



OPINION:
Dipak Gyawali



ENCOUNTER:
Kåre Vollan

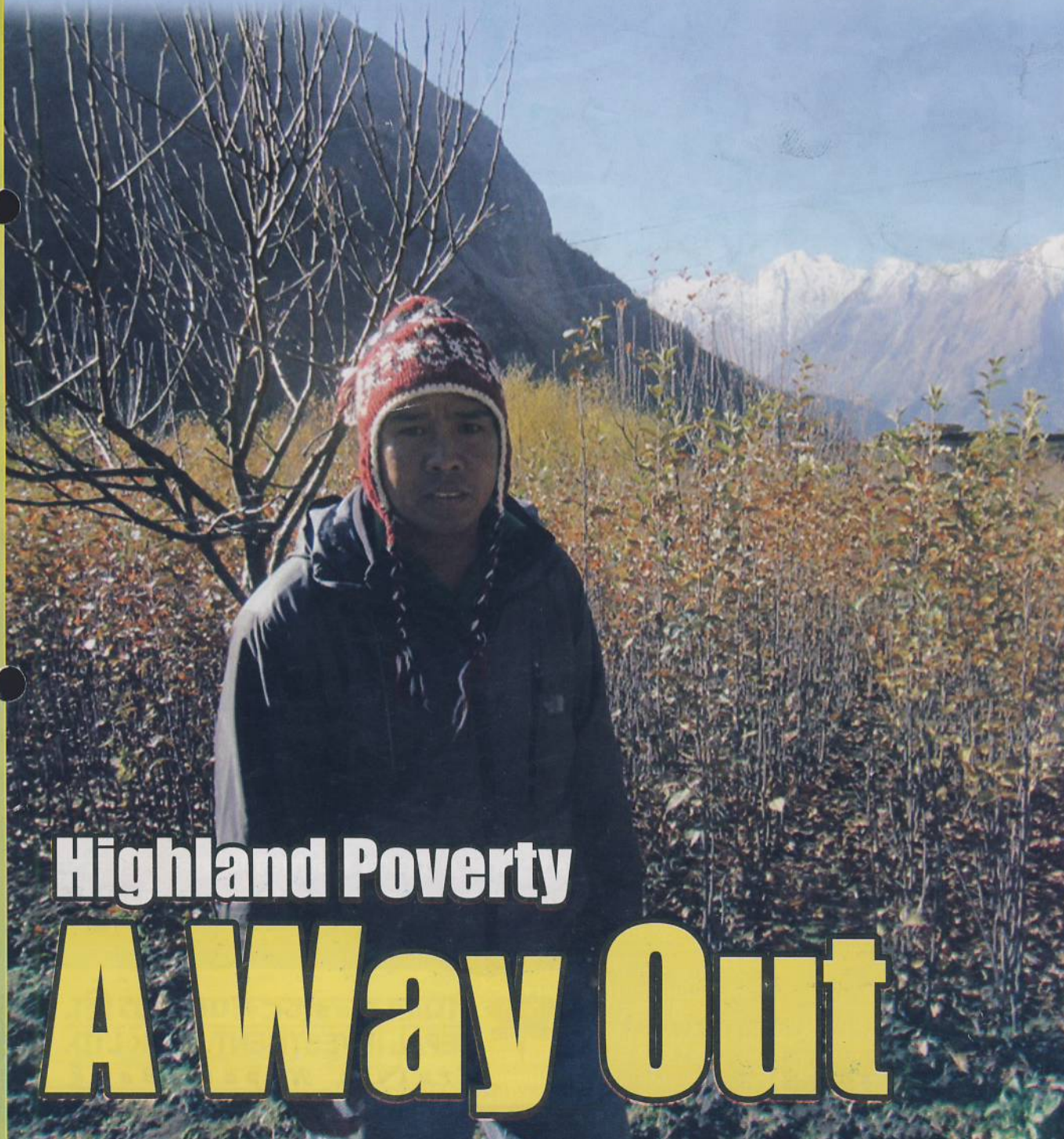


VIEWPOINT:
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From The Editor

As the leaders of major political parties are yet to settle their political differences over formation of the new government, uncertainty lingers over what course political equation will take in the coming days. When Nepali Congress, CPN-UML and UCPN-Maoist have been putting forth their own demands and agenda, the prolonged political instability shows no sign of abating. As the situation lingers on, we have decided to write about the development projects aimed at reducing poverty as our lead story for this issue. Based on the project supported by the Asian Development Bank, the cover story analyses various models of development implemented in many parts of the country and transformation they have brought about in the rural and interior parts of Nepal. Along with this, we have also analyzed the implications of the recent decision of the European Union to ban the Nepalese aircraft from flying in Europe. As Nepal's air safety is worsening, the decision of the European Union may work like a wake up call for Nepal to improve the air safety standards. Along with this, there are also the regular columns as in the past. The world community has been saddened by the news of the demise of a great leader, Nelson Mandela, a man who is known for his reconciliatory work to bring South Africa's politics back on track. The new Spotlight family joins the world to be with the South African people in mourning the loss of the great human of our era.

Keshab

Keshab Poudel

Editor

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Patan Royal Palace Restored

Conservation experts, representatives from the government of Nepal and the diplomatic community joined members of the Patan community on December 1 to celebrate the completion of the restoration of Patan Royal Palace. The preservation of this historic site was made possible through a \$1.1 million grant provided by the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP).

U.S. Ambassador Peter W. Bodde and Embassy officials congratulated the local community and AFCP partner, Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT), for the



project's great success. Ambassador Bodde said, "The Ambassadors Fund is among the U.S. Government's most significant cultural initiatives abroad. It makes me very proud as an American to know that my country supports and protects conservation efforts like this one around the world."

KOICA Consultative Workshop

The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) is organizing a consultative workshop on KOICA volunteers program for its partner organizations.

All the KOICA volunteers, representatives of the recipient organizations and officials from different ministries of Nepal are attending this workshop. Its prime objective is to review and evaluate KOICA's volunteer program and to strengthen mutual relationship between KOICA and partner organizations through exchanges of the best practice and new ideas about how to improve international volunteer program in Nepal among volunteer-related organizations.

According to a press release of KOICA-Nepal, KOICA volunteer program is an important aspect of KOICA's cooperation program in Nepal, which supports transfer of Korean knowledge and experiences directly in the grass root level in order to make practical contributions to the socio-economic development of the partner countries.

KOICA Organizes Field Workshop

The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) organized a week-long workshop in "Maternal and Child Health

Promotion from Gender Perspective 2013" from December 01- 07, 2013 in Godavari, Lalitpur, Nepal.

According to a press release issued by KOICA-Nepal, a total of 27 participants from three South Asian countries, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Nepal, who have ample knowledge in maternal and child health sector, are participating in the program.



Resident Representative of KOICA Nepal Office Ms. HaengLan Jo mentioned, "This is the first case that KOICA Nepal Office hosted a field workshop with the participation from the three different countries in South Asia," and "I hope the program will provide a platform where all participants can share the updates on the maternal and child health situation and improve individual capabilities to implement related programs to solve the given challenges in each country."

Dr. Padam Bahadur Chand, Chief of Policy Planning and International Coordination Division from Ministry

of Health and Population welcomed all invitees from Bangladesh and Myanmar to Nepal, in order to see the Nepal's experience which shows how Nepal's health policy is implemented in the real

US Support To Airport Rescue Station

The United States Government, in partnership with the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN), will provide assistance worth \$462,000 to retrofit the Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) Crash, Fire and Rescue Station to make it more resistant to earthquakes. On 15 November 2013, the Office of Defense Cooperation, U.S. Embassy Kathmandu and CAAN officially signed a Memorandum of Understanding to carry out the project. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, working with local contractors, will provide design and construction services. Work will begin in January 2014. This project is a part of a greater plan for TIA infrastructure improvement through the Seismic Resistance Program.

India supports river bank projects in Nepal

India handed over Rs 374.68 million to Nepal to build embankments on three border rivers to control floods affecting both neighbours. The constructions along the Lalbakeya, Bagmati and Kamla rivers in southern Nepal are being undertaken in accordance with the decisions taken by the India-Nepal Joint Committee on Inundation and Flood Management.

Indian Ambassador Ranjit Ra handed over a cheque here today to Umakant Jha, Minister for Energy, Irrigation and Science and Technology.

With the present assistance, the total grant from India for embankment construction stands at Rs 2917.68 million.

"India remains committed to continue working closely with Nepal for further cooperation in the field of Water Resources so that this contributes to the development and prosperity of a close and friendly neighbour," a statement from the Indian embassy said. ■

India Ready To Invest: Rae

Ambassador of India to Nepal Ranjit Rae has said that India is ready to invest in Nepal if the government of Nepal creates a favorable environment for investment.

Speaking at a Border Trade Symposium, organized in Bhadrapur by the Embassy of India and Jhapa Chamber of Industry, Rae pointed out the need for bilateral collaboration to attract investment.



“There is a need for trade expansion between the two countries. The private sector of India is ready to invest in Nepal, but, for that, effort should be made by the Nepali private sector as well,” said Rae.

At the symposium, Nepali entrepreneurs raised the problems they faced at the border and urged the concerned stakeholders to solve these problems. Jhapa and Ilam-based entrepreneurs said they have been facing the border problems while importing goods from India.

Industrialists associated with Jhapa Chamber of Industry also informed Rae about the problems faced due to the delay in the construction of Mechi Bridge and Charali-Chandragadhi-Kechana road sector along the Mechi Highway.

Nepal Seeks Flexibility To Conclude DDA

Minister for Commerce and Supplies (MoCS) Shankar Prasad Koirala has urged major players of global trade to display the necessary flexibility to conclude the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) at the earliest.

Speaking at the ninth Ministerial Conference of WTO in Bali in Nepal's capacity as the Coordinator of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) Group in WTO, Koirala also conveyed the firm belief of LDCs in multi-lateral trading system.

Global IME Approves 15% Bonus Shares

A meeting of the board of directors of Global IME Bank has decided to provide 15 percent bonus shares to its shareholders.

The meeting also announced the bank's annual general meeting for January 3 next year. The bank has recently signed an agreement with Commerz and Trust Bank for a merger.

After the merger, the bank will have a paid-up capital of Rs 4.41 billion and total deposits worth Rs 49 billion, said a statement issued by the bank.

Positive Environment For Investors: Governor

Governor of Nepal Rastra Bank Dr. Yubraj Khatiwada has said that there is the need of private sector support to build a strong economic base. Addressing the 42th general assembly of Morang Industrial Association, governor Dr. Khatiwada stressed the need to invest more in the present context when the economic indicators of the country are performing well. “Although the trade balance is negative, there are many positive developments in the national

economy, including the balance sheet, foreign currency reserve and management,” said Dr. Khatiwada.

Along with economic infrastructure, economic indicators are also positive, Dr. Khatiwada said, adding there is no risk for private sector to invest in Nepal.

“Due to political instability, the private sector have spent their time for long in a mood of wait and see. Now the situation has changed following the elections for CA,” said Khatiwada. “The private sector needs to take the social responsibility to increase their investment for development.”

IFC Calls For Risk-based Monitoring

Faced with limited resources, regulations and capacity, the government should identify and focus their monitoring efforts on high-risk areas first to improve food safety standards in the eatery services across the country, said the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group.

IFC is working with the government, with support from UK-based Better Regulation Delivery Office (BRDO), to improve the food safety standards at different tourist-class eateries in Nepal and to train market monitors on inspection and monitoring techniques, it said.

At a press conference, Representatives from IFC and BRDO said that a risk-based approach to food safety allows inspectors to focus limited resources on high-priority high-risk areas.

Global IME Opens Branch-less Service

Global IME Bank has started branch-less banking service in Deurali village of Kulekhani Village Development Committee of Makwanpur district. At a program held under the chair of head of Marketing Management and Promotion Department of the Global IME Bank, the service was launched with the distribution of certificate to the



professional representative. The bank has nominated local entrepreneur Dhruva Prasad Aryal as the representative.

This is the eighteenth village having the bank's branch less service operating in different parts of Nepal.

Thai Airways Marks 46th Anniversary In Nepal

Thai Airways celebrated its 46 years of service in Nepal recently. Thai Airways has been operating in Nepal since 1968. Thai Airways said in a press release that it is committed to providing the highest level of service to all customers making each journey memorable. ■

Elections And The Morning After

By DIPAK GYAWALI



The country now groans in post-election hangover, hoping as usual that a few months of time will make the problem go away. Unfortunately, the cause of the headache is not just yesterday's campaign carousing: it comes from a serious cancer within Nepali polity that cannot be cured with the placebo of elections. Indeed, this attempt to raise a new edifice on the foundations of the failed political architecture of November 2005 has already shown early signs of its chronic hopelessness and instability.

This November's elections, however, did manage to establish a few good things: they terminated the illegitimacy of the last self-extended parliament, giving the newly elected politicians and their parties a degree of legitimacy they had lost in May

(constitution). It was then an admission by party oligarchs of their failure to forge practical compromises and manage the country's fractured politics. The results of this November's selections have taken the country further back to 1995, a real regression to the days when we had a hung parliament, minority and musical chair governments that gave the country not only Pajero, Lauda, Chase, Enron, SMEC and other corruption scandals galore, but also, with its politics of majoritarian bulldozing, the Maoist insurrection. The most unfortunate aspect of the upcoming CA-2 is not only that all the problems of CA-1 are still there in even more chronic metastasis but that the very oligarchs – who not only failed the country with

day. There is no face-saving for the primary architects of the collapsed 2005 architecture, and not much hope that Nepal's party oligarchs with their quarter century of failures behind them will be able to deliver an acceptable constitution in the months ahead.

These November elections were never supposed to be normal, business-as-usual elections that are conducted to renew tenure, but were conducted as such. In a country where the democratic order of 1990 was demolished – more from international interference than genuine internal needs – and without a thought of what could replace it in a society as diverse and polity as fractured as in Nepal, the rituals of elections in an architectural vacuum was bound to be meaningless, and challenged from all angles.

There are serious allegations of electoral fraud from the right, left and center of the political spectrum; and they present legitimate grounds for suspicion. It is not that electoral fraud, booth capturing etc. have not been seen in Nepal before. If anything, they have been developed to a fine art over the last three decades, starting with the pro-Panchayat referendum results in 1980 to the third parliament elections of May 1999 when the second largest party of today, the UML, obstructed the House for a record 57 days on charges of electoral malpractice by the Kangress under whose leadership the elections were held. It was sorted out, thanks to the acumen of KP Bhattarai who formed a high powered investigation commission. It never produced any report but got the UML to privately acknowledge that both sides had indulged in malpractice and hence it was in the best interests of both parties to keep quiet about it and let the House resume! That option may not be available this time around.

For the first time in Nepal's history, the army was used not just to provide outer perimeter security but

In the face of already emerging in-party squabbles, there are limits to which optimism can give solace: even die-hard apologists for the failed 2005 architecture seem to be losing hope so soon and even before CA-2 has been convened and a government has been formed.

2010; they gave space to conservative voices forcefully excluded in the first CA elections of April 2008 (remember how Surya Bahadur Thapa was not even allowed to go to his constituency then: this time he has managed to get his son elected in his place!); Nepali voters resoundingly rejected, to borrow a Chinese phrase, ethnic and regional "splitists"; and – this is what has made many coerced voters of 2008 gleeful, Jimmy Carter notwithstanding – the Maoists have got their comeuppance.

But something continues to be rotten in the state of Nepal. The unconstitutional imposition of a non-party, Chief Justice-led government in March 2013 was in essence Nepal returning politically to October 2002 (when the Seven Party Alliance unanimously passed a resolution recommending King Gyanendra to invoke Article 127 of the 1990

their antics of CA-1 from 2008 but also failed to save the democracy of 1990 – are still ruling the political roost for last quarter of a century! How long can the country bear the deadweight of this creativity bereft political class without fresh upheavals is a question Nepalis are now forced to ask.

In the face of already emerging in-party squabbles, there are limits to which optimism can give solace: even die-hard apologists for the failed 2005 architecture seem to be losing hope so soon and even before CA-2 has been convened and a government has been formed. The best indicator of this despondency was an Indian friend, frequent visitor to Nepal, asking what happened with elections in Nepal: it seems that in the Delhi media, where one can read more about elections in Honduras and Haiti than about Nepal, embarrassed silence and news blackout on Nepal is the order of the

to transport the ballot boxes. It was justified on the grounds that the Dash Maoists had promised violence, and indeed the army's heavy presence did dent the street-fighting zeal of the revolutionary comrades. However, in constituencies where fraud has been alleged, party representatives were not allowed to either place their signatures or seals on the ballot boxes nor allowed to accompany the transport convoy. What happened during the transport as well as in the time gap when vote counting was suspended to when it was resumed – in constituencies where Prachanda as well as the president's son won despite poor showing in the earlier phase of the counting – has drawn the election commission officials, the army and the president himself into dispute and has allowed the boycotting Dash Maoists to legitimize their extreme left end of Nepal's political spectrum against that of the more right-leaning Cash Maoists.

The election results have surprised the largest vote gathering Kangress and the UML at the scale of the loss of their rivals, the Maoists and the communal parties. However, psephologists such as those at Interdisciplinary Analysts are not surprised since their nation-wide surveys just before the elections (which the election commission in their unfathomable loktantrick wisdom forbade publishing as per election code of conduct) showed that Kangress would emerge as the first, UML the second, Dash Maoists third, Cash Maoists fourth and RPP-N as the fifth largest parties. With the Dashists not only boycotting the elections but actively and selectively helping the Kangress candidates win against the Cashists and sometimes the UML, the final results were exactly what were foreseen. Gagan Thapa was seen in those surveys as the most popular leader, and ethnic federalism had no traction at the grassroots; and that is what the election results showed.

An anti-incumbency mood seems to have driven the voters with their main ire directed at the Cash Maoists. As admitted by Kangress's Narayan Khadga in an FM interview, Kangress

won by default, not by their inspiring leadership or organizational acumen (indeed they were helped by the Dash Maoist's youthful organizational zeal!). The UML won because they have the largest country-wide network of PONGOs (party-affiliated NGOs), and the Madhesh-based parties were decimated by their own in-fighting and loss of patronage by India (indeed, one senior Madheshi leader went on to admit that their defeat was India's defeat!).

This election in reality solves nothing. It will be months before a government might be formed, and how stable it will remain is anyone's guess. It has dragged the office of the president into controversy, and has drawn the army into more active management of the country's political course. It has practically eliminated those with ethnic and regional agendas

(which will not go away easily), and has strengthened the political positions of the extreme right and left of the political spectrum. These changes in the public mandate compared to that of 2008 makes the fractured middle more vulnerable to attack and thus more insecure.

How such a political diversity without any agreed common ground can manage to cobble an acceptable or workable constitution is even iffier. In the months ahead, the only game changer might be if local elections can be held by April next, and a fresh crop of political leaders at the grassroots are able to collectively assert their views of what the shape of national governance should be. Otherwise the doldrums and flux of interregnum that we have witnessed since the collapse of the Panchayat a quarter of a century ago may just continue. ■

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POLITICAL CHAIR Round Two

Nepal's politics has entered into a new phase following the completion of the elections for the Constituent Assembly. However, political leaders are yet to guarantee political stability as expected by the people

By KESHAB POUDEL

Although Nepal's politics is apparently back on its normal course of power sharing, there is still a long way to go before the formation of the new government and beginning of the constitution writing process on a solid footing. Given the present domestic political scenario, the formation of the new government will be unlikely before February.

Nepal held elections for the second constituent assembly, five years after the first one failed to agree a constitution. Few expect the new assembly to be more successful in bringing stability, which means the nation of 27mn people is unlikely to see a quick end to its leadership vacuum.

"There is no way other than to make a compromise between Nepali Congress and CPN-UML, including Maoists. But we want a complete agreement on a package," said Ishwor Pokharel, general secretary of CPN-UML. "If Nepali Congress wants to have its president, it must give up other demands."

If the present disputes on the fresh elections for president intensify between Nepali Congress and CPN-UML and UCPN-Maoist led coalition continue to resist on their demand to form high level probe commission on Election, which Nepali Congress and CPN-UML are unlikely to accept, this

will delay all the processes including summoning of the Constituent Assembly.

Along with the disputes, major political parties have started negotiations for power sharing. Although Nepali Congress and CPN-UML have emerged the largest party and second largest parties respectively, they cannot form the government without support from other parties. Both need each other or the UCPN-Maoist and other fringe parties to form a coalition government.

As it does not have the numbers in the CA to play a decisive role on its own, UCPN-Maoist is now creating an alliance of rainbow coalition of various parties so that it can bargain for powers with Nepali Congress and CPN-UML.

Although Nepali Congress and CPN-UML inked a three-point agreement looking for a long term political alliance and power sharing, CPN-UML and Nepali Congress partnership cannot last long as both the parties are competitors to populist politics.

Similarly, UCPN-Maoist led coalition also has contradictions within. UCPN-Maoist, which demands fresh elections for president, is in a very difficult position to retain the coalition as most of the Madheshi parties in the

coalition are opposing the elections for the post of president.

Although three major parties are still sticking to their own stands, they have agreed to sit for negotiations. Nepali Congress has already held meetings with UCPN-Maoist and CPN-UML and UCPN-Maoist is holding talks with CPN-UML. Since no political party has a majority to form the government and a two-thirds to pass the constitution, compromises and negotiations are two ways to form the government.

CPN-UML is also in a hard bargaining with Nepali Congress. The party at least wants to retain the chairman of Constituent Assembly and lucrative cabinet portfolios and sharing of power equally before taking any major decision. Given the current political situation nothing can be ruled out.

Although Nepali Congress and CPN-UML inked their three-point agreement aiming to end the current political stalemate, they are yet to find any compromise formula for power sharing and formation of new consensus government. However, both the parties are stressing for consensus government, including the representatives of all political parties.

The two largest parties have also agreed to hold dialogues and negotiations with the third largest party UCPN-Maoist over the formation of the new government and constitution writing. Although they have softened their stands, UCPN-Maoist is yet to give up its demands for the formation of an independent commission to probe the fairness of elections. Despite several efforts, political parties are yet to have a consensus on the coming political and constitutional agenda.

Possible scenario

Given the current situation, a new government is unlikely any time soon or before the end of January. Although Nepali Congress is claiming to form the next government, it is not sure it can. As Maoists have 75 members in the CA, it is a major power broker in the Legislature Parliament to make and break the government. In case of disagreement between CPN-UML and Nepali Congress, UCPN-Maoist support will be crucial. The political move will then begin to look different the next week. ■

Presidential Constitutionalism

By PRATIGYA POZNIAK

The unduly and untimely raised recent debates by some political leaders, although premature, have again induced division in the nation in favour and against the first citizen of the country. Opinions of the Nepalese constitutional experts and jurists are also divided on the issue of presidential tenure. While the experts like Dr. Surya Dhungel, Dr. Bhimarjun Acharya and former justice Balram KC keep similar views on the ground of legality and supremacy of the explicit constitutional provision, Dr. Bipin Adhikari has however expressed some reservations based on the concept of fresh mandate and political morality. Former Chief Justice Anup Raj Sharma considers this to be a tricky political issue that no Constitution alone can resolve. As this issue relates to some serious and complicated jurisprudential issues of political and legal constitutionalism, attempts have

been made in this note to briefly examine them under three sub-headings: constitutionalism of 'presidential tenure'; constitutionalism of 'political exist', and constitutionalism of 'popular legitimacy'.

Constitution survives. Whereas tenures of the CA Chairperson or Speaker, and even the Prime Minister who may be voted out anytime, is linked to the life of the Constituent Assembly/Legislature-Parliament. This was solely done to alleviate the dignity of the Republican Head of the State vis a vis Monarchical Head, and also to maintain the continuity of the Head of State (HOS) as a living institution as per the global practice. It is not a personal favour for anyone, neither it depends on the wishes of the incumbent.

When the Interim Constitution was amended by the full House, it was a consensus view that only new Constitution will determine the fate of the first Republican Head of State (HOS). Thus the CA election or its tenure does not have to do anything with the tenure of the HOS. The concept of fresh mandate is not applicable here, as it is not the election

solely for a parliament. The tenure issue not raised while removing constitutional obstacles under

The tenure issue not raised while removing constitutional obstacles under Article 158, nor was this issue politically considered in any party's manifesto as an election issue.

Article 158, nor was this issue politically considered in any party's manifesto as an election issue. Hence the fresh mandate was not for the Presidential post but for the urgency of political and constitutional exits for the nation which was left in a state of uncertainty, and the Supreme Court's advice was not heard by CA. Constitutional norms were thereafter breached by the government one event after another due to constitutional gaps.

Political Exit:

Exercise of extraordinary provisions of the Interim Constitution, especially related to Ordinances (Article 88) and Removal of Difficulties (Article 158), was done for giving 'political exit' to the nation which had suffered through a decade long armed insurgency and prolonged peace and constitution building process that could not be concluded

Presidential Tenure:

It is linked to the supremacy of the written Constitution and international practice in a democratic society. Expressed Letters of the Constitution cannot be overridden in a political whim by anyone without duly amending it through prescribed constitutional procedure. The Article 36 C of the Interim Constitution clearly states the tenure of the President, as a new Republican Head of the State (HOS), to last until a new Constitution has not been produced. Hence, it is linked with the life of the Interim Constitution itself. President continues as long as the Interim

through the first elected inclusive Assembly. The responsible political actors and institutions could not accomplish the tasks within the extended life of the CA. Even the Supreme Court's directives were not complied with. In such an extremely 'unusual situation, the President as HOS had to make a compromise based on the constitutionally odd political solution agreed with the political parties and the then Government, in the interest of the nation and as 'protector and defender' of the Constitution. Until and unless the newly elected CA (and its Legislature-Parliament component) endorses the whole constitutional rearrangements made for creating a Chief Justice led Government and the new Election Commission under Article 158 in an extraordinary situation, no political party or any authority has any legitimate political or constitutional ground to raise the constitutionality or political legitimacy of the Head of State (HOS) who in fact is the very primary source of their own legitimacy as elected members.

Even the Supreme Court's legitimacy hangs in limbo until the new Legislature-Parliament endorses the extraordinary changes (including CA election results), the sources of which lies in the President's power of removing difficulties under Articles 36 A and Article 158. The political constitutionalism of 'constitutional exit', during national crises and political transition, therefore, is the only jurisprudential justification of all these actions and results receiving legitimacy through people's broad consent.

Popular Legitimacy:

The 'Grundnorm', ie the ultimate source of legitimacy of all political and legal changes and actions, in the words of Austin, eventually lay in the acceptability (or consent) of the people. The overwhelming participation of the people and collective voice articulated by them through their 78 percent votes, in the

recently concluded elections for 575 (240 +335) seats of the CA, are glaring example of popular constitutionalism determining legitimacy. This legitimacy will receive institutional endorsement once the CA sessions are convened, followed by parliamentary approval of the 'extraordinary majors' undertaken under Article 158. No one but the President alone, as HOS, is the constitutional source to enable the Legislature-Parliament to endorse the very basis of removal of constitutional obstacles.

Now the issue before the nation is how to convene the House, accommodate all political forces as far as possible, and move forward to drafting and promulgating a new democratic Constitution for Nepal. Distracting the country from the core issue of the country means creating obstacles on the path of constitution building ahead. People can no longer bear and tolerate the burden of prolonged transition. Even the issue of victims of conflict has been left untouched (eg. TRC formation)

Concluding Observations:

The President may not be fully aware of the scholarly writings of the contemporary constitutional scholars on the *21st Century Constitution Making* (Cheryl Saunders, 2012) or on the *Endurance of National Constitutions* (Z. Elkins, T Ginsburg and J. Melton 2009), but his persistent stand for the CA election for 'political exit' has granted political legitimacy to the exercise of his extraordinary power under Article 158 that resulted in the heavy electoral turnout exceeding 78 percent of voters endorsing his move, as stated above. Whether it is due to his political wisdom and democratic commitment, or due to his weaknesses and lack of assertiveness, the country nevertheless appears to have been saved from getting plunged into the ditches of autocracy or prolonged conflict. Constitutional anomalies of the Interim Constitution eventually leading to the second CA election have thus proved to be a 'blessing in disguise' for the country. Election is now on the way bringing politics, Constitution and peace back on the right track. Now priority has to be set out with constitution making as a primary task in order for giving a good governance for the country. Thanks to President Dr. Ram Baran Yadav and Chairman Mr. Khil Raj Regmi for the immense political risks they have taken. The Election Commission, the security apparatus, the international community and the peace loving people of the country deserve special thanks for the collective efforts and successful outcome.

Ms. Pozniak is Research Development Officer at a reputed Australian University



Adieu, Mandela!

As the people around the world did, thousands of Nepalese paid tributes to former South African president Nelson Mandela

By A CORRESPONDENT

As Nepal has been passing through a transition with prolonging political uncertainty in its efforts at making an inclusive constitution, late Nelson Mandela's contribution to transform South Africa from the era of apartheid to a democratic and liberal society will be a good lesson to remember.

After his death, Nepalese leaders have expressed their faith on the model propounded by late Mandela to make Nepal an inclusive, liberal, democratic state. However, the commitment is yet to be translated into action. Political leaders are divided among themselves and they are yet to learn any serious lesson and take the meaning of reconciliation to heart.

"We need to learn from late Mandela. South Africa survived and escaped violence because of his strong commitment to national reconciliation," said Nepali Congress leader Sunil Kumar Bhandari. "Our leader B.P. Koirala also died calling on all to work for the cause of reconciliation. It is not easy to champion reconciliation,

there are many difficulties on its path." Contrary to Mandela's work, Nepalese political leaders stand on their hatred and confrontation campaign. There is no room for accommodation to all the political forces. Mandela had shown how the society reconciled when he invited Pter Botha, a white leader who put him in the prison, as his vice president.

Giving high importance to the contribution Mandela had made, Nepal government has sent foreign minister Madhav Prasad Ghimire to take part in the commemoration of the late leader of South Africa. Former South African president, Mandela, died at the age of 95 last week. The memorial service was one of the biggest gatherings of international dignitaries in the recent years.

Hundreds of people assemble outside the stadium during the night, the BBC's Joe Winter reported from the scene. Crowds, many wearing Nelson Mandela t-shirts and South African football and rugby tops, were singing songs from the time of the fight against apartheid.



RESIGNATION ROW

Divided House

CPN-UML's decision to seek the resignation of president Dr. Ram Baran Yadav has divided current politics

By **A CORRESPONDENT**

The leaders of major political parties contested the elections for the second Constituent Assembly to promulgate the new constitution within a year. However, they have started the debate on the fresh elections for the post of president and vice president.

After the completion of the elections, CPN-UML and UCPN-Maoist have raised the question about the fresh election for the president by leaving aside their own commitment to deliver the constitution to the people. According to the Interim Constitution, the president shall remain in the post until the promulgation of the new constitution. Even the Supreme Court does not say anything about him. The president and vice-president have nothing to do with the process.

They didn't have any role to dissolve the CA. However, the political parties are now debating over whether to hold the fresh elections for the

president or not? Nepali Congress and Madhesh based parties have already opposed any move to hold fresh elections for the president. However, UCPN-Maoist, CPN-UML and RPP-Nepal are demanding fresh elections.

"There is the need for the president to renew the mandate. We want to see new elections for the president," said Bam Dev Gautam, vice president of CPN-UML. "We will oppose any move to fresh elections," said Rajendra Mahato, leader of Sadbhvana Party.

According to Article 36 C of the Interim Constitution, the president shall continue in office until the new constitution is promulgated by the Constituent Assembly.

Constitutional lawyers also argue that the present political stalemate cannot be resolved without the approval of the president. The new CA has to endorse the order under which the present interim government and new election was held. Till the endorsement of all the previous

presidential orders by the Legislature-Parliament, even the election will be regarded as illegal.

Given the present circumstances, even if the president expressed his wishes to resign, the interim constitution has not spoken anything about it. In case the president and vice-president tender their resignation, there will be a constitutional crisis.

According to article 69, the first meeting of the Constituent Assembly shall be held as summoned by the prime minister within 21 days after the final results of the election of the members of Constituent Assembly have been made public by the Election Commission. UCPN-Maoist and fringe parties have already made it clear that they will not submit the list till the formation of an independent probe commission. However, the situation is different now as the status of head of the present government is given to the chairman of council of minister. International practice also is that normally the president summons the House. There is a legal controversy over the summoning the meeting.

Chairman of Council of Minister, Khil Raj Regmi has already told president that he will summon the CA meeting as a prime minister. The matter is yet to be settled amidst all the political and constitutional disputes.

The controversy over who can summon the first session of the newly elected Constituent Assembly is also raging. Some constitutional lawyers are arguing the need to amend the present interim constitution to add the clauses to address the issues. If CPN-UML, UCPN-Maoist and other parties continue to insist on fresh elections for the president and vice president, that will delay the summoning of the CA. As UCPN-Maoist led 18 parties' alliance has decided not to nominate their representatives within the schedule, published by the Election Commission, the CA proceedings are sure to get stalled. ■



Nepal Army Chief General Gaurav SJB Rana meeting Indian Army Lieutenant General Rajan Bakshi (General Officer Commanding in-chief, Central Command)

POLITICAL INSTABILITY

Neighborly Concerns

As Nepal drifts into a prolonged course of political instability, India and China, regional rivals step in

By A CORRESPONDENT

At a time when Nepal's major political parties are yet to agree on the formation of a new government, a hint that the political crisis is more likely to intensify, India and China, the two immediate neighbors, have stepped up their diplomatic activities. High ranking officials from the two countries are in Kathmandu where installing the government to provide the much needed stability is still uncertain.

Just a week after the elections results, former Chinese ambassador to Nepal Quo Guohang, who presently heads China's external security affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, visited Nepal with a large delegation.

Similarly, Indian Army's Lt. General Rajan Bakshi paid an official visit to Nepal last week. According to Nepal Army headquarters, Lt. General Bakshi called on chief of Nepal Army General Gaurav Sumsher JBR. Although Nepalese officials termed both visits as formal and official, these visits have their own significance given Nepal's current political course.

An unverified report published in

Annapurna Post daily even revealed that Alok Joshi, chief of Research & Analysis Wing (RAW), India's Intelligence Agency, visited Nepal meeting various leaders of political parties. Annapurna Post also said that another RAW man Peter Hanaman in his brief stay in Kathmandu had already met with Nepali leaders of various shades and colors.

The sensitivity of Nepal's neighbors is understandable as various groups could launch anti-India and anti-China activities taking the benefit of Nepal's prolonged political instability. For instance, in August, Indian security officials tracked down one of their most-wanted militants in Pokhara where he had told neighbors he was a traditional healer. The same month, Indian agents picked up a man they suspected was a top bomb-maker for the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba militant group in Nepal's southern plains.

Similarly, the Chinese too worry about Nepal's situation. The Chinese are busy trying to choke off an exodus of disaffected Tibetans into Nepal. The

Chinese have even offered all necessary equipment to Nepalese border guards.

India's main interests in Nepal are to curb Chinese influence and to deny a base to militants, intent on infiltrating into India across an open border. China's focus has broadened from Tibetan issues to establishing a stronger foothold in countries around India.

Landlocked Nepal traditionally depends on India for food and fuel and hundreds of people criss-cross the border every day for work. According to a report published by Reuters, China is now wading in too. It nearly doubled its aid to \$52mn last year. It is also cultivating politicians and business people, just as India has done for years.

"The geostrategic rivalry between India and China in Nepal has heated up and the world is watching," said Vanda Felbab-Brown, a Nepal specialist at the Brookings Institution.

"India has been deeply involved in Nepal for decades. China's arrival is more recent, but they have quickly covered a lot of ground. If the Indians are building a hydro-electric dam, the Chinese will offer to build another in another part of the country."

Zhao Gancheng, director of South Asia Studies at the Shanghai Institute for International Studies, said China's influence had been overstated and, unlike India, it played no role in Nepal's internal affairs. "China has no way of competing with India's influence in Nepal. If you look at it in terms of percentage points, India's influence in Nepal would exceed 80%."

But he said Nepal was important for China because of the long border with its Tibetan regions as well as the number of Tibetans living in Nepal. "Of course this is an issue which involves China. On this question, China and Nepal have close co-operation."

India's security agencies have notched up a series of quiet successes in Nepal, reducing the threat from militant groups using it as a haven, not least the capture of the founder of the Indian Mujahedeen group, Yasin Bhatkal.



Former Chinese ambassador to Nepal
Quo Guohang

According to Indian news agency DNA, increasing Chinese activity on

India's eastern borders and their dabbling in Nepal affairs have prompted security establishment in India to look into revisiting the role of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) in its previous avatar of intelligence gathering as Special Services Bureau. The Special Services Bureau was set up a year after India's war with China in 1962 to gather crucial human intelligence on Chinese maneuvers in the region by using local foot soldiers in large numbers. Later when the Chinese threat diminished with the rise of that country as an economic power, the SSB's role was changed to that of a border guarding force. In 2001, it was renamed as Sashastra Seema Bal.

According to a report, the major cause for worry for India is the increasing Chinese footprints in Nepal

in the form of growing Chinese study centers and China's keen interest to invest in both Nepal and Bhutan. The same prevailing thought could be seen when director general of Sashastra Seema Bal, Arun Chaudhary, stressed on the need to revive the organization restoring its former role.

"We want to revive the earlier role of SSB that included intelligence gathering. The case for this is pending with the ministry of home affairs," said Chaudhary, speaking at a seminar on Indo-Nepal and Indo-Bhutan relations security challenges.

While Nepal's leaders argue and the country drifts in a prolonged state of political limbo, its giant neighbors India and China are not waiting for it to sort itself out. They are stepping in, operating more brazenly than ever in Nepal to protect their interests. ■

Uk Supported A Bridge Construction In Eastern Nepal

A UK-funded bridge over the Arun River in Eastern Nepal was inaugurated by Khil Raj Regmi, Chairman, Council of Ministers,

The bridge built over the Arun River at Leguwa Ghat will safely link thousands of isolated communities in Bhojpur and Khotang Districts in Eastern Nepal for the first time. The bridge, completed and opened to traffic in October 2013, is set to bring an economic boost to families in one of Nepal's most remote regions. The bridge provides the first year-round crossing of the Arun River at Leguwa Ghat.

The 120m steel truss bridge will connect hundreds of kilometres of strategic and local roads, and provides vital connectivity to the 280km of roads supported by DFID's 'Rural Access Programme'. It will ensure the flow of trade and goods to the east of the country, bringing business, tourism and jobs so that the people living around Leguwa Ghat can work themselves out of poverty. The bridge will also save the lives of people paying for the dangerous boat service to cross the raging Arun River during the rainy season. The unique bridge was designed to withstand earthquakes and flash floods.

In his speech in the opening ceremony, Chairman Khil Raj Regmi said, "We want to thank the British government very much for this bridge which is a symbol of the excellent relations between our two countries."

DFID Nepal Head, Gail Marzetti, said: "This bridge proves how British aid can make a real difference, helping the people of Nepal to lift themselves out of poverty. This bridge is a life-line. It will allow communities to work and trade, send their children to school and access health care."

UK Ambassador Andy Sparkes commented: "This bridge is a perfect example of the strong partnership between Nepal and the UK. Villagers told me that they were very happy with the bridge. Since it has started to operate they are getting rice much cheaper."

A similar bridge was opened in April this year in Sankhuwasabha District, connecting hundreds of kilometres of strategic and local roads, the region's only all-weather airport and a landmark hydro-electric power. The two bridges will connect 280km of roads already built in the area. This will allow farmers and other traders from four districts in eastern Nepal – Sankhuwasabha,



British ambassador Sparkes (left) and DFID's Nepal head Gail Marzetti at inaugural function
(Photo Courtesy British Embassy)

Khotang, Bhojpur and Dhankuta – to reach markets as far away as India. The bridges, part of DFID's Rural Access Programme, are the final links in a chain to improve access to roads for 900,000 people who previously had to walk for more than four hours. Over the past ten years more than 970km of road have been built by DFID, providing employment for 24,000 poor families.

The DFID Head also commented that: "The next phase of the Rural Access Programme will lift 20,000 people out of poverty and generate 7.5 million days of employment in the western Nepal".

According to a press release issued by British Embassy, the UK Government provided £3m for the construction of the Arun River bridge. UK will invest £36.5m in the third phase of the Rural Access Programme to maintain, upgrade and build 2,400km of road over the next four years. ■

Taking The Lord's Name In Vain



By HEMANG DIXIT

About a month back a local English newspaper carried the news of a court ruling in Malaysia that only Muslims can use the word 'Allah'. Theologians in different parts of the world have expressed differing views stating that the word means God and is not a name. One of the Ten Commandments in the Bible directs not to take the name of the Lord in vain. This presumably means that one should be satisfied by and large as the tendency is to say 'Lord help me' whenever one is in trouble. Not being ardently religious, I tend when starting a journey to take the Lord's entreatings to look after and protect me. Is this taking the Lord's name in vain? This action is more likely to have originated from the tendency, when challenged, to utter: 'I swear by God'.

But one does not take God's name for swearing only? In Southern Germany it is customary to greet people with the phrase 'Gruss Gott' thereby implying that that I greet the God in you. Similar is said to be the origin of Namasakar. Khuda Hafez is a similar term implying parting with God's blessing.

In the Bible too, God is quoted to have told Moses, "Do not make for yourselves gods of silver or gods of gold." Are we in this twenty-first Century, disobeying God's command when our whole economy is based on these two metals?

A poser that has come down the ages is whether it was God who created man or man who created God? Those living in ancient Egypt got around by saying that their God Ra was self created and from him evolved the rest. If one does not subscribe to the Big Bang theory then God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh or Sabbath.

So Gods have come and gone with the different civilisations that evolved on earth. Thus there were Gods of Egypt, Norse Gods and those of the Greeks and Romans. The question to come to one's mind is how many were mythological and how many were

human forms which became mythological in course of time.

The fact is that many religions have rites and rituals which have to be followed. Hindus worship images of Gods whilst Islam forbids such practise. The Anglicans and the Protestant Christians have the cross as a symbol whilst the Catholics accept the Virgin Mary and Jesus as a child or as man crucified. The individual scriptures on which all religions are based are said to have been added to by the devotees down the ages.

Hindus worship images of Gods whilst Islam forbids such practise. The Anglicans and the Protestant Christians have the cross as a symbol whilst the Catholics accept the Virgin Mary and Jesus as a child or as man crucified.

The religions of the world were in the 19th Century divided by Western thought into four major groups comprising of:

- i. Abrahamic ones: Christianity, Mohammadism (now Islam) and Judaism
- ii. Indian group: Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism.
- iii. East Asian: Taoism & Confucians in China and Do in Japan
- iv. Other ethnic religions.

In the 19th Century the Western world regarded all other religions except their own as Paganism and those practicing such as 'idol worshippers'. The world has changed now and the concept of 'Freedom of Religion' is something that is accepted as a basic human right.

One recalls that when Henry the VIII of England broke away from the Vatican he became the 'Defender of the Faith' of the Anglican Church. Some years ago Prince Charles had expressed the view publicly that in future, the monarch of the UK should be 'Defender of All Faiths'.

Our Shah kings were said to be Avatars of Lord Vishnu. Did they take the Shree Panch and the Rana Premiers the Shree Teen to denote that they were above us all? In this

situation what about the five Shankaracharyas based in different parts of India who are Jagatgurus with no less than 108 Shrees in front of their names? So who is the head of the Hindu faith? Or is it not a religion but rather a philosophy of life? How should one go about conducting one's life on earth?

A state that does not profess a religion is known as a secular state. Many states with official religions do allow freedom of worship and thought. The old order in Nepal, which did not allow conversion as such, did allow people of different faiths to follow their beliefs. What was wrong with that, when many countries in the world

today are doing exactly the same? There are many countries where the state has an official religion and act of conversion is an apostasy. The Hindu religion or philosophy was something which is said to have originated with the Aryans from Vedic times and though it had its heyday when it covered the Asian continent inclusive of Indonesia and Cambodia, it is now virtually in India and Nepal or practised by those originating from there. As the religion developed with the wanderings of the Aryans, it is supposed to have imbibed the culture of the different lands. It was not a religion spread by the might of the sword nor did it resort to crusades of any sort.

At the recent elections it appeared that except for one or two, all the parties were secular. It is surprising that in this country of 26.5 million people as per the census of 2011 and where 81% of the population are either labelled as Hindus / Buddhists that this should be so. The option to consider would be to label our country as a Hindu Rastra or alternatively a multi religious society. After all most countries in the world fall in this category and do not have the word secular in their constitutions.

“Fifteen Parties Did Not Meet The One-third Women Requirement”

- KÅRE VOLLAN

Electoral system expert KÅRE VOLLAN is recently in Nepal. He analyses the possible scenario based on elections results. In an interaction organised by Kathmandu University School of Law (KUSL), Vollan spoke on various issues with the experts and newly elected CA members. Moderated by Dr.Surya Dhungel, the discussion focused on the overall results of CA Elections 2013. Excerpts of almost two hour long discussions based on Vollan's presentation prepared by NEW SPOTLIGHT.

How do you see the CA elections results?

According to Amendment of Constituent Assembly Act, 2013, there are 335 List PR, 26 Appointees 240 FPTP as it kept 601 in total exactly as in 2008.

How do you analyse the figures?

The Elections Commission's record shows that there were 4,914 candidates nominated for FPTP. Out of which 1,115 were independent, 667 were women (13.6 %) and 122 parties filed lists for List PR. However, only 13 parties had «long lists» (more than 100 candidates. Fifteen parties did not meet the one-third women requirement.

How do you see the scenario?

Out of 4,914 candidates nominated for FPTP, 115 were independent, 667 were women (13.6 %), 122 parties filed lists for List PR. However, only 13 parties had long lists (more than 100 candidates. Fifteen parties did not meet the one-third women requirement.

What is the results and turnout?

Under FPTP, 12,147,865 numbers of voters were registered. However, total votes in FPTP are 9,516,724, 78.3 % and Invalid votes in FPTP: 471,826 (4.96 %). The number of registered voters in PR was 12,249,062. Total votes in List PR 9,778,703, 79.82 % Invalid votes in List PR: 312,841 (3.20 %)

What is the status of FPTP results?

Ten parties won seats, plus two independent candidates. Ten women elected, down from thirty in 2008

What is the state of marginal candidates in FPTP?

Party candidates, 167 candidates won from 0 to 10 votes and 2,215 won from 0 to 100 votes. Independent candidates, seven won from 0 to ten votes and 68 won from 0 to 100 votes.

What about the results in PR list?

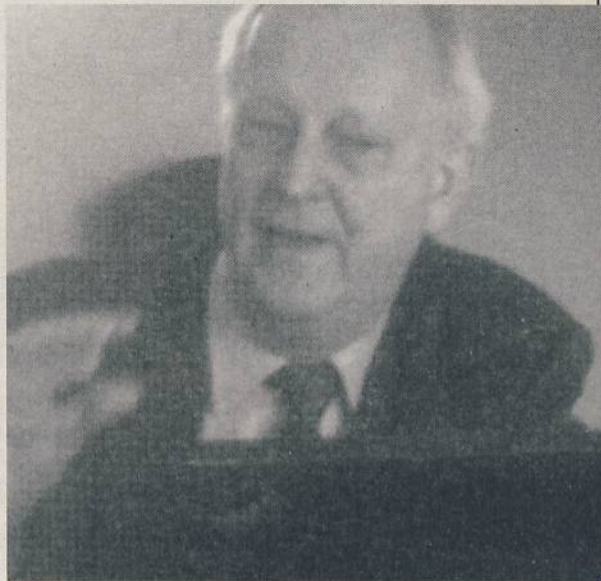
30 parties won seats in List PR. All the parties winning FPTP seats also won List PR seats so the total of parties in the CA is 30, plus the two independent candidates. In List PR there were 10 one-seat parties. The lowest share to win a seat was 0.22 %, the same as in 2008.

How do you see the state of Madhesi based parties?

Madhesi parties had split in a number of parties. In 2008, five Madhesi parties won 12.0 per cent of the List PR votes, with Madhesi People's Rights Forum, Nepal being the biggest with 6.3 per cent of the votes and 22 FPTP seats. In 2013, 24 Madhesi parties won all together 12.1 % of the votes, with Madhesi Janaadhikar Forum (Loktantrik) as the biggest with 3.0 per cent of the votes and 4 FPTP seats (needs to be verified).

How do you see the scenario of 2008 results including in short and long lists?

In 2008, 58 seats were won by parties registering short lists. This was down to 47 seats this time, which meant that the inclusiveness would be



better. Out of the thirteen long list parties, only eleven won seats.

What are the Challenges?

On 3 December 21, out of the 30 parties winning List PR seats collected their letter and the results form. The rest were sent to parties' addresses. Submitting candidates to fill winning seats is major challenge. Other challenge is to pursue UCPN-Maoist which says they will not select such candidates.

NEW SPOTLIGHT

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ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

At Work Against Poverty

Nepal's development experiences have shown that a balanced and sustainable interaction between communities and economic, social and environment policies is necessary to alleviate poverty and generate opportunities to the poor people living in remote and rural parts of Nepal. At a time when Nepal has been aiming to alleviate poverty by implementing various programs, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) funded projects show how the community involvement in decision making at different stages, including implementation, design and operation, brings opportunities for environmentally sustainable and inclusive economic growth to alleviate poverty in remote parts of Nepal

By KESHAB POUDEL

A community managed irrigation project has changed the livelihood of Suchita Khand of Ayodhyapuri Village Development Committee of Chitwan district, 150 kilometers South-West of capital Kathmandu. The village adjoins the Chitwan National Park. As water availability for irrigation has increased through the construction of the canal, productivity has doubled with diversification and intensification of crops. Where one-crop agriculture system prevailed earlier, multiple-crop farming has been common these days. After paddy, farmers grow vegetables as a cash crop there.

Suchita, who is a member of the user group of Riu-Tamata Ghaghar Community managed irrigation committee, is not alone to benefit from the irrigation canal. According to the project, 1,210 people of 283 households have benefited from the scheme. With a command area of 122 hectares, the irrigation project is owned and managed by a user group periodically elected by the local community. "Until a few years back, our production was not enough to feed our family for a year. Now, we even sell additional food grains and vegetables," said Suchita.

Although in Megghauli, which

remains a major entry point to Chitwan National Park by air, the people are still compelled to drink water that has a high level of arsenic and iron. However, Megghauli Town Water and Sanitation Project, now under construction, has brought a sigh of relief to the local people. Constructed with a contribution of the community and ADB under Second Small Town Drinking Water and Sanitation Project, Megghauli's Small Towns Water Supply project will pump over 250 cum liters drinking water per day to the people living in Megghauli. It will provide drinking water to 1,765 households of



A Community Manage Dairy in Jomshom

five wards of the village with 11,180 permanent residents.

"Our community is ready to manage the project once it is handed over to us," said Indra Bahadur K.C. chairman of the user group. "We know we need to pay up to Rs. 260.00 per month. However, we also receive filtered water 24 hours a day. As a lot of people annually suffer from water-borne diseases, we save medical bills once the project begins to supply pure drinking water."

As the pace of urbanization has intensified, a number of small towns have come up. "This is one of the twenty projects, currently in the construction phase in different parts of Nepal, aimed to provide water supply services to 240,000 people and sanitation service to 270,000 people," said Ram Dip Shah, project manager. "After the completion of the project, which is expected by the next year, the user group will be responsible for its maintenance and operation."

As the project lies in the buffer

zone of Chitwan National Park in an area of Ghadiyal breeding, the project is of utmost importance in terms of the surrounding environment. "We are planning to put the used water in nearby ponds before discharging it to Rapti river," said Shah.

Whenever villagers have some trouble about their livestock, they knock the doors of Nirmala Khanal, 42, a mother of three children. Trained under the Decentralized Rural Infrastructure and Livelihood Project -Additional Financing (DRILP-AF), Khanal, a resident of Soti Pasal of Lamjung District, 200 kilometers west of capital, has been providing services for the people as her employment.

Along with providing training for self employment, the section of the road upgraded under the DRILP-AF in Sundar Bazar and Soti Pasal of Lamjung has brought drastic changes. The road has reduced the time for driving as well as increased the land prices along the road sides. Suvadra Danai, 32, a high school teacher of

Sundar Bazar, says the road is a real boon. "Till a few years ago, one would have to sell the land at throw-away prices. However, the price has gone up now," said Danai.

"Out of 23.2 kilometer Sundarbazar-Kunchha and Duipiple Road, an eight-kilometer road section is still under construction and it is likely to be completed next year," said Jay Ram Shrestha, engineer of District Development Committee, Lamjung. Since 2008, the project has already provided technical training in the areas of beekeeping, beauty parlor, driving, veterinary, electric wiring and so on.

Chitwan and Lamjung have better access to link Nepal and more opportunities available due to its link to the capital city. People living in Mustang, a remote mountain district of Nepal, have to face much more hardships due to lack of roads, market and finance.

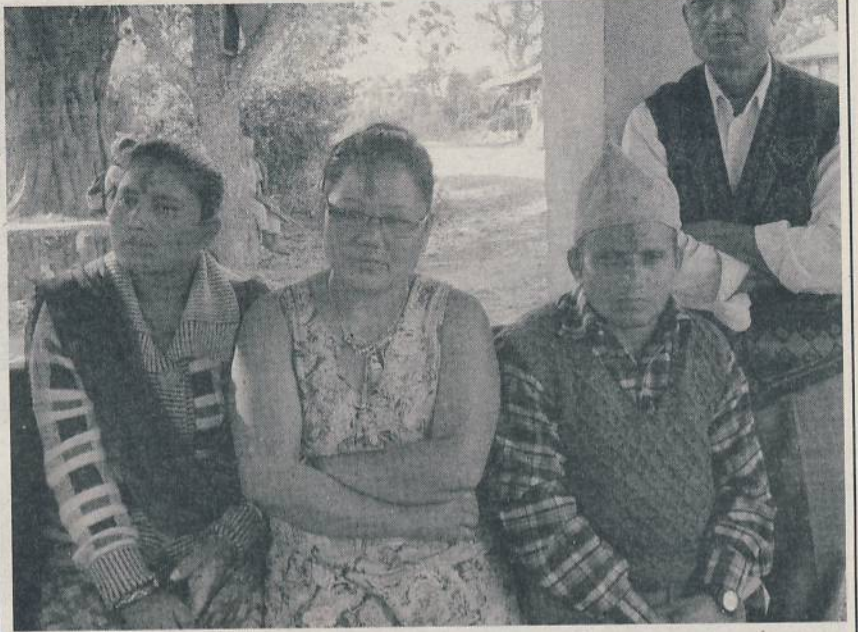
Two other projects are designed for remote mountain districts like

Mustang. Supported by the Asian Development Bank, Rural Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Sector Development Project (RRRSDP) High Mountain Agribusiness and Livelihood (HIMALI) Project has been helping rural population to enhance their livelihood through different schemes.

As the rural road, drinking water and irrigation projects aimed at poverty reduction in the lower hills and plain region, High Mountain Agribusiness and Livelihood Improvement (HIMALI) and RRRSDP have been supporting the private sector to participate in employment generation and poverty reduction through improving the connectivity through capital. HIMALI project aims to increase the number of mountain agribusiness, providing agribusiness grant to local entrepreneurs, groups and community. One of the aims of the project is to improve income in selected high mountain areas.

The project is assisting farmers and enterprises to strengthening the linkages taking advantage of the gradual improvement in infrastructure to realize the existing demands for mountain projects.

Along with completing the



Farmers in Ayodhyapuri VDC in Madi, Chitwan

construction of Kagbeni-Jhaite road linking upper Mustang with Jomsom and the rest of Nepal, RRRSDP also completed 6 schemes for water supply and sanitation benefiting 4,403 population of 675 households. With a total cost of 362,869,950.54 rupees, the project also constructed 4 trail bridges, 2 small irrigations and 2 community buildings, 1 primary school building, and a bio-engineering, Nursery in Kagbeni and Samar. The project also provides training in

driving, hotel management, sewing, and cooking and apple management to 72 individuals.

"Before the construction of road, people living in the area used to pay over Rs. 200 per kilo rice, the situation has changed now. Similarly, our apple and potato did not see the market. Now, we are getting good price for our products," said Tashi Ambe of Samar village. "We are selling apple, potato and barley as far as up to Pokhara."

After the construction of the road, farmers living in Tangbe-Chaile-Samar section of the road have already started to plant apple in the community land.

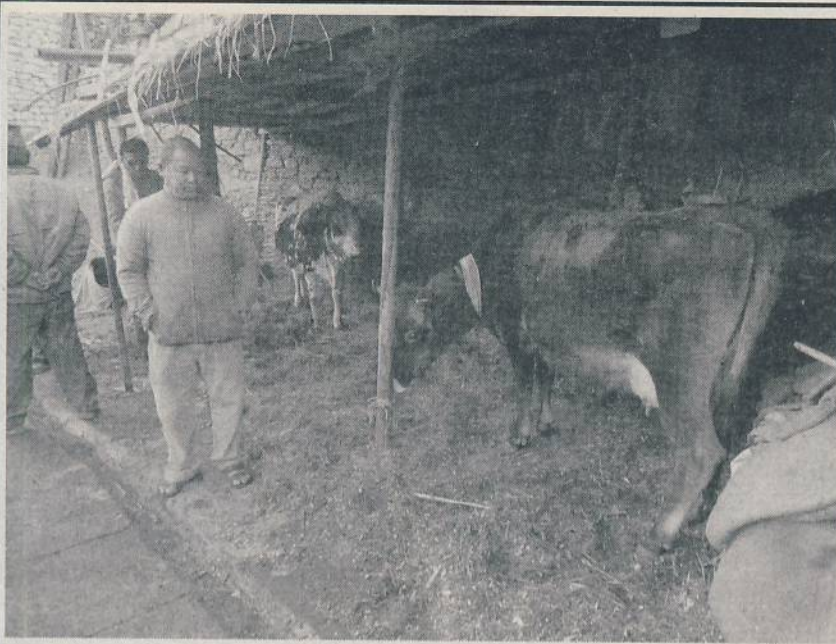
"This is a unique project directed to improve the living standards of poor people living in the Himalayas. We take utmost care to protect the fragile ecology and social security of people living in upper Mustang," said Ram Krishna Sapkota, deputy director general of DoLIDAR.

RRRSDP focused its attention to poverty reduction and inclusive development by enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of public services, and improving access of rural residents to economic opportunities and social service.

As per the project outputs, the project improved roads, developed and



Drinking water project in Meghauli, Chitwan



Livestock Farm in Lete

improved community based supplementary rural infrastructure, enhanced equity, employment and income opportunities for the poor and disadvantaged, strengthened institutional capacity of the government institutions at various levels and communities and improved the project management.

"This is the road constructed with support from the local community taking consideration of social and environmental safeguards," said Ram Krishna Sapkota, project coordinator of RRSDDP.

Implemented through Department



ADB's Country Director Kenichi Yokoyama

of Local Infrastructure Development and Agricultural Roads (DOLIDAR), Rural Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Sector Development Program (RRSDP) are funded by Asian Development Bank.

"This road is likely to end our hardships," said Tashi Khambo, 45. The road has made a tremendous contribution in the livelihood of the people living in remote parts of the Himalayas where the ratio of poverty is rampant.

There are also growing concerns about environmental and social safeguards. "ADB's environmental and social safeguards are a cornerstone of support to inclusive economic and environmentally sustainable growth. We commit to the full implementation of the safeguard policy, and work with our borrowers and other stakeholders to put the policy principles and requirements into practice," said Deepak Bahadur Singh, senior environment officer at ADB resident mission. "We ensure the environmental soundness and sustainability of projects and support the integration of environmental consideration into the project into the decision making process."

When such projects are implemented, the question of land

acquisition and social safeguards always arises. "We take care of agenda like social inclusion as well as social safety of the poor and deprived population in the course of implementation of the projects," said Laxmi Prasad Subedi, senior social development officer, ADB.

Himali Project has shown how public-private partnership can successfully work in remote Nepal. Under the project, five sub-projects have already been approved with a total amount of over 21 million rupees and approved over 15 million rupees in grants for those projects. The projects include Rainbow Trout farm in Jhasa Lete, Shyangfola Community Agriculture Farm, Marpha, Mustang Dairy Industry, Marpha, Himali Sherpa Apple Nursery Marpha and Muktinath Multiple Cooperatives Limited Jharkot Muktinath.

Situated at over 6,000 feet, Ghansa Rainbow Trout Farm of Lete VDC of Mustang district is the first of its kind to utilize fresh water of Kali Gandaki watershed to produce Trout Fish. With an aim to produce 7,400 kilo of trout fish from the fresh water, four entrepreneurs have already invested over 7.9 million rupees. After the production of trout, it will end to import need for fish from plains of Nepal.

"Although there is risk, we agreed to invest in the project," said Navin Bhattachan, chairman of the group. It will generate employment opportunities as well. As there is a big market, we can even sell it up to Pokhara."

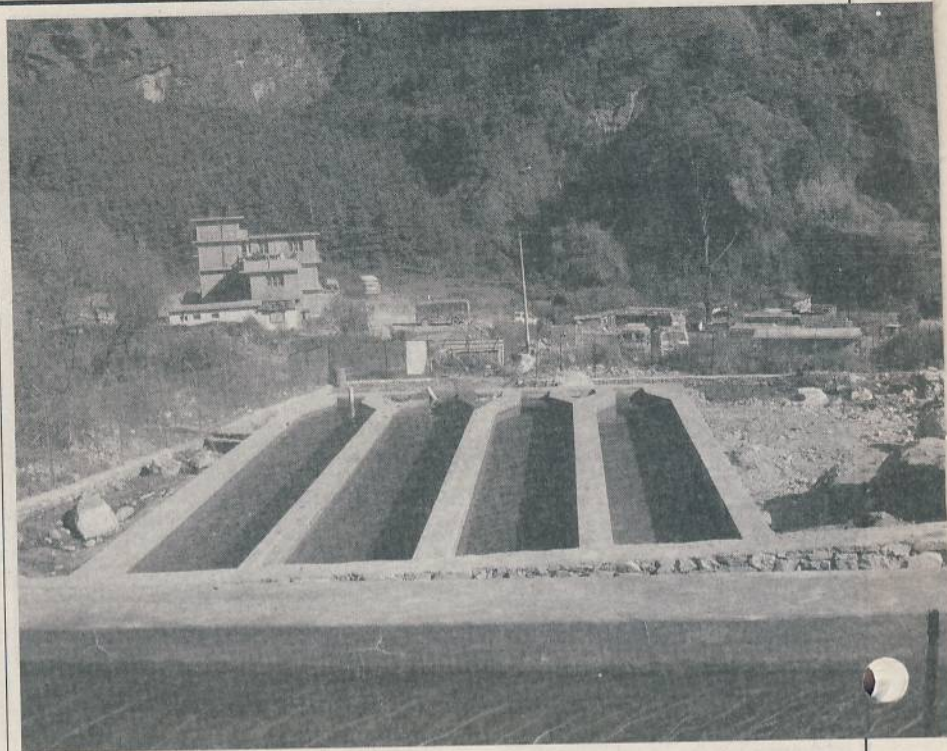
Maya Gurung, 28, chairperson of Muktinath Multiple Cooperative, has also noticed a lot of change in her village. After the completion of road to link the village, they have started commercial production of Tora Juice. Seabuck Thorn Squash is produced from Hippophae-Tibetana, natural and wild berries found above 3500 meters. From collecting raw materials to producing the juice, it is an industry handled by women of Jharkot.

"Himali project encouraged

mountain entrepreneurs to show their potential by investing their own seed money with the grants," said Dr. Amar Bahadur Shaha, project director. The people will sustain it for their own benefit. "As poor people in mountains do not have enough money, nobody will come to invest here."

Situated at Jharkot 4 of Muktinath Village Development Committee, Muktinath Tora Juice Industry has produced the juice and sent it to sell in Kathmandu. Promoted by Women Development Committee and Muktinath Multiple Cooperatives Ltd, the juice helped to improve the livelihood of women in general and households of the Jharokt and nearby village in particular. Himali project under public private partnership has set an example to generate the private resources in the development of the region. It also encourages people to take risks in investing local industry.

The level of community involvement in the development programs and projects determines the level of achievement and prosperity of the people living in the targeted areas. At a time when various development programs are undergoing throughout the country, Asian Development Bank has shown that the initiatives of various development projects will



A Rainbow Trout Farm, Ghasa

make a difference in the life of people.

Community managed projects and flow of remittances have helped reduce poverty in Nepal dramatically in recent years, from 41 per cent 31 percent in 2011.

Nepal has exceeded the Millennium Development Goals for poverty reduction, cut poverty by

more than half and become one of the best global performers in poverty reduction. Despite such achievements, the gap between rich and poor continues to increase. The gap is growing in urban and rural areas.

Nearly 40 per cent of children under the age of five suffer from malnutrition and 28 per cent in the same age group were underweight in 2010. This is Nepal's key challenge, and also its key opportunity: to improve the lives of those children and their families and lift them out of poverty.

How can Nepal reduce poverty further? By investing in its people, its human capital, for improved health, education, skills and jobs and better access to finance along with investments in critical infrastructure – and that's where Nepal's development partners, including the Asian Development Bank can help.

Nepal and the Asian Development Bank have been partners in development since 1969 and Asian Development Bank has already provided nearly \$ 3.1 billion in concessional loans and grants for investment projects and about \$175



A section of Kagbeni-Samar road

million technical assistance grants. The ADB has provided analyses, advice and financing to Nepal – to both the public and the private sector – in areas ranging from education and healthcare to infrastructure, energy policy, clean drinking water and access to finance for rural micro-borrowers and small and medium-sized businesses.

The Asian development Bank has begun working with Nepal on the next phase of our partnership by preparing five-year Country Partnership Strategy for Nepal Interim Strategy Note. “I am very happy to see the completion of the projects and contribution made in the remote parts of Nepal,” said an ADB top official.

“The strategy has a long five year term horizon, and is well aligned with the government’s development objective of accelerated, sustainable, inclusive economic growth,” said Kenichi Yokoyama, ADB’s country director to Nepal, who visited the project sites in Mustang.

ADB’s grants and credits over the last couple of years have built critically needed drinking water systems for



Women Entrepreneurs in Muktinath

urban populations, including in Kathmandu and other projects are improving agriculture and providing vital roads, bridges and transportation links.

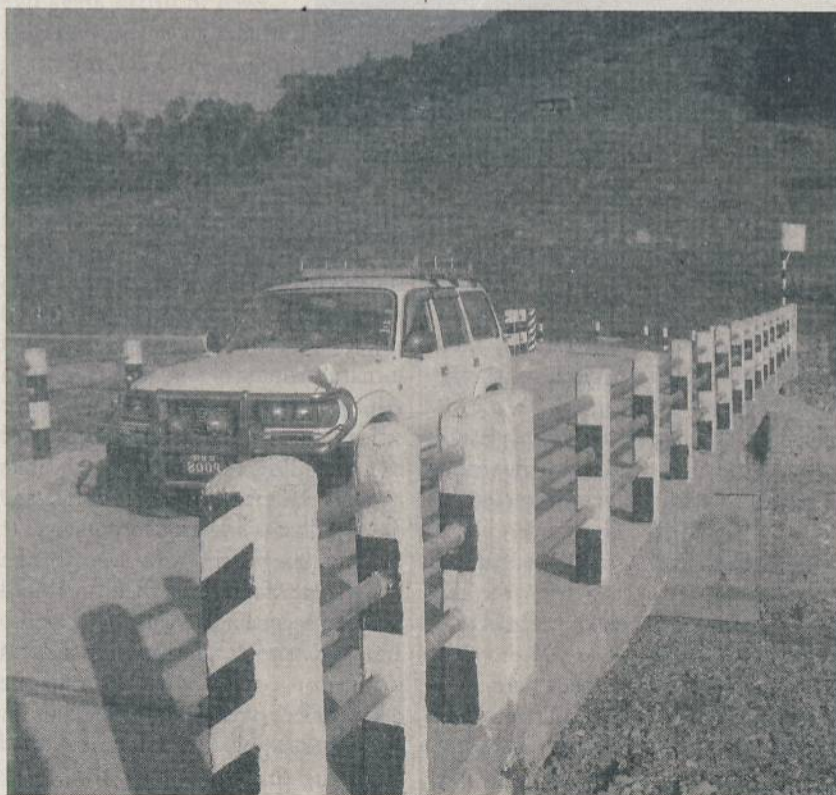
Through projects like HIMALI, ADB is also focusing on private sector development. It has invested in

infrastructure to support development. ADB support has also helped create jobs and raise incomes for people by promoting trade opportunities, and facilitating businesses’ access to outside markets.

“We support programs that meet the needs of the people. These initiatives and additional resources are part of our expanded and increased efforts to assist Nepal in bringing people out of poverty,” told ADB’s country director Kenichi Yokoyama to New Spotlight.

ADB is Nepal’s partner in finding a path forward for the Nepali people – especially those children, families and communities held back by unemployment, low incomes, health concerns and lack of income prospects. Education, improved health care, better skills and training can improve incomes for families and working people.

As ADB has approved the Country Partnership Strategy 2013-2017 for Nepal focusing on Nepal’s overall development, committing to build historic partnership with the people of Nepal to help them build a better future, poor people living in remote parts of Nepal like in Mustang, Lamjung and Chitwan now have reasons to rejoice. ■



A bridge in Lamjung

Springs And Ponds – Viable Solutions To The Water Crisis

By NIRENDRA BASNET

Ponds have been a significant part of nature and thus humans for many centuries. It has had the important goal of supporting many habitats, an integral part of cultural and heritage and an inspiration for many forms of the arts. The ponds show above was an inspiration for Claude Monet and his works, and there have been numerous such ponds providing an inspiration for many across the world. Besides the arts ponds do have an important role of supporting wildlife and other vegetations, thus creating a natural ecosystem.

Nepal is no stranger to ponds, and it is believed in myths and also in geological studies that there existed many ponds and lakes in the Kathmandu valley. Ponds such as the Rani Pokhari (Queen's Pond) or known by the Newari name of Nhu Pukhu (New Pond) dating to the 17th century was built by King Pratap Malla to console his Queen Anantapriya on the demise of her youngest son. It has a Shiva temple (Balgopaleshwar Mahadev) at its center and every year during bhai tika (October-November), the final day of the Tihar festival it is visited by those pilgrimage that do not have brothers who do not have sisters. The Nag Pokhari in Naxal is which is on the eastern gate of the former Royal Palace, has a tall statue of a Naga King (Serpent God). It is the centre of attraction to various performing arts during the festival of Nag Panchami. Gahana Pokhari is another major pond in the Kathmandu valley, which is the pièce maitresse de l'attraction to the festival of gahana khoj (ornaments search) search during March-April. Many such ponds that provide a religious value to communities exist in Bhaktapur, the major ones being Siddha Pokhari or in Newari Ta Pukhu (Big Pond) located at Dudhpati (at the entrance of the city). Patan also provides its fair share of arts and festivities to the Kathmandu valley from the Pim Bahal Pokhari which was built in the 14th century and is one of

the more famous ponds in Patan.

Besides such religious value to the community ponds also seem to be an important source to the most important source for life: water. The traditional forms of springs referred to as Asare mul (July period) and Saune mul (August) are all but dried up across the country. Those who can afford water utilize machines to extract groundwater, those who cannot have to ravel (especially women and girl child according to traditions) three to four hours each day to carry just 20 liters of water for a family of four. Such is the dire need of water that there even exists a water dowry system in many parts of the country,



A Japanese garden pond in Giverny, France built by the Claude Monet, after he began a lifelong love affair with all things Japanese

where family would provide a water pipeline to a nearby reservoir or spring. This research has been further continued by Nepal Water Conservation Foundation (NWCF) and earlier by FINNIDA along with the Government of Nepal's DoLIDAR ministry. The hypothesis of the research is that if there is a pond above the spring it could provide a source of water for the nearby springs. The study was conducted in Nawalparasi, Myagdi and Kapilvastu. They represented the different geographic regions of hills, mid hills (which includes the Mahabharata hills) and bhabar respectively. The ponds were built to be multipurpose, so they could serve the purpose of water collections from the overflow, or fishery ponds (in Kapilvastu) or rain water

collection (in Nawalparasi) with all having a common goal of recharging groundwater. From community visits, traditional knowledge and other secondary information we found that several key factors lead to drying up of springs. There are human induced factors like population which results in supply not meeting the demands. The constructions of roads and other infrastructure projects further dislocate the fractures' elsewhere, which provide the medium of waters transportation. Natural affects could be disasters like earthquakes, which provide a mechanism to shift the source of water to the spring. Many community members interviewed proclaimed that when the ponds dried up it resulted in many springs too drying. This research has been further undertaken by ICIMOD and NWCF to research ponds and springs correlation in the mid hill region of Nepal.

Even in urban areas like Kathmandu valley ponds like Gahana Pokhari and Rani Pokhari have been believed by the surrounding community members that it provides a source for the dhunge dharas.

The famous pond in Bhaktapur, e.g. the Siddha Pokhari has been one of the sources for their existing dhunge dharas and also is believed to provide a natural filtration system to the water supply via its natural lining of mud. The Patan area which included several ponds have either dried up or the land has been used for building homes, which has negatively made an impact on the dhunge dharas and its water quality.

Is it time we revert to the scientific knowledge of our forefathers and build the city according to their blue prints and study the significance of ponds? If we are on course with the current development, we will be losing out on the water supply and its sources thus resulting in a mass feud for water services. ■

PRISM

Poverty Reduction

After the implementation of Poverty Reduction of Informal Workers in Solid Waste Management (PRISM), the livelihood of informal waste workers has transformed

By A CORRESPONDENT

Purna Man Waiba, president of Samyukta Safai Jagaran, an organization of Informal Waste Workers (IWWs), is the happiest man now. Although IWWs are still facing so many problems, the last three years have brought many changes in their day to day life.

"Now we don't have to fight alone for our cause, we have organizations to take care of our issues and agenda," said Waiba.

Unorganized and neglected earlier, informal waste workers have now the Samyukta Safai Jagaran, which was formed in coordination with PRISM to provide recognition to waste picking as a decent job and waste pickers as decent workers.

The life of over 4,000 informal workers working in Solid Waste Management used to be worse. Collecting wastes through naked hands and living on the piles of waste along the rivers like Bagmati, they were the poorest of people serving the richest in the urban Kathmandu Valley.

However, this is gradually changing. With the implementation of Poverty Reduction of Informal Workers in Solid Waste Management (PRISM), informal solid workers are organized and mechanized.

Ram Pukar Das and Sakhiya Khatun two informal waste pickers have noticed the real changes in their livelihood. "Yes we still live in the bank of Bagmati river in a slum. But, there is a change and better environment for us than in the past. We have our own cooperative where we can deposit our savings and borrow the money at the time of need."

Instead of collecting the solid waste by naked hands, they have started using gloves and other equipment to collect the garbage. Similarly, the



establishment of cooperative has helped them develop the habit of saving and lending. As they are organized, informal workers now realize they have more bargaining power than before.

With the improvement in the conditions of waste pickers, the common people are also respecting and treating them with dignity. "PRISM has shown how organized informal workers can make their livelihood different," said Srijana Devkota, project director of PRISM.

With the financial support from European Union, Practical Action Nepal, with implementing partners, namely, Centre for Integrated Urban Development (CIUD), Solid Waste Management and Resource Management Centre (SWMRMC), UN-Habitat, Water for Asian Cities Programme Nepal, and Nepal Reuse and Recyclable Goods Entrepreneurs Association (NRRGEA), has been implementing the project in five municipalities, that is, Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Bhaktapur, Madhyapur and Kirtipur of the Valley.

"One of the aims of the project is to enhance social protection of the informal workers and vulnerable groups dependent on solid waste for their livelihood in the solid waste management sector," said Devkota. "After the implementation of project, one can see

many visible changes happening in the livelihood of people. Many waste workers are sending their children to schools and they have now certain savings also."

Urbanization in Nepal is increasing at an alarming rate, from 3-17% in the last 5 decades. Due to the lack of appropriate employment opportunities, a large number of workers in the

informal economy are engaged in waste-related work.

"This is a model program targeted to support the informal waste workers in Kathmandu valley," said Dr. Sumitra Amatya, Executive Director, Solid Waste Management Technical Support Center, and Ministry of Urban Development.

Along with organizing various income generating programs, PRISM also organizes behavior change campaign from time to time. Under the project, Center for Integrated Urban Development (CIUD) in partnership with European Union and Practical Action Nepal celebrated International Waste Pickers' Day last March organizing "Behavior Change Campaign" to provide social recognition for Informal Waste Workers (IWWs) working in waste management sector in project areas.

Funded by European Union and Practical Action Nepal, CIUD has been implementing Poverty Reduction of Informal Workers in Solid Waste Management Sector Project (PRISM) in Kathmandu Valley since 2011. It is a three-year project.

The primary objective of the workshop was to generate respect for informal waste workers (IWWs) and increase the level of social awareness

about their often neglected contribution in the waste management sector. The campaign also aimed to make the public aware about the five R's: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Respect (for waste workers) and Recover.

"As we start our journey, this will require a great deal of coordination between the Municipalities, Solid Waste Management Technical Support Center and the Ministry of Urban Development. CIUD commits to play a facilitating role to coordinate between the stakeholders," said Pushkar Lal Shrestha, Technical Advisor of PRISM project and the Executive Director of CIUD.

According to an estimate, there are 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.

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.

The waste picking profession is despised by the rest of society, despite its contribution to removing and recycling large quantities of waste. Waste workers are often exploited socially and economically. None of the current policies or plans includes social protection provisions which could help improve the situation, and raise the status of the profession.

"We are targeting around 4,000 waste workers. We also want to increase programs for health and safety, leading to better health outcomes. We are also working to increase income of workers of 2,000, and access to affordable health care insurance to 1,000. We expect that at least 50% of beneficiaries will be women," said Devkota.

Along with many other projects, Practical Action Nepal has shown that change in the livelihood of the poor people is possible through various interventions through partnership of the government, civil society and private sector. ■

WORLD AIDS DAY Yet To Pay Off

Despite achieving some success, the efforts at bringing the number of HIV infected people down are yet to pay off

By NIKKI SHARMA

When it comes to celebrating the WORLD AIDS DAY, although the situation is not alarmingly dangerous, it is not a reason to rejoice either. The day's theme for 2013 is "Getting to Zero - Zero new HIV Infection, Zero Discrimination, and Zero AIDS Related Deaths" but the data show four to six Nepalese are getting infected with HIV virus.

Experts argue that migration, unsafe sex, and increase of ISD are the reasons behind the refusal for the number of HIV cases to decline in Nepal. Using condom is safe for not getting infected from HIV virus.

In the last few years, efforts have been made to supply free needles to the drug users as well. However, these have yet to reach all those who need them. Condom is not available easily for most female sex workers and their clients.

According to the World Health Organization, in 2012, twenty-one lakh teenagers, between 10-19 years were infected with HIV/AIDS. Some 35 million people carry this virus in the world. It has been estimated that 41,110 Nepalese, between 15-49 years are infected by HIV.

However, Nepal has been able to reduce the HIV prevalence rate as one of the 56 countries, which are found to be able to bring down the HIV infection sharply. But recent reports show four to six people are getting HIV infection in Nepal daily.

According to President of Jagriti Women Association Bijaya Dhakal, there are 30,000 registered female sex workers in Nepal, who have been transmitting the HIV. "Sex workers, injecting drug users, male having sex with male, third gender, migrant workers and their families and prisoners are the most at

risk population group of HIV," said participants at an interaction on media sensitization to the issues of HIV/AIDS, organized by Nepal HIV/AIDS Alliance (NEHA).

"The youth should be aware of how to prevent the spread of the disease and learn to treat victims of HIV/AIDS as equals. There are ways to live a normal life in case sufferers receive medical assistance. However, the challenges before us are to overcome the social stigma related to the disease. There are rampant discriminations against the infected people and there is the need to



treat them equally," said president of Children for Green New Nepal Bijaya Prajapati.

National STD and HIV/AIDS

Centre commemorated the World AIDS Day 2013 with the theme "Getting to Zero - Zero new HIV Infection, Zero Discrimination, and Zero AIDS Related Deaths" by organizing an "Interaction Programme on HIV/AIDS with National Networks of National Federation of Women Living with HIV/AIDS & Jagriti Mahila Maha Sang, Nepal" at Thimi, Bhaktapur, Nepal on 29th November 2013.

Though Nepal is a poor country, but two-fourth people of our country are well-informed about HIV/AIDS. Despite that, in public places, Nepalese stay one step backward to talk about the topic of sex. They do not realize sex education is necessary for their teenage children also.

The recent incidents of declining HIV prevalence rate should give us some sigh of relief. However, the challenges remain in containing the HIV infections. Along with the strong government commitment, there is also the need for involving the concerned stakeholders at all levels. ■

EU BAN ON AIRLINES

Wake Up Safe

The EU's ban on the Nepalese airlines to enter the European airspace may turn out to be a good for the civil aviation authorities and airlines to improve their safety measures

By A CORRESPONDENT

The EU's decision to ban the Nepalese airlines from entering the European airspace is a regrettable decision. We demand its revocation," said Rameshwor Thapa, chairman of Airlines Operators Association Nepal (AOAN).

Other airlines operators echoed Thapa's demand. What we have not realized are the need to correct the security lapses in Nepal's aviation system and address the safety issues.

In the last five years, more than a dozen domestic aircraft crashed, killing almost two hundred passengers, mostly Nepalese. The air crashes continue to increase due to faulty aircraft and human errors.

In a mountainous country with STOL airports in different parts of Nepal, compromise in any safety measures means to invite more accidents and casualty of innocent people. Just last year, Nepal Airline's aircraft crashed in Jomsom due to the failure of pilot to follow the advice of Air Traffic Controller. Similarly, the airlines operators often ignore the terrain of Nepal, compelling pilots to fly the aircraft even at the risk of their life.

A number of minor incidents may have occurred in Nepal every day. Some go unnoticed and some are recorded. For instance, just a day after the decision of the European Union to ban all Nepal based airlines, under its blacklist, a Buddha Air aircraft witnessed technical glitches, while landing at the Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu.

According to the Air Traffic Controller, the brakes on the plane that took off from Pokhara locked as it took a turn after touching down the

runway in Kathmandu. Airlines officials described that the plane witnessed a brake lock. It was a small problem. Following the incident, oil spilled on the runway and the air traffic was disrupted for about half an hour.

Thus, Nepal's air safety is often in question as not being at par with the international standards. Politicization in the appointment of chiefs and decision makers at the Civil Aviation Authority, a regulatory body, has made the institution weaker.

"We are making a gradual progress in reducing the non-compliance rate in air safety. We plan to reduce the rate to below the world average of 39 percent by significantly reducing air accidents

and incidents within the next six months," said Tek Bahadur Thapa Gharti, Minister for Civil Aviation, at a program organized to mark the International Civil Aviation Day.

ICAO audits countries on their level of aviation safety by utilizing eight parameters; Legislation, Organization, Licensing, Operations, Airworthiness, Accident Investigation, Air Navigation Service and Aerodromes. According to AirlineRatings.com, any airline that meets the global average for all eight parameters gets two stars towards the seven star total available.

As Nepal's regulatory authority is so much politicized, compromises on these safety parameters are common.

Nepal's civil aviation authority has failed to implement the suggestions given in accident investigation reports. "Under the pressure from the ministers, many decisions were taken in midnight to issue license to airlines," said a senior official at the CAN on condition of anonymity.

With seven accidents in Nepali skies since 2012 and the loss of 36 lives, one can easily gauge the level of safety in flying Nepali carriers. "Nepal must improve its safety records by adopting the measures outlined by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the global airlines regulator."

The EU ban came in the wake of growing lapses in air safety. Instead of improvement, as recommended by an important ICAO audit in 2011, Nepal's non-compliance rate with ICAO standards has increased.

This is the reason foreign aviation regulators and aircraft insurers had been repeatedly threatening stern action if Nepal failed to take concrete measures to minimize the number of air crashes on its soil. According to

"We are making a gradual progress in reducing the non-compliance rate in air safety. We plan to reduce the rate to below the world average of 39 percent by significantly reducing air accidents and incidents within the next six months," said Tek Bahadur Thapa Gharti, Minister for Civil Aviation, at a program organized to mark the International Civil Aviation Day.

Airlines sources, the aviation insurance in Nepal has gone much higher in recent times.

This is just a wake-up call for Nepali civil aviation authorities and government administrators. They must have realized how costly the neglect of air safety can be and how they should work towards improving the country's dreadful air safety records more seriously. With hundreds of thousands of people still flying in these dangerous skies every year, it is never too late.

"The current safety situation in Nepal does not leave us any other choice than to put all of its carriers on

the EU air-safety list," European Transport Commissioner Siim Kallas said in a statement in Brussels. "We do hope that this ban will help the aviation authorities to improve aviation safety."

In addition to imposing an operational ban in Europe, the blacklist can act as a guide for travelers worldwide and influence safety policies in non-EU countries. Nations that are home to carriers with poor safety records can ground them to avoid being put on the EU list, while countries keen to keep out unsafe foreign airlines can use the European list as a guide for their own bans.

"The government will take all necessary steps to improve Nepal's aviation safety standards within the next six months. We will try to correct deficiencies that the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has pointed out," said director general of Civil Aviation Authority Ratish Chandra Lal Suman.

This was not an overnight decision. A team of CAAN officials had visited EC headquarters in Brussels in November to discuss Nepal's aviation safety standards. "On the basis of safety information from various sources and a hearing both with the Nepali aviation authorities as well as with a number of Nepali carriers, the Commission decided to put all airlines from Nepal on the EU air safety list," in its statement Siim Kallas, EC vice-president who is also responsible for transport, said.

"Nepal has made considerable progress by reducing the percentage of ineffective implementation of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Standards from 57 percent in 2009 to 45 per cent in 2013, compared to global average of 41 percent in 2009 to 39 percent in 2013," said Suman.

With more than hundred planes flying in Nepal's domestic sky and Nepal's airlines flying to some of routes in Asian cities, Nepal needs to prove that it is a safe country to fly in. ■

USAID Launches a New Program in Nepal

USAID Launches a New Program to Ensure Sustained Availability of Lifesaving Drugs and Commodities across the Country

The Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) launched Health for Life Logistics, a \$2.2 million, five-year project aimed at strengthening the MOHP logistics system to ensure sustained availability of essential health commodities in health facility and community settings.

In 2000/2001, 23 percent of health facilities experienced stock-outs of family planning commodities (condoms, pills, Depo) and 62 percent of stock-outs of trace drugs (Iron, Vitamin A, Oral Rehydration Salts, Cotrim P). Over the last 10 years, the Ministry's Logistics Management Information System data demonstrates that year-round stock-outs of family planning commodities at health facilities were reduced to 4 percent and stock-outs of tracer drugs to 16 percent during that same period.

USAID has supported the Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP) in strengthening the logistics system for health commodities since the inception of the Logistics System Improvement Plan in 1994. There remains a need to consolidate gains made to date and to adapt the system to the changing circumstances. Health for Life Logistics is a nationwide project that will help MOHP monitor its stock of health commodities and use data from the logistics and health management information systems to make decisions about where additional commodities and support are needed. In addition to its national focus, Health for Life Logistics will increase health service utilization by the general population with special attention to the poor, marginalized and hard-to-reach population, by strengthening the MoHP's existing logistics system in local health facility and community settings.

The project will prioritize 14

districts in the Mid-Western and Western regions for identification, implementation, and scale-up of best practices.

This activity continues USAID's decade-long partnership with the MOHP to improve the logistics system in Nepal. USAID, the MOHP and other External Development Partners helped to strengthen the logistics "pull" system (demand-based nationwide distribution of health commodities); expand the Web-based Logistics Management Information System for efficient logistics decision-making; improve the supply chain management of health and HIV/AIDS commodities; auction off and dispose of unusable commodities; and make effective warehouse management practices a key priority to decrease wastage.

According to a press release of Public Affairs Section Embassy of The United States, health for Life Logistics will support the expansion and sustainability of these successes to date through three objectives: 1) improving decentralization of logistics management systems; 2) integrating the HIV and general health logistics systems; and 3) building on the existing capacity of the MOHP Logistics Management Division to reduce future need for external support.

USAID and the MOHP signed a partnership agreement for implementation of Health for Life Logistics. The project will be implemented by a recently formed Nepali NGO, Lifeline Nepal, with Management Support Services as the sub-partner. Sheila Lutjens, USAID Acting Mission Director, noted: "For over half a century the United States Government, through USAID, has supported the Government of Nepal in the health sector. I am delighted for the opportunity to once again formalize USAID's ongoing partnership with the Ministry of Health and Population to ensure that lifesaving drugs and commodities are reaching those in greatest need across the country."

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Curb On Violence

The experiences of women tempo drivers show that economic empowerment can reduce domestic violence

By NIKKI SHARMA



Bimala Gautam, 30, a tempo driver, of Pepsi Cola, starts her duty from early morning at four and works till eight in the evening on RNAC- Pepsi Cola route. As one of the bread earners of her family, Gautam has her say in the family matters.

Until a few years ago, it was strange in the Nepali society to see a woman work outside home till the evening, like Gautam did. However, the perception has changed now. As Gautam makes money and contributes to her household, she has earned her freedom.

"Although I come from a Brahman family, I feel no shame to work as a driver. I'd rather not care about people's backbiting. I believe in hard work. You see, when I started work and made money, I was given a decisive role in the house. I can see violence committed against my colleagues, who do not work, by their husbands. Not me," said Gautam. "Of course, working for such a long time daily is difficult. However, I earn Rs 10,000 a month. With this income, I am supplementing the family's monthly income, offering good food and education to my children."

As she makes money through hard work, Gautam's husband and other family members help her in household chores. "It is not easy for a woman to work inside and outside the home at the same time. My husband makes my work easier by lending his helping hand with some household chores. I respect my work and feel proud to be self-reliant," said the confident female tempo driver.

Gautam is not the only woman tempo driver feeling such security. Ambika Jimi, 38, a resident of Anamnagar, also drives a tempo on Sundhara-New Baneshwor route. "When I was jobless, I used to be depending upon the husband's salary and there were no other ways for a strong family support. Now I earn Rs

5,000 per month and I don't depend upon my husband to look after my family. Since I started work, it has not only improved my economic condition, but also built up my confidence level," said Jimi proudly. "Nowadays I do feel, if both couples are employees, understanding and self-respect for each other will be highly valued."

Ambika and Bimala are among hundreds of working women whose situation has drastically changed. Although there are cases of rampant of domestic violence against women in the rural parts of Nepal, many women of Kathmandu city, who are engaged in economic activities, have started enjoying a better life.

Studies conducted by various organizations have shown that economic empowerment of women is a key to reduce domestic violence. Even in rural parts of Nepal, women with better income rarely faced violence. Despite efforts of the government and civil society organizations to reduce violence against women, the scenario has been discouraging. According to Nepal Police, violence against women is on an increasing trend in Nepal. During the last fiscal year, 555 cases of rape and 156 cases of rape attempts were registered by the police.

Nepal Police recorded a total of 3,123 rape cases and 726 attempts in the past 10 years. Similarly, there were 1,116 cases of women trafficking and 10,697 cases of domestic violence against women. Among all the forms of violence against women, domestic violence was the largest in number in the past 10 years. In 2003, there were 569 cases of domestic violence, which rose to 983 and 1,355 in 2010 and 2011, respectively.

As Nepal has been celebrating 16 days of activism against gender based violence 2013, mixed results are coming in. Every day, the number of women

living in rural and even urban regions have gone through one or the other kind of violence. According to Nepal Police records, many cases are being registered by women against violence. The reports show that domestic violence swelled alarmingly by 66.05 percent to a total of 2,250 cases in 2012.

According to United Nations, domestic violence is defined as violence occurring within the private sphere, generally between individuals who are related through intimacy, blood or law. Domestic violence is also referred to as "wife beating", "wife battering" or intimate "partner abuse".

Domestic violence has continued throughout history, unreported and unchallenged. It has profound effects on women. After marriage, the greater risk of violence for women continues to be in their home where husband and family live together. Domestic violence has been taking place primarily within the home and among members of a particular household. Thus, domestic violence has been treated as a private matter and not of social concern and there is a cultural practice not to tolerate interference by any outsider.

"We cannot take a sort of action when males try to take advantage of us. Although woman is becoming independent, but unless society stops to look upon us with disbelief and the sense of ignorance, we never get chances to demonstrate our working skills," Bimala said.

Violence against women is everywhere in the world. What is lacking in Nepal is that the victims do not bring such cases to light, while the officials do not respond to them seriously and the efforts to empower women are negligible while most of the programs have focused on awareness campaign. ■



A Water Tap in Sindhuli Photo Courtesy: Ashutosh Tiwari, Wateraid Nepal

WATER & SANITATION Challenges Ahead

Although Nepal has made a steady progress in the water and sanitation sector, a long way is there to ensure universal coverage

By A CORRESPONDENT

Be it Baglung, Tanahu or Mustang, many districts have been making efforts to declare themselves as Open Defecation Free (ODF) areas. With support from national and international governments, Nepal has been successfully carrying the ODF campaign throughout the country.

However, the question remains: how can it be sustained? Is just declaring ODF enough or is there the need of back-up programs as well? In many villages, the people have resumed their habit of open defecation. Due to the lack of public toilets, the people in the highways are compelled to go for ODF.

Although Nepal has almost achieved many goals of MDGs, it is still behind the goals of sanitation and water. Many international non-governmental organizations have also been supporting the water and sanitation sector of Nepal in line with the MDGs.

Nepal's experiences have shown that the supply of drinking water with the sanitation facilities can make a lot of difference in rural health. Proper sanitation facilities reduce the incidents related to diarrhea drastically in Nepal.

Studies have shown that Nepal can save over 8,000 deaths caused by water borne diseases.

"Our ministry is planning to launch backup programs in the districts which were declared the ODF. Similarly, we are also working to increase the number of public toilets in various districts which were declared ODF," said Kishore Thapa, secretary at the Ministry of Urban Development. "After successfully holding SACOSAN V, the government will come out with a focused program on sanitation."

Along with the government, INGOs and NGOs working in Nepal have been

playing important role in this complex and difficult but important task to provide drinking water and sanitation.

On broader

level, what the I/NGOs -despite the undeservedly easy ridicule they face in some quarters in Nepal - do best is this: raise widespread awareness about the importance of social inclusion of all forms in all our activities, educate people about their rights, educate and make people aware against acts of discrimination, empower the hitherto voiceless and marginalized people by teaching them how to access the legally provided instruments and the resources of the state, and so on," said Ashutosh Tiwari, country director of WaterAid Nepal and chairperson of Association of International Non-governmental organizations.

Over the last two decades, WaterAid Nepal has been working with various NGOs in Nepal to increase the coverage of drinking water and sanitation in rural parts of Nepal. It is focusing its attention on socially marginalized and poor people of Nepal.

As in other parts of Nepal, WaterAid Nepal has been supporting Nepal-Water-for-Health (Newah)-built tap in Sindhuli district to provide drinking water to the poor and marginalized communities. The taps constructed in Sindhuli district serve the people with their morning, afternoon and evening safe water needs.

At a time when questions are being raised about the role of the International NGOs, WaterAid Nepal's support given to the community is an example of how important they are. "Through their various works, I/NGOs do their best to ensure that everyone — the disabled, the vulnerable, the social outcast, the marginalized, and the poor — in Nepal get to be fully, actively participating member of our various societies," writes Tiwari. ■

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EARTHQUAKE

Children At Risk

World Vision has launched an earthquake preparedness project in the valley to help reduce the risks of disaster for children

By A CORRESPONDENT

As Nepal lies in an active earthquake zone, a major earthquake may hit it any time sooner or later. Experts have predicted that there will be a high human casualty in case a quake hits Kathmandu valley at a scale the Nepal-Bihar earthquake did in 1934.

However, the government has shown little concern about preparedness planning. The quake will badly affect tens of thousands of children in schools and homes. Against this scenario, World Vision, an international non-governmental organization working in Nepal, has come up with a program to reduce the risk.

According to a press release of World Vision Nepal, the Cities Prepare report focuses on reducing vulnerabilities for the urban poor in Kathmandu and other six Asian cities.

The report highlights Kathmandu, alongside six Asian cities, Kolkata, India; Chittagong, Bangladesh; Bangkok, Thailand; Jakarta, Indonesia; Davao, Philippines; and Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea – in order to capture the varying preparedness contexts in cities across Asia. The population of the Kathmandu valley

has grown by 500% in the last 50 years with little corresponding investment in planning, services and building codes. The next earthquake is considered not only inevitable but overdue, and is likely to have a significantly greater impact than its predecessors due to population density.

In Southeast Asia alone, the UN says some 35 per cent of the urban population, roughly 190.7 million people, lives in slums or squatter settlements, making them particularly vulnerable to disasters. World Vision's Cities Prepare report calls on leaders to recognize and act on the dangers facing people living on the margins in urban centers.

"The vulnerability of Kathmanduites and urban dwellers in other cities of Nepal has increased because of urban wealth inequity. Learning from similar cities around Southeast Asia in the area of managing urban disaster risks will help while we work together with the urban communities here to manage disaster risk.

World Vision has continued working with communities in Kathmandu creating local disaster

management committees and building their capacity on managing risks on their own. A project is underway that will retrofit 22 government schools and 8 health post buildings in the valley.

"In collaboration with other humanitarian agencies, namely Save, Care and Oxfam, joint efforts are being made in preparedness with simulations, repositioning and capacity building, for a major earthquake long due in Kathmandu," says Surendra Babu Dhakal, Humanitarian Emergency Affairs Manager, and World Vision International Nepal.

As the international community marks the one-month of Super Typhoon Haiyan, this new report calls for stronger disaster planning for cities to avoid widespread future devastation. The report warns of rapid urbanization and increased risks. The UN Population Fund says Asia is home to half of the world's urban population, and that roughly 44 million people across the Asia Pacific region move to urban areas each year. The report urges governments, businesses, civil society and communities to immediately address the changing urban landscape and ensure disaster preparedness is central to planning, future legislation and research.

The report recommends governments place more emphasis on disaster risk reduction programs for homes, schools, businesses and in developing policies in areas such as health care and municipal planning. It also calls for more partnerships to eliminate gaps in disaster planning at the municipal level and increased involvement of children in disaster preparedness plans.

World Vision warns that thousands are at risk of a major earthquake without adequate disaster preparedness plans. At a time when Nepal is expecting a major earthquake any time, the report issued by World Vision-International is timely.

Second Suns



By **BUDDHA BASNYAT, MD**

A new book entitled the Second Suns(Random House) tells the story of two revolutionary eye doctors, Dr Sanduk Ruit from Nepal and Geoff Tabin from the US. It is a story of innovative medicine and compassion.

Dr Sanduk Ruit from Olangchungola in Taplejung district won an open scholarship to study medicine in the prestigious King George Medical College in Lucknow, India. After specializing in ophthalmology Ruit was mentored by the famous Australian, Dr. Fred Hollows, in ground-breaking cataract surgery. This modern technique, which Ruit helped perfect, involves a deft incision in the cornea, removal of the cataract, and placement of the new lens. Recovery is prompt.

Reams have been written about how exquisitely competent Ruit's hands are in performing cataract surgery even in the most difficult places with lack of resources. This book has nothing new to add to the well-known operating skills of this surgeon. But what is amazing is how effectively Ruit, working closely with his counterpart Dr Geoff Tabin, has been able to propagate his magic technique to the furthest corners of the world, including Nepal, Tibet, Bhutan, Mongolia and even North Korea. Ruit was driven from the start in trying to provide world class cataract surgery to the poorest communities on earth. And the book describes in some detail how this shared vision of these two innovative doctors helped many thousands of patients worldwide who otherwise would not be able to see. In addition what this book brings to the fore is how quickly Ruit performs these cataract operations. In villages where hundreds of patients are waiting to have their cataract surgery, speed is of the essence.

But speed has to be accomplished without surgical complications. An important study (referenced in the book)



in the American Journal of Ophthalmology clearly demonstrated that one of the world's best and fastest eye surgeon, David Chang from the US, took nearly twice as long to operate on each patient as Ruit had. The study also revealed that ninety one % of Ruit's cataract patient had normal vision compared to Chang's 78 % after one day of surgery. This is an essential difference for people who have to walk home over difficult terrain soon after the operation. At six months time, 98% of both Chang and Ruit's patients had excellent eyesight. The article clearly showed that the cataract surgery Ruit was doing in monasteries, schools and police posts was comparable to outcome patients could expect in modern American hospitals.

Dr. Geoff Tabin too is an amazing man driven with the sense of strong altruism. He has many accomplishments. He is Harvard educated, a serious tennis player who captained the Yale tennis team when he went to college there, and a well-known mountain climber who has summited Everest and many other mountains. Despite all these accomplishments he also shows deep humility when he tells the Dalai Lama that in the field of cataract surgery "everything I have achieved, I have achieved with the partnership of Ruit". The book is also well balanced in its pitch as it depicts Ruit's grumpy nature at times with Tabin often appearing to be a hyperactive adolescent.

There is however a melancholic presence pervading this book: the author, David Relin, who also wrote the best-seller Three Cups of Tea with Greg Mortenson took his own life in 2012. Many events in that book were found to be either fabricated or excessively embellished by Greg Mortenson. Nepali readers of this new heart-warming book about Sanduk Ruit and Geoff Tabin will find that contrary to Three Cups of Tea, this book

MASHAV Organized Workshop

MASHAV – Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation, Dhulikhel Hospital - Kathmandu University Hospital and The Embassy of Israel in Nepal jointly organized a Comprehensive Trauma Workshop

The workshop was organized keeping in mind the Emergency Department's important role in responding to medical emergencies and trauma care. The workshop disseminated the required unique skills to nurses and physicians while dealing with the compound patient's situation. It was also aimed to introduce the participants to the various roles and performance of the Emergency Department staff while dealing with the management of trauma. Since Nepal is ranked 11th most risky country in world in terms of relative vulnerability to earthquake, and one of the less disaster-prepared nations globally, this workshop becomes much effective for preparing the paramedics and doctors to minimize the effect of trauma and take situation under control. Two Israeli experts, Ronit Ringel, Head of Emergency Preparedness of Community Health Services, Ministry of Health, Israel and Ms. Odeda Benin-Goren, Director,

Emergency Medicine, were the guest lecturers for the workshop. 30 mixed participants including special surgeons, anesthesiologists, emergency physicians, general medical doctors, nurses, paramedic staffs and community health person benefitted from the workshop.



According to the press release of Embassy of Israel, the workshop is a part of long term collaboration between MASHAV, Embassy of Israel in Kathmandu and Dhulikhel Hospital. Since its collaboration, more than a dozen of Programs related to public health, trauma management and community services have been organized in which Israeli Guest Lecturers were invited to impart the knowledge to Nepali participants. Beside the workshops and trainings, study opportunities (under full scholarship) and joint medical research for health professionals were organized so as to exchange ideas, views and experiences along with the sharing of technology and know-how between the two countries.

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