it is important to drink clean drinking water, wash your hands with soap and water and eat hot steaming, well cooked food, especially during the summer months, when this disease peaks. What about vaccinations? Since most of the people who suffer from this illness are school going children about 15 years old, it would be ideal if our government provided this vaccination for free to this age group, as mandated by the WHO. Ironically, the only ones using the typhoid vaccines today are tourists from yonder lands.

Dead Sea Stones Leave For Mt Everest

A joint team led by Embassy of Israel in Kathmandu; Mayor of Tamar Regional Council-Dead Sea Israel; Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation and Nepal Tourism Board left for Namche Bazaar on 21 April 2013 to place a stone brought from the Dead Sea in Israel at the base of Mt. Everest, Namche Bazaar.

The main ceremony in Nepal will be held on the 23 of April 2013 at Namche Bazaar to unveil the monument brought from the Dead Sea. The monument has a stone from the Dead Sea in Israel, the lowest place in the world embedded into it. Dov Litvinoff, Mayor of the Dead Sea Municipality in Israel, along with his team brought the stone to Nepal for the ceremony.

A matching monument will be placed by the Dead Sea on 16 May 2013, which will have a stone embedded in it

from Mt. Everest. The main objective of these projects is not only to promote natural beauty and cultural heritages of the two countries but also to mark the longstanding and the friendly relations between the two countries.

The idea is to further strengthen the existing good and friendly relations between Nepal and Israel and bring it to the people to people level. The placing of the monuments will also encourage more people to visit the regions and to promote internal as well as international tourism.

This is the joint project of the Embassy of Israel in Kathmandu, Embassy of Nepal in Israel and the Governments of the respective countries. On 4 September 2012, the first Nepal-Israel Joint Stamps carrying Mount Everest and the Dead Sea were released simultaneously in Nepal and in Israel. The project has received huge response in Nepal and in Israel. It received wide coverage in the Nepali and Israeli media as well in the international press.

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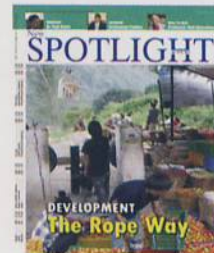
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