



Face to Face
Dr. Bipin Adhikari

Economy : Busting Uncertainty

Politics : Giving A Miss



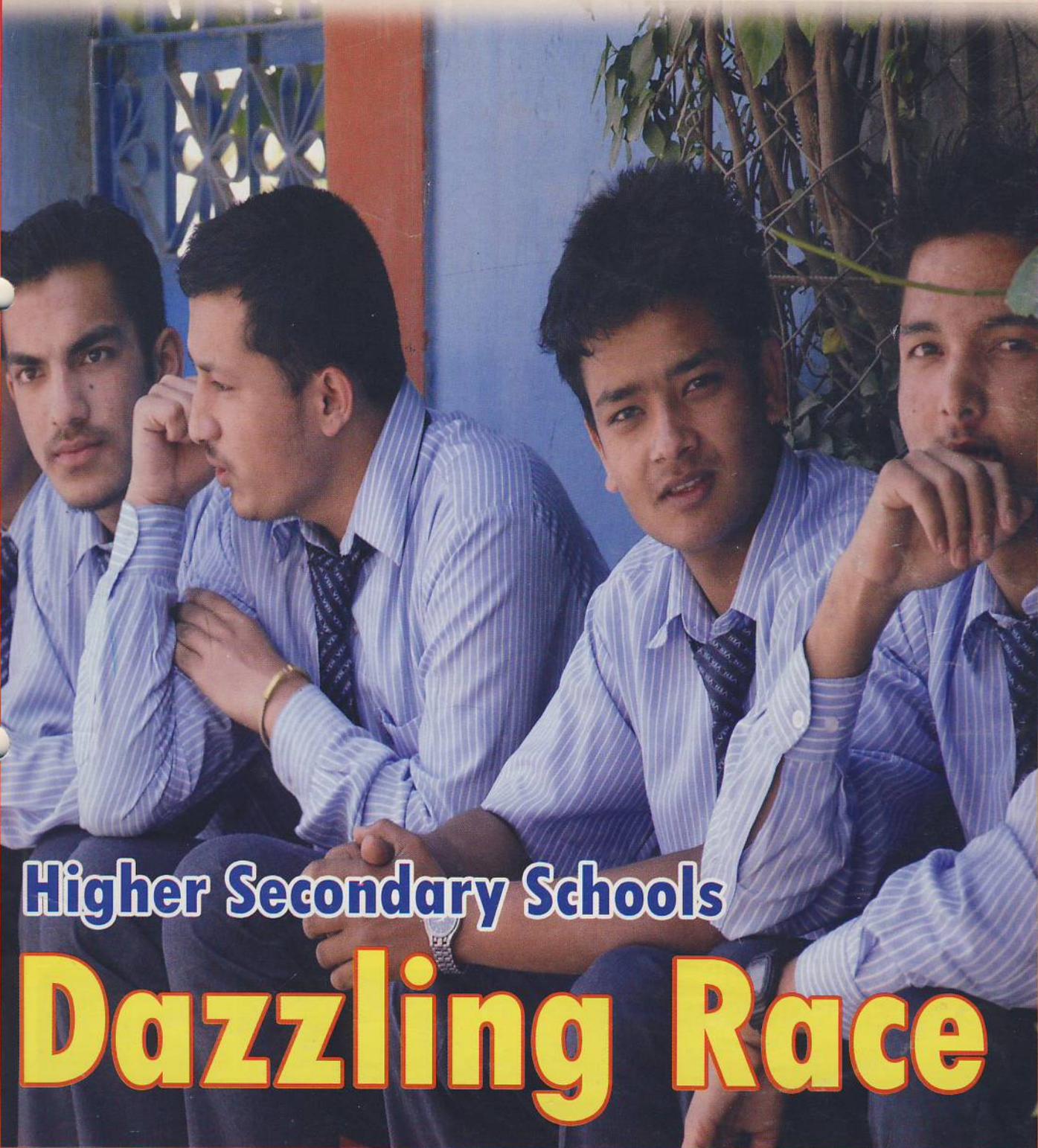
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NEW SPOTLIGHT

June 01-21, 2011

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From The Editor

Following the publication of SLC Results, an overwhelming number of young people have begun a scramble for truly good institutions for higher secondary education. Although there are several hundred schools and colleges available to pursue higher education, it is often very hard for these young students to make the right choice. As higher secondary education system is based on private investment, it is commercialized so much that guardians are worried whether these institutions impart quality education as they advertise or not. Of course, some big schools are investing heavy money in advertisements to lure students.

However, there are other schools also which are focusing on the quality of education. It is good that private sector's investment is reducing the burden of the government but there must be a strong mechanism to monitor the overall higher education schools so that they deliver good and quality education also. The situation right now is that the Higher Secondary Education Board, which is supposed to play a major role in monitoring, lacks the institutional capabilities to do so. The time has now come to make HSEB powerful and capable to deal with such a scenario. This week we have decided to look at the overall situation of higher secondary education. After more than two decades since the introduction of higher secondary education, the time has now come to learn from the past experiences and do something for future.

Keshab

Keshab Poudel
Editor

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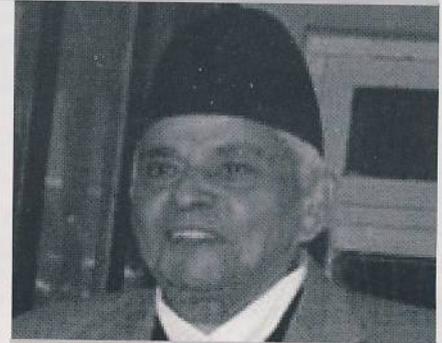
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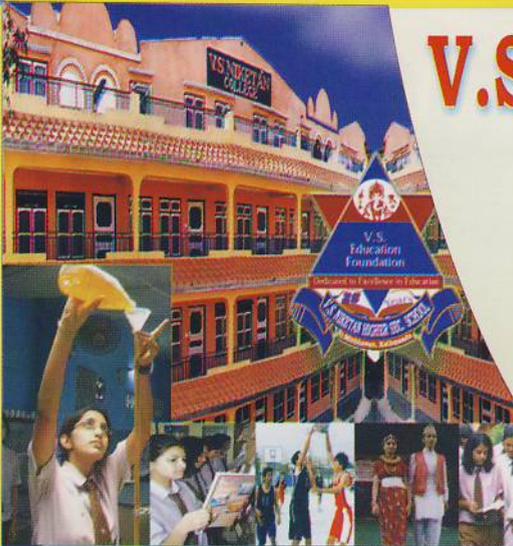
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WFP and Siddhartha Bank Launch First Smart Card

The United Nations World Food Programme is launching an innovative electronic smart card for people employed in its cash-and-food for work programmes in remote areas of western Nepal. The pilot programme aims to make payment more secure, to help stimulate local markets and to allow poor rural people to learn about saving.

Launched in partnership with Siddhartha Bank, this will be Nepal's first electronic cash delivery system and will support

484 food insecure households in the Pagnath VDC, in Dailekh district.

Under the WFP programmes, beneficiaries receive family food rations as well as 90 Nepalese rupees (about US\$1.20) per day, for up to 80 days of labour on community infrastructure projects.

Each worker will be given a smart card issued by Siddhartha Bank, storing personal identity details, photo, fingerprints and savings records, and their "salary" will be credited to the card.

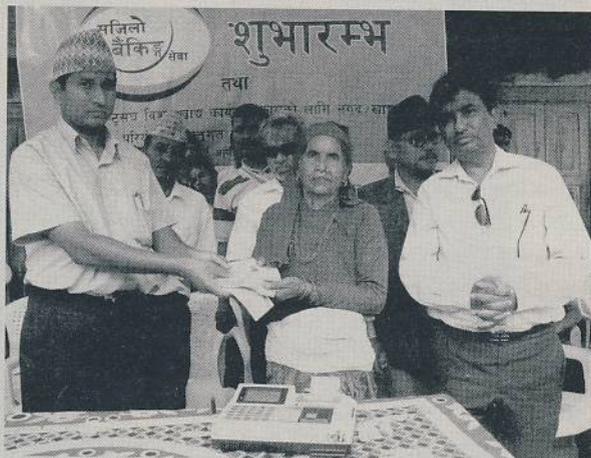
Beneficiaries can then access their funds by presenting their card to a local Siddhartha Bank agent, who will swipe it and verify the cardholder's identity.

"Through this partnership, WFP

and Siddhartha Bank hope to provide a 'smart', simple solution for delivering cash transfers and social protection in rural areas of Nepal," said Nicolas Oberlin, WFP deputy Country Director. "This is an exciting initiative, if successful the pilot could be up scaled and rolled out across Nepal."

"We are leveraging technology for delivering financial services to the

unbanked without relying on traditional bank branches," said Surrender Bhandari, Siddhartha Bank's Chief Executive Officer. "With this delivery



channel, there is potential to expand the Bank's network to remote areas of the country as well. To start this financial inclusion program, the Bank has waived the standard Rs.300 smart card fee for all WFP beneficiaries involved in the project."

In Nepal, over 3.5 million people are considered food insecure, and 41 percent of the population is estimated to be undernourished.

In 2011, WFP will provide food and cash assistance to around one million people who are at risk of hunger. In 2010, WFP began providing cash (in addition to food) in areas where food markets function well but high levels of poverty and food insecurity persist.

Kaski First Open-Defecation-Free District

On 24 June 2011, Kaski became the first district of Nepal to be declared free of open defecation. Prime Minister Jhala Nath Khanal attended the event in Pokhara celebrating the culmination of the district's 4-year sanitation drive to make the district 'open defecation free'(ODF).

On 7 June 2007, the 15th District Council of Kaski decided that it would

aim to make Kaski ODF by mid-April 2010. A strategic plan was drawn up highlighting the joint responsibility of the individual, the community and the state in promoting total sanitation, and the campaign was led by the District Water and Sanitation Coordination Committee.

Some of the strategies undertaken to make the ODF campaign effective included promoting local leadership; pooling of resources and programmes;

encouraging participation and commitment of political parties, private sector, community, schools, I/NGOs, media and individuals; system of incentives and rewards; encouraging innovative awareness raising activities and; special consideration for the disadvantaged, and application of societal pressure.

Other districts in the central development region in the pipeline to be declared free of open defecation include Chitwan, Tanahun and Nawalparasi.

Currently over 43 percent of the households in Nepal have access to sanitation, and the country aims to have universal coverage for sanitation by 2017. 'Adequate Midwifery Could Save 3.6 Million Lives'

Some 38 of 58 countries could miss their MDGs targets without 112,000 more midwives, a survey report showed. Increasing women's access to quality midwifery has become a focus of global efforts to realize the right of every woman to the best possible health care during pregnancy and childbirth. A first step is assessing the situation.

The State of World's Midwifery 2011: Delivering Health, Saving Lives, supported by 30 partners, provides the first comprehensive analysis of midwifery services and issues in countries where the needs are greatest.

According to a UNFPA Press release, the report provides new information and data gathered from 58 countries in all regions of the world. Its analysis confirms that the world lacks some 350,000 skilled midwives — 112,000 in the neediest 38 countries surveyed — to fully meet the needs of women around the world. The report explores a range of issues related to building up this key health workforce. UK Ministers Welcome Landmine Free Nepal

The UK Government has congratulated Nepal for the successful clearance of its last remaining minefields and its designation as a landmine free country. As a key donor, contributing over £5 million toward demining activities in Nepal over several years, the UK has worked closely with Nepal to help rid the country of its mines, which are estimated to have

claimed over 300 lives since the end of the Nepalese civil war in 2006.

FCO Minister Jeremy Browne said, "I congratulate Nepal on this remarkable achievement, and pay tribute to the brave work of the demining personnel. I now urge the Government to build on this success by joining the Ottawa Convention to ensure that these terrible, indiscriminate weapons never again blight Nepali soil and the lives of its people."

The UK Government has actively contributed to mine-clearance activities in Nepal through its support to the Nepal Peace Trust Fund and the UN Peace Fund for Nepal. In addition, UK funding from the FCO, DFID and MoD Conflict Pool has enabled the United Nations Mine Action Team to train and provide equipment for the Nepal Army's Explosive Ordnance Disposal Unit and the Nepal Army Mine Action Coordination Centre.

With the United Nations Mine Action Team (UNMAT), the UK, through the FCO/MoD/DFID Conflict Pool has provided over £2 million to support the development, training and equipment needs of Nepal Army's Explosive Ordnance Disposal Unit, and the Nepal Army Mine Action Coordination Centre (NAMACC) activities to build domestic demining capability.

Through the Govt-supported Nepal Peace Trust Fund and UN Peace Fund for Nepal, a further £3.3m has been used to support UNMAT and the Government of Nepal's Mine Action Unit. The UK's support has been a major factor in Nepal successfully clearing all 53 conflict-era minefields. On 14 June 2011, Nepal was declared mine-free.

EU Welcomes Decline In Child Labour

The EU has welcomed a steady decline in child labour since 2006 when the International Labour Organisation (ILO) set a visionary target to eliminate the worst forms of child labour by 2016. "We are also encouraged by the ILO's report last year which showed that the speediest decline in rates of child labour are in the most harmful areas of work and among the most vulnerable children. Nevertheless, there are no grounds for

complacency: a staggering 115 million children are still exposed to hazardous work, and the global decrease in child labour is not prevalent in all regions and among all categories of children," it said.

While the EU announced a number of concrete initiatives last year, "we must step up our efforts to combat child labour, in particular its worst forms, and consolidate children's rights through a comprehensive approach which addresses the root causes of this phenomenon."

Reshaping British Council English Language Services

The British Council is reshaping its English language services in Nepal to ensure that a wider range of young people and teachers benefit from high quality English products. These changes include the discontinuation of teaching at the British Council's Lainchaur centre in Kathmandu, with effect from 22 July 2011.

The British Council's focus will shift to providing English language resources for teachers and students through partner organizations. This builds on the significant work already undertaken by the British Council with in-service teacher training. Since 2008, the British Council, in cooperation with governmental and non-governmental partners, has provided training to almost 3,000 teachers of English across Nepal. **USAID-Microsoft Partner To Boost ICT Use**

On June 22, 2011, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Microsoft Innovation Center Nepal partnered to co-host NGO Day: an all-day event that aimed to encourage Nepalese NGOs to utilize technology to further the impact of their development programs. The NGO Day event reflected USAID's and Microsoft's shared commitment to the development of Nepal.

For more than thirty years USAID has applied information and communication technology (ICT) to development. USAID-funded NGOs in Nepal are currently leveraging technology in a variety of ways to enhance their programs. For example, New Era, a USAID-funded local NGO,

is using tablets to collect information for the Demographic Health Survey and Winrock International, through the USAID-funded Education for Income Generation program, has established a website to facilitate the employment of youth in Mid- and Far-West Nepal.

Microsoft is committed to help NGOs unleash technology to advance social and economic development of Nepal. Microsoft strategy is built around ensuring NGO access to stable and more secure technology, optimizing the delivery of IT solutions, and helping them transform their operations through the innovative and appropriate use of technology. This approach enables NGOs to offer a comprehensive set of services, products, tools that are relevant to NGOs and their communities.

In the hands of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), information technology can improve productivity, increase overall effectiveness through better collaboration, and extend services to new communities in need. Moreover, technology can be a powerful force that opens exciting opportunities for nonprofits to better achieve their missions and accelerate their impact to add one more brick to build the Nation.

Microsoft had its presence through its innovative initiative called "Microsoft Innovation center".

Microsoft has also showcased the software donation guideline on how an NGO could be benefited from whole range of genuine Microsoft products.

Over one hundred Nepalese NGOs participated in the event. Sessions focused on the challenges and opportunities of technology, applying technology for sound financial and information management practices, social media, and innovative technology solutions. The highlight of the event was "Technology Speed Dating", in which participants heard from several NGOs about technologies currently being used in development programs. At the end of the event, all NGO participants were given a licensed copy of Microsoft Office Suite.

USAID and Microsoft will continue to partner in Nepal on initiatives in the sectors of health, anti-trafficking, and local capacity building in the future. ■

ADB Firmly For Poverty Reduction: Rahman

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is fully committed to working closely with the government of Nepal and stakeholders in supporting Nepal's poverty reduction and development critical for lasting peace and stability, said Sultan H. Rahman, Director General of ADB's South Asia Department, at the end of a three-day official visit to Nepal.

Rahman added that ADB had been closely following recent developments in Nepal and was aware of the challenging and complex political transition the country was undergoing.

It is important for the government to stay focused on the nation's strategic development goals, while taking the peace



and constitution drafting process forward," he said.

During his visit with high level government officials, including prime minister, finance minister, other ministers and secretaries, Rahman reiterated ADB's commitment to Nepal's development and underscored the need for effective delivery of basic services to the people of Nepal.

In particular, he underscored the importance of improving the quality of education to support Nepal's social and economic redevelopment.

Rahman, who used to head ADB's Resident Mission in Nepal from 2003 to 2006, noted the progress made in the Melamchi Water Support project but stressed the need to speed up project implementation much more while monitoring safety and environmental issues.

WB Supports Nepal-India Energy Cooperation

The World Bank has approved a US\$ 99 million package for the Nepal-India Electricity Transmission and Trade Project (NIETTP) to assist efforts of the Government of Nepal to mitigate a national energy crisis.

Insufficient and costly electricity is a major constraint to the economic and human development of the country, where only 46% of the population has access to electricity. As a result, rationing of electricity is common, with some areas receiving electricity for as little as 8 hours a day during the dry winter season.

The landmark cross-border project will provide Nepal with at least 100 MW of additional electricity, to supplement its

current electricity generation capacity of 698 MW and help minimize power blackouts. The country's peak demand is 885 MW. The project will see the establishment of cross-border transmission capacity of about 1000 MW. It will also develop key segments of the backbone high voltage system to help expand access to electricity across Nepal.

"Increasing access to electricity is one of the most significant development challenges facing Nepal today," said Susan Goldmark, World Bank Country Director for Nepal. "For the first time this project will help mitigate deficits through the trade in electricity. Once Nepal develops its hydropower potential and meets its domestic needs, the transmission infrastructure could also be used to export surplus hydropower and earn revenues for Nepal."

In response to the worsening electricity situation, the Government of Nepal declared a "national energy crisis" in December 2008 and approved an Electricity Crisis Management Action Plan which is currently under implementation, with support from the World Bank. The Action Plan includes development of the Dhalkebar-Muzaffarpur transmission link, a key component of the NIETTP and the first major cross-border transmission line between India and Nepal. Upon completion, Nepal could end electricity rationing by 2015, according to projections.

The energy situation throughout the South Asia Region (SAR) is characterized by poor consumer access to electricity, high dependence on imported oil and/or petroleum products, slow development of energy sources and supply infrastructure, weak distribution and almost no intra-region energy trade.

"Cross-border energy cooperation can lower costs in each country, improve supply reliability, and help lower carbon emissions," said Raghuvveer Sharma, Project Team Leader. "This project will lead the way in providing the necessary physical infrastructure for initially bilateral and eventually multi-country electricity trade in the northeastern part of South Asia Region."

American Chamber of Commerce Team visits Nepal

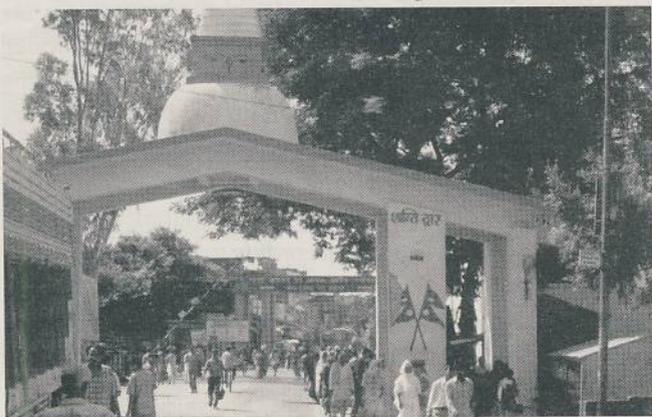
A delegation from the American Chamber of Commerce in India arrived in Kathmandu today for a three-day visit. The trade mission, the first by a U.S. business organization in 13 years, will explore investment and trade opportunities in Nepal. This important visit demonstrates the renewed American interest in Nepal's economy. Building on the recently signed U.S.-Nepal Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA), the Embassy hopes to expand the economic ties between the United States and Nepal.

Nine U.S. companies are taking part in the delegation, including Johnson & Johnson, GE Healthcare, Rockwell Automation, Monsanto, and Bell Helicopter. The delegates will meet with the Prime Minister, senior Government officials, political leaders, private sector companies, and U.S. Embassy officials. ■



'Dubious Meeting' On Border Mapping

Director General of the Department of Survey and his predecessors have reportedly quietly held a meeting earlier this month following reports that alleged that they were witness to, and involved in, the wrong mapping of borders with India which led thousands of hectares of Nepali land in the Indian



Sunauli Border

territory. The meeting was reportedly attended by officials who are said to work at the behest of the Indian officials. Knowledgeable surveyors and the staff of the border section of the department were not invited at the meeting which was intended to form a uniform stand on border demarcation. Sources said that the discussion was also held on ensuring the successors of the present officials at the department who would not disclose anything about the allegedly anti-national mapping. (Sanghu, June 20)

Oli 'Design'

The growing dispute within the Maoist party is threatening to disrupt the peace process and the constitution making. The party which has more than a third of the total seats at the constituent assembly is now divided in three factions. They are more concerned about the factional agenda than on the agenda of the party or the nation. As a result, the five-point pact reached ahead of extending the CA's term for three



KP Oli

months has been left in a lurch. Unless this pact is implemented the CA cannot be further extended. Already, senior UML leader K.P.Oli has warned of the politics after the three months. Oli, who had earlier



Pun

been lobbying against the extension of the CA, has reportedly claimed, after his mysterious tour of Delhi, that he would become prime minister after the expiry of three months. This information has reached the residence of the Maoist boss, Prachanda. At a meeting attended by a few leaders at his Naya Bazar residence, one of them had reported the Oli claims of becoming the next prime minister and making the two factions of the Maoist party meet the fate of the LTTE. According to what the Maoist leader reported at the meeting, within six hours of becoming the prime minister Oli planned to jail some from the UML, the Nepali Congress, the Nepal Army and the Nepal Police on charge of corruption. Prachanda laughed at the reports and said that Oli's life would be no longer than six hours. Despite Prachanda trying to laugh the report away, his confidante Barsha Man Pun Ananta Prachanda told other leaders that the chairman was very serious about it. So, Prachanda was positive towards suggestion that the party would have to be flexible to the maximum on army integration and the peace process and if the other parties did still not agree, a strategy should be put in place to resist the massacre post-August 28. Many Nepali Congress members of the constituent assembly also felt that Oli had been engaged in clandestine games to force prime minister Jhahnath Khanal to step down so as to show that the CA has been a failure. (Tarun, June 27)

Nepal Ranked 27th Failed State

Nepal has improved its ranking in the Foreign Policy magazine's list of the failed states. It is now ranked 27th worst out of the 177 countries.

According to it, among the South Asian countries, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Burma fare worse than Nepal. Finland is the top-ranked nation while the conflict-torn Somalia is at the bottom. Other African countries such as Chad, Sudan and Congo are also among the worst-placed countries. (Haank weekly) ■

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The Word Lab



Constitution Making: A Farce

—By YUBARAJ GHIMIRE

Almost every day, the special task force headed by Prachanda keeps making one important announcement after another. The obvious claim is that it narrowed down differences on ingredients of the future constitution. The task force is clear that it will have a president like that in France, but is not quite certain about the model of electoral system and federalism. There are clear indications that the Nepali Congress will oppose the 'French model presidency'. Obviously, Prachanda is hopeful that, despite the nose-dive in his popularity and image, he is still popular, and that he will be legitimately occupying Shital Niwas come the next election. A constitution is the basic guideline to effectively run the state in an accountable manner. But we are in a situation where the state has almost collapsed. Political parties, including the Maoists, have misappropriated, abused or misused the authority of the state. The system or principle of check and balance has collapsed. A few instances will clearly show this:

Nepal is the 6th country from the top among the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in terms of the volume of capital flight away from the country during the 1990-2008 period. A total of 9.1 billion US dollars—an average 450 million US dollars per year—made its way abroad clandestinely. Rubel Chaudhary, son in law of Sujata Koirala

and a suspect in the Darfur kick-back and the Voice over Internet Protocol racket, who deprived the country of several million rupees, made an unrestricted escape from the country on June 6. Chaudhary probably was the only person who knew where the Darfur scam money is gone. An American pair of lesbians come all the way from Colorado and declare themselves husband and wife in the presence of a gay right activist and legislator in the Dakshinkali Temple, a holy shrine for millions of Hindus across the globe.

What has the state done in response to all these? About half a dozen banks and financial institutions have either collapsed, or are on the verge of collapsing. People are withdrawing rapidly from the banks, and some are even sending money out. If what bankers say is true, the rate of capital flight is much higher compared to the annual average of 450 million US dollars during the year surveyed by a UNDP commissioned study. The Central bank—Nepal Rastra Bank—has hardly been able to instill confidence among depositors or in the financial health of the country. Instead, it has been caught doing silly things like putting a ban on the currency notes with King's photographs, and contributing to the poor being fleeced. Black marketers robbed the ordinary people by buying their 1000 Rupee notes for half its price in a desperate situation. When there is political instability, and the state almost invisible, people adopt any method to save their earning.

Large scale corruption at home, visible immunity that the politicians are acquiring in a scale never before in any crime

and plunder of the state—evident in Darfur scam—and lack of accountability for the crimes they have committed against the nation will give just one message: either the people revolt against all these and punish the current politicians, or explore their future somewhere outside. If they opt for the second one: sending money out is what follows.

What does Rubel's flight so smoothly mean? Obviously, all the three major parties, Nepali Congress that Rubel was directly related with, Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) that heads the government, and the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (UCPN-M) that controls the Home Ministry were hand-in-glove in facilitating his escape days after the media came out with reports alleging that Rubel was the kingpin receiving the huge kick-back in the Darfur scam, that not only spoiled Nepal's image abroad, but also exposed our policemen in the UN mission in Darfur to enormous risk as the Armed Police Couriers and other logistics sent to them did not meet the prescribed standards. All this happened when the government of Nepal—whoever was the Prime Minister—was aware about the growing

number of attacks on the UN mission in Sudan and a few other places by the rebels or the armed groups there.

With Rubel away despite the instructions from the Commission of Inquiry Into Abuse of Authority (CIAA) that

With Rubel away despite the instructions from the Commission of Inquiry Into Abuse of Authority (CIAA) that he be kept under vigil, and probed in the VOIP case, his mother in law may claim she and her son-in-law are innocent. K P Situala, home minister of the government when the corrupt deal was signed and implemented is sure to feel relieved over the great escape.

he be kept under vigil, and probed in the VOIP case, his mother in law may claim she and her son-in-law are innocent. K P Situala, home minister of the government when the corrupt deal was signed and implemented is sure to feel relieved over the great escape. Krishna Bahadur Mahara allowed his escape not for nothing. After all, top leaders of the big three parties have together—under agreement—plundered the nation and its funds, have devised a formula for egalitarian sharing of power and key positions for their cadres in almost every political, constitutional and diplomatic institutions without being held accountable.

The American couple made a mockery of not only the shrine, but also the fact that Nepal's law does not permit or recognize 'lesbian marriage'. Some have called it a sacrilege of the shrine.

Why did the couple not go to New York where such a marriage has just been legitimised? Why did the Blue Diamond Society get them to Nepal? Perhaps it had to show it is doing something for the massive funds that it got from the donors. But all these facts prove, Nepal is a place where anything can be done, and the culprits can easily get away with it.

In that situation, what does it mean even if a constitution is delivered? Nothing. What is needed now is the politicians, of the big three mainly, who have made the state defunct and invisible, must be punished by the people, and fresh initiatives taken to re-establish the authority of the state. A constitution, howsoever good and pro-people it might be in letter, means nothing when there is no functional and effective state. ■



PM Khanal (Left) Maoist Leader Prachanda

AUGUST 31 DEADLINE

Giving A Miss

As the country's largest party struggles to keep its house in order, the first one month of the extended constituent assembly has been wasted leaving no indications for hope in the next two

By SAROJ DAHAL

The United Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist had never belied its name as it has in recent weeks. It is a disunited lot, waiting to disintegrate any time. This has threatened to throw the peace process into pieces and the constitution making in a limbo.

The momentum seen in the immediate aftermath of the extension of the constituent assembly has virtually come to a halt.

Whatever had been agreed in the army integration special committee and the CA sub committee are in disarray.

The agreed calendar on declaring a draft statute two weeks before the extended deadline and the army integration four days before the deadline is almost certain to be confined to papers.

At the centre of the deadlock is the deep division in the Maoist party.

Chairman Prachanda has failed to convince his detractors on what he had agreed with the Nepali Congress, the UML and the Madhesi outfits.

Arch critic Mohan Baidya 'Kiran' has defied the party in ending the dual personal security as agreed with other parties. He has refused to return the Maoist combatants, deputed to provide security to the Maoist leaders, and their weapons to the camps.

The modality on the army integration has also caused a deep division in the party, with Baidya openly challenging Prachanda.

With strong opposition from the Baidya faction showing no sign of receding, Prachanda is also unlikely to agree with other parties on a 'democratic constitution' and independent judiciary. Baidya faction is insistent on a 'people's constitution' which the other parties can not accept at any cost.

The internal differences have run so deep that the central committee meeting

to thrash them out has not taken place after what was supposed to be a brief interruption last week.

And until and unless the largest party makes its position clear on key issues of peace process and the constitution making, any headway is impossible.

Said Maoist politburo member Devendra Poudel, "the on-going discussions among the parties are only a formality. They can take a concrete shape only after the Maoists decide its future course."

Whether Prachanda will be able to get his line endorsed by the central committee will decide the fate of the talks with other parties.

Prachanda has the sympathy of other major parties who feel that he has appeared honest these days on the issue of a democratic constitution and the logical conclusion of the peace process.

Following long talks with the Maoist chief, the Nepali Congress general secretary, Krishna Prasad Sitaula said, "there are grounds to trust Prachand now than before."

Prachanda has been intensifying consultations with the Nepali Congress vice president Ram Chandra Poudel and the senior UML leader Madhav Kumar Nepal to take them into confidence.

The three are likely to hold a secret meeting out of Kathmandu soon to bolster mutual confidence.

But with "moderate" vice chairman Baburam Bhattarai joining the "hardliner" Baidya bandwagon, the "centrist" Prachanda has found himself cornered in the party.

Setting aside what seemed their unbridgeable differences – for now — the two vice-chairmen want to bring the powerful chairman "down to his size".

But the wily Prachanda is not going to budge that easily. He is a hard nut to crack. The tussle has caused a serious crack in the country's largest party. It will be no surprise if the party succumbed to it.

The peace process and the constitution-making would in all probability become a casualty.

As the extended August 31 deadline is missed Nepal will embark on a new political course shape of which is not clear yet. ■



The Search For National Consensus Government

By DEVENDRA PAUDEL (SUNIL)

The UCPN-Maoist is committed to completing the peace process and constitution writing by August, when the extended period of the Constituent Assembly ends. Of course, some forces are trying to sabotage the peace process and constitution writing. Within UCPN-Maoist, there are no major ideological differences, but there are differences on how to carry on with the peace and constitution writing processes. Despite several differences on the modality of integration and forms of government, our party leaders have a common agenda that is to bring out at least a brief constitution by August if we are unable to write a full constitution. This is the reason our party has supported the efforts to narrow down the differences in various disputed issues. Our party has a clear vision and stand on peace process and constitution writing as we want to write the constitution in favor of the oppressed people of Nepal. There are several differences in our party regarding the party's way of working. We cannot settle all of them by just discussing them at the central committee or standing committee meets.

This is the reason an overwhelming number of our party leaders and workers are demanding the party's general convention, so that we can find an amicable, long term solution to all the disputes presently surfacing in our party. Informal meetings and discussions are taking place to sort out differences at various party levels.

People have voted UCPN-Maoist as the largest political party in the elections of the Constituent Assembly. We have a bigger responsibility towards the country and the people. In this scenario, what we need is to take more progressive steps to change the present state of affairs. This is what the debate, going on in our party level, is about. As a living party, debates and discussions are integral and no one can deny this fact. Although many regressive and reactionary forces are trying to project the present, healthy discussions in our party, as internal rivalry, this is not true. Our party will be stronger through these kinds of discussions and disputes. Of course, our leadership is unable to manage the internal problems of the party. Due to our internal failure, UCPN-Maoist is unable to move to achieve the goal which it formulated during the people's war. All the major political parties have been facing one or the other kind of dissension, which is hampering the overall peace process and constitution making. Our party is not an exception. Our party leaders have also certain defenses over the peace process and constitution making. However, there is no alternative before us other than to complete the peace process by promulgation of the new constitution through the CA. Our party leaders are aware of the situation. This is the reason they

agreed to extend the tenure of the CA.

Our party is holding the general convention soon to change the present individualistic trend. The leaders have to rise above individual interests or interests of their henchmen and to work for the broader interests of the common people. In our party also, the leaders have factions and favorites of particular groups of their own. But we have to think for the common people. We reached here by passing various stages. Our working strategy was to hold the elections of the Constituent Assembly, abolish the monarchy and restore the rights of the people. After making these kinds of decisions, we reached at the present state. There are certain differences over the way to go ahead. As a political party, we changed alliances with various political parties on the basis of issues.

Frankly speaking, the present strategy of our party is to complete the peace process and frame a new constitution for a democratic, federal republic Nepal. It is impossible for anybody to go out of this set agenda. This is in favor of the oppressed people. We need to make alliances within the party and outside the party. The maturity of our party will be seen on



Maoist Leaders

the main issue of peace process and constitution. We need to continue the present debates. There are discussions at the top levels. As the tenure of the CA is going to expire on August 31, our thrust will be to protect the Constituent Assembly. We need to conclude the peace process, the integration aspect, and promulgate the new constitution. Our party is trying to bring up the common voice on this. There are three views showing up our party. For instance, Mohan Baidhya Kiran has his own views and Dr. Baburam Bhattarai has his differences. Party president Prachanda is also trying to accommodate the views coming from different leadership levels. I have not heard that Mohan Baidhya Kiran is opposed to the integration process. He might have certain reservations, but he too seems to be serious to conclude the peace process and promulgate the new constitution. Our leader Baidhya's demand is that all the issues of integration should be taken to the central committee.

The present demand is for a national government. All political parties have agreed that there is the need to have a consensus government under the leadership of the largest party UCPN-Maoist. People, the international powers and republics and the majority wish to see the new national government under the leadership of Dr. Baburam Bhattarai. Many believe that he has the capability to bring all political forces together. Even Nepali Congress leaders are unofficially supporting Dr. Bhattarai.

(Sunil is a central committee member of UCPN-Maoist as told to NEW SPOTLIGHT)

“The UN Mission Had Some Significance For The Peace Process”

DR BIPIN ADHIKARI is a well known face amongst the members of legal community in Nepal. He is also a foremost constitutional expert of the country. He has written and edited many publications including books on the constitution, human rights and public law. Adhikari has been very closely following the constitution building process at Nepal's Constituent Assembly. Currently the chairperson of Nepal Constitution Foundation, Adhikari spoke with NEW SPOTLIGHT on the current hiccups in constitution making and peace process. Excerpts:

Do you see the possibility of a new constitution being enacted in the next two months?

There is always hope. However, I do not think the new constitution could be enacted if the issue of management of combatants is not solved as desired by most of the non-Maoist parties in the Constituent Assembly. There is increasing polarization in the country around this issue. There could be several other factors behind.

But why a compromise solution is so difficult on this subject?

To my knowledge, they all are ready to compromise here and there, as far as the draft constitution is concerned, but they do not want to negotiate on the combatant issue in a way that Maoists remain as armed force even after the promulgation of the constitution. What they want is - by the time the constitution is promulgated, there should not be any concept of Maoist combatants on board, and there should be no organized threat to the new constitution from any quarter. Democratic parties take it as the ideal point of departure for pursuing further democratization of the state. Some people have linked this issue with the larger issues of regional security as well.

Why cannot both the issues go hand in hand as the Maoists have been emphasizing?

In principle, if there is an environment of trust, there is no reason why this should be a problem. The dilemma is that such an environment of trust is not visible. Parties like Nepali

Congress have been insisting that the key peace agreements signed with the Maoists hither to this day since the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed in 2006 remain to a great extent unimplemented on their part. There have been several good faith understandings from which Maoists have backed out openly. While they do not want to dismantle their combatants, others think cantonments must be cleared out first.

What are the major issues in which they are confronting each other?

It is the same issues that we read in the newspapers every morning. Maoists have problems to agree on the number of combatants to be integrated into the national security forces, and on the modalities for their integration including rank harmonization. They want parity in everything. Some of the Maoists do not seem to be happy even with the idea of establishing a Directorate under the Nepal Army on which the Maoist leadership had a favorable nod. Discussions have remained inconclusive to date.

What is the Maoist position in all these issues?

Generally, they all love the idea of having a standing army of their own. This is the psychology. You cannot help it. However, their leadership, aware of the international critiques, has always tried to assure up to certain standards. This offers space for negotiation. However, there has never been serious dialogue in exploring this space in the interest of all. Meanwhile, there are others in his team, who have very strong opinions, and have nuisance value within the party. They say that the leadership has failed, and the one who succeeds in finding a solution to external class struggle in Nepal and inner-party struggle, should lead the party. They have also demanded review in the party steering committee decision to accept the leadership of Nepal Army in the separate division to be created with the integration of combatants. This situation frightens others as to long term stability in the country.

Do you think the absence of the



UN mission has created vacuum?

The UN mission had some significance for the peace process. It was like an international forum in the peace process creating space for deliberative decision making. But its role was technically limited to monitoring of compliance by the Nepal Army and the Maoist combatants with the agreement on the monitoring of the management of arms and armies. They continued round-the-clock surveillance at the Nepal Army weapons storage site in Kathmandu and the weapons storage areas in the seven main cantonment sites of the Maoist combatants. But even this moderate role of the UN mission was not tolerated by certain international sectors. I do not want to explain more.

What does the constitution say? Does it give any guidance for the remaining peace process?

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) is a part of the Interim Constitution 2007. So it is not just an agreement between political parties, but also the fundamental law of the land. The Constitution also envisaged that the integration and rehabilitation of the Maoists combatants would be completed within six months of the formation of a new government following the 2008 Constituent Assembly election. These provisions have not been enforced. The Supreme Court is of the opinion that they are political issues, and has said that the mechanism under the CPA should handle them well. I do not think in the broader scheme of things that Nepal has been passing through there is any room for constitution and the rule of law. ■

HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Difficult Choice

Soon after the announcement of the results of School Leaving Certificate exams, floodgates to higher secondary schools have opened. A large number of schools are rushing to appear on newspapers, television, radio and hoarding boards with their own styles to woo the students. The challenge before the students and parents is to make the right choice of schools that offer quality for affordable fees.

By KESHAB POUDEL

As soon as the results of the SLC exams came out, floodgates appear to have opened for schools offering the higher secondary education. The +2 schools are marking this festive season with a motley of advertisements in newspapers and hoarding boards hanging here and there, almost everywhere.

When, back in 1994, Govinda Raj Joshi, then minister of education, presented the higher secondary education as an alternative to the proficiency certificate level of the Tribhuvan University, many a critic saw his decision as premature. There was a massive opposition within his party, not to talk of the upset TU authorities.

The TU took loans from the World Bank to remove the proficiency certificate level, but later the authorities showed reluctance to do so and did not cooperate

with the ministry in this regard. "This move was possible at that time because there was a virtual political stability and our party led the government under Girija Prasad Koirala," said Joshi.

His opponents even created hurdles to run the +2 education. He had to personally motivate private schools and public schools to go for the plus 2 because it was an internationally accepted school system.

When no private and public school was ready to open +2 in Kathmandu, Joshi asked Budhanilkantha to start it. Due to his personal influence, some of public schools from outside the valley supported him.

Nobody bothers to know today how difficult it was to introduce this new system. Intellectuals like Dr. Ishwor Prasad Upadhyaya, secretary of Ministry of Education, and Dr. Tirtha Khaniya,

vice chairman of Higher Secondary Education Board and many others, who were at the Ministry at that time, supported Joshi in his move.

"I am happy to see the present scenario where higher secondary education is widely accepted by all, especially as I remember those days when I was condemned by critics as acting like a bully," said Joshi. However, I had not anticipated anything like the present level of commercialization of this education," he said. "Had HSEB monitored and regulated the system properly, it would not have gone too commercial like in the present context."

Although Joshi's aim was to make the Nepalese education system competitive and up to the international level, he did not find many takers of his view back then. From his own party to the opposition, all he got was a massive criticism.



Students at Higher Secondary School

Seventeen years after, the situation has reversed, yet nobody cares to notice those persons who worked so hard to bring these major changes in the education system. And, who has the time?

Every year, as soon as the SLC results are published, parents and students rush to knock on the doors of higher secondary schools. The schools, in turn, rush to the doors of media- newspapers, radio, television and online, to lure the students and parents through attractive advertisements.

Amidst the festive mood now, one can see floods of colourful advertisements and hoarding boards, better looking than those in the years gone by thanks to the improving technology and knowhow. Obviously, the psychological pressure on the students and parents to choose the right education institution, which imparts quality for a reasonable cost, is tremendous. If one reads the advertisements online, they indicate that the infrastructure of these schools are at par with classrooms in developed countries.

Most of the newly established higher secondary schools are marketing

themselves with many things western, including their names and models of buildings. But hardly any seems to really put a premium on quality of education and dedication to work for the future. These new schools are also using a marketing gimmick by hiring old teachers as principals and founders, for their names in certain fields.

As the +2 education solely supported by private investment, it is natural they have some kind of profit making motives. Everybody wants to make profits from investment. In this context, many schools operators ignore the main ethos of education to serve the people.

According to higher secondary authorities, there are 2,700 schools permitted to teach the +2 classes. Interestingly, all these schools are under the private sector. Higher secondary education is only one level where the government investment is virtually zero. Out of 17 percent total budget allocated to education, Higher Secondary Education receives just a few million rupees.

“The government needs to increase its annual contribution to the Higher

Secondary Education so that even the rural population gets benefits,” said Dr. Baburam Pokharel, founding chairman and principal of VS Niketan Higher Secondary Schools and College.

Confusion

Although one of the main thrusts of education is to impart quality education, the recent trend speaks otherwise. Some urban-based schools are luring students by showing off their school dresses, buildings and other hardwares.

Students and parents tend to look for colleges that are liberal and offer extra facilities. Most of them neglect the colleges providing quality education without compromise. Along with good professors, good colleges make sure, how well the classes are conducted.

Over the years, Nepal has seen the growth of quality colleges in the country but students are mostly oblivious to that. Moreover, it is also essential to get prior and correct information about the courses that prospective students would like to take.

Following the great recession in the real estate business, many brokers are now investing in the higher secondary

No To Advertising Race

Professor Dr. KRISHNA KANTA PARAJULI is the managing director of CANVAS International Higher Secondary School. Having had a long involvement in the +2 education, professor Parajuli knows many ins and outs of the school education. Parajuli spoke to NEW SPOTLIGHT on various issues. Excerpts:



The recent trend shows that the +2 education has been commercialized giving rise to a flourishing unhealthy competition. How do you look at this?

I agree with you that the +2 looks to be a very profitable business venture for many. Instead of guaranteeing quality education, schools seem to be competing in the advertisement campaigns. CANVAS International believes in quality of education. We don't have any intention to join the advertisement race.

If things are going wrong, what do you propose as a solution?

Higher Secondary Education Board (HSEB) needs to act. Unfortunately, HSEB has been doing nothing to regulate the schools. HSEB has to monitor all the ongoing activities.

What do you say about the present uncompetitive and unhealthy practices?

An unhealthy advertisement race is creating confusions in the minds of parents and students. The minds of young students are badly affected by the present trends. Students fail to see what is right and what is wrong.

In the present context, what do you suggest for parents and students?

Parents and students need to follow a cautious approach. They have to visit the schools and meet the teachers to test the quality of education. Advertisements should not be the basis for them to judge the quality of education. Some newspapers are classifying the schools by drawing their own criteria.

What strategy does CANVAS have for a long term?

CANVAS has a long-term vision. We will lure the students and teachers by imparting quality education. It may take a few more years for us, but we want to convince parents and children through our academic environment and quality education. CANVAS believes commercialization is not going to enhance the image of the schools for the long run. We will pursue the policy which will enhance our image in the long run.

What other reforms do you think are necessary in the +2 education?

In the changing context, there is the need to take certain reforms in curriculum and monitoring. HSEB must be made capable to monitor and regulate the schools as a central and powerful authority.

education. "Although many schools are selling the name of renowned old scholars to attract the students, the brokers and businessmen are playing from behind," said a professor on condition of anonymity. "Such schools are promoting the culture of mini-skirts, motorbikes and muscle power."

As private investment in the higher education sector is reducing the burden of government, it is creating more troubles due to the lack of a strong monitoring and regulatory authority. Although Higher Secondary Education Board is responsible to take all the necessary regulatory works, what it lacks is the institutional capability and manpower.

In an unhealthy competition, many reputed schools run

Call For Change

At a time when there is a growing competition in the +2 education, various schools are offering their own schemes. Princeton International College also has its own set of beliefs and plans. Executive Director SHANTI KRISHNA ADHIKARI spoke to NEW SPOTLIGHT on various issues. Excerpts:



How do you assess the overall scenario in the higher secondary education?

If you look at the present trend, unhealthy practices are growing. Instead of taking education as a service, there is more business orientation. This kind of a trend will ultimately harm the overall education performance.

How do you make your college different in this context?

We believe in quality education and we will never compromise on it. This is the reason we are very concerned about quality and proper management. Proper management is important to make private educational institution successful.

What do you see are the reasons behind the growth of private schools?

One of the reasons behind thriving private schools is their strong management. Despite limited resources, private education institutions are thriving in the country because their management is strong.

How does the Princeton International Academy work?

We hold regular examinations and class tests. This makes students alert. We also emphasize extracurricular activities and even proper counseling for students having problems in their studies. We have a very dedicated and strong team of teachers. Finally, we provide the best academic environment.

At a time when there is a growing concern about the gap between the government and private schools, what do you suggest?

There should be a policy that could bridge the gap between the students of private and government institutions. There is the need to change the dual education system of Nepal.

by professionals are also facing the problems. Chelsea International Academy is one of them. For the past four years, Sudhir Kumar Jha, principal of Chelsea International Academy, had not faced any difficulty to get the students for its A Level Cambridge. Established as a good A Level school for science and non-science streams, Chelsea International Academy used to get enough students till the last year.

"Due to the haphazard decision of the government to allow any number of schools in any time and any place, the situation has gone from bad to worse. If the government is sincerely in favour of quality education, it must not permit new schools without analyzing the manpower available in the market," said Jha.

After taking the portfolio of Minister of Education, Ganga Lal Tuladhar, who issued permission to 36 schools to run A Level Cambridge in Kathmandu, is concerned about the scenario too.

"Education sector must provide healthy academic environment rather than healthy physical environment. I have already directed the HSEB to monitor the situation to stop unhealthy practices," minister Tuladhar told *New Spotlight*. "Following the phase-out of the proficiency certificate level from Tribhuvan University, we need to bring changes in the

New Vision For Higher Education

Having spent his entire career in promoting quality education, DR. BABURAM POKHAREL, founder principle of V. S. Niketan Higher Secondary School and College, has a new vision to share about Nepal's higher education. Since its establishment by Dr. Pokharel in 1981, V.S. Niketan has made remarkable achievements. It is now a leading private sector education institution dedicated to impart quality and affordable education to all. V.S. Niketan provides one roof for students from pre-primary to graduate levels. As the results of the School Leaving Certificate exams have come out, like every year, the students face difficulties in choosing the right school dedicated to their further education.

How do you look at the quality of higher education at the +2 level?

I can say that the curriculum of +2 is at par with international standards. Unlike in the Tribhuvan University's proficiency course, the curriculum of +2 is updated every two to three years. It helps students to receive instruction under the best available curriculum.

What do you say about the recent trend of commercialization of +2 education? Don't you think such a trend has been eroding the ethos of education?

A school like ours, which offers classes from nursery to higher education levels, does not have to compete in the advertisements race. We receive enough students. Only those schools, which have just the +2 level of education to offer, are seen in the ad race. Parents and students are wise enough to understand which schools impart quality education with full commitment to nothing but education.

After decades of experiments in the +2, don't you think time has come now to make certain reforms in it?

Of course, there is the need to make certain reforms. The time has now come to make the +2 as part of school education. Globally, higher secondary is part of the school education. If we can follow the same,

sector of higher secondary education to make it accessible to the people from all walks of life."

Out of the total of 397,759 students who appeared in the SLC examination conducted in the academic year 2067 B.S. (March 2011), only 220,766 students got through this most vital exam of their school life.

Over 2600 schools are now trying to

this will discourage unhealthy practices. Nepal's development partners are also suggesting reforms, such as making a single board for +2 at the center and leaving the SLC to regional education boards.

What changes has the +2 education system brought about in the country?

After the introduction of +2 education, the people living in rural parts of the country too have got the opportunity to acquire education at their doorsteps. In the past, rural students had to go outside their home village and district to acquire intermediate level or higher education. This is the reason there were high dropouts following SLC. After the introduction of +2, the situation has changed and rural people too are completing the +2 level.

How do you claim that the private sector has been imparting quality education?

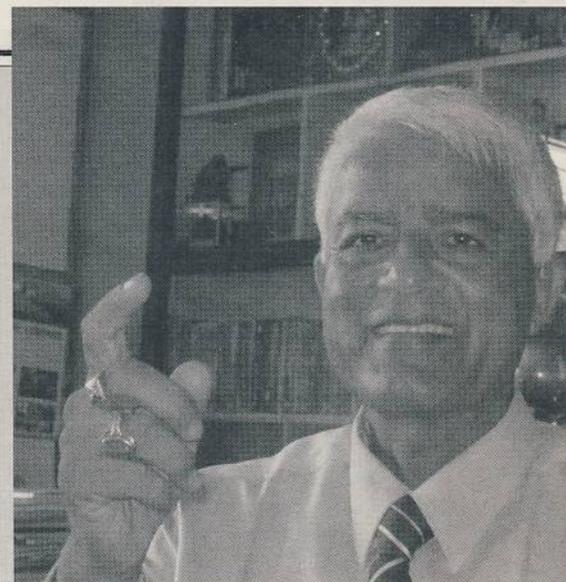
The recent SLC results also showed that the private sector was able to impart quality education as 90 per cent of their students passed SLC. However, the results of the government schools remained pathetic as less than 50 per cent students passed the SLC examination. Even the +2 education institutions have proved this. Teachers are more dedicated and committed in private schools. This is the reason why the pass percentage of the private schools remains higher than the public schools. The teachers in the government schools get more benefits than the private schools. This does not change the overall performance.

As results of SLC have already been published, what challenges and opportunities do you see before the students?

Following the closure of the proficiency certificate level, there is no option before them but to choose the +2 education. The schools need to assure parents that they will impart quality education. Students have enormous opportunities before them as they normally do not go to foreign countries to pursue +2. Challenges for the students are mainly in making the right choice of schools that are

lure these 220,776 students. After results of partial examinations in August, another 10,000 to 15,000 students will be added in the total pass percentage.

Education expert Dr. Mana Prasad Wagle said that lack of appropriate political leadership and willpower of the employees are to blame for the failure of different education programmes launched by the government.



really dedicated to education.

How do you look at the Higher Secondary Education Board?

As an autonomous body, the Higher Secondary Board is free to make major decisions. This is one of the reasons it publishes results in time. It also conducts the examination in accordance with its calendar.

What do you say about the overall environment of the higher secondary education?

The environment at the higher education sector is good as it provides peaceful atmosphere to the students who want to pursue higher education. This is the reason guardians and students are now looking forward to choose good schools of higher secondary education.

What about the V.S. Niketan?

It started with 147 students and 7 teachers in 1981. The school has made a lot of progress since then. From pre-primary to high school and college, I am proud to say, we have been able to secure more than 98 per cent success. Nepal government honored it with excellent school of the year award. We are now running BBA. Our BBA program is like a hot cake. Banks are offering placements for our students even before they complete their course. Our program provides the job guarantee. Thanks to the support of parents and students, we have been able to establish ourselves as a good school. ■

"The government must take the steps to regularize the education institutions. If things go like they do now, there will be more problems in the future."

As there is no choice other than the Higher Secondary Education now, what students and parents need to do is to find out the institutions with proven capability for quality education and institutions with academic atmosphere. ■



Revamping Of The Judiciary In The Context Of Federal Nepal

By ANKIT DHAKAL

Nepal's transition from a unitary set-up to a federal one will have to come with a host of institutional changes. Existing institutions belonging to all the three organs of the State will have to be revamped towards implementing the new federal constitution. The changes that are to be anticipated while implementing federalism in Nepal are going to be both 'structural' as well as 'functional' in nature. The current set-up of the judiciary will also have to be modified in both of these aspects (structural and functional) to accommodate the necessary changes.

Structural Issues:

The preliminary draft of the Constituent Assembly Committee on Judicial System has suggested a three tier judicial system comprising of the Federal Supreme Court, the Provincial High Court and the District/Local Court. Although this structure may not look very different from the existing one, the arrangement of high courts in harmony with the federal units upon restructuring of the State is going to be a real challenge. High courts have to be so arranged that it can effectively deal with appeals from all lower courts within its jurisdiction, and therefore be easily accessible to all its subordinate courts and interested parties.

Another important issue to be settled is concerning the 'constitutional court'. This issue has been a debatable one, both within the Constituent Assembly as well as the judicial circle of Nepal. The main argument for having a Constitutional Court is that the Federal Supreme Court will be flooded with constitutional interpretations to deliver in the light of the new constitution, and therefore, it is best to grant this to a specialized court as this will further provide uniformity of constitutional interpretations. However, views have also been expressed that the Federal Supreme Court, just like the current Supreme Court, will prove adequate in interpreting the new constitution and hence a new entity will only create confusion and lack of coordination within the judiciary. Although both the sides 'for' and 'against' having the constitutional court may have their merits and demerits, the point is that it is still to be decided whether or not to have one and prepare for implementation of the new constitution. Delay in taking this decision has prevented the new judicial structure of Nepal from taking shape at least on paper which has further delayed any planning in this regard.

Functional Issue

In the current setup, the Supreme Court of Nepal is vested broadly with ordinary jurisdiction, extra-ordinary jurisdiction, jurisdiction of judicial control and miscellaneous

jurisdiction. However, upon the establishment of the High Courts as provided by the Committee on Judicial System, the Federal Supreme Court will have to play a crucial role in harmonizing legal interpretations. Instances will arise wherein a question of law will be interpreted differently by two or more High Courts while deciding cases. In the eventuality of such instances, it will be the chief function of the Federal Supreme Court to address such questions and provide uniformity in interpretation. This function of the Federal Supreme Court will also be crucial in establishing certainty of law across various High Courts. This will be a new but vital function that the apex court will have to proactively perform in the context of federal Nepal apart from its regular duties.

Also, mechanisms of ensuring inclusive judiciary will be necessary in the federal context. Apart from ethnic inclusivity, Federal Supreme Court should ensure the inclusion of judges from all the respective federal units of Nepal. This will be an important aspect of revamping the judiciary while implementing the new constitution of Nepal.

Another important issue to be settled is concerning the 'constitutional court'. This issue has been a debatable one, both within the Constituent Assembly as well as the judicial circle of Nepal. The main argument for having a Constitutional Court is that the Federal Supreme Court will be flooded with constitutional interpretations to deliver in the light of the new constitution, and therefore, it is best to grant this to a specialized court as this will further provide uniformity of constitutional interpretations.

Challenges in Revamping the Judiciary

Adequate human resource and infrastructure will undoubtedly be the major challenges to be faced by the State in

revamping the judiciary. Some of the existing Appellate Courts could be enlarged and transformed into High Courts while rest will have to simply be made from scratch depending upon how the State gets restructured. Timely and strategic planning can help mitigate the infrastructural challenges. However, garnering adequate human resource that shall be necessary in revamping the judiciary towards federalism will be a bigger challenge than that of 'infrastructure'. The State needs to invest in legal institutions (especially educational and legal training based institutions) as soon as possible to create the necessary workforce in days to come. Lack of adequate and modern legal educational/training institutions will cripple the functioning of the judiciary at all levels in the federal context.

Judiciary is just one of the organs of the State that needs to be transformed to fit the new federal system. It is however a worrying sight that in the present context, key issues pertaining to the new judicial system are still to be settled by the Constituent Assembly. The uncertainty of the restructured units of new Nepal, even as of now, has made it impossible to paint an exact picture of the judicial institutions in days to come. Therefore, careful planning and settlement of contentious issues regarding the judicial systems should be the main focus towards ensuring a stable and strong judiciary in federal Nepal. ■

BUDGET 2011

Busting Uncertainty

Efforts to bring the national budget through normal process could restore confidence in economy

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

In the past three years since the promulgation of interim constitution and the election of Constituent Assembly (CA), none of the successive governments could bring the budget through the normal parliamentary procedure.

The cumulative effect has been quite dramatic.

First, the country, in the last two years, fell into the trap of Balance of Payment (BoP) crisis. From a comfortable BoP surplus, Nepal has now been compelled to witness the falling BoP deficit month after month.

The soaring trade deficit has coincided with the double-digit inflation.

And, in recent months the nagging pain of liquidity scarcity has become full-blown crunch even as the government struggles to spend its development funds.

As liquidity problem engulfed development banks and finance companies, the bankers had said that normal budget on time had become a must.

"The liquidity problem cannot be solved fully without the budget," Ashok Rana, president of Nepal Bankers' Association (NBA) had said.

Positive Signs

Last year, the opposition Maoists had prevented then government from presenting budget at the parliament stating that the lame duck government



DPM Adhakari

cannot do so even as rounds and rounds of election to choose a new prime minister had failed.

This year, too, politically, the status of the government is caretaker since Prime Minister Jhalnath Khanal has already signed an understanding to resign.

But this year the opposition Nepali Congress (NC) has agreed to let the government present budget provided it does not pursue populist and partisan line.

Last week, Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Bharat Mohan Adhikary tabled the principles and priorities of the budget at the parliament.

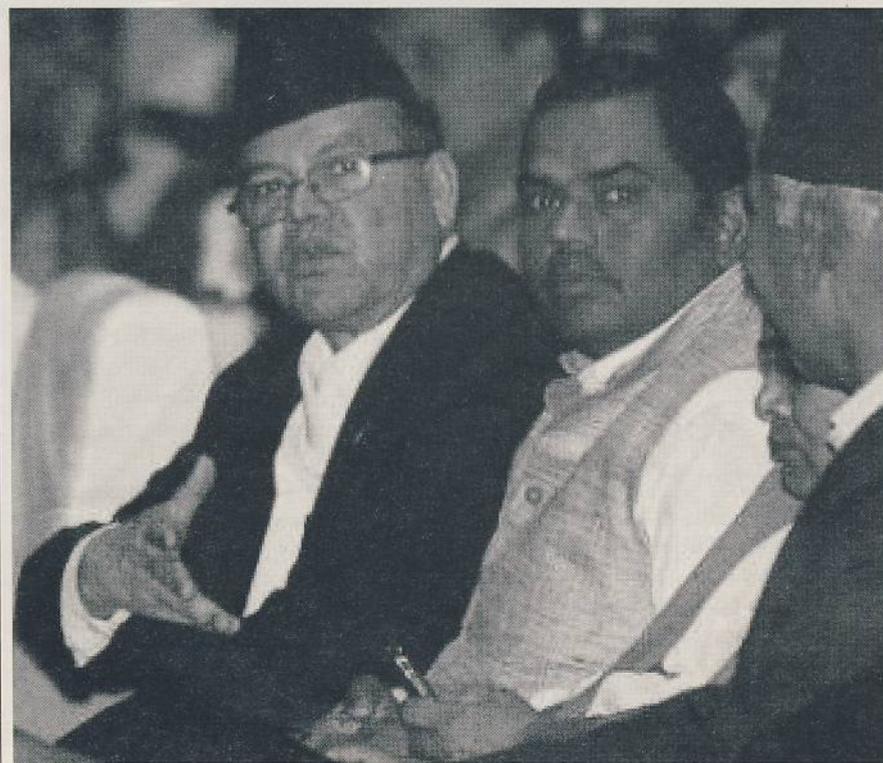
He has mainly focused on creating environment conducive to increasing production and investment.

In the immediate term, the budget would also need to help the central bank in dealing with the liquidity problem.

"The budget also needs to address the burning issue of recession in real estate sector where tens of billions of rupees of banks and financial institutions have been trapped," said a banker, adding, "That is where the root cause of liquidity crunch lies."

As per the rules, the principles and priorities of the budget has to be tabled at the parliament at least 15 days before presenting the annual budget.

Officials plan to unveil the budget for the fiscal year 2011/12 on July 14 before which the president will present the policies and programs of the government on July 3. ■



PM J.N. Khanal (Left) and DPM Upendra Yadav



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee with Gurkha Leaders

DARJEELING ROW

Dissension Grows

By UMA KANTA KHANAL
in Jhapa

The agreement between Gorkha Janamukti Morcha and the chief minister of West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee, has invited strong condemnation from the other pro-Gorkhaland parties. They have reacted that the agreement is not in favour of the Gorkhali people of India.

The party agitating for a separate state for Indian Gorkhas, or Gorkhaland, Gorkha Janamukti Morcha had been launching the agitation for at least four years in the hill district of West Bengal, Darjeeling and its peripheral areas.

But recently, when it made an agreement with the chief minister to form an interim authority to develop Darjeeling in various sectors, the other parties which favour the formation of Gorkhaland have strongly reacted that the agreement is a betrayal for the people of Darjeeling and the Gorkhali people residing throughout that country.

The interim authority entails formation of an autonomous council in Darjeeling.

The organisation secretary of Revolutionary Communist Party of India (Marxist), Govinda Chhetri, said, "The Indian Gorkhas had not been involved in the agitation of Gorkhaland to get the autonomous council only. The formation of the council is not the real demand of people of Darjeeling and the Indian Gorkhas."

Chhetri further said that the agitation was to obtain the real identity for Indian Gorkhas.

In the legislative assembly election of West Bengal, the candidates of Gorkha Janamukti Morcha won from all the three constituencies of Darjeeling. Dr. Harka Bahadur Chhetri, Rohit Sharma and Trilok Dewan are MPs from the hills.

The umbrella organisation of Indian Gorkhas, Bharatiya Gorkha Parisang is also not satisfied with the agreement between GJM and the chief minister of West Bengal. Parisang has said it is a shock for the Indian Gorkhas. The acting

president of Parisang, Dr. Enos Das Pradhan said, "The problem of Darjeeling is different from the problem of Indian Gorkhas. The agreement can solve the problem of Darjeeling but the main demand of the Indian Gorkhas has not been addressed by it."

The last ruling party of West Bengal, Communist Party of India (Marxist), was also ready to provide autonomy to Darjeeling. But the agitating parties did not agree. When the same kind of agreement has been made with the latest chief minister, it is said that GJM's intention was only to phase out the communist rulers and politicians from the hills.

An MP, Dr. Harka Bahadur Chhetri, claims that the agreement is the result of eleven rounds of tripartite talks with the state and the central government. He said, "There is no use of condemning the agreement between GJM and the state government. We have not found out that there is possibility of a separate state directly, that is why this is the first step towards the separate state."

The MPs from the hills are busy now-a-days in the collection of problems of Darjeeling to find their solutions and to raise the voice of the people in the state legislative assembly. They are trying to convince the people that the agitation has not been suspended instead they will raise the voice of demand of Gorkhaland in the assembly. There had not been the discussion of the demand of Gorkhaland in the assembly during the rule of the communist parties. ■

NEW SPOTLIGHT

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GURKHA VETERANS

Resettlement Woes

Senior Gurkhas find it difficult to adjust to a new environment in the United Kingdom

By BHAGIRATH YOGI
in Aldershot, UK

A resident of Ramechhap VDC, Jit Bahadur Sunuwar, arrived in UK almost a year ago along with his wife, Mrs Lal Maya Sunuwar, with the prospect of bright future for himself and his family.

70-year-old Sunuwar—who is suffering from high blood pressure, arthritis and weak bladder—hoped for better treatment in his adopted home.

The Sunuwar couple, however, found that life in the UK was much difficult than what they had thought in Nepal.

“First there is a problem of language. Both I and my husband can’t speak English. Moreover, I have to do all household chores myself here,” said Mrs Sunuwar, who has left her grown-up daughter in Kathmandu.

Hundreds of senior Gurkha families like Sunuwar have arrived in the UK following the British government’s decision to allow all ex-Gurkhas, who have served at least four years in the British army, to settle in the UK. The

May 2009 decision came in the aftermath of a high-profile campaign led by British actress Joanna Lumley and supported by a wide range of British society. ‘New Home’

Also called a garrison town, Aldershot is located in the Greater Rushmoor Borough—nearly one hour train journey from London. The Borough is a home to hundreds of Gurkha families including those who have arrived recently.

Jit Bahadur’s cousin, Man Bahadur Sunuwar, arrived in the UK, along with his wife Bishnu Maya Sunuwar, nearly five months ago. Man Bahadur says he had served in the British Army for nearly eight years, took part in the ‘Malaya war,’ among others, but was discharged without pension.

“I was told that I will get pension along with state benefits from the British government. That’s why I am here,” he said.

Hundreds of Gurkha families have arrived UK over the last year at a time when UK is passing through one of the difficult economic times in its history. As the coalition government is trying to

reduce public debt furiously, the number of unemployed people has soared high most of whom now depend on the state-sponsored benefit system.

“Local councils are mainly responsible to take care of local people including unemployed and senior citizens,” said Chhatra Rai, General Secretary of British Gurkha Welfare Society (BGWS), a leading organisation of the Gurkhas. “Though they provide a lump-sum amount every month to Gurkha families, they find it very difficult to meet their overall costs including housing,” he added.

The one bed room apartment, hired by Jit Bahadur Sunuwar and his wife, doesn’t have a landline telephone or a television set. “Though we get around 600 pounds every month in state benefits, I don’t save a penny,” said Mrs Lal Maya Sunuwar, whose only luxury is to speak with her daughter back home over a mobile phone.

It is estimated that over 30,000 Gurkhas have settled in the UK since 2004. While the younger lot have been working in various sectors including security, transportation and have launched their own businesses, most of the elders have found it difficult to adjust to the new environment.

“Most of the Gurkha veterans have left Nepal and settled here for the future of our children, to be useful and integral part of the British Society,” said Major (Retd.) Tikendra Dal Dewan, chairman of BGWS, who is also president of the Greater Rushmoor Nepalese Community. “While we are grateful to the local authorities for all their support to Gurkhas despite financial constraints, the problem won’t be resolved even over the next ten years unless the British government provides equal pension to the Gurkha veterans,” he added.

Gurkha organisations say they receive only one-third of the pension accorded to their comrades in the British Army. After a British court rejected their appeal for equal pension, BGWS is now planning to move the Strasbourg-based European Court of Human Rights. While it will be a long and costly battle, people like Sunuwar may continue to arrive in the UK looking for better future for themselves—only to confront a reality which is much different than what they were promised back home. ■



Love In Shimla

By ABIJIT SHARMA

Déjà vu

If you are a Nepali visiting Shimla, one thing that you instantly notice about this hill station is its similarity with Nepal. Shimla bears striking resemblance with the hilly areas of Nepal; Ilam to be precise. Not only the topography, the houses, the climate, language and even the people can easily be mistaken for a Nepali. Having visited Ilam just a year back, my trip to the East India company's summer capital was like a déjà vu. Throughout the trip, I couldn't stop myself invariably comparing the place to Nepal.

Pot-holed dreams

Delhi to Shimla is a nine hour bus ride. Unlike the Nepali highways, the Indian highways are well maintained; black topped throughout, with street signs and are brightly lit. A nine hour bus ride in Nepal would normally leave one with a sore backache, disturbed sleep, and a nasty stomach (courtesy Munglin's food). But thanks to the highways in India,

travelling by bus was a much comfortable affair. To my delight, I even found good restaurants on the way serving 'Chawal and Dal' much better than Munglin's 'Dal Bhaat'. En route, I marveled at the scene of beautifully decorated and brightly lit gurdwaras and temples even at midnight! As I lay relaxed watching the still world outside from my speeding bus, I pictured Nepal with all of these; a black topped road without potholes, well working street lights and embellished monuments. A sudden jolt of the bus awoke me from my imagination and I thought it better to concentrate on the comedy movie showing on the bus rather than plunge back into my dream again.

A Tiny Britain in India

Shimla was annexed by the British in 1819 after the Gorkha War. Lord Lytton, Viceroy of India initiated steps to plan the town from 1876. This scarcely habituated rural area would ultimately go on to become the summer capital of India, with the administration shifting twice a year, between Calcutta and this much cooler hill station. It is not surprising that the place

still carries much of its British legacy and it is this reason which attracts a huge number of tourists. Right from the administrative buildings to the church, traces of European architecture is reflected everywhere. The Town hall, which is the main administrative building, reminds you of the typical 19th and 20th century British houses. The huge cathedral is no different from any other European church. The former Viceroy Lodge, now used as a research centre, is an absolute masterpiece. What stands out amongst all is the way in which the place is maintained. Not a single scrap of garbage or plastic waste can be seen and roads are swept almost throughout

the day. Dust-bins are placed everywhere and even a public latrine is maintained like any other 5 star hotel restroom. Looking at the way India has tapped the specialty of Shimla to attract thousands of tourists every year, I only felt dejected on how we are wasting the potential of our very own 'hill stations' like Ilam and Palpa.

'Grin' Valley

I was advised by the hotel staffs not to

miss out on a couple of places which were just an hour drive from Shimla. To my dismay, 'Green Valley' which was the first place I visited turned out to be nothing more than a mere sight of a sprawling hill with neatly cut and uniformly grown pine trees. I cursed myself for paying two thousand rupees to see something I could have seen from the balcony of my home! With an optimistic mind, I expected the second spot to be exciting. It was even more disastrous. After getting down from the taxi and riding a horse for half an hour, my guide takes me to a cliff where people have gathered to see a mountain peak! Now how often would a Nepali be excited to see a mountain, that too on a cloudy day?

'Speed = Death Ahead'

As I cruised in my taxi while visiting a place nearby, a rather funny street sign caught my sight. The signal read 'Speed = Death Ahead'. I wondered who had taken the pain of installing the ludicrous signal on the road. And with 70 kmph I only imagined if my driver had read the sign! ■



Shimla

Book

Novel Work

Manan Karki's English novel The Memory of Leaves marks an important milestone in English writing and publishing in Nepal

By A CORRESPONDENT

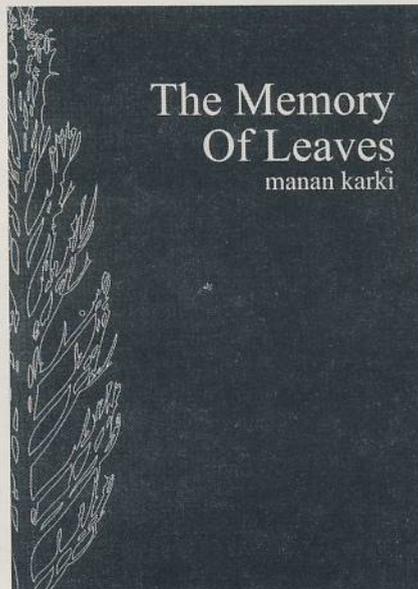
In the midst of many English language novels published in Nepal, novelist Manan's work stands out. Renowned litterateur Greta Rana describes the book as high quality work, which everybody needs to read.

One of the important things about author Manan Karki is that his novel narrates plots enlivened with his observation. Karki has also shown his command over the English language. Many renowned writers find it difficult to use appropriate words in explaining events. Author Manan is well-versed in word choice.

The novel is an expression of a perfect combination of events, characters and narrative. The language is very interesting and touching. The book reflects novelist Manan's creative views and thinking.

"Set in the turn-of-century Kathmandu, *The Memory Leaves* is a collage of three different but interweaving narratives, each of which is narrated from the perspective of one of the novel's three protagonists and revolves around a central tragic event from the distant past. Full of linguistic and verbal inventions, the novel, marked with the author's poised and frequently poetic prose, is an evocative exploration of the human condition and of the ways in which the past and the future are continually reshaped by the present," according to a press release of Llareggub Press.

First published in Ireland by Pillar Press in 2009, Llareggub Press released Manan Karki's first novel in Nepal. "We believe that the release of the novel here marks an important milestone in English writing and publishing in Nepal," writes the publisher. "We are also too proud to announce the availability of the eBook

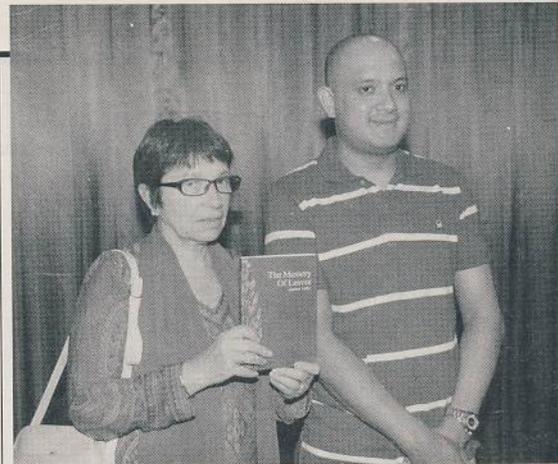


**The Memory of
Leaves
By Manan Karki
First Published in
Ireland by Pillar Press
in 2009**

**The new edition
published in 2011 by
Llareggub Press,
Kathmandu, Nepal
Price: Undisclosed
Pages: 232**

version of the novel. While the eBook version is at present restricted to Amazon's Kindle platform, we are in the process of making it available via other channels online."

Dedicated to the publishing of quality literary fiction and poetry in English, the Llareggub Press aims to harness the power of the new media to



**Greta Rana (Left) Releasing the book of
Author Manan Karki**

reach a global audience. According to the press release, *The Memory Leaves* is the first of what we hope is a long line of quality publication.

Manan Karki, who was born and lives in Kathmandu, proves himself as a world class writer in his very first book. Greta Rana compared Manan's work with great writers like Shakespeare and Aristotle.

"I completed the reading it in one sitting. I started reading the book, and slept only after completing it. I recommend to all to read this great novel written by Manan. I have read many novels in Nepali and English by Nepali writers but this is the first book that deserves to be commended," said Rana, releasing the book.

"This book is a result of support of many of my friends. I want comments from my readers about the book," said author Manan, in his brief speech in the book release ceremony.

From the beginning till the end, novelist Manan's book depicted his acumen of making a perfect observation of human actions. He minutely describes all kinds of actions. This is what usually novel writers fail to do. ■

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DEVELOPING NEPAL

Challenges & Prospects

By TROY EDIGE

On arriving in Nepal, an outsider can immediately notice the state of the country's roads, the garbage strewn on the streets, the power cuts that can range from 6 to 18 hours depending on the season and region, and the lack of sanitary sources of water, amongst certain things. Without difficulty, one can infer that Nepal is facing development challenges. Besides these obvious shortcomings, however, there are also the more subtle problems that an outsider may not be able to immediately observe.

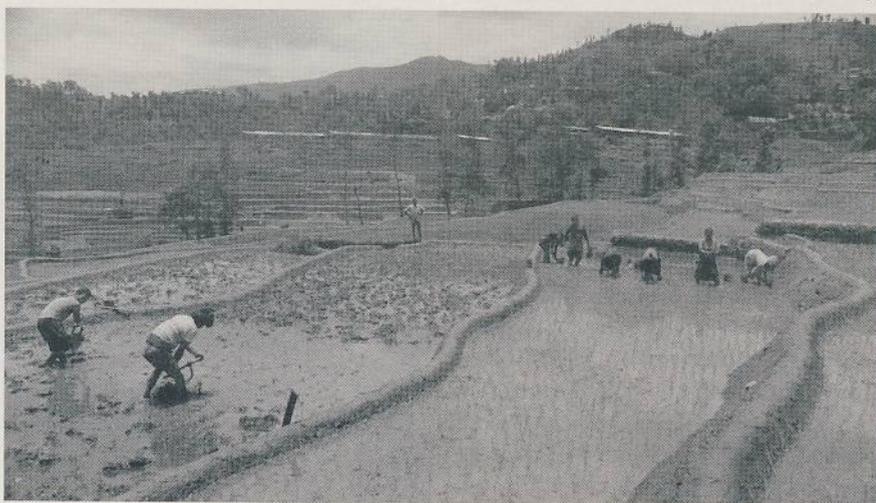
The Human Development Report (HDR) published by the UN Development Program sheds light on Nepal's several development issues. There is an endless amount of numbers compiled in the report, and they never seem to be favouring Nepal, not even in one of the 18 different criteria assessed. Nepal's Human Development Index (HDI) score puts it in the 138th place in the overall rankings. That is out of 169 countries included in the survey. It is important to realise that the variables that go into calculating HDI scores are not only economic indicators, but are mostly concerning people's access to resources and facilities such as education, healthcare and infrastructure. Political participation and freedom are also important factors, and one of the most important notions that the report takes into account, especially in Nepal's case, is social inequality. In fact, inequality is such an important obstacle for Nepal's development that it is pointed out as a major underlying reason for underdevelopment in the UNDP Country Report for Nepal and the Asian Development Bank's Outlook Report. This fact seems to have hit home domestically as well, as the National Planning Commission's policy agenda includes terms such as "social inclusion" and "equitable distribution".

It is now clear that economic growth

alone is not the answer to development. Since the concept of Human Development gained currency and validity in the global arena in the early 1990s, governments have started to accept the responsibility to take into consideration social factors that make up the base for the HDR's assessment criteria. It is, however, an inescapable fact that economic growth is an enabling factor that will open the doors for social restructuring and the provision of basic needs and resources for all. And not only

of the current turbulent political environment.

If the politicians are too busy to shift their focus on development, then whose responsibility is it to take care of it? Here, it is necessary to make an important distinction. While the politicians are the ones who make the important decisions and get all the media attention, it is the bureaucracy that does the work that matters. This work ranges from creating policy guidelines and agendas to the work of actually



Rice Planting

does Nepal need to rebuild its social structure, but it also has to sort out its economy to be able to accomplish the former. For quite some time now, Nepal has been struggling to generate a decent amount of capital. The growth rate, which was 4.5% this year, falls far behind some of Asia's more successful economies. Moreover, lately the economy has been declining even further. Economists say that this is the result of neglect from the CA, which is busy with other issues, such as drafting the constitution, or rather bickering over which party and which leader is going to take the reigns once the constitution issue is settled. It seems as though development efforts, which Nepal is in dire need of, are being hindered because

implementing such plans at the practical level. On both ends of the spectrum, however, the efforts are undercut by the current political situation.

The Vice-Chairman of the National Planning Commission Dr. Dinesh Chandra Devkota repeatedly underlined the importance of the settlement of the constitutional process, and remarked that political instability is "a major issue" hampering development, and in fact, is a result of the uprising of the people who are excluded from development. In this light, he explained that the development plans firstly focus on the impoverished regions and strive to provide basic needs and provisions to the poorest. He also admitted that the

economy has not been the priority of the CA lately, but expressed his hope that once the new constitution is settled, the economic agenda, with the efforts of the NPC, will become very important for the government and the economy will take a turn for the better.

On the other end, where the policies are transformed into concrete projects, the Secretary of the Ministry of Local Development, Sushil Ghimire, expressed that they face practical problems. He said that even though the bureaucracy functions within its own system separate from the government, they face several problems as a result of current political affairs. Firstly, he explained, some of the important policy-level decisions that enable them to do their work get delayed, and secondly there is a "political vacuum" in rural areas (the Ministry's main area of operation), meaning that there are no elected government officials due to the lack of elections. This results in certain responsibilities not being taken, making things even more difficult for the MLD.

The one point of concern is that the 2063 (2007) Interim Constitution has also laid out clear terms for the social and political inclusivity of "Women, Dalit, indigenous tribes, [the] Madheshi community, oppressed group[s], the poor peasant[s] and labourers, who are economically, socially or educationally backward," but these principles have to a great extent remained on paper. The public has now to a great extent lost its hope and believes that the new constitution, if it is ever completed, might still not fulfil all of its promises in practice. And what of the federal system, which might not appease all of the ethnic groups in Nepal's complex social fabric and lead to further uprisings and instability? There is of course also the added likelihood that the three-month extension period might not bear any fruit. What may we face then? The aspiration to find political stability and finally to be able to move on to developing the country is encouraging, but for now, just as it has done for the past two decades, Nepal plays the waiting game.

Troy Edige is from Britian

FOREING EMPLOYMENT

Flip side of Remittances

Large number of under SLC are eyeing for foreign employment brining huge foreign remittances. Is it a long term solution?

By JOSHUA LESLIE

Every day more than eight hundred young Nepalese leave the country hoping to get the job in Gulf and East Asian countries. However, all are not lucky at all and many returned with empty hand even working after years.

According to Nepal's central bank, Nepal received over 230 billion NRs from foreign remittances in 2009-2010, covering over 22% of the country's GDP, and more than the annual budget of the government; however, the flip side of such an overreliance on remittances is the low SLC results.

The decline in the number of students passing their S L C compounds fears of Nepal turning into a country that supports developed and developing countries, especially the Gulf States and India, by providing prodigious amounts of unskilled laborers. The Ministry of Labor and Transport shows that Nepal is currently sending over 300,000 people for foreign employment every year, and the country is estimated to have the total population absent from Nepal to be around 6.5 percent, significantly higher than the official record of 3.3 percent.

Experts argue that high rates of poverty and a high unemployment rate further exacerbate the problem of mass migration as the youth begin to feel disenfranchised by the lack of job opportunities available in Nepal. Furthermore, the high salaries, compared to local earnings, found for these unskilled positions in foreign markets make a potential laborer more determined to find a job in a foreign country than in Nepal.

Nepal seems to find its absolute advantage within the global economic market by providing cheap, unskilled laborers to more advanced countries. A case study done in 2002 on the amount of money remitted per person found that migrants in India remit around 9,000 NRs per year, migrants in Western countries are able to send an average 450,000 NRs, and remittances from Gulf

States average to 90,000 NRs per year. Nepal's GNI per capita in 2009 was \$440 (31,500 NRs per year), clearly demonstrating an almost pure arbitrage between working in Nepal and in foreign states.

The opportunity cost of a college education, especially if one wants to reach masters or PhD levels, has lost its intrinsic value as post-secondary schooling is extremely costly and the current low SLC test scores seem to indicate that the Nepali society at large is aware of the futility in finding professional, well-paying jobs in the Nepali market. Therefore, the encouragement

and support usually afforded to pre-SLC students begins to diminish as parents realize that they are only pushing their children into a deeper and more difficult abyss from which to



Nepal Rastra Bank

rise out of, so, instead of putting money into their child's education, a family would rather risk entrusting their child's future well-being to a manpower agency rather than an educational institution. With a rise in the number of workers going to foreign lands and earning more money, in jobs that require less skills, than they could possibly earn in Nepal, Nepalese students themselves are probably not as keen to study and pass their SLC without at least a semblance of assurance over their immediate future.

Foreign countries use the large pool of unskilled laborers currently available from Nepal to decrease their own costs, but as xenophobia, protection of citizen's rights, and immigration become larger problems within foreign countries in the near future, it would be foolhardy for Nepal to rely on foreign countries to provide jobs for its population. The SLC results will not increase without substantial assurances of high paying, professional jobs by market forces and the government of Nepal. Until then, this country will remain to be the pool in which foreign countries remove the every so necessary flow of young educated people. ■

WORLD DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2011

Haunting Conflict

At a time Nepal has been passing through a very critical transition, the recently released World Bank's World Development Report 2011 has many insights to offer the country

By A CORRESPONDENT

The World Development Report 2011 has revealed a pathetic scenario for conflict affected countries of the world. According to the report, some 1.5 billion people live in countries affected by repeated cycles of political and criminal violence, causing human misery and disrupting development.

"To break these cycles, it is crucial to strengthen legitimate national institutions and governance in order to provide citizens security, justice and jobs, as well as alleviating the international stresses that increase the risks of violent conflict," said the report.

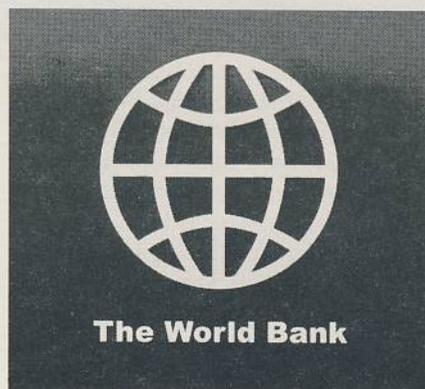
Despite a decade long history of conflict, Nepal has made unbelievable achievements in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, the World Bank's World Development Report revealed that no low-income fragile or conflict-affected country has yet achieved a single MDG.

Nepal went through an intense conflict with the loss of more than 15,000 people and infrastructure worth of millions of rupees but it was able to achieve MDGs in three critical areas, including infant mortality, maternal mortality and girl education.

As conflict and criminalization are global phenomena, the World Bank chose the topics, conflict, security and development, as a theme for the World Development Report 2011," said Nigel Roberts, special representative/director of the Report. "Political violence is growing in the countries around the world slowing down economic development work. As political stability and peace are a prerequisite for high economic growth, the challenges are there for the country

like Nepal to restore them."

According to the study, violence is spurred by both local and international stresses: youth unemployment, inequality between social, ethnic, regional, or religious groups, economic shocks, infiltration of trafficking networks and foreign security interference. In survey areas affected by violence, citizens cited unemployment



as the main motivation for recruitment into both gangs and rebel movements – with corruption, injustice and exclusion, the main drivers of violence.

"The report reveals that violence happens where states and sub-national governments do not provide security and access to justice, markets do not provide employment opportunities and communities have lost the social cohesion that contains conflict. No country can afford to ignore areas where violence flourishes and citizens are excluded from social justice and economic progress."

The report finds out those countries where government effectiveness, rule of law, and control of corruption are weak

have a 30 to 45 percent higher risk of civil war and significantly higher risk of extreme criminal violence.

The report showed that violence cannot be confined to certain areas. "The effect of violence in one part of the world spreads to other more stable areas through refugee flows, criminal networks, drug trafficking, epidemic diseases and shocks to the prices of commodities such as oil."

Countries with recent human rights abuses are far more likely to experience conflict than countries with a strong history of respect for human rights. Each one-step deterioration on the five point political terror scale – which measures arbitrary detention for non-violent political activity, torture, disappearances, and extrajudicial killings – resulted in a more than 43 percent increase in the risk of civil war in the following five years.

The report also found that countries with weak government effectiveness, rule of law, and control of corruption have a 30-45 percent higher risk of civil war, and significantly higher risk of extreme criminal violence than other developing countries.

"Following the end of the cold war, the number of conflict supported by state actors decline but the loss of human life in other kinds of conflict grows. Forty-two million people are displaced today as a result of conflict, violence or human rights abuse. Of these, 15 million are refugees outside their own country and 27 million are displaced internally within their own country.

As a country like Nepal will have to pass through a long cycle of violence and conflict, the trauma of violence will continue to haunt Nepalese society where legal impunity is encouraging various criminal elements to commit more crimes, it said. ■

Global Coverage

APEX
WORLDWIDE EXPRESS

"THE GLOBE IS IN OUR HAND"

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EXPOSITION

Kharels With A Double Offer

By DEBESH ADHIKARI

Journalist Suman Kharel is popular name in Nepal's media sector. People from far and near, Nepal and abroad, hear his voice through BBC Nepali Service. Similarly, Situ too is not a new name to Nepalese music sector as her album has already

hit the market.

During his 27 years in the media, Kharel has seen many ups and downs in Nepal, particularly in the media sector. Having seen a lot of changes in the Nepali society, he tried his best to describe his journey. Situ's sole album too is a recent hit.

At a special ceremony in the Army Officer's Club auditorium in Kathmandu, June 25, the husband-wife duo, Suman and Situ Kharel, launched their book and music album respectively. There was also a concert by Situ after the launch. It is not always that a couple comes up with two different creations at the same event.

Kiran Kharel, father of Suman, launched his book whereas Biju Rimal, the veteran singer and Situ's father, did the honors of releasing her music album.

Suman is currently the desk editor at BBC Nepali. His book "Radio yatra" is the reflection of his 27 years of experience in radio. Published by Fine Print, the snazzy book also consists of audio CD of the programs which were broadcast by BBC Nepali.

"I really liked the book but it was the audio that was more interesting and I feel this book is the history of the decade of conflict that we all faced," said senior journalist and Suman's close friend Durga Nath Sharma.

The book encompasses four interviews and the program series Dwanda ko Dashak (A Decade of Conflict), Prachanda lai Prashna (Questions to Prachanda), Sangeet Yatra (Musical Journey), and Aparichit Patra (Unknown Characters).

"The book is mainly intended for the people who want to study journalism and want to speak in radio," said the



Situ Kharel

publisher of the book, Ajit Baral.

Situ Kharel, the talented classical pop star, is back in the limelight after nearly three years with her sixth album, "Batas Sangai". She has been a popular figure in Nepalese music industry for more than a decade. She completed four-year B. Mus. Degree from the Trinity College of Music in London last year and also has three-year Diploma degree in music from the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in London.

Situ released her first album in 2000 A.D. (Smarika), which was an instant hit. Since then, she has offered four more albums, which were all acclaimed.

Her new music album is produced by SAC music and consists of eight songs penned by her husband and her father-in-law Kiran and Suman Kharel

respectively. The music is composed by the experienced music director Prabhuraj Dhakal. Songs like *mero biswaas ma saath huna, batas sangai udyera aau, bairi banyechu, timile sajilai birsiyau, gitai matrai hoon ma, tekna khojchu paila haru* are slow and melodious whereas *annol cha jivan* and *dherai bhool maile garye*

are the average paced tracks in the album. Even though the numbers are mostly slow, they are gripping and leave a strong impact on the listeners.

The album is intriguing and explains about the various aspects of life. The dulcet voice of situ is accompanied by powerful lyrics and interesting classical music consisting of various ragas. "The lyrics were already perfect, I didn't have to omit or modify a single words to fit in my music, the voice of situ was also perfect match for the lyrics" said the music director.

Proceeds from the book and the album will go to the Nava Jyoti Kendra located at Baluwatar in Kathmandu which is a care center for mentally handicapped children. ■

Thai Film Festival 2011 Held

Royal Thai Ambassador Maris Sangiampongsa inaugurated the Thai Film Festival-2011 amidst a function at the Russian Cultural Center.

At the festival organized by Royal Thai Embassy on June 28-29, four Thai films were screened.

"The four films are different from one another. They are action films as well as comedies," said Sangiampongsa, Royal Thai Ambassador to Nepal.

The four films included Muay Thai Chaiya, Samchuk: Once in a Chance, 32 December Love Error and That Sounds Good. Their themes were action, love and comedy.



Minefield Problems Remain

By RADHA PAUDEL

The Comprehensive Peace Accord (2006) had clearly mentioned that “the government army and the Maoist PLA shall assist each other to mark landmines and booby traps used during the time of armed conflict by providing information within 30 days and defuse and excavate the same within 60 days.”

We civilians do not know much about the nature of landmines, their impacts and what policies are there regarding them. People don't care about this unless these explosives cause immediate loss to them. But according to INSEC, 78 persons were killed and 395 others were injured by Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) during 2006-2011.

Both Nepal Army and Maoist PLA used the landmines as a strong defense strategy during the decade of insurgency. Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) were used massively everywhere, especially in places like Kalikot, Jumla, Dang, and Arghakhachi where exchange of firing occurred.

In all, Nepal Army planted 275 explosives and Maoist PLA 52, 617. As part of implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Accord, the government declared Nepal a mine free country in June 14, 2011. Phulchoki of Lalitpur was called the last site for clearance of the anti-personnel landmines. Nepal also announced that it is the second landmine free Asian country.

Unfortunately, two days after the declaration, on June 16, this writer was in Manma, Kalikot asking for help to the victims of landmines. A bomb blast occurred in Phuhemahadev village of Kalikot. A 16-year boy, named Ananda Pandey, was injured severely while he was in his maize farm. He was brought to Bir Hospital and transferred to teaching hospital in June 26. He lost one of his eyes completely, and another eye had injuries. He lost fingers, suffered broken arms and had severely damaged mouth, nose, forehead, and chest. Now, he is getting surgery and treatment in the teaching hospital where Action Works

Nepal (AWON), a non-governmental organization working for Karnali, is taking care of him under Miteri Gaun (Let's Live Together) campaign.

In this scenario, the government still needs to consider landmines as a serious concern for the following reasons; i) the civilians do not have access to information about the policies and systems, ii) no access to well equipped health institutions, iii) poor mechanism to respond to the survivors of landmine accidents. Thus, the government should continue to educate the people for taking consideration of

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p r o v i s i o n s o f f r e e



PM Khanal in Landmine Sweeping Ceremony

health treatment matters little. The needful action always matters, therefore, the government should be serious to serve landmine survivors. In a landmine free country, there should not be more people suffering like Ananda. Never Again. ■

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New TB Diagnostic

-By BUDDHA BASNYAT, MD



Tuberculosis has been around for centuries. In Nepal before there was effective cure for TB with antimicrobial drugs, Ranas built sanatoriums with many pine trees in places like Tokha, north of Kathmandu above Budanilkantha. In these sanatoriums, patients, mostly Ranas would go to recuperate from the illness; but of course without proper drugs, the ambience of the place including the pine trees did little to cure the disease. Because of tremendous overcrowding and exclusively joint family arrangements in Nepal especially during the last century, TB spread like wildfire when someone in the household was affected by it. Because there was hardly any awareness of the disease, no one at that time stopped to consider the transmission of the disease via cough droplets. So no one did anything to stop the spread of the illness. But although TB without proper medicines was more deadly then, it has unfortunately continued to cause huge problems even to this day.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) there will be ten million new cases of tuberculosis this year

in the developing world. But the good news is that effective therapy will prevent the deaths of many of these patients. However, by the time the sick patients are diagnosed and treated, they will have infected many others in their community. Indeed, this failure of interruption continues to keep the global epidemic alive and well. So prompt diagnosis is very important in the treatment of tuberculosis to help fight the spread of the disease.

Unfortunately the techniques of diagnosis of TB are antiquated. The most widely used method to test the sputum ("khakar" in Nepali) for the tuberculosis bug is called the Ziehl-Neelsen stain which is 125 years old. If this disease was still a major affliction in the Western world, to be sure there would have been new major breakthroughs in the diagnostic techniques, but basically tuberculosis is a poor man's disease.

So it was welcome news when a few days ago the WHO endorsed the GeneXpert device, a rapid test for TB as "a major milestone for global tuberculosis diagnosis".

Unlike the Ziehl-Neelsen technique, the GeneXpert does not need anyone to be

an expert in making the sputum slide and look for the bug under the microscope. Amazingly this new molecular approach is more straightforward. After the patient spits into a cup, the sample is placed in a "espresso" machine which examines the sample's DNA to see if it contains the genetic signature of tuberculosis. A simple, reliable "yes" or "no" answer is available in two hours. Importantly in this time frame, the GeneXpert can determine if the bacteria is resistant to rifampicin, the most effective of the four drug cocktail prescribed for tuberculosis. This knowledge allows the doctor to know from the start if they are dealing with resistant bacteria and thus tailor therapy accordingly.

However the initial cost of about \$30,000 for the machine and at least \$20 for the tests are daunting rates for the developing world. Unskilled workers can carry this test out with minimal training, but electricity is required. From hospitals in Bihar to the well appointed Hinduja Hospital in Mumbai, great satisfaction has been expressed about the usefulness and accuracy of the device. But the cost continues to be an important issue, regardless of the scientific enormity of the breakthrough. ■

Nepali Anti-trafficking Hero Honored in Washington



Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton Awarded Charimaya Tamang of Nepal, a trafficking survivor herself, the 2011 Hero Acting to End Modern-Day Slavery Award, Monday, June 27, 2011, during the release of the 2011 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, at the State

Department in Washington.

Shortly before her departure for the U.S., Ambassador DeLisi welcomed Ms. Tamang to the Embassy in Kathmandu to congratulate her and wish her safe travels.

The 2011 TIP Report notes: "Born into a poor family made poorer by the passing of her father, Charimaya Tamang was 16 when she was trafficked to India. She spent 22 months enslaved in a brothel before the Indian government rescued her and more than 200 other Nepali women in 1996. Upon her return to Nepal, Ms. Tamang faced social stigma and was outcast from her own community. But she courageously filed a case against her traffickers, becoming the first person to file personally a trafficking case with the district police.

In 1997, the District Court – in a landmark decision – convicted and sentenced eight offenders involved in her case.

"In 2000, Ms. Tamang and 15 other survivors established Shakti Sumaha, an anti-trafficking NGO. She received a national honor for her work in 2007 and is currently one of two trafficking survivors serving as members of the government-led National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking, which was founded in 2009. In that role, Ms. Tamang raised the importance of including survivors in each district-level working group. There are now five trafficking survivors serving as members of district-level committees around the country."

According to US embassy press release, Nepal's anti-human trafficking efforts see some improvements. ■

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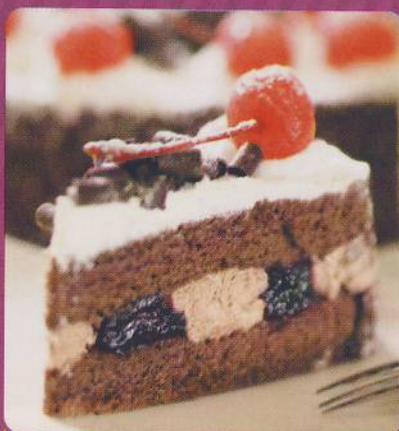
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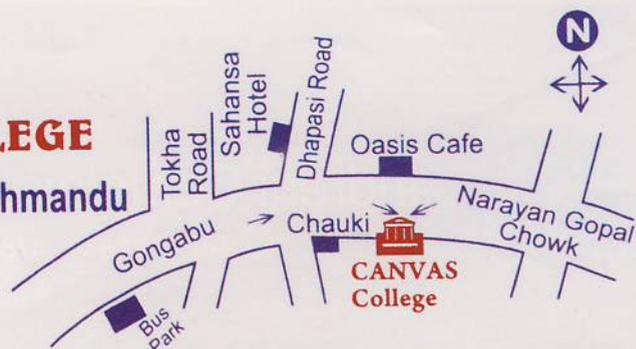


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