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Opinion:  
**Dipak Gyawali**

**Politics: Maoist Plenum**

Interview: **Upendra Yadav**



Viewpoint:  
**Dr. Tilak Rawal**

# SPOTLIGHT

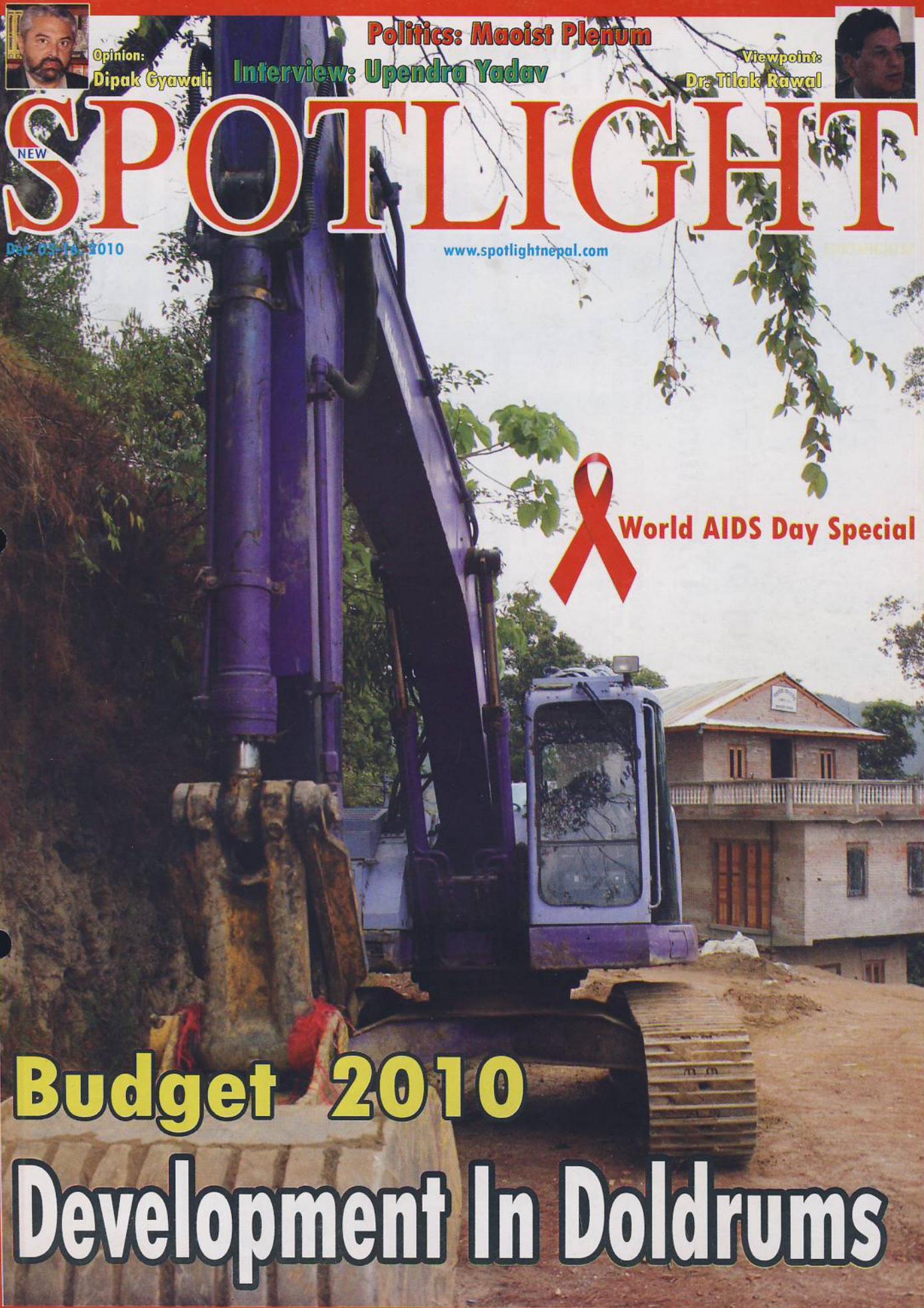
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**World AIDS Day Special**

## Budget 2010 Development In Doldrums



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### From The Editor

**T**he drama in the parliament on November 19 when Finance Minister was manhandled by some Maoist lawmakers ended all hopes of budget through parliament. Instead it forced the government's hand and the country was subjected to a prolonged period of economic uncertainty. Already the government of the day is a caretaker one. And now it has brought a budget through ordinance. It is anybody's guess how much confidence it can generate among investors, or for that matter, even the ordinary businessmen. The worst victim, as we have repeatedly been pointing out, will be the development - and, along with it, the country's efforts towards alleviating poverty. In an ominous turn of event last week, major donors came out with a joint statement not only ruing the absence of 'development leadership,' but also warning that the uncertainty could limit future aid to Nepal. Their warning comes in the wake of official revelation that till the completion of four months of this fiscal year, they have spent only Rs 6 billion - of the slated Rs 129 billion - on development. Based on the gravity of the matter, this week, we, once again, decided to look at this sorry state of affairs in our cover story.

*Keshab*

**Keshab Poudel**  
Editor

# NEW SPOTLIGHT FORTNIGHTLY

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## Japanese Aid For Safe Mother/Childhood

The Government of Japan has decided to extend financial assistance of 197,547 US Dollars; equivalent to approximately 14,025,800 Nepalese Rupees to AMDA Multisectoral and Integrated Development Services (AMDA-MINDS) under the Grant Assistance for Japanese NGO Projects Scheme of the Government of Japan in Japan's FY 2010.



AMDA-MINDS will implement the Project for Safe Mother-and-Childhood through Promoting Capacity Development in 16 Rural Villages in Rupandehi in coordination with the District Development Committee,

District Public Health Office and local NGOs.

Tatsuo MIZUNO, Ambassador of Japan to Nepal, and Ms. Maiko KOBAYASHI, Project Manager, in charge of Nepal office of AMDA-MINDS Japan signed the agreement.

Under the project, AMDA-MINDS will utilize the grant exclusively to

promote capacity development for Safe Mother-and-Childhood in 16 villages in four VDCs, namely, Mainahiya, Haati Banggai, Kamhariya, and Dhamauli in

Rupandehi District.

AMDA-MINDS has many years' experience in running maternal health service projects in Nepal under various assistance scheme from the Government of Japan.

UNMIN's mandate as of 15 January 2011. USG Pascoe will be looking particularly at the status of decision-making and planning for reintegrating and rehabilitating combatants and for ensuring an orderly withdrawal of the Mission that leaves no critical gaps.

## Donors Show Concern

The international donor community showed its growing concern regarding the negative development impact stemming from the slow progress in forming a new government, implementing the peace process, and writing the new constitution.

"The donors recognize the difficult circumstances under which the budget was promulgated by Ordinance and are glad a crisis has been averted for now," they said in a statement. "We further encourage leaders to renew their focus on the long-term critical issues affecting Nepal's development and economy—particularly corruption, ownership and accountability; slow progress in filling key positions in important public offices; and the security environment."

Released by USAID on behalf of the international donor community, the statement said, "While development progress continues in certain sectors, the ongoing political impasse has stalled or slowed many development projects and may negatively impact or limit future donor assistance."

In addition, numerous key senior positions remain vacant limiting the effectiveness of the Nepal Government and reducing donor confidence, including the Head of Supreme Audit Authority (Auditor General), Chief Election Commissioner, and Chief of the CIAA (Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority) as well as significant numbers of leadership positions at the Village Development Committees."

The statement said, "While progress continues, the slow pace in implementing the peace process combined with the continued care-taker status of the government, lack of development leadership significantly reduces most donors' ability to secure future resources for Nepal. Each donor institution is ultimately answerable to its own government and citizens or to its

## Young CA Members Visit India

Eleven young Constituent Assembly members from Nepal's seven political parties, including UCPN (Maoist), Nepali Congress, CPN-UML, MJF-Loktantrik, MJF-Nepal, CPN (United) and RPP-Nepal, visited India from 21-27 November 2010 at the invitation of the the government of India as part of the Young Parliamentarians Exchange Programme initiated by the Embassy of India in Nepal. The visit is in keeping with the tradition of the long and deep association and friendship between parliamentarians of India and Nepal and will help continue that tradition with the newer generation of parliamentarians.

Hari Ram Sripaili and Puran Rana Tharu of UCPN-Maoist, Gagan Kumar Thapa, Sita Gurung, Mahendra Yadav and Nabindra Raj Joshi of Nepali Congress, Naradmuni Rana (Tharu) of CPN-UML, Sunil Babu Panta of CPN-United, Kunti Shahi of RPP-Nepal, Pramod Gupta of MJF-Loktantrik and Raj Kishore Yadav of MJF-Nepal were in the tour.

During the visit, the delegation called on Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Finance

Minister, EAM, Leader of Opposition, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, and Foreign Secretary. They also interacted with senior officials in the Ministry of External Affairs and attended a special session organized by the Bureau of Parliamentary Studies and Research with special focus on 'parliamentary practices and federalism'.

## Pascoe Visiting Nepal

UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe will be in South Asia at the beginning of December. He will visit India and Nepal from 2-4 December.

USG Pascoe's discussions in India will focus on a range of regional and international issues.

According to a press release of UNMIN, while in Nepal, USG Pascoe will assess efforts by Nepal's political leaders toward concluding key remaining tasks of the peace process and preparing adequately for the departure in January of the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN). This will be the Under-Secretary-General's second visit to Nepal since the Security Council decided in September to conclude

senior management at headquarters. Nepal's unstable political situation has made it increasingly difficult for many donors to justify why Nepal should receive support in a world where there are many competing demands for limited development resources. The impact of reduced donor funding may not always be immediately apparent, however, the long term consequences for Nepal's development are substantial."

Donors participating include Asian Development Bank, Canadian International Development Agency, Embassy of Denmark, Embassy of Finland, Embassy of Germany, Embassy of Norway, European Union, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the Embassy of Switzerland, U.K. Department for International Development, the United States Agency for International Development, and the World Bank.

### Indian Support For Siraha

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Embassy of India, Kathmandu with Ground Water Resources Development Board, and Ministry of Irrigation for providing Indian grant assistance of NRs. 2.59 crores for installation of 350 Shallow



Tube Wells in Siraha under the India-Nepal Economic Cooperation Program.

Agriculture, the largest sector of the Nepalese economy, constitutes about 39% of country's GDP. Nepal has 2.6 million hectares of cultivable land out of which only about 1.2 million hectares has irrigation facilities. Siraha, one of the Eastern Terai Districts, is facing acute problem of irrigation due to scanty rainfall in the area.

### Home For Ex-British Gurkhas

A residential home run by the Gurkha Welfare Scheme (GWS) opens in Pokhara to look after 26 elderly ex-Gurkha soldiers and widows whose needs are no longer being met at home. It is

the first home of its kind in Nepal, having been designed and built to British standards, and providing a UK level of care. This means that each resident has their own living space, with bathroom en-suite; they also have the services of specially trained care workers. Each room has a 'panic button' so that the duty staff can be there within moments of any emergency.

### First Meet On Terai Road Project

The first meeting of the Project Steering Committee (PSC) for the strengthening of road infrastructure of the Terai area of Nepal was held recently. The meeting was co-chaired by Satish C. Mehta, Joint Secretary (North), MEA from the Indian side and Kamal Raj Pande, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Physical Planning & Works from the Nepalese side.

The Committee reiterated the importance that the two governments attach to the Terai Roads Project and also agreed that work should be completed in a time bound manner because of the special importance the two countries attach to the project.

The project will be implemented in three phases and envisages construction of over 1450 kms of black topped all weather roads in the Terai area of Nepal. Phase-I, on which work is expected to start by December 2010, includes 19 roads totaling 605 kms. The project would be funded totally by the Government of

India under the Nepal-India Cooperation Program and will be constructed at an estimated cost of nearly NRs.1100 crores.

The role and responsibility of Government of Nepal is to provide clear land free from all encumbrances for the contractor and to ensure utility relocations of the length of all the roads. RITES is the consultant for the project from the Indian side. Both India and Nepal have appointed engineers for the implementation of the project.

### Hand Washing Day Observed

UNICEF Nepal has joined hands with leaders and representatives from various religious and faith-based groups to pray for the wellbeing and nurturing of children.

"It is commendable that the leaders and representatives of all the various religious groups have come together today to promote exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life and continuous breastfeeding along with other nutritious food for the first two years of life," said Gillian Mellis, UNICEF Nepal Representative. "At the heart of every religious tradition is the insight that children are humanity's best hope for the future and we really do need to nurture them."

Similarly, the nationwide campaign for Global Hand washing Day with the slogan of "More than just a day" was celebrated amidst a special function in Changanarayan, Bhaktapur.

## US Concern

American Ambassador to Nepal Scott H DeLisi issued a statement questioned the authenticity of WikiLeaks website.

In his statement on release of classified State Department Documents, he said, "I cannot vouch for the authenticity of any one of these documents. But I can say that the United States deeply regrets the disclosure of any information that was intended to be confidential. And we condemn it. Diplomats must engage in frank discussions with their colleagues, and they must be assured that these discussions will remain private. Honest dialogue-within governments and between them-is part of the basic bargain of international relations; we couldn't maintain peace, security, and international stability without it. I'm sure that Nepal's ambassadors to the

United States would say the same thing. They too depend on being able to exchange honest opinions with their counterparts in Washington and send home their assessments of America's leaders, policies, and actions."

"The owners of the WikiLeaks website claim to possess some 250,000 classified documents, many of which have been released to the media. Whatever their motives are in publishing these documents, it is clear that releasing them poses real risks to real people, and often to particular people who have dedicated their lives to protecting others. An act intended to provoke the powerful may instead imperil the powerless. We support and are willing to have genuine debates about pressing questions of public policy. But releasing documents carelessly and without regard for the consequences is not the way to start such a debate," said a statement.

## EU'S Food Aid

The European Union is providing a grant assistance of Euros 1,047,000 (around NPR 100.15 million) to allow the World Food Programme (WFP) to transfer its food security phase classification monitoring system to the Government of Nepal and to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MoAC) to monitor and analyse food security in the country.

Bishnu Prasad Aryal, Joint Secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture of the Nepal Government and Nicolas Oberlin, WFP Deputy Country Director signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at the Ministry Monday for executing the aforementioned tasks.

Nathu Prasad Chaudhary, Secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperative, and Lluis Navarro, Head of Operations, European Union Delegation to Nepal were also present on the occasion.

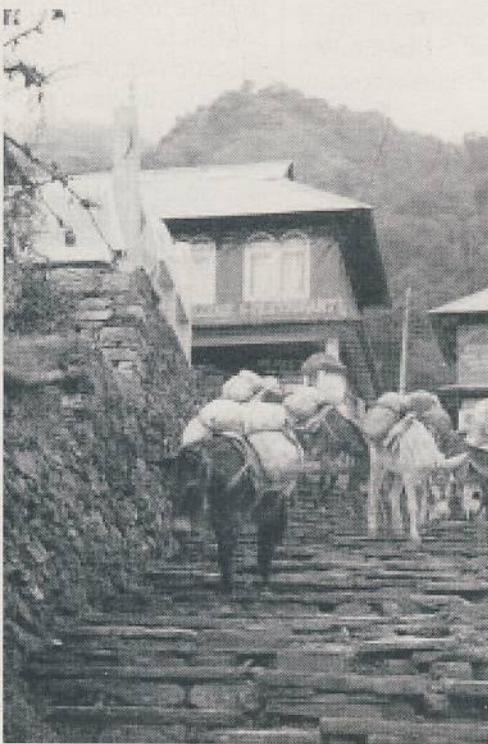
The assistance being provided is part of a larger EUR 9 M intervention funded by the European Union and implemented by WFP in seven food insecure districts in the Mid- and Far-West.

"The EU is glad to assist WFP and the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives to develop an effective food monitoring mechanism since improving the food security situation has been one of the prioritized areas of EU cooperation in Nepal," Navarro said.

WFP Deputy Director, Oberlin thanked the EU for the support under the European Union Food Facility (EUFF) project and hoped for continued support in the days ahead.

The project began on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2009 and will end on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2011. Some 50,980 most vulnerable households in the target districts reaching up to 285,000 beneficiaries are expected to reap the benefits of the project.

According to press release of Delegation of European Union in Nepal, The European Union (EU) announced a package of one billion Euros for the 'Food Facility' in 2008.



The announcement came in the wake of rising food prices and the pressing need to make rapid responses to growing food scarcity in 50 countries including Nepal. Out of this total sum, 23.5 million Euros (2.7 billion rupees) have been earmarked for Nepal to run projects in the eastern, central, mid-western and far-western regions.

## Electronic Garbage Injurious To Health

The discarded electronic appliances such as mobile, computer, refrigerators also known as e-wastes are causing serious public health implications. The heavy metals like lead, and mercury and the radio active radiations that these release to environment can cause ailments in nervous system, heart, liver, lungs, kidney, skin, muscle, brain and bodies' defense system. According to Sushma Upadhyaya, senior chemist at the Pollution Monitoring Division of the Environment Ministry, the garbage should be segregated into biodegradable, plastics and electronics for their safe and proper disposal. She said that a recommendation has been registered at the cabinet to formulate E-waste Act for their safe management.

## Perks Of Bank CEOs Capped

Close on the heels of the budget ordinance that increased the income tax rate to 35 percent on additional income for those earning more than Rs 2.5 million a year, the Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) has capped the salaries and perks of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of banks and financial institutions. Issuing a set of guidelines, it has asked them to limit the fixed annual salary and allowances for chief executives to less than 5 percent of the average staff expenses incurred over the previous three fiscal years or less than 0.025 percent of the company's total assets at the end of the previous fiscal year, whichever is lower.

## Tenth General Assembly

The tenth General Assembly of Karmana Saving and Credit Co-operative recently concluded in Jawalakhel. Chief Guest was Chairman of National Cooperative Bank Ramesh Prasad Pokharel, chairman of the cooperative Shyam Prasad Ghimire and member secretary Ganesh Bahadur K.C. The cooperative has 622 members with annual transaction of more than 500 million rupees. During assembly, founder chairman Prakash Bahadur Mahat was also felicitated. The general assembly also endorsed the audit report of 2009/10. ■

## NEW SPOTLIGHT

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### 'Chinese PM May Discuss Nepal In Delhi'

A prominent Chinese expert on Nepal says that prime minister Wen Jiabao may discuss the Nepal situation with his Indian counterpart during his visit to Delhi this month. Professor Wang Khonwei of the Beijing-based Institute of Asian Pacific Studies and Institute of Chinese Academy of Social Science said that Nepal, India and China would do well to work in close understanding. The issue is likely to come up during Wen's visit to Delhi, according to him. Referring to the Nepalese Maoist communist party



chairman Prachanda's proposal that he made after a recent visit to China, Wang voiced support for the three-nation strategic cooperation. This is a good-intentioned proposal to which China is positive. He said that if India has a long-term strategic interest in South Asia, it must work in collaboration for the development of the region. He accused that some member of the Indian intelligentsia have been playing the Tibet card against China, but he said China would not play with India's security because it wants to maintain good relations. He said, Delhi must think what will happen if the Chinese backed the separatist movements in the north-east India. (*Nagarik*, November 25)

### 'Foreigners Have Already Decided On New Nepal PM'

The chairman of the Nepal Mazdoor Kisan Party, Narayan Man Bijukchhe, has blamed the stalemate over the new prime minister's election on the



wrangling among the three big parties. He said that 'foreign masters' (read India) have already made their choice clear and given the name to the parties. But the three parties have not been able to come to agreement on the suggested name, which, according to Bijukchhe, comes from outside the three big parties. (*Nepal Samacharpatra*, November 27)

### After the UNMIN's Exit

Some argue that the present stalemate in Nepal is due to the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) and that once it departs from here, India will remove the uneasiness prevailing in Nepal. This reminds one of the assessments the Maoists made: a quick solution to the existing political stalemate would follow once the government of Madhav Kumar Nepal stepped down. But the reality is: such a solution did not come about. Instead, the Maoists began recognizing what it once dubbed a puppet government as a caretaker one.

So, the exit of the UNMIN also would not let Delhi have a free hand for more excesses in Nepal for three reasons. One, Nepal's situation has come to the notice of the international community. Two, India itself is all set to start off as a two-

year temporary member of the Security Council in January. Three, one of the five permanent members of the Security Council does not seem likely to stop keeping watch on the happenings here from its border with Nepal. (*Dhruba Hari Adhikary in Tarun*, November 22)

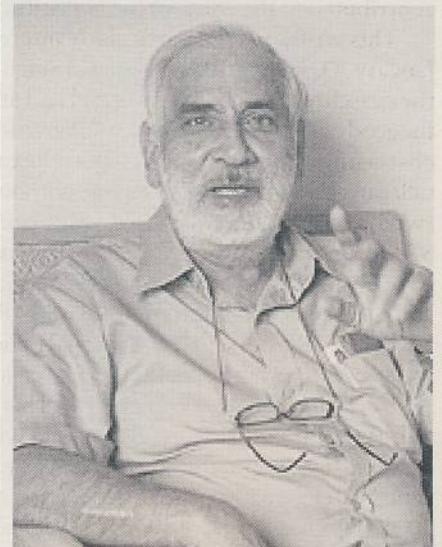
### I am not an anti Indian:

#### Prachnda

UCPN (Maoist) chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal has clarified that he doesn't hold any kind of anti-Indian sentiments, and that it was the media that presented him to be like that.

In a meeting with Professor S.D Muni, the Indian expert on Nepalese affairs, in the capital on Monday, he said he is not anti-Indian and that he never pinpointed India as the "main enemy" in his political dossier he presented during the party's extended meeting recently.

"Our party does not want to identify India as a chief enemy and that reports that I have pin-pointed India as one in my political dossier is but a rumour spread by the media," the Maoist strong man told Muni during their brief meeting.



Emerging from the meeting, Muni said that the Maoist chairman complained to him that India is stopping him from getting back into power, but would still like to maintain a cordial relationship with India as always. (*Nepal News*)

# Leadership Of Muscle And Money Minus Morals

- DIPAK GYAWALI



Nepali public mood is one of despair morphing into anger. Surveys show that only five percent of the people think the country is heading in the right direction and only twelve percent think positively of their elected representatives. Nobody seems to be expecting this demonstrably incompetent lot to write any kind of constitution in the remaining six of their self-extended twelve months. Given the range of unresolved thorny issues - from the very framework of the state to the nature of democracy itself - if a draft is hastily declared in penultimate days, it will in all likelihood be burnt in the streets by our abundant disgruntled groups.

Everyone is groping in the dark to find the answers: when, how and why did we go so horribly wrong? Some insights might soon be forthcoming in two thousand plus secret US embassy cables from Kathmandu in the WikiLeaks website sent during the tenures of Ambassadors Michael Malinowski, James Moriarty and Nancy Powell. They cover events from early 2002 till February this year

and hopefully will cover the Kangressi infighting between the Girijangress and Deupangress factions that led to their dissolving the

discredited Third Parliament. That enmity continues till today, has paralysed its collective leadership and, as a consequence, contributed to the ennui of the Constituent Assembly itself.

This writer will be particularly interested in the cables of January 2003 when the late Narayan Singh Pun was negotiating the ceasefire with the Maoists and had at one point called for the good offices of Ambassador Malinowski to arm-twist certain obstinate neighbouring diplomats reluctant to let their wards talk directly with the royal regime without their interlocution (which they engineered three years later with the 12-point SPAM agreement). One cannot help wondering what could have changed, and how, in American thinking between then and November 2005 after the Dhaka SAARC summit when the US essentially 'outsourced' its Nepal policy to the Mughlanis. It will be interesting to see the official version of (now in Dhaka) Ambassador Moriarty's explanation of his highly undiplomatic public outburst that 'King Gyanendra will soon be flying out of Nepal hanging on the nose-cone of a helicopter!' The cables from November 2005 till the declaration of Loktantra in April 2006 are what anthropologists would call 'thick text', often four times a day, and should provide a mirror into the morality of Loktantrick times and the international factors that legitimized and fertilized a range of unprincipled behaviour.

Moral turpitude is a two-way street, and US diplomats' readings of Nepali shenanigans will be a far less reproachable traffic than the self-serving behaviour of the Nepali politicians themselves that will probably be found in WikiLeaks commented upon with glee, since that is what has led to the current imbroglio. The secret cables should help us understand

the unprincipled politics of those times and to appreciate the nature of the current political mess.

How is it that Nepali Kangress was leading a majority government that was fighting the Maoist insurgency but its party president would unauthorized go secretly to Delhi to meet the rebel leaders sheltered there, even as Deuba was in Washington talking to George Bush? To an observer from across the seven seas, how was it possible to make sense of the political morality in arguing for restoring a parliament dissolved by the majority government? Even more perplexing, how could the prime minister and his followers who dissolved the parliament go back shamelessly into its resurrected version, and after its five-year mandate had expired? How could the Mughlanis who declared Maoists as terrorists even before Nepal did, continue to meanwhile shelter them in Delhi, provide intelligence security and chaperon the insurgency's top leadership to confabulate with India's senior politicians against a supposedly

friendly neighbouring state in times of peace?

How could parties that were the architects of the 1990 constitution (self-declared 'the best in the world') throw it into the

dustbin without an iota of reform efforts? How could the parliamentary parties that avowed non-violent politics provide a hit list to the Maoists to murder candidates for local elections called by the King in 2005? How did they appease the Maoists politically to the hilt and now complain that the Maoists do not believe in parliamentary democracy but still believe in a revolution to establish the dictatorship of the politburo as per Leninist strategy of using 'useful idiots'? How could they be brought en masse into a resurrected parliament without due process of popular elections, without a single commitment from them to eschew the politics of violence and one-party dictatorship? The US has at least been consistent: it still has not forgotten the murder of its security guards, nor has it removed the terrorist tag of the Maoists without first seeing concrete evidence of their having given up violence as a political tool.

Nepal's problem lies in democrats not really being democrats, socialists (and communists) not really believing in socialism, and politicians being in politics not for public service but as unprincipled careerists out to make money. If politics is the art of managing power in society, Steven Lukes, Karl Polanyi and even the sages of Samkhya philosophy have advised us that it is of three types: coercive (tamasic shakti) of the state, persuasive (rajasik shakti) of the market and moral (satwik shakti) of the civic sphere that relies on volunteerism born of deeply held beliefs. It is that third ethical force that Nepal's political parties lack. They believe that money from looting the exchequer and the coercive muscle of their goon squads are enough to justify a blissful career at the helms of the state. It is whispered among the cognoscenti that even a small conservative

One cannot help wondering what could have changed, and how, in American thinking between then and November 2005 after the Dhaka SAARC summit when the US essentially 'outsourced' its Nepal policy to the Mughlanis.

party in the current 22-party coalition nominated to the cabinet a character with a particularly unsavoury past because, so argued its party chief, the main purpose today is to make money for the party (with constitution making ostensibly being a non-issue!), and goon-squad boss is the only one that can do so without any qualms of conscience.

In all of this loot going on during the last three years, the "ethics community" of Naagarik Samaaj has been criminally silent: having prostituted their supposedly independent consciences to particular political leaders, they have lost the capacity to shed any light in the current darkness. The question is not where the country headed, because the answer is plainly downhill; rather it is: what are the pathway options on the table that promise any outlet from this stagnation? Only three political philosophies are distinct out there, the majority of the parties having written themselves into the ethical margins as porters to the Maoists.

One is the dominant Maoist (especially Vaidya faction's) view that the insurrection begun in 1996 must be taken to the logical conclusion of establishing a one-party rule. Nepali ground realities as well as the international mood, to say nothing of the high physical costs, will doubtless prevent its realization. The other position is that of RPP-Nepal's which argues for new elections and a referendum on major issues of monarchy, federalism and secularism. However, it is not clear from which legal basis one could move forward, since the interim constitution does not allow for it and the current CA is deadlocked and defunct. The third position is that of the veteran of Nepali politics KP Bhattarai. Since the Girija-Mughlani roadmap forced upon the King has collapsed, go back to the 1990 democratic constitution, he says, and put its unacceptable provisions to a referendum.

Maybe the time has come to consider this third option; and the Maoist appeasers must find the guts to face the truth that their 2005 experiment has been a singular disaster. We just have to wait and see if Malinowski and Moriarty might be unwittingly providing, in all the embarrassment to follow, that face-saving moment. ■

# Cancun Promise

*Nepal is expecting that the coming round of climate change meeting can produce some significant progress*

By KESHAB POUDEL

Nepal is expecting that the coming round of climate change meeting can produce some significant progress.

"Nepal is expecting that the Cancun conference will agree on financial parts needed for the adaptation in the least developed countries," said Dr. Ganesh Raj Joshi, secretary to the Ministry of Environment.

"Nepal's priority is in finance, technology transfer and adaptation," secretary Joshi told New Spotlight. "On December 4, Nepal will host the meeting for Mountain Alliance as a side event."

Minister of Environment Thakur Prasad Sharma will lead the Nepalese delegation in the Cancun meeting. Nepal will be represented by NGOs, media persons and officials from the Ministry Environment.

A senior UN official is also expecting that the next round of climate-change talks, beginning Nov. 29 in Cancun, Mexico, can produce "significant" progress on forest protection, aid for developing nations and technology sharing.

"There are enough issues that are close to resolution that an important outcome could be achieved," UN Assistant Secretary-General Robert Orr told reporters in New York. "It is our assessment that significant progress is possible."

Orr, director of policy planning for UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, said that, while "expectations for Copenhagen were huge, we are at a different point today." As no broad-based accord will be reached, the "order

of the day is pragmatism" and negotiators should "make progress where we can on the issues we can," he said.

Talks since Copenhagen on forest protection, climate aid and technology sharing have left those issues "ripe" for agreement in Cancun, Orr said. "We encourage all parties to push the last few inches across the finish line."

The UN is seeking a "set of understandings on cooperation" to curb destruction of forests, which accounts for 20 percent of manmade carbon dioxide emissions, Orr said.

Laurence Graff, head of international relations unit at the European

Commission's climate department, also said last month that agreement in those three areas is "within reach" at Cancun. "We need to be ambitious but realistic and manage

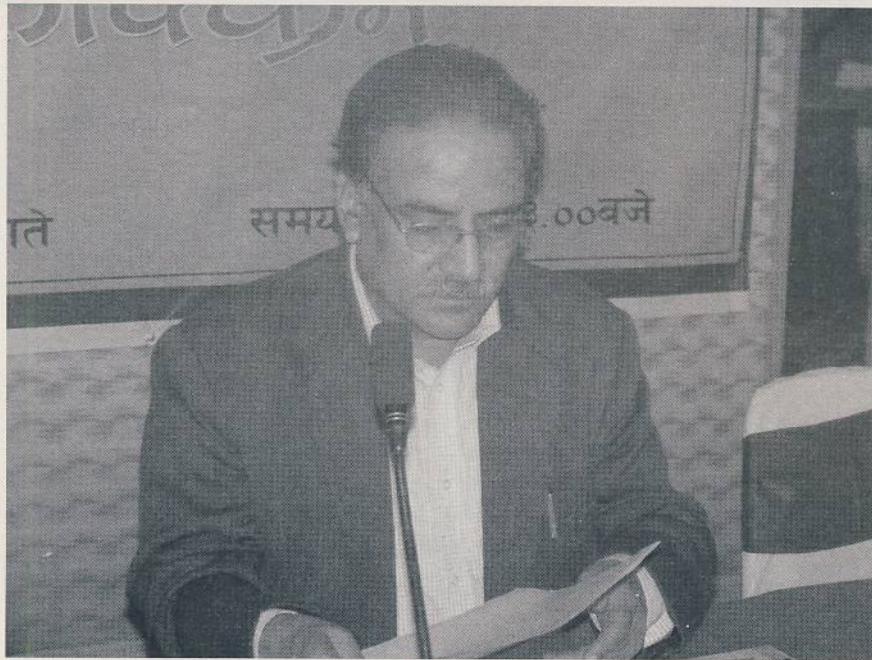


expectations so that we can lay the ground for action and provide a good milestone for an international regime that would be finalized later," he said.

Almost 200 nations will try to forge a deal to limit greenhouse gases blamed for climate change that eluded last year's meeting in Copenhagen. They failed to reach a binding agreement to set a framework for greenhouse-gas reduction when the Kyoto Protocol expires in 2012.

Instead, the Copenhagen meeting yielded a political accord calling for \$100 billion a year by 2020 to fund climate efforts in poorer nations.

The countries also vowed to stop global temperature increases at 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) higher than in pre-industrial times. ■



Maoist Chairman Prachanda

## MAOIST PLENUM

# Three Is A Crowd

*The Maoist party has returned from Palungtar plenum with a façade of unity that could burst any time soon*

By SAROJ DAHAL  
in Palungtar, Gorkha

At the end of the week-long Palungtar plenum, Maoist chief Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' boasted of a grand success of the meet.

He told reporters, "it has been a win-win for all of us – the chairman, vice chairmen, the people and the nation."

His facial expression and the body language defied the claims. So did the facts on the ground.

The plenum had ended in a clear defeat for the once all-powerful chairman.

For the first time in the party's history, the Maoist chairman failed to push through his report. Despite a clear majority among the 6000 delegates.

Faced with tough opposition from vice chairmen, Mohan Baidya 'Kiran' and Baburam Bhattarai 'Laldhoj', Prachanda had no choice but to relent.

He could not force through his

report. Nor did he let the other two's reports.

"Had he gone his way", said a party insider, "the party would have witnessed a vertical split."

Added another, "the chairman is no longer the all-powerful he used to be."

The plenum failed to sort out the differences of the three top leaders on a number of issues including the peace process, the constitution-making, the future course and policy on India.

The issues have been returned to the central committee (CC) which had been inconclusive prior to the plenum.

The CC was set to begin December 2.

Prachanda did manage to avert a visible split of the party. But seeds of division have deepened after the Palungtar conclave.

Ideological and emotional division was there to see in the broadday light.

The three different groups of cadres and the combatants supporting the three leaders met separately to discuss the three reports.

The division at the top had descended to the bottom.

The supreme commander of the 19000-combatant party seemed to lose his grip over them too.

Most of the participating 1200 combatants did indeed throw their weight behind the top boss.

But some dared to challenge him and back the other two junior bosses.

Some sided with Vaidya some with Bhattarai.

Not that Prachanda did not think of giving a try at proving who is the boss.

On the third day of the plenum, he quietly initiated a signature campaign to show his majority.

He had to back out in the wake of the two vice chairmen's warning.

They said, "the issue is not who holds the majority and who does not, but the issue is ideological one.

In yet another attempt to sway the meet in his favour, Prachanda sought to win over influential young turks like pro-Vaidya Netra Bikram Chanda 'Biplav'.

"Biplav and Barsha Man Pun 'Ananta' (another youth brigade figure) should have been in my government", said Prachanda.

Critics took the comments as an attempted bribery.

Prachanda sought to play Vaidya and Bhattarai against each other. He tried to send olive branch to Vaidya to isolate Bhattarai.

Although Vaidya was more critical of him, Prachanda reserved his anger to be poured at Bhattarai.

But Vaidya threw cold waters to Prachanda's design of winning over him.

Said a politburo member, "for the first time our chairman's tactic to remain the unchallenged powerful leader by playing one rival against another failed."

It is obvious that Prachanda has returned from the plenum weaker while Vaidya and, more importantly, Bhattarai won many grounds.

The Palungtar plenum may well have set the stage for a dramatic finale soon to the tussle of power in the country's largest party. ■



# Unique Nepal

-DR. TILAK RAWAL

Disappointing the hard pressed Nepalese one more time, the much publicized meetings of top leaders of top three parties could not produce any positive result on formation of much-desired unity government and presentation in the legislative parliament of a consensus budget. Despite reported agreement, Maoist lawmakers did not let finance minister read the budget on the night of 19<sup>th</sup> November, forcing the caretaker government to unveil the budget, with a total outlay of around Rs 338 billion, through ordinance the next day. The budget is not very ambitious in that it has a growth target of 4.5 percent, very unlikely to be achieved, and in keeping with the past, has increased capital expenditure by 45 percent and 26 percent of the annual plan outlay is expected to be funded by external source. Increase in capital expenditure, it seems is just for mass consumption because recurrent expenditure has increased astronomically, from Rs 35 billion to Rs 160 billion during the last 10 years, while capital expenditure reached Rs 106 billion from Rs 42 billion during the same period. Further, data clearly reveal that there is huge gap between what is hoped for in the budget and its actualization. It may be noted that in the last 6 years only 86 percent, 72 percent 56 percent of publicized development expenditure, foreign grant and foreign loan, respectively, have been actualized. It should not be forgotten that when money comes into a country, it is a vote of confidence in that country. World capital is flowing into China and India because these countries have created a suitable environment for the global capital to be used in a very productive manner.

They have so many things on the offer for foreign investors. What do we have except insecurity, instability and rampant corruption in this country? Therefore, even a 26 percent reliance on

external source does not look realistic. Further, data available for the four months of the current fiscal year present a gloomy picture in that capital expenditure has decreased by 6.2 percent compared to the corresponding period of the previous fiscal year. Revenue that had registered an impressive growth in the previous three fiscal years has in this year grown by only 8.8, which is a clear reflection of slacking economic activities. During this period last year, revenue grew by 35 percent. In view of these realities, one can take the liberty of terming this budget unrealistic and ambitious. International donors and investors have genuine reasons to be worried.

On the corruption front, we have achieved global recognition as a corrupt nation in the last two years or so as is stated by reports of Transparency International (TI). This global coalition against corruption has placed Nepal in 146<sup>th</sup> position among 180 countries in the corruption perception index. It states in its report for the year 2010, which Prime Minister Mr. Nepal officially received couple of weeks ago, that this poorest nation in Asia, slipping 3 positions this year, is one of the most corrupt nations in the world. It has leapfrogged its Asian neighbors in recent years and will not take long, looking at the trend, to replace Somalia as the most corrupt nation (number one) in the world. Despite expectation of many that the budget will come up with measures to control unabated corruption, it has not made a mention of it. As if corruption has been accepted as a part of our life, PM is silent so are political parties and their

so called top leaders. In view of the current political confusion of serious nature and leaders repeated failure to resolve it, no improvement on any front in the near future is foreseeable. Sudden prorogation of the current session of the assembly has added further confusion and put into jeopardy the candidacy of NC's Ram Chandra Poudyal, the sole runner for the top executive post who has already lost 16 elections. These fruitless elections have become some kind of laughing stock in the society and the Supreme Court, issuing verdict on a writ petition, had directed Mr. Nembang, Speaker, to make the poll conclusive. After the verdict, which received positive as well as negative comments from different corners, some politicians and lawyers supporting NC went to the extent of suggesting that Poudyal should be declared winner as he had no contender left after Prachand's withdrawal from the race. However, nothing can be said until the next session of the assembly is called to commence business. MR. M. K. Nepal, who just returned from Russia after attending a conference on tiger there, however, does not seem too excited about calling the session as he has embarked on avoidable visits, defying criticism from all corners, to Cambodia and Belgium. He has assured the inquisitive press that he will cut short his visit if his presence is required. It would be unwise not to trust him because he did cut short his visit to Russia because his presence was required here in connection with his daughter's marriage. Some other members of cabinet as well as party top leaders are also all set to go abroad at a time when even Nepali Congress

**May be unique leaders of our unique Nepal are waiting for this country to replace Somalia as the most corrupt nation and Burundi as the poorest country in the world. Our caretakers also very well know that Iraq has just formed a new government after the inconclusive elections held some eight months ago. So let our rulers take their own sweet time.**

seems impatient, hope it is serious, about electing a new prime minister. Visits abroad are very essential in the present day world but in view of the crisis that Nepal is in today, commoners would want their masters to avoid

junks and concentrate on burning problems of this country.

It can be argued that the CPN Maoist's plenum held at Palungtar of Gorkha ended positively in that it has given top priority to peace and constitution. Any programme of protest to be carried out in the next six months, it seems, will not be violent. Now it is up to them and other political parties to work hand in hand in the greater interest of this nation, which has deteriorated politically as well as economically. It may be recalled that Lao PDR, Bangladesh and Nepal had per capita income of us dollar 180 in 1990. In 2009, the former two countries' per capita income reached 880 and 540, respectively, while that of Nepal remained at dollar 440. Amongst 160 economies surveyed in 2009, Nepal was found 8<sup>th</sup> lowest in the world with Burundi, at dollar 150, as the poorest country in the world. With a completely devastated external sector (balance of payment remaining negative in the last 16 months and export/import ratio at disappointing 16) and inflation at double digit in most of the last 28 months, one does not know what more is required to attract serious attention of our leaders to these problems. May be unique leaders of our unique Nepal are waiting for this country to replace Somalia as the most corrupt nation and Burundi as the poorest country in the world. Our caretakers also very well know that Iraq has just formed a new government after the inconclusive elections held some eight months ago. So let our rulers take their own sweet time.

*Dr. Rawal is a CA Member and Former Governor*

# BUDGET 2010

# Development Dilemma

Three days after the caretaker government issued the budget through ordinance, major donors came out with a written joint statement showing grave concern over the lack of what they called 'development leadership.' Their concern is especially pertinent given the extremely slow pace of development. Four months of the fiscal year has passed. But the government has spent only Rs 6 billion of the projected total of Rs 129 billion for development. There is no doubt that the delayed development will hit efforts to gain decent economic growth and frustrate the attempts toward poverty alleviation

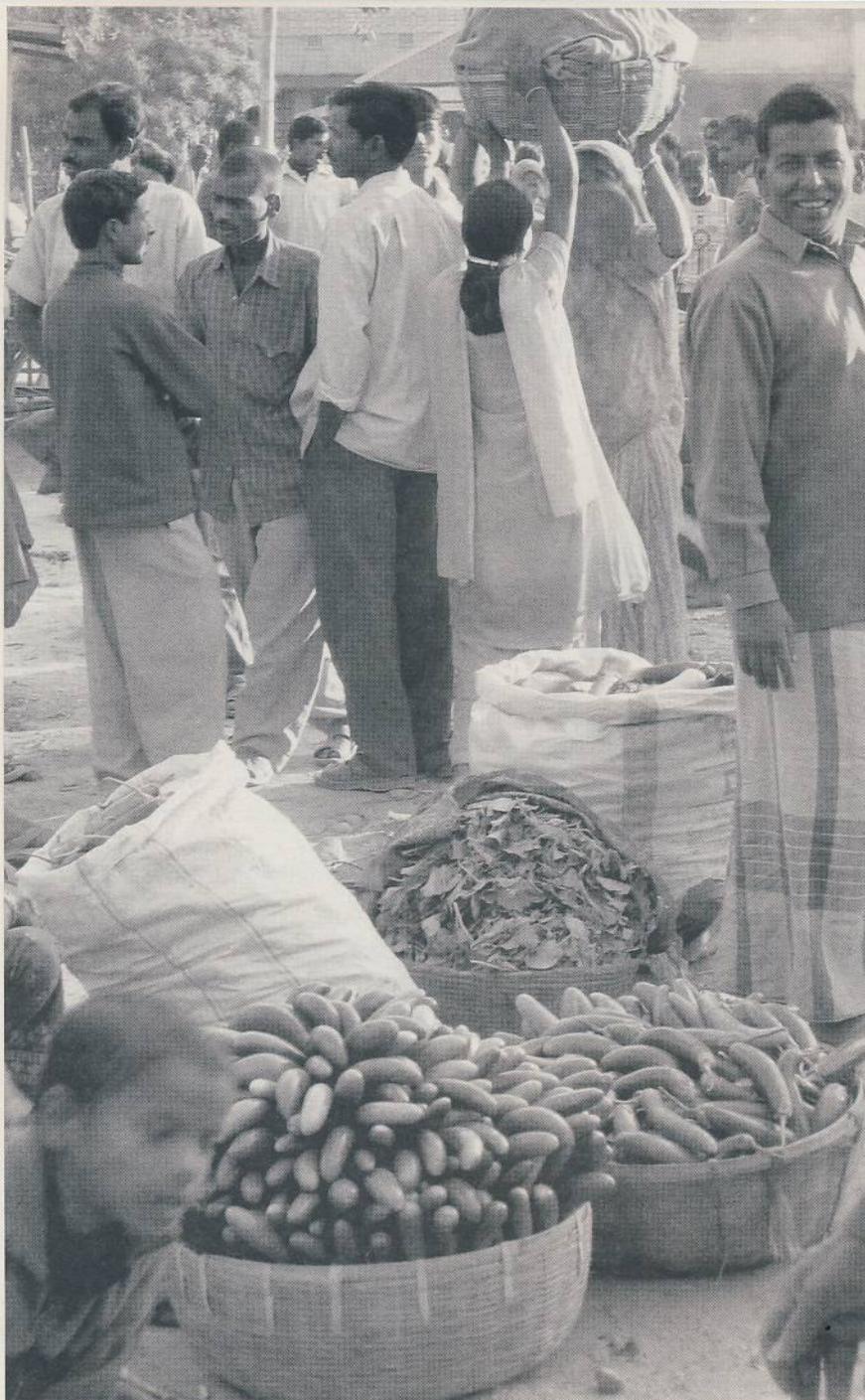
By SANJAYA DHAKAL

**I**n a way the uncharacteristically scathing statement made by Nepal's key donors was a dreadful reminder of how the unending

political uncertainty was exacting a toll on the country's economy and development.

In a clear sign of growing impatience

among Nepal's development partners, the statement was aimed at shaking the leaders who appear almost blithe toward the economic plight.



**Vegitable Market**

For over four months the development partners had watched, with trepidations, how the debate on the need to timely bring the budget was trampled under political considerations.

And when it was finally about to come, the drama that erupted in the House served as the last straw that broke the camel's back.

Alarmed by the unfolding events, the donors responded with a serious warning.

"The slow pace in implementing the peace process combined with the continued care-taker status of the government, lack of development leadership significantly reduces most donors' ability to secure future resources for Nepal," their statement read.

They have even warned that Nepal's unstable political situation makes it increasingly difficult for them to justify why Nepal should receive support in a

## Budget At A Glance

Total Outlay: Rs 337.9 billion
Capital (Development)
Expenditure: Rs 129.53 billion
Current (Regular)
Expenditure: Rs 190.31 billion
Total Revenue Projection: Rs
216.64 billion
Foreign Grants Projection: Rs
65 billion
Budget Deficit: Rs 55 billion
Foreign Loan: Rs 22 billion
Domestic Borrowings: Rs 33
billion

world where there are many competing demands for limited development resources.

### Danger Signs

Even if they want, the politicians will not be able to wish away the warning from the donors.

A quick look at the budget figures this year is enough to bury doubts, if any.

Of the total outlay of nearly Rs 338 billion, the government projects to finance only Rs 216 through revenue. The rest will have to be collected mainly as foreign loans or grants.

The budget expects to get Rs 65 billion in foreign grants and additional Rs 22 billion in foreign loans.

Their warning, if not paid heed to properly, could upset the budget projections substantially.

The part that could suffer the most, if the donors actually cut their aid amid worsening political instability, will be the development.

Since the government will not be in a position to cut financing the regular expenditures, any shortage of funding will hit the development expenditures.

### 'Ambitious' Target

In a budget that was delayed by four months and that came through ordinance, the government has set aside nearly Rs 130 billion for development purposes.

This, many economists say, is ambitious target.

"I will appreciate if the government can spend even one-half of that

## “We Will Successfully Spend On Development”

KESHAV ACHARYA is the Senior Economic Advisor to the Ministry of Finance. He spoke about the development ambitions and challenges of the budget. Excerpts:

**The overall environment is painted in uncertainty. How can you spend so much in development?**

We have set aside Rs 129.53 billion for development. Till now we have already spent around Rs 6 billion. So, in the remaining seven or eight months we will need to spend Rs 123 billion. We will successfully spend them.

**But the process for releasing resources for development itself is so lengthy. How can you?**

This budget does not have any new programs or projects. We have continued the projects from the previous year and they do not need to go through the process again.

**Still, given the past experiences and the slow pace of administrative machinery, how can you brush aside those doubts?**

We may not spend the whole of Rs 129 billion. But we will spend the large chunk of it.

**There are also worries that in trying to speed up spending, the government may end up facing irregularities and wasteful spending?**

That is why, this time we have introduced some bold measures. For instance, the money allocated for far and mid western region cannot be transferred anywhere else. Likewise, the spending on the last month of the fiscal year (Asar) must not exceed 20 percent of the total. Otherwise, we have seen that in Asar alone there have been 39 percent of the total spending.

months of the fiscal year – will ensure that development budget will be used appropriately. ■



**Road Under Construction**

projection,” said economist Dr. Chiranjivi Nepal.

According to him, the lengthy procedures laid down in the Procurement Act and the administrative red tapes will, invariably delay the start of development projects.

“That delay on the top of the fact that the government now has only seven

months to implement the budget will mean that the development targets will not be met,” he said.

But this is contested by the government officials. Keshav Acharya, Senior Economic Advisor at the Ministry of Finance, claimed that they will be able to spend ‘most’ of the development budget.

“This budget does not have new programs and projects. Therefore, the older ones will not need to go through contract and other procedures under the Procurement Act. This will save time,” he said.

On the other hand, the concerns shown by the donors and the doubts raised by economists have pushed the government to the situation where it might feel the urge to spend the development resources randomly just to fulfill the quota.

“That is exactly the concern. In this situation, the government might feel compelled to misuse the development expenditures,” said Dr. Nepal.

But Acharya has an answer to those doubts as well.

He said that some policy departures introduced by the budget – like prohibiting transfer of resources allocated to far and mid western region and limiting the amount of expenses that can be incurred during the final



**Finance Minister Surendra Pandey**



# Will The Nitish-engineered *Bahaar* Last?

By **ABIJIT SHARMA**

The ever flamboyant and jocularly 'charming' Laloo Prasad Yadav was pictured sad, lost and even shocked in the newspapers on the 25th of November. Hogging the front page headlines and stories was another man quiet opposite to Laloo's character. Despite people cheering and dancing around him he seemed quite calm, composed and had a gentle smile on his face: The man was Nitish Kumar.

The JD (U)-BJP alliance that Nitish led had won a thumping majority in the state assembly elections - an unbelievable 85 percent of the 243 seats at stake. The JD (U) stalwart thundered: "This is not a victory of my party. This is a victory of development and a victory of Bihar."

Indeed, the chief minister-reelect had turned out to be a Messiah of sort for Bihar. The state's face was completely overturned during his first innings. Right from empowering the women by distributing around 400,000 bicycles all over the state, putting more than 50,000 criminals

behind bars to improving the law and order situation, constructing thousands of kilometres of road where there was previously only some hundred kms, Nitish was able to do something which was never thought of in Bihar, often termed as an 'ungovernable' state. The state registered an 11 percent growth rate under him

The question now being asked is: Has a new and a sensible kind of politics finally emerged in India? Does identity politics, which plays a huge role in Indian politics, no longer matter?

The new CM claimed that religion and caste based politics was no longer influential and that the people voted for only those who brought development and worked for the state and the people.

It will however be too early to agree with him. For several reasons. He has not discarded the caste factor altogether yet. The engineer-turned-politician very wittily engineered identity politics or the caste based politics along with his developments. To reach out to the *dalits*, he created another category even amongst them, called the '*Mahadalits*' and another category called the Extreme Backward classes from the already existing Other Backward Classes (OBCs) category. He provided them with special financial packages. While addressing them, he cleverly said "Don't think I am creating these categories to play caste politics. I have created these categories so that you

people get what you deserve from the state".

Moreover, Nitish was also reluctant in letting the controversial BJP leader and Gujarat CM Narendra Modi campaign in Bihar, for the fear of losing the Muslim votes. Modi has been accused of having a hand in the 2002 religious riots of Gujarat. What's more, Nitish who has been credited with ushering in a new kind of clean politics in Bihar has not been able to disassociate the long-running criminal-politician nexus in the state. As a matter of fact, he even campaigned for a candidate from his party, who is in jail on murder charges.

It is clear that the development, the plank on which Nitish

has boasted of winning the elections, was not the only factor. Had he been confident of a landslide electoral victory purely on the development plank alone, he would not have needed to target the *dalits* nor fear losing votes in case Modi campaigned. That he has not been able to completely dissociate from the criminal elements also show that

Bihar politics is not yet free from crime and criminals.

It would be premature to conclude that he has ushered in a new kind of politics. In fact, politics would take even more time to change in a state like Bihar, where caste system and crime are deep rooted. You simply cannot wish them away just because a chief minister has done something positively different from his predecessors. Whether Nitish will be able to maintain the momentum in his second innings and repeat the electoral feat will have to be seen before giving him full marks for turning the Bihari, and indeed the Indian, politics around.

For now, the Indians can rejoice that the change has finally begun. As they say, well begun is half done? But the fact remains that the job is not complete yet. And the latter part of the journey is often tough, testing and tiring. Many, in the past, have flattered to deceive. Nitish will have to prove he is different.

As for the neighbouring Nepal which shares a long border with Bihar it should be happy if Nitish goes on to prove that he is made of a different mettle and change the face of one of the most impoverished and lawless states of India for the better. Nepal can look to Nitish for ideas and inspiration to change the face of one of the world's poorest and bad-governed countries, that Nepal is. After all, Bihar will also stand to gain from Nepal's progress and prosperity. ■



# "Nation's Leadership Weak"

- UPENDRA YADAV

UPENDRA YADAV, former foreign minister and president of Madheshi Janaadhikar Forum, is trying to do balanced politics. Following a split, the party has been reduced in its size and role. Yet, MJF is a force to reckon with. The budget episode gave a context in which Yadav spoke to **NEW SPOTLIGHT** in his party's parliamentary office. Excerpts:

**How do you describe the present political crisis?**

The present crisis is the result of distrust and mistrust among the country's three major political parties, namely, UCPN-Maoist, Nepali Congress and CPN-UML. Nepali Congress and CPN-UML consider UCPN-Maoist as a party with arms in its hands and Maoists consider Nepali Congress and UML as parties eager to suppress them at any time, once they disarm.

**But Maoist leader Prachanda has been saying that it is the foreign elements, particularly India, which does not want Maoists in the government? How do you look at this?**

There is some truth in Prachanda's statement. However, India is not the only factor now. There are several foreign actors working in the country - some in disguise of INGOs and some in others. For instance, some INGOs have been taking extra initiative in the constitution making process. They are sending our CA members abroad and supporting various local NGOs to hold the conference, training and other such things. This way they have been making the situation complicated. I don't mean that all INGOs have been doing this kind of thing. Some are very supportive also.

**Do you believe India can change the situation?**

Being a close neighbor with so many commonalities with Nepal's social, political, religious, cultural and geographical aspects, India can make a difference in the present situation. India helped us to settle the 10-year long violent insurgency, just within a couple of days.

**How can India make the difference?**

As all of us know how India helped in forging the 12-points agreement between seven political parties and Maoists. Thanks to that agreement, the present change was possible. If India takes initiatives like in 2005, Nepal's problems will be solved in an hour. If India positively supports us, nothing is impossible in Nepal.

**Your statement indicates that India has a major influence in Nepal's political parties. Does it not?**

Not only in political parties, India's influence is there in all aspects of Nepal's life. Whether one terms it fortunate or unfortunate, this is Nepal's reality. From centuries, India has influenced Nepal. There are many reasons behind it. Nepal's geography is a major factor. Economic dependence, cultural and religious commonalities, open border and social relations all are there. We have very close interactions with India. One cannot break this relation. This is the reality of Nepal.

**How do you look at the influences?**

We can also use this influence in the broader context

of national interest. For our economic prosperity, we need India's support and cooperation. We can use this influence in this direction. India is going to be economic super power and we can get a lot of benefits from it. It will be positive. Even our other neighbor China has made big economic progress; we also need to tap this for the benefits of the country. If we try to use these influences for the petty interest of particular political parties, that will be a disaster for all of us.

**How much do you blame political leadership for the present political scenario?**

Yes it is very weak. We have a tendency in Nepal that one needs foreign backing to continue in power and they ask external powers to be in power. From elections to formation of government, there is a tendency to seek support from external powers. Nepal's political leadership and mentality is so poor that we knock the doors of external power to be in the leadership of party. Since our leadership quality is so weak and greedy that they can sacrifice everything at the cost of power. In this scenario, it is natural for Nepalese people to face this kind of hardship.

**If there is a widespread involvement of external elements in Nepali politics, what needs to be done?**

First of all we need to develop economic, political and institutional strengths. Without such capabilities, it is impossible to reduce the foreign influence. Another important thing is the quality of political leadership. If we have a leader who always works in keeping with the interest of the country, we will find a respite.

**Maoists are demanding to sign a new agreement replacing the 12-points agreement. How do you look at this?**

If you are unable to fulfill commitments and follow the road map of earlier agreement like that of the 12-points agreement, I don't think there is any meaning to sign another agreement. As per the 12-points agreement, Maoists should have completed the integration of their combatants and other parties should have supported framing the new constitution. Nothing is happening.

**Your comments justify Maoists argument that India is meddling in Nepalese politics. Don't they?**

Since the time of Prithvinarayan Shah to now, India has remained a strong factor in Nepal's politics. India played key roles in 1951, 1990 and 2006-07. No one can deny it.

**If that is so, why are Maoist leaders, including Prachanda, harping on a tune against India's interference?**

This is a typical communist mentality. All Nepalese politicians follow a similar trend, like Maoists. If India backs them to go to power, they

*There are several foreign actors working in the country - some in disguise of INGOs and some in others. For instance, some INGOs have been taking extra initiative in the constitution making process.*

don't mind to hail its role as supportive to uphold the democratic value. Once they are out of power, they criticize and even condemn India.

**It means UCPN-Maoist and Prachanda's relations with India are not good?**

I don't think so. India cannot ignore UCPN-Maoist party as Maoist is the largest party of the Constituent Assembly. This is the reason Indians are giving due recognition to CPN-Maoist party despite their anti-Indian slogans.

**UCPN-Maoist leaders said that they were out of power because of India. What do you say?**

We cannot cover our own weakness by criticizing others. If we unite, we can form the government on our own. The problem with our local leaders including Maoists is that they don't see their national interest first but what they care more is personal interest. If Maoist can make alliance with other parties, no one can stop them from forming the government.

**What do you think is a stumbling block for Maoists to form the government?**

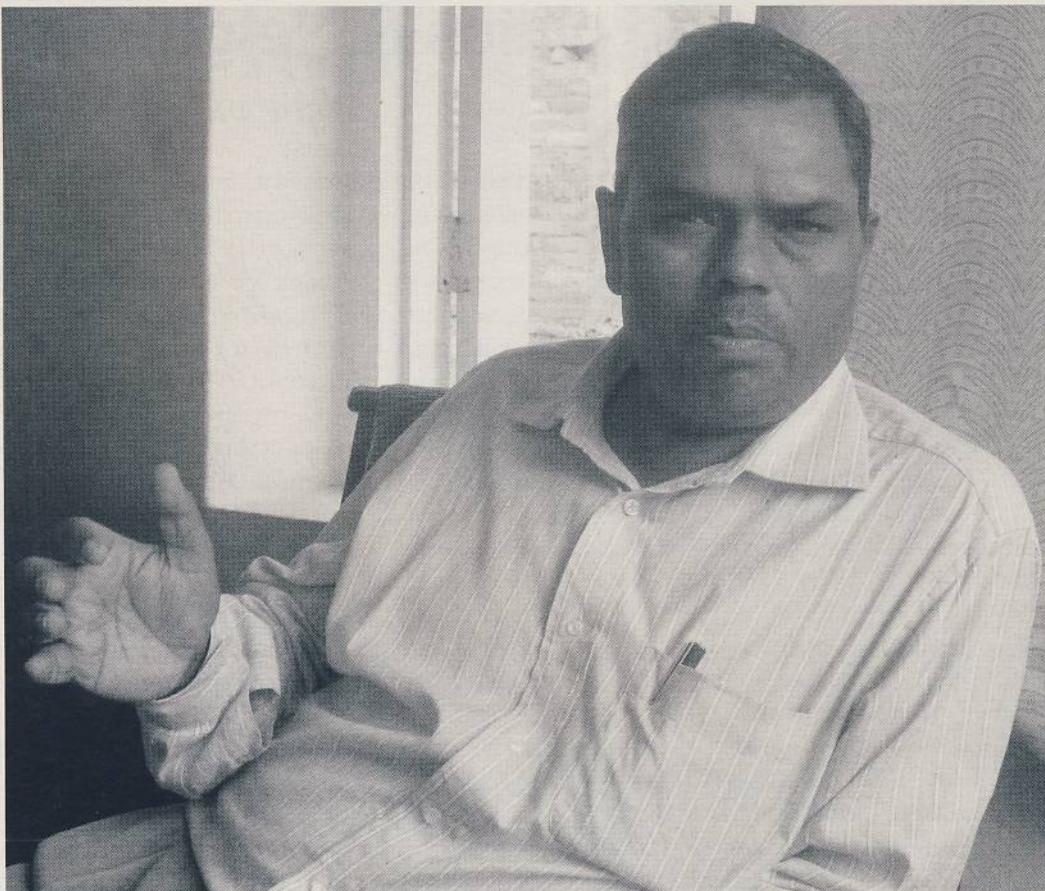
If Maoists are honest, they should support the process of integration of their combatants. Maoist leaders, including Prachanda, should stick to words and commitments they made. If Maoist frequently changed their stands and words, they will lose their credibility and trustworthiness. Maoists need to show that they are a political party not an armed group.

**How can you solve the present problems?**

There is need of coordination, cooperation and harmonious relations among the country's major political parties. If they continue to have this kind of situation, the country will go to conflict again. This is not the interest of anybody. We don't have other alternatives than to have compromise and consensus. If there is a conflict again, the country will have to pay a high price and people will suffer. Even after that they have to come to negotiations table for the solution. The road to conflict is a long and tedious road.

**What role have Madheshbadi parties been playing?**

Frankly speaking, we have a little role but it is the country's three main parties, UCPN-Maoist, Nepali Congress and CPN-UML, which will determine the course of politics. Only common agreement among



them is to deny the rights of Madhesh. Madhesh based parties have already tendered their demands to three parties. Our first demand is to settle the differences in constitution writing through discussions, second to prepare a working plan to lead the peace process to a logical end. The third is the need of a consensus government. If we want to write the new constitution by May 2011, we must form a consensus, an all-party government. We need to have a government to write the new constitution and to bring the peace process to a logical end.

**As all parties are demanding prime ministership, what suggestions do you have?**

First of all, we need to decide who is going to lead the government. We can divide portfolios on the basis of the percentage of vote we secured in the CA elections. Political parties agree to form such governments but they fail to implement it. This is because of mistrust and misunderstanding.

**How possible do you see it is to bring the constitution by May 2011?**

If the situation continues like this, I don't think we can produce the new constitution. The need of the time is to form the consensus government. There cannot be a party in opposition and others in the government.

**How does your party view the recent Maoist act in the Legislature-Parliament?**

We oppose both the moves. Presenting the full budget by the caretaker government was itself an unconstitutional act. Similarly, it was anti-parliamentary practice to manhandle CA members by Maoists. We condemn the Maoist act. ■

*The need of the time is to form the consensus government.*

*There cannot be a party in opposition and others in the government.*

# Domestic Politics & Neighbors



-PROF DR. LOK RAJ BARAL

Nepal's foreign policy is in a political wilderness today. No political elite, neither in the government nor in the opposition, spares time to consider the implications of the fast changing international and regional politics — as if nothing has happened to them. However, they never fail to react to events and opinions concerning their failures. Ranging from the firebrand Maoist Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda to Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal or Nepali Congress's Sushil Koirala, all leaders of the so-called major parties adopt reactive postures without, however, weighing the pros and cons of their utterances. Prachanda started spitting fire against India after his ouster from power. Madhav Nepal was angry with the UN Secretary General on the issue of the United Nations Mission in Nepal and on the former's comments on the government's failure to take the peace and constitution making processes ahead. Sushil Koirala and his colleagues also joined the anti-UNMIN chorus. It was more intriguing when the Prime Minister himself gave a nod to the Chief of the Army Staff, Chhatra Man Singh Gurung, to lobby against the extension of UNMIN that has put the army and the Maoist ex-combatants under its monitoring radar requiring both the forces to observe the code that they should not go out of their barracks or camps freely.

The most disgusting part in the conduct of Nepal's current policy is that it has in fact no policy at all. The

fractious politics of Nepal is also reflected in the conduct of the affairs of the state. Nepal has neither governance nor government in the real sense of these terms. Driven by horses facing different directions, the government leaders have failed to take decisions to add new values to their respective ministries. If a certain issue surfaces, all ministers start speaking on it even when their speeches are at variance with the policy of the Prime Minister or the government. UNMIN was one such issue for engaging the politicians, followed by Maoist-India and Maoist-China relations. For some time, the Machine Readable Passport (MRP) issue dominated the agenda. The Deputy Prime Minister with the portfolio of foreign affairs and the officials of the ministry were engaged in a media war with the former opposing the deal struck with one of the contractors and the ministry taking a decision to offer the contract to a foreign company. Finally, the cabinet took a decision despite a strong protest of the concerned minister. Surprisingly, the minister didn't resign on the issue as is normally done in other countries.

How ministers speak with conflicting voices has also been

observed in the Indian government's report submitted to the Nepali government that the Maoist leaders have been providing training to the Maoists of India in jungles, or in camps lodged by the ex-Maoist combatants. A strong denial came from the UCPN (Maoist) leaders that no such training had ever been undertaken by the Nepali Maoists and hence it was reprehensible. What is more interesting is that the ministers themselves have taken contradictory positions with ministers denying or supporting the report. Now the Inspector General of Armed Police Force himself told the media that his intelligence source has not yet received any evidence on the purported training.

On the domestic front, the election of the Prime Minister and the failure of parties to handle the issue have stalled the constitution making and peace processes as the leaders are preoccupied with grabbing the coveted Prime Ministerial chair, showing the least interest in the main agenda of the country. The incomplete election has also dragged India and other powers into domestic politics. The two neighbors, India and China, appear to be concerned greatly for their own respective reasons. The financial help allegedly offered by a

Chinese national to influence the outcome of the Prime Ministerial election and visit of the Special Envoy of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India on the eve of election of Prime Minister of Nepal and its

**The most disgusting part in the conduct of Nepal's current policy is that it has in fact no policy at all. The fractious politics of Nepal is also reflected in the conduct of the affairs of the state. Nepal has neither governance nor government in the real sense of these terms.**

exposures to the media have suggested how Nepal's politicians are increasingly losing their own credibility and independence. In 1951, India had prevented King Tribhuvan from appointing B.P. Koirala as Prime Minister due to lack of personal equation between Nehru and Koirala as the former considered latter too abrasive for maintaining relations with all the forces including the Ranas. His letter to the King which is published in the first volume of A.S. Bhasin's edited book or as narrated in *Atma Britanta* by B.P. himself reveals that, Koirala, despite his popularity, was a bete noire for Nehru. It denied the post of Prime Minister to B.P. Whether or not Nepal's democratic history would have been different if he had been a Prime Minister, the alternative provided to King Tribhuvan didn't also turn out to be positive for Nepal. On the contrary, it paved the way for bouts of political instability leading to the termination of the party system itself in 1960.

Can Prachanda's case in 2010 be compared to the politics of preference shown by India as had happened to B. P. Koirala? Yes, given the close linkages between Nepal's domestic politics and India's own perceptions about developments in Nepal

since the dawn of modern Nepal, especially after signing the Treaty of Sugauli, such phenomenon was nothing new in the past and will also continue to influence events in Nepal in the future. The psychology of power and the geo-political imperatives may make India more concerned about Nepal's developments than in the past. Since strategic significance of Nepal is increasing, other powers' activities are also likely to increase. Moreover, decline of states and erosion of absolute concept of sovereignty themselves are to be related to the emerging trends of global geo-politics that tend to erase national boundaries and erode the classical doctrine of sovereignty. Agendas of climate change, transnational terrorism and a host of other factors have made inter-state relations more complex and vulnerable.

Nepal's foreign policy which is almost a forgotten agenda today needs to be revisited in order to update and contextualize to the new regional and world politics. First of all, Nepal's own house should be in order by forging minimum level of understanding for shaping the political future. Guided by the past prejudices and mind set, Nepali political elites may not cope with daunting problems and crises. Since such problems have immediate implications for others, only realistic approach and acumen would bridge the gap between Nepal and its two neighbors. It is said: "Geography still counts. It counts in a strategic and tactical military sense, a political sense, and a culturally defined territorial sense, and it counts in terms of the spatial distribution of resources, peoples, and physical systems." We cannot change geography, nor can we prevent the all invading influences of the rising powers, India and China. But we can maintain our independence and sovereignty through a diplomacy based on realism and principles. And reliance on diplomacy is the only guarantee to national security.

*Lok Raj Baral (Ph.D.) is Professor and Executive Chairman, Nepal Centre for Contemporary Studies (NCCS), Kathmandu.*

# Hope & Fear

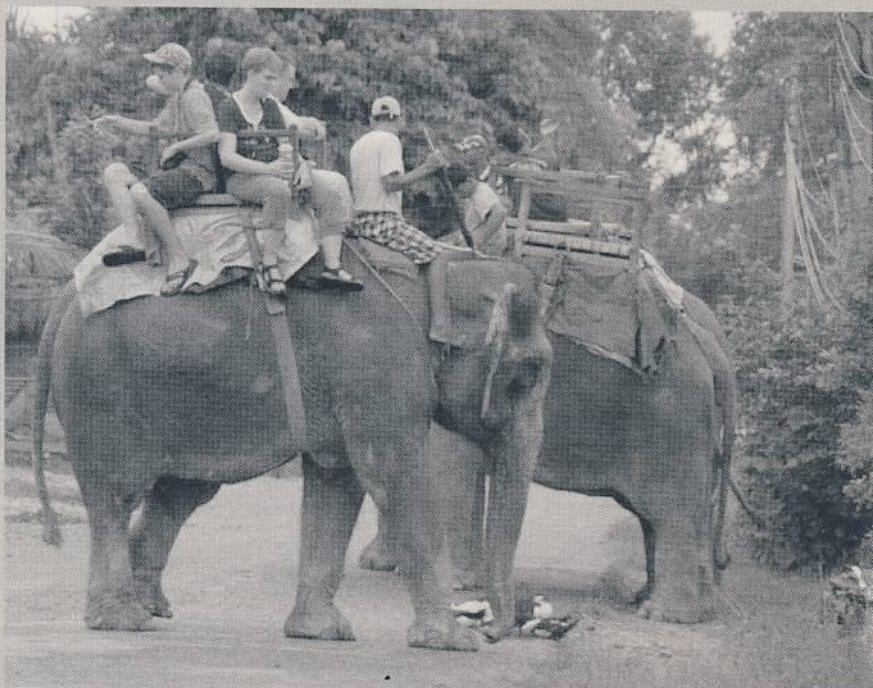
By A CORRESPONDENT

**A**lthough several countries in the world have seen declining number of visiting tourists, Nepal's tourism growth remained at double digits in the last nine months. Despite political uncertainty, the quest of tourists to visit Nepal and trek in the Himalayas is there forever.

Visit Nepal Year 2011 is approaching with an ambitious objective to bring in a

program," said a tourism entrepreneur. "Tourism is a very vulnerable industry and it will suffer in the case of any political incident and uncertainty," said Prasadha Bahadur Pandey, President of Hotel Association Nepal. "As political parties have already committed their support, I don't think they will take any action against their commitment."

Despite difficulties in getting to Nepal due to low number of air tickets,



million tourists but not all political parties are helping the national campaign. As UCPN-Maoist party came up with the agenda of struggle, tourism entrepreneurs are worried if the party will fail to abide by the general understanding that there will be no general strike in the year.

UCPN-Maoist called five days of general strike in May last year, completely devastating Nepal's growing market in the world. One cannot rule out such possibility in the future.

"We are worried about the future

the tourist arrival is increasing. Had Nepal got its own aircraft, the number would have been much higher," said another tourism entrepreneur. "We don't understand when someone tries to buy plane for Nepal Airlines, CIAA and PAC of Legislature Parliament run behind it."

Along with peace, Nepal needs to have its own aircraft to make the Visit Nepal Air 2011 a grand success. In the context of Maoist threat for political disruption and CIAA and PAC's pulling down the proposal to buy new aircraft, the year ahead is very difficult. ■

# Heavy Weight Problem

-DR. ARUNA UPRETY



One cardiologist advises his patients to do physical exercises to reduce their weight. But Dr. Kamal Dhakal (name changed) is fat himself and has a bulging belly. His heavy weight makes it very hard for him to climb stairs. He eats only spicy, oily foods and eats lots of meat products. He is an example in how very easy it is to give advice to others but difficult to apply the same in one's own life.

In our country, some people have malnutrition because of a heavy physical work and a lack of nutritious foods. But in the city areas, people eat too much of junk food and they have a lack of physical exercise.

Health workers, businessmen or computer engineers with huge bellies are not a welcome sight. When they advise others how to reduce weight, there will be few takers. Especially the health workers need to take their own advice seriously.

Nowadays, in the big cities, people have many diseases like high blood pressure, cholesterol, heart problems, and diabetes. The influx of patients in the hospital shows heavy weight affects most of these patients. And some research has shown that not only in the big cities but in some villages as well people have been suffering from high blood pressure and diabetes popularly known as *chini korogin* in Nepal.

Current worldwide estimates suggest that one billion people are overweight or obese, and the World Health Organization (WHO) predicts that the number will increase 1.5-fold by 2015. As early as 1997, an expert committee convened by the WHO signalled that the rising trend of overweight and obesity represented an imminent global threat and a rapidly growing public health problem.

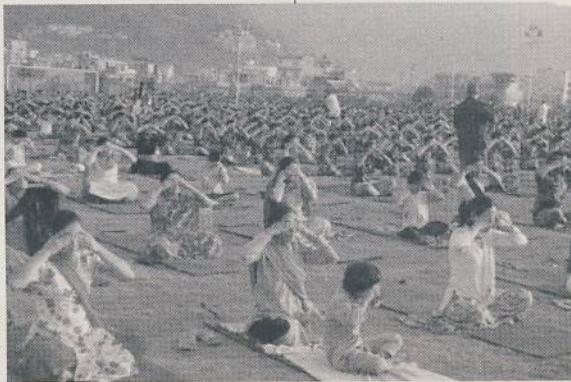
The first nationally representative study of both genders was conducted in 2007 in Nepal.

The Nepal Non-Communicable Diseases Risk Factor Survey, which included 15 of 75 districts and represented all five administrative regions and three ecological regions, estimated the prevalence of overweight at about 7% and the prevalence of obesity at around 1.7% in Nepal. Based on the WHO-STEPs manual, this WHO-funded NCD risk factor survey began in 2003 as a pilot study in Kathmandu. It was extended to three other districts in 2005 and became a national survey in 2007.

I knew one engineer Mr. Ramesh Sharma (name changed) who liked cheese, potatoes, meat products and ate heavy food every day. He used to do less physical work. His weight increased day by day and he looked like a ball. Fifteen years ago he was advised to control his diet and to focus on exercise. He replied that instead of dying without eating it was better to die by eating. After five years he was found to be suffering from high

blood pressure and he also had a minor heart attack needing hospitalization for about two months when he underwent an operation for his heart elements. After some time it was found that he also had diabetes.

Nowadays he cannot eat junk food, tasty food or spicy food. Being a diabetic patient, he regularly takes medicine. He was lucky that he survived heart problems and is now under medication, but how many people are so lucky? Many people, without knowing that they might be victim of blood pressure and diabetes, continue to eat a lot of rice, and junk food and their bellies and waists rise until, at the end, they are knocking on the doors of hospitals and some times the doctors cannot do any thing for them. Why do people not stop eating unhealthy food products? If they focus on physical exercise and stop eating junk foods, instead of eating medicine, they don't have to suffer a lot.



We usually drink cold drinks in which preservatives are added. In a bottle of 300ml of cold drinks, 10 spoons of sugar are added. The diabetic patients drink tea without sugar but continue to drink cold drinks.

During fasting many men and women with heavy weights overeat. They eat lots of potatoes, sweets, fats, and milk. In the long run if they continue to do this they will suffer from different diseases. People with heavy weight have regular backache,

knee pain, swelling legs and hands etc.

Regular exercise, healthy diet will cure their pains and they don't have to take doctor's medicines. One has to promise to himself that he won't go for tongue's taste, he will do physical exercise even if he has less weight, we won't eat more during fasting etc.

Unhealthy or non-nutritious food contains little or zero nutritious value to the diet, too much unnecessary calories and fat which are useless and harmful to human health. They could easily destroy your health and fitness. So finding ways to keep yourself healthy and active is very important. The lack of activity is one reason why people get obese. Others are consuming too many calories, heavy or poor nutrition etc.

There is a woman that I know called Bimala Bhatta. Because of her heavy weight, she even cannot climb up the stairs to go to the kitchen to have a cup of tea. When she is advised to climb up the stairs, she complains of having knee pains. She says that she cannot eat less and is hard for her to do exercise. She has high blood pressure; she takes medicines but cannot work. No one can give advice to the people like this.

May be If people like Ram Dev comes to Nepal and gives a long lecture to her she might realize how she is spoiling her own life. ■

## Book

# On Media-Politics Nexus

*Senior journalist and academician Professor Parsuram Kharel describes how media and politics go side by side and what implications does this have in the society*

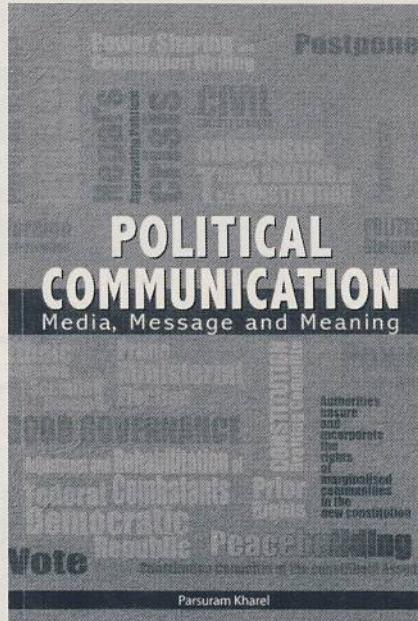
By A CORRESPONDENT

**A**t a time when several critics are debating the role of the media in the present context and when many people are pointing to the nexus of media, corporate sector and politics and politicians for many ills in the society, Professor Kharel has written a book, the first of its kind, that goes to inform on the actual role of politicians, politics and media and their interactions.

Several authors have written books on Nepal's media sector. However, senior journalist and Professor Kharel's books are different from all those. Having worked as a journalist for more than three decades and having been involved in teaching journalism, professor Kharel brings in a rich experience and extensive knowledge as an author. This is what one can see in this book.

"This book takes a critical approach to the practices and prospects of media-mediated communication, and the link role media play between the general public and politicians. It is designed to help perspectives and conceptual understanding. The purpose is to delve into relationship between politics and news media in particular. The primary objective of the book is to discuss the role news media has in informing society about political affairs and the functioning of political institutions," writes professor Kharel in his author's note.

A prominent media critic and columnist writing on national and international issues, Professor Kharel knows ins and outs of linkages between Nepalese politics and media. "The author, a well-known media person in his own right who has long innings in Nepalese journalism, takes a critical look at the practices and prospects of media-



**Political Communication  
Media, Message and  
Meaning**  
By Parsuram Kharel  
Published by Sangam  
Institute  
Gyaneshwor, Kathmandu  
Nepal  
Price: Rs. 500.00  
Pages: 287

mediated communication and the pivotal role they play between the general mass and politicians in general, and the relationship between politics and news media in particular," writes Prof. Ananda Shrestha in his preface.

Whether it is in developed or developing countries, the nexus between politicians, political parties and media often mislead the people. In the present context of Nepal, one can see this

growing nexus. "Knowing fully well that political communication not only involves journalism but a host of other disciplines like political science, economics, history, anthropology, psychology, linguistics, science and technology, the writer deliberately focuses on the relationship between the government and political parties, their leaders and print media and to some extent the broadcasting stream as well," writes Prof Shrestha.

Divided into 12 different chapters, the book by Prof. Kharel discusses the role of media in various forms and facets. The book deals with the role of media in regime change, its partisan interest and misuse of freedom for the sake of personal interest.

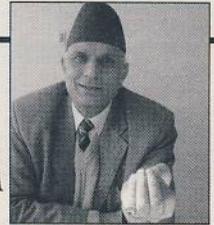
The author highlights how media is misused by various interest groups. Instead of working as a watch dog, media in the author's views is widely misused for political and other personal gains. This is what is the reality of Nepal's politics and media.

"The abuse of media is also highlighted in that some instead of fulfilling their assigned role as faithful 'watch dogs' of society turned into 'hound dogs' and 'lapdogs.' Greasing public opinion, the concept of free and fair media, national interest and patriotism, code of ethics etc are also discussed at length," writes Prof. Shrestha.

Based on his own collections of information of various political developments, Pof. Kharel critically evaluates the news disseminated by the media in various stages of political upheavals and changes. The author elaborates how information is generated and communicated to various publics in modern communication, and delves into characteristics of communication structure and conflict.

Author Professor Kharel has seen more than three decades of transformation and evolution of media in Nepal. He is an eyewitness to media's changing role. Thus, this book has a great value to all the readers who want to know about the media and politics in Nepal. ■

# Cancun: Taking Up Cause Of LDCs



THAKUR PRASAD SHARMA

I am leaving for Cancun, Mexico, following a series of consultative meetings with various stakeholders, including other ministers, members of the civil society, experts and members of the National Planning Commission, ICIMOD and experts from the Least Developed Countries. We have organized our views now. This time Nepal has done a good preparation. I am leading a 12-member ministerial delegation to take part in the summit of the United Nations Conference of Parties 16. I am going there not only as the minister of Nepal, but also as an authority to speak on behalf of the Least Developed Countries. As a chair of the Least Developed Countries in the United Nations, Nepal has many obligations and commitments towards them. Nepal is taking part very actively in the COP 16. Last year in Copenhagen, the head of the state and the head of the government took part. This time I am taking part as an environment minister. I am proud that we have made much progress in the last one year at the national and international levels regarding climate change. We were able to raise issues of our vulnerabilities, risks, finances, challenges and problems and our overall situation.

Nepal will strongly raise the issues and problems faced by LDCs. This is a matter of pride for all of us. As a member, we know the challenges and problems faced by LDCs. We want financial resources committed by the developed countries to LDCs through Least Developed Countries Fund. Along with Nepal, countries of LDCs are in a very vulnerable position. Our stand on temperature rise is clear as it needs to be reduced below 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Although the LDCs produce very nominal amount of Green House Gases, they have to face all hostile situations. The developed countries which produce almost all Green House Gas should pay for us. We want 1.5 percentage of their GDP as compensation from them. The money should be given to LDC Fund so that we can use it as per our need. We will also raise the issue of transfer of technology and fund for adaptation.

One of the important occasions for us will be to host a reception to the representatives of 51 mountain countries. Of course, we don't have a new agenda. As all other Least Developed Countries, our focus will be on finance, technology transfer and adaptation. Our discussions with various stakeholders will help us to promote our ideas and raise concerns.

My delegation includes members from the Ministry of Environment, the National Planning Commission and other ministries. I am proud to say that all of them are capable and knowledgeable. I don't know the number of participation from the civil society sector who are already there on their own. I have realized that taking part in such a Conference alone is not as important as it is to make sure how much we get in return for the country as well as for Least Developed Countries.

It is an honor and pride for me to lead the team. I have very strong group of experts in the Ministry. I think our efforts will be stronger for COP 17 in South Africa. Nepal has strong stand in all global issues. We will raise our concern very strongly in

the meeting of Developing Countries as well as Least Developed countries group. As Nepal is a party which supports Kyoto Protocol, we have taken a very good stand. Our middle stand of 1.5 degrees Celsius on temperature rise is accepted by all. I don't know how politically they agree on 2 degree Celsius but those who defended 2 degree Celsius are regretting their earlier stand. Even to maintain the 1.5 degree Celsius temperature, there is a need of a huge investment and new technologies. Some countries are arguing for less than this.

We are not going to put across any new agenda and decision. Nepal took several steps in the last one year that is very important. We are hosting a big gathering of the environment ministers of 51 countries in Cancun on December 4 which is going to be very important. We will discuss our agenda for ministerial meeting of Mountain Alliance in March. Whether it is in the leadership of Mountain Alliance Countries or Least Developed Countries or a country taking stand on 1.5 degree Celsius temperature, we are in the right position. If we go with right cause, we can make a lot of progress.

We have done a lot of work in the last one year. We have already produced NAPA and we are now making National Climate Change Policy and Environmental Department and are formulating program for Pilot Project for Climate Change Resistance, (PPCR). Our program is going to be all over Nepal. We need support from all. The support given by Nepal's development partners and donor communities is also very important in this regard.

They have been supporting us and we need their support. I don't think Cancun will solve all the problems but I am confident that it will at least agree on the matters of finance and technology transfer.

I am heading to Cancun with the hope and confidence. I am clear on the question of fund as we need our direct access to fund so that we can launch program to affected population. Our focus will be LDCs. As you know, the countries of the LDCs are the most vulnerable to the effect of climate change. The people living in these countries are punished for not committing any crime. I think the time has come for the developed countries to fulfill the political commitment they have made. The LDCs whether they are in mountains or in islands, they are the most vulnerable because of the rise of temperature. As Nepal is taking the leadership of Mountain Alliance countries, we want recognition from around the world.

Nepal has four important agenda. First of all, as a chair of Least Developed Countries, our focus will be on the problems of LDCs and their demands. We will appeal to the global community for the issue of finance, technology transfer and challenges. The fund should be channeled through LDC Fund for the people of LDCs. Being a leader of Mountain Alliance Country, we will also raise the problems of mountainous countries. Other important issues will be to stress our stand of below 1.5 degree Celsius temperature.

*(Sharma is a Minister of Environment. This is an excerpt of his views shared with Keshab Poudel before leaving for Cancun)*

**Nepal has four important agenda. First of all, as a chair of Least Developed Countries, our focus will be on the problems of LDCs and their demands.**



## JICA'S 40 YEARS IN NEPAL Supporting Development

*Japan International Cooperation Agency and JOCV have supported Nepal's development efforts in the last forty years*

By A CORRESPONDENT

**F**rom road construction to agriculture and from health to communication, JICA and JOCV have worked together in the uplift of the life of Nepalese people. Thanks to their efforts, Nepalese have made significant progress in some of these areas.

The Japanese help to Nepal is visible all over the country. Whether it is in the improvement of Koteswor-Surya Binayak Road or Banepa-Sindhuli Road, there is JICA. Be it hydropower sector or drinking water, Japan government has supported Nepal. Kulekhani project is a model storage project.

In the agriculture sector, the Japanese have helped Nepalese to grow junar in Sindhuli and Ramechhap and coffee in Syangja and trout fish in Rasuwa and Nuwakot. All these products aim to uplift the life of poor people in Nepal.

Similarly, JICA supported to build the TUTH hospital as well as a number of schools in various parts of Nepal. JOCV volunteers worked in remote parts of

Nepal in various forms. The expansion of Radio Nepal and technical support to Nepal Television helped to modernize Nepal's media sector.

The government of Japan, through JICA, has been providing development assistance to Nepal since the 1970s, mainly in the areas of social and economic infrastructure, democratization and peace-building and improvement of rural living standards.

Aiming at the promotion of Japan, its traditional as well as contemporary cultures in Nepal, the Embassy of Japan, in association with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Nepal Office, organized a one day Japan Festival in Kathmandu with joint support from Japanese Association in Nepal, Japanese Chambers of Commerce in Nepal (JCCN), and Japanese Language Teachers' Association of Nepal (JALTAN). The show was a first of its kind where one could see all out developmental efforts being made.

During the Festival, visitors en-

joyed various traditional Japanese cultures like Japanese cuisines, tea ceremony, Ikebana, calligraphy, wearing Yukata, Japanese Karaoke competitions, Japanese drums, and Noh (stage performance). Also the new Japanese technological products from Canon, Sharp, Sony, Panasonic and Honda Companies featured in the festival.

The stalls of JICA and JOCV demonstrated 40-years' activities of JOCV and the ongoing economic cooperation projects of the Government of Japan like Sindhuli Road, Kathmandu-Bhaktapur Road, and One Village One Product (OVOP).

"This type of occasion will help promote cultural ties between the peoples of the two countries, which ultimately will help expansion of ever-growing friendly and cooperative relationships between Japan and Nepal in the 21st century," said a Japanese Embassy Press Release.

At a time when the country has been passing through a political instability, Nepal's overall development is overshadowed. However, JICA continues to provide support in Nepal and JOCV's volunteers work side by side with the local community.

One can see visible impacts of forty years of development support given by Japan in various spheres of life. ■



पढ्ने, पढाउने  
र पढ्न पठाउने  
सबैको साथी

**शिक्षक** मासिक

जनसंलग्न शिक्षक सञ्चार संस्था लिमिटेड, अल्पकालीन, भक्तपुर  
फोन: ९४४२५५५, ९४४२५५५, email: mail@teacher.com.np

*"Stop AIDS: Keep the Promise" Universal Access and Human Rights*

## WORLD AIDS DAY

# On Right Track

Given a guarantee to basic human rights and regular availability of medicines for people living with HIV, it is possible to stabilize the HIV epidemic. This is what the recently released UNAIDS Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic reveals. The report shows that the total number of people living with HIV is stabilizing worldwide. Despite continuous political instability and frequent changes in the governments, Nepal has also achieved a major progress in stabilizing HIV infections. Interestingly, Nepal has also succeeded in decreasing new HIV infections by more than 25% over the last one decade. As the World's AIDS Day was celebrated on December 1, fundamental rights of people living with HIV and their access to medicines remain a challenge for Nepal towards meeting UNAIDS' vision: Zero new HIV infections. Zero discrimination. Zero AIDS-related deaths.

By KESHAB POUDEL and YOGESH GYAWALI in Kathmandu and UMID BAGCHAND and SITA MADEMBA reporting from Dhangadhi and Dharan

Geeta B.K (name changed) is a temporary resident of Dhangadhi. She was infected by HIV five years ago through her husband, a watchman in the Indian city of Mumbai. He died three years ago of an AIDS related illness.

'HIV/AIDS almost took my life. I was not aware of anything. I had lost all hopes,' said Geeta, who is now struggling for her livelihood. 'ARV worked wonders to my health.'

On medication for two years now, she worries about feeding her three children. Her younger daughter is also an HIV positive.

Samsara (name changed), 20, lives with her HIV positive boyfriend in Kathmandu. Samsara was diagnosed with HIV/AIDS five months ago. Since then, she has given up being an Injecting Drug

User (IDU). Accepting the fact of her life, she is living normally like everyone else around her.

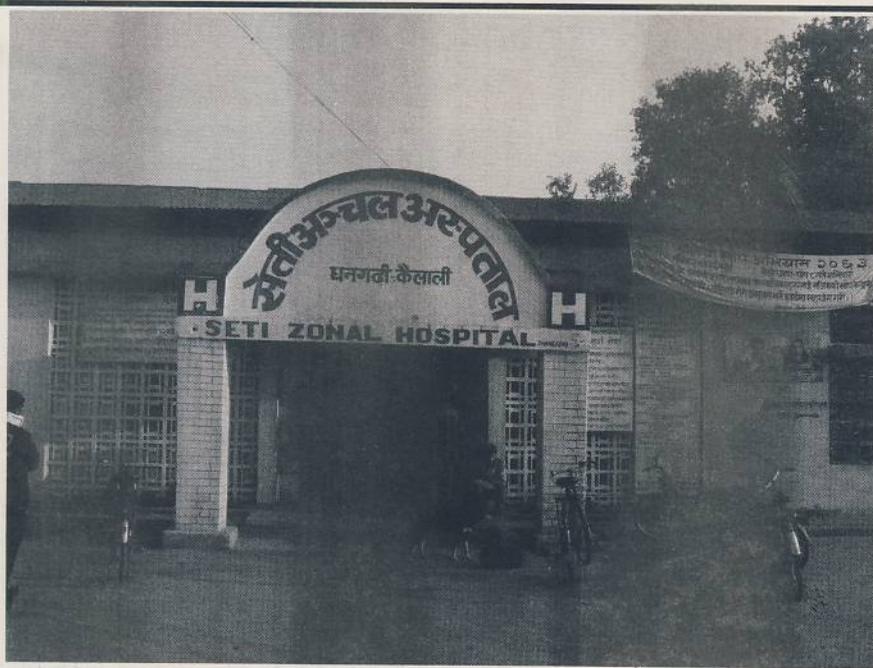
Born and raised in Kathmandu, Samsara started smoking cigarettes in school. Her youthful exuberance to try out new things, aided by the company she kept, led her to experiment with softer drugs and then brown sugar. She claims that she was a normal girl and was aware about drugs, its pitfalls and HIV/AIDS. But as an addict, she could not think straight.

Shila (name changed), another girl with IDU, has recovered from her drug addiction after going through a rehab program. At a young age, she fell into a bad company, took the risk and shared needles, usually with her husband, on several occasions. Fortunately for her, she

did not contract HIV/AIDS.

She thinks addicted or recovering girls get little support from the society, including their parents, who often discard them and refrain from taking them to rehabs in fear of social backlash and shame.

Data from the 2010 UNAIDS Report on the global AIDS epidemic show that more people are living longer and AIDS-related deaths are declining as access to treatment has expanded. The total number of people on treatment increased by seven and a half times over the last five years with 5.2 million people accessing life-saving drugs in 2009, compared to 700,000 in 2004. Over the course of the last year alone, an additional 1.2 million people received treatment—a 30% increase compared to 2008. In addition, there has



been a secondary dividend of stopping new HIV infections with increased access to HIV treatment. Countries have made slow but good progress in integrating tuberculosis and HIV programmes.

Nearly 10 million people are awaiting treatment.

Karuna Rai (name changed), 25, a resident of Bijayapur of Dharan, 600 kilometers east of Kathmandu, was infected with HIV three years ago through sharing needles. An IDU, Rai faces humiliation and discrimination in society. She is often put in prison whenever police find her in the city. Although she needs to take ARV from time to time, frequent prison terms deny her medicines and her rights to mobility.

"Nobody cares about IDU's rights. Police arrest us whenever they want and put us behind bars," she says.

Different people living with HIV (PLHIV) have different stories to tell. However, in all the districts, they are struggling to find a respectful position in their communities. Haunted by social stigma and discrimination and police atrocities, PLHIV are constantly troubled with the tension of providing two square meals to their families.

Data from the District Public Health Office in Achham and Sunsari indicate that the number of infections declined over the year. Majority of those PLHIV in the Achham district have contracted HIV from their husbands who worked as labor

migrants in India and young people in Dharan mostly got infected due to needle sharing.

According to Medical Officer of Achham District Hospital Dr. Khageshwar Gelal, there are 586 HIV positive taking Pre-ART service. Leading activists Mathura Kunwar of Achham said many people living with HIV are yet to get medicines. Some 480 cases are still out of government statistic.

PLHIV Mohan Thapa of Chalsa Village Development Committee of Achham said despite giving training to people living with HIV, a majority of them are yet to find jobs.

"We have made significant progress in terms of providing basic facilities including testing facilities and medicines but there is a need to do a lot of work," said Dr. Gelal.

Due to growing practices of using condom for safe sex and supply of needles through needle syringe exchange program, there seems to be stabilization of HIV cases. As the men still deny practicing safer sex by using condoms and practices of sharing needles is yet to come to zero, the threat is still there for new infections.

"We are compelled to share needles since we don't have both needles and drugs together. Thanks to some NGOs, most of the IDUs now carry the needles provided by them," said Rai.

According to a Handbook for Media

Persons in Nepal, as of the 2009 National Estimate of HIV Infection, the total number of PLWHA in Nepal is 63,528, of which 3,544 are children below the age of 15. Therefore, according to the estimate, around 59,984 people above the age of 15 are living with HIV in Nepal, an adult HIV prevalence of 0.39%. The analysis for volume-wise HIV infections across different key population groups indicates that male labor migrants make up the largest proportion of cases (29.4%), followed by 'low-risk' women including the wives of seasonal labor migrants (28%), MSM (6.24%), the clients of sex workers (5%) and injecting drug users (4%). Obviously these proportions of total HIV cases are affected by the total size of each population group.

Published by UNAIDS and Asia Pacific Leadership Forum on HIV/AIDS and Development, the Handbook for Media says the geographical distribution of HIV epidemic burden indicates that 26 highway districts, most of them bordering India, have the greatest proportion of cases with 32,097 infections (49.7% of all estimated infections), followed by remaining 39 hill districts with 12,023 (18.6%), the 7 districts of the Far Western Region with 10,352 (16%) and three districts of Kathmandu Valley with 10,112 (15.7%) infections. These four epidemic regions were analyzed in the years 2003 and 2005 and were again reviewed and maintained for the 2007 national estimates.

The first HIV infection was reported in Nepal in 1988, moving within 20 years from its initial 'low epidemic status' to the current 'concentrated epidemic status', meaning that HIV infection is now marked by high prevalence (> 5%) in some sub-populations while prevalence in the general population remains low (<1%).

#### Rights to Work

Majority of positive women in far west are single whose husbands either abandoned them or died due to HIV related illnesses. They have to look after their family and children.

"We want a respectful job," says Nagina (name changed), who has been living with HIV for the past two years and working as a laborer at a Construction

# "UNAIDS Support Nepal's Response On HIV/AIDS"

DR. MARIA ELENA G. FILIO-BORROMEO

As Nepal celebrates World AIDS Day, DR. MARIA ELENA G. FILIO-BORROMEO UNAIDS Country Coordinator Nepal spoke to **NEW SPOTLIGHT** about HIV/AIDS and in Nepal and the steps taken by various stake holders. Excerpts:

**How do you see general trends of HIV/AIDS in Nepal?**

The 2010 UNAIDS Report on Global AIDS Epidemic released last week, gives Nepal an encouraging scorecard on some key indicators in the past few years such as an increase in condom use, rise in the number of people accessing anti-retroviral drugs, and a greater awareness among general population about HIV/AIDS. Last week, the National Center for AIDS and STD Control (NCASC) the implementation arm of the Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP) released its new fact sheets which among others, reported that the HIV prevalence is now 0.39%, down from 0.49% in 2007. So based on available data, the trend (HIV prevalence) is decreasing.

**Who do you see the data?**

But we all know the limitations of these data. So to me, while it is good to refer to these evidences/data for program planning and prioritization, policy formulation and advocacy, let's continue to focus on HIV risk and vulnerability reduction. AIDS is a behavior driven disease and human behavior is very complex- it is shaped and affected by multiple, multi-dimensional factors. These factors form an enabling or hindering environment in intensifying HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services.

**As there are rampant violation basic human rights of people living with HIV/AIDS, what Nepal needs to do?**

Indeed, there are anecdotal reports of human rights violation in the context of HIV/AIDS. This includes harassment of most-at-risk groups or key affected population. Little documentation has been done on this and I'm not sure if a formal complaint had ever been filed.

Nepal has made international commitments and had also put in place,

appropriate laws and policies to protect the rights of every Nepali. Some of the daunting challenge I see, includes among others- the execution of these laws and policies, documenting and reporting cases of human rights violation and setting up a mechanism to address these reports.

**How do you look at the efforts made by the government of Nepal?**

Amidst the socio-political, economic and geographical challenges, the Government of Nepal is trying its very best to effectively respond to the changing needs and realities of the epidemic. With limited domestic resources, the government continue to mobilize external resources in order not to disrupt the services of those who needs it most. Certainly, there is a long list of to-do: to implement, to monitor, to put systems in place from the district, regional to the central level, to continue to build its capacities, etc. But overall, the government's current focus on prevention while providing treatment to people in need is laudable- and investment is paying off as reflected in the Global AIDS epidemic report. Providing space to civil society including people living with HIV to help in accessing services is another good and remarkable practice in Nepal. However, if we want to seriously seize the opportunity now while the HIV prevalence (among adult population) is still relatively low and stay ahead of the epidemic, we need to engage other development sectors as well. This will sustain the government's efforts.

**As a leading agency working in Nepal, how UNAIDS has been supporting Nepal?**

UNAIDS is a cosponsored program on HIV/AIDS composed of 11 entities: 10 Cosponsors and 1 Secretariat. In Nepal, there are 2 more UN agencies who are members of the UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS.



UNAIDS support Nepal's response on HIV/AIDS by providing technical assistance in various areas, like in scaling up interventions on prevention, treatment, care and support, strategic planning, knowledge sharing, strategic information and monitoring and evaluation. This support is aligned to Nepal's National Strategy Plan on HIV/AIDS 2006-2011. Where there are clear gaps, we also support the country mobilize additional resources.

**What other steps UN will take?**

Now this year, the UN had embarked on the first-ever mapping of UN HIV-related work, which includes both program areas and funding resources/commitment. This gives us a clear understanding of the UN's collective contribution and support to the country's response on HIV/AIDS. This also provides us a strategic direction where to focus in the next years to come, in order to help the country close the gaps on its HIV/AIDS response.

**As several steps have been made to end the discriminations against people living with HIV/AIDS, how do you view general status of people living with HIV/AIDS?**

I think this question would be best answered by Nepalis living with HIV themselves. But overall, educating people about rights and responsibilities, about reducing if not eliminating stigma and discrimination, about respecting personal preferences, is a continued process.

Based on my personal observation,

the overall attitude of people towards PLWHAs is gradually becoming positive and supportive. I have seen for example in some villages in Doti and Accham, where men and women living with HIV are accepted and supported by the community. Of course this might be an exception, but generally there had been good progress compared to 10 or 15 years ago.

**Thanks to initiative taken by the government and support given by UNAIDS and other donor countries, Nepal is able to control infection level, how vulnerable Nepal is?**

As I mentioned earlier, Nepal is one of the countries in the world where new HIV infection is declining. But this hard-earned achievement should not make us complacent and relax. For these gains could be very fragile. Nepal still saw an estimated 4,800 new infections last year almost 500 of which were children 0-14 years old. Everyday, an estimated 13 Nepalis are getting infected

Company in Dhangadhi for a living. According to the District AIDS Co-coordinator of District Health Office, Kailali, most of the money from government, INGOs and donors is limited to providing medication and spreading awareness amongst people when the actual need is providing them income-generating skills.

"There is the need of training and employment opportunities to the people living with HIV. Only by providing training and employment, we can uplift the social status of PLHIV."

Realizing the importance to protect the rights of PLHIV, a bill was mooted by a group of members of Legislature Parliament to give priority to PLHIV but it is yet to be tabled in the Legislature Parliament. "We are able to place a special clause in the draft of the constitution regarding the rights of PLHIV. But, we are yet to table the bill," said CA member Gagan Thapa.

Businessman and member of Legislature Parliament Rajendra Khetan has been playing his role. As an industrialist, he is defending the right to work of PLHIV in industries and working together with other CA members to pass the bill. "PLHIV needs protections by law in employment," said Khetan.

**Rights and Dimensions**

with HIV. This is indeed alarming, particularly in a small country like Nepal. And factors that fuel the epidemic like poverty and gender inequity is real. So the country, given its current situation, remains to be very vulnerable.

With UNAIDS vision of zero infections, zero discrimination, and zero AIDS-related death- there is much more that needs to be done.

**How do you see the state of Sex Workers? How much vulnerable are they from infections?**

If you look at the newly released Fact Sheets on HIV/AIDS by the National Center on AIDS and STD Control (NCASC) of MOHP, female sex workers account to only 1% of the total estimated HIV infections in 2009 (605 of the 59,984 total infections). So to me, while attention is on sex workers because of the very nature of their work, the more strategic focus is on the behavior and practices that puts people at risk of HIV. And in

Human rights goals of universal access can be achieved through various programs and policy means. These include implementation of sufficient programs on H I V prevention, treatment, care and support that reach all those in need, particularly the most marginalized and vulnerable, implementation of law and policies and their enforcement that provide a supportive framework to enable those in need to take up available services and implementation of program that are specifically designed to overcome rights-related obstacles, such as discrimination and stigma against people living with HIV and populations at risk, gender inequality and violence against women.

These programs include "know your rights" campaigns, provision of legal aid, campaigns against harmful gender norms and violence against women,

the context of HIV/AIDS, this includes multiple sexual partners, unprotected sex and sharing of unclean needles. Whether one is a sex worker or not, if she/he indulges in behaviors and practices where there is direct exchange of body fluids- then he/she is at risk of spreading or acquiring HIV infection. Remember, it is not who you are but what you do that puts you at risk of HIV.

**How do you see the current strategies in Nepal to fight AIDS?**

The country is reaching the tail-end of its current strategy (2008-2011) and is now developing the new one for the next 5 years (2011-2016). Consultations are ongoing and we have yet to see it. Nepal has rich experience in HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services- and I'm confident that the next strategy will draw upon past experiences, build its momentum, and be more forward-looking so that it will truly be responsive to changing needs of the HIV epidemic in the country.

campaigns against stigma and discrimination, and programs working with police and health care workers in terms of non-discrimination, non-violence in the case of the police and the need to ensure access and to protect informed consent and confidentiality.

A national antiretroviral therapy (ART) program was started at two sites in Kathmandu in late 2004; by October 2007, there were 16 public sites providing ART. WHO estimates only 11 percent of HIV-infected individuals needed ART accessed treatment in 2007. However, Nepal's 2010 UNGASS estimates are higher, with an estimated 19 percent of those in need of treatment receiving it. As of December 2009, 3,540 individuals were receiving ART from 23 sites across the country. With the CD4 cell count cut-off point now being increased from 200 to 350 cells, an additional 1,000 patients are expected to be added to treatment programs.

Universal Access and Human Rights  
Laws and policies based on the protection of those infected and affected by HIV and those most vulnerable to HIV such as sex workers, IDUs, MSMs, women and children, are likely to check the transmission of the virus, whereas laws and policies that infringe on their rights are likely to increase it.



# Women Can't Even Demand Safe Sex:

- SAPANA MALLA PRADHAN

CA member and women activist **SAPANA MALLA PRADHAN** has been working for the cause of gender equality. She has also backed the Bill on HIV/AIDS in the Legislature Parliament. CA member Pradhan spoke to **YOGESH GYAWALI** on various issues. Excerpts:

## How do you see the state of AIDS in Nepal?

In Nepal, data from National AIDS Center have indicated a high number of housewives are affected and women are more vulnerable not only due to biological reasons but also due to the social/cultural context, where women have no power to negotiate on sexuality. Women are still considered as a subordinate and a commodity.

## What are the conditions of women?

A large number of women are in the entertainment industry. Trafficking and migration, which contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS, are high. Bigamy, though prohibited and illegal, is not null. While multiple sex partners are

Experts suggest that it is critical for governments to put in place the kind of laws that will really help stop the transmission of HIV: laws to protect the equality of women and to protect them against violence, laws to protect people living with HIV from discrimination, and laws to ensure sufficient targeted prevention programs for all populations groups in need of them.

To empower rights-holders to claim their rights, to protect human dignity and to prevent the transmission of HIV, the rights to Non-discrimination; Right to privacy; Right to liberty and freedom of movement; Right to education/information; Right to health for all should be protected so that people will come forward for HIV information, education and means of protection, and will be supported to avoid risky behavior.

Fear of violence discourages women from seeking HIV testing and counseling, accessing HIV services, or negotiating condom use with their male

accepted for men, women cannot even demand for safe sexual behavior. Infected or affected women are also discriminated for inheritance rights. As a result of this, their access to medicines and nutritious food is also limited.

## How do you view the National HIV/AIDS strategy under the National Action Plan (2008-2011)?

The National Plan of Action mentions about the need for enactment of a comprehensive law to deal with HIV and AIDS from the human rights perspective. An NGO coalition has even prepared and submitted a draft bill on HIV/AIDS. However, the Ministry of Health is yet to register the Bill in the parliament. Since the present law, instead of protecting and respecting rights, discriminates the victims, a comprehensive law is critical.

## As one of the four members of parliament to request to serve as a focal point in the parliament to address HIV/AIDS issue, how do you see your own role?

We have an informal caucus in the parliament and have a commitment to

sex partners and HIV is more likely to be transmitted through rough, unprotected sex. It is urgent to reach women and girls with methods of prevention they can control.

The report also contains new data which shows that human rights efforts are increasingly being integrated into national AIDS strategies, with 89% of countries explicitly acknowledging or addressing human rights in their AIDS strategies and 91% having programs in place to reduce stigma and discrimination.

However, punitive laws continue to hamper access to AIDS-related services- 79 countries worldwide criminalize same sex relations and six apply the death penalty.

In the Asia-Pacific region, 90% of countries have laws which obstruct the rights of people living with HIV.

Meanwhile Over 2200 people are lost from the current ARV program posing a threat

of a new wave of multi drug resistant

work for the HIV/AIDS law. We are committed to register a private bill. But the Ministry is not taking the initiative and that has been a problem. There have been consultations with some political leaders and parliamentarians. We are speaking in public in Nepal and abroad for the law and doing advocacy within the rights based framework to deal with the vulnerability.

## What is the position of the bill?

Political instability and lack of focus from Ministry of Health are the reasons for us not being able to come up with a bill. Political commitment from the Minister and problem recognition by the Ministry and wider public are equally important since the National Plan has already called for a comprehensive bill.

epidemic hence we cannot

celebrate this day but will resist.

## Hopeful Signs

A new report by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), released on November 23 in Geneva, shows that the AIDS epidemic is beginning to change the course as the number of people newly infected with HIV is declining and AIDS-related deaths are decreasing. Together, this is contributing to the stabilization of the total number of people living with HIV in the world.

The new UNAIDS report shows AIDS epidemic has been halted and the world is beginning to reverse the spread of HIV.

"We are breaking the trajectory of the AIDS epidemic with bold actions and smart choices," said Mr Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS. "Investments in the AIDS response are paying off, but gains are fragile- the challenge now is how we can all work to accelerate progress."



## We Need Effective Services

KRISHNA KUMAR RAI

MBBS, MD, GP, MPH

Director, National Centre for AIDS and STD Control (NCASC).

### What is the number of HIV positive?

As of July 2010, 16,238 were reported positive among estimated total positive



of 63,528 across the country, which means 48,114 or close to 50,000 HIV positive people in Nepal are transmitting HIV new infections and making others positive without knowing that they are already infected.

### What do we need to do now?

Obviously, we have to improve the quality of counseling and testing services and at the same time we have to scale up of our prevention of mother to child transmission (PMTCT) services across the country. Perhaps, we urgently need operational research in order to understand the cost effectiveness of our ongoing programs, to better explore underlying problems, to evaluate outcomes and impacts so that we can come up with more rational, cost effective and feasible approach that may better match local problems. Over 90 percent infections are due to unsafe sex.

### How about duplication of work?

NCASC obviously does not want duplication. Although it fosters partnership in program implementation through Public Private Partnership (PPP) mechanism ensuring the quality of work, it also wants to make sure the coverage of services (comprehensive HIV/AIDS care package) to all people as per need ensuring universal access.

## Media Award (NAMA) Announced

Nepal HIV/AIDS Media Award (NAMA) established for the first time to award the journalists writing on HIV/AIDS, has been announced. According to the verdict given by the jury members comprising of experts from the field of media and HIV/AIDS, Mohan Sahi, Dailekh correspondent of Avenues Television has been declared winner in the print media section. Similarly, Santa Basnet of Radio Sagarmatha has been declared winner from the Radio section whereas Bhupendra Sahi of Kantipur Publications has been declared winner from the print media. The winners received cash prize of Rs. 50,000 each with a memento on World Aids Day on 1st December 2010. The Nepal HIV/AIDS Media Award was set by the UN/AIDS and the Federation of Nepali Journalists.

## "Zero new HIV infections. Zero discrimination. Zero AIDS-related deaths."

MICHEL SIDIBÉ

Executive Director of UNAIDS and Under Secretary-General of the United Nations  
2010 World AIDS Day Message

### On this World AIDS Day we can be proud.

Globally we have reduced the number of new HIV infections and deaths by nearly 20%.

This means less people are becoming infected with HIV and less people are dying from AIDS.

56 countries have either stabilized or significantly reduced the rate of new HIV infections.

For the first time, we have broken the trajectory of the AIDS epidemic and reached the first part of the Millennium Development Goal for HIV.

We have achieved this amazing milestone because families, communities, governments and UNAIDS have united the world in an unprecedented movement.

We are prevailing...with political commitment, leadership from all sectors including leaders of faith...with science, with evidence, with human rights, and passion.

### On this World AIDS Day we can remember.

Our successes have not come without sacrifice. Today we mourn friends and family - some 30 million people who have lost their lives to AIDS.

An estimated 10 million people are waiting for treatment.

We must remember that punitive laws and stigma still hurt too many people around the world.

### On this World AIDS Day we can commit.

Our hard-won gains are fragile - so our commitment to the AIDS response must remain strong.

AIDS is a proven investment and must be a shared responsibility today and tomorrow.

### On this World AIDS Day we can be hopeful.

With your commitment and that of UNAIDS and the UN family, we are changing the course of the AIDS epidemic.

I have called for the virtual elimination of mother-to-child transmission by 2015.

Nothing gives me more hope than knowing that an AIDS free generation is possible in our lifetime.

So on this World AIDS Day, take action today - together we can reach Zero new infections.

Zero discrimination. Zero AIDS-related deaths!

Sidibe, who is also an Under Secretary-General of the United Nations, said in his 2010 World AIDS Day Message: "On this World AIDS Day we can be proud. Globally we have reduced the number of new HIV infections and deaths by nearly 20%. This means less

people are becoming infected with HIV and less people are dying from AIDS. 56 countries have either stabilized or significantly reduced the rate of new HIV infections. For the first time, we have broken the trajectory of the AIDS epidemic and reached the first part of the Millennium Development Goal for HIV."

The common goal is clear: universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support, said UN secretary general Ban Ki Moon.

For Nepal it needs to have to go a long way. Despite stabilising the cases, problem is now how to sustain it for longer period of time. ■

## Recommended Treatment Vs Practical Treatment In Medicine

BUDDHA BASNYAT, MD



In the last issue of the Spotlight in this column we posted an article by Dr Sunil Badve that had appeared in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* (a medical journal from the USA) several years ago. Several interesting things came out of that article, chiefly, the question that was posed at the end of the piece: Do the best practice guidelines and treatment recommendations published in renowned journals apply to our patients (that is patients from South Asia)?

These practice guideline and recommendations are made usually by western countries where relatively speaking, funding is not a problem. But without health insurance for the vast majority of people in Nepal, funding for individual health care is a fundamental problem. I remember many years ago when I was doing my internship at Shata Bhawan Hospital, patients who needed more sophisticated care and diagnosis would sell off their piece of land or buffaloes and head to Christian Medical College, Vellore in South India. Nowadays a lot of the medical problems that required referral then can be handled in Nepal; but the cost of treatment is still very expensive for the vast majority of patients who I am sure

continue to sell their piece of land or cattle.

Take long standing kidney disease for example. This is a problem that is almost reaching epidemic proportions in South Asia, thanks to the rampant presence of high blood pressure (hypertension) and diabetes in our part of the world. Both of these problems (with help from cigarette smoking) have had a tremendously negative impact on kidneys which are vital organs for dealing with waste in our human body. Because of chronic kidney disease, people often require dialysis.

Dialysis works as an artificial kidney to get rid of the body's noxious waste. However for chronic kidney disease, dialysis is required for a lifetime. And in general, dialysis needs to be carried out two to three times a week. In our country, the cheapest haemodialysis per session costs at least about two thousand rupees. So, that means about sixteen thousand rupees a month for dialysis. And since this is for life you can see how financially draining it will be for the family. For sure they will have to use up their savings or sell land or cattle as I had seen at Shanta Bhawan.

There is a more inexpensive version

of dialysis (peritoneal dialysis) which is less sophisticated than haemodialysis and is significantly less expensive. Many international kidney experts say that peritoneal dialysis would be very suitable for Nepal as it is just as effective and furthermore less expensive. Perhaps peritoneal dialysis is the way to go. Of course, the other solution is kidney transplantation, but this may be harder because you have to find a kidney donor amongst your relatives and a sizable initial sum of money. Whatever it is, prevention is best.

To prevent kidney disease it is a good idea to continue to take your blood pressure medicine (and not stop abruptly) and to continue to check that the pressure is under control. Finally ways to avoid diabetes by exercising (doing morning walks) and not drinking sugary drinks will certainly help.

But going back to the question posed by Dr Sunil Badve in the first paragraph, there is no way that most of the recommended medical guidelines can be brought into practice in Nepal due to the stranglehold poverty has in this part of the world. So indeed, "When, what is recommended treatment is not practical, what is practical has to be adequate."

## Gender Activism: Vehicles For Violence

By RADHA PAUDEL

Despite many identities as a renowned world heritage city, Kathmandu, to women, has an awful downside. Some like to describe its notoriety in terms of three S's: the city never sleeps, has no security and looks selfish. 'No security' tops the problems women see in the city.

Obviously, half of the sky of Kathmandu is covered by women, regardless of their involvement in various occupations and capacities. A majority of these women use public transportation. The number of women working in very high profile organizations and without having to commute by public vehicles is very nominal.

Since early in the morning women here are seen using the public transportation such as Tempos, Minibuses and Microvans.

"Three seats reserved for women" is a platitude one can read inside these public vehicles. "One seat for the disabled."

The irony of these writings on the walls of the vehicles is that these seats are up for grabs of anyone who is able-bodied. Neither are these seats occupied by women nor are they enough for them, even if they were allowed the seats.

Meanwhile, they encounter with various forms of violence in public vehicles. Drivers and conductors hurl verbal abuse on them and create a hassle regarding fares and discount cards. It is easy to see women are standing, holding on to the doors and ceilings despite their height, bags, or babies.

They do not have a choice but to adjust with other people. The meaning of such 'adjusting' often implies, however, that males may be touching their body parts, even private parts, and thrusting in their shoulders or front sides on these vulnerable women.

Another frustrating scene is catching public vehicles in stations. Men usually jump and

occupy the seats but women are waiting and waiting and get on vehicles but find no seats. On top of that, if the women look a bit aged, even a small conductor challenges her that her student ID card should be fake.



The government and many INGOs, NGOs, and UN agencies are spending huge amounts of money and using big, broad slogans to end gender-based violence, concentrating mainly in Kathmandu, in meetings at hotel Everest, or Himalaya.

We can ask ourselves that why our public vehicle drivers, conductors and male users are not serious towards women's safety and security. We have many creative and sensitive means of working around it. We can work in partnership with transportation associations and government authorities and work rapidly on some easy and cost effective means to end the gender based violence right when we are celebrating 16 days of VAW.

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