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NEWSMAGAZINE



Interview:
Rajendra Kumar Khetan



HIGHER SECONDARY EDUCATION

The First Choice

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General Katuwal: Biding Adieu
Maoist Politics: Leadership Tussle
Economy: New Monetary Policy
Social Inclusion

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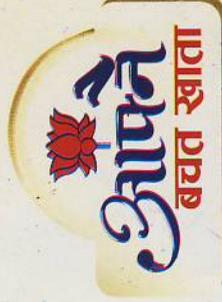
अब... १* रु. १ मै बचत खाता



नेपाल इन्भेस्टमेन्ट बैंक बाबी भन्दा बाबी
नागरिकहरूमा बैंकिङ्ग सेवाको पहिलो अनुभव
एवं बानी बस्न सकोस भन्नाका लागि सजोरब
प्रस्तुत गर्दछ...

**मात्र रु.१ मा
“आफ्नै बचत खाता”**

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Yeti Airlines Donates Money to Four Social Organizations

Yeti Airlines decided to donate Rs. 4 per flight ticket to four social organizations involved in various social works. Under its corporate social responsibility program, Yeti Airlines handed the cheque of Rs. 2, 84, 442 to each of the four social organizations as per its commitment. The total amount of donation is Rs. 11, 37,768.

The organizations include Helpless Children Welfare Mission, Itahari, which supports the rehabilitation of helpless and orphaned children of Nepal by providing livelihood and education; Sewa Kendra Leprosy Relief, Kathmandu, which treats leprosy affected people in hospitals and government leprosarium.

The other two organizations are Spinal Injury Rehabilitation Centre, Sangha, which provides care and training to spinal chord injury patients and helps them to obtain physical, mental, social and economic independence; and Women for Human Rights, Kathmandu, which works to uplift the social and economic status of single women (widows) in Nepal.

According to a Yeti Airline press release, the airlines has donated a total of Rs. 37,32,784 to Tewa, Occed, Maiti Nepal, Nepal Leprosy Relief, Nepal Glaucoma Eye Clinic (Tilganga) and Sewa Kendra Leprosy.

“Besides these, Yeti Airlines’ biggest socio-economic contribution is the accessibility it provides to various remote areas like Bajhang, Simikot, Manang, Rukum, Dolpo, Bajura, Rara, Lukla, Phaplu, Rumjatar, etc. Yeti Airlines Domestic is the only means of transportation to some of these very remote areas in Nepal,” said Pradeep Bikram Shah, Director, Sales and Marketing Department, Yeti Airlines Domestic Pvt. Ltd.

Shah also announced the plan to open up service to other remote areas of Nepal such as Syangboche, Jiri, Langtang, Dhorpatan, and Kalikot.

Japanese Embassy Donates Grant to NGO

The Embassy of Japan has decided to extend a grant of USD 48,542, equivalent to approximately Rs. 3,738,219, to Nepal Humanitarian Help Organization in order to implement the Project for Micro Irrigation and Clean Drinking

Vice President Row

The Supreme Court nullified the oath of office and secrecy of Vice President Paramananda Jha, saying that the oath taken in Hindi was unconstitutional. Drawing much controversy and street protests, Jha had taken the oath in Hindi on July 23, 2008. President Dr Ram Baran Yadav had read the oath in Nepali but Jha translated it into Hindi and pronounced it in Hindi, prompting advocate Bal Krishna Neupane to move the Supreme Court to nullify the oath-taking. “The oath of the vice president in Hindi has been nullified as it was against Article 36 (I) (2) and Appendix 1 (A) and the spirit of the Interim Constitution 2007,” Chief Justice Min Bahadur Rayamajhee and Justice Bala Ram KC said in the verdict on Friday. The court also cited the example of American President Barack Obama who was re-administered the oath of office after he misspoke the order of a few words of the oath. The court, however, did not explicitly said whether Jha should take a fresh oath in Nepali, saying that it was not legally appropriate to order someone to take a fresh oath as the law does not compel anyone to take oath. In the 14-page verdict, the court, however, said, “It is necessary to make the oath of the vice president constitutional and controversy-free by beginning [fresh] process of oath as provisioned by the Interim Constitution.” The court in its verdict expressed doubts whether its verdict will be respected and said: “This court is confident that the vice president will take the oath as per the constitution.” The court has indirectly suggested the vice president that he could resign if he does not want to take the oath as per the constitution. “One can quit the post by not taking the constitutionally and legally mandatory oath,” the court said. Meanwhile, vice President Jha has expressed his displeasure over the Supreme Court verdict saying the judgment was biased and predictable. The judge-turned vice president said, “It is an unwelcome verdict. The justices assumed that a non-Nepali speaking person cannot be president and vice-president of Nepal.” Jha said that the verdict involved conflict interest as Chief Justice Min Bahadur Rayamajhee was a member of the Judicial Council that formed a committee to probe a controversial order passed by Jha in 2006. Then a temporary justice at the apex court, Jha was then demoted for the flawed order releasing an alleged drug smuggler. “Presence of Rayamajhee on the bench involved conflict of interest,” Jha said.





Water in Tanahun District under the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) Scheme of the Government of Japan in Japan's Fiscal Year 2009.

A grant contract was signed and exchanged between Ambassador of Japan Tatsuo Miuno and Ram Chandra Kaphle, Chairperson of the Nepal Humanitarian Help Organization (NHHO).

According to press release of Japanese Embassy, access to safe drinking water is a basic necessity of life and plays an important role in enhancing human health. However, safe drinking water has remained out of reach for many people living in Nepal. The project aims to solve the water problem by introducing water from a spring in the hills and building a reservoir and distribution system. The outcome of this plan is water not only for drinking, but also for agriculture and fish farming as well.

The grant will be utilized for the construction of the intake, the water reservoir tank, the fish pond, the distribution pipes, and essential equipment for running the facility. This will provide drinking water to 400 households and irrigation water to over 30 hectares of farm land in Gurungtal,

Bandipur VDC, Tanahun District.

During the signing ceremony, Japanese ambassador, Mizuno expressed his hope that this project will provide not only drinking water but also income generation through the installation of micro irrigation and a fish pond. This project area is believed to have potential because of its location on the highway between Kathmandu and Pokhara.

Honorary Consuls & Consul Generals elect

The 3rd AGM of Honorary Consuls & Consul Generals (HCC- Nepal) held on 23rd July' 09 unanimously elected Mr. Binay Man Shrestha as the Dean of HCC- Nepal. Mr. Shrestha is Honorary Consul General of Brazil. Similarly Mr. Rajendra K. Khetan has been elected as Vice Dean of HCC- Nepal. Mr. Khetan represents Portugal as Honorary Consul.

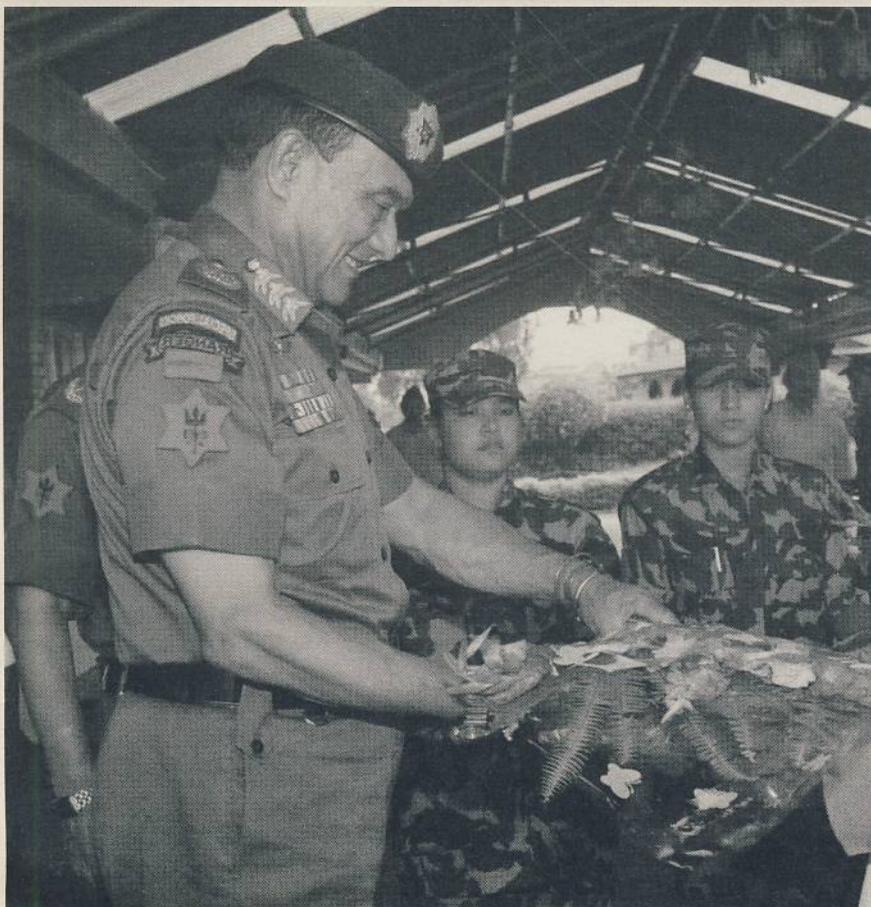
The 26 member HCC- Nepal meets every year on 23rd July on its annual day.

The AGM Thanked for the contribution of out going Dean Dr Vijaya Gajanand Vaidhya - Honorary Consul General Philippines.

Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Maldives, Malta, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Philippines, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey & Ukraine are represented in Nepal by Honorary Consulate. ■



Minister of Constituent Assembly, Parliamentary affairs and Culture Dr. Minendra Rijal Lunching program Standup, Take Action, End Poverty Now Organized by United Nations Millennium Campaign



General Katawal: Bidding Adieu

ARMY CHIEF

In Supreme Confidence

Contrary to calculatedly-fueled speculations, the commander is said to have taken his savior into confidence about his future.

By SUSHIL SHARMA

Army chief Rookmangud Katawal has been a frequent guest at the residence of President Dr. Ram Baran Yadav ever since the medical doctor assumed the ceremonial role last year.

Normally, Katawal went alone to visit the supreme commander of the Nepali army. Those visits fueled all kinds of speculations in the past months.

On July 27, Katawal's entry into the President's office was notably different. He was not alone.

Before the presidential palace staff could express their surprise, Katawal introduced his deputy, Chhatra Man Singh Gurung, to the President.

"He is going to succeed me next month," said the four-star general. "I will go on a month-long customary leave before I retire next month."

Post-May 3 this year, the Nepali army commander, Rookmangud Katawal, owed his continuation in his Bhadrakali office to the supreme commander, President Yadav.

Sacked by prime minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' before noon,

army chief Katawal was restored by the President in the afternoon.

The move to get rid of Katawal four months before he was due to retire instead led to the ousting of Prachanda after barely nine months at Baluwatar.

As Katawal's natural retirement approached, calculatedly-fueled speculations abounded regarding "the ambition" of the most controversial chief of the Nepali army.

The series of meetings he held with people from a cross section of society at Shashi Bhavan were viewed as part of "a mischievous design," what some saw as the lobbying for extension of his tenure.

Before such drillings, however, the army chief had assured the supreme commander that he had no ulterior motives other than an honorable exit.

In long meetings with his savior at Shital Niwas, Katawal discussed his future after retirement. He was concerned about a graceful exit and also personal safety.

What failed to be mentioned was his perceived misadventure, although it grabbed headlines and rims of newspaper columns for reasons best known to the spin doctors.

If there were still any misgivings, Katawal sought to put them to rest last Monday when he took his deputy and "successor" Chhatra Man Singh Gurung, to President Yadav.

Despite being discredited, especially over his role in the pst, Katawal has been credited with leading the Nepali army in the institution's present most difficult non-war days: the transition of the Himalayan kingdom to a republic.

According to sources, the supreme commander of the Nepali army would feel "betrayed" if commander Katawal took back his words and chose to go his own way.

Asked an analyst, "Can there be a better qualified person than President Yadav to make a judgment about the man he rescued only three months ago?" ■



Prachanda : In Power Struggle

MAOIST PARTY

On Top Tussle

As the former rebels decide to replace Prachanda's unitary leadership with a collective mechanism, division in the party deepens

By **SAROJ DAHAL**

The central committee meeting of the unified Maoist Communist party has gone on and on and on.

Several days after it began, it shows no sign of ending.

Deepening ideological differences apart, serious rift has surfaced in the selection of the leadership.

The ex-rebels have decided to introduce multi-positions in the party. To date, the party boss Prachanda, holds the only position – that of the chairman.

There is no immediate threat to Prachanda, but as the party prepares for the first general convention in two decades, many have begun to nurse the ambition of leading the party.

They know that the first step towards realizing the ambition is to grab the proposed new positions.

There is no debate on the choice of the senior vice chairman. The veteran ideologue Mohan Vaidya 'Kiran' is the natural number two.

But given that he lacks the charisma to lead the party, the real fight is between Baburam Bhattarai and Narayan Kaji Shrestha 'Prakash'. They are vying for the senior position among the other vice chairman positions.



Dr. Bhattarai : Row over position

Baburam was one of the founders of the party. Logically, he should find no competitor in Prakash who joined only last year after his party merged with the Maoist party.

Besides, it was Baburam who floated the idea of collective leadership ten years ago

But the fact that Prakash holds his own forte is testimony to his influence, despite opposition from veteran former party colleague, Amik Sherchan.

By the time this story goes to print, the leadership issue might have been settled.

But insiders say, the personal egos and ambition are less likely to go away.

Said one, "the tussle will resurface in the general convention."

The date of the convention has not been finalised yet. Probably it will take place in a year's time – before the deadline of making the country's new constitution.

The convention will set the stage for an outfit in which even chairman Prachanda could be required to bring in all his acumen to stay at the top.

He has been criticized by opponents and supporters alike in the party.

Critics accuse him of leading the party towards a revisionist path of parliamentary system of governance.

His supporters are not happy over his sudden resignation from the government two months ago.

Either way, he has been seen as a failure. As the party goes for collective leadership, Prachanda's supremacy will come to an end.

That could weaken his position in the general convention. And that is what his subordinates vying for the newly created positions are preparing themselves for. ■

The proposed party positions and the leaders likely to fill them:

Chairman: Prachanda

Senior vice chairman: Mohan Vaidya 'Kiran'

First Vice chairman: Narayan Kaji Shrestha 'Prakash'

Second Vice chairman: Baburam Bhattarai

General Secretary: Ram Bahadur Thapa 'Badal'

Secretary: C.P.Gajurel, Post Bahadur Bogati, Amik Sherchan

GURKHA JUSTICE CAMPAIGN

Now On The Home Turf

After the British government's decision to accept petitions from all ex-Gurkhas to settle in the UK, major Gurkha organisations are launching campaigns in Nepal to garner broader support

By BHAGIRATH YOGI in London

Barely two months after the British government's decision to allow all ex-British Gurkhas to apply for settlement in the UK, major Gurkha organisations seem to be showcasing their strength in the home turf.

Gurkha Army Ex-Servicemen's Organisation (GAESO) was busy receiving noted British actress, Joanna Lumley, who has been in the forefront of the Gurkha Justice Campaign and members of her team. Joanna was given ecstatic reception as she arrived at the Tribhuvan International Airport on July 26. Hundreds of Gurkha veterans and their families put marigold garlands and sacred silk scarves around her neck. A day later, she met President and Prime Minister and was feted by Chairman of the Constituent Assembly, Subash Nembang, at a public ceremony.

"I am very happy to come to my home—Nepal," said the 63-year-old actress, who was born in Kashmir, where her father was an officer with the British Army. "I would not have been born if a Gurkha veteran had not saved my father in the Second World War," she added emotionally.

While a section of Gurkha community is busy celebrating "victory," other Gurkha organisations insist that the campaign is far from over. "The Gurkha Justice Campaign is not over. We will continue to press the British government for equal pension and benefits for ex-Gurkha soldiers and officers vis a vis their British counterparts," said Major (Retd.) Tikendra Dal Dewan, chairman of the British Gurkha Welfare Society (BGWS).

A delegation led by Major Dewan arrived in Kathmandu on July 25 on a two-week-long visit. "During our trip

we will meet top government officials, leaders of major political parties and members of civil society and media to mobilise moral support for our on-going campaign," said Dewan, talking to reporters at the Tribhuvan International Airport.

"Due to our continuous lobbying, over 90 British MPs from major political parties have already supported our demands signing an Early Day Motion (EDM) which remains open and signatures continue. Some of them have even written personal letters to the Prime Minister and Secretary of State, in support of our demands," said Dewan adding, "While we have won many battles on the equality front we now look forward to win the war remaining positive that the British government will re-affirm its commitment to justice and equality for all ex-Gurkhas."

Reports said up to 36,000 Gurkha veterans would benefit from the British government's recent announcement that will allow all ex-Gurkhas who retired prior to 1997 to apply for indefinite leave to remain in the UK. Gurkhas, who retired after 1997—when the Gurkha regiment of the British Army moved to UK from Hong Kong—were allowed to settle in UK as per the British government's decision in 2004.

In a landmark verdict on 30 September 2008, Justice Blake, a High Court Justice in London, announced that the 1 July 1997 cut off date was "unfair and illegal." He also asked the Home Office, the British Home Ministry, to come up with a new immigration policy for the Gurkhas by the end of the year.

As the British government could not meet the deadline, Liberal Democratic party—the third largest party in the British House of Commons—tabled a motion calling upon the government to



Lumley : With cause

allow all Gurkha veterans the right to reside in the UK. Thanks to the high-profile campaign led by Joanna Lumley and her colleagues, there was such a huge support in favour of Gurkhas that even some ruling party members crossed the floor and voted in favour of the opposition proposal when the motion was put on vote on April 27, this year. MPs voted by 267 to 246 for the Lib Dem motion with the Tories and 27 Labour rebels backing it. In less than a month, the British government was forced to make an announcement facilitating Gurkhas' mass settlement into UK.

Gurkha activists like Gyan Raj Rai who have been campaigning for equal rights to all Gurkhas, however, say many Gurkhas won't be able to benefit from the latest British announcement.

Rai, who has recently returned to his new home in Reading, UK, after a three-week-long trip to different parts of Nepal, said many Gurkhas are already in their old age and don't have enough money to start a new life in the UK. "Moreover, their pension is so low they can't afford themselves and their dependants even if they move to UK. That's why we have been pressing for equal pension and benefits as well as compensation to all Gurkha veterans," he added.

A Gurkha memorial right outside the British Defense Ministry in central London reads, "Never had the country more faithful friends than you." As Gurkha leaders insist that their campaign is not over, the British government is likely to be subjected to more pressure from its own public and political leaders to set its record straight vis a vis legendary Gurkhas who have been fighting for the British crown and the country for the last 200 years. ■

The Power Mantra

As the possibility of another political turmoil emerges as a hot topic in Kathmandu's cocktail circuits, an India-based Nepali *baba* has gotten down to "warding off the evil" by way of his mantra for revival of the world's only Hindu nation of not long ago.

The *baba* saw the rise of the phoenix in the economist politician, Dr. Man Mohan Singh, long before his Catholic party boss sacrificed prime-ministership for him.

The man predicted the exit of P.V. Narsimha Rao, Singh's former boss, and later, the tragic end of his political career.

The *baba* today has access to two of the most powerful leaders of the most powerful South Asian nation – Man Mohan Singh and Sonia Gandhi.

This same man is in Kathmandu, busy receiving leaders of all hues and colours in audience. Former prime ministers Lokendra Bahadur Chand, Surya Bahadur Thapa and Sher Bahadur Deuba have been his visitors.

He is also reported to have met ousted king Gyanendra.

A host of other political heavyweights have flocked to the *baba*'s temporary ashram in Kathmandu to seek his audience and blessings.

His mission, according to a prominent leader, is to revive Nepal as the world's only Hindu nation.

The move, if it becomes a reality, would reverse a major change that was enforced after the advent of the republic – the declaration of Nepal as a secular nation.

And it is certain to have far



Kali baba: How powerful ?

reaching implications in the current volatile political transition.

Former prime minister Surya Bahadur Thapa was lucky to have the longest audience of the *baba* – one and a half hours.

Thapa, incidentally, is the only Nepali leader who to date retains the trust of the Nehru-Gandhi family, said a source.

He is due to dash off to Delhi soon for important consultations. So is another former prime minister Deuba, who is still smarting under the shock of defeat as leader of the NC parliamentary party.

-By SUSHIL SHARMA

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HIGHER SECONDARY EDUCATION

The First Choice

In terms of monthly bills, 10+2 education costs far more than its counterpart Proficiency Certificate Level (PCL) of Tribhuvan University (TU). Yet the choice of an overwhelming number of high school graduates is 10+2. Since the opening of education to private investment and the introduction of 10+2 as higher secondary level in 1991, these institutions have grown in number by leaps and bounds. The competition has gotten so stiff that they need a sustained promotional campaign to lure students. This year, however, their prospects are better because the biggest pie is up for grab. Out of the 256,489 graduates, the highest number of students getting past School Leaving Certificate (SLC) exams in a year, more than 200,000 are expected to join class-11, rather than the old PCL. In the midst of reigning anarchy, disorder and frustration in the country, the +2's have at least something to cheer for.

By **KESHAB POUDEL**

If advertisements in daily newspapers, FM radio stations and television channels indicate anything, it is this: 10+2 schools are major providers of higher education in Nepal. They promise quality teaching and stimulating learning environment for students eager to pursue studies beyond high school.

The higher secondary schools started their promotional campaign to attract students a month ago, as soon

as the results of the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) exams were out.

The colourful ads stand as a testimony that Nepal has not lost all hopes, despite reigning uncertainties in economy, politics and law and order.

According to the Higher Secondary Education Board (HSEB), more than 72 per cent of this year's SLC graduates have joined grade 11 classes. The board expects the figure, that is, the share of student intake for +2 schools, will reach as high as 80 per cent.

Although the Tribhuvan University (TU) still runs the old Proficiency Certificate Level (PCL), providing a massive subsidy for students, the programme is gradually losing its relevance in both local and international contexts.

"The higher secondary system has transformed the whole education scenario in Nepal, offering the most competitive and quality education to students," says Dr. Tirtha Khaniya, a



10+2 School: Quality over Quantity

member of the National Planning Commission and the former vice chairman of HSEB (1996-2000). "Over 90 per cent of MBBS, engineering, business and management graduates today are the products of the higher secondary system. The 10+2 has been a catalyst in all this transformation."

The present state of education is not a result of a sudden decision. It took more than a decade for things to really change.

Many people may have forgotten the particular individual who pushed for these changes in higher education system. Govinda Raj Joshi, the education minister between 1991 and 1995, introduced drastic changes in the education sector, including the 10+2 schools. He proposed a number of amendments in the existing acts, which ultimately took the 10+2 to the present shape.

Dr. Khaniya, as the vice chairman of the higher secondary board, implemented the plans in making the higher education sector competitive and attractive for high school graduates. "One of the important aspects of the

10+2 education is that it solely relies on private investments. Even in the rural areas, local communities have been supporting the 10+2," says Dr. Khaniya.

Nepali Congress leader Joshi has a reason to be happy despite the many ups and downs he saw in his political life. The decisions he took fourteen years ago as the education minister, convincing politicians and bureaucrats on the merits of the system, have not been futile.

"My colleagues tried to prevent me from opening up education to the private sector," Joshi recalls. "Some even accused me of selling education and weakening our party's hold among the youth at the university."

In the beginning, there were only two dozens of higher secondary schools in the country and they were mostly unknown.

The number of 10+2 schools now stands at 2000, according to HSEB.

"It will increase this year," says Minister for Education Ramchandra Kusaba.

The higher secondary level of education assumes great significance because it is here that students, after ten years of general education, diversify towards their chosen areas of future specialisation. At this level, students are supposed to be developing independent thinking.

"They are better placed to exercise a choice in terms of the course they want to pursue, keeping in view their needs, interests, capabilities and aptitudes, which would enable them to cope with the challenges of the future. They may, therefore, choose either specialized academic courses or job-oriented vocational courses. For a majority of students, the higher secondary stage may be the end of their formal education leading to the world of work," say experts.

Although most schools are concentrated in urban areas and district headquarters, the 10+2 institutions are reaching to the remote parts of Nepal too. HSEB has been making efforts to take the 10+2 education to the doorsteps of the rural people.



Uttam Sanjel (Left), Bhawana Tamang and Kamala Dhungel (Right) :
Common cause for Samata School

“Although we introduced 10+2 with an aim to provide rural populations with access to higher secondary education, this is yet to happen in several parts of the country,” Dr. Khaniya says. “It is time to give a fresh push to take 10+2 schools to the remote parts.”

The government initiated the process towards launching of the higher secondary system far back in 1989 by introducing the Higher Secondary Education Act.

“Preparations took almost 3 years and in 1992, some 38 higher secondary schools came into existence. The Eighth Five-Year Plan had envisaged 125 higher secondary schools by 1997. Today the number of higher secondary schools is 1018 (mathi 2000 chha). After the introduction of higher secondary education, several exercises were carried out to make this sub-sector more quality-oriented and more unified say experts.

One of the interesting trends of the 10+2 education is that an overwhelming numbers of students prefer science and management. This is contributing to the increase in the number of engineering, medical and management colleges in the private sector.

“Our 10+2 produces the best management students. We are the first choice among all the students in management,” says Narabahadur Bista,

principal of Global College of Management. “Half of our higher secondary graduates study BBA and CA in Nepal and the rest go for higher education in America, Australia and Europe.”

Two processes, phasing-in and phasing-out, are running in parallel as regards providing the intermediate level education in the country. In a way, the Plus Two education can be obtained from University campuses and from higher secondary schools, with two separate curricula, despite the similarity in their goal.

“Tired by petty politics in TU’s colleges, students and parents prefer private 10+2 colleges since there is no room for politics in these institutions. Classes run here with fewer interruptions than in TU colleges,” says Krishna Kanta Parajuli, principal of Canvas International College. “Our college offers science, management and humanities at grades 11 and 12.”

The quantitative growth of higher secondary schools has been impressive. But the quality gap between the private and public schools is growing and time has come to introduce mitigation measures to end the discrepancy.

“HSEB is now making efforts to end this discrepancy,” says the vice chairman of HSEB.

After its success in providing quality education and producing

‘All parents want quality and competitive education’

Dr. BABU RAM POKHAREL, founder principal of V.S Niketan College is well known for his contribution to the field of education. Pokharel spoke to New Spotlight on various issues regarding the status of education:

How do you look at the growth of 10+2 education?

All parents want to give quality and competitive education to their children. The 10+2 system has already proved that it can deliver quality in education. Parents, therefore, prefer higher secondary education for their sons and daughters.



Is not it expensive?

Of course, it is. But private sector is where all parents find quality education for their children. Parents want to spend their hard earned money for quality. They see the 10+2 schools promise quality education.

How do you look at the HSEB?

Unlike Tribhuvan University’s traditional method of education, 10+2 has very competitive curriculum matched with international standards. From curriculum to physical environment, higher secondary education is very competitive. This new form of school education is popular all over South Asia and other parts of the world.

How do you describe the present state of higher secondary education?

More than 400,000 students appeared in SLC. Out of this 250,000 students passed out and there are still 80,000 students waiting for supplementary exams. After all results come out, the number will increase further. About 300,000 students will be entering the higher education. This is pretty good. ■

Everybody Wants Quality Education

KRISHNA KANTA PARAJULI is the principal of Caravan International College. Established by professional teachers, Caravan International College is offering quality education to students. Excerpts:



Why do students prefer 10+2?

Naturally, everybody wants quality education in peaceful environment and higher secondary schools are providing this to them.

Is not it expensive?

I don't think it is expensive. The fees are reasonable and affordable to all. As all the 10+2 schools are under the private management, it is naturally a little bit expensive. Of course, TU's Proficiency Certificate Level is much cheaper or virtually free but nobody likes to go there. One of the interesting things is that 10+2 is completely under the private or community ownership. There are virtually no investments from government sides.

What are other attractions?

Higher secondary schools provide education in peaceful environment. Private schools don't compromise on quality. We hardly stop classes and there is no student politics at all.

As there is growing disparities, how do you mitigate it?

Yes of course, there is a certain level of disparity but schools are gradually moving from urban to rural areas. One of the problems in rural areas is that there is lack of opportunities for teachers. One has to depend upon only one school.

How about your college?

Our college has 500 plus students in three faculties of science, humanities and management. Our aim is to provide quality education. ■

competent students, 10+2 has enthused the Nepali society in at least this one

St. Xavier Row Operation Destruction

At a time when all private schools are looking up to good days ahead, Nepal's premier educational institution, the St. Xavier College, is facing the most difficult situation in its five-decade-long history. It is having to deal with strikes by teachers, who are threatening to close down the school if its management refuses to reinstate teachers fired on charge of violating discipline.

Under the pressure of a Teachers' Union, a Maoist affiliated teachers' association, St. Xavier had to close several times in the past.

St. Xavier is a renowned academic institution which has played an important role in modernizing Nepal's educational system.

Never in its five decades, St. Xavier school faced this kind of crisis as it always succeeded to put politics at bay.

Over the last few months, however, teachers are trying to disrupt the school almost every day. Providing quality education at a reasonably low cost, St. Xavier has made a great contribution to support Nepal's education as the country embarked on the path of modernization.

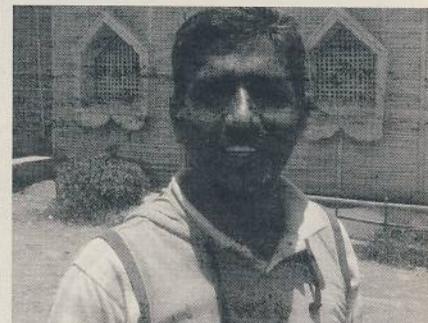
This is a time when Nepal's institutions, almost all of them, are facing threats of some kind or the other in the transitional period. Most of the threats come in the name of trade unions. Given this situation, one cannot rule out the possibility that some operation is going on to destroy St. Xavier.

As a symbol of modernizing Nepal's education system, St. Xavier should be saved from any assault from any quarter. For this, all sides would do well to think twice before hurting an institution that has played an important role in the nation's education. ■

front. While anarchy and disorder are continuing to find a foothold in all

'This is middle path between two extremes'

If a man is committed to do something, he or she can do it. This is what **UTTAM SANJEL**, principle of Samata Shiksha Niketan Secondary School, has shown in the last one decade. Sanjel's Samata School started with 12 children of carpet laborers, taxi drivers and other such workers. It is now offering education to over 17,000 children. Sanjel spoke to New Spotlight on his vision of education:



What is your vision of education?

I have clear vision of education. My aim is to provide education on the basis of equity, not equality. That means education at a fee of Rs. 100 for all classes and to all students. My objective is to help orphans and hapless children by providing food, shelter and education.

Who are your target groups?

My target groups are those who are left out from boarding schools and who don't want to go to government schools. You can say this is the middle path between two extremes.

How do you plan to sustain the middle path?

It will be sustained through the contributions made by various persons. I am receiving support from different personalities. Recently, Nirvan Chaudhari, son of renowned industrialist Binod Kumar Chaudhari, agreed to provide support to build a school in Nawalparasi.

What type of students do you have?

Most of the students are from backward and low income families. I am trying to support the wishes of those parents who want to see their children having quality education in their own expense. ■

spheres of life, a major question before HSEB is how to sustain the success. ■

“Rhetoric and Jargon do not change society”

-RAJENDRA KUMAR KHETAN

Renowned industrialist and Constituent Assembly (CA) member **RAJENDRA KUMAR KHETAN** is a frank, open and down-to-earth young man. A member of the Legislature Parliament, an honorary consul of Portugal and the vice dean of the Honorary Consular Corp (HCC-Nepal), Khetan likes to look at problems in their contexts. He talked to **KESHAB POUDEL** on a wide range of issues covering economy to constitution making and law and order at the fourth floor of the Khetan Group headquarters at Hattisar. Excerpts of the half-an-hour interview:

As a CA member and an industrialist, how do you look at Nepal's economic sector, especially in the present fluid political situation?

Industries are not performing well due to several reasons related to law and order and labor disputes. Because of these problems, we are unable to maximize revenue, employment opportunities and productivity.

Well, the country has been passing through a very critical time. The industrial sector is not an exception. As people have been facing several problems including deteriorating law and order, food crisis, high market price, diarrhea and so on, it is not justifiable for us to talk about economic problems alone.

Don't you think economic issues are important?

Of course, they are. But you cannot look at them in isolation. If the overall situation improves, the economic sector will perform better. Economic development is related to creation of employment opportunity, which is a very sensitive issue. As such, it is an issue of national importance.

How are industries performing now?

Industries are not performing well due to several reasons related to law and order and labor disputes. Because of these problems, we are unable to maximize revenue, employment opportunities and productivity. We want to increase productivity by establishing more industries as well as creating more job opportunities but the situation is hostile for these developments.

What is your impression of the law and order situation?

Everyone knows that the law and order situation is worsening day by day. Just an hour ago, I was attending the meeting of State Affairs Committee of Legislature Parliament where all the members posed this question to Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal and the Home Minister.

What do you say about their response?

I found Prime Minister Nepal is committed to restoring law and order in the society by according it a priority. The Home Minister appears to hold similar views.

Will they bring about the change?

It is very difficult to improve the security situation when the institutions entrusted with the task of delivering law and order are so much politicized. There is a feeling in the agencies involved in law order that they don't have to do anything. The Prime Minister or the Home Minister cannot do anything without the support from institutions created to maintain law and order. They need to change. But then everything depends upon the will of the government.

It is often reported that business communities are under threat. Has there been any improvement in the situation?

Business communities still feel some kind of threat. They have not felt fully secure yet. Forget the businessman, the common people cannot feel secure now. As a businessman, I can afford to hire guards for my personal protection. But what about the general public? We need to talk about the common people, not the businessmen. Law and order problem is not only the problem of business communities but also that of the common people.

What do you say of the recent government action against hoarders of essential commodities?

This is a good step. But the government should make sure it is under the rule of law.

Labor organizations have been lobbying for special articles in the new constitution to protect their rights. How do you look at it?

Nobody is against the need to protect the labor rights and enshrine them in the constitution. There is a need to provide social protection to workers. As for calling indefinite strikes for a long time, protestors need to reconsider their approach of putting pressure on the government. Of course, they have their rights and we cannot prevent them. I think the time has come now to link employment with productivity. We need to pay the workers their minimum salary by ensuring their right but labor organizations need to respect their duty too.

How do you think should the problems of labors and industrialists be solved?

There is a consensus that the problems of labor needs to be addressed. No industrialist is against this. Nobody is against the labor rights, social welfare and setting a minimum salary.

Despite all these commitments, labors often shut down the industries. How do you look at this?

It is the right of labors to call strikes but they also have certain responsibilities towards the industry where they work. Although they can shut down the industries, they have to keep in mind that the same industry feeds them and their families.

At a time when numbers of strikes are increasing and investors feel unsafe, what are the ways out to end the growing industrial unrest?

Nobody can justify shutting down the industry because industries offer job opportunity. If labors shout down the industry, it will also affect the revenue collection. This is against industrialization and in favor of foreign dependency. Shutting down the industry and creating disturbance will have long-running implications for the country's overall development. Creating a disturbance in the industries also encourages the import of products from third party countries.

Do you have any suggestions to improve the situation?

We need to build a system, which integrates



productivity with industry. If we increase productivity, we can increase employment opportunities. Productivity is also related to the improvement of quality manpower. Strikes and lockouts are creating problems. This trend needs to be discouraged. We are opposed to the idea of holding general strikes and padlocking industries because this will discourage investors.

How do you evaluate the recent budget? Will it address the problems faced by the country?

The budget has not addressed specific problems faced by industrial sector but it has made efforts to reach out to each and every level of people and society. This is a positive aspect of the budget. This is a large budget.

Is the size of budget enough to address the problems?

I am concerned about its implementation. We have to be careful to ensure what it will have delivered at the end of the fiscal year. There is nothing to reassure that the budget will support the process of industrialization as well as increase the productivity of the country.

But the finance minister has been saying that this budget will provide relief to the people?

It is not necessary that one budget should bring all necessary changes. What I am more concerned about is the law and order situation, trade union problems and decline of productivity. These issues are not related to the budget. Since the budget is just an annual program, one cannot expect too much from it. What we need to focus is good governance, which will increase productivity.

Do you see any possibility of foreign investment coming?

In the present day context, don't talk about foreign investment. Even Nepalese are not ready to invest. People are investing only in those sectors where there are immediate returns. People find banking and real estate are where there is no risk and the promise of returns is high. It is unfortunate to say that people are losing their faith on industrial sector and employment oriented areas, which also generate revenues. If you see the pattern of investment, you can find high growth of banking sector with lackluster performance in the industrial sector.

Since you are a CA member, how much time do you think CA should spend on economic agenda?

We must not forget that this is not a parliament like that of the past but this is a constitution making body. We spend very nominal time for Legislature Parliament. Out of ten thematic committees, I am a member of the Committee on Division of Natural Resources, Financial Powers and Revenue. In the committee, we do discuss economic issues. Because most of us are members from the economic sector, we have been trying to ensure economic prospects to be furthered by the new constitution.

Do you think the new constitution will solve all the problems?

I don't think so. Making a new constitution is not enough to solve the problems. Until we settle the problems of social inclusion and economic empowerment, Nepal will continue to face several problems in the future. Our priority should be to make Nepal prosperous, stable and strong. Simply writing some rhetorical and political jargons will not change society. What is important is the commitment to abide by the document and implement it. ■

It is not necessary that one budget should bring all necessary changes.

NRB GOVERNOR ROW

Musical Chair

Moments after Deependra Bahadur Chhetri presented the monetary policy, he got sacked as the central bank's governor. The NRB musical chair threatens ongoing efforts to tame skyrocketing inflation.

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

Deependra Bahadur Chhetri had a premonition that he was getting the axe even as he read out the 27-page monetary policy at a packed hall in the Bankers' Club of Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) at Thapathali on Friday, July the 24th.

"I will fully implement the policy, that is to say, if I remain in the chair," he said at the start of his presentation of the document which primarily aimed at controlling inflation.

No sooner had he finished his speech, his hunch over the chair came true. A cabinet meeting in Singha Durbar reinstated Bijaya Nath Bhattarai to the post of NRB governor. Bhattarai had been suspended following a lawsuit on embezzlement charges filed against him by the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA).

The Supreme Court recently absolved him of those charges – after two long years.

Chhetri's sudden exit, and his subsequent filing of a writ petition at the apex court against the cabinet decision, have cast a pall of shadow over the central bank.

Just as dramatic was Bhattarai's re-entry as governor. He had to run from pillar to post, appealing for justice for two years to make a clean comeback.

Policy Confusion

The sudden turn of events revolving around the top chair at NRB might affect the central bank's capability to

implement its monetary policy.

"Even if I am not there, the policy will be implemented because it has been approved by the whole team including the board and the deputy governors," Chhetri had said after his speech at the club.

But it is easier said than done.

"There are always possibilities of instability in such an atmosphere. The



Governor Bhattarai: Back to chair

quick changes in the leadership are bound to hamper the policy stability," said a member of the NRB board.

The significance of the monetary policy has increased with the urgent need to arrest the spiraling rate of inflation.

The last one year saw the average rate of inflation rise to 13 per cent. The new monetary policy aims to bring it down by half within the next year.

But the central bank cannot attain the aim unless the supply situation is normalized. The bandhs and strikes affecting free flow of goods have been proving to be a death-knell to the efforts to contain inflation.

In the monetary policy, the NRB

has stated that the budget aim of 5.5 percent growth rate can be attained.

It notes that the macro-economic indicators are healthy. "Although the trade deficit widened, the overall balance of payments (BOP) posted a surplus of Rs. 43.1 billion in the first ten months of 2008/09 compared to a surplus of Rs. 19.9 billion in the previous year."

The migrant workers' remittances also have increased significantly by 55.5 per cent to Rs. 169.2 billion in the first ten months of 2008/09 compared to a growth of 35.5 per cent in the previous year. This has increased despite fears that the global economic crisis would severely hurt this sector.

The accumulation of gross foreign exchange reserves has reached Rs. 283.4 billion in the first ten months of 2008/09. This level of reserves is sufficient to cover merchandise imports of 12.4 months and merchandise and services imports of 10.1 months.

Despite the rosy data, the monetary policy has adopted 'cautious and tight' stance amid high inflationary pressure and low growth scenario. ■

LUMLEY IN NEPAL

The most famous face in the struggle of Gurkhas, the 'Absolutely Fabulous' British actress visits Nepal.

At a mass reception in her honor organized by the Gurkha veterans on July 27, actress Joanna Lumley termed Nepal as her home.

"I am very happy that I have come home," said the 63-year-old 'Absolutely Fabulous' star after being felicitated by hundreds of British Gurkhas and their family members.

She was also welcomed by Constituent Assembly chairman Subhas Nemwang, who said Nepal was her 'Maiti,' the maternal home.

Improving ties with Nepal: Need to understand the complexities

By S. Nihal Singh

With Nepal embroiled in the turmoil of making a post-monarchical system work, India's shadow over the country has grown, rather than diminished. Indeed, there are so many layers in the complex relations between the two countries that they are never far from the political debate that has raged in Nepal over the decades, as it is raging now.

In a brilliant recent study of India-Nepal relations, a Nepali journalist with wide international exposure* has made a path-breaking examination of the complexities, misunderstandings, prejudices and conflicting and merging interests of the two countries. Despite the provocative title, Sanjay Upadhyia's is an honest and unblinking view, with blame apportioned on both sides although India as the weightier party bears more of it.

Upadhyia's story ends with the Maoists being brought into the mainstream and the waning fortunes of King Gyanendra on the eve of the monarchy being abolished. It is a blow-by-blow account of how the monarchy, interwoven with local politicians and the seemingly overbearing Indian presence, has tried to cope with its own authoritarian ambitions and promote the country's interests by its own light.

The older generation of Nepali leaders, of course, were participants in the Indian independence movement. Many of them studied in Indian universities, sought refuge in India during inclement political times at home. And even the Nepali monarch has, on occasion, sheltered in the neighboring country awaiting more propitious times. Upadhyia finds it ironic that, given these links, India continues to view Nepal with the mindset of the Raj.

Yet Upadhyia does not shy away from the truth that no one can rule Nepal without reaching an accommodation with New Delhi. Nor does he quibble over India's legitimate security interests in Nepal. And in highlighting the persistent demand for the revision of the 1950 treaty, he plainly states the problem of retaining its beneficial aspects while making it acceptable to Nepal's opinion. Despite the secret letters exchanged at the time revealed a decade later, it remains a unique document.

In seeking to explain Nepal to India and the world, the author distinguishes between what his countrymen view as

historical wrongs and Indian moves that have adversely impinged on Kathmandu. In the first category is the war with British India in 1814-18 leading to the Sigauli treaty under which Nepal believes it lost a third of its land although some of the land in the Terai was restored to it, thanks to Kathmandu's help in the 1857 Mutiny, commemorated in India as the First War of Independence. In the second section, the author places Nehru's action in engaging with King Mahendra and his party-less polity after the Indian debacle in the border war with China, hurting the Nepali Congress more than it helped the Palace. Upadhyia's contention is that anti-

****The Raj Lives – India in Nepal by Sanjay Upadhyia; Vitasta Publishing Private Ltd, New Delhi; pp 334.***

Indian sentiments expressed from time to time are more complex than they appear. They are on occasion manifestations of nationalism; at other times there are specific grievances. The author believes that India's unfriendly neighbors using Nepal as a conduit for anti-Indian activities, most dramatically manifested in the Indian plane hijacking, is not because Nepal's rulers want to harm India but due to their lack of will in situations of political instability and deficiencies in infrastructure and equipment.

The China factor in India-Nepal relations is bound to remain a constant and was traditionally employed by the Ranas as well as kings and politicians developing a dynamism of its own after the Sino-Indian border war. Prime Minister Koirala had pleaded for China's membership in SAARC, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, King Birendra had touted his Zone of Peace proposal, and the first visit abroad of Prachanda as Prime Minister before his resignation was to Beijing, rather than New Delhi.

The author believes that the onus is on Nepal to define the 1950 treaty in the totality of the relationship. But disputes over the demarcation of the border, in Uttar Pradesh in particular, remain an irritant. Differences over trade and transit agreements have also been a perennial feature, with New Delhi finally accepting

the Nepali contention that transit for a land-locked country was a matter of right. Nepal's tremendous hydro-electrical potential and projects have been another source of friction, with Kathmandu believing that New Delhi discourages others' investment and takes more than it gives Nepal.

Many of these problems can be laid at the door of mutual distrust; there is, indeed, a belief in Nepal that it does not know the secret nature of agreements that might have been arrived at by New Delhi with the Ranas, the Palace, mainstream politicians or the Maoists. It is, of course, no secret that India was the midwife who delivered the Seven Party Alliance agreement with the Maoists bringing them into the mainstream some 10 years after they took to the jungles to try to wrest power. The Nepalis tend to give an Indian security twist to this agreement.

It is to the credit of the United Progressive Alliance Government in its first term that New Delhi was more straightforward in presenting its views on India-Nepal problems and perspectives. This has been appreciated although suspicions, shared by the author, remain over whether it is for real. Thoughtful Nepalis understand that New Delhi has vital security interests in what happens in Nepal. At the same time, Sino-Indian rivalry has given Kathmandu greater room for manoeuvre. Being landlocked by India for the most part, a broadening of its relations with Beijing, as with Pakistan and Bangladesh, is a policy shared by most Nepalis.

An overall reordering of relations between Nepal and India must await the resolution of the present stalemate between the main political parties and the Maoists. In Kathmandu, there is distrust of Indian intentions whereas for New Delhi there are red lines Nepal should not cross. Given the disparities between the two countries, a measure of resentment and defensiveness on the part of Nepalis is understandable. The problem is accentuated by the intimacy and religious and cultural affinities of the two peoples who share an open border. Quarrels between cousins are proverbially fierce and difficult to resolve. Upadhyia has made his contribution by speaking his mind and pointing a way towards a more harmonious relationship. ■

This article appeared in The Tribune, July 14, 2009

Inclusion of Dalits in the Nepali State

By: Yam Bahadur Kisan¹

Introduction The term Dalit is considered as an identity, unity and power of a low caste populace group in contemporary world. Ancient Hindu society referred to Dalits as the fifth *varna*, *adwij*, *antyajyajya*, *Ashprishya* and *ati-Sudras*. In the Gandhian period (1900-1960) they were labeled as *achhut*. Later, in the early seventies the followers of Ambedkar, started to identify themselves as Dalits.

There is long history of Dalit's exclusion in the Hindu society. In ancient times, food was given to Shudras by higher castes. Leftover food was kept for Shudra servants. Manu, the legendary author of *Manusmriti*, ordered that Shudras to live in places from the settlements of the upper castes. The Shudras only used household goods made of clay, wear jewelry only made from iron. Manu also restricted the Shudras from earning and accumulating wealth saying "Women, sons and Shudras do not have authority over money. Their money is of those to whom they belong." He stressed that Shudras were to serve the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas, and that this was pre-ordained. Shudras had to do the hardest, the dirtiest, and the most demeaning types of works, like toilet cleaning, skinning animals, or disposing of corpses.

Context Dalits Exclusion in Nepal: Muluki Ain of 1854 - first set of codified legal documents of Nepal - enacted by then Prime Minister Janga Bahadur Rana divided Nepalis into five groups: Brahmins (*tagadhari*); Khas; Matwali; 'touchable' Shudra (*pani chalne*), and 'untouchable' Shudra (*pani nachalne*). The Shudras were grouped in two major categories. One of the categories included Rai, Limbu, Gurung, Magar, Lepcha, Bhote, Sherpa, Thakali, Raute, Tharu, Dhimal, and Koche peoples. The other category comprised of the Kami, Damai, Sarki, Pode, Chame, Kasai, Gaine, Badi, and Musahar castes. These Shudras were further divided into two categories - those whose touch would always require others to purify themselves (Sarki, Kami, Sunar, Chunara, Hurke, Damai, Gaine, Badi, Pode, and Chyame) and those who were considered untouchable but whose touch did not require purification on the part of others (Muslims, Teli, Kasai, Kusule, Kulu, Mlecha, and Chundara).

The Constitution of Nepal 1962 declared Nepal a Hindu country and once again, Nepal was ruled according to laws dictated by *Manusmriti*. Later Muluki Ain of 1854 was

amended and a New Muluki Ain (1963) was issued. Although the Muluki Ain of 1963 put an end to practices whereby purification was required, it did not put an end to caste discrimination. There was no protection of the right to equality for untouchables in the New Muluki Ain. There were no provisions for punishment so the law was ineffective.

In the past, the word Dalits was used to refer to all oppressed groups, but in contemporary Nepali parlance, it is used to refer only to those groups categorized by law and who belong to the formerly untouchable castes. The National Dalit Commission (NDC) identified and listed the Dalits of Nepal in 2002. The following 21 Dalits castes based on origin - Hill, Madheshi and Janajati - have been identified by the NDC.

(A) Hill origin: Badi, Damai, Gaine, Kami, Sarki

(B) Madheshi origin: Bantar, Chamar, Chidimar, Dhobi (Hindu), Dom, Dusadh, Halkhor, Kakaihiya, Khatbe, Khatik, Kori, Tatma, Mushar, Pattharkatta, Pasi, Sarvanga

Policy, Provision and Law against Dalits Exclusion: The 1990 Constitution made caste-based discrimination and untouchability offences punishable by law. It said, "No person shall be discriminated against on the basis of caste. No person's presence shall be prohibited in public places and no person shall be prevented from using public property. Violation of such laws will be punishable." It was the first public commitment of the state to punish those found guilty of caste-based discrimination and untouchability. An amendment was made to the Muluki Ain, which was published in 1992, under Chapter 19, Article 10(A) said, "If anyone practices untouchability toward another, or if anyone prohibits another's presence in public places, or if anyone prevents another's use of public property, then such a person will be imprisoned for one year, fined Rs. 3000 or would be liable for both." However, the explanation of this clause it is said, 'but traditional practices in temples and religious places will not be considered discriminatory practices' thus undermining the



constitutional provision.

Interim Constitution enacted after the People's Movement II and end of Maoist Armed Movement provisioned important clause on Dalits's inclusion. Article 13(3) of the Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007 commits to take special measures to ensure the rights of women, Dalits, indigenous nationalities, Madheshi, farmers and workers. These can be assured through legislation for the protection, empowerment and advancement of the interests of children, the elderly or those who are physically or mentally incapacitated and of those belonging to a class which is economically, socially and culturally backward.

Article 14 of mentions the "rights against untouchability and racial discrimination" and Article 21 states the "right to social justice". This article says the economically, socially or educationally backward women, Dalits, indigenous nationalities, Madheshi communities, oppressed class, poor peasant and labourer have the right to participate in all structures of the state on the basis of the principle of proportionate inclusion.

Other than constitution, the law that tried to do ensure the inclusion of Dalits earlier is the Local Self-Governance Act 1999. Articles 8(2 C), article 76(2 C) and article 172(2 E) have provisions for inclusion of a Dalit member in the Village Council, Municipal Council and District Council. But the nomination is not mandatory.

Likewise, the proclamation of the House of Representatives (2006) adopted the concept of equitable society. The Women Commission Act (2006) provides for the compulsory inclusion of Dalits in the commission. The Three Year Interim Plan (2007) launched the Dalit Enlistment and Development Program. The Constituent Assembly Member Election Act, 2007,

Section 7(3) ensured proportional representation (PR) of Dalits (13%) in the election system. The Civil Service Act, 2007 has reserved nine percent seats for Dalits in the 45 percent reservation that applies to all open recruitment. The Nepal Police Regulations 2007 and the Armed Police Regulation 2007 have reserved 15 percent seats for Dalits from the 45 percent reservation that applies to all recruitment.

Loopholes of Dalits Inclusion: While these are important steps toward creating an atmosphere for inclusion of Dalits, there still remain large gaps between the expressed commitments and actual practice inclusion. Dalits have been systematically and continuously excluded by the Hindu state and state power although Nepal is declared a secular republic. As, Kshatriya hegemony still exists in the Nepal Army, Brahmin hegemony in educational institutions, civil service and judicial service, and Brahmin-Kshatriya hegemony in Nepal police, armed-police force, Foreign Service, political parties and civil service organizations. Dalits are not only at the bottom of Nepali social hierarchy but are also excluded from state governance mechanisms. Dalits' Representation in general state governance is very low, in policy making levels it is almost zero and it is only symbolic in the leadership in political parties and civil society.

The constitutional and legal provisions are still insufficient for Dalits even though the main cause of Dalit exclusion is the lack of adequate laws, rules, regulations and lack of proper and effective enforcement mechanisms. Existing laws related to Dalits have many loopholes (enforcement depends on the perception or mood or bias of law enforcement agents and agencies) compared to other laws (in the sense of their wording and implementing mechanism). The legal procedure is too lengthy and law enforcement agents and agencies lack the sensitivity required to handle cases related to the Dalits.

Political parties and civil society organizations are somehow seemingly more sensitized about the material inclusion of Dalits. They are quick to apply the concept of social inclusion in a "cosmetic" form (symbolic or head counting) than in its real form.

Caste-based untouchability is still widespread and neo-racism (neo-untouchability or indirect untouchability) is emerging through denial of capacity, skills, leadership, knowledge and existence of the Dalits.

The perception of the traditional ruling castes and classes towards Dalits is still



stereotyped, prejudiced, and discriminatory. They still believe in the concept of the 'pure' and 'impure' and 'superior' and 'inferior'. The ruling classes and castes (so-called upper castes) perceive and believe that Dalits lack qualification, ability, skills, and knowledge and deny jobs, political and institutional leadership and even the existence of the Dalits.

Recommendation: The restructuring of Nepal, to make its organs, structure, mechanism, institutions, agency and agents more inclusive and Dalit-friendly is the first essential step towards effective inclusion. The government has to make special provisions for Dalits in order to increase their representation in policy making and implementation at all levels of society. This would require amending all the constitutional, legal, procedural provisions that are now in place. The existing prejudices perception, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors also need to be changed.

The following recommendations are especially addressed to the State:

(I) The government has to formulate mandatory policies, provisions and laws for the inclusion of Dalits in all sectors and levels of agencies, organs and mechanisms of the state.

(II) The government has to ensure appropriate, effective and equal access of Dalits to decision-making in all levels and sectors of the state and society. For this purpose the government has to make special policies for special rights, proportionate rights and reservation.

(III) The government has to formulate and fully implement effective policies and laws to include Dalits at all levels and sectors of the decision-making process of political parties, civil society organizations and other agencies.

(IV) Establishment or inclusion of Dalit agencies need to be compulsory to ensure law enforcement.

(V) The government needs to adopt and implement, or strengthen national legislation and administrative measures that expressly and specifically aim to end caste-based discrimination and untouchability, whether direct or indirect, in all spheres of public life.

(VI) The government needs to establish regular monitoring of the acts of caste-based discrimination and untouchability in the public and private spheres, including those committed by law enforcement officials.

(VII) The government, including its law enforcement agencies, has to design and fully implement effective policies and programs to prevent, detect and ensure accountability for misconduct by police officers and other law enforcement personnel, especially those acts that result from caste-based discrimination, and to prosecute perpetrators of such misconduct.

(VIII) The government needs to review and reform the existing judicial procedures for eliminating caste-based discrimination. Similarly, institutional and structural mechanisms of administrative and judicial systems need to be reviewed, revised and updated.

(IX) The government needs to formulate laws against caste-based discrimination and untouchability and increase the punishment, make enforcement mandatory and include compensation in the enforcement mechanism.

(X) The perceptions of law enforcement agents and agencies towards Dalits should be changed.

¹ Mr. Kisan is a research fellow of Social Inclusion Research Fund (SIRF) for 2006. This article is based on the research study supported by SIRF.

'Inclusion is now a common agenda'

- NARSINGH CHAUDHARY

NARSINGH CHAUDHARY, the chairman of the Commission for National Inclusion, and a leader of the Terai-based Nepal Sadbhavana Party, is an advocate for the cause of Madhesis. During the last two decades, Chaudhary spent most of his time working to empower the voices of Madhesis. Chaudhary spoke to New Spotlight on various issues. Excerpts:

How was the Commission established?

The government established the National Inclusion Commission as per Nepal's Interim Constitution, 2063 and Nepal Government's Policy and Program for Fiscal Year 2065/ 66. One major aim of the commission is to work on the provisions of ensuring inclusion and representation of all castes, ethnicities, communities, areas and genders in the state agencies.

What are its mandates?

The commission has been working as per the terms of references made by the government. One of the main mandates of the commission is to categorize the state institutions and agencies where inclusion practices are needed, and to recommend the process by which to enhance such inclusion practices. It also has a role to advise the government on the parameters for proportional inclusion of various communities and areas.

Other mandates?

It also has a mandate to analyze, monitor and evaluate the current laws, rules, regulations and programs of inclusion in the state mainstream. We can also recommend necessary improvements and effective implementation measures to the government.

Do you have the mandate to analyze the policies and programs?

Yes we do. The commission analyzes whether the policies and programs of various state agencies follow the theoretical aspect of inclusion, and it can recommend further improvement measures. The commission also analyzes whether the practices of social inclusion theory will affect the current institutional structure of government, and advises the government on measures to minimize such effects.

To what extent is social inclusion actually being practiced in Nepal?

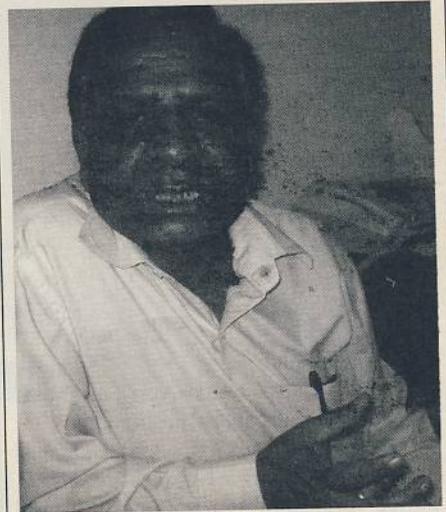
Compared to the past, the situation has changed a lot. But there is still much work to be done. A large number of people are still excluded from the mainstream. Madhesis, Dalits and Janjatis are still left out. In this context, there is a compelling need for Nepal to demonstrate its commitment to establish a multi-cultural, multi-social, multi-linguistic, multi religious and multi-ethnic federal state. This is especially true at a time when the country is in the process of restructuring the state and taking into consideration the diversity of its people.

Have you noticed any change in the way people look at inclusion today?

When we demanded the inclusion of Madhesis in Nepal's mainstream in 1991, many labeled us betrayers and separatists. Now people have realized that our demand is not to secede from Nepal but to strengthen the national unity through social diversity. I am proud that we started the protest against exclusion.

How did social inclusion become an agenda in Nepal?

Social inclusion is a political agenda which was brought forth by the armed conflict started in 1996. Our



party, Nepal Sadbhavana, pioneered this agenda. It established the cause for inclusion.

How did the Constituent Assembly elections further the agenda of inclusion?

For the first time after the elections of Constituent Assembly, the process of political inclusion is in place. In addition to the first-past-the-post system to elect members of the Constituent Assembly, a proportional representation system was introduced for a wider spectrum of the population, including representatives of excluded groups, to receive their fair share in the assembly. As a result, previously excluded groups are fairly represented now.

What is the present composition of CA in terms of inclusion?

It is quite good. There are 33 per cent women members, about 31 per cent Janjatis, 8 per cent Dalits and 34 per cent Madhesis.

Do you think the new constitution will be truly inclusive?

Yes. There is no way out other than to accommodate all the excluded communities in the national mainstream. Social inclusion is now the common agenda of all. ■

Contemporary Status of Terai Dalits

By Mohan Das Manadhar
Rojan Bajracharya¹

Introduction: Nepal is geographical diverse country with high hill Himalayan in North and flat land called Terai in South. This diversity of country is also complemented by diversity in caste and ethnic groups. The traditional social and state structure of Nepal is based on traditional Hindu caste hierarchal system which discriminates lower untouchable caste group termed as Dalits and other non- Hindu indigenous group. Further, poverty and low human resource development of the country has nurtured the discrimination practices of country. It has been globally observed that there is correlation of social discrimination with poverty and human resource development and the most suppressed and their grievance are rarely recognized by state mechanism. The Terai Dalits are one of such suppressed community of Nepal.

Stylish Fact of Terai Madhesh: Terai, Madhesh and Madheshi have multiple connotations which here mean plain flat land of southern belt. It spreads from east to west with 20 districts covering 23 percent of total land of Nepal. It is a densely populated area of the country with 48.4 percent population of which 36.32 percent belongs to hill origin and the remaining 63.31 percent belonging to Non- Hill Origin or Terai origin. Non-hill origin people have collective identity. They are grouped into Hindu castes, Terai Adibasi Janajati and Muslim with population share of 59, 27.5 and 13.2 respectively. The cultural identity of plain Hindu Caste is closely associated with "Madheshi". Whereas the muslims and Terai Adibasi Janajati do not prefer to termed their cultural identity as "Madheshi". Once in the past, Terai was huge forest and could not be reside due to malaria. Now, it has acquired greater economic importance as the clearing of forest provides opportunities for new shelters, agriculture, business and commerce. Notwithstanding, Terai is also the resident of the largest Dalit groups in Nepal whom are technically termed as "Terai Dalits". The National Dalit Commission has identified 15 distinct Terai Dalits' cultural groups but the Population Census 2001 has only identified 11 groups. The major Dalit caste

groups in the Terai are Musahar, Chamar, Dom, Tatma, Dusadh, Khatwe, Bantar, Dhobi, Chidimar, Patharkatta/Kushwadia and Halkhor.

Poverty in Terai Madhesh: Madheshi Dalits are the most unrecognized community group of country which partially credits to poverty prevailed in Terai that nurture Dalits discrimination and made them voiceless. ICIMOD study suggests 9 out of 20 Terai districts are worst in terms of poverty and deprivation with wealth disparity, low education and poor health condition. The development status of Terai districts namely - Saptari, Siraha, Dhanusha, Mahottari, Sarlahi, Rautahat, Parsa, Bardiya and Kailali - are as poor as the remote mountain and hill districts of Achham, Kalikot, Dailekh, Mugu, Bajhang, Humla, Jumla, Jajarkot, Baitadi and Rolpa. Where, the remote mountain and hill districts are poor due to district's limited and/or minimal development infrastructure and the Terai district are poor due to deficiency prevailed in non-hill origin people of Terai with most suppressed being Terai Dalits. This poverty characteristic of Terai where deficiencies persist in certain communities is one of the leading discourses of Madheshi Andolan which mostly affected nine poorest Terai districts, namely: Saptari, Siraha, Dhanusha, Mahottari, Sarlahi, Rautahat, Parsa, Bardiya and Kailali.

The suppression against Terai Dalits and their poor socio- economic condition has also been highlighted by the research studies supported by Social Inclusion Research Fund (SIRF). There are around 17 studies supported by SIRF on Terai Dalits which has highlighted on poor economic condition and suppression against Dom, Mushahar, Halkhor and Chamar caste group of Terai Dalits.

Madheshi Dalit Deprivation: In the contemporary world, certain untouchability- related boundaries are gradually wiping out while others continue to remain intact. Younger Dalit and non-Dalit groups do not entertain food untouchability practices. However, the other barriers against Dalits still remain intact, namely: participation in religious rites and Dalit and non - Dalit inter caste marriage. Specifically, inter caste marriages continue to cause communal



tension and violence which often lead to displacement or isolation of the couple. The untouchability practices is more severe to Madheshi Dalits than hill Dalits which credits to Terai's high levels of poverty, illiteracy, landlessness and low levels of awareness and mobilization. Though landlessness is an issue of all groups belonging to the harouwa - charouwa (Oppressive bonded agriculture labour in Siraha and Saptari, similar to Kamaiyas) as well as Muslims and Janajatis, the landlessness situation of Madheshi Dalits is more severe and acute than that of other landless groups.

The social mobilization program is dearth against discrimination and suppression of Terai Dalits. The socially mobilized Madheshi Dalit communities exhibit the marked difference in level of awareness, confidence, activism and articulation skills which clearly reflect in the manner they present themselves in the public meetings. In those mobilized communities, young Dalit females stood up vehemently to vindicate injustice. In contrast, the communities without social mobilization support remains passive with an environment of aura of 'depressive gloom', more so among women which the writers have exclusively observed in Bara district.

Conclusion: It has been observed that the Terai Dalits are the least recognized Dalits group of Nepal so they have remained poor. Further, poverty also credits to their voiceless nature. The social mobilization programs encourage the Terai Dalits to stand up for social justice. The research studies conducted by SIRF and other agencies will be guiding reference for government and other stakeholders to design social mobilization programs. ■

¹ Mr. Manadhar is associated with Social Inclusion Research Fund and Mr. Bajracharya is a freelancer.



MIREST Nepal in Constitution Making : Raising awareness in Terai

MIREST-NEPAL

Supporting the Constitution Building Process

MIREST-Nepal, a non-governmental organization with mass base, has been supporting the constitution building process by organizing various programs at grass root level

By A CORRESPONDENT

The non-inclusion of the marginalized groups in the political, social and economic mainstream is a critical factor leading to mass disenchantment with the national polity and causing self or systematic exclusions. These segments of the Nepali society are in acute need of knowledge sharing about current democratization and constitution making processes by giving them ample opportunities to ventilate their feelings on state affairs.

Media Initiative for Rights, Equity and Social Transformation (MIREST Nepal) is a non-governmental media organization which has been engaged in supporting the constitution building process in Nepal. MIREST Nepal aims to bring positive change focusing its operation on twin-pillar policies – democratization and development. This encompasses areas of functions such as

peace and constitution building, restructuring the state, federalism, right-based inclusion, and socio-economic transformation through sustainable development and good governance.

Currently, MIREST Nepal has been supporting the constitution making process by conducting open public debates, women round-tables; radio oral testimonies, as well as, thematic discussions with the participation of policy-makers, experts and civil society members across the country. It has mobilized more than 50 CA delegates and more than 75 leaders from various political parties in three months beginning May 2009 in which approximately 75,000 people have participated.

Dharmendra Jha, President of the Federation of Nepalese Journalists shedding lights on the importance of media and communicators in drafting

the new constitution, emphatically says, “This time the communication outreach programs will be playing key roles in public opinion collection in efforts of making the new constitution for Nepal.”

Observers believe that public participation will ensure the sustainability and ownership of the constitution. But, the Fifth Amendment in the calendar of events by the Constituent Assembly recently has arbitrarily reduced the time allotted for CA public opinion collection by 66 percent. According to the latest CA calendar of events, the Constituent Assembly has cut short the 12 week program, slated from September 17, 2009 to December 10, 2009, for collection of people’s opinion on the first draft of the constitution, by eight weeks.

This has also raised doubts that the major political parties in the CA are not in favor of intense public dialogues on constitutional matters fearing that it will minimize their role and influence over the process.

“Curtailing the political rights of the sovereign people is not an option,” says Suresh Acharya, President of MIREST Nepal, “Maybe the time is right to announce the extension of the deadline for promulgating the new constitution instead of sticking to it and infringing

upon the peoples' chances of writing their constitution."

Acharya says, "This phase in Nepali history is characterized by the eager anticipation for an inclusive constitution. Hence, all efforts towards constitution making, either by the state/non-state players, or by domestic/external actors, need to be streamlined in such a manner that the process becomes more and more participatory."

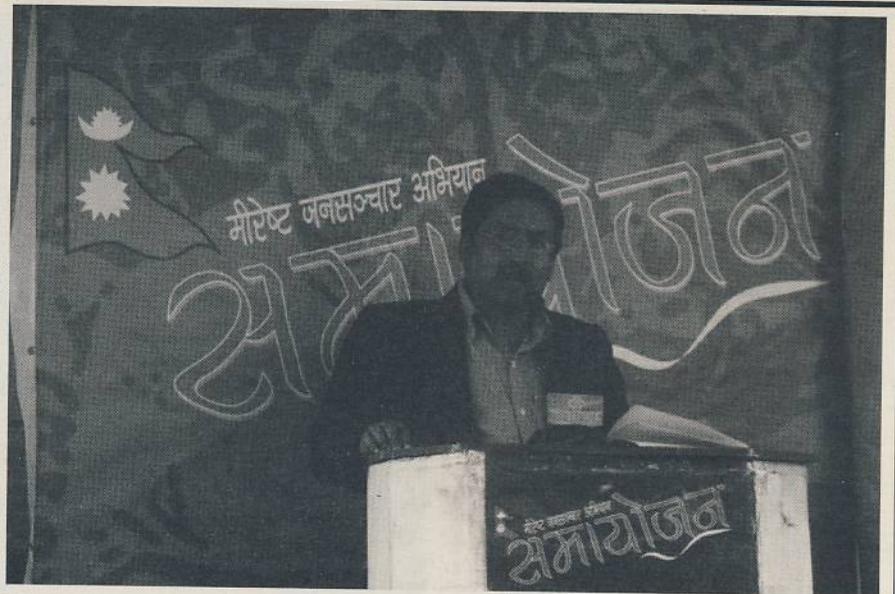
Acharya, who is associated with the Nepalese media and communication sector for 29 years, emphatically urges, "Let's be more participative and unite the Nepalese people through social dialogues!"

He add, "Making a constitution in the 21st century is a process that requires ample discussions and interactions amongst the masses to make the constitution people-oriented, to generate deep understanding of crucial issues and to instill the feeling of ownership of the constitution, but still it has not been as participatory as anticipated."

MIREST Nepal opposes all sorts of activities of the state that curtail fundamental rights of the people and underlines the need of media and communicators to play a major role in bringing the voices of the ordinary people of rural areas to the Constituent Assembly.

It also says there is an urgent need for capacity building of social communicators at grassroots level in the context of a participatory constitution making process. During the submission of the concept paper at the Constitutional Committee recently, most of the political parties presented their opinion without consulting their own party cadres and the ordinary citizens.

MIREST Nepal members and staffers are overwhelmed that a range of people have appreciated the works undertaken by it, from the Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal to Bir Nemwang, the self-styled leader of Limbuwan Liberation Front; from the civil society leader and the President of Nepal Bar Association Biswokanta Mainali to the spokesperson of the Constituent Assembly Mukund Sharma



MIREST Nepal President Suresh Acharya: Talking on inclusion

Poudel; and from the Personal Secretary to the President of Republic of Nepal and constitution lawyer Lalit Basnet to the peoples' representative Ms. Sita Gurung, a CA delegate.

RK Khambuwan, leader of Khambuwan Federal Front, an ethnic political outfit active in the eastern hills of Nepal, says, "Some organizations and individuals need to come forward to bridge the gap between CA delegates/policy-makers and ethnic groups/leaders to resolve all issues concerning ethnic communities in Nepal before the finalization of the new constitution."

Khambuwan is confident that, MIREST Nepal has the appropriate blends of abilities to initiate a series of direct dialogues between them citing the reason that CA delegates/policy-makers have less understanding of ethnic issues; whereas, ethnic leaders/representatives have not been able to convince CA delegates/policy-makers about their issues and rights.

"It has become very difficult to carry-out initiatives at grassroots level because of frequent *bandhs* and blockades, but we have managed to keep up with our calendar of events", says Gaurab Pudasaini, Executive Director of MIREST Nepal.

He adds, "MIREST Nepal has been successful in managing social dialogues professionally in addition to bringing out constitutional issues relevant to constitution making to public scrutiny

with excellent backstop support and facilitation."

Besides, traveling during the first and second Tharuhat movements across

Nepal had also given MIREST Nepal members an opportunity to document the movement audio-visually. But, it has not always been a smooth sailing.

Its communication outreach team comprising 17 people were held up at midnight in the middle of a jungle in Kailali for more than an hour by an unidentified group without any reason. They were later released after they were convinced that the team was a media group.

One of social communicators, Ms Yam Pokhrel of Kailali claims, "Prior to the historic Constituent Assembly election MIREST Nepal alone was able to galvanize more than 555,000 in more than 190 public hearings and social dialogues held in 100 rural villages of the country within a period of 14 months. It was the first media group to conduct interactive TV sessions at the remote out-flanked areas where there were no national media or city-dwelling civil societies."

An outcome of intensive grassroots communication outreach programs held in those remote villages was that MIREST Nepal had been able to come out with a Voters' Manifesto before the CA election in April 2008.

Lars Peter Christensen, Program

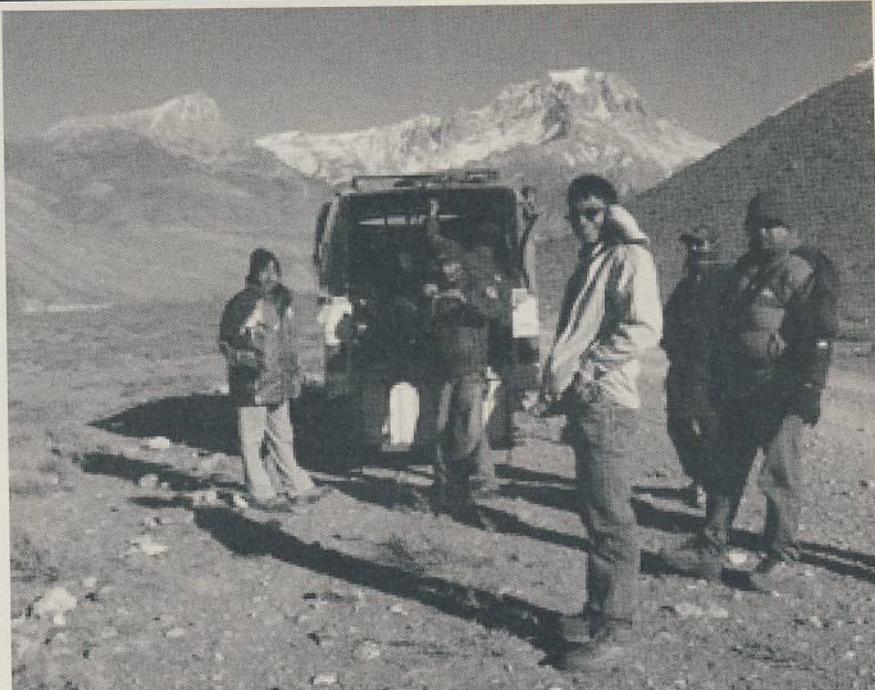
**HIGHLIGHTS OF MIREST
Nepal's communication
outreach programs**

Strengthening Constitution Making by Mobilizing Voices of the Citizens – social dialogues to be conducted across Nepal. (January 2009-September 2010) MIREST Round Table (September/October 2006 to August/September 2010) Transformation Caucus (October 2006 to October 2009) covering five development regions Grassroots Intervention for Dialogue and Participation in Democratic Processes supported by DanidaHUGOU (May 2007 to July 2008) Field-based capacity building of social communicators (June 2007 onwards) Social dialogues on Right-to-Information Development Perspective (June 2007-June 2009)

Public Awareness and Utero-Vaginal Prolapse (UVP) Advocacy in four districts

Coordinator at DanidaHUGOU, who had graced the function to release the Voters' Manifesto had remarked that this might be the first instance that a Voters' Manifesto was being released as an innovative tool to educate the voters and present views of the ordinary citizens. MIREST Nepal's Voters' Manifesto has highlighted self-imposition of the election code-of-conduct by contesting parties in elections and ways of making elections more inclusive and participatory so that no voters are excluded from the process.

MIREST Nepal has a strong network of Partners-in-Change (P-in-Cs) in all the districts of Nepal. A lot of hard work goes into setting up the stage and organizing the venue for the social dialogues' programs. Podiums, water-proof tented roofs and over 100 kg. of online editing system and complete sound-system have to be set up. A team of technicians and experts are fully engaged throughout the open public debate for its smooth operation. MIREST Nepal carries 17-20 team members in convoys of three vehicles loaded with a 95 kg electric generator for uninterrupted power supply, necessary equipment and accessories



MIREST Nepal Team in Mustang: Tough time

such as computers, flex, dais, podium, tapes, ropes, luggage, steel structures, publications, including a first-aid-kit.

MIREST Nepal's three programs such as open public debate, women roundtable discussion and radio oral testimonies via social mobilization have in-built characteristics of direct interface with the general people on

constitutional issues. It has been also conducting its institutional works such as operation of web-site, publication of public IEC materials such as brochures, leaflets, tool-kits etc., and launching e-bulletins and networking with relevant stakeholders on programmatic issues, individually and institutionally as well as formally and informally side-by-side.

PRESS STATEMENT ISSUED BY MEDIA INITIATIVE FOR RIGHTS, EQUITY AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION ON JULY 23, 2009 REGARDING THE ALTERATION IN CA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Media Initiative for Rights, Equity and Social Transformation, MIREST Nepal is gravely concerned by the news of the fifth amendment of the Constitution's Schedule, which has resulted in the sudden cut back of 66% of the time allotted for people's participation in the constitution making process.

The Constituent Assembly has cut short the 12 week program, which was slated from September 17, 2009 to December 10, 2009, for collection of people's suggestion on the first draft of the constitution, by eight weeks. This has not only dealt a blow to the participatory constitution making process but also raised questions over the credibility of the Constituent Assembly.

The Constituent Assembly has recently been accused of failing to incorporate the suggestions and views that had been collected from the ordinary citizens into the concept papers of the constitutional committees. It is a proven fact that the public opinion collection program of CA did not even represent one percent of the total population during the first phase of opinion collection in January-February. In view of this, MIREST Nepal urges the political parties and CA members to listen to and respect the voices of the entire population. In addition, Media Initiative for Rights, Equity and Social Transformation, MIREST Nepal strongly calls on the Constituent Assembly to revoke the decision to cut short the 12 weeks time allotted to opinion collection without jeopardizing the deadline set for the drafting of the constitution.



CULTURE

A Little Bit of France

Alliance Française has been making efforts to bring French culture in Kathmandu

By PRADIPTI BHATTA

A lot of people must have noticed an interesting billboard at Maitighar. It's an advertisement that is different from others seen in the Valley. This ad is of Alliance Française, an institution working to teach French language and promote French culture in Nepal.

Established in 1994, Alliance Française has been teaching French language to many interested Nepalese and over the years, it has organized many festivals related to music, art, film as well other social initiatives. Through these various programs conducted, this institution has been able to provide a platform to many local talents as well. This year itself, up till July, they have already organized around 20 events related to various fields.

Prabin Bikram Rana, the deputy director of AFK gives details about the events organized up till now.

Although a lot of events have already been held, the main attraction of this year were the Festival of Animated Movies, the projection of a short film titled 'Home', the European

Film Festival and the International Music Week.

'Resolument Animes' was a festival of animated movies held from April 17-19. It was organized with the collaboration of MAYA Animation Academy and was the first of its kind. A lot of animated movie fans got a chance to enjoy animated movies like never before. A workshop was also organized during this event which helped interested learners know more about animation.

Similarly, on June 5, a one and a half hour long film by Yann Arthus Bertrand called 'Home' was premiered for the first time through Kantipur Television and in the premises of AFK itself. This short film portraying the relation between human beings and the environment proved to be a huge success among the Nepali audience.

Likewise, the European Film Festival held from June 13- 19 was another grand success. The weeklong festival included a total of ten movies from France, Denmark, Finland, Britain and Germany. It was held at the Army Auditorium and a total of 4000

audience gathered to watch the unique yet interesting movies. This event was held for the second time in the capital.

The International Music Week was the most awaited event of the year. Although it was started fifteen years ago by AFK as a one day event, over the years, the days of the even have been increasing and this year, it extended to a weeklong program and was organized in three different places, the Alliance Française de Kathmandu, Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory and Rastriya Nach Ghar. These seven days were different in their own way, focusing in different music forms.

The first day included performers, Salil Subedi and the Earth Beat Community. It also included performance by children from orphanages. The second day was more focused on Nepalese music and included Nepalese Pop/Rock performers. The third day was a little different from the other days. It was called HIP HOP day and it included hip hop music, hip hop dance and graffiti. Unlike the third day, the fourth, fifth and sixth days were dedicated to Jazz music. Not only were the audience entertained with music, a short history of Jazz was also given to them. With the help of Kathmandu Jazz Conservatory, a lot of forthcoming musicians also got a chance to show their musical talents. Marking the end of the Music Festival was a concert by the French rock band, KWAK. This concert was also telecasted live by Kantipur Television. Not only was the hall at Rastriya Nach Ghar fully packed, a lot of music lovers enjoyed the event in their television sets. All of the audiences were satisfied with all the performances in the Music Festival.

Other than these events, the other ones successfully organized by AFK this year are HIV/AIDS Awareness Program, 'The Horn of Shame'- an artistic performance, Francophonie Week, a concert by a French Jazz Band 'Ozma', various book launches, and a conference on 'Rain Harvesting System'.

As a whole, AFK has had a great success in promoting French language as well as French culture in the country. They have satisfied a lot of people by organizing free events and through these events; AFK has also entertained music, art as well as film lovers. ■



Nepali culture with sea-like stretches of color meant to imply Bangladesh. Similarly, Dangol's use of 12 faces in his "bird's eye view" landscapes signifies the different artists who worked together.

Artists Rana and Bajracharya explain that the beauty and calmness of the Nagarkot environment had an influence on their current work. Both use vibrant colors in their landscapes, suggesting different times of day, moods and emotions.

Bajracharya's work include an introspective female figure that corresponds with the forms present in the paintings of the Bangladeshi artists. Six of these artists are women who draw inspiration from the female figure, and their Nagarkot creations continue this theme. Hints of Nepalese cultural influence are also present especially in Chakma's stupa and mountain landscape.

Nepal "Rendezvous-Nagakot Workshop" features a range of styles from figurative to abstract and a blend of traditional and modern. Some of the

ART

Inspired by Nagarkot

Thirteen artists explore style and the natural beauty of

By SHARMINI WIJESKERA

The Siddhartha Art Gallery, in Babar Mahal, is currently hosting an exhibition entitled, "Nepal Rendezvous-Nargarkot Workshop," a show featuring the work of 13 contemporary artists from Bangladesh and Nepal. The artists participated in a three day workshop, living and working together in Nagarkot, and the current exhibition is a culmination of this workshop.

According to Siddhartha's curator Sangeeta Thapa, a small workshop like Nagarkot produces quality work "because of the intimacy and rapport that (artists) can build." Senior artists from Bangladesh and Nepal as well as junior artists from Nepal artists had a chance to explore culture and style together.

The artists featured include Bangladeshis: Farida Zaman, Nasreen Begum, Karak Chanpa Chakma, Fareha Zeba, Naima Haque, Rebeka Sultan Moly and Khalid Mahmood Mithu Farida; and Nepalis: Erina Tamrakan, Sushi Sha, Batsa Gopal Vaidya, Asha Dangol, Pramila



Bajracharya, and Sunita Rani.

Elements suggesting cultural dialogue can be found in some of the work on display. Nepalese artists Baidya explains that his paintings, Ganesh I and Ganesh II, combine the ubiquitous Ganesh figure important to

paintings are more striking than others, yet each shows a unique voice in the process of cultural and artistic dialogue.

Twenty eight paintings are currently on display. The exhibition remains open until 10th August, 2009. ■

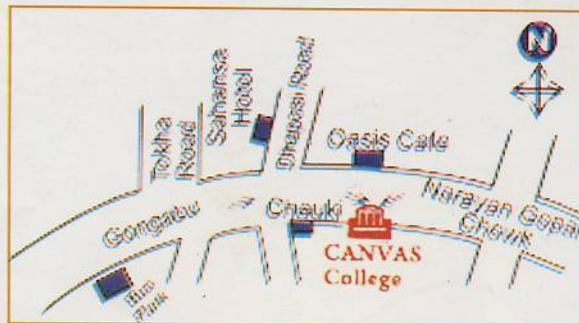
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