

Interview: Radheshyam Adhikari

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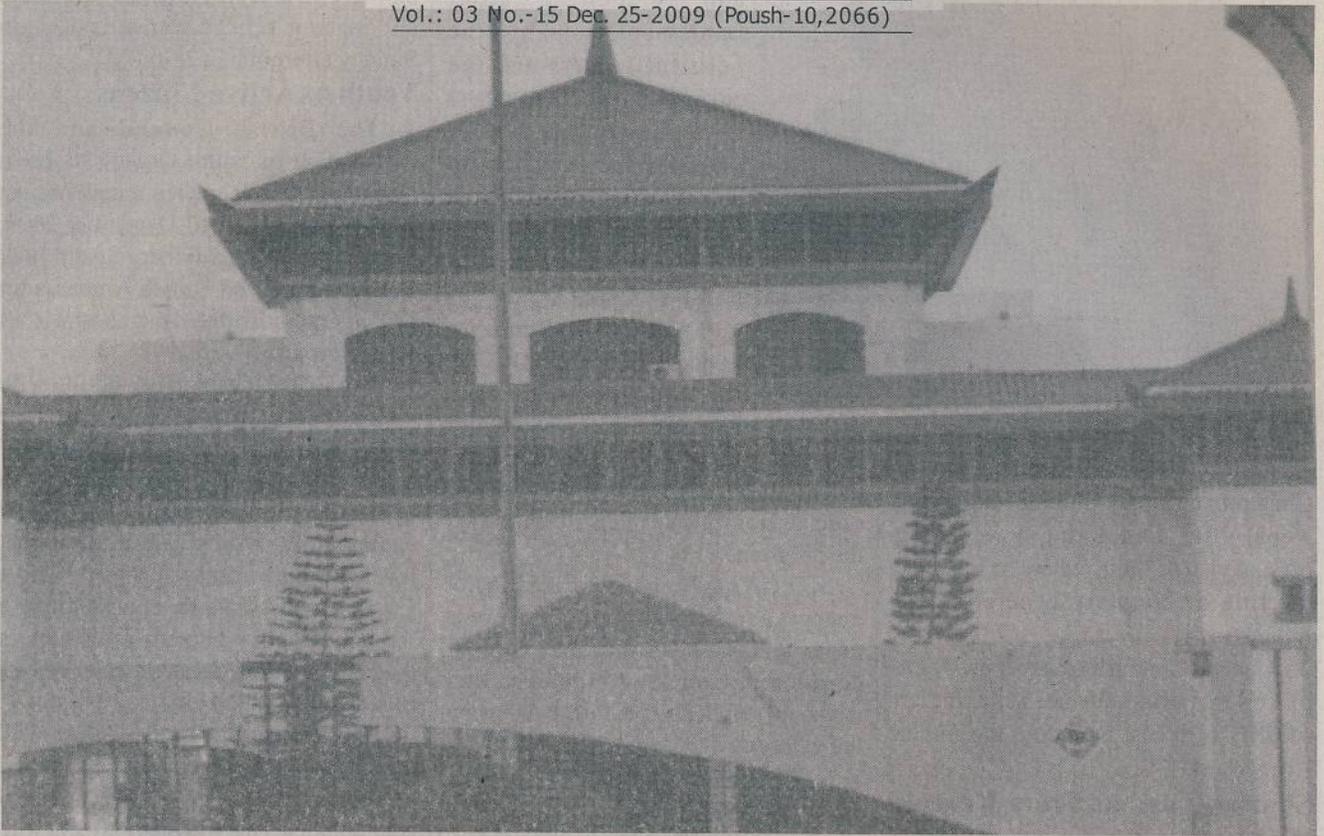
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COAS Gurung Returns

Chief of Army Staff General Chhatraman Singh Gurung returned to Nepal after completing a weeklong official visit to India, where he received the title of honorary general of the Indian Army.

General Gurung took a tour of several places in India and met with Indian security officials, including the Indian Army chief.

Sharing Lessons From Korea's Development

KAAN organised an interaction program at Annapurna Hotel in Kathmandu on December 16, 2009 to share the lessons learned in Korea's Economic Development.

The program was supported by Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA).

KAAN was established in 2001 to maintain good relations between KOICA and the Nepalese who have participated in KOICA's short or long term training programs.

Its main purpose is to share knowledge and experiences gained in Korea and to contribute to the development of Nepal.

The interaction was the first of its kind for KOICA trainees who discussed their stay and study in Korea. Participants of KOICA Master's Degree program presented papers on various facets of Korea's economic development.

Ambassador of the Republic of Korea Hong Sungmog highlighted the key aspects of Korea's economic

development. He said laws and their strict implementation by the political leaders and the citizens led Korea to where it was today. He further stated that local government bodies had an important role to play in strengthening the development process in Nepal.

National Planning Commission member Dr. Chet Raj Pant and FNCCI vice-

president attended the program as chief guests. A total of 80 participants, including 60 KAAAN members and 20 officials from related ministries, attended the program.

KOICA has been supporting KAAAN every year in organizing different programs such as medical camps, donation programs, web building and magazine publication within and outside the valley.

U.S. Embassy Sponsors 'English by Radio' Program

The U.S. Embassy-sponsored 'English by Radio program' goes on air from December 25, 2009 on Radio Sagarmatha. The 52-segment English language program is produced by Radio Sagarmatha, a community FM radio station, in collaboration with Nepal English Language Teachers' Association (NELTA). The first phase was produced and broadcast as a pilot program in early 2009.

The U.S. Embassy's Public Affairs Section, in an effort to assist Nepalis who want to learn English, provided a grant for the production and broadcasting of 'English by Radio program.' This is the second Embassy-supported project that involves top-level Nepalese English language professionals and academics in conceptualizing, designing and producing the program. The program, designed for beginning language learners and since it is broadcast on the radio, provides wide access to Nepalis in all parts of the country.

Radio Sagarmatha estimates that their listenership is over 2.5 million and that one fourth of them will tune in to

this program. The program goes on air on 102.4 MHz at 9:15 PM NST on Fridays and with a repeat transmission on Sunday afternoon at 2:30 PM.

Youth As Active Citizens

The British Council and the Association of Youth Organisations in Nepal (AYON) launched a new project Active Citizens on 17 December 2009. Secretary of Youth Ministry Sushil Jung Bahadur Rana and British Ambassador Dr Andrew Hall offered their best wishes for the project.

The British Council is working with young people to help them recognize their potential and exercise their responsibility to engage effectively in positive development of their communities at local and international level through its new project. Active Citizens will create an opportunity for the young active citizens to engage in their communities on small scale projects of real and lasting value.

Engagement with Active Citizens will lead the youth to self awareness and understanding of their local communities. This will provide them with motivation to work and care for their community and will make them aware of their communities' position in the world and how their local action has global significance.

United Nations, Nepal Government & UCPN-M Sign Action Plan

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy witnessed the signing of an Action Plan between the Government of Nepal, Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-M) and the United Nations for the discharge of Maoist army personnel disqualified in the United Nations-led verification process in 2007.

"Today, the minors who have spent the last three years in Maoist army cantonments with their lives on hold will finally be able to take the next step towards a more positive future," said Ms. Coomaraswamy.

The UCPN-M has been listed as a party to conflict recruiting and using children in five Annual Reports of the

Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict. The party needs to fully comply with the Action Plan in order to be removed from this list.

The Government of Nepal and the United Nations will assist the orderly rehabilitation of the disqualified once they have been officially discharged. The discharged individuals will have access to a range of rehabilitation options which have been developed by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP), in consultation with the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction and UCPN-M. Financing for these packages will be provided from the UN Peace Fund for Nepal (UNPFN), which is supported by the Governments of Norway, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Switzerland and Canada and the UN Peace Building Fund.

"The Government of Nepal, the United Nations, and our partners are prepared to ensure that these disqualified benefit from rehabilitation packages, including education and skills training to create a brighter future," stated UNICEF Representative, Ms. Gillian Mellsoy.

"This is a historic step in Nepal's peace process. We hope that it will encourage other steps to unblock the current political stalemate," said Representative of the Secretary-General in Nepal, Ms. Karin Landgren.

The Action Plan will be monitored by a United Nations-led team to ensure that those disqualified are given the choice to partake in programmes to assist their return to a civilian environment, and that they are not exposed to recruitment by groups who engage in violence or criminal activities. Political youth movements, in particular, are a concern for protection partners working with children across Nepal.

EU Engagement In Nepal To Continue

The European Union has said it would like to continue being deeply engaged in Nepal.

"At the end of an eventful year, the EU would wish to pledge renewed support to the Government of Nepal in its ongoing endeavours to write a democratic constitution and ensure

peace and stability," it stated.

The assistance being provided to Nepal, it said, could be used in a more meaningful and constructive way only if the concerned stakeholders bury their differences and realign their efforts to conclude successfully the peace process, which lately has been faltering.

"The EU thus would like to make an earnest appeal to all concerned to engage in the main task of peace building and constitution writing, which in turn it firmly believes would enable improved results for development assistance from the international community.

"The EU would like to continue being deeply engaged in Nepal and is always eager to support the existing partnership."

The EU and its member states are Nepal's largest development partners, providing more than 40 per cent of annual development aid. The figure excludes the funds given by EU and EU member states to the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, agencies under the United Nations system and international organisations, which in turn is re-allocated in part to Nepal.

Peace building, education, trade facilitation, food security, energy and environment, support for democratisation, improving human rights and health conditions through NGOs are some of the ongoing prioritised areas where yearly grants to the tune of 35 million Euros (about 3.6 billion Nepali rupees) have been allocated from the EU budget.

In addition, the other key area of assistance comprises of the 'Food Facility' under which the European Union has provided a total sum of 23.5 million euros to address growing food insecurity in eastern, central, mid-western and far-western regions of Nepal. The projects are being run by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), World Food Programme (WFP) and four NGOs in coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture of the Nepal Government and the line agencies working under it for the period 2010-2011.

Besides what the EU has been providing to Nepal, the six EU member states provide separate grants for separate projects. Support ranges from action on climate change, forestry, roads, job creation and economic growth, to health, education, social



Minister for Culture Dr. Minendra Rijal (Left) with Ambassador of Thailand Maris Sangiampongsa at a reception organised to celebrate the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Nepal and Thailand.

protection and inclusion, local government and wider governance. Much of the Member State support is being extended in collaboration with the EU.

The EU, Finland, Germany, Netherlands and the United Kingdom have been working on the areas of agriculture, food security, water supply, rural and urban development.

Education is one of the key components of financial assistance, which aims at meeting the objectives of School Sector Reform Programme. The European Union, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands and UK have been supporting this national programme.

The other area where the EU member states have been supporting is 'energy', under which projects on hydropower generation, renewable energy, energy efficiency, solar home system, biogas support programme are being funded by the European Union, Denmark, Germany and Finland.

All the six EU member states missions, including the Delegation of the European Union have made visible their presence in the sector of consolidating democracy and human rights and good governance in Nepal. Capacity development in Governance together with measures to promote social inclusion and support to OHCHR are some of the major interventions that have been contributing substantially to promote human rights in different parts of Nepal.

"A special mention needs to be made here to the support being extended to the Nepal Peace Trust Fund (NPTF) collectively by the EU Member States. This apart, the support extended in the areas of health and sanitation and rural transport are equally important." ■

Political Crows Are Coming Home To Roost

— Dipak Gyawali

This winter's chill in Kathmandu is bereft of the warmth of Loktantrick triumphalism and comes laced with heavy political angst. While it is less pronounced with the "Ke Garne?" Nepalis with their seemingly infinite capacity to muddle along, it has severely infected the "international community", more properly the EuroAmericans. On a flight to Europe recently, I happened to be seated next to one who was an advisor of sorts on conflict, inclusiveness and constitution making, the dominant industry of our times. This expert had a permanent shell-shocked look, the type that comes when force-fed day in and day out on Nepal's political quagmire. It was my turn to be shocked when this young expert brought in to advise our top leadership would turn to me to ask "Why? And what would happen in May 2010 if the constitution is not made as leaders of all political parties admit in private?"

I began with a fable. Wind the Big Ben clock half a decade back. Imagine a restless Gordon Brown wanting to unseat Prime Minister Tony Blair and not so slyly instigating the back benches to defeat a motion to embarrass him into resigning. A sly Blair sees through the trick, marches off to the Queen to dissolve the parliament, and calls for fresh elections. The opposition Conservatives welcome the dissolution and look forward to winning a majority six months hence. However, come five months, and Blair goes to the Queen and says, "Oops! Your Majesty, I can't hold elections because of the IRA's terrorism, but extend my term by a year and a half." He should of course have had the political decency to resign for the wrong political move of dissolving a house in which his party enjoyed a majority, but that demands a higher standard of morality than available in this fable.

The Queen, however, cannot do so without having the streets of UK on fire; so she dismisses him and asks all the parties to name a caretaker prime minister to hold elections. The Conservatives and Brown, while welcoming this dismissal, cannot agree among themselves, forcing the Queen to propose ex-PM John Major pulled out of retirement. Parties agree, and John Major becomes caretaker PM mandated to hold fresh elections; but the squabbling starts and parties refuse to take part in new elections, despite the fact that Major government did manage a very indigenous ceasefire and peace process with the IRA. The long and short of it is that Brown works to thwart any and all efforts to restore the constitutional process

or peace with the IRA, including by another caretaker government of Blair and the Conservatives, until the dissolved parliament is first resurrected by the Queen and he is appointed Prime Minister. He then proceeds to dismantle all apparatus of governance including declaring Britain a non-Anglican, secular republic as well as placing the British army in quarantine, thus preventing them from going after other groups raising arms against the state. He also brings in the IRA as ruling partners without their first renouncing violence as a political tool or the goal of one-party dictatorship.

Well, I had to tell this bemused expert, that is exactly what happened to Nepal from 2002 till now. And what would have happened to Britain under those conditions can logically be expected to happen in New Nepal too. The EuroAmericans who supported this unprecedented experiment on a small country (mainly by outsourcing their foreign policy to the Mughlanis with their own agenda of regional predominance and resource capture) will have to bear a large portion of the blame for what has followed, hence this greenhorn expert's angst. Such anguish is now also heard among the Mughlanis as half their country reels under Maoist insurgency and Nepal's ideologically committed, battle-hardened cadres (never incidentally sequestered in UN camps) hive off to the Dandakaran jungles to provide consultancies.

Jana Andolan II did rest on rather wobbly indigenous political premises but rather strong Firanghi funding and Mughlani machinations; and today's shaking edifice is testimony to that. The political experimentation, including the scrapping of the democratic 1990 constitution and its institutional foundations by its very architects, was premised on misplaced beliefs as well as hidden agendas which are now too nakedly out in open view. The seven parliamentary parties had self-hypnotized themselves into believing that the Maoist insurgency was directed against the monarchy and not against their bourgeois parliamentary system. Without any historical reflection, especially the fact that the upper echelons of the Panchayat were more ethnically diverse than under their multiparty of the 1990s, they bought the line that a federal republic would be more inclusive than a unitary monarchy. That was not to be.

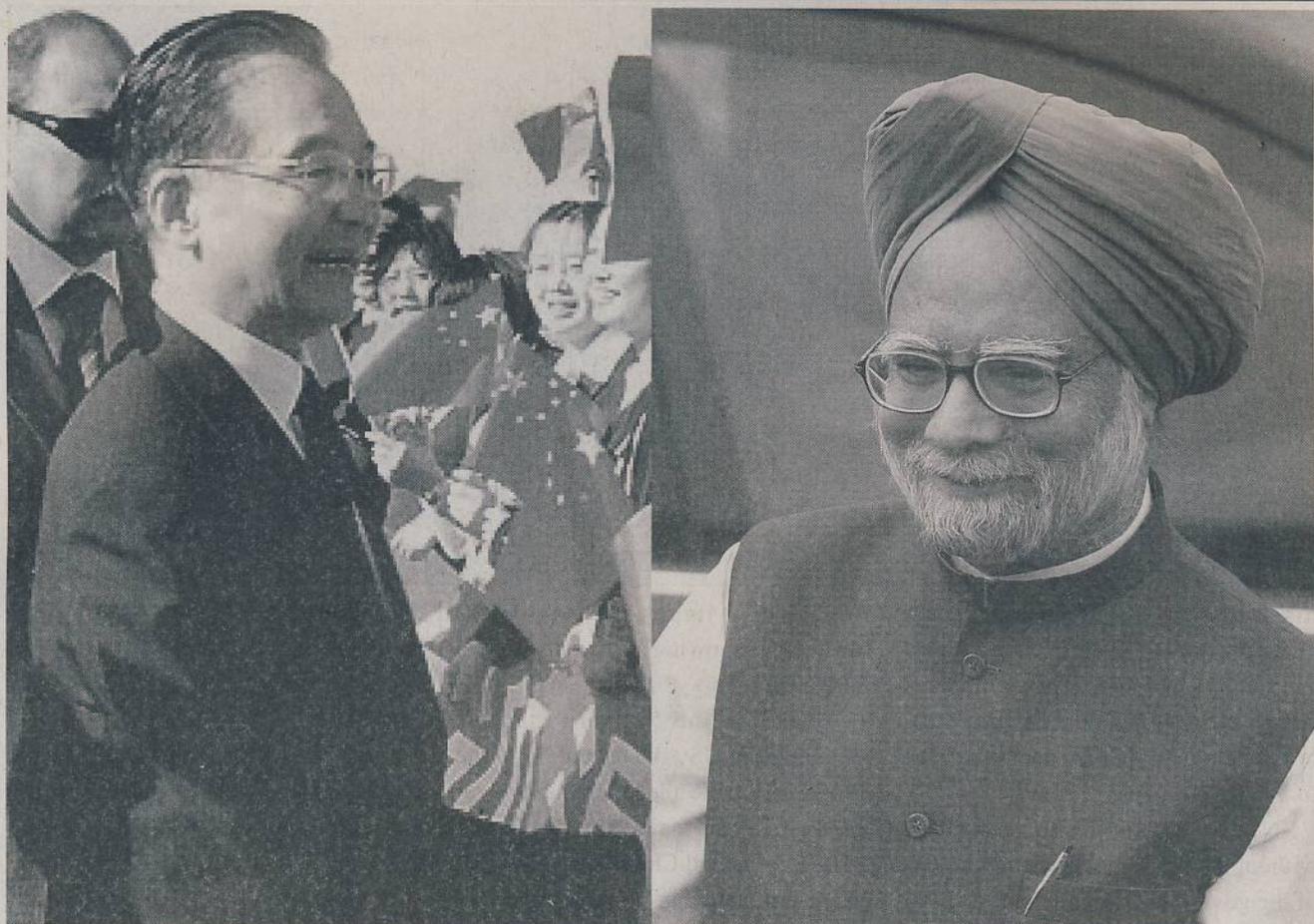
The inclusiveness debate that Nepal has seen recently is innately exclusionary. Unlike the Panchayat with its stated goal of all

Nepalis being equal before the state and at least trying to show itself as such with whatsoever mixed results, the current discourse centers on various votaries and their Firanghi romantics



focusing upon one or a small set of Nepal's hundred odd ethnic and caste groups and "other-ing" the vast majority. The goal then becomes a battle for more privileges from the state for this exclusive group vis-à-vis the majority of others, one that is bound to fail amidst boundary frictions with the "otherized" multitude in this nation of minorities. Nation-states are not inclusive, but avowedly multi-ethnic ones are, the best examples being the Austro-Hungarian empire whose army spoke ten languages, and the Ottoman empire where all the Abrahamic religions managed to co-exist, until rising nationalisms brought both down in fiery pogroms and holocausts that continued as recently as Kosovo. Inclusiveness has come about historically either through the market — which recognizes only efficiency as the organizing principle — or from the ethics community of new religions in their early ecumenical avatars, viz. Christianity, Islam, or Hindu reforms such as Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism. Institutionalized, these too have become akin to nation-states, not ecumenical but highly exclusive, as the banning of headscarves and minarets in Europe have shown.

The attempt in New Nepal to achieve inclusiveness, through state-restructuring even while destroying the market through excessive trade-unionism and the ethical ecumenism of its old multi-national base through unassimilated imports, does not foreshadow a happy ending. Good governance with honest decentralization can achieve even more effectively whatever half-baked 'federalism' hopes to achieve in the best of circumstances. Why the 1990 *Jana Andolan I* turned out to be even more centralizing than the Panchayat demands a so far absent soul-searching by the parliamentary parties. In the absence of a commitment to political democracy, support for national entrepreneurs, as well as innate ecumenism in public life, the 2005 *Jana Andolan II* promises to be no better; and the political crows coming home to roost may have to be eaten soon by quite a few, Nepalis, Mughlanis and Firanghis alike. ■



Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao (Left) and Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh : Coming closer ?

NEIGHBOURS

Come Together?

As Nepal faces an uncertain future, its rival neighbours are faced with a common ground of concern – and potential action in their neighborhood

By SUSHIL SHARMA

It was for no reason that the Maoist chief Prachanda returned empty-handed from Beijing a few weeks ago.

Frustrated after being forced out of office the former prime minister was seeking to make new friends in the north to counter the south.

But, in Beijing, he was told to avoid annoying Delhi.

The message was clear: the Chinese despite seeking new reliable friend in Nepal had no trust yet in the Nepalese Maoists.

Prachanda proved them right from the podium at the New Baneswor mass meeting at the end of the third phase of agitation this week.

He openly called for Delhi's involvement in "establishing civilian

supremacy" in Kathmandu (read: help the Maoists return from the streets to Singh Durbar)

Less than 24 hours later, Prachanda retracted his remarks, saying he was only being satirical at other parties "who see Delhi as their masters".

But it was enough to send the message across the world that the Maoists see as their masters.

The Maoists outbursts came less than a week before prime minister Madhav Kumar Nepal was due to begin the official visit of China. And just days after the prime minister claimed to have won support of his Chinese counterpart, Wen Jiabao, during their meeting on the sidelines of the Copenhagen summit.

The Indian support to the continuation of the present Nepal government is no secret as was also evident from the reiteration of the same by prime minister Man Mohan Singh to

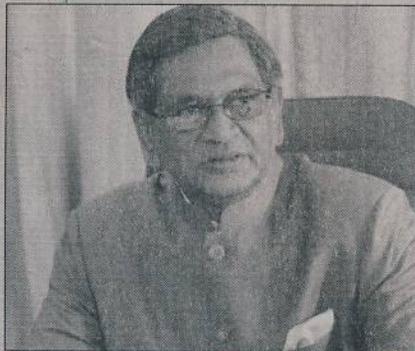
SM For MM?

The long wait is set to prolong. No Indian prime minister has visited Nepal since I.K.Gujral 12 years ago.

Prime minister Man Mohan Singh was due to break the wait next month, according to his initial – but not finalized — plan.

But he has decided to send external affairs minister, S. M. Krishna instead.

The reason is not known yet, but fluid political situation in its



Himalayan neighbor is believed to have changed the plan.

He however spared time to see his

Nepali counterpart, Madhav Kumar Nepal, on the sidelines of the failed Copenhagen climate summit.

He assured prime minister Nepal of full support to the beleaguered coalition.

And, according to none other than Nepal himself, Singh asked him “to fly to Delhi or call the Hyderabad house for any help in case of any difficulty.”

A happy prime minister Nepal apparently forgot to ask his Indian counterpart to fly to Kathmandu for a long-overdue visit ■

his Nepalese counterpart, also in Copenhagen.

Singh, according to prime minister Nepal, even asked him to come to Delhi or phone him up in the event of a crisis to the government.

Nepal now prepares to go to China without having to bother about the fate of the government back home.

In contrast, Prachanda had to quit the prime minister’s office a week before he was due to visit Beijing.

In his infamous New Baneswor speech, Prachanda lambasted India for offering military aid to the Nepali army.

Billions of rupees worth assistance had been pledged during a very significant visit of the new army chief, Chhatra Man Singh Gurung, to India just a few days earlier.

Prachanda termed the proposed assistance as part of the war preparedness on the ex-rebels that he leads.

But he seemed to forget that China also offered millions of rupees worth assistance to the Nepali army, as one military delegation after another from the northern neighbor landed in Kathmandu to hold talks with highest ranking security officials.

The row over the human rights record of the Nepalese army has been another contributing factor in bringing

Nepal’s two important neighbours together in showing camaraderie with the Nepali army.

Even as the western nations including the US take exception to the army’s role in the alleged impunity over the controversial major Niranjana Basnet’s case, India and China see a common ground in standing behind the Nepali army by pledging more support.

The promotion of the controversial general Toran Jung Bahadur Singh to the number two position in the army has also taken place — though belatedly — despite the western opposition.

Interestingly, none of the key neighbours raised any objection.

An insider quoted a senior government minister as saying that as long as India and China are not opposed to the move there was no need to bother about what others said.

That the two nations also have a common stake in seeing the UNMIN out of Nepal at the earliest is no secret.

Amidst the growing uncertainty about a new constitution by the stipulated May-end deadline, Nepal is threatened with an uncertain future.

Even if the new constitution is put in place on time, chaos and instability are not ruled out.

India and China are the two countries that will have to bear the direct brunt of

the immediate fallout of such a situation. Hence their common concerns in ensuring that Nepal does not go out of control.

The west will have very little, if at all, to lose. Instead, they might seek to fish in troubled waters to increase their influence in the region.

On one hand, they will hope to play the Tibet card against China and, on the other, assert its role vis-a-vis India in what the latter considers its backyard.

To keep the “outsiders” at bay in Nepal is increasingly becoming a common cause of India and China despite long-running mutual rivalry, mistrust and suspicion especially over security issues.

That common cause, if and when, translated into a major action plan will determine the future course of Nepali politics.

A drastic course is not unlikely, says an analyst. A course far from the normal constitutional and democratic processes could very well become a ground reality if the two neighbours came together.

And that possibility is growing by the day, added the analyst. As the first decade of the millennium approaches its end, the two billion-plus neighbours could well be rehearsing, in Nepal, the famous Beatles song of the Sixties. Come Together. ■



World Leaders : Little progress

CLIMATE SUMMIT

Worsening Weather

The global meet not only failed to have a deal to contain atmospheric warming but also bungled to help vulnerable countries

By **NAVIN SINGH KHADKA**
in Copenhagen

The much talked about climate conference in the Danish capital would not deliver anything concrete was a conclusion long foregone.

World leaders were saying that for months. Even senior officials of the United Nations that organised the conference had almost confirmed it beforehand.

It all meant that a legally binding climate treaty to cut carbon emissions that heat the atmosphere was a mission impossible for now.

But there were great expectations that the global summit would at least come to the rescue of poor and climatically most vulnerable countries like Nepal.

Experts and even officials say the meet failed even on that count.

They argue that the controversial Copenhagen Accord does not specify how the vulnerable countries will get help to adapt to inevitable impacts of climate change including floods, droughts and lowered farm inputs.

“Right from the definition of adaptation to the issues of funding and the financial mechanism, the agreement is very weak,” says Sandip Chamling Rai, an adaptation expert with World Wildlife Fund Singapore.

Negotiators from western world did not want to get in the draft document phrases like “historical responsibilities” because they thought if the document became legally binding they would be trapped.

Major economies like China and India were equally alert to avoid the phrase “polluters pay” in the draft as they knew that it would be for them to cough up the money if the document became a legal instrument.

And so until the final days, the draft paper on adaptation was dotted with brackets, which meant that there were so many issues to be sorted out.

No sooner US president Barack Obama struck a deal with China, India, Brazil and South Africa, negotiators scrambled at midnight on the last day of the summit to prepare the Copenhagen Accord that also included provisions for adaptation.

“It was then the draft for adaptation became clean (meaning, all brackets representing disagreements were omitted),” said a Bangladeshi negotiator who did not want to be named.

The adaptation paper may have come clean but insiders say the key document on finance is still muddled up.

Reason: As world leaders crossed swords over the right to emit carbon on the global summit stage, behind the curtain their canny negotiators were still tussling over who should control the fund to fight climate change.

Developed countries have pledged 30 billion dollars in the next three years for developing countries to cope with and help contain climate changes.

If their words mean anything, the fund could run into 100 billion dollars a year by 2020 – quite a myriad pot of money to exercise power.

“It certainly is a big power game, particularly between developed and developing worlds” said a senior European representative actively involved in financial negotiations.

Insiders say the US wants the World Bank to have control over the money and some European countries are okay with that while other developed countries want their existing bilateral agencies to do the job.

Vexed by not getting the earlier promised adaptation money, developing countries are for a new body that they want to be under the authority of Conference of Parties – the 192 countries that have signed the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) that organised this global summit.

“If the change the developing countries want in the financial mechanism happens, it will have a ramification in the Overseas Development Assistance regime (under which developed countries have been providing foreign aid to developing ones all over these years),” said Benito Muller, director of the Institute for Energy Studies at Oxford University.

Perhaps that will explain if adaptation money does not still reach vulnerable countries — despite all the pledges made by developed countries in this summit.

Khadka is a BBC journalist



Human Rights

Wrong Deal

As Nepal joined the world in observing the World Human Rights Day on December 10 this year, rights violation cases continued to be a cause for concern

By **ABIJIT SHARMA**

Nepal has remained vulnerable to human rights violations in the recent years. During a decade-long insurgency, the Maoists were heavily criticized for committing excesses as non-state actors. But then, even the state was violating human rights; an infamous example being the case of Maina Sunuwar, who was killed in 2005 during interrogation by the Nepal Army.

The signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA), in 2006, raised hopes in the human rights front. But rights abuses continue to cause alarms. Releasing its annual report on the 61st World Human Rights Day, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) said that the state and non-state actors were still involved in extra-judicial killings,

torture, enforced disappearances, illegal detention and displacement.

According to NHRC, of the 677 complaints it received last year, the Maoists were responsible for 28 abduction cases, 15 murders, 31 enforced displacements, 27 property seizures and 13 threats. The state actors were responsible for 36 abductions, 36 disappearances and 34 deaths in detention.

This year's human rights day also witnessed Human Rights Magna Meet, the first of its kind in Nepal. It had as its theme "Common campaign for human rights; making inclusive federal democratic constitution".

On the occasion, experts highlighted the need for making an inclusive federal democratic constitution, which will help in ending discrimination and ensuring human

rights. They also urged political parties and leaders not to protect the rights violators and said that the new constitution should include strict punishment for the culprit.

Inaugurating the meet, President Dr. Ram Baran Yadav said, "The new constitution should be drafted in time and should be inclusive and democratic to secure and sustain human rights of all Nepalese."

United Nations Chief Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal Richard Bennett concurred, "The theme of the 61st World Human Rights Day should be considered seriously by all the Nepalese and they should make an effort to build a discrimination free society as it is discrimination which brings in violence and conflict and hence breach of human rights in the society".

The theme of the world human rights day this year was "Spread Diversity, End Discrimination".

Experts also opined that a mechanism should be put in place to monitor the CPA properly and punish those who breach the agreement in order to control human rights violation cases. ■

NEW SPOTLIGHT

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VICTORY: Joanna Lumley celebrating with Gurkha veterans in front of the British parliament in May this year

BRITISH GURKHAS

Debt of Honour

A leading British celebrity launches a fresh campaign to support Gurkha veterans

By BHAGIRATH YOGI in London

Nearly six months after launching a successful campaign that won ex-Gurkha soldiers right to settle in the UK, a leading British celebrity, Joanna Lumley, has joined forces to support thousands of Gurkha veterans who were unlikely to come over to UK due to health and other reasons.

In a public appeal on December 17—just before the Christmas, the former actress said she hoped to raise £10 million (nearly Rs 1.2 billion) for 10,000 Gurkhas and their widows who are now living in villages across Nepal.

“They (Gurkhas) helped fight our wars and keep our peace. They stood up for us and now is the time to stand up for them,” said Lumley in her appeal, adding, “Our debt of honour to the Gurkhas remains.”

Prince Charles, heir to the British throne, also extended his support to the high-profile campaign launched by the

Gurkha Welfare Trust—a UK registered charity. “The money will fund a variety of vital projects, including the provision of a monthly welfare pension for 10,000 gallant Gurkha veterans and widows; help provide much needed medical care and provide essential services such as the provision of water and sanitation in Gurkha villages,” said Prince Charles in his message. “These projects will help ensure these wonderfully loyal and courageous men receive the support they so deserve.”

The ‘Debt of Honour’ campaign said many veterans are surviving on little more than £30 a month.

Daughter of a British major in the Gurkha Rifles, Joanna was in the forefront of a long-running campaign that led the British government to announce in May this year that it will allow residency right to all ex Gurkhas who had served at least for four years with the British army. Earlier, only those

Gurkhas who had retired after 1997 enjoyed such rights.

Joanna visited different parts of Nepal in late July 2009 and met with Gurkha veterans and their families. She was accorded ‘hero’s welcome’ wherever she went. In west Nepal, near the tourist town of Pokhara, local people of Mattikhan village re-named a 1,400-meter high peak as “Mattikhan-Lumley Viewpoint.” The peak is a popular viewing spot from where Dhaulagiri and Annapurna ranges can be viewed.

But campaigners say Gurkha veterans living in the foothills of Nepal’s majestic Himalayas are living in a pathetic situation.

In its mission statement, the Gurkha Welfare Trust (www.gwt.org.uk) says it aims to relieve poverty and distress among Gurkha ex-servicemen of the British Crown and their dependants. This is achieved by raising funds for distribution in Nepal through the Trust’s field arm, the Gurkha Welfare Scheme, and responding to welfare needs as they arise in the UK, the organisation said.

Established 40 years ago, the Trust supports thousands of welfare pensioners in Nepal. “Most are in their 80s and are totally reliant on the Trust for a dignified comfortable old age,” the Trust said, adding, “Increasing numbers of Gurkhas will settle in the UK and the Trust is ready to respond. As the lead charity for Gurkha welfare, the Trust has a coordinating role for helping those in need in the UK and other service charities. However, the Trust’s firm focus remains Nepal and 10,000 veterans who will spend their final days in the mountain villages.”

The Trust, which works in partnership with the Department of International Development (DFID) of the British government, said between July 2008 and June 2009, it helped build 1,614 tap stands benefiting nearly 15,000 people. 11 latrines for schools and health posts were also constructed, the Trust said.

About 200,000 Gurkhas fought for Britain in World War I and World War II and more than 45,000 have died in British uniform. Around 3,500 currently serve in the British army, including in Afghanistan.

'No Serious Discussion Yet'

-BISHNU POUDEL, Secretary, CPN (UML)

What happens if the new constitution is not made on stipulated time?

There is still time for a consensus to get the new constitution on time. Circumstances will compel all to come together in the next six months.

What is the basis of your optimism?

No party can go it alone. There are forces which do not want to let the constitution come on time. But they will not be able to prevail.

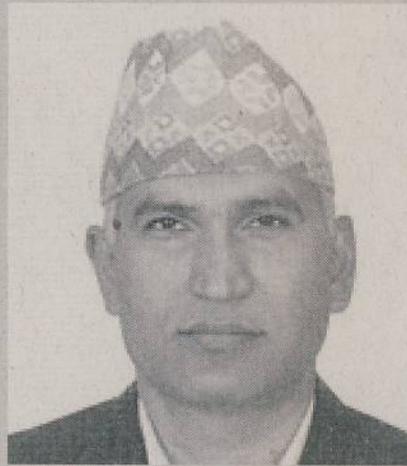
Why the stalemate now?

The main thing is the government. The Maoists do not accept the present government. The others are not in favour of a new outfit.

Then how can the new constitution be made on time?

Well, if we fail to meet the deadline, it can be extended.

So that is what the UML is getting ready for?



No, no. The UML has not decided its future course yet. I myself am a leader. But I do not know any move on how the party should go ahead and how to deal with the impending crisis. There has been no serious discussion. Nobody is serious. Not just the UML, other parties as well.

-By SAROJ DAHAL

rule out a popular revolt. "We are alert against move to dissolve the CA which has us as the single largest party, but in the eventuality of its dissolution (forced or natural) we may take to the streets for a revolt."

The revolt will clearly be aimed at capturing the power. But that is easier said than done.

Said Sitaula, "the situation will be far different from what the Maoists have been visualizing."

According to him, a deadly conflict will begin which will spare none.

There are others who believe that the president will automatically become active in face of the political vacuum created by the absence of the CA and a new constitution.

All the state authorities will shift to the head of the state who will be obliged to intervene to end the political crisis.

"Presidential rule will be inevitable," said a lawyer-politician, "to save the country."

although the issue has not been officially debated yet in the party forums.

Senior UML leader Bishnu Poudel said, "there has been no serious discussion as yet."

The same is the case with the Nepali Congress, adds Sitaula.

But powerful neighbor, India, is said to be backing the idea which could take a step forward when president Ram Baran Yadav visits Delhi for his first foreign outing, less than four months from the CA deadline.

The argument that the CA extending its own term would be against the principle of constitutional supremacy and the rule of law will re-enforce the logic of those who see in the presidential rule a solution to the political and constitutional stalemate.

As of now, however, all major parties appear to be preparing themselves for the extension of the CA by amending the article 64 of the interim constitution.

"It's only a moral question not a legal one," CA chairman Nembang told *New Spotlight*.

If major parties agree, there is no question why the CA's term can not be

A section of the Nepali Congress and UML is hell-bent on this option,

'No Alternative To Extending The CA's Term'

-BARSHA MAN PUN 'Ananta',

Standing committee member, UCPN (Maoist)

What will happen if the new constitution is not made on time?

We will be left with only one choice: extend the term of the constituent assembly by amending the interim constitution. It is not opportune to talk about it given the reluctance of the Nepali Congress to have a new constitution. But we believe that the CA's term must be extended.

But if that does not happen?

There is no other alternative. But if the CA's dissolution is imposed, we will have no choice but fight and take to the streets.

There has been argument for a presidential rule.

That is totally ruled out. Once the CA ceases to exist the president's office will also cease to exist. If anyone is hoping to bank on the military backing for a new course of action that will be day-dreaming. The army which did not come forward to rescue the 240 years old monarchy will not back such a move.



- By SAROJ DAHAL



President Dr. Yadav : Decisive role?

extended, asks UML chairman Jhalnath Khanal.



CA Chairman Nembang : What next?

But the key question remains unanswered: how will the CA's extension

resolve the political crisis and pull the country out of a potential disaster?

The constitution can not be made without a consensus of three major parties. There can not be a consensus on the conclusion of the peace process without an agreement on the Maoist combatants' integration issue.

If such an agreement has been elusive for two years, can it be achieved in the next six months which is the maximum time the constitution allows for the CA's extension?

Still, as an ad-hoc measure, CA's extension looks more likely than an immediate presidential rule. That however is less likely to get many takers among the ordinary people who are increasingly becoming fed up with the failure of the political leadership.

Even if the measure is reluctantly accepted, the question will continue to hound many: what will happen after the extended six-month deadline?

The answer: a totally dramatic new turn in Nepali politics that could make the most of the present-day major parties irrelevant. ■

'CA's Extension Is Not The Solution'

KRISHNA PRASAD SITAULA, central member, Nepali Congress

What will happen if the new constitution is not made on time?

This question should not be raised at all. There has been progress in the constitution-making exercise. The key concern is the lack of progress in Maoist combatants' adjustment.

Why no seriousness on what you called a major concern?

Because extremists of all colours — rightists and leftists — have been dominant in all parties. Both rightwing and leftwing extremism are threatening to push the country towards a confrontation.

There has been argument in favour of and against the extension of the term of the CA?

No debate has begun in our party on the issue, although some may have expressed individual opinions.

Some argue that the President will remain even if the CA's term ends.

In such a situation, neither the President nor the Maoists will become strong. Instead, the country could plunge into a civil war.

So, the CA's term can be extended?

Yes, of course. But extension is not the solution. Extending the CA's term without progress in the army integration and constitution-making would only aggravate the crisis. How can one guarantee that what could not be achieved in the past two years can be achieved in the extended period?

-By SAROJ DAHAL





Usual stuff: Maoist torch rally

THREE DAYS OF STRIKE

Controlled Anarchy

Although the general strike called by UCPN-M brought unexpected troubles for innocent travelers, it was a usual kind of a controlled anarchy as west Nepal witnessed it

By **KESHAB POUDEL**,

in Belahiya of Nepal and Sunauli of India

As soon as tourist buses entered Nepal from the Indian border town of Sunauli on Sunday, December 20, they were greeted with red flags bearing hammer and sickle. Demonstrators stopped the vehicles and warned everyone on board of dire consequences if they dared to violate the three-day general strike called by UCPN-Maoists. More than a dozen buses and half a dozen jeeps came to a halt in the morning of *bandh-day one*.

Although Nepalese towns looked

very tense from the Indian side of the border, which was guarded by India's Special Security Bureau (SSB), no violent incidents happened here. Nepalese Television channels were highlighting violence and tension in the capital city but Belhiya, the Nepalese border town, had only stories of stranded foreign tourists and elderly Nepalese pilgrims to share.

The Bhairawa Customs Office, which used to be jam-packed with loaded trucks coming from and going to India, was virtually deserted. Officials at the customs point, police

post, and government offices like immigration and tourist information center seemed to have taken a good break from their otherwise hectic days.

Belhiya was a bit tense, no doubt, but disruptions were not too many. General strikes, whether they are called by rebels-turned mainstream political parties like UCPN-M or smaller regional outfits or even business groups, they affect the transport sector and the market.

Bandh's and general strike are not new to Nepal. Following the restoration of multi-party democracy in 1990, general strikes are meant to disrupt the political process. In the early 1990s, newly emerged CPN-UML used the general strikes as a weapon to rock the government.

Although UCPN-Maoist, which used all kinds of methods in the last thirteen years to weaken Nepal's democratic institutions as well as factors of stability, claimed that the three-day general strike was against foreign intervention and restoration of people's sovereignty, the general strikes produced the opposite results.

More than three hundred elderly religious pilgrims spent seventy-two hours in Belhiya alone. Thanks to the general strike, tourists cancelled their trips to Nepal and Sunauli, the bordering Indian town, found more Nepalese customers.

Just a few meters south of Belhiya, the general strike in Nepal made little impact. As usual, Nepalese from border town continued to enter the market to buy the essential goods and other such commodities.

Just that the elderly Nepalese pilgrims were going without food or shelter and foreign tourists were furious.

“Had we known that the situation in Nepal would be like this, we would have cancelled our visit,” said Elina Patrica, a Dutch tourist. “India is making a big progress. Nepal needs to learn and work much harder for their own development rather than stopping the movement of peoples.”

The condition of Nepalese pilgrims, especially the aged, was far worse. They had limited or no amount of money upon their return from Kashi (Banaras).

Thanks to the coverage given by Kantipur and Avenues TV stations and sympathetic statement issued by president of Human Rights Organization-Nepal Sudip Pathak, there was a ray of hope that the agitators would agree to let the tourist buses move.

Controlled Anarchy

Although the coverage given by national television channels, radio stations and print media covered the

general strike, unwittingly instilling fear among the people, this general strike was a controlled anarchy.

The *bandh* organizers stopped public transport, burnt some motorbikes and shut down education institutions as well as some government officials. But the scale of disturbance was less than what the media projected.

During the three day general strike, the market in Nepal's southern border town, however, was filled with overwhelming crowds.

Method of General Strikes

UCPN-Maoist used methods of strike akin to that of others. From the early morning, the UCPN-M cadres issued threats to shopkeepers and transport owners with consequences in case of violation of their order.

In 2001, CPN-UML, with support from all political parties, called two days' general strikes. During the period of People's Movement II in

2006, seven political parties and Maoist alliance called indefinite general strikes. All have used similar methods and tactics and the purpose, largely, remains the same.

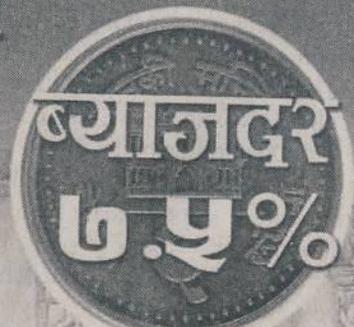
Interestingly, the general strikes of UCPN-Maoist, which many Indian media termed as pro-Chinese forces, were called when a high level Chinese military delegation was in the capital. Although during the three days of general strikes property worth millions of rupees were burnt and the country had to face the loss of a huge amount of money, the form was not different than the previous ones in nature.

Interestingly, police and district administration took their own ways and UCPN-M took another way. Although a police officer and senior government officials at education department were injured in clashes, agitators and police administration largely avoided confrontation. ■

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Active citizens : Encouraging youth

ENERGISING YOUTH

Active Initiative

A program aims at encouraging the youth to be active citizens

By **ABIJIT SHARMA**

In countries like Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan, more than half of their population is under-25. Yet youth participation in bureaucracy and decision making is always low. Although they are eulogized as the pillars of the nation and the future of the country, young people are hardly ever consulted for major decisions. The energy and enthusiasm of the youth in making a positive social change remain largely untapped.

A project Active Citizens, launched in three South Asian nations, by the British Council intends to encourage young people to become the active change agents of the society. The Association of Youth Organizations of Nepal (AYON) is joining hands with the British Council in the project.

The program will help youth understand their local communities and create a realization and motivation for them to work for their communities and bring a positive change. Through international networking, these youths

will be able to realize how their actions in their local communities will help to create a positive global change.

The program will provide an opportunity for 'active citizens' of one country to communicate with the other 'active citizens' in other countries. In this way, the project will be providing a platform for young people to share their ideas and problems they have to face while carrying out works in their communities. This will also help in building understandings between communities of different countries and help in building cultural relations.

"The British Council Active Citizens Programme aims to encourage youths to contribute positively for their local as well as the global community through the means of international networking," said Paula Middleton, Country Director, British Council Nepal.

The project was a huge success in Pakistan, where 30,000 people applied for 1000 seats.

Amidst a program organized to announce the project in Nepal, Shazia Khawar, Regional Project Manager for Active Citizens said, "The main aims of the program are capacity building of young people, developing youth networks, developing youth led social action projects and facilitating youths on policy dialogue."

About 200 young people from Bhaktapur have been chosen as Active Citizens in Nepal. ■

NEW SPOTLIGHT

Wishesh its readers,
advertisers and
well-wishers

**a Merry Chistmas &
Happy New Year
2010**

Building on New Promises

-Bipin Adhikari

**Nandan Nilekhani,
*Imaging India: Ideas for
the New Century* (New
Delhi: Penguin/Allen
Lame, 2009)**

India is an example of success in the third world. It has achieved significantly over the last two decades in almost every area of human development and nation building. The country has enormous advantages in its young population and its entrepreneurs, a growing IT capacity, an English speaking workforce and strength as a democracy. It seems hovering to grow into a strong economic power - rapidly catching up with the developed world. But even now it is a nation that has barely scratched its potential. There must be good reasons behind it.

The book *Imaging India: Ideas for the New Century* is the latest visionary work that explains what a 'big' Indian, Nandan Nilekhani, thinks about the situation. Nilekhani, a famous business leader, and the co-founder of the Infosys not just talks about his country's nagging problems, but also about its latent strengths in all walks of life. A big reason for India's struggle, he argues, lies in its inability to push through and implement critical ideas.

He not only looks at evolutionary process, that India has been through, but also shingles out the cynicism evident in that process, including the politics of money and votes. A number of contradictions in its economy, and new found wealth are also the area that the author has worked on. He does not hesitate to note that there are many things holding Indians back - their pessimism around what they have accomplished so far, and a resistance to the ideas they need to implement in order to solve their remaining challenges.

The book has four parts. Part 1 discusses issues where Indian attitudes have changed radically over the years. In his words, it is the shifts here that are at the heart of India's dynamism today. Be it the development in the area of human capital or increasing acceptance of globalization, they mark a shift in

Indian thought process.

The second part of the book examines those issues that are still in the ether. Nilekhani says they are now widely accepted, but have yet to see results on the ground. For example, here he argues, the idea of full literacy has gained popular appeal over the last two decades, but India is still framing strategies to implement universal education, and address the discontent around the state of it's schools.

Part III deals with more fundamental issues. They are the issues which have led to partisanship, and it has been difficult to reach consensus. Here, the author discusses furious ongoing debate in India about regulation of higher education, easing up labour regulations, and similar other reform agenda which some consider as empowering and some see them as exclusionary.

Part IV, which is also the final part presents the readers with his final set of ideas. Here he points out that "this final set of ideas presents us with a challenge we are not as adept at meeting as we once used to be." But, as he argues, "India's rapid economic growth is demanding much more of us in innovating new ideas, as existing solution for issues like health, energy and the environment have proved ineffective around the world, India cannot, in his opinion, have an energy policy that is based entirely on the heavy use of hydrocarbons.

The author argues in a very neat language that the rise of modern capitalism has helped India much. But it has to go further: "[t]he challenge we

have faced across our ideas is in uniting our people and policy makers toward urgent and necessary solutions. Our coalition governments at the centre often give themselves labels that reiterate unity and a common purpose - the United Front, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). But in reality they represent fiercely sparring ideals, and reflect an India that is intensely fractured, its divisions sharply defined no so much by ideology as by religion, caste, class and region. ... But the reason I am optimistic is that we have achieved consensus before. Through our history, our divisions and debates have been in constant flux, as the ideas that define and animate us as a people changed and evolved."

There is a momentum for change. His concluding remarks must be noted in this respect: "As I travelled around India, I realized that this feeling, this intense belief in the future, has not yet infiltrated our governments, and our ministers still talk about the people as masses to be take care of, as one would tend an ailing patient, rather than as fellow citizens to empower. In our politics, we have yet to tap into our new language of hope. For this to be mirrored in our political institutions it requires us to imagine an India that rests not on the struggle of our past but on the promise and challenges of the future. It requires us to shape systems and policies that give people the ability to travel in search of work, to educate their children and to tap into economic growth, to recognize how fully India is transforming itself... [India] is young, impatient, vital, awake - a country that may finally be coming close to its early promise." There is reason to agree with him.

The book of Nilekhani is full of thoughts, analysis and inspiration. It is just lengthy for anybody who is not a good reader. He could have conveniently reduced half of its size without impairing his message anywhere. Notwithstanding its length, however, it is very readable, well edited and stimulating book.

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Religious and Cultural Dynamics of Musahars Dalits

- By Subhash Jha'

Background

Nepal is a land of ethnic diversity and is popularly known as "Ethnic Museum". Nevertheless, the country has adopted the Hindu caste based system, which categorized the populace into four groups, namely: Brhamin and Cheetri are upper cast, Vaishay are middle caste and Sudra (Dalits) are lowest caste. The caste system geared with the beginning of the major hinduization process in 14th century and legitimization of Muluki Ain in 1854 BS². The caste hierarchy prevailed in four caste group also give birth to hierarchy within the caste group by itself so there are practices of untouchable and discrimination between Dalits, the lowest ranked caste group. Among the different Dalits caste groups, Musahars is one of the least ranked. Musahars got their name from their traditional occupation of killing rats and eating them.

Specifically, Musahars are one of the backward and downtrodden Dalit people in Terai region. The high residences of Musahars are in Terai and inner Terai including Dhanusha, Siraha, Saptari, Rautahat, Sarlahi, Morang, Sunsari and Udayapur district. Musahars account 1 percent of Nepal's total population and their share accounts 5.48 percent in Dalits population. Specifically, Musahars are Hindu by religion and speak Maithili. The socio-economic condition of Musahars is worse compared to other low caste groups.

Dor Bahadur Bista, the famous anthropologist, had given a short account of Musahars in his book - Peoples of Nepal. He described Musahars are Terai Dalits by residence and their main occupation is agriculture - specifically agriculture wage labor. Musahars belong to two distinct

groups- Magahiya, the one who bury the dead and Tirautiya, the one who perform the cremation. The marriage of Musahars is conducted within their own sub-groups but from the different clans. Further, Musahar have tradition of drinking and gambling

Religious and Cultural of Musahars

Musahars are Hindu by religion and their ancestors were strong and rigid followers of Hindu religion. Musahars worship their tutelary and other deities inside their home in a special room called Gahvar. Few Musahars also use to keep separate house for worshiping such deities and other Goddess. They still worship in their ancestral worship place. The spiritual powers of Musahars are

has gradually influenced the feast and festivals of Musahar people. Previously, there used to have rigid traditional culture to follow during the festival but there is currently much simplicity due to their engagement in other available economic opportunities. Nevertheless, Musahars has not still given off their primitive life. Musahars are still followers of superstitious and traditional thoughts and they have a strong belief on luck/ unluck, Dhami/Jhankari and witch.

The major life cycle ceremonies of Musahars are: Birth, Naming, Feeding, Mundan, Marriage and Death Ritual. There are no changes in the traditional custom of Birth, Naming, Feeding,

Few Musahars also use to keep separate house for worshiping such deities and other Goddess. They still worship in their ancestral worship place. The spiritual powers of Musahars are home God, namely: Panchunath, Sursen, Lukeswar, Kelu, Tanu, Lola and Kansh. Further, they also pray Goddess like Gango, Rupna, Maina, Bageshwari, Bishara, Kali, Sansari and Sitala.

home God, namely: Panchunath, Sursen, Lukeswar, Kelu, Tanu, Lola and Kansh. Further, they also pray Goddess like Gango, Rupna, Maina, Bageshwari, Bishara, Kali, Sansari and Sitala. Besides, they also worship water resource and trees (Mango, Banana, Pipal, Bar, Neem, Bamboo, Bell, Grass and Tulsi) as spiritual power. The major festivals of Musahar are Jur Sital, Naga Panchami, Chaurchan, Dashain, Deepawali, Chhath, Maghe Sankranti and Faguwa. The socio cultural change

Mundan and Death ritual. However, some changes are observed in the marriage system. The custom of dowry system is slowly dying down in Musahars' community and there are also gradual decline in child marriage. Nevertheless, the inter-caste marriage is still strictly prohibited in Musahars. If there are cases of inter caste marriage then the couples are punished and they have to pay homage to god and organize feast to make couple spiritually pure. The music of Musahars is traditional by

nature and they use to play the traditional music in ceremonies, feasts and festivals. Their main musical instruments are: Dholak, Jhail, Dumph, Jhamar and Mridang. The present generation Musahars also listen Maithaili, Bhojpuri and Hindi songs and music. Musahars do not have their own language and the language of this community depends on spatial location.

In past, Musahars were not invited in ceremonies, feasts and festivals of non- Dalits as well as other Dalits because of social discrimination. They were also not allowed to take bath with non- Dalits in public pond of the village. Nevertheless, it has been observed that there is gradual change in such traditional culture and the feeling of purity and impurity is slowly dying down.

Socio Economic Status of Musahar

In term settlement pattern, Musahars reside in the core-periphery which is almost isolated from the other caste. They reside in compact settlement and their habitation is called as "Musahari Tole" in their local language. In term of housing structure, they use to reside in hut type construction made from locally available materials such as Bamboo and Straw. Beside few cases, their houses are traditional in structure with mud wall and tiles roof. There are no significant changes in the housing structure of Musahars which partially credit to poor economic condition and less practices of saving. Specifically, Musahars have less practices of saving as they spend their income recklessly. Musahars use open toilet and such sanitation practices is also one of the prime reasons for isolation, exclusion and discrimination in village.

The ancestors of Musahars are nomadic and landless and have little opportunity of formal employment. Agriculture and livestock rearing is their traditional occupation. Nevertheless,

the migration is observed among the Musahars and Punjab use to be major destination as agriculture labors during the harvesting time. The new employments of the Musahars are: Wage Labor, Rickshaw Puller and Foreign Employment in Gulf countries. The normal diet of Musahars is Roti (Baked Wheat Bread) with salt, chilly and onion and they sometime also eat rice and pulse. "Shidhri" is one of their most favorite food items. Their ancestors have faced famine many time and they used to collect "Aanpko Khoya" (inner seed part of mango) for lunch and dinner during famine period. Nevertheless, there is some improvements Musahars'

observed in the Musahars but such changes are spontaneous that occur in every community. Specifically, the discrimination against Dalits prevailed at societal level than government level which has also been highlighted in many media reports. In consistence to the highlighted conclusion, the study has recommended the following measures:

- Both, the Government and the private sector including I/NGOs, should come forward with right and need based program for Musahars
- The specific programs on Mushahar's education, income generation, sanitation and hygiene should be initiated to raise the socio-

Beside few cases, their houses are traditional in structure with mud wall and tiles roof. There are no significant changes in the housing structure of Musahars which partially credit to poor economic condition and less practices of saving. Specifically, Musahars have less practices of saving as they spend their income recklessly.

food availability condition but the malnutrition still prevailed in Musahars communities.

Traditionally, the Musahars used to cover their genitalia and mammary glands. However, there is drastic change in dressing pattern partially due to marginal improvement in income and adaptation of other's culture. The male generally use to wear dhoti and vest and the female use to wear sari only. In young generation, the dresses are - shirt and paint- for male and - kurti and sulwar- female.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Musahars are the most vulnerable and marginalized groups of Nepal. Some religious and cultural changes are

economic status of the Musahars.

- The policies and programs should be designed to up-lift Musahars and enhance their meaningful participation.
- The Mushers should be enriched with skills and practices of commercialize farming.
- Musahars should be encouraged on saving and aware on financial security.

1. Mr. Jha is Research Apprentice of Social Inclusion Research Fund for 2007
2. BS stands for Bikram Sambat, an official calendar of Nepal. This calendar is 57 years ahead of Georgian Calendar.

Mansion for Social Inclusion Research: Social Inclusion Research Fund

By Mohan Das Manandhar
Rojan Bajracharya'

Social Inclusion Research Fund (SIRF) is a research financing institution that provides grants for social science researches of Nepal. The Fund was conceived as a follow-up to an assessment dated 2001 of Norwegian support to NGOs in Nepal, following the realization of the need to stimulate further researches on nation building process, social exclusion and poverty and the civil society's role. This was followed by another assessment on Norwegian program on "Social Inclusion and Nation Building" in 2003 which envisaged an initiative to reorient the current research agendas on the contemporary issues of social exclusion in Nepal. The 2003 assessment team recommended for setting up a research programme that focussed on structural inequalities and their implications for building inclusive nation. The team further realised that the programme should allow the excluded groups and civil society organization to articulate their contemporary issues as the research agendas thereby the research on such agenda contributed to understand the conditions by which the nation and democracy can transcend social and cultural categories.

Thus, Social Inclusion Research Fund was established on August 1st, 2005 under 3-year "Research Programme on Social Inclusion and Nation Building in Nepal". It was setup under the agreement between the Government of Nepal (GON) and the Royal Norwegian Embassy (RNE), Kathmandu. The RNE, Kathmandu finances the fund and the Netherlands Development Organization, Nepal (SNV Nepal) has been designated a fund manager as per the agreement between RNE, Kathmandu and SNV Nepal. The Fund's secretariat is housed in SNV Nepal's office. The *main objectives* of the Fund are: to produce

high quality and critical research on causes of social exclusion in Nepal and ways to accommodate and manage diversity; to make social science researches more relevant to excluded and disadvantaged groups and their agendas; and to ensure that the social inclusion researches contribute more effectively to policy debate and a deliberative democratic process.

The Fund invites proposal applications and provide research support grant. Government of Nepal appoints the Screening Committee (SC) for the Fund which has mandate to allocate grants for Harka Gurung Research Fellowship, Matthias Moyersoen Research Apprenticeship and other research projects. The Secretariat has two main responsibilities: 1) to manage the overall budget of the

Women and other excluded/minority groups) that could serve as an essential background and guide the selection of research applications

On Mid- July 2009, the fund has completed its 3-year (1 Aug 2005- 15 July 2009) "Research Programme on Social Inclusion and Nation Building in Nepal" (Hereafter this 3 years will be termed 1st Phase). In the first phase, the programme consists of two independent components: 1) Research Fund under project, apprenticeship and fellowship and 2) Research Cooperation between Norway and Nepal. The Fund had awarded 25 Research Fellowship (RF) and 149 Research Apprenticeship (RA) grants in 2006 and 2007 of 1st phase. Two Norwegian and five Nepali research institutions had collaborated in the researches during first phase and they

The Civil society workshop provides the research theme which will be prioritizes and endorsed by SC for proposal call. The workshop provides input on the relevance and urgency of issues pertaining to the exclusion of disadvantaged groups (Ethnic groups, Dalits, Madheshis, Women and other excluded/minority groups) that could serve as an essential background and guide the selection of research applications

Fund, and 2) to manage the operational aspects including administration of the Fund.

The approvals of grants are made on a competitive basis, following transparent procedures. All the approval decisions of SC are guided by the operational manual. The Civil society workshop provides the research theme which will be prioritizes and endorsed by SC for proposal call. The workshop provides input on the relevance and urgency of issues pertaining to the exclusion of disadvantaged groups (Ethnic groups, Dalits, Madheshis,

had published 8 paper. The mid-term review of the Fund's first phase recommended to initiate policy debate and focus on consolidating the research results and disseminate them to media, policy-makers, development actors and lobby and advocacy groups. In this regard, SIRF should facilitate policy dialogue with the political party leaders, government agencies and civil society organisations through dissemination of critical discourse related to the outcome of the research programme, as well as allowing for advocacy groups to take back and use the research results for

their own purpose. In this line, Fund had carried out policy dialogues with political parties' leaders, government agencies, development partners, civil society organization and others and had also disseminated the research outcomes in last half of first phase.

The fund was fortunate that some of its supported researches had completed at the time of country's constitutional making process. So the Fund felt a need to assist the Constituent Assembly (CA) members to make the constitution more inclusive in order to address the issues of structural inequalities and their implications for building a more inclusive nation state. In addition, there is also a need to assist political parties of Nepal to develop policy papers on social inclusion on which the political parties can base their proposals on federal structure and the restructure of state mechanisms to address the issues of exclusion in Nepal. In last half of first phase, the fund worked with leaders of different political parties and member of the Constitutional Assemble to spread the knowledge acquired, which is expected to influence making Nepal's new constitution more inclusive.

SIRF has partnerships with the three organizations - Central Department of Sociology/Anthropology TU, Social Science Baha and Martin Chautari - to improve the research quality of first two batches of the fund's first phase awardees.

The contractual agreement between Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and SNV Nepal extended the assistance program of the Fund upto December 2012. The period for this extended assistance program will be 15th July 2009 to 31st December 2012 (Hereafter extended assistance programs will be called 2nd Phase). In this phase of assistance programme, there will two proposal calls for research grant with total of 40 Harka Gurung Research Fellowship (HG RFs) and 100 Matthias Moyersoer Research Apprenticeships (MM RAs). In the second phase, the

fund will also conduct Commissioned Research through the strong team of social science experts and intellects. It is to be noted that the commissioned research of second phase replace the Norway- Nepal Research Cooperation of first phase. The Fund has been successful in bringing out research findings on social exclusion/ inclusion which is useful to the policy makers and other stakeholders. So there is a need to institutionalise the Fund and extend the programme in order to support the mainstreaming of the social inclusion agenda in policy, programme and functions of the state, and to establish and operationalize a national level

process of making a new constitution led by the Constituent Assembly, which includes restructuring of the state with a focus on respecting the right to self determination of excluded groups. The Constituent Assembly has decided to make Nepal an inclusive Federal Democratic Republic. In this regard, the research on social inclusion agenda and nation building has become extremely relevant and necessary for informed decision making and advocacy of civil society members to protect and promote the rights of excluded groups in the constitution. Further, it is clear from the discussion with the political parties and Constituent Assembly members that

The Constituent Assembly has decided to make Nepal an inclusive Federal Democratic Republic. In this regard, the research on social inclusion agenda and nation building has become extremely relevant and necessary for informed decision making and advocacy of civil society members to protect and promote the rights of excluded groups in the constitution.

institution supporting social inclusion research. So, the institutionalization of the Fund will be the milestone goal of 2nd phase. SIRF has its new Screening Committee in September 2009 to supervise and administer the research granting process of second phase.

As the activity of second phase, SIRF made advertisement on "Call for Proposals 2009" for Matthias and Moyersoer Research Apprenticeship and Harka Gurung Research Fellowship in National Dailies, namely: Kantipur dated 17th October 2009 (i.e. 31st Aswin 2066) and Gorkhapatra, Nagarik and The Himalayan Times dated 21st October 2009 (i.e. 4th Kartik 2066). The announcement was also aired twice a day- morning at 0645 and evening at 2045 - throughout Nepal via Radio Sagarmatha, Nepal FM and their networks.

Nepal and Nepalese are in the

there is a need of researches on various aspects of social inclusion/exclusion which have not been addressed. The SIRF research finding will be fruitful insight to contemporary socio- politico process.

1 Mr. Manandhar and Mr. Bajracharya are engaged with Social Inclusion Research Fund. The views presented in this article are that of author's own.

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Pande Inaugurating NIBL Marathon : Run with cause

Responsible Race

A bank-sponsored marathon is raising funds and awareness for heritage conservation

By ABIJIT SHARMA

December the 12th brought thousands to Kathmandu for a fun fund-raising event. Some 4000 professional and amateur athletes donned blue and white t-shirts as they prepared for a marathon at 7 in the morning.

School kids, retired senior citizens, corporate personnel and others took part in the NIBL Heritage Marathon 2009 at the call of the organizers, the Nepal Investment Bank Ltd (NIBL).

The "Run for Fun" started amidst thundering cheers from a large number of spectators. The event raised Rs. 6

million, that was Rs. 1 million more than the organizers expected.

The bank is giving away the proceeds to improve Aryaghat in Pashupatinath and restore the 16th century Bhai Degal Temple in Patan Durbar Square.

Enlisting support from Pashupati Development Fund, NIBL will add cremation sites at Aryaghat, which has been getting over-crowded lately.

The heritage marathon is part of the corporate social responsibility that NIBL says it has been taking since its establishment in 2002.

In the first year of its foundation, NIBL raised Rs. 1.5 million for the restoration of the legendary Kaal Bhairav statue at Hanuman Dhoka premises. The bank donated Rs. 2.5 million, raised from its first corporate marathon, to aid the restoration of Sundari Chowk in Patan Durbar Square in 2007.

"It is high time, we, the Nepalese, ourselves, start thinking about our heritage rather than seeking funds and help from international sources," said Prithivi Raj Pande, CED and chairman of NIBL. "We have initiated this work hoping to create awareness among others about the need of protecting our national heritage, our national wealth," said Pande.

Bhai Degal Temple in Patan was the biggest temple in Patan Durbar Square before it collapsed in the 1990 B.S. earthquake. Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT) will be joining hands with NIBL in its restoration.

"This is just the beginning. We hope to organize many other events in coming years for the preservation of our heritage," said Pande.

The bank has been actively involved in preserving at-risk cultural heritage of Nepal. ■



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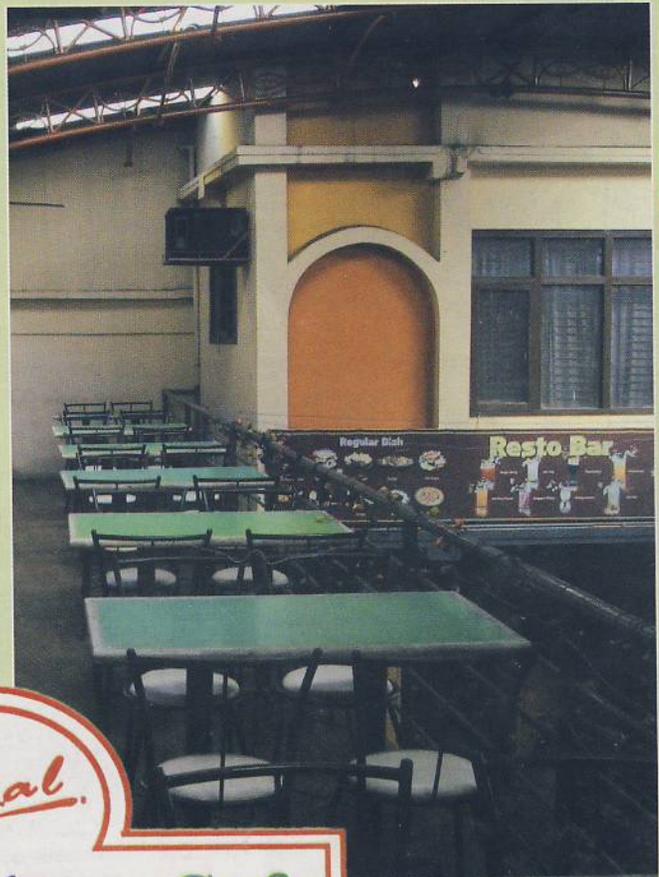
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