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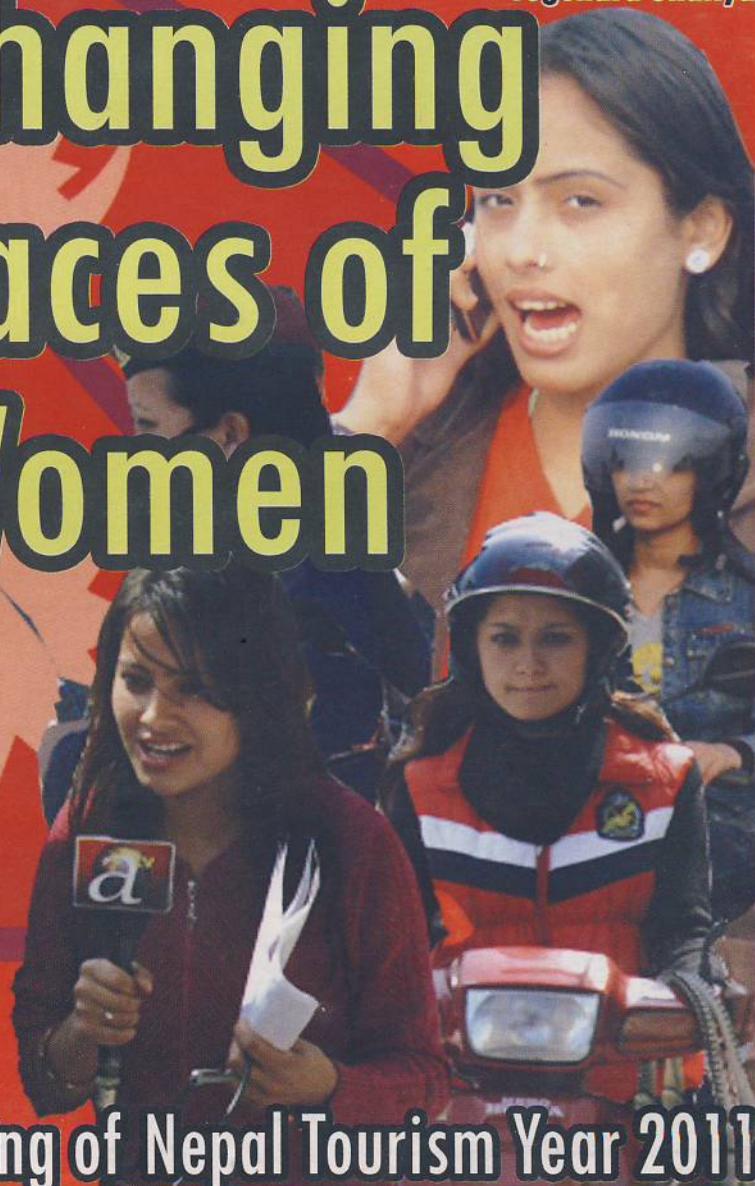


Viewpoint:
Dr. Tilak Rawal



Interview:
Yogendra Shakya

Changing Faces of Women



Special report: Launching of Nepal Tourism Year 2011

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COVER STORY: Women On Power Path

Cover Photo: Alvaro

8



POLITICS: Dangerous Games 5



INTERVIEW: YOGENDRA SHAKAYA 12

NEWSNOTES

2

VIEWPOINT: Dr. Tilak Rawal

4

GOVERNOR APPOINTMENT: Dragging Its Feet

6

Climate Politics: Feeling The Heat

7

SPECIAL REPORT: Grand Launching

14

FORUM: Ratna Sansar Shrestha, FCA

16

Second Microfinance Summit: Mission Inclusive Growth

17

PERSPECTIVE: MOHAN DAS MANANDHAR/ ROJAN BAJRACHARYA

18

ARTICLE: Sheel Kant Sharma

19

SACEP MEET : Search For Common Purpose

20

NEIGHBOUR: Darjeeling Deadlock

21

Millennium Development Goals : On Track?

22

ON FOCUS

24

ART

28

Editor and Publisher : Keshab Poudel, **Senior Correspondent:** Saroj Dahal, **Reporter:** Pradipti Bhatta, Abijit Sharma, Aditi Pandey
Marketing Manager : Madan Raj Poudel, Tel: 9841320517, **Photographer :** Sandesh Manandhar **Guest writer :** Alvaro Castrillo Schneiter

Cover Design/Layout : Hari Krishna Bastakoti

Editorial Office : Tel: 977-1-4430250 E-mail: spot@mail.com.np, P.O.Box: 7256

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MASHAV and UNWFP Signed Memorandum of Understanding for Future Cooperation

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and the Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation (MASHAV) signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) in the field of Water Management (Irrigation and Drinking Water System). WFP Country Director to Nepal, Richard Ragan, signed the framework agreement on behalf of WFP, and His Excellency Dan Stav, the Ambassador of Israel to Nepal, signed for MASHAV.

The MOC between MASHAV and WFP aims to provide a framework for collaborative efforts on international programs and activities by identifying areas of common interests and priorities based on Nepal's development strategies, and in accordance with the availability of funds. The signatories will encourage the open exchange of information and ideas that enhance capacity building program objectives and strengthen institutional capabilities; promote an exchange of relevant technical resources and assist to enhance impact and sustainability through capacity building and training activities; and dispatch experts to identify areas of collaboration.

NIBL Enters 25

Nepal Investment Bank Limited (NIBL), which is celebrating its 24th anniversary today (February 26), has opened its 38th branch in Maharajgunj, Kathmandu on Thursday, February 25.

The newly opened branch will be linked through ABBS (Any Branch Banking Services) to all other 37 branches around the country. The key services provided by the branch include deposit and credit facility, foreign exchange, retail banking, import, export,

letters of credit, guarantees and remittances, among others.

The bank has also introduced two new products – Savings Plus Plus and Fixed deposit, whereby the bank gives interest up to 6% on savings account and up to 10% interest on Fixed deposit.

Nepal Investment Bank, with the widest networking chain, has extended its ATM in Gaighat and Krishnanagar recently. With that bank has total of 68 ATM chains and 38 branches around the country.

Nepal Investment Bank Ltd, previously Nepal Indosuez Bank Ltd, was established in 1986 as joint venture between Nepalese and French partners. The first private sector bank is Nepal, has now the highest capital base, highest growth rate among the banks in Nepal and number on deposit lender.

According to General Manager Jyoti Pandey, the bank plans to provide exceptional banking services within all major pockets of the country, both within and outside the Kathmandu valley. In the coming days, the bank plans to extend its access to rural areas as well as urban centers, whereby extending banking service for larger chunk of population.

The bank is also committed towards the highest levels of ethical standards, professional integrity, corporate governance and regulatory compliance.

Stronger Adoption Measures Recommended

The ad hoc International Adoption Working Group has urged Nepal to strengthen the adoption process by implementing 1993 Hague Convention on Inter-Country Adoption regulations, including implementing measures aimed at ensuring authenticity and accuracy of documents, promoting family preservation and, most importantly, safeguarding children's well-being.

Embassies of Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States signed the statement.

World Bank Vice President Concludes Week-long Visit To Nepal

The World Bank vice-president for South Asia Ms. Isabel Guerrero concluded a weeklong visit to Nepal

after meeting senior Nepalese government officials, including Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal, Finance Minister Surendra Pandey, and Energy Minister Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat; political party leaders; the Vice Chairman of the National Planning Commission; the Chief Secretary and Secretaries of the Government of Nepal; and representatives of the private sector, civil society, development partners, and the media.

Ms. Guerrero and members of her team also visited several development projects in western Nepal. She met with community partners and project beneficiaries of the World Bank financed Poverty Alleviation Fund and Social Safety Nets Project in Dolpa district as well as a micro-hydro scheme and a community managed school in Baglung district.

Talking to journalists prior to her departure, Ms. Guerrero said she was impressed by what she saw in the field.

"It was remarkable to see how these programs are getting resources to the poorest and most excluded groups. They demonstrate that when the community decides what it wants, even just modest amounts of resources can help many poor families get on a sustainable path out of poverty," she said.

Support For Improving Access To Justice

Representatives of Nepal Judiciary, Nepal Bar Association, Civil Society, The Asia Foundation, and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) came together to celebrate the accomplishments of USAID's Strengthen Rule of Law program on February 24, 2010.

The two-year \$1.7 million program, funded by USAID and implemented by The Asia Foundation, was designed in extensive consultation with the Judiciary and NGO partners. The close-out ceremony was attended by many senior judges and justice sector dignitaries who lauded U.S.-Nepal cooperation and appreciated the program's contributions to improving the quality and access to justice in Nepal.

Dr. Kevin Rushing, Mission Director of USAID/Nepal, remarked "on post-conflict settings like Nepal, re-

establishing and strengthening the rule of law is crucial to ensure the transition to peace and to enable development. Through these efforts many more Nepalis are now able to obtain redress and justice through the legal system – reducing the temptation to resort to illegitimate means. As debates about restructuring the Nepali state continues, the U.S. Government remains firmly committed to promoting the idea that democracy will only be sustainable if it is underpinned by good governance, citizen's access to justice, and a broader respect for the rule of law."

The program established three new court-annexed mediation centers and two commercial mediation centers and continued to support operations of three mediation centers opened under a previous project. In just the two-year program period, more than 1,700 cases were referred for mediation, helping reduce the numbers of back-logged cases and expedite the delivery of justice for the average Nepali and these referrals will continue. Chief Guest at the event, Supreme Court Justice Ram Prasad Shrestha said, "The Supreme Court is committed to maintaining the current centers and expects to open 22 additional centers across the country."

India Nepal Agreement

Two separate Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) were signed on February 26, 2010 by the Embassy of India, Kathmandu with concerned District Development Committees and the beneficiary organizations for providing the grant assistance:

NRs.2.34 crores to Shree Bhawani Higher Secondary School, Kusumkhola, Palpa for construction of double storied school building, provision of furniture, computers, printers, photocopy, fax machine and installation of one HP Pump set. Established in 1957, this is the only school in the district which holds special classes for children with speech and hearing disabilities. The school is presently holding classes in old and dilapidated buildings. The new infrastructure being created with the assistance of Government of India will provide much needed classroom space to over 600 students.



Japan Approves Use of Counterpart Fund

The Government of Japan has, based on the request made by Government of Nepal, recently approved the utilization of the Counterpart Fund of Fifty million Nepalese Rupees (NRs. 50,000,000) for the implementation of the Cooperative Farming Based Small Irrigation Scheme, Small Irrigation Scheme and Transportation Subsidy of Seeds and Chemical Fertilizer.

The Counterpart Fund was established through the financial assistance extended by the Government of Japan to increase agriculture production under KR2 (The Grant assistance for underprivileged farmers). The Government of Nepal has procured fertilizer through this assistance, and sold it in the domestic market to prevent acute shortage and unexpected price hike.

Regional Enterprise Final Award Process On

The British Council's Regional Enterprise Award competition 2010 has started with five teams from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Kazakhstan, Nepal, and Uzbekistan taking part in the contest.

The competition is being held over the internet and is open for public voting through the British Council Nepal website.

The award and competition were conceived in November 2009 and began the same year when Enterprise Challenge competitions were held in all participating countries of Central and South Asia region. Designed for young people to highlight their excellence in enterprise, innovation and technology, each of the winning teams is now taking part in a final for the overall winning team of the region.

Five students from Seti Mahakali Nursing Campus, winner of Enterprise Challenge from Nepal are taking part in the competition.

Press Under Pressure

By A Correspondent

The media is up in arms. Against the government. Not on a political mission. But on a mission of survival. Literally.

Less than a month

after the Spacetime Network chairman Jamim Shah was shot in the broad-day light in the high-security capital neighbourhood, a leading media entrepreneur, Arun Singhania, has been murdered in a similar manner, in the southern Janakpur town.

The murder of the chairman of the Janakpur Today group that publishes the popular Janakpur Today and runs an equally popular Radio Today has added to the shock of the media world.

Terror writ large elsewhere too.

Less than 24 hours after Singhania was killed, the editor of Janakpur Today, Brij Kumar Yadav, received a death threat.

It was reminiscent of the threat the Kantipur and the Kathmandu Post editors and the two newspapers' publisher received last month.

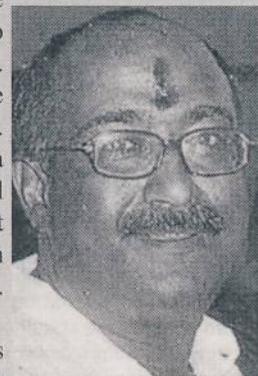
The president of the Federation of the Nepalese Journalists, Dharmendra Jha, says, "these are clear attacks on the free media"

The security situation had been worsening in recent years.

The media persons outside of Kathmandu had been under all kinds of pressures and threats.

But never was the media world subjected to such a terror, in the capital itself.

No one even has a clue as to what ails the situation when a strong and stable, but democratic, dispensation is not in sight with the internal parties squabbling for power and the external forces out to fish in troubled waters. ■



Views on Economics: Learn From Next Door

- Dr. Tilak Rawal

China registered a growth of 8.7 per cent in 2009, a year in which most economic powers in the world experienced output contraction. China replaced Germany as the world's largest exporter and was about to replace Japan as the second largest economy had it not been for the relatively impressive growth that Japanese economy registered in the fourth quarter of 2009. Recent data reveal that Japan's nominal GDP for 2009 stood at \$5.1 trillion, while Chinese output was valued at \$4.9 trillion in the same year.

However paradoxical it may sound, especially from the standpoint of struggles of different nations to come out of recession, China is already working hard to cool growth. Billions of dollars injected into the economy in the form of fiscal stimulus are being mopped up. While Chinese authorities are doing this to avoid crash-landing of the economy, they are equally conscious about maintaining a dependable flow of energy to continue a commendable growth of the Chinese economy on a sustainable basis.

In addition to Africa, oil and gas rich Central Asian countries appear willing to cooperate with China. The year 2009 presented many challenges for the Indian economy, but the challenges were bravely fought as a result of which the economy began to rebound. Indian economy grew by more than 6 % in 2009. In fact India witnessed a robust recovery in the second half of 2009. Proper implementation of the fiscal stimulus (tax cut, subsidy and enhanced government spending) worked well to put the economy back on track, a path of robust economic growth.

Presenting the budget for the year 2010/11 recently, Pranab Mukerjee, finance minister of India, stated that the government wanted to revert to the 9 % growth that India enjoyed before the crisis. Notwithstanding some partial rollback on stimulus as fiscal expansion is not sustainable in the long run, the budget has provided for massive spending in infrastructure and agriculture and has sacrificed around Rs.26000 crores via tax concessions. The tax concession provided is expected to enhance the demand for goods and services. Providing funds for huge social programmes, the budget also speaks of courageous divestment plan amounting to Rs.40000 crores. The challenge before the government of India now is to control the fiscal deficit, 6.9% of economic output and double digit inflation, which is feared to be fuelled by reimposition of taxes on petroleum products. Food inflation has been the major concern lately and union government and state governments are strengthening the public distribution system to counter it. India, it seems, will achieve a 10% growth in not too distant a future to eradicate poverty

permanently.

Contrary to economic progress achieved in our neighbourhood, both north and south, our economy is moving ahead in a lackluster manner mainly because it has not received the attention that it so much deserved, especially after the cessation of conflict in Nepal. A moderate growth target of 5.5% for the current fiscal year has been adjusted downward at 4 %. Weeks before the government made this adjustment, economy watchers had written and spoken that the targeted growth of 5.5% was not achievable because the government was not at all serious about increasing capital expenditure and arresting rocketing recurrent expenditures. On average in the last three years, the share of recurrent expenditure in total expenditure remained at 82.3% and in the six months of the current fiscal year it went up to 85.2%, leaving only 14.8% to be accounted for by capital expenditure. The only area where some solace could be derived from is the revenue collection, which has registered a commendable growth on a strong base of previous year. Despite the increase in revenue collection, revenue surplus is on a decline due mainly to soaring recurrent expenditure. May be to meet some unproductive expenditure of a populist nature, Nepal government borrowed at the end of the last fiscal year an overdraft from the central bank exceeding the limit set by the central bank act. The concerned authorities have not yet spoken on this offense committed.

Nepal has also experienced a huge balance of payment deficit, which is a result of deteriorating exports and declining remittances. Export/import ratio has deteriorated, resulting in a huge trade deficit with India and other trading partners. In view of slackening economic activities, composition of export trade and its direction, no improvement in export/import ratio is seen in the near future. Trade deficit which grew by 37.5 % in the first five months of last fiscal year grew by 51.7% in the 5 months of current fiscal year. For Nepal the situation is pathetic both on the external front (negative BOP) and the internal one (rising inflation). Those running the state affairs admit without any sense of guilt that they have not been able to pay attention to economic problems because of their heavy concentration on political issues.

Some 21 months have passed after the election to the constituent assembly, a body created to prepare a new constitution in 2 years, but barring some politicians people are found increasingly skeptical about the job accomplishment in the remaining less than three months. Let us not forget that countries have achieved reasonable economic growth levels even in the midst of



conflict and political instability. With this reality at the back of our head we have to learn to tackle economic problems even if we continue to face instability. India and China are counted upon by major global powers, western nations, to contribute towards providing a solution to the economic problems of global scale such as the global recession that started in 2008. China has not only flooded the global market with its products, it's import of goods and services from other countries is also on the rise and so seems to be the case of India with a population of one billion. It is high time that Nepal learnt to take benefits from the remarkable economic progress of our neighbours by concentrating basically on two areas-1) water resources, and 2) tourism.

Indo/Bhutan cooperation in hydro power development could be studied to see its replicability in Nepal. Why should not one expect India to show us the same level of generosity and magnanimity that it is showing elsewhere in the world, more specifically in South Asia? Likewise, we should attract tourists from all over the world with heavy concentration on nearby Indians and the Chinese who are emerging as great spenders. There is a new area (climate change) that Nepal could benefit from by virtue of being a low carbon economy. India and China are under tremendous pressure to cut carbon emission, their combined emission accounting for 13% of world total. At the climate summit in Copenhagen, India and China managed to avoid any binding limitation on carbon emission. They, however, agreed to cut the carbon intensity of its economy, amount of carbon dioxide emitted for each unit of GDP by 40 to 45% (China) and 25% (India) by 2020, compared with 2005 levels. Nepal could not attract the global attention it so much deserved at the summit but let us not forget that open before us is the vast opportunity of cooperating with China and India, world's biggest and fourth biggest carbon emitters respectively, to reap the economic benefit. Let us learn to monitor the global, regional and domestic situation regularly and bring about suitable internal changes wherever they are required to benefit Nepal and save us from further ruining ourselves. ■

(Dr. Rawal is CA Member and Former Governor of NRB.)



Meeting of HPLM : Uncertain course

POLITICS

Dangerous Games

Even as the country inches closer to a grave crisis ahead of the May 28-constitution deadline, major parties are engaged in petty politicking

By SUSHIL SHARAMA
with SAROJ DAHAL

As of writing this, the much-touted high level political mechanism (HPLM) was engrossed in what some leaders called would be a decisive deliberation.

After the first 'know each other's position' meeting, at the Godavari resort on the outskirts of Kathmandu, the only thing the participating parties could boast of was a "move towards an atmosphere of mutual trust.

They got to "know" each other four years after they signed the 12-point pact, in Delhi.

The second day of the HPLM meeting, at the five-star Yak and Yeti hotel in the heart of the capital city, was not much different in terms of a substantial progress in breaking the current political stalemate.

The reason? According to Nepali Congress leader Ram Sharan Mahat, "the Maoists did seem to be in the pre-peace process mood."

No surprise. Given what the ex-rebels had decided only a week ago at their central committee meeting.

The Maoist central committee was clear on one thing: the new constitution is impossible within the May 28 deadline. And another, and more important, thing the CC was unambiguous was on the party's next move. Popular revolt.

The Maoists are in no mood to let the constitution come into place within the deadline without them in the Baluwatar seat of power.

But they are also almost certain that internal dynamics and external interests are not on their side.

A central committee member admitted as much: "although a new government under our leadership is our top priority, we know that this is unlikely."

He added, "the popular revolt is the only option left to us."

Soon after the CC meeting, and just before the 'crucial' HPLM meeting, the Maoist supremo Prachanda mad a whirlwind of a number of districts where he urged "the people" to get ready for a revolt.

His address was capped by a "training" of hundreds of combatants, drawn from different UN-supervised camps across the country, at the

Shaktikhor cantonment in Chitwan.

Predictably enough, the Nepali Congress took strong exception to the Prachanda drilling at the cantonment.

This speaks volume for the level of trust between the major parties.

Insiders say, the Maoists' strategy is to provoke the state into a crackdown on its planned peaceful movement next month so that it can convert it into a popular revolt.

"However", said a politburo member, "in the event of Prachanda becoming the prime minister again the revolt will be put on hold."

It is clear. The ultimate goal of the Maoists is a government led by them. By hook or by crook.

The non-Maoists on their part are determined to prevent that from taking place. By hook or by crook.

The advantage is with the non-Maoist parties, though. International community, notably the influential neighbor India, is wary of the 'unpredictable' ultra-leftists whom they gave a benefit of doubt earlier. Only to repent.

They might not mind the Maoists joining a government under a non-Maoist leader.

As the stalemate lingers, the only area where all the parties can agree on is the extension of the tenure of the constituent assembly and a new "national" government – post May 28.

The outcome of the "decisive" HPLM meeting could give an indication to this end. After four years of discredited performance, whether the three major parties still command the moral and political strength needed to implement what they decide is however open to debate. ■



NRB : Without leadership

GOVERNOR APPOINTMENT

Dragging Its Feet

Pulled by different interests, the government has been unable to appoint a new central bank governor for weeks

By SANJAYADHAKAL

When the committee formed to recommend three names for the Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) governor, finally did its job – the names it put forward raised many eyebrows.

It was a juicy mixture – a serving finance secretary, a serving vice chairman of National Planning Commission (NPC) and a second-rung deputy governor of the central bank.

That the finance secretary Rameshwor Khanal and vice chairman of NPC Dr Yubaraj Khatiwada – who if appointed governor would actually be demoting himself – had thrown their hats in the ring indicated the extensive pulls and pressures for the government in appointing the governor.

Even the presence of deputy governor Bir Bikram Rayamajhi in that elite list instead of current acting governor Krishna Bahadur Manandhar was unexpected by many quarters.

Indicative of that pressure is the unnatural delay in making the choice among the three.

Inordinate Delay

The position of the NRB governor had become vacant since February 1 when then governor Bijaya Nath Bhattarai completed his tenure.

If the government had gone by the rule

book – the NRB regulations – it should have selected the governor a whole week before February 1.

But a whole month has already passed and the cabinet is yet to make a choice (by the time of writing this story, at least).

Initially, the three member recommendations committee headed by Finance Minister Surendra Pandey and including former governor Ganesh Bahadur Thapa and former secretary Bhola Chalise, itself, took a long time in recommending three names.

And once they did, the cabinet is now taking a long time in picking the one name out of those three.

Power Tussle

It is understood that the major ruling parties are yet to come to an understanding in picking up the new governor.

The Nepali Congress (NC) believes that since it had helped UML-favored candidate Dr. Khatiwada in his appointment as NPC vice chairman, the NRB governor should be given to their favored candidate.

The UML, on the other hand, has added to the intrigue by forwarding the name of the NPC vice chairman himself for the post – a clear signal that it is ready to sacrifice the NPC vice chairman post for the NRB governorship.

That the NC has asked for the NRB

POVERTY CAPSULE

The poverty in Nepal has come down significantly, if one is to believe a recent report.

The draft progress report of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2010, published by the National Planning Commission (NPC), states that the poverty in the last half a decade has come down from 31 percent to 25 percent.

“This is our preliminary estimate. The calculations made on the basis of some indicators point to the decrease in the number of people living below the poverty line,” said NPC vice chairman Dr. Yubaraj Khatiwada.

Many economists, however, say this estimation should be taken with a pinch of salt.

“In this period, the inflation has surged, the crisis has overshadowed the economy and not much investment in employment generation has been made. So its strange that the poverty should come down so considerably,” said an economist.

The lead author of the report Dr. Jagadish Chandra Pokharel, however, says there is nothing strange in the new estimation.

One of the reasons for this decrease, he says, is the increased flow of remittance to the hands of rural population increasing their consumption power by many folds.

The poverty is calculated on the basis of consumption of food and other basic materials.

The report also predicts that Nepal is well on its way to achieve most of the MDG targets by 2015 except the one related with guaranteeing productive employment to all, which it deems will be highly unlikely to be met.

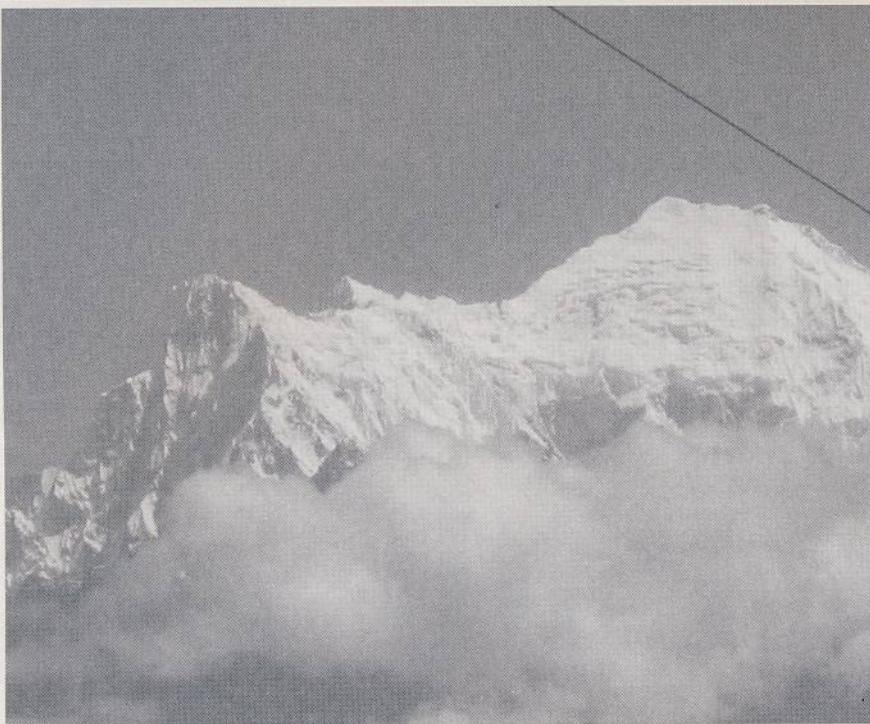
governor’s post is not surprising. What has surprised many analysts is the choice of NC leader in the cabinet Sujata Koirala.

She is said to be backing Rayamajhi while within UML, itself, there are two clear divisions with Prime Minister favoring Dr. Khatiwada while Finance Minister backs Khanal.

Then the interests of some of the shady entrepreneurs and financiers, too, are said to be influencing this three way race.

The race for governorship has already become a political battle with DPM Koirala threatening that NC would lose patience with the UML-led government if it continues to engage in what she calls “UML-isation.” Interestingly, she has been the only NC leader issuing such threats, at least, in public.

It is unfortunate, many analysts say, that the government is delaying in appointing a new governor by allowing itself to come under such diverse pressures. What is more unfortunate, they say, is the fact that the NRB will be leaderless at a time when the country is said to be passing through a bitter financial crisis. ■



Climate Politics

Feeling The Heat

Support for the controversial accord under pressure by the US and Japan could get Nepal in a fix

By NAVIN SINGH KHADKA in London

Whether the climate is arguably changing or not, Nepal's position on the issue certainly has.

Climatically deemed to be one of the most vulnerable countries, it had always voiced for a legally binding international climate treaty that would keep global temperature rise from pre-industrial level below 1.5 degrees.

The controversial Copenhagen accord has neither of the provisions.

So, when the US and emerging economies like China and India ganged up to bring out the accord at the stalemated summit in the Danish capital last December, Nepal's foul-crying was understandable.

But just two months since, the country has made a U-turn and approved the accord which the summit

did not even adopt as it was brought from outside the UN climate framework.

Diplomatic and political sources have said there was intensive lobbying by the US and Japan to make Nepal accept the accord.

According to these cross-checked sources, American and Japanese diplomats inquired with different layers of officials what Nepal would do while replying to the UN that had asked member countries' response to the accord.

"During such conversations, the Nepalese side was reminded that supporting the accord would mean better bilateral support," said a highly placed source.

Another similar source with the US administration confided that the main objective of principal deputy assistant secretary of state Patrick Moon's recent

Kathmandu visit was to get the country on board the Copenhagen accord.

Diplomatic sources in the US said American officials mounted pressure on Nepalese missions there.

In turn, those missions would call the Prime Minister's Office in Kathmandu and inquire what was happening with the accord, a highly placed source at the PMO confirmed.

Both the US and Japanese embassies in Kathmandu chose not to comment.

Now that it has become clear how influenced Nepal's decision to approve the accord was, the question is will Nepal get away with it.

It could have, if it did not have other ambitions in climate regime.

The country will now be representing the least developed countries grouping as its chair in international climate negotiations.

These nations have maintained that global temperature should not be allowed to rise more than 1.5 degrees while the Copenhagen accord Nepal has supported has the target of two degrees.

They also stress on a legally binding treaty which the accord is not.

Visibly excited on climate affairs of late, Prime Minister Madhab Kumar Nepal has been pushing for an alliance of mountainous countries to voice their common climatic concerns.

If it happens, this will be another grouping Nepal will be leading.

And again, these mountainous countries have also been stressing on temperature rise below 1.5 degrees and that any global climate treaty should be legally binding.

The Copenhagen accord is not just non-binding, but it also has a provision of reviewing itself only in 2015.

Which means, it won't be before five years when the world gets a binding global climate treaty – if at all.

Whereas the scientific community widely believes without a legally binding treaty, global warming cannot be controlled.

If so, as a supporter of the controversial Copenhagen and as the leader of the most vulnerable countries, Nepal will feel the heat.

Khadka is a BBC journalist

Women On Power Path

When Nepal first celebrated International Women's Day in the year 1975, the concept was to approach women's struggle for independent existence with the perspective for welfare. Now after almost 35 years, the initial concept has evolved making right based approach a greater priority. As the efforts for upliftment of women continues, one can visibly observe major transformations in the lives of Nepalese women in terms of economy, social status, education, autonomy and opportunities. A comparison study of four women from four generations reflects the same. However, challenges are still pertinent. Real improvements can be embraced only if they are consistent and growing

By ADITI PANDEY

"The test for whether or not you can hold a job should not be the arrangement of your chromosomes." Bella Abzug is clear in her statement that women are not biologically weak, for they can evolve and adapt as good as men with the fast pace of life in this modern era.

From as early as the hunting-gathering societies, women have always had a predetermined role that focused more on taking care of the house and other members of the family. More active and vital roles, like hunting were often automatically taken over by men. Although time and evolution changed the methods, quantity and quality of work, differences between male and

female roles continue to exist. As a result of this, women in most societies can be seen as the recessive group. They can mostly be seen associated to beauty, grace, elegance and extravagance. However, in this post-modern world, the dominant male can no longer camouflage himself with his insignificant adulations for women.

Women have learnt the reality of their existence and intend to fight back in every possible way. It is the sole reason for the existence of many feminist groups and female empowering NGOs and INGOs all over the world. Government policies are being changed in favor of women. Women have spread their reach

in almost all sectors like politics, music, art, business and social work. They compete with men side by side in order to outrun them. Inspiring Nepalese political figures, Deputy Prime Minister Sujata Koirala, Defense Minister Vidhya Bhandari, Minister of Agriculture and Cooperative Kareena Begam, Parliamentarian and renowned lawyer Sapana Malla, along with many others, can be taken as the best examples of empowered women.

On the contrary not all women are so fortunate. Since they are biologically weaker in strength, they are prone to violence like rape, assault and trafficking. Some are also forced into



1. Do you believe in equality between male and female genders? State your gender perspective.

- Mrs. Shanti Singh Bhandari-Yes, I believe equality between genders is for the good. I have always believed that both sons and daughters should be equally educated. This has been reflected in my own offsprings. Except for one son, most of my daughters outrun their brothers in education.
- Mrs. Rama Rayamajhi-Yes, both have their own fields of expertise. Although the differences will continue as our society is a male dominant one, equality is a good thing. The women try to come up, but when we observe the entire female population, maximum females seem to be illiterate. It is also not possible for most women to improve as they live in remote areas. Unlike their husbands it is not possible for them to travel to urban areas for education or work.
- Mrs. Kanchan Pandey-Yes, I believe there can be equality between men and women because male and female are two vital phases of life. Neither can be complete without the other. When I was small, I had always observed that my father used to be the head of the house. He used to give certain amount of money to my mother for monthly household expenses. Besides this amount, she was unaware where my father used to invest family money. Although she always seemed satisfied, I always felt that she was being dominated. I learnt from my parents and so I have always made that my husband and I share every bit of our family income.

Narration of Four Generations

- Ms. Aditi Pandey- No, I do not believe in the equality between men and women. The biological and social differences between the two genders are so vast that the word 'equal' cannot be used. In my family, I can't specify who the dominant character is. We respect each other for who we are. Rather than keeping men and women in a beam balance, I think it better if they are not compared. They compete with each other for the same things, but males and females have their own distinct characters. A relative evaluation of the two genders would be limiting both. Gender differences should be respected rather than used as a means to manipulate by either of the group.
- 2. How far have you studied? Have you completed/Do you plan to complete your studies? If not, why?**



- Mrs. Shanti Singh Bhandari-I never attended a school because there was no school where I grew up. I grew up in Sindhuli, and my village had not yet seen any schools in my time. However, my husband was a teacher and he taught me how to read and write in Nepali. Since I never attended any school, I never had the want to go one. I was satisfied with how much my husband taught me.
- Mrs. Rama Rayamajhi- I studied till the intermediate level. I was born in a village at Janakpur named Ahuri. I studied in a local school named Prasad Singh High School till the 8th grade and was sent to Banaras for further studies. I completed my 9th and 10th level from a girl's school named Kanya and finished

intermediates in science (ISC) from Aarya Mahila. I always wanted to study more, but I got married and my husband did not approve of me studying after marriage. He convinced me that he had studied enough to be able to get a proper job and look after me.

- Mrs. Kanchan Pandey- I have finished my Bachelor's in Science. It is not that my parents did not encourage me to study further, but I wanted to settle down. I got married to my husband and had my first child after a year of marriage. The new born child brought along many responsibilities and so I willingly chose to focus more on my family than to continue my education.
- Ms. Aditi Pandey- I have completed A levels from Rato Bangala School and am currently taking a year's break to gain work experience. I have no intention at all to get married any time soon. I have applied to colleges in the US and if things don't work out as planned than I will probably go to India for further studies. I plan to complete at least my masters before I even think of getting married. Education is vital for me. I have mine and my parents' dreams to fulfill before I commit myself to anything extra.

3. What role have you taken after marriage? Does your husband lend a helping hand in household chores?

- Mrs. Shanti Singh Bhandari- Officially I am a housewife but after



my husband became sick and could no longer supervise the farming of our fields, I took over his post. I

prostitution. The worst fate is faced by those who suffer from poverty. Due to lack of education, they become bound to do intense labour. Unfortunately most industries that employ women are unjust and biased. Although men and women do equal work women are paid less than men. As Karl Marx mentions, women are easily manipulated by capitalists. They form what is said to be a 'reserve army of labour'. As secondary breadwinners, they provide a source of cheap and easily exploitable labour. Women, who are socialized to comply and submit, form a docile labour force that can be readily manipulated and easily fired when not required. Even at higher posts they are said to have a 'glass wall' above them that obstructs them from moving up a certain post.

To rid the society of existing gender inequalities, many feminist groups and other organizations like TEWA, Ama Nepal, UNIFEM and Saathi have been formed in Nepal. They work for the betterment of women and help those who are poor, live in remote areas and lack resources. Even in the twentieth century, a variety of forms of discrimination exist. However, the efforts to improve women's lives have not gone in vain. Differences in the perspective, status and confidence of women from different generation can be evaluated.

It is natural that women being the dominated ones, look forward to becoming equals of men. The above four women have stated very diplomatic answers, but there is one common aspect in all, the dislike of being dominated by the men. Although none have directly asked for it, but all answers hint that neither one of the gender (in this case the male gender) should be dominant over the other.

On the auspicious occasion of

supervised all our business and made sure that our farms produced good quality of variety of food. Normally, my husband did not need to get involved in household works but he cooked for me every time I was unwell.

- Mrs. Rama Rayamajhi- I have always been a housewife. Since I could not complete higher education I could not work or earn



Marching Woman : Fight to right

Women's Day, I bring to you a social experiment that evaluates the extent to which women have evolved through time in their own words. Interviews were taken of four female candidates related to each other as mother, daughter, granddaughter and great-granddaughter.

Without much explanations, the above answer clearly state the increasing importance and demand of education in people's lives. Previously it seemed that being uneducated was not a very big deal for women but the newer generations have more than half of their lives dedicated to gaining education. Shanti Singh Bhandari's answer indicates traces of male dominance in our society. It should be noticed that her husband who was from the same time was well educated whereas she had never attended school in her life.

It is now clear that women are evolving to become more than just housewives. They can no longer be

suppressed and made to submit to their male partner. Women have proven to be equally good or even better as a breadwinner in the family. Nepalese women are slowly on the rise to becoming independently earning citizens.

The progress made in empowerment and development of women is immense as the experiences of women of four generations are the testimony of the transformation. On the contrary, this achievement in women might well be limited to the contemporary urban society. The fact that an annual of around 7000 women are trafficked in Nepal cannot be ignored. Progress is not complete until women everywhere are free from suppression, exploitation and manipulation. Nevertheless, as the famous saying 'Something is better than Nothing' suggests, we should encourage those who are headed to the path of success and help the needy. ■

a decent income. Being a housewife did not sadden me though. I have always had interest in cooking and feeding the guests. Unfortunately my husband has never cooked for me. We have always had a helper but in difficult times he does help by cleaning the dishes.

- Mrs. Kanchan Pandey- I am the administrator of my house. I have a daughter and a husband to look after.

But I don't limit myself to becoming a housewife. I am an active breadwinner in the family. Honestly speaking, I earn more than my husband. I have worked as a teacher for 17 years and now am planning to retire from this job. I have recently opened a restaurant and am planning to devote my time to my business.

Women Still Excluded

SHARU JOSHI SHRESTHA

SHARU JOSHI SHRESTHA, Regional Program Manager for Migration, UNIFEM program office, Nepal, is well known for work in the area of women empowerment. In the Context of International Women's Day, Shrestha spoke to **NEW SPOTLIGHT** on various issues. Excerpts:

How do you look at the status of women?

The data indicate that the overall status of women has changed but we are still to go a long way to see structural changes in the society. Because of old structure, there is discrimination in appointment of women in various positions. For instance, political parties are yet to appoint women in higher position in the party. Look at women's representation in the National Planning Commission, other commissions, diplomatic missions etc.

How do you compare the women's status back in 1975 and now?

In the last 35 years, we have seen many a transformation, but it is also a fact that a large number of women are still excluded from the mainstream development. Of course, the level of literacy has gone up, access to health increases, mortality rate gone down and opportunities are available in all sectors but the implementation of policy and laws side is still weak.

Do you see any paradigm shift in women's right issue?

There has been a major shift in terms of viewing women in the development arena. Women were considered mere beneficiaries of development endeavors and their concerns fell in the periphery of the development agenda. Now with Gender mainstreaming considered as the major tool for development endeavors, gender equality has been brought to the center stage of development agenda. Moreover, with CEDAW emphasizing on equality not only in opportunities but in results, have introduced special measures to bridge this historical subordination of women through quotas and reservations. With the rights based approach to programming major thrust has been given to engagement of the right holder in the agenda setting to define their own development agenda. The interim constitution has guaranteed equal protection of the law to all its citizens, calls for an end to all forms of discrimination on the basis of sex and has included provisions of special measures to ensure protection, empowerment or advancement of the interests of women. However, despite all these provisions, I agree the implementation part is poor.

What more do you say about the situation?

There is a growing realization that unless women that comprises half of the total population needs to be included at par in all development endeavors if we are to ensure a sustained growth and development. There is the need to engender the whole development process. Unfortunately, despite their

contribution in all aspects of the country's development, are largely considered as mere dependent and beneficiaries of the development program.

Have not you seen the changes in women status?

Women's role is still participatory in peace and development. For instance, how many women were there during the 12 point agreement that was significant towards the peace process for Nepal? It shows that women's roles and contribution are not yet internalized. However, I think that 197 women Constitution Assembly members, holds a historical significance for the women's movement not only in Nepal but also in the South Asia region. This shows women's hold in the key decision making position to contribute for women's rights and gender equality in this historical juncture. But we need to ensure that such gains are sustained. Likewise, if you are to reflect on the economic contribution of the women, the NLSS 2004 have already indicated that women make 11% of the total contributors to remittance. Through remittance, studies have indicated that women's status in terms of owning property and other assets have enhanced and they have become the bread earners for the family. Definitely, these are indicators that women's status has increased over the period.

When there are growing commitments from donors, why are women still falling behind?

During the 4th Women's Conference, Donors have committed for gender mainstreaming and women's development. It was during the Donors meeting 2005 Paris meeting, Donors has committed to be take action to reform ways to deliver and manage aids have agreed to enhance the effectiveness of the aid. It was seen only 0.2% was allocated for women's development. It showed a gross gap between the commitment and actual allocation. Therefore, an exercise to map aid effectiveness has been initiated, UNIFEM, EU and ILO is working on that. The exercise has shown that many donors do not have tools to transform their commitments for gender equality into their policy and programme. The term mainstream is loosely used. Making gender focal points in all the offices merely is not adequate to ensure gender mainstreaming. However, there is a widespread approval among donors for gender equality and women's empowerment as a priority issue needs to be addressed but very few of them have concrete plan to translate their commitment into action.

We had so far made only the government accountable for development effectiveness through the Millennium Development Goal and Aid effectiveness is a positive initiative to makes donors accountable, which is indeed a positive initiative. With this two pronged approach, we are hopeful that the status of women and girls would enhance further.



What contribution has the conflict made to women's issues in the country?

When talking about the armed conflict that Nepal has seen over the decade it has set back development. However, it has brought structural changes in years old traditions and mindset in Nepal. There has been a drastic increase in the participation of women in various sectors as a result of the post conflict changes. The 40% combatants in the Maoist armed outfit have opened opportunity to women in the Nepal Army as well. It has forced many women to become the head of the household and take decisive role for the survival of the household and the community. With majority of men either in involved in the armed warfare, in employment elsewhere from their homes, it was women who had stayed back to take care of the elderly and children and working for the peace and stability from their communities. However, despite these contributions, issues of women's participation and protection were not prioritized in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. However, UN has raised these issues as one of the key agenda and a Peace Support Working Group on 1325 and 1820 that includes members for the donors communities and UN agencies have been pushing these concerns with the government of Nepal.

Don't you think Nepal Living Standard Survey (NLSS II) has revealed some important indicators?

Yes. As I shared earlier, NLSS II showed that 11% of the contributors of remittance are women and remittance has contributed significantly to sustain Nepal's economy during the period of conflict. This has in black and white documented women's contribution to Nepal's economy and that they are the economic actors rather than the perceived norms of women as mere beneficiaries or target groups of the development programme. With remittance being attributed to the reduction of Nepal's poverty from 42% to 31%, women can also claim their contribution towards this. Our study shows most of the remittances of women migrant workers go to children's education, health care and food. Their remittance is strengthening household to national economy. Not only have they brought remittance on monetary terms, the skills, knowledge and information brought in by the returnee in terms of social remittance is also helping to transform the society.

We Can Host A Million Tourists

YOGENDRA SHAKAYA

Renowned hotelier YOGENDRA SHAKAYA is now a coordinator of Nepal Tourism Year 2011. After the successful launch of the Tourism Year on Friday amidst a grand rally, Shakya spoke to KESHAB POUDEL and ALVARIO CASTILO at the lawn of Hotel Ambassador. Excerpts:

What do you say of the launching of Nepal Tourism Year 2011?

Well, Nepal Tourism Year will be inaugurated in January 2011 but this launching was very important for us. The reason of Nepal Tourism Year 2011 was to rebrand Nepal because we have had all kinds of negative publicity for the last 14 years. From insurgency to Royal massacre and all sorts of *bandhs* and strikes, it was necessary for us to say that we have come together for tourism, for nation building and to give the message that there will be no more strikes and *bandhs* in Nepal and there will be peace and political stability.

What were the main objectives during the launch of NTY-2011?

The whole objective of launching the event was to get the commitment from one and from all. We were able to do so. Now we will use that commitment to promote internationally that there is a commitment in Nepal for peace and development. The numbers of people that turned out from all walks of life, from professionals to politicians and government officials to investors, showed that the event was highly successful.

How is Nepal Tourism Year 2011 different from Visit Nepal Year 1998?

Well, the political scenario in 1998 was so much better and easier to work because things were very stable politically. Today, nothing is certain. Uncertainty is everywhere. Visit Nepal was basically to increase tourists and that was the focus. Nepal Tourism Year 2011 is much more of a government initiative than the private sector's. Of course, both the government and the private sector are involved but this time there is more government. Nepal Tourism Year is not just to bring more tourists but to use tourism as a tool for economic development of the country. This is for developing infrastructure to percolate economic benefits of tourism down to the villages or enhance participation from the people.

As the government plans to bring a million tourists in 2011, does Nepal have enough infrastructure and products to accommodate them all?

There is the need to have three parts of infrastructure. Air seats, accommodation and ground transport. Of course, the other part is the carrying capacity of the areas. If we work hard, bringing a million tourists and accommodating them is not a big problem.

How about air seats?

As far as air seats are concerned, it has been the bottle neck for tourism ever since tourism started in this country basically because of Nepal Airlines, the national carrier, which never really grew and its steps on very sluggish warpath. Unfortunately, the two airplanes that were supposed to come got into controversy as well. This is going to be a big setback for Nepal Tourism Year. If we had two more planes, we could have so much of power to go, get people. Now we have to depend on international airlines. We have twenty-five airlines. This is a big movement for international airlines for small countries like Nepal. They are coming to carry the Nepalese workers or manpower rather than tourists. They always come and go judging on profit. In a way, they are not dependable but we don't have choice. Three more international airlines are coming and we are trying to work with these three international airlines to bring more tourists. The air seat capacity will be alright.

How about hotel capacity?

Hotel capacity during the insurgency reduced because five four star hotels were closed. Because of that, during this session, we will have problems. Even today five or six hotels are closed, the average occupancy of five star hotels is just less than fifty percent. If you take average occupancy of the hotels in the year even it has not reached fifty percent. Theoretically, the existing hotel rooms are enough if they spread out. Unfortunately, tourists come to visit Nepal from October to April and they cannot come during the off season. That is why if we say we need more hotel rooms, we cannot accommodate all of them in a season. That is why we are coming with home-stay and regulations have been made.

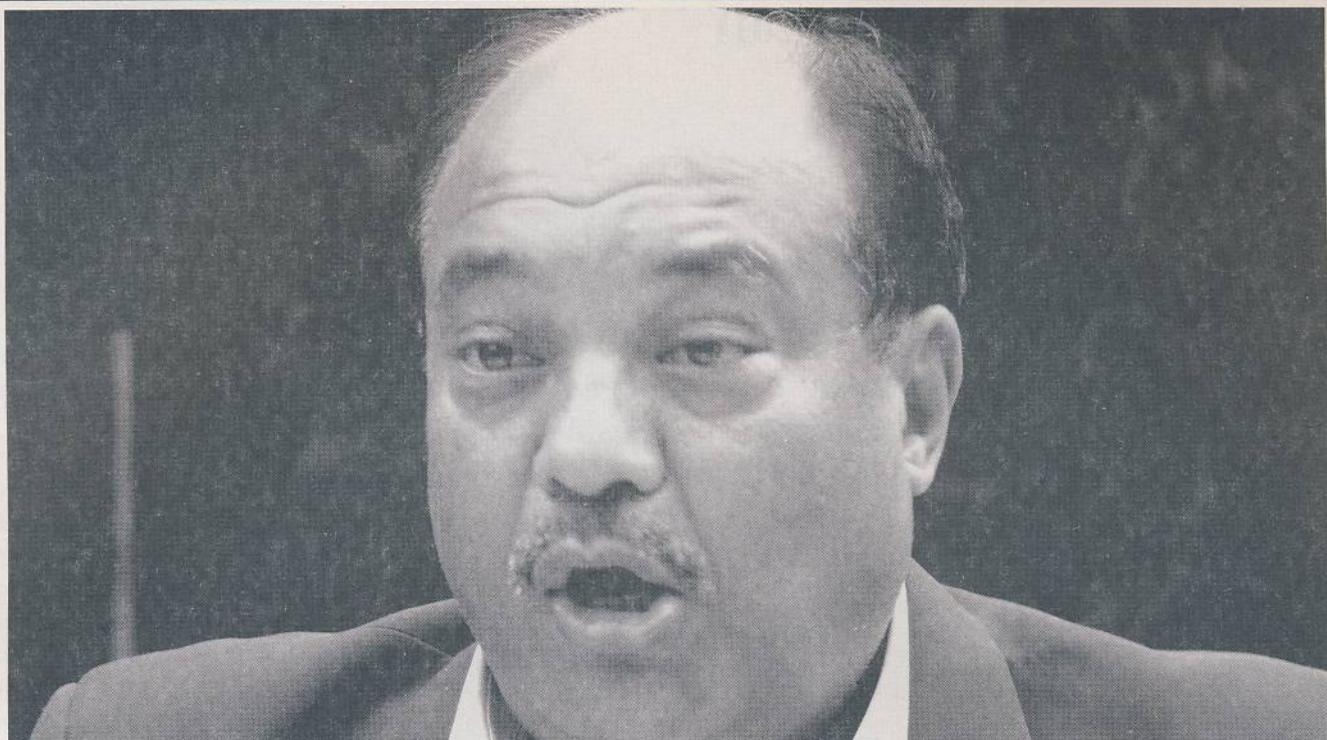
How do you accommodate all of them?

There are a lot of empty apartments in Kathmandu and a lot of people have two or three rooms which we can use for home stay. With a destination like ours, which is seasonal, home stay will be very reasonable. The two or three rooms at the house can be used for home and stay. So that will be how we will come up with accommodation during the season.

Do you think transportation will be alright?

As far as transport is concerned, we are proposing to the government to make provisions for every destination that there should be express transport from Kathmandu. Since Kathmandu is the gateway to the entire destinations, we will connect the cities like Lumbini, Pokhara, Nagarkot and Dhulikhel. That will also help international and national tourists. We are requesting the government to give facilities to import the vehicles to establish express services for the movement.

Today, nothing is certain. Uncertainty is everywhere. Visit Nepal was basically to increase tourists and that was the focus. Nepal Tourism Year 2011 is much more of a government initiative than the private sector's.



At a time when all political parties expressed their commitments that they will not call general strikes and *bandhs*, how much tourism entrepreneurs believe that they will abide by it given their track record?

That is why we did not get their commitments in writing to put in our drawers. That is why we asked them to commit in front of 40,000 masses in Tuindikhel and millions of people through the seven channels. This is to build pressure upon them not to backtrack from their words. This is what we can do. There are a lot of witnesses and people.

What was the response of people in the launching?

I had said then that it gave clearly three messages that it was not just for the launching they came. This is not that all were involved in tourism and all of them knew about tourism. Out of forty-thousand people who came, more than 20,000 have nothing to do with tourism. They gave three loud messages: the message that Nepal now needs is not a political revolution but an economic revolution. They are clear in the mind that new Nepal requires an economic revolution. They demand the use of the revolutionary blood for the betterment of the country which is economic revolution. The second message was that stop incurring fear in society by calling *bandhs*. By holding more than twenty thousand national flags, people gave clear cut messages that the country needs to unite for tourism, economic growth and nation building. So it was much beyond just an inaugural event.

What is the state of tourist arrivals in Nepal?

What happened in Nepal is we are caught in a catch-22 situation. On the one hand we are saying we want to increase tourists from one million.

On the other hand, nobody has shown interest to increase the capacity. There is the lack of investment for infrastructure and development of new products. We are organizing the Nepal Tourism Year in the worst time we ever have because of the situation. Sometime, when things are bad. There are two choices: either you have to stay, keep quiet and nothing will happen or to say something will happen. With the spirit of working in Nepal Tourism Year to bring one million tourists, it certainly seems to be a Herculean task and difficult. If you ask we cannot achieve this in 2011 but we can achieve it in 2012 — any business is a risk, we may forecast and we do it the next year.

This means you are not certain about the number?

What I can say is that we have the capacity for hosting one million tourists. We will be working hard to bring one million tourists. We are saying that we will bring 300,000 by land 700,000 by air. We are focusing a lot through land as well as land movement has been ignored for a long time with the border town of India. If we get 265,000 tourists from India it is just to increase 125,000 more than the last year. If we get 100,000 tourists from China, last year there were 38,000 and 25 percent increase from other parts of the world, we can get one million tourists. Looking at the figure shows nothing impossible to the country which has India and China next door. We can increase that this year 50 percent and next year 50 percent. It is achievable. If we work united, we can achieve the target. I am hopeful given the figure of January and February of 2010 when the number of tourists increased by 18 and 33 percent respectively compared to last year's figures. Again all depends upon how responsibly we act to keep peace in this country. ■

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NEPAL TOURISM YEAR 2011

Grand Launching

For the first time in a decade or so, a large gathering of political leaders, bankers, business entrepreneurs, common people and students expressed solidarity for the cause of economic development and prosperity. Tired of frequent bandhs over the last three years, which were marked by economic slowdown, these people attended the grand inaugural of Nepal Tourism Year 2011, organized by Nepal Tourism Board.

By KESHAB POUDEL

Friday, February the 27th. The temperature was about 24 degrees Celsius. Political leaders, senior executives of banks, hotels, travel agencies and business leaders came to Tundikhel on schedule. Amidst an enthusiastic crowd of people, all took part in the grand opening of the Nepal Tourism Year 2011.

Nepal's national flags and banners of organizations fluttered. Torch bearers had carried a peace flame from the birthplace of Lord Buddha in Lumbini to light the flame in Tundikhel. Cultural troupes, representing various ethnic groups, were added colour to the program.

The day was a break from the routine harping by politicians over the last few years that often ignored the economic agenda. Strikes, blockades and power outages had the economy turning backwards.

The jubilation

After the rally for jubilation, hoteliers, business executives and industrialists, who earlier had been receiving threats from miscreants, now assembled at Tundikhel where they were to be welcomed by leaders of the country's 21 political parties, the prime minister, ministers and high level government officials.



Tourism Entrepreneurs : Marching for cause

Entrepreneurs were jubilant following the written signature of leaders of 21 political parties not to call any general strike or *bandha* during the whole year of 2011.

"The commitment expressed by political parties sends a positive message to the international market that Nepal's disturbing situation like general strikes will end," said chief executive of Nepal Tourism Board Prachanda Man Shrestha. "If peace prevails, we will achieve the target of bringing one million tourists by 2011."

The commitment shown by all the stakeholders to Nepal Tourism Year 2011 is a sign of hope for economic prosperity for future.

Nepal celebrated 1998 as Visit Nepal Year with a campaign which was successful to create awareness of potentials with the arrival of half a million tourists. For the first few years of 2000, numbers of visitors continued to decline. However, the tourism industry picked up following the signing of peace treaty between the government and Maoists in 2006.

The prevalence of peace transformed tourism sector with increase of arrivals of tourists by 526,705 in the year 2007. The numbers of tourists in 2008 and 2009 continued to cross half a million. According to Tourism Vision 2020, the government intends to develop tourism aiming at two million visitors annually arriving by 2020.

At a time when global recession is hitting the market for Nepalese workers and Nepal's trade deficit continues to rise because of failure of Nepal's products to compete in the international market, tourism can be a savior. Along with generating employment opportunity, it will also help to increase Nepal's foreign currency reserve.

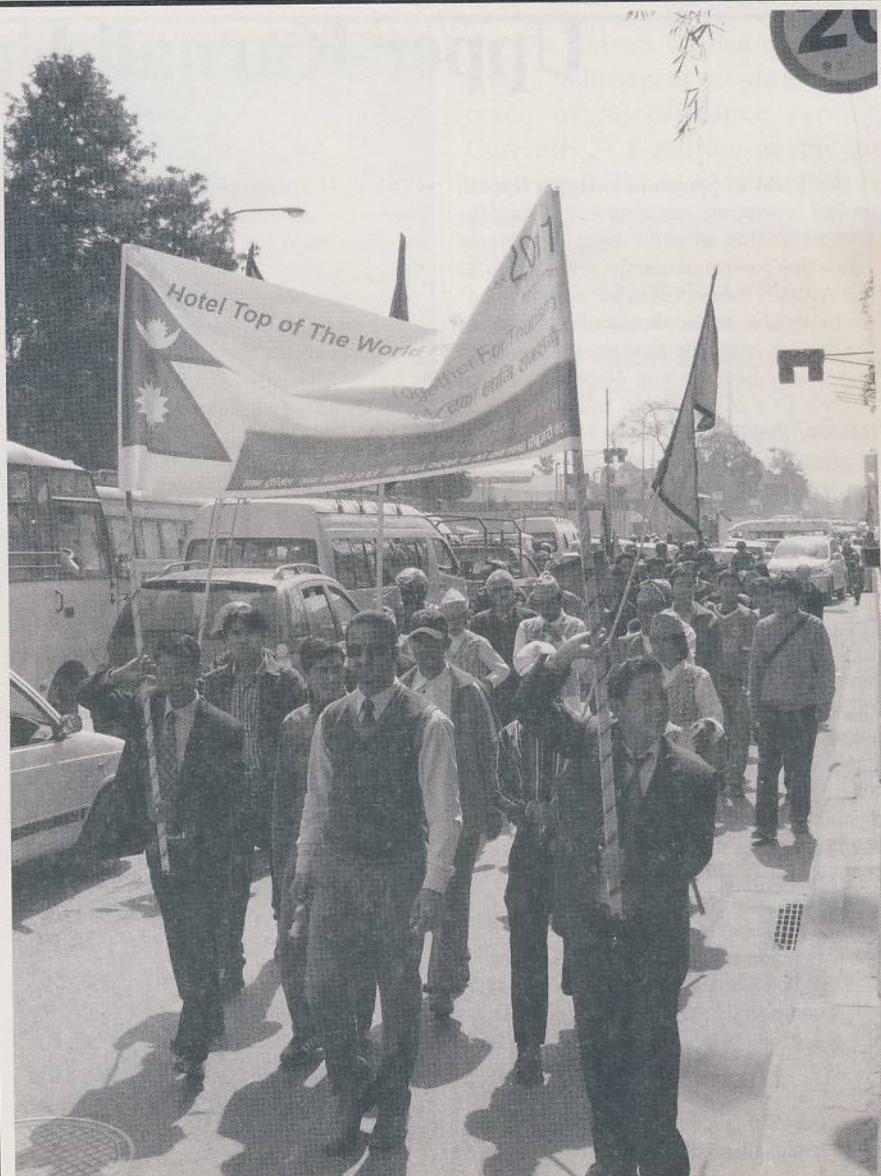
"We have already placed tourism on high priority along with mainstream development. The government is ready to work with tourism entrepreneurs to make the Nepal Tourism Year 2011 a great success," said Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal, addressing the function. "Nepal has successfully completed the political revolution. The consensus of political parties will also help to do the economic revolution. To make economic revolution successful, the government is ready to open all kinds of door."

Along with prime minister, leaders of 19 political parties chanted slogans saying that they will not call general strikes and *bandhs* in the year 2011. "I will call upon all the concerned ministries to support the process of improvement of infrastructure and to encourage the investment in economic development," said Prime Minister Nepal.

Entrepreneurs also stressed the need to translate the commitment made by political parties to reality. "The political commitment given by political leaders not to call any general strike has initiated the process of economic development," said Kush Kumar Joshi, president of Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry. "It is important to see consensus among political leaders in promotion of tourism," said Joshi, who also took part in the march past in the street.

Although Joshi held a press conference just a day ago saying that business community was under threat, the businessmen took part in the rally taking a risk.

"It is good news that political parties give written commitments not to organize *bandhs* and strikes. We welcome this," said Surendra Bir Malakar, chairman of Nepal Chamber of Commerce. "I am hopeful that this is a beginning for



Tourism Rally : Uniting for economic prosperity

economic prosperity."

Tourism's Contribution

Tourism has major contribution in Nepal's economic sector. From contributing to GDP to trade balance, tourism has a role. It also generates employment opportunities for millions of Nepalese.

According to Nepal Tourism Statistics 2008, Nepal earned more than Rs. 10 billion equivalent of foreign currency with 1.4 percent contribution to GDP in 2006/07. Similarly, tourism generated over 18 billion rupees equivalent foreign currency with 2.3 percent contribution to GDP in 2007/08. In first eight months of 2008/09, tourism earned foreign currency over Rs. 16

billion with 2.6 percent contribution to GDP.

"We need to work together to achieve the target for 2011 to bring one million tourists. The Prime Minister has already directed us to support tourism entrepreneurs and attract more tourists," Sarat Singh Bhandari, Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation told New Spotlight.

From geographical diversity to vivid ethnic cultures, Nepal has enough products to attract the tourists. The enthusiasm and encouragement shown by all the stake-holders during the grand opening of Nepal Tourism Year 2011 is a good omen. ■

Upper Karnali Uproar!

- Ratna Sansar Shrestha, FCA

UCPNM's opposition to Upper Karnali project is creating uproar as it is beyond the comprehension of some people in Nepal (attracting condemnation for venturing to do so). Actually it deserves to be "commended" for being able to see through the façade of the project, belatedly though, and establish that this project isn't in Nepal's national interest (it's definitely in Indian national interest, though). The likes of this scribe have been pointing out the deficiencies in the way this project is structured and packaged since January 2008. A case filed in the Supreme Court is still pending.

Lose/Lose Proposition

This project is a lose/lose proposition. The project site is a rare gift of nature and implementation of the project with installed capacity of 300 MW is mutually exclusive of storage project of 4,180 MW, the optimum capacity from the perspective of Nepal's national interest. From 300 MW Nepal will earn Rs 358 million annually as royalties, while from 4,180 MW Nepal could have earned Rs 4.84 billion; a difference of 1344%!

Under the MoU signed with the proponent, Nepal stands to receive 12% free energy, valued at Rs 458 million, if priced at Rs 2/kWh while the same from 4180 MW will amount to Rs 4 billion. Exploited at its full potential, as a storage project, it will generate augmented/regulated flow of about 500 m³/s, capable to irrigate 1.5 million hectares of land during the dry season in the lower riparian area. Excepting for some ground water irrigation projects, the area is devoid of dry season irrigation facility. Far western and mid western development regions, possessing good agricultural land, are food shortage area. With irrigation facility during dry season, by implementing this project as a storage project, the area can be easily metamorphosed. Additionally, with ample electricity becoming available at low cost, the two development regions have the potential to become economic power houses of the nation. In order to understand the magnitude of the value of this quantum of water, a parallel needs to be drawn with arrangement between Lesotho and South Africa. If Nepal is to make the water available to India (instead of using it for irrigation purposes in Nepal), Nepal stands to earn Rs 52 billion annually.

As such Nepal stands to lose Rs 60 billion each year if it is implemented at lower capacity. The magnitude of this amount can be understood by comparing it with this year's Nepal's total domestic revenue of Rs

176 billion. Being prepared to forgo such an amount is tantamount to committing high treason against Nepal.

Energy Crisis

Some have opined that non-implementation of this project will aggravate energy crisis in Nepal, wrongly. It is an export-oriented project and there is no relationship between its implementation and mitigation of energy crisis in Nepal. On the contrary, if it's to be built at its optimum capacity, Nepal would not only be self-reliant from the perspective of peak power but could also utilize it to industrialize and generate employment in Nepal such that those working in foreign countries will be afforded dignified employment in their own motherland, enabling them to avoid disintegration of their families.

While a project like this, that can sell electricity at the bulk rate of Rs 2 per kWh, is being dedicated as export oriented, Nepal

While a project like this, that can sell electricity at the bulk rate of Rs 2 per kWh, is being dedicated as export oriented, Nepal is importing from India at Rs 10.72. Even the cheaper power exchange rate of Rs 7.81 is close to four times of this rate. Exporting at low rate and importing at high rate

is importing from India at Rs 10.72. Even the cheaper power exchange rate of Rs 7.81 is close to four times of this rate. Exporting at low rate and importing at high rate definitely reflects intellectual famine. Besides, such a policy perpetuates dependency. People also need to remember that India treats electricity as a "strategic" commodity; evidence of which can be found in the refusal of India, in last Baisakh, to export 30 MW power to Nepal which led to the collapse of Prachanda government.

Indian security force in Nepal

CA member Mr Radheshyam Adhikari, in an article published in vernacular weekly, with reference to UCPNM obstructing implementation of this project, in "Yo Sata" has opined that "India could force our authorities to concede in the area of security. They could ask their security personnel stationed in the said project to protect their citizens (*sic*) investment interest." The clear implication is that it will be justified for India to demand as such and Nepal should be willing

to concede in view of UCPNM obstruction of the project. This merely amounts to using UCPNM as an excuse for the purpose. Because without any provision as such in, much condemned, Koshi and Gandak treaties, and with no UCPNM at that time to provide convenient excuse, Indian security force is stationed in the barrages of Koshi and Gandak projects.

Most people don't know that Karnali Chisapani project, 10,800 MW, was shelved by the then royal government of Nepal as India, prematurely, let it out that the security of this project will be ensured by Indian security personnel. Jagat Mehta, former secretary of ministry of foreign affairs of India, in his book titled "India-Nepal Relations—Challenges Ahead," has revealed it. Although the monarchy got eliminated from Nepal as it deserved, but at least from this perspective it must be commended. Similarly king Mahendra too deserves to be commended for succeeding to evict Indian military check posts and mission in early 60's.

Conclusion

In view of the above this project shouldn't be implemented at less than its optimum capacity and neither should it be made export oriented, forcing India to be dependent on it as making her feel insecure. We should first aim to become self-reliant and export energy, not power, in case we have surplus. This project should be developed as a multipurpose project to ensure that Nepal benefits from multidimensional use of water. However, it will be disingenuous for people to jump to conclusion that electricity should not be exported at all. It reflects poorly on intellectual capacity to export power while keeping more than 75% of the populace in the dark, industrial growth stunted due to energy crisis, having to export human resource of prime age group for lack of industrialization and employment generation with attendant problems of disintegration of families and rampage of diseases like HIV.

UCPNM needs to be applauded for succeeding to draw attention to the extant tunnel vision in Nepal's hydropower policy in particular and water resource policy in general (or for lack of a coherent policy). Policy lacuna lies in the failure to optimize in the national interest (current plans to raise the capacity to 900 MW is equally detrimental to Nepal's national interest) and unwillingness to allow Nepal to benefit from multidimensional use of water by developing it as a multipurpose project. ■



Summit on Microfinance : Institutions are making

Second Microfinance Summit

Mission Inclusive Growth

Micro-finance institutions are making a major contribution in helping the poor

By **ABIJIT SHARMA**

More than 30 per cent of Nepalese live below the poverty line. Microfinance institutions are reaching out to about 20 per cent of these poor people, according to Harihar Dev Pant, program coordinator of the second microfinance summit held in Kathmandu last month.

“They can be of great help to reduce the incidences of poverty,” Pant said.

Microfinance has been an effective tool in providing support to the poor, especially in the rural areas. Nearly 80 per cent of the people in Nepal are engaged in agricultural services and have a low income. An estimated 17.6 million Nepalese lack access to financial resources. Due to the inability of commercial banks to reach the rural areas due to various reasons,

the people in the rural areas have difficulty in obtaining funds for their endeavours. Obviously, then, microfinance can play an important role in helping the needy.

Many poor people have already been able to receive loans for initiating businesses, save and deposit money safely, and also carry out other financial transactions thanks to the microfinance institutions.

At the summit entitled ‘Microfinance for Inclusive Economic Growth’, experts discussed ways to increase funding for the microfinance sector and increase the outreach of the microfinance service to all, including the disadvantaged and excluded groups. They also highlighted the importance of microfinance in reducing poverty and inclusive economic growth of the country.

Summit coordinator Pant said, “In

the first summit we had targeted to bring 3 million poor people under the reach of microfinance service. Currently, 1.8 million people are receiving it. It looks like we will be able to achieve our target successfully.”

A ten point declaration was adopted by the summit which urged concerned sectors to contribute from their sides for inclusive economic growth and poverty alleviation. The declaration appealed to the Constituent Assembly and the National Planning Commission to give due importance to microfinance services in the constitution and in the national planning respectively for social and economic development. Similarly, the declaration requested Nepal Rastra Bank to implement the National Microfinance Policy to suit the needs of microfinance sector.

“Due to geographical and financial problems, we are unable to expand the microfinance service to all parts of the country,” said Pant, reading the declaration. “We request the Ministry of Finance to provide tax incentives and financial support for social mobilization of microfinance institutions, so that we can reach to the people in every part of the country.”

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Development and Inequity: Intricacies of South Asian Growth

By **MOHAN DAS MANANDHAR**
ROJAN BAJRACHARYA¹

Current South Asia is one of the evolving giant of world's political economic circuit. Specifically growth of India in last three decades - is not only surprising; economists often argue as ever experienced economic progress. The prediction is that the region has immense natural and human resource to exploit in order to maintain current growth rate and evolve largest economic region in next half century. Small economies of the region - like Nepal and Bhutan - also have enough room to take benefit from geographical proximity of region's growth. So, inter- regional labor flow is gradually being observed in the region and inter regional FDI is also gradually galloping. Thanks to major economic policy shift in South Asian economies - specifically from close/ controlled to open/ liberalized economy - which credit overall economic growth in the region in last few decades.

Nevertheless, the region has dearth to transform its growth into equitable human development progress. Young political family member of Indian National Congress, Rahul Gandhi, very often says there are two India - one is progressing with milestone goal and other still thrives for single day meal. Despite huge economic progress, the region has to accept the contemporary facts that South Asia is the house to world largest poor population and there is immense disparity in living standard of rich and poor. Adopting conflict expert's word disparity between rich and poor give birth to conflict in the region. So the contemporary challenge for South Asia is to identify the reason behind inequitable growth. In further days, it is hoped that academic effort of the region will be devoted to explore why certain sect of populace are being left out from country's overall economic progress and how such population sect can be encompass in the development mainstream.

There are immense literatures on inequity and deprivation in South Asia and the literatures have two contrasting arguments on explaining the reasons behind inequity and deprivation. One group argue that the growth model of Asia has created economic classes - viz. laborer and entrepreneur - as evolved in Europe in various phase of economic revolution and their discourse is to minimize the disparity in allocating benefit to both of these classes and advocate for equitable distribution of resource. So, in late nineties, the concept of inclusive growth model has evolved which defend to measure not only macro economic growth but equitable distribution of growth

between various economic classes.

On the other hand, social exclusion is one of the evolving discourses in Asia and this practice is prevalent in social and political affair of the region since ancient past with undue influence in state structure. Social exclusion and discrimination exist in various forms in the world, namely: racial, caste, ethnic, spatial and others. Specifically, the caste and ethnic based social exclusion that persist in South Asia can be seen as an institution that has been structuring and maintaining for centuries relations of power among different communities. Development approaches defined in the nexus of Investment Gap, Human Development and Poverty focuses on steady growth and

Beside economic deprivation, social inclusive should also be one of the guiding principal to design policy measures.

equitable distribution of income without considering social cultural structure of country so is invite inequity and injustice. The development practices that exclude an individual and/or a community and society from the mainstream process give birth to inequity and disparity so the century old social exclusionary practice prevailed in the contemporary world is the stumbling block against the equitable development. UNDP's Human Resource Development 1997 highlighted social exclusion and discrimination as the leading causes of the unequal development and wealth disparity. Specifically, the suppressed groups who are in the stage of extreme poverty and grievances are the vulnerable populace and are leading cause of making an unequal state.

In most South Asian countries, it was Poverty Reduction Strategy Plan (PRSP) to address social equity with overarching emphasis on poverty reduction and most of countries have adopted MDGs approach to equitable delivery of social services, reduction of poverty and social justice. Unfortunately, none Asia countries other than Nepal has participatory involvement approach in designing PRSP of respective county. Further, MDGs also only consider gender dimension of social parity with all other form of social inclusion beyond it's reach. So, many of indigenous and ethnic peoples who are most excluded in social

affairs are also excluded from major policy relevance.

A socially exclusive society bars excluded and suppressed groups' voice from being public. In such society, sometime even media-independent state units to raise public voice - get indulged and failed to give proper access to excluded and suppressed communities. So, grievance and demand of these communities might not be well channeled to state ruler and/or policy makers which will lead to create exclusive state policy. Many South Asia economies brought out reservation and affirmative action as policy measure to enhance the access of suppressed and excluded in basic service. However, excluded groups like Dalits have fear to enroll in school because social prospect of untouchability won't allow them to attend class along with other student. Further, indigenous with minority tongue won't find his class encouraging if he is compelled to read in another language. So beside reservation, it would have been better if education policy create conducive school environment to enhance the participation of Dalit and bring out mother tongue education to encourage minority language speakers to get formal education.

Beside economic deprivation, social inclusive should also be one of the guiding principal to design policy measures. State policy should recognize socially excluded group as one of state and social organ and protect the rights of excluded groups. This will be the basis to promote policy measure for social equity and justice of excluded group via affirmative action of preferential treatment to excluded groups, representation of excluded groups in the state affairs, redistribution of resource for easy access to social groups, targeted programmes on basic social services delivery to excluded group and advocacy programmes include civil society involvement in tackling discrimination and promotion of social inclusive society.

The socially excluded groups are diverse and/ or small in size so there is dearth to channel their demand in state structure. It is only few advocacy groups who are working for these socially excluded to deliver their demand but a state mechanism should be developed to make such demand more authentic and politically influential.

¹ Mr. Manadhar and Mr. Bajracharya are both freelancers and the views presented are that of author's own and do not reflected the institutions they are presently engaged.

SAARC has developed actionable regional policy approaches

By Sheel Kant Sharma

In the past three decades SAARC has developed actionable regional policy approaches, plans and perspectives in several areas of development including culture, rural development, food security, poverty alleviation, trade, education, public health, disaster management, energy, financing mechanisms, and transport. In fact creation of a functional South Asian free trade area recognized as truly one of the concrete and remarkable achievements of SAARC is today in good health because it is not sterile; the processes spotted by the SAFTA are moving forward and I will give you some details about them. We also signed our social charter in 2004.

My observations in the past two years have been that not only in Track I and Track II but even within the Track I, the implementation message which had been there in the summit since 2004 has not percolated down to the line ministries in full measure. So, in the separate gatherings I have been also laying emphasis on sensitizing the vast bureaucracies of South Asia for delivering what the summit leadership has consistently promised to do and consistently upheld doing. So somewhere along the way in the vast bureaucracies, the message gets lost and my experience has been that the eight actors who suppose to work together and provide strength to what the leaders have given then to sometimes become discursive and there is lots of time is lost in that process. And that is again something which I would like to bring to your notice because SAARC has done well in the last 25 years. It has managed to protect the achievements of the founding fathers and the achievements of all the successive summits despite the vicissitudes of relations among the SAARC countries and despite the twilight of political relations.

The implementers in SAARC remain the national governments and therefore it is necessary to attach due priority and a certain ownership to SAARC related works in line ministries. This is a point that has been made by me in the cabinet secretaries meetings and they appreciated this point. So these are the

overall observations I want to make. Then I want to enumerate what we have done so far like SAFTA despite the critical analysis to which it had been subjected to; I would say that it has made progress. There was a meeting of commerce ministers held in October in Nepal and that meeting decided that they would reduce sensitiveness in tradable items by September 2010. There was also a notional figure of 20% reduction mentioned at that meeting though it was mentioned in an inconclusive sense. Second is tariff and non tariff barriers. There is a timeframe for their reduction and that process is also on and so far no glitches. Third is the standards on harmonization and this is also on schedule. There is a bit of a glitch due to non ratification by countries like Afghanistan and Maldives. But we hope that it will also be straightened soon. The SAARC Arbitration Council is also very much ready now. We have decided on where it will be located and the head of the organization has also been selected.

In the case of climate change, the SAARC forums have discussed climate change issues with great interest. Actually the SAARC ministers in Copenhagen managed to make a joint statement which helped to put down what our concerns are and I have been asked by the chair of SAARC, Sri Lanka, to make sure that this process of consultation within the SAARC governments on climate change is more active so that whenever next event takes place we are able to pull our efforts together. There is already an action plan which was adopted in Dhaka at the SAARC Climate Change Ministers conference in July 2008. And the SAARC environment ministers met in Delhi in October last year. They have endorsed the action plan again and they have also agreed to work on the SAARC Environment Treaty which is also progressing. Another connected issue with environment and climate change is disaster reduction and disaster management

The empowerment of all states has been to be seen everywhere. So unless we have something to relate to this media, the audiovisual and newspapers,

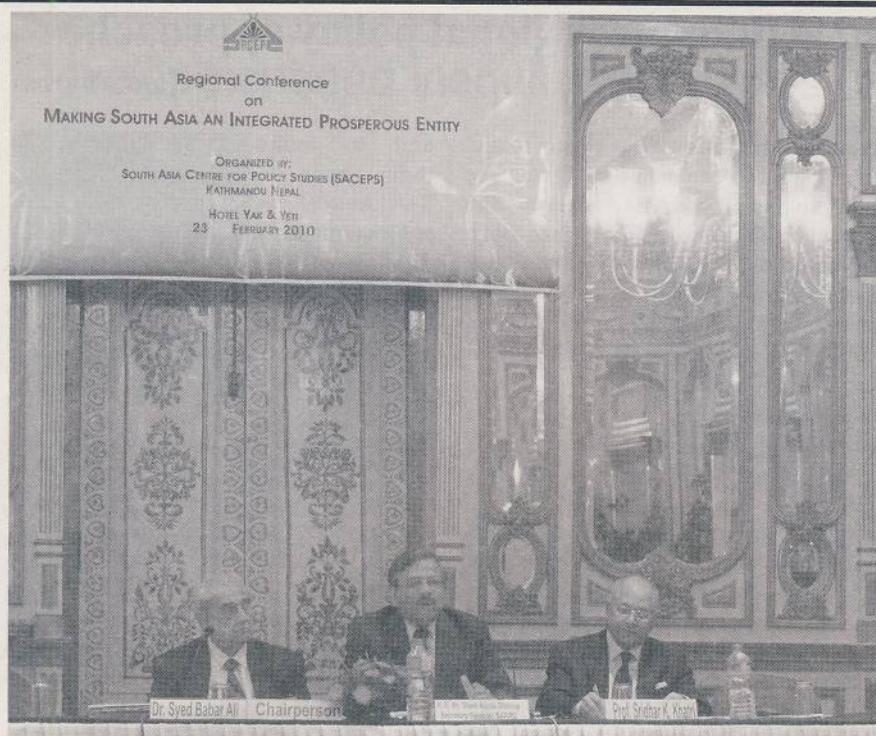
and to make them focus on S A A R C ' s achievements, I think it will be l a c k i n g somewhere in a very vital sense. I have not been tired of giving



these examples that many of you would have heard it that when we had this foreign ministers' council meeting in Colombo last year, the financial crisis was at its peak. So the SAARC foreign secretaries worked for a whole day produced a statement on the financial crisis giving steps to it to be taken and that statement was very thoroughly worked out. It was supported by the ministers. The Sri Lankan minister as the chair of the SAARC council of ministers called a press conference, gave the document and appeal to the press to give it due publicity. Nonetheless very little was given in the SAARC media about that kind of statement. Whereas, within three or four days, ASEAN leaders made a statement which was more or less along the same lines and that was given the banners headings in SAARC newspapers. So, we said that we ourselves somehow the other have an under esteem of our own work.

We should look at it and may be as a Track II process you can give emphasis to this area. So, before I end I would like to say that despite the problems SAARC is very much alive in kicking and the mechanisms which have been created are substantial. The only thing is that we should not lose heart; we should not allow ourselves to succumb to rundown and everything. They are again the eminent stand you bring to bear on your governments and to the Track II processes. There is a small little life and you put all the problems which you cannot solve bilaterally and otherwise you want SAARC to solve. So there I would like to say have a heart. Don't burden SAARC with things which you cannot do otherwise.

Sharma is a secretary general of SAARC. Excerpts of the statement delivered by Sharma at the meeting of South Asia Center for Policy Studies (SACEPS) recently



SACEP MEET

Search For Common Purpose

South Asian civil society members stress the need to increase connectivity for common benefits

By ALVARO CASTRILLO

Just two months before the forthcoming Summit of leaders of South Asian countries, the South Asia Center for Policy Society (SACEP) organised a meeting of civil society members in Kathmandu.

Represented by former diplomats, scholars and academicians from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Maldives and Sri Lanka, the one day workshop discussed issues ranging from economic development and connectivity to climate change.

Chaired by former foreign minister Dr. Bhekh Bahadur Thapa, the program was inaugurated by Dr. Sheel Kanta Sharma, secretary general of SAARC.

Scholars from the region discussed on the issue of Making South Asia An

Integrated Prosperous Entity.

“Despite two decades of efforts, the countries of the region are yet to integrate themselves as market for common purpose,” said professor Sridhar K. Khatri, executive director SACEP.

Connectivity, energy, migration, agriculture and security are among the topics of greatest interest to South Asian countries. These topics are issues that cross national borders and that at this juncture become interdependent issues of states in this geographical area.

Broader policies are required to enhance the domestic economy in South Asia. “Global problems require global solutions,” said ambassador Farooq Sobhan, president of Bangladesh

Institute Dhaka. “Strained relations between Pakistan and India affect the connectivity in Nepal or Bangladesh.”

Former foreign secretary of Pakistan Dr. Humayaun Khan, former secretary general of SAARC Kanta Kishore Bhargava of India, Ibrahim Hussain Zaki vice chancellor of Sikkim University Professor Mahendra Lama and senior diplomats from Nepal and Bangladesh attended. Former foreign ministers of Nepal Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat and Dr. Prakash Chandra Lohani also presented their papers. Similarly, Dr. Mohan Man Sainju and Shanker Krishna Malla commented on papers presented by Ratnakar Adhikari general secretary of SAWTEE and Pushpa Sharma.

Other regional groups too have faced a similar situation in the initial phase. The EU is an example. Although nearly 20 years ago the EU signed the Maastricht treaty which gave political powers to EU bodies, it took a lot of time and efforts to translate it into reality. This treaty included the principle of subsidiary which allowed an unprecedented development for less developed members of the European continent. The treaty began to coordinate the laws at European level with national laws.

The EU has allowed Europe to address issues of vital importance with an efficiency that individual countries could not. From its origins in the ECSC or EURATOM Community energy laid the foundations of the Union. The free movement of citizens allowed a better adjustment of the workforce where it was necessary, cohesion funds endowed infrastructure to areas that lacked them.

As linked by geography and culture, South Asian countries have a good chance to increase connectivity and translate SAARC into reality. The forthcoming Summit to be held in Thimpu, capital of Bhutan, in April may start the new area of cooperation. ■



Gorkhaland Agitators: Demand for separate land

NEIGHBOUR

Darjeeling Deadlock

The movement for separate Gorkhaland state within India peaks

By **UMAKANTAKHANAL**
in Darjeeling

As the movement for separate Gorkhaland state within India peaks, the state government of West Bengal has deployed a special force, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), in Darjeeling and its periphery.

The Central Reserve Police Force has been deployed after Gorkhalis torched a police post in Sukuna near Siliguri on February 21. They attacked the police post blaming the police failed to punish killer of a Gorkhali lady.

The administration claimed that the people who attacked the police post were the party cadres of Gorkha Janamukti Morcha, which is agitating

for a separate statehood for the Indian Gorkhas.

After the police arrested one and a half dozen cadres of Morcha, Morcha has threatened the police administration with a protest campaign demanding their release as soon as possible.

Otherwise, it said, all party members will be ready for 'jail bhara' agitation. Morcha's Press and Publication Secretary Harka Bahadur Chhetri said, "If police failed to release our members from their custody, we all will go inside the custody."

He claimed that the party was not involved in the incident of attacking the police post in Sukuna.

According to the the Gorkhalis of

Terai region, it is now difficult to move forward with the agitation for the Gorkhaland. The administration and the CRPF began watching the activities of Gorkha Janamukti Morcha. But they say that they continue agitation as per Gandhi's principle whereas the anti-Gorkha parties claim that Morcha's agitation is now becoming violent day by day.

After the movement became violent at the time of previous agitation for Gorkhaland led by Subash Ghising, the former chairman of Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council – developing agency of Darjeeling, the CRPF was deployed to suppress the movement. As a result, with the agreement of DGHC, the agitation was concluded.

Some analysts and the leaders of Morcha predict the same situation would come to pass. Morcha's Press and Publication Secretary of Siliguri Terai, Hemanta Gautam said, "Now the agitation would be more difficult than before."

He says that it is the master plan of the state government to suppress the Gorkhaland agitation as the government had done in the agitation in 1986.

Now the CRPF has started to control the situation in Darjeeling, Siliguri, Kurseong, and Kalimpong. It also keeps in hand the 31A National Highway which is the lifeline of Sikkim. The public have demanded the withdrawal of the CRPF from Darjeeling Hills.

With the deployment of the CRPF, the fifth round of the tripartite talk is also affected. The last round of the tripartite talk was held in Darjeeling on December 21 last year in which there was the agreement that the date of the fifth round would be fixed within forty five days and the fifth round of the talk should be in political level. The state government is much aggressive with the Morcha blaming its cadres were involved in the incident of attack of police post in Sukuna. West Bengal's Chief Secretary, Ashok Mohan Chakravarty said in Siliguri last week that there was no question of dialogue with the Morcha because Morcha targeted the police post. He said, "When police posts are being attacked, it is very difficult to hold the meetings with such organisations." ■

Millennium Development Goals

On Track?

If the progress achieved by Nepal in reducing mortality of infant and under five children is any indication, the country may well be on track towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals in these fronts

By **ABIJIT SHARMA**

In 35 years, Nepal made a remarkable progress in reducing infant mortality. The 2006 data show that Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) dropped from 200 to 48 per 1000 live births. Under five mortality rate (U5MR) also plunged to 61 per 1000 live births. If this steady development is maintained, Nepal will be successful in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) within the targeted time, that is, 2015.

MDGs are eight international development goals set for underdeveloped and developing nations, as agreed upon by 192 UN members. They include reducing child mortality rate, improving maternal health, reducing extreme poverty, establishing global partnership for development and controlling epidemics such as AIDS.

Nepal has been moving quite positively towards achieving the MDGs, especially in terms of IMR and U5MR targets. This can be largely attributed to improvements in the management of diarrhoea, improved immunization, Vitamin A supplementation and improvement management of epidemics such as measles, polio and pneumonia under the initiatives of the government and private sectors.

National Immunization Program (NIP) played a key role in improving child health in Nepal. The program, which was started with the aim of reducing child morbidity and disability associated with vaccine-preventable diseases, now has coverage in all the 75 districts. The program plans to achieve and sustain a 90% coverage by 2010. It also aims to maintain polio-free status, initiate measles elimination and improve and sustain immunization quality in all the districts of Nepal.

However, the progress is not without problems. Immunization coverage has declined from 2004/2005. The number of unimmunized children for DPT – HepB has increased from 119,691 (2006) to 142,170

(2009). This is largely because of decreasing financial resources, high burden of neonatal mortality, inability to eradicate all vaccine-preventable diseases, decreasing immunization coverage etc. If the problems cannot be tackled soon, it will prove to be an obstacle in achieving the MDGs within the allocated time.

With the aim of highlighting the progress, obstacles and solutions in achieving the MDGs, a meeting, led by the Parliamentarian Committee on Women, Children and Social Welfare, was organized in Kathmandu. The meeting was attended by parliamentarians from Sri Lanka and Cambodia, where they shared their experiences towards achieving MDGs in their countries.

The program ended with parliamentarians from all three countries making commitments and recommendations for improving child and maternal health which would help in achieving the MDGs successfully. The participating parliamentarians have recommended national budget be allocated to cover free health services and immunization program, and also committed to advocate for ensuring sustainable financing for the program. Likewise, they have also recommended developing a joint work plan and immunization programs to reach the people below poverty line and disadvantaged group.

The parliamentarians have called for representation of the voices of women and children with meaningful participation in the higher level. They pointed out the need to supervise and monitor maternal child health, nutrition and immunization related indicators. They also suggested that regular interactions involving neighbouring countries be held on child and maternal health issues to identify the best possible options.

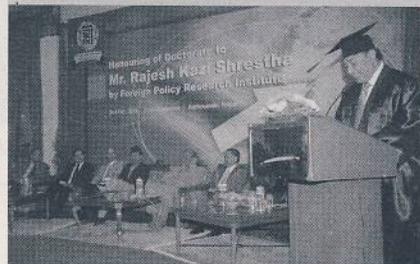
As the countdown to the MDGs continues, Nepal will need to maintain its progress by taking into consideration recommendations for further improvement and tackling the problems on its way. ■

RAJESH KAJI SHRESTHA Reward For Cause

If a person is completely dedicated to his job and profession, it always pays. This is what businessman Rajesh Kaji Shrestha proves. Although he was just a commerce graduate, New Delhi based International Policy Research Institute conferred an honorary Ph.D on industrialist Rajesh Kazi Shrestha for his long contribution in the area of promoting international trade.

As soon as he received information regarding his selection for the honorary Ph.D by an international Policy Research Institute, industrialist Rajesh Kaji had a moment of joy and surprise to share.

"I never thought that I would receive this kind of award for my contribution. The honorary award made me proud as well as jubilant. I realized that my



commitment and dedication towards promotion of international trade has some importance," said Rajesh Kazi Shrestha.

At a function, attended by Minister of Culture, Parliamentary Affairs and Constituent Assembly Dr. Minendra Rijal, chairman of FPRI Professor Dr. Prashanna Kumar Patahani handed the Honorary PH.D certificate to Rajesh Kazi Shrestha.

Chairman of International Chamber of Commerce and Nepal and Nepal China Chamber of Commerce and Industry, businessman Shrestha has made enormous contributions in the areas of expanding Nepal's trade in the international sector.

Immediate past president of Nepal Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Shrestha also served as an assistant minister of Industry, Commerce and Supplies. In recent years, Shrestha has been making tremendous efforts to secure duty free access in Chinese market. During his tenure as a president of Nepal Chamber of Commerce, Shrestha gave a very strong leadership.

Executive member of Hotel Association Nepal, Shrestha wants to show more. "After securing honorary Ph.D title, I found that my responsibility has tremendously increased," said Shrestha. ■

Economic Security of Women Migrant Workers –An innovative scheme started in Nepal

Foreign labour migration has come as both an opportunity and a challenge for many Nepali women. WMWs comprise 11% of the contributors of remittance which makes 23% of Nepal's Gross Domestic Product¹. Most remittance from WMWs is used for paying back loans, education of children and household consumption². Foreign labour migration for many is a forced choice linked with survival of their family. With high investment, dependency on illegal agents and routes and no planning and training, Nepali women are exposed to abuse and exploitations before starting the journey.

UNIFEM has been working to protect the rights of WMWs and supporting their empowerment. Gender responsive innovative and sustainable policies on remittance can be an effective strategy to stop forced migration and the cycle of re-migration, which comes at high cost, especially for women. Towards this, "Economic Security of Women Migrant Workers" an IFAD/UNIFEM supported project is designed to generate necessary resource, voice and visibility among WMWs and the members of their families to engage and influence policies on remittance and reintegration and engaging them on enterprise development opportunities to ensure their economic security.

The project is being implemented by Nepal Institute of Development Studies, (NIDS) and POURAKHI, organization of returnee WMWs in 6 clusters and 19 sub locations of three districts Sunsari, Kaski and Kathmandu. The trainings were charged with high emotions where returnees demanded to respect their contribution earned despite pains in foreign lands and to create opportunities in Nepal where they can be close with their children and families and yet retain their hard earned dignity and respect.

This is an innovative, first time in Nepal and a historical initiative on reintegration and is expected to guide future policies and programme in remittance and reintegration in Nepal. Foreign Employment Act 2007, have specified mandate to Foreign Employment Promotion Board to develop schemes for the reintegration of migrant workers by providing alternatives in Nepal. Sri Lanka, another South Asian country which is known to have effective structure to manage foreign labour migration and have more than 50% of its migrant workers being women have various provisions to

facilitate the link of remittance with the development of its country. They have targeted schemes to reduce the transfer cost of remittance and promoting its institutional transfer, housing and loan schemes for self employment is provided at minimum interest rate to the returnees, retirement benefit schemes have been offered to the Sri Lankan migrant workers. These are excellent example that is being successfully being implemented and we need to draw in lessons from it. Viable and sustainable alternative livelihood opportunities will contribute to curb the massive exodus of people. If we are to regulate foreign

The project is being implemented by Nepal Institute of Development Studies, (NIDS) and POURAKHI, organization of returnee WMWs in 6 clusters and 19 sub locations of three districts Sunsari, Kaski and Kathmandu. The trainings were charged with high emotions where returnees demanded to respect their contribution earned despite pains in foreign lands and to create opportunities in Nepal where they can be close with their children and families and yet retain their hard earned dignity and respect.

labour migration and to benefit from it, then the policies and structures has to address entire phases mainly the pre-departure, on employment and reintegration, as isolated and piece meal approach is not going to addresses the complex phenomenon of foreign labour migration. It is now very evident that large number of Nepali women is going for foreign employment. Unfortunately those women who are suffering are victims of unplanned and unregulated processes and practices. On the occasion of the international Women's

Day, we would yet gain call upon all concerns stakeholders to come together to acknowledge the contribution of these women that have risked everything to contribute for the survival and sustenance of their families and to design policies and mechanisms that would help them to maximize the gains of remittance and also to link remittance and migration with the development of the country. The innovative scheme that has been jointly initiated is expected to realize the economic security of Women Migrant Workers to some extent. ■

Science and Technology

Space For Progress

Nepalese policy makers and planners have begun to see science and technology as an important factor in the country's overall development. The formation of a separate ministry of science and technology shows this. With it, space, nuclear, alternative, bio-tech, e-governance and similar concepts are gaining currency. All these things mean little in a context of inadequate budget, human resources and institutional capabilities. The Ministry of Science and Technology knows this and is now working to formulate a long term as well as a short term plan to change things

By A CORRESPONDENT

Within a month after being created as a separate ministry, the Ministry of Science and Technology organized an interaction program inviting senior scientists working in various fields to seek their advice on how to make the ministry more effective in coordinating and encouraging scientific research.

The interaction was first of its kind, organized to collect views and opinions of scientists. As a focal ministry for information and technology, the ministry took the initiative to know the status of e-governance through the use of national information center.

Ignored by the overwhelming priority given to environment, science and technology ministry had lost its direction. The areas again came to lime light after the establishment of the separate Ministry of Science and Technology. Although the ministry was made as an independent institution for political reasons, the direct beneficiary was science and technology sector.



MOST : Stressing research

Although the ministry has limited budget and many constraints before it, the process of highlighting the agenda of science and technology has begun. After years of negligence in the areas of science and technology, because of too much involvement in the environmental

sector, the infrastructure, institutional capability and direction were derailed. The ministry has again found time to focus its attention on consolidation and institution making in the areas of science and technology.

Within a span of short time, the

“The Ministry has Vast Scope”

Dr. RAM HARI ARYAL

Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) secretary DR RAM HARI ARYAL is also a well known demographer. Dr. Aryal, a Ph.D from Australia, started his career from the Parliament Secretariat. As the need to develop science and technology cannot be overstressed, Dr. Aryal spoke to NEW SPOTLIGHT on a range of issues. Excerpts:

Everyone has been saying that Nepal needs to give a high priority to science and technology, but the reality is different. What do you say on this as a science and technology secretary?

Undoubtedly, the country cannot develop without adequate investment in the science and technology sector. Science and technology need top priority. The ministry should be full equipped.

It is said that a transfer to MOST is regarded as being dumped. How do you look at this?

When the government transferred me as a secretary to the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST), some of my colleagues even said that I was dumped at a non-functional institution. When I started work, I found the remarks were not true. I am busy all the time now.

What changes have you brought about in the Ministry?

With a spirit of team work, we have been able to convince members of the National Planning Commission and others concerned that the ministry needs priority. It is impossible to have a sustainable development without the development of science and technology. I visited some countries in the region where I found ministry of science and technology is the focal point of development as it is equipped with adequate resources as well as regarded as a coordinating institution.

Why do you think the Ministry's role in Nepal is different?

Along with other factors, people who worked in the ministry also need to take the responsibility for this. Looking at that past, we are planning to increase

activities of the ministry linking its role in ensuring sustainable development. We in the ministry are working as a team to promote science and technology.

What are the main functions of ministry?

The ministry's main function are to give priority to research and development. We are working in this direction. Science and technology are related to sustainable development and many other ministries are also related to this ministry. We are closely working with the ministry of agriculture, health, power, irrigation and education on how to implement science and technology.

At a time when many new changes are appearing due to climate change and several other countries have already started research on alternative energy and use of Information Technology in day to day life, what role is your ministry playing to pursue similar research works?

We are focusing our efforts on information technology, to use it in all sectors in the context of e-governance. The ministry is making long term policies to connect all the ministries and departments through information technology. This is the age of e-governance and Nepal cannot escape from this. Known for its method of transparency and accountability, e-governance has high importance. We are also planning to introduce e-governance at all levels. The ministry will start training those who don't know about technology.

What are the policies to accommodate the private sector?

The private sector has made a tremendous progress in IT sector with enhancement of its capacity compared to the government sector. We are working to forge public private partnership in this sector.

Do you think government offices will adopt IT?

One of the problems is to change the attitude and interest of the people on computers. There are computers in all

the offices but their use is very limited. We are considering starting orientation program and standardization of IT. Although IT was introduced a long time back in Nepal, the government sector is yet to fully adjusted with it.

As a ministry related to scientific research, can your ministry play a role in contributing to research on climate change?

So far as the issue of climate change is concerned, it is a cross-cutting issue. All the ministries, which have a linkage with effects of climate change, need to work together. The National Planning Commission has already realized this. For a country like Nepal, which is geographically diverse with high mountains, hills and plains, there is a need of extensive research. From coming fiscal year, we will start research on the implications and impacts of climate change in the Himalayas and agriculture.

What role can Nepal play now that it is a member of International Atomic Energy Association?

Nepal is now a member of IAEA and this will help a lot to Nepal to transfer technology in health sector. IAEA also agrees to support us in this area. We are now considering opening a Nuclear Development Center and Space Center.

At a time when the community of scientists says it is being ignored at the policy making, does your ministry have any plan to utilize their scientific knowledge?

Since last year, a project has been launched to prevent the brain drain of Nepalese scientists under Nepal Academy of Science and Technology. We have been developing a plan to retain the scientists but Nepal is not in a position to fulfill all the aspirations of the scientists.

Do you have any plans to hunt the talents?

Along with discouraging the brain drain, we also need to identify the talents. Through the regional seminars, science and technology exhibition, we

are making efforts to identify the talents. There are large numbers of Nepalese experts who have been working around the world. We need to utilize them. We need to have a long term strategy to retain the scientists. We need to create the work so that we can retain a large number of people.

It is often said that the Ministry of Science and Technology is the least preferred ministry since there is no adequate budget, nor programs. How do you look at this statement?

Frankly speaking, a transfer to this ministry is considered a punishment because this is regarded as the least attractive ministry. In other countries, this is a high profile ministry and prestigious too. To prove that this is very important, we are working as a team. Things are gradually changing.

I have already told you that we are discussing whether we should have Nuclear Development Center and Space Center. Nepal is regarded as a very appropriate place as a Space Center. Even many scientists visit us on use of Nepal's advantage.

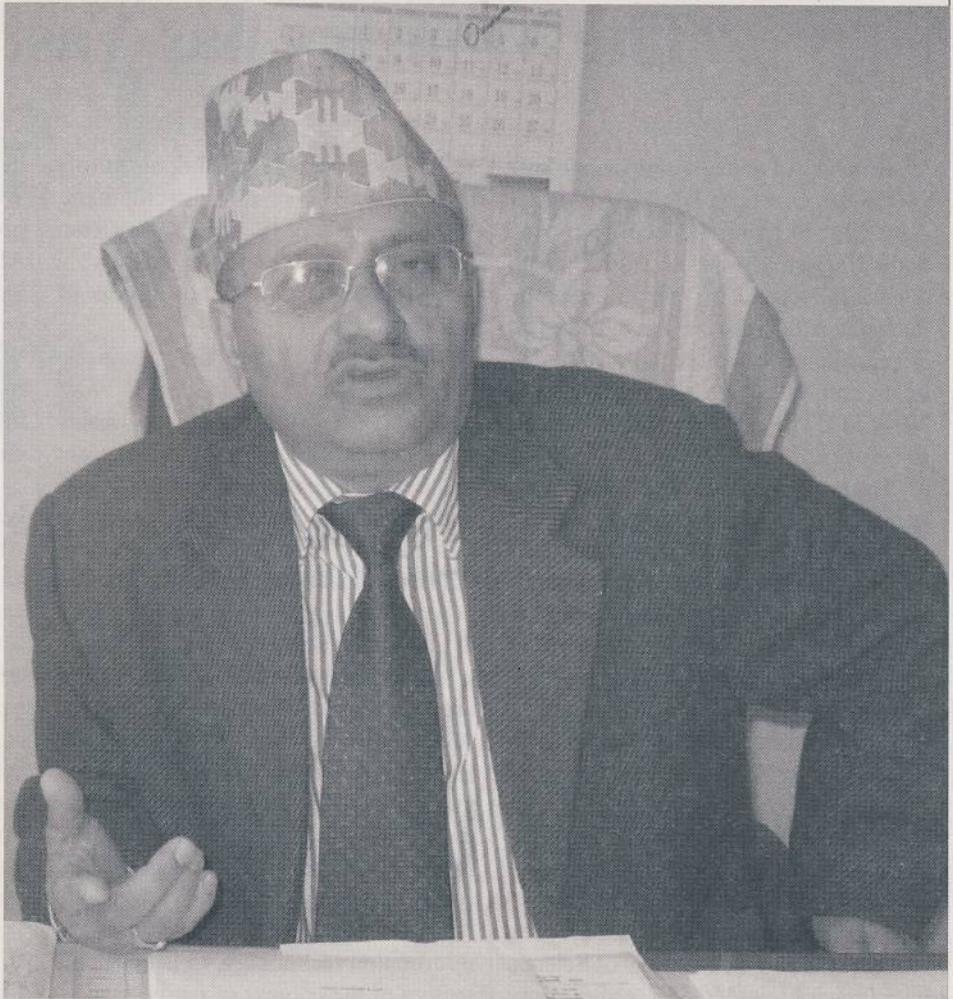
Just a month back, some scientists came from NASA to see the solar eclipse. According to them, one can see the angle of solar eclipse differently from Nepal. This is a very appropriate place to study space.

Do you really believe things are changing?

We are gradually bringing the changes and you cannot do this overnight. We need to have exposure to know how others are doing this. There are a lot of works in science and technology areas which can benefit common people and their understanding of many things. If we can implement all innovative works, the perception regarding the ministry will change. We need to work with others. The Ministry of Science and Technology has unlimited scope.

Do you think you get adequate budget to run the programs?

Of course, our budget is not adequate but we can use limited resources to achieve greater target. We are



discussing with the officials of the Ministry of Finance to increase the budget for the coming fiscal year. If we are unable to give something to the people, one can question the very existence of this ministry.

What do you need to make the ministry more effective?

We need to equip the ministry. There are some departments and centers which are now under other ministries, though they have direct relations with us. We have already proposed bringing such departments and centers within the ministry. The work load of this ministry is low. We need to increase the work load. We don't have specific mandate now.

There is a feeling among the members of scientific community that they are ignored by the government. Have you conducted any interactions with them after your appointment as a secretary?

Just a few weeks after my appointment, I conducted an interaction program inviting country's prominent scientists. They suggested that this kind of activities need to be enhanced in the future to make the ministry a focal point for scientific community. They also agreed to support us voluntarily.

What are you doing to implement their suggestions?

In accordance with their suggestions, the ministry is planning to set up five thematic groups related to science and technology under the coordination of scientists. I think their inputs will help us a lot in the process of implementation of programs. After formation of thematic committees, which will work in five major sectors like Information Technology, Physics, Chemistry and others, discussions that take place in the committees will help us to enhance the programs.

ministry has started discussions on the establishment of a space center, the effective use of nuclear technology in health and the management of waste, the use of information technology for e-governance and other research areas. The use of bio-technology and research for alternative energy and research on glacier melting are other areas the Ministry is now looking at. The ministry has several areas to cover, it is just beginning to realize.

The ministry has been facing many constraints in its effort to expand and extend its areas due to lack of an institutional mechanism. Some research related institutions, which were with this ministry in the past, are still under other ministries. One of the handicap of other this ministry is that, it cannot implement the project at the grass roots level as other ministries like agriculture, forest and health.

"This is one of the smallest ministries in terms of its institutional set up. We are in the process to set up certain necessary institutions to carry out its activities," said spokesperson of the Ministry Mukunda Raj Prakash.

As there are many ministries which have their own research wings and they can research and implement them for the benefit of the people. However, the role of the Ministry of Science and Technology is to work as a ministry at the focal point of all scientific research and use of technology at various levels.

"Our work is more related to create the work and conduct the research but we cannot go to implement findings at the grass roots level. It is the other line ministries which can carry research to the grass roots level," he said.

"We cannot disseminate scientific information on our own and we have to consult other ministries to disseminate them. For instance, health ministry can implement the health related research and forest and agriculture ministries can disseminate the research related to them. This ministry cannot go directly to the people. This is the reason we are not getting the budget. We don't have direct relations with people. We have to work in making knowledge as well as importing. We need to play a coordinative role among various ministries to disseminate these information to public."

Evolution of Institution

Institutionally, it was established as a separate entity in 1996 with the

integration of some wings. However, after dismantling of the Ministry of Population and Environment; environment was integrated with it in 2005. It split again with environment giving it a status of separate ministry in 2009.

Nepal spent a huge amount of money for research and technology transfers through various ministries. The ministries like Health, Agriculture and Forest have their own research wings. Realizing the need to have an institution to coordinate among various ministries involved in scientific research and work to search the new technology applicable to Nepal, the ministry came to exist.

In the course of its unification and separation, the Ministry of Science and Technology regularly lost its well built institutional capability as well as its institutional memory. To build the connections and collect its memory is a priority now.

"We are in the process of establishing the Ministry of Science and Technology as a focal point ministry in the areas of scientific research and transfer of technology. The Ministry is now working under team efforts to establish its institutional capability," said Dr. Ramhari Aryal, secretary at the ministry.

Scientific Research and Transfer of Technology

For the countries like Nepal, it is not an easy task to conduct scientific research in space, nuclear, climate areas, not even in the area of bio-technology, as they all require huge financial resources. However, Nepal cannot remain in isolation in the process of using these technologies.

Not only the internal financial resources but also the pressure from neighboring and other countries hampers research. In the areas of space centers and nuclear technology, neighboring countries showed the concerns. Although other countries, which do not have strategic interest, too want to conduct research, they don't want to transfer this capability to Nepal.

"For instance, we need to have a cheap and effective technology in the area of solar power, no country will transfer the knowledge to us easily. Other countries lend support for research in areas like bio- technology but they too don't want to share the



Spokesperson Prakash : Focusing science and technology

right of the results. We have spent a lot of time in disseminating the information rather than making it. Many countries have interest in Nepal, some have strategic and others have different interests," said spokesperson Mukunda Raj Prakash.

There is the need to create an environment to share benefits with the countries of origin. Nepal hardly gets the benefits of research conducted jointly with support from other countries. "We want a provision under which the country can share the benefits of any research as a country of origin," said Prakash.

Non-priority to Priority

The Ministry of Science and Technology is gradually coming to be a ministry of priority. With a country of diverse geography and bio-diversity, Nepal's position is unique for all kinds of research and test of technology. "We are working to make itself into a priority ministry. In the first year, we have been able to increase resources. The National Planning Commission is positively looking at the proposal in establishing the space center," said Prakash.

With ecological, biological and geographical diversity, Nepal has many comparative advantages to be prosperous. As Nepal is a country with high mountains, one can observe the space closely with good angles. Similarly, Bharatpur Cancer Hospital has proven itself as a center of excellence by treating the cancer patients through the use of radio Therapy.

As exploitation of Nepal's huge potential requires coordinated scientific research as well as use of new technology, the Ministry of Science and Technology can function as a bridge and coordinative institution to translate them into reality.

Naked Beauty

Kapil Mani Dixit's paintings portray nudity differently

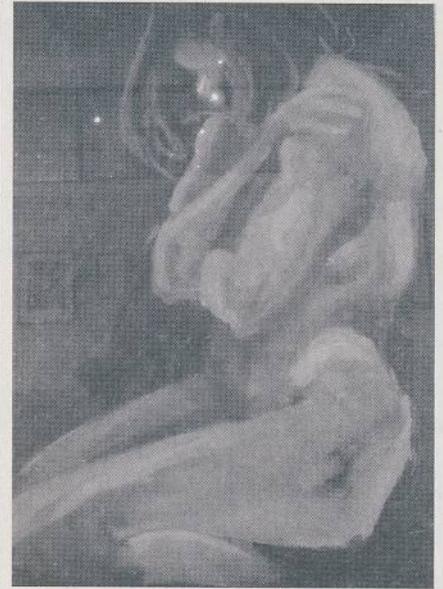
By PRADIPTI BHATTA

When you think of an exhibit of nude paintings, what is the first thing that strikes your mind? Most people, it seems safe to speculate, don't think of beauty at first. 'Literally Figurative' will change your views. The international art exhibition, being held at Imago de Café, Nagpokhari, deals with nudity in such a subtle way that you are left appreciating the artist for calling your attention to beauty.

The exhibit, which was inaugurated by artist Sashi Bikram Shah on February 17, showcases works of 24 students, including former students of North Lake College in Texas, USA. A total of 27 paintings have been put up in the exhibit by visual artist and painter Kapil Mani Dixit.

Nude art works are not a total novelty in Kathmandu. But they definitely are rare if nudity is not to be equated with vulgarity. The exhibition is far from being vulgar. Many forms of art portray beauty which is mostly facial if it is in relation to human beings. Literally Figurative singularly focuses on the beauty of the human body in its inartificial form. The paintings do not give any details of facial features.

Most of the paintings use only a few colors. The colors and the positions of the human body successfully convey different emotions. All the works of art seem to have a story of their own. Some reflect sadness or anxiety whereas others express just the opposite. All this in fact is done without the use of any facial expressions, which make the paintings more intriguing.

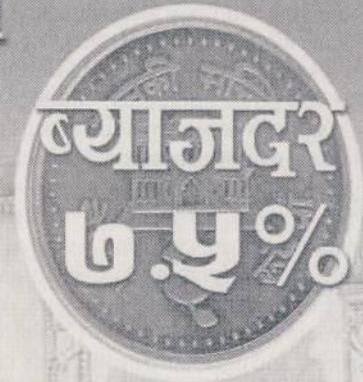


The kind of art displayed in this event is something that is rarely seen in the capital. It's a bold form of art in a country like ours. Although nude paintings have a different stand in other countries, in Nepal it is not appreciated as much. Being able to exhibit creations like this in the country will definitely give rise to more of this wonderful art in the days ahead.

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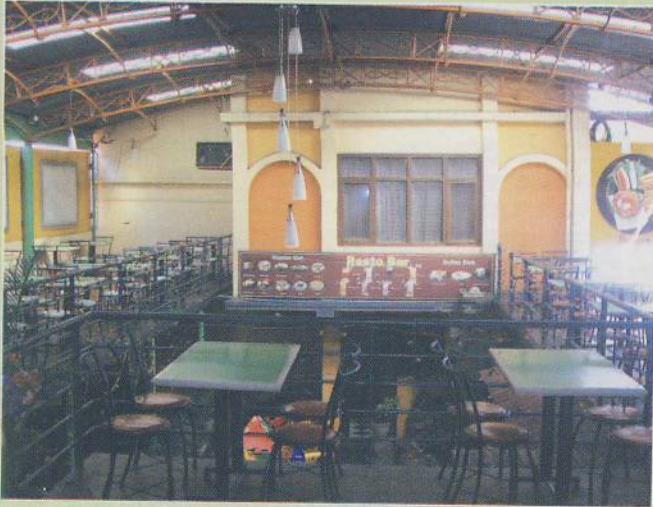
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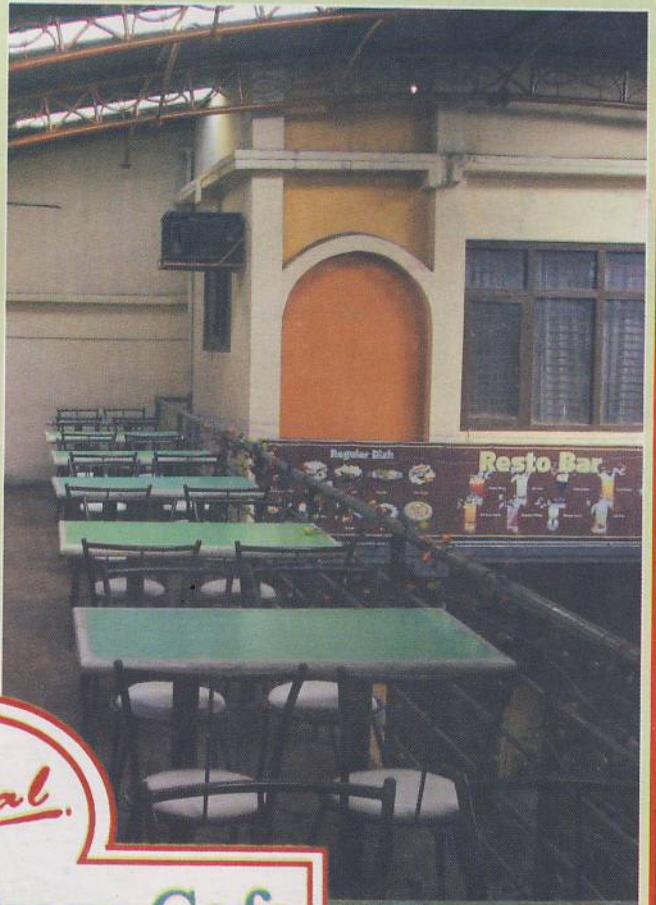


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