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OPINION
Dipak Gyawali



VIEWPOINT
Hanan Goder-Goldberger



ARTICLE
Dr. Bipin Adhikari

NEW
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FORTNIGHTLY

JAJARKOT EARTHQUAKE

Waiting For Reconstruction

INSIDE



LATE HIMALAYA SUMSHER RANA
A Legendary Figure

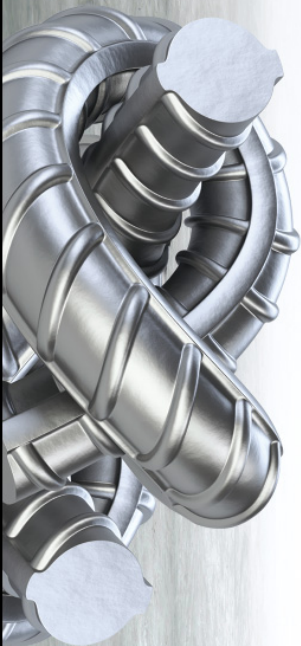


HELVETAS NEPAL'S INELAM
Banana Revolution!

हिमालय स्टील
DUCTYL 500D

जन्मिलो जन्मि, बन्मियो ल्यामि

बढी
हिमालयले सुरक्षित घर बनाउँछ ।



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Political parties are focused on organizing programs to strengthen their organizations, while earthquake victims in remote parts of Jajarkot, Rukum East, and Rukum West continue to suffer. Government agencies have only paid lip service in the last four months, rather than taking concrete action to help the victims. The government has distributed the first installment of money for temporary shelter to the victims. However, it is uncertain when they will receive the second installment necessary to build the shelter. As a result, the process of reconstructing permanent housing is far away. The recently released report by UNICEF paints a grim picture in a situation where the majority of earthquake victims are facing various problems. The report states that approximately 200,000 people, including 68,000 children, still require humanitarian assistance to rebuild their lives. Many of these individuals spent a cold winter in temporary shelters. If the current pace continues, the victims will face severe conditions during the upcoming rainy season, which is only four months away. This week's cover story is about earthquake rehabilitation.

Keshab Poudel

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Why Israel Must Win The War Against Hamas

Among the hostages is the Nepali student, Bipin Joshi, who was kidnapped after ten of his Nepali friends were murdered during the attack on Kibbutz Alumim. The release of Bipin as well as other hostages is a key part of the end of the conflict



BY: HANAN GODER-GOLDBERGER

Hamas's ongoing aggression against Israel has reached a critical juncture following its vicious attack on 7 October 2023 and has deep-rooted implications not just for the region, but for global stability as well. In the wake of the frenzy of murder, rape, mutilation and burning of innocent Israeli civilians, there are compelling reasons why Israel must emerge victorious in this war against the Islamist terror organization, which controls the Gaza Strip with the support of Iran.

First and foremost, the October 7 massacres serve as a grim reminder of the constant threat that Hamas poses to the security and safety of Israeli citizens. Winning the war against Hamas is a matter of utmost national security, as well as a basic moral imperative. As a lone democracy in a belligerent region, it is essential for Israel to demonstrate strength and resilience to protect its people and prevent future attacks.

Hamas's actions on 7 October underscore its relentless commitment to an extremist genocidal ideology, aimed at the destruction of Israel and the establishment of an Islamic state in its place. By breaching the ceasefire and launching its barbaric actions, Hamas has once again demonstrated its disregard for international law and its rejection of peaceful coexistence with Israel. As long as Hamas continues to hold power in Gaza, the prospects for a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remain bleak. By defeating Hamas, Israel can weaken the influence of extremist elements and create an environment more conducive to diplomatic efforts and dialogue.

Furthermore, Hamas's grip on power in Gaza has contributed to the continuation of poverty, suffering, and instability among the Palestinian population. Rather than governing responsibly and promoting the welfare of its people, Hamas has diverted resources and humanitarian aid towards building up its arsenal and infrastructure for waging war against Israel. By defeating Hamas and dismantling its terrorist infrastructure, Israel can help pave the way for

a more prosperous and peaceful future for the Palestinians living in Gaza.

In the broader picture, Iran's Ayatollah regime has provided Hamas with financial, military, and logistical support and poses a wide-reaching regional threat. A defeat for Hamas would not only weaken Iran's influence in the region and disrupt the flow of support to terrorist organizations, but also send a powerful message that its support of proxy militias promoting instability in Yemen, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon will not go unchallenged. As a frontline state in the global fight of the free world against terrorism, Israel's ability to effectively deter and defeat ultraviolent organizations like Hamas is critical for maintaining stability and security, not just in the Middle East, but around the world.



Let us remember that Hamas is still holding 134 hostages abducted from Israel during the Oct 7 attack. Among the hostages is the Nepali student, Bipin Joshi, who was kidnapped after ten of his Nepali friends were murdered during the attack on Kibbutz Alumim. The release of Bipin as well as other hostages is a key part of the end of the conflict.

The stakes in Israel's war against Hamas are high, with implications that extend far beyond the borders of the Middle East. By defeating Hamas, Israel can ensure the safety of its citizens, pave the way for a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people, weaken Iran's sponsoring of terrorism, and contribute to global efforts to combat extremism and promote stability. For these reasons, Israel's victory over Hamas is not just desirable but an absolute necessity for the security and well-being of the entire region. It is essential for the international community to stand united with Israel against terrorism in order to work together towards a future of peace and security for all.

Hanan Goder is the ambassador of Israel To Nepal. This article offers a comprehensive understanding of the ongoing Israel-Hamas War and delves into the significance of Israel's victory over HAMAS for regional as well as global stability.

NEWSNOTES

US Defense Assistant Secretary Inaugurated Solar Project In Panchkhal

United States Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS)



Rachel Schiller inaugurated the solar project at Birendra Peacekeeping Training Center, Panchkhal.

On that occasion Deputy Assistant

Secretary (DAS) Rachel Schiller Expressing his belief that this project will remain as a good example of cooperation between Birendra Peacekeeping Training Center and Global Peace Operation Initiative (GPOI) in the field of peacekeeping capacity building, he expressed his happiness that he was able to support the soldiers of different countries participating in United Nations peacekeeping operations through the Nepalese Army.

During the program, Deputy Head of the War Works Department Mr. Premadhwaj Adhikari expressed his gratitude for the support received from the GPO for the construction of the Solar Project.

The Solar Project, built with the support of the United States Government GPO, has a capacity of 185 KVA.

The electrical energy required for all the structures in the training center will flow through Solar. The Solar Project connected as an alternative energy source will be important in the physical upgradation of the training center as well as helping to develop the center as an international level Center of Excellence in Peacekeeping.

DAS Shiller is in Nepal since February 8th in connection with the Peacekeeping Exercise, which is being conducted at the Birendra Peacekeeping Training Center in collaboration with the Nepali Army and the United States Army with the support of the GPO.

Generals of Nepal Army, the American Ambassador to Nepal, representatives of GPO, media persons and others were present at the inauguration ceremony.

Regional Conference For Asia And The Pacific (#APRC37) Prioritizes Agricultural Transformation In Nepal

The Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (#APRC37), convened by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and hosted by the Government of Sri Lanka, marks a significant milestone in the region's efforts to address the challenges posed by the

pandemic, climate emergencies, and volatile markets.

The Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (#APRC37) is set to convene from February 19 to 22, 2024, bringing together delegates from 46 FAO Member Nations in the region. This high-level gathering will feature official ministerial sessions, providing a platform for strategic discussions and collaboration on key agricultural issues facing the Asia-Pacific region.

Amidst the challenges posed by the pandemic, climate emergencies, and economic volatility, the conference serves as an opportunity for delegates to exchange insights, share best practices, and formulate collective strategies to address pressing concerns in the agricultural sector of this region.

The ministerial sessions, scheduled to take place in-person, will facilitate dialogue on a range of topics including food security, nutrition, poverty reduction, and sustainable agricultural development. Delegates will engage in discussions aimed at identifying innovative solutions and fostering partnerships to enhance resilience and promote inclusive growth across the region.

Nepal government has participated in the conference led by Hon. Bedu Ram Bhusal, Minister for Agriculture and Live-

stock Development (MoALD) including two senior

official delegation members from MoALD. Mr. Ken Shimizu, FAO Representative for Nepal and Bhutan has also joined the event along with the delegation in Colombo.

The Government of Nepal (GON) underscores its commitment to agricultural transformation, emphasizing initiatives such as the One Country One Priority Product (OCOP), Digital Village Initiative (DVI), Green City Initiative, and the One Health Approach.

In alignment with the Hand-in-Hand initiative, recently declared by the Rt Hon. Prime Minister, the Government of Nepal identifies the highland potato, ginger, large cardamom, and Sichuan pepper as Hand-in-Hand commodities, following their presentation at the 2021 Investment Forum in Rome. In addition to this, efforts are initiated by FAO support, particularly in the formulation and implementation of the One Health Strategy, focusing on food safety, antimicrobial resistance (AMR), and animal health.

The Government of Nepal highly appreciates the recently concluded FAO Country Foresight Exercise, which has provided direction to develop upcoming 16 five



years periodic plan, revision of Agriculture Development Strategy (ADS 2015-35) and formulation of the decade of agriculture investment.

The conference agenda, which includes ministerial roundtable discussions on topics such as future food and nutrition security, investment and financing for poverty reduction, and strategies to mitigate water and food loss and waste, reflects issues of vital interest to Nepal. These discussions provide an opportunity to share lessons learned from convergent crises and explore collaborative solutions.

The recent visit of FAO Director-General QU Dongyu to Nepal further underscores FAO’s commitment to supporting the country’s agricultural transformation. Emphasizing the importance of agri-food systems transformation, especially in light of Nepal’s graduation from the Least Developed Countries category, Director-General Dongyu highlighted the significance of prioritizing small-holder family farms and Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) in agri food system transformation.

Nepal is embarking on a decade of agricultural investment with optimism in achieving sustainable growth, increasing productivity, and contributing significantly to regional food security. It is optimistic and looking forward to fruitful collaboration with FAO and member countries in realizing the transformation of our agri-food system.

The Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (#APRC37) serves as a platform for dialogue and collaboration, focusing toward a resilient and sustainable agricultural future for the region.

Japan Provides Rs. 9.7 Million For New Health Post In Sindhuli District

Kikuta Yutaka, Ambassador of Japan to Nepal, signed a grant contract with Ms. Siramala Tamang, Chairperson of Sahakarya Nepal, Sindhuli, for the construction of a new health post in Sindhuli District.

The signing ceremony was held at the Embassy of Japan in Kathmandu today. The project is funded under the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) of the Japanese Government and involves a grant of USD 73,747 (approximately NPR 9.7 million).

The project supports the reconstruction of a health post in Ward No.1 of Golanjor Rural Municipality.



The current health post, which is a necessary medical facility in Ward No.1 of Golanjor Rural Municipality, was built about 40

years ago. It has only one room for examination and treatment. It also has a high risk of collapse in case of an earthquake due to its deterioration, making it an unsuitable environment as a medical facility.

A new health post, which will be reconstructed under the GGP, will improve these situations and provide suitable medical services to the neighborhood. The project will be managed by the Golanjor Rural Municipality and the Sahakarya Nepal, Sindhuli, which has been working to improve the lives of residents in this area. Golanjor Rural Municipality has committed to provide the necessary medical equipment, as well as doctors, nurses, and other personnel and expenses.

The Embassy of Japan believes that this project will improve the medical environment in rural areas and promote the health of the community. We hope that this assistance will also further strengthen the friendship between the people of Japan and Nepal for future generations.

GGP was established to implement projects that directly benefit people at the grassroots level for the socio-economic development of communities. Since 1991, over 200 GGP projects have been completed in Nepal.

World Social Forum Concluded Issuing 60 Declarations

The 16th edition of the World Social Forum (WSF) 2024 concluded in Kathmandu on Monday by issuing 60 declarations from organisations worldwide and reaffirming their commitment to building a fairer and more just world.



The Forum started in Brikutimandap with the theme “Another World Is Possible,” on February 15. Representatives from various sectors including climate change activists, workers, farmers, trade unions, women’s organisations, LGBTQI groups, indigenous communities, ethnic organisations, civil society groups and social movements participated in the five-day event.

The WSF, originating from civil society movements against globalisation in the late 1990s, held its inaugural event in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 2001. The journey to WSF 2024 in Kathmandu began in November 2022 when Nepal was selected as the potential host country for the 16th edition. The International Council (IC) and the Asia-Pacific Social Forum (APSF) led the selection process, according to a press statement issued by the Nepal Organising Com-

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mittee on Monday.

March 2023 saw Nepal being officially designated as the host nation, with Kathmandu chosen as the host city. Subsequently, a general council, organising committee and various subcommittees were formed in Nepal, with members volunteering their efforts to ensure the success of WSF 2024, the statement read.

The event witnessed a staggering turnout of over 50,000 participants from 98 nations and six continents, including a concurrent Intercontinental Youth Forum with 410 participants from over 30 countries. More than 400 activities, spanning thirteen diverse themes, were registered for the event, reflecting the multifaceted nature of discussions.

Sushil BK, a member of the Media Coordination Sub-committee, said in a press statement that throughout the event, individuals and groups affected by the current global order, including various social movements, workers, farmers, youth, women, Dalits, tribals, Madhesi, people with disabilities and civil society organisations convened for meetings, conferences, and discourses participated in the forum.

The outcomes of the discussions have been compiled into a comprehensive manifesto, encompassing more than 60 announcements accessible through the WSF website. He expressed gratitude for the extensive coverage of WSF activities thus far, the organisers emphasised the importance of proper coverage of the declaration and other pertinent issues during the closing programme.

The 16th edition of the World Social Forum Nepal (WSF) held from February 15 to February 19.

The World Social Forum (WSF) is an open forum for free and horizontal exchange of ideas, experiences, and strategies oriented toward enacting and generating alternatives to neoliberalism.

Since its inception in 2001 in Porto Alegre in Brazil, the WSF has been a unifying space for the transnational actors of the counter-hegemonic globalization 'from below' with the pledge of Another World is Possible, the organizing committee said in a press statement.

"The WSF rejects economic policies and growth through privatizing social services, opposes militarism and imperialism, and provides an 'open space' for people to reflect and debate alternative ideas, formulate proposals, exchange lived experiences, and seek alternative solutions for the current crises that the humankind are facing. The WSF movements explicitly act to oppose neoliberal global capitalism and to address issues of global social justice and environmental sustainability. It is a forum governed by the charter of principles and leadership bodies: an International Council (IC), Regional Forums such as the Asia Pacific Social Forum Facilitation Committee (APSF-FC), and a Nepal Organizing Committee (NOC).

Participants presented several thematic panels followed by self-organized activities/sessions/assemblies

and end with informal meetings in open spaces along with cultural programs. There will be around 900-1000 self-organized activities and assemblies throughout the WSF2024 event. The forum is anticipated to have over 50,000 participants, delegates, and guests from all continents of the world.

With a decade-long armed struggle, people's movement, other social movements and political struggles Nepal built a dynamic democratic process that has led to political transformation by embracing secularism and adopting a federal democratic republic.

"The global solidarities are critical to the change we are fighting for, for building peace, security, democracy, equity, and justice. The recent onslaught of right-wing, anti-democratic, and fundamentalist forces threaten the very fabric of our societies, yet they are succeeding in winning support amongst some sections of the people, they are winning elections, forming governments which go on to stifle dissent, generating hatred and divisions, using nationalism, religion, insecurities of all kinds."

Nepal Army Hosts Multinational Exercise- 'Shanti Prayas IV'

The multinational Exercise- 'Shanti Prayas IV' commenced at local Tundikhel in Kathmandu on the participation of 1,925 Nepali Army personnel deployed in the peace keeping operations at the call of the United Nations.

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' inaugurated the event amidst a special ceremony held today.

The pre-deployment training for the contingents and individual soldiers before their deployment

in various peacekeeping missions will be conducted at the Birendra Peace Operations Training Centre in Kavrepalanchowk.

The training, supported by the US Global Peace Operation Initiative, was undertaken in collaboration with the US Army.

Nepal hosted the inaugural Multi Platoon Training Event, Exercise "Shanti Prayas" in the year 2000 and since then, three successful multi platoon exercises have taken place, on the participation of military forces from various nations.

The event will run till 4 March 2024. According to the Centre, the objective of the exercise is to increase inter-



operability and peacekeeping skills at various levels before their deployment to the UN missions and operational level staff training (STE). The tactical level field training event (FTE) and critical enabler and capability enhancement (2CE) are the key events of the Exercise.

At an inaugural session, Chief of Army Staff (CoAS), Prabhuram Sharma said the participation of NA personnel in UN missions and other international peacekeeping bids is the priority of the NA. “The Nepali Army has given priority and importance to inclusive participation in peacekeeping missions, and the world has commended the bravery it has demonstrated from highly sensitive Golan height to the Sahara desert of Africa. We have a long experience and historical presence in global peace.”

Rachel Schiller, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Programs and Operations in the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM), US Department of State said the US government has already invested 1.5 billion dollar since 2005 in nations contributing to the world peace and security for regional peacekeeping efforts. As she said, multi-dimensional challenges for world peacekeeping mission are rising and the US is committed to enhancing the effectiveness of the peacekeeping mission.

Nepal became a member of the United Nations in 1955 and since 1958, Nepal has been actively engaged in the broader spectrum of UN Peace Operations. Over the course of over six and half decade, Nepal has participated in 44 UN peacekeeping missions and during this period, 167,000 Nepali peacekeepers have contributed to these missions and among them, the NA personnel number 149,890.(RSS)

Nepal’s Terai Arc Landscape Project Recognized UN World Restoration Flagship

Reforestation initiative that helped triple Nepal’s tiger population recognized as one of seven UN World Restoration Flagships

Local communities that teamed up with government and civil society groups to protect and restore 66,800 hectares of forest in Nepal, boosting biodiversity and supporting local communities, have today been honoured as one of seven UN World Restoration Flagships.

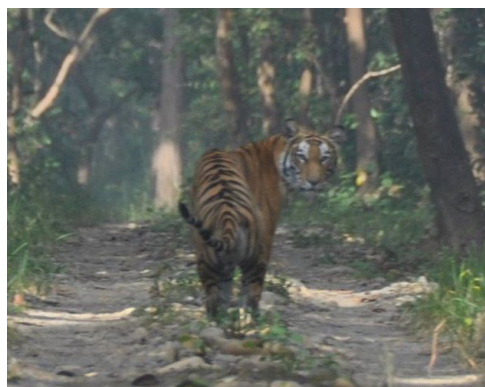
The Terai Arc Landscape initiative aims to protect a biodiversity hotspot shared by India and Nepal that was rapidly degrading. On Nepal’s side alone, more than 7.5 million people and a plethora of wildlife – tigers, rhinos, elephants, black bucks, buffaloes, crocodiles, and birds – depend on the vast Terai Arc Landscape, stretching across 2.47 million hectares. As poaching, habitat loss, degradation, and human tiger conflict increased, the forested area receded, and wildlife decreased.

The initiative – which started with the Government of Nepal’s launch of the Terai Arc Landscape Program in 2001 – has already brought back to life a forest area 13 times the size of Kathmandu, and nearly tripled

its tiger population to 355 from 121. In the entire Terai Arc landscape, shared by India and Nepal, the population more than doubled to 1,174. According to partners in the project, some 40,000 local community members, engaged in community-based anti-poaching units, citizen science, and nature-based tourism, and as forest watchers, are already improving the livelihoods of almost 500,000 households. The World Restoration Flagship awards are part of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration – led by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) – which aims to prevent, halt, and reverse the degradation of ecosystems on every continent and in every ocean. The awards track notable initiatives following global commitments to restore one billion hectares – an area larger than China. The award for the Terai Arc Landscape initiative was announced by UN Environment Programme Goodwill Ambassador, actress and environmentalist, Dia Mirza.

With its recognition as a World Restoration Flagship, the Terai Arc Landscape will now be eligible for technical and financial UN support towards plans to restore an area of almost 350,000 hectares in India and Nepal, or 70 times the size of Nepal’s capital. “The transboundary Terai Arc Landscape serves not only as a biodiversity hotspot – it also serves

as a true testament to the effectiveness of the landscape approach of conservation,” said Dr. Birendra Prasad Mahato, Minister



of Forests and Environment of Nepal. “We are incredibly grateful for this recognition from the UN and are encouraged to continue tackling existing and new challenges faced by our forests, wildlife, and communities.”

Landscape approaches recognize the interconnections between people and nature and address environmental challenges across sectors, such as agriculture, forestry and economy. In the past decades, the Terai Arc Landscape’s wildlife became isolated in forest patches in protected areas due to human-led forest degradation outside them. The focus of restoration efforts in the Terai Arc Landscape was thus on corridors that connect forested patches, through planting native species and protecting natural forest regeneration.

“The Terai Arc Landscape initiative does not protect nature by pulling people out of it, but by bringing people and nature closer together,” said Inger Andersen, Ex-

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ective Director of UNEP. “After decades of uncontrolled exploitation and degradation, resources are now urgently needed to rebuild that connection and restore vital ecosystems. This is key to tackling climate change, biodiversity loss, and rampant pollution.”

As a World Restoration Flagship, the Terai Arc Landscape is recognized as one of the best examples of large-scale and long-term ecosystem restoration in any country or region, embodying the 10 Restoration Principles of the UN Decade on Ecosystem

Restoration. The announcement of seven new World Restoration Flagships was made ahead of the 6th UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-6), held between February 26 and March 1, 2024. The Assembly convenes the world’s Environment Ministers in Nairobi, Kenya, to address the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity and nature loss, and pollution and waste.

Nepal’s 20 Per Cent People Living Below Poverty Line: Report

The National Statistics Office (NSO) has stated that 20.27 per cent people still live below the poverty line in Nepal.

Releasing the Nepal Living Standard Survey (NLSS) 2079-080 here Monday, the NSO said that country’s poverty rate could not decrease as expected due to Gorkha Earthquake of 2015 and the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the NLSS report, the rate of poverty is intense in the rural areas compared to the cities, with the poverty rate in the cities remaining 18.34 per cent while it is 24.66 per cent in the rural areas.

During the programme, National Planning Commission Vice-Chairman Dr Min Bahadur Shrestha argued that the country’s progress in poverty alleviation has faded due to the corona pandemic, natural disasters and other reasons.

As per the survey, four provinces have more poverty rate against the national record of the poverty rate. Sudurpaschim Province has the highest rate of poverty with 34.16 per cent while Karnali Province has 26.69 per cent, 24.35 per cent in Lumbini Province and 22.53 per cent in Madhes Province.

Gandaki has the least poverty rate with 11.88 per cent followed by 12.59 per cent in Bagmati and 17.19 per cent in Koshi Province. (RSS)

UNICEF: 68,000 Children Affected By Nepal Earthquake Still Need Urgent assistance

100 days after a 6.4 magnitude earthquake struck western Nepal on 3 November 2023, UNICEF is calling for continued support for 68,000 children and their families in the affected areas and appealing for US\$14.7 million in funding to help rebuild the lives of the affected children.

The earthquake, with its epicentre in Jajarkot District of Karnali Province, killed 154 people and injured 366. Half the dead, 81, were children. The earthquake also dam-

aged homes, schools, health facilities and water supply infrastructure, which disrupted critical services for children. Around 200,000 people, including 68,000 children, many of whom spent a cold winter in temporary shelters, still need humanitarian assistance to rebuild their lives.

“Three months on, following a harsh winter, thousands of children affected by the destructive earthquake in western Nepal continue to face daily hardships. They are still dealing with the trauma of losing loved ones. Their development is at risk as they lost their belongings, homes and schools, among others” said Alice Akunga, UNICEF Representative to Nepal. “Even as temperatures rise, the needs are still high as children require nutritious food, clean water, education and shelter. One of the best ways to rebuild children’s lives and restore a sense of normalcy is to get them back to school and learning, so that they can play with their friends, learn and heal.”

Immediately after the earthquake, UNICEF was on the ground with the government and partners to provide children and their families with life-saving supplies such as tarpaulins, blankets, medical tents, recreational and educational kits, and hygiene materials.

The earthquake damaged 898 school buildings (294 fully damaged, 604 partially damaged), impacting education of around 1,34,000 school-aged children. Out of these, over 17,000 children have gone back to school, thanks to 223 temporary learning centres set up by UNICEF with support of the development partners. In addition, transitional learning centres, which can withstand extreme weather conditions, are being set up so that children can continue their education until school buildings are fully repaired.

Furthermore, UNICEF, working with local governments and partners, also helped to repair 565 damaged toilets and construct 251 temporary toilets. Support was also provided for the Government’s campaign to vaccinate children against deadly diseases such as measles, rubella and typhoid.

But much more needs to be done to support children and their families. So far only 7 per cent of UNICEF’s US\$15.7 million appeal has been funded, a large proportion of which includes financing from the UNICEF Global Humanitarian Thematic Fund, the most flexible form of funding allowing for rapid and strategic responses by UNICEF



to humanitarian crises, as well as support from UNICEF National Committees. UNICEF is calling for US\$14.7 million in additional funding to continue providing life-saving support to children.

“UNICEF thanks all our donors and supporters who have provided the much-needed resources. However, additional efforts are required to help restore lives and give children hope for the future,” added Akunga. “UNICEF is committed to working with the Government of Nepal, partners and donors to help children and young people in desperate need of support. We are calling for investment from donors and partners so that we can continue to provide life-saving supplies and services to help children survive and thrive.”

Foreign Minister Saud Underscores The Importance Of The Indian Ocean For Nepal

Minister for Foreign Affairs Narayan Prakash Saud addressed today the Seventh Indian Ocean Conference held in Perth, Australia. In his address, Minister underscored the importance of the Indian Ocean for Nepal in reaching the international market and hence stressed on the stability and sustainability of the Indian Ocean for the land-locked countries like Nepal.

Stating there is an organic link between the Himalayas and the Ocean, he underlined that ocean and mountain issues should be dealt with in an integrated and holistic manner.

Minister also met with Ms. Eileen Laubacher, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for South Asia, National Security Council of the United States of America, the earlier day and discussed matters of mutual interests.

In the morning today,. Komura Masahiro, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan held courtesy meeting with Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal and discussed multiple aspects of Nepal-Japan relations.



In - dra Mani Pandey, Secretary General of BIMSTEC also had a courtesy meeting with

Minister in the margins of the Indian Ocean Conference during which the Secretary General gave an overview of the status of cooperation in various areas under BIMSTEC.

While in Perth, Minister also interacted with the Nepali community focusing on ensuring the welfare of the Nepali community in Australia and the opportunities for

collaboration with them for the economic benefit of the country.

Foreign Minister Saud Extends Greetings On Chinese New Year, Year Of Dragon

Foreign Minister Naryan Prasad Saud extended ward greetings and warm wishes on the Chinese Lunar New Year.

“I extend warmest greetings to everyone celebrating the Chinese Lunar New Year. As per Chinese tradition, this is the Year of Dragon, which embodies strength, wis-



dom and good luck. On this important occasion, I convey my best wishes for continued progress and prosperity of the Chinese people and for further strengthening of Nepal-China friendship!” writes Foreign Minister Saud in his X.

Similarly, Chinese ambassador to Nepal Chen Song extended his greetings on the occasion of Chinese New Year. “On the auspicious occasion of Chinese New Year, on behalf of the Chinese Embassy in Nepal, I would like to extend my best Dragon Year wishes. May China and Nepal enjoy peace, harmony and prosperity! May the two peoples live in happiness and all the wishes,” writes ambassador in hi X wall.

“The Chinese New Year Lantern Show lights up Kathmandu. Thanks for Hon. Minister Sudan Kirati’s attendance at the opening ceremony of the Lantern Show tonight. The Chinese New Year Lantern Show will be held at Ratna Park from February 8th to 21st, a new Internet Celebrity Destination in KTM, welcome everyone’s visit and check in!”

Minister of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation Sudan Kirati attended the program as a chief guest which held in Kathmandu

Bharat Raj Paudyal And Sanil Nepal Appointed Ambassador To Canada And Portugal Respectively

President Ramchandra Poudel has appointed ambassadors for Canada and Portugal.

President Paudel appointed Bharat Raj Paudyal as ambassador for Canada and Sanil Nepal as ambassador

NEWSNOTES



hearing had already been completed. Ambassador Paudyal, who was appointed to Canada, is the outgoing Foreign Secretary.

Foreign Minister Saud Held Biletral Meeting With Australian Foreign Affairs Minister Penny Wong

Minister for Foreign Affairs Narayan Prakash Saud held bilateral meeting with Senator Penny Wong, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia at Perth, Australia.

While exchanging the views on matters of mutual interests, both the ministers expressed their happiness over the steadily growing bilateral relations between Nepal and Australia.

After the meeting both Ministers witnessed the signing and exchange of “Trade an Investment Framework Arrangement between the Government of Nepal and the Government of Australia” (TIFA).

Kailash Raj Pokharel, Ambassador of Nepal to Australia and Tim Watts MP, Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia signed the Framework Arrangement on behalf of their respective governments.



The Arrangement aims to promote and deepen bilateral economic relations between Nepal and Australia by encouraging and facilitating the trade and investment. With the conclusion of TIFA, the bilateral economic relations between Nepal and Australia is expected to grow for mutual benefit.

Minister Saud attended the Luncheon hosted by Senator the Hon. Penny Wong, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia in honour of the participating Ministers for Foreign Ministers in the Seventh Indian Ocean Conference.

In the evening, Foreign Minister Saud attended the Inaugural Ministerial Session of the Indian Ocean Conference followed by Gala dinner.

Earlier in the afternoon, Foreign Minister Saud

for Portugal in accordance with Article 1 of Article 282 of the Constitution.

According to the recommendation of the Council of Ministers, the process of their parliamentary

had a bilateral meeting with Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Singapore and discussed matters of bilateral relations. He will address the Conference tomorrow during the Ministerial session.

Foreign Minister Saud arrived in Perth on 8 February to participate in the Indian Ocean Conference. Ambassador Kailash Raj Pokharel and the officials of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) of Australia received Minister at the airport.

Nepal And Australia Signed TIFA Agreement

Australia’s Minister for Foreign Affairs Senator Penny Wong and Nepali counterpart Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal Narayan Prakash Saud witnessed the signing of the Australia-Nepal Trade and Investment Framework Arrangement (TIFA). The signing event occurred in the margins of the Seventh Indian Ocean Conference, held in Perth, Australia, from 9-10 February.

Tim Watts MP, Australia’s Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Ambassador of Nepal to Australia, Kailash Raj Pokharel, signed the TIFA, which seeks to deepen economic relations and promote expanded trade between Australia and Nepal.

Australia and Nepal enjoy strong bilateral relations including in trade and investment. Australia is Nepal’s sixth largest foreign investment partner and an international destination of choice for higher education and vocational training for Nepali students.



Australia is supporting Nepal’s tourism industry recovery. Almost 39,000 Australians visited Nepal in 2023, making Australia Nepal’s fifth largest source of foreign tourists. Nepal’s export of services to Australia jumped from \$78 million to \$160 million in 2022-23, led by strong growth in travel services to Nepal.

Flourishing people-to-people links between the two countries have created a solid foundation for growing, mutually beneficial economic relations. The Nepali diaspora community numbers more than 150,000 and is well placed to further develop bilateral economic and commercial opportunities. Sectors such as tourism and hospitality, Nepal’s emerging information and communications technology sector and agribusiness show particular promise.

The TIFA represents an important milestone as Australia and Nepal celebrate 64 years of bilateral relations in February 2024.

NIMB Opens New Branches At Swayambhu And Balaju In Kathmandu

Nepal Investment Mega Bank Limited (NIMB) 2 new in Kathmandu from Thursday Branches have expanded.

Bank Kathmandu Metropolitan City Ward no. Swayambhu Branch on 15th and Kathmandu Metropolitan City Ward no. Balaju branch was brought into operation on 16th.



Chief Executive Officer of the Bank Jyoti Prakash Pandey inaugurated new branches.

In the program, CEO Pandey provided excellent banking services to the customers from the new branches.

He said that facilities will be provided. The bank last month in Anamnagar and Shankhamul and Lalitpur in Kathmandu Satdobato and Bhainsepati branches were brought into operation.

The bank currently has 268 branches, 63 extension counters, 113 branchless banking and 262 across the country. It is providing services through ATMs

Coca-Cola Foundation Hands Over Kalikatar Sustainable WASH Project

The Coca-Cola Foundation (TCCF), in collaboration with the Centre for Integrated Urban Development (CIUD), WaterAid Nepal (WAN) and Godawari Municipality hands over of the Kalikatar Sustainable WASH Project in Kalikatar of Ward No. 6 of Godawari Municipality.

The project aims to deliver safe, sufficient, accessible, and affordable drinking water to 148 households and improve the hygiene behaviors of the people. The official handover ceremony took place on February 15, 2024, and was led over by Bishnuman Maharjan, Chairperson of Ward No. 6. Notably, Mr. Udaya Shumsher Rana, former minister and representative of Lalitpur 1 in the Parliament, served as the Chief Guest for the event.

The project primarily focuses on three major objectives. Firstly, it involves the comprehensive rehabilitation of the existing drinking water system, encompassing the installation of 2 intakes, upgrading 2 reservoir tanks, laying a 2766-meter transmission line, and establishing a 3702-meter network of distribution lines, along with connecting 148 households and three temples with the household taps with water meters. Secondly, the project aims to enhance commu-



nity sanitation practices. Lastly, it focuses on capacity building for existing user committees and implementing activities to bring about positive hygiene behavior changes within the community.

Lele faced several challenges after the devastating earthquake in 2015. Many spring sources dried up, and unplanned road construction worsened the situation, impacting the flow of springs and causing landslides that further harmed water sources. The TCCF is aiding in rebuilding the infrastructure, leading to improved access to safe water for this community. Moreover, TCCF is expanding the project further in this region as their next phase has been approved.

With a mission to make a difference in communities worldwide, The Coca-Cola Foundation has been providing sustainable access to safe water, building climate resilience, promoting a circular economy, economic empowerment, and responding to disasters. Aligning with TCCF's objectives of providing access to water resources, promoting, water conservation, and using water for multiple-uses, WWF Nepal has been leveraging our extensive experience in partnering with the Government of Nepal on wetland restoration to realize the project goal through three major objectives of Construction of wetlands, supporting in water replenishment and Capacity building of local communities and people.

Discussion Held In Kathmandu To Address Weaknesses In Nepal's Secured Transaction Law

An interaction program was convened in Kathmandu today to scrutinize the status of secured transactions in Nepal.

The event, jointly organized by Kathmandu University School of Law (KUSOL), the Secured Transaction Registry Office, and the International Financial Cooperation (IFC), aimed to explore and assess the efficacy of Nepal's secured transaction law introduced in 2006.

While Nepal took a significant stride towards modernizing its secured transaction law with the enactment of the Act in 2006, various weaknesses and gaps in its contents have come to light. With the Act formulated nearly two decades ago, it no longer aligns with contemporary best practices in several crucial aspects, thereby hindering its full potential.

During the program, Babacar S. Faye, Resident Representative of the International Finance Corporation, and Prof. Rishikesh Wagle, Dean of KUSOL, emphasized the significance of secured transactions and lauded recent endeavors in this domain. Jinchang Lai, Principal Operations Officer of IFC, and Bruce Whittaker from the International Law Institute (via Zoom) elucidated the context of law and secured transactions, along with the current status and associated pros and cons in Nepal.

Associate Professor Shiva Kumar Giri, corporate lawyer Anup Uprety, Assistant Professor Santosh KC, and Advocate



BUSINESS BRIEF

Suruchi Basnet deliberated on the challenges inherent in Nepal's Secured Transaction Act 2006.

Participants, comprising professors, banking executives, legal advisors, advocates, and practitioners, underscored the necessity of a flexible and modern framework allowing the use of movable property as collateral. This, they asserted, would expand credit availability and foster broader participation in economic activities.

Key recommendations emerged during the discussion, including the need to clarify key definitions, extend the Act's application to outright transfers of accounts, eliminate unnecessary provisions, incorporate obligations on parties to act in good faith and commercially reasonable manner, clarify the survival of security interests in insolvency, and introduce choice of law rules, among others.

Professor Bipin Adhikari, former law dean and participant in the forum, deemed the program highly significant. He emphasized to this correspondent the imperative of further discourse on the issue within the context of Nepal's significant informal economy, where transactions occur outside the formal legal framework and regulatory oversight.

In this informal sector, businesses and individuals often lack access to traditional banking services and formal credit markets. Instead, they rely on informal lending arrangements, personal networks, and so on to meet their financing needs.

According to Professor Adhikari, one of the challenges faced by secured transaction laws in such contexts is the need to recognize and enforce security interests in informal collateral that may include assets such as inventory, equipment, livestock, agricultural produce, or personal property that may not be easily identifiable, quantifiable, or readily transferable.

Secured transaction laws traditionally focus on formal collateral, such as real estate, vehicles, or financial assets, which can be easily registered, valued, and enforced through established legal mechanisms. However, in the informal economy, Adhikari opined, assets used as collateral may not meet these criteria. They may lack formal documentation, clear ownership titles, or standardized valuation methods, making it difficult to establish and enforce security interests in such assets.

The program's discussions shed light on critical areas for improvement in Nepal's secured transaction law, signaling a concerted effort towards enhancing the legal framework to foster economic growth and financial inclusion.

IMF Team Finds Investment Climate In Nepal's Energy Sector

A team of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has found investment-friendly environment in the energy infrastructure sector in Nepal albeit various challenges in the country's economy.

The IMF staff team, led by Tidiane Kinda, conducted a staff visit to Nepal from February 5-12, 2024, to discuss recent macroeconomic developments and the implementation of the Fund-supported programme.

"Nepal's external position continues to strengthen on the back of buoyant remittances, increasing tourism activity,

subdued imports, and inflation is decreasing. Weak domestic demand, large outward migration, and low credit growth despite monetary relaxation continue to weigh on near-term economic growth. Enhancing domestic revenue mobilization and accelerating the execution of capital expenditure will provide needed support to growth while securing fiscal sustainability.



Increased vigilance on banks' asset quality and stepped-up supervisory efforts are important to preserve financial stability in view of growing non-performing loans," team leader Kinda said in a press note issued on conclusion of their visit.

The medium-term economic outlook remains favorable, as strategic investments in infrastructure, especially in the energy sector, are expected to support potential growth. The upcoming Investment Summit presents an opportunity to showcase Nepal's economic potential. Timely reforms to durably improve the investment climate will help take full advantage of the Summit and pave the way to stronger growth in the future.

The authorities' ongoing efforts in meeting key commitments under the Fund-supported programme, with the support of IMF's technical assistance, are welcome. Performance under the programme will be formally assessed in the context of the fourth review of the Extended Credit Facility, which is expected to take place in the middle of the year, states the press note.

Gulde-Wolf, Deputy Director in the IMF's Asia and Pacific Department, attended key meetings. The IMF team held meetings with the Finance Minister Dr Prakash Sharan Mahat, the Nepal Rastra Bank Governor Maha Prasad Adhikari, the National Planning Commission Vice-Chairman Dr Min Bahadur Shrestha, and other senior government and central bank officials. The IMF team also met with representatives from the private sector and development partners.

400 kV Hetauda Substation Nearing Completion

Nepal Electricity Authority Managing Director (MD) Kul Man Ghising's regular inspection visit has accelerated the construction of transmission lines and substations, which are crucial for evacuating and supplying electricity to distribution centers.

Despite facing some obstacles in a few places along Dhalkebar Hetauda, the construction of the 400 kV transmission line, a lifeline for Nepal's energy supply and export, is progressing. The construction of substations is also moving

quickly.

The Hetauda Substation, the second largest one, is also nearing completion after the completion of the 400 kV Inaruwa substation. During a recent site visit by Ghising, the Managing Director of Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), the project office informed him that the construction of the Hetauda 400 kV substation is expected to be finished within a month.

During a recent visit to the construction site, MD Ghising expressed satisfaction with the progress of the substation. He had a discussion with the project management and construction professionals involved in the construction and instructed them to complete the remaining work within a month to bring the substation into operation.

Any disruption in the construction of the substations and transmission line could affect the evacuation of electricity during the summer session, which is only three months away. MD Ghising has intensified his inspection visits to prevent any crises.

This substation is being built to strengthen the country's electricity transmission and distribution system. It will include 400 ÷ 220 kV, 220 ÷ 132 kV, and 132 ÷ 11 KV substations.

The final stages works, such as connecting and testing the substation equipment, are being carried out with the goal of completing construction and commissioning within a month. The substation will not only facilitate electricity flow in the national transmission system but also provide local supply. This will ensure sufficient, reliable, and high-quality electricity supply in the area.

The Hetauda substation expansion project, funded by the Nepal Government and Electricity Authority, includes the construction of three power transformers with a total capacity of 315 MVA each at 400-220 kV. This brings the total capacity of the substation to 945 MVA.

The grant received from Dhalkebar in Dhanusha and the American aid project Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) will be used to build a 400 kV double circuit transmission line from Ratmate in Nuwakot, which will be connected to the Hetauda substation. The Hetauda substation has already had the necessary infrastructure constructed.

The project has completed and put into operation 400-220 kV substations in Dhalkebar and Inaruwa. In December 2075, a contract was signed for the construction of Hetauda and Inaruwa substations.

The Hetauda 220 ÷ 132 kV substation has been constructed under the Hetauda-Dhalkebar-Inruwa 400 KV double circuit transmission line project, which aims to strengthen the electricity transmission system within the country and facilitate electricity trade between Nepal and India.



The substation has two power transformers, each with a capacity of 160 ÷ 160 mV. Due to unsatisfactory performance by the contractor company, a new contract was signed in December 2075 to complete the remaining work.

The project involved the construction of 220 kV substations in Dhanusha and Inaruwa, which have been completed and are now operational. The project was funded by the government and authorities, as well as a concessional loan from the World Bank.

The Hetauda-Bharatpur-Bardghat 220 kV transmission line project has been completed, including the construction of the 132-11 kV Hetauda substation. This substation will supply electricity locally. The project was funded by the government and authorities, as well as concessional loans from the World Bank.

Nilgri Khola II Hydropower Project Successfully Tested 220 kV Transmission Line

The testing of the 220 kV transmission line for the 71 MW Nilgiri Khola II hydropower project in Narchang was successful.

The project's promoter, Nilgirikhola Hydropower Limited, began testing the transmission line on January 15th. The line connects Annapurna Rural Municipality-4 Dovilna to Ward No. 3 Dana. The project's power supply is connected to the central grid through a substation.

Upendra Gautam, the official representative of Nilgirikhola Hydropower, reported that the test of the 220 kV transmission line connecting Dovilna to Dana was successful. The transmission line, which is 7.4 km long, was constructed from Chotepa, the location of the 42 MW Nilgiri Khola power plant, to Dana via Dovilna.

The technical team of Nepal Electricity Authority participated in the test by supplying electricity from the transmission line at Dana substation to Nilgiri 2nd power house.

The transmission line testing is complete, but the tunnel testing is ongoing.

Gautam, the project's official representative, stated that the schedule for testing the tunnel by pouring water into it has been extended to February 15, 2080.

He said that during the pouring of water into the tunnel, the flow of river water from Chotepa to Dovilna would decrease.

The Nilgiri Khola is the largest hydroelectric project built so far in the Second Magadh. The project has accelerated testing after the construction of the dam, tunnel, power house, transmission line, and switchyard. The descender (sand settling pond) constructed in Chotepa was already tested by pouring water. A 4,275-meter-long tunnel has been constructed from Chotepa to the power house in Dovilna.



World Social Forum: Rethinking And Redefining Development Itself



BY: DIPAK GYAWALI

World Social Forum (WSF) 2024 just concluded its five-day event in Kathmandu on 19th February. With over 50 thousand participants from 1400 organizations of 98 countries, it might have set a record as one of the largest international gathering in Nepal. Maybe also a record of sorts: unlike other international events, it saw barely any coverage in Kathmandu's mainstream Sahuji media, leaving many unaware that something as big as this was even going on! Held not in five-star hotels as is often the case with international gatherings, but at the open-air Bhrikuti exhibition grounds under makeshift tents and adjacent classrooms of Law and Ratna Rajya college classrooms, a casual passerby could have mistakenly thought it was just another crowded mela or bazaar. "Simple living and high thinking" remains the driving ethos behind what this gathering of social and environmental activists is mainly about.

WSF started as an antidote to the World Economic Forum (WEF, the "Davos gang"!) where the world's billionaires and multinationals meet annually at a Swiss ski resort to discuss how to make the world more comfortable for trade and business. Realizing that, in their pursuit of profit WEF were making short shrift of social and environmental justice, Latin Americans began the process of dialogue among activists to counter neoliberalism's unbridled pursuit of profit with an alternative of action for compassion and equity. After the first WSF meeting in Porte Allegre in 2001, the forum has expanding into other centers in the Global South, the last and 16th having just been held in Kathmandu.

Given its sheer diversity in both issues and activists from around the world – the first day for instance saw over 120 parallel sessions! – it is nothing short of a miracle that groups with common activism interests did manage to agree and bring out resolutions and program for further action. The Resolution brought out by river activists for example – including the well-known Narmada Bachao Andolan, Kosi Victims Society, Ganga Mukti Andolan and others – resolves inter alia to work towards an alternative radical agenda:

- educating ourselves on our riverine histories, contemporary challenges and threats through a multi-disciplinary lens, putting the most marginalized riparian com-

munities and their knowledge at the center of shared river dialogues

- resisting the commodification, appropriation, exploitation and pollution of our rivers that threaten rivers and riverine values

- rejecting reductionist engineering-based water knowledge and climate solution to advocate for community-centered water and river governance based on holistic approaches of climate justice

These are not understandings and actions that will go unchallenged by the powers-that-be who benefit from the status quo and everything that activists are opposed to. And this has been recognized by WSF participants. The 2007 event in Kenya was criticized for the unhealthy role of "exclusive rights" enjoyed by sponsoring international business groups to the exclusion of local businesses; and the 2009 event in a city in the Brazilian rainforest was criticized for being NGO-dominated that marginalized popular movements. Indeed, many international conferences on water or climate have been hijacked by sponsoring business interests who have also had an unhealthy, insidious influence on the agenda and the final resolutions. The most blatant was the latest COP28: although carbon trading has been scandal-plagued, it failed to agree on integrity rules for market players!

The current post-Covid, post-Ukraine/Gaza unfolding world disorder is exposing the post-World War-2 Bretton Woods arrangement that essentially promoted neo-colonialism in the guise of development. And this was most insidious with the rise of NGOs from the 1980s and the push for Structural Adjustment Loans and the marginalization of the State by the global financial institutions: while economic development was to be done by the deified Market, social issues were to be managed by tame NGOs (mercifully under this rubric some local issues-based activist NGOs have also emerged and survived). With this stroke of strategic planning, Bretton Woodsters were able to marginalize genuine, volunteerism-based traditional civic voices.

In Nepal, the mushrooming of NGOs since the 1990s (in reality, government-, donor-, business-, and political party-based GoNGOs, DoNGOs, BoNGOs and PoN-

GOs) have completely undercut the traditional guthis. It is they that have kept alive much of the arts, culture and religious artifacts of the country over the last centuries. Thankfully, despite lack of government support – indeed in the case of the “guthi land nationalization act” scandal a few years back that was thankfully torpedoed by their street-level activism – they continue to survive and did indeed provide much of the voluntary relief services during the 2015 earthquake.

It was impossible to attend but a fraction of the events; but the general mood amidst the wide diversity of social and environmental causes roiling the participants was one of solidarity for social justice and expanding their network of support among those of good will. I had the good fortune to participate in the discussions on Bioregionalism organized by Kalpavriksh, INTACH, Woven Design Collaborative and Nepal Water Conservation Foundation folks, a session that was indicative of the concerns, commitment and intellectual depth participants came with.

Boundaries, be they political or administrative, have been the hallmarks of nation-states and the bane of the natural environment as well as communities living next to or divided by such boundaries. It has been said that the main task of nation-states is “bordering, ordering and othering”. It is in this process of “ordering” by governments that the “othering” occurs leaving communities marginalized and vulnerable, as well as environment such as rivers, forests and wildlife desecrated. In much of South Asia, it was the British Raj and its colonial enterprise that drew the political and administrative boundaries to suit their resource extractive needs. That process ignored the traditional understandings of those living there of their physical, ecological and cultural space and the generations of relations they built around them.

The Westphalian nation-state model, born out of the European experience but alien to the rest of the world’s historical experience, imposed an unnatural homogeneity on this rich civilizational and ecological tapestry, and sought to merge multiple identities that people in this part of the world naturally enjoyed into one monochrome. The political project ended up trying to create one language, religion, dress, even national bird and food to enhance its “ordering” power. In this effort, it found a willing partner in the market whose push for efficiency to enhance its profit resulted, to borrow the words of Karl Polanyi, in feeding citizens with rich socio-cultural identities into a “satanic mill” to produce alienated and individualized labour with “only their hands to sell” as Marx would have described it.

Thus, was born the current dominant public-private-partnership (PPP, instead of PPCP or public-private-civic partnership) where much of the public needs were made subservient to powerful private interests. Bioregionalism – and indeed much of other WSF concerns – is an effort to push back against this rapacity and resulting alienation, to regain meaningful lives, livelihoods as well as environmental health for the majority 99% currently getting increasingly poor and marginalized. It means regaining social and environmental well-being by redrawing the boundaries of governance, especially at the lowest village and township levels, by advocating stewardship on behalf of this and future generations instead of ownership today by the powerful.

In Nepal, a bioregional advocacy would have certain natural advantages: with some 124 ethnic groups and 103 languages, with a geography that goes from tropical 60m above sea level to arctic 8848m thus containing almost all the climatic zones of the world in a 150 to 200 km range, diversity is Nepal’s hallmark. Not having been under direct colonial rule (but still influenced by it), many traditional natural

resource management institutions are still alive and intact. That is what made initiatives like community forestry, irrigation, and later community electricity possible here and not in India down south. Promoting less water consuming and more healthy dryland crops such as millet and barley has been made easier by a highly developed tourism industry that is currently promoting ethnic restaurants that serve food ecologically relevant to such ethnic groups.

But there are major challenges. Hydroelectricity-powered ropeways (a climate- and mountain-friendly technology which made its advent in Nepal a century ago and is 3 times cheaper, 8 times faster to build and consume only half the energy in megajoules to transport goods compared to equivalent diesel-consuming hill roads) still find no policy support. Bretton Woods and globalization-imposed trade liberalization means locally grown, low carbon footprint food items are being displaced by those coming from far abroad even as they burn cost-externalized-to the environment fossil fuel. None of that is sustainable, even without the uncertainties of climate change and a collapsing old global order.

This is where bioregionalism offers conceptual and practical avenues to develop an alternative world where much of today’s mal-development can be corrected and avoided. Indeed, to borrow from Marx, one might say: “Bioregions of the world, Unite! You have nothing to lose but the mal-developments visited upon you!”





JAJARKOT EARTHQUAKE Waiting For Reconstruction

Although over three months have passed since an earthquake devastated Jajarkot, Rukum East, and Rukum West, destroying ninety percent of old houses and killing over 200 people, the majority of people are still living in tents. With the monsoon season only four months away, there is no immediate plan for launching early reconstruction. Recent studies by UNICEF have revealed an alarming situation, particularly among children.

By A CORRESPONDENT

The students of Tribhuvan Secondary School in Nalgadh Municipality, Jajarkot district, have no choice but to study and take exams in the open sky. While some NGOs and INGOs have provided tents, they are insufficient for all the students.

Gyanendra Bahadur Singh, the school's headmaster, ex-

pressed concern about the lack of space as the SEE approaches. He stated, 'We are praying to Indra, the Rain God, to hold off on rain until the exams are completed.' Headmaster Singh stated that due to the slow reconstruction process, they are exploring ways to manage classes during the winter period.

The school, located in

ward no. 1 of Nalgadh Municipality, is one of the largest high schools in the area with 1,200 students from ECD to class 12.

Singh added that they are in discussions with various INGOs, NGOs, the Municipality, and the Karnali Provincial government to take immediate steps to build temporary classrooms for the stu-

dents.

Nalgadh Municipality is facing significant challenges due to limited resources and extensive damage, particularly with regards to the 13 schools that have been badly affected. Mayor Damber Bahadur Rawat explains that the municipality heavily relies on grants from the Federal and Provincial governments, and is currently waiting for additional funding. “We have already spoken with INGOs and other major donors to request their support in reconstructing school buildings and health posts.”

Like Nalgadh Municipality, Bheri Municipality is also facing similar issues. Due to the destruction of classrooms, students at Bheri Tribeni Higher Secondary School in Bheri Municipality Ward 1 are being taught in open spaces. “Thank God we had a dry winter this time. Krishna Pariyar, a teacher at the school, stated that if there were to be any rainfall similar to that of the past, students would have to pay a high price.

Tribeni Higher Secondary School has also received new temporary classrooms built by a Bud-



dhist organization, at a time when some NGOs and INGOs have started building temporary school and health post buildings.

Pariyar acknowledges that the country does not have sufficient resources to construct all school buildings and classrooms at present. However, even four months after the devastation, no one is addressing the issue of the damage,” stated Jaya Bahadur Khadka. “From the municipality

to the provincial government and CDO, everyone seems helpless in providing support. As a result, the common and poor people of the region continue to suffer.”

Among the dozen municipalities that were badly affected by the earthquake, Bheri Municipality is working to mobilize funds from development partners, including the US Embassy, Swiss Embassy, and Helvetas Nepal. Under the dynamic leadership of Chandra Prakash Gharti, Mayor of Bheri Municipality, the reconstruction work is progressing.

Seeking Support

Mayor Gharti stated that the municipality has already distributed the first installment to the victims to build temporary houses. He also expressed his satisfaction with the positive response from the Swiss Embassy, US Embassy, and Helvetas Nepal to support the reconstruction of school buildings.

The Swiss Embassy and Helvetas Nepal collaborated to provide relief materials and temporary shelters to the municipality. Mayor Gharti expressed gratitude towards them. The Municipality



COVERSTORY



had a positive discussion with the US Ambassador and the USAID Director during their recent visit to the earthquake-affected areas. They assured us of their support.

During a time when federal and provincial governments are displaying apathy, Nepal's development partners' recent efforts provide hope for the earthquake survivors.

According to Mayor Ghariti, 'Frankly speaking, our development partners are more responsive to our problems and challenges.'

During their recent visit to Bheri Municipality, Dr. Prabin Mahandhar, the country director of Helvetas Nepal, and Aman Jonchhhe, the Program Management Specialist/Team Leader at the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, met with the mayor and his team to discuss potential support for the reconstruction of school and health buildings.

"We have been working in the district and municipality for a long time," they said. Helvetas Nepal also sent relief materials shortly after the earthquake. Dr. Manandhar expressed interest in

supporting the reconstruction of school buildings and health posts during a meeting with municipal officials.

The earthquake on November 3, 2023, destroyed the historical palaces at Thaple and Pipaldanda of Khalanga, the district headquarters of Jajarkot, with a magnitude of 6.4. However, even two months after the disaster, the earthquake-damaged structures have not been demolished, and the

sites have not been cleared.

At Thaple, two palaces were being used by government offices, a hotel, and 20 families. 'We have not yet removed our belongings from the ruined palace,' said one resident. Bishwa Bikram Shah, who had been running a homestay at one of the quake-damaged palaces, suggested that the damaged structure should be leveled to qualify for government aid for temporary housing. He explained that it would be expensive to demolish the structure and dispose of the debris, as there is no space to dump the timber, bricks, and other rubble.

It is worth noting that the earthquake destroyed the historical palaces two months ago. Dipak Jung Shah, former parliamentarian and one of the owners of the four privately-owned palaces, has been urging the federal government to restart reconstruction work.

The main palace in Khalanga, believed to have been built 138 years ago by the sons of the king of Jajarkot Junga Bahadur Shah, also sustained damage in the disaster. Before the earthquake, the



District Administration Office was located in the palace.

Discussions are currently taking place to transfer ownership of the earthquake-damaged Mathillo Durbar in Thaple to the Department of Archaeology for reconstruction by the federal government, according to Krishna Bikram Shah, one of the Durbar's owners. Krishna Bikram stated that negotiations are ongoing regarding the conditions for the use of the property. These conditions include restrictions on the owners' ability to sell the property, divide it among themselves, or use it as collateral for loans from financial institutions.

The Tallo Durbar at Thaple was a four-sided palace with a central courtyard. The debris from the palace is extensive, and clearing the site will require significant resources. Krishna Bikram suggested that the government take initiatives for the reconstruction of the main durbar, which was built around 1885, and Tallo Durbar, which was constructed around 1893.

The federal govern-



ment included the main palace at Khalanga on the list of 100 tourist destinations in the country for the Visit Nepal 2020 campaign, but the campaign was postponed due to the Covid pandemic. The palaces in Jajarkot have archaeological and historical significance. According to Chief District Officer of Jajarkot Suresh Sunar, the earthquake-damaged monuments should be reconstructed in their original traditional style and size.

In addition to the historical palaces, the earthquake also damaged over 300 government-owned and community-owned buildings. However, the district disaster management committee has only recorded 152 government and community buildings that were destroyed by the disaster so far.

Sunar stated that the assessment of the actual data on the government-owned and community-owned buildings destroyed in the disaster is pending. Details on the damaged or destroyed school buildings are yet to be received. Private housing management is currently underway. Assessment of the damage caused to public and community buildings will begin after the first tranche of housing aid is provided to the earthquake-displaced families. Approximately 36 government offices are providing their services from tents, according to him.

The earthquake also damaged numerous police posts in Jajarkot, Rukum West, Salyan, Jumla, and Kalikot districts. The Karnali Province Police Office in Birendranagar reported that a total



COVERSTORY



of 54 police posts in the province were damaged by the earthquake.

Deputy Inspector General of Police Bhim Prasad Dhakal reported that security personnel slept in tents and conducted rescue work following the disaster. They have been preparing a public inquiry report based on damage assessment. In total, 33 police buildings in Jajarkot, 12 in Rukum West, four in Jumla, three in Salyan, and two in Kalikot sustained damage. The District Police Office in Jajarkot suffered damage, along with four other buildings, 12 area police offices, 10 police posts, and six temporary police posts.

The earthquake, which had its epicenter in Jajarkot, displaced 60,478 families in the prov-

ince, according to data from the Karnali provincial government. However, even two months after the disaster, only around 17,000 temporary huts have been built,



leaving thousands of displaced individuals to languish under flimsy tarpaulin tents.

According to the Temporary Housing Construction Grant Procedure for Earthquake-affect-

ed Households-2023, the federal government provides Rs50,000 in two tranches to families whose houses were completely or partially damaged and are now uninhabitable. However, many beneficiaries have yet to receive the aid necessary to build temporary shelters.

According to data from the province's Internal Affairs Ministry, Jajarkot has 35,140 applicants, while Rukum West and Salyan have 23,608 and 1,730 applicants, respectively.

Following the earthquake, 36 people died in Jajarkot and Rukum West due to cold, diarrhea, chronic illnesses, and fever.

A recent report from UNICEF revealed that over 68,000 children affected by the Nepal

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earthquake still require urgent assistance, highlighting an alarming situation in the three districts.

UNICEF Report

UNICEF is appealing for US\$14.7 million in funding to support 68,000 children and their families affected by the 6.4 magnitude earthquake that struck western Nepal on November 3, 2023. Continued support is necessary to help rebuild the lives of the affected children.

The earthquake, which had its epicenter in Jajarkot District of Karnali Province, resulted in the death of 154 people and injured 366, with 81 of the fatalities being children. The earthquake damaged homes, schools, health facilities, and water supply infrastructure, disrupting critical services for children. Around 200,000 people, including 68,000 children, still need humanitarian assistance to rebuild their lives after spending a cold winter in temporary shelters.

Three months after the earthquake, many children in western Nepal continue to face daily hardships. According to Alice Akunga, UNICEF Representative

to Nepal, the individuals affected by the disaster are still coping with the emotional aftermath of losing loved ones. In addition to the loss of homes, belongings, and schools, the children's development is also at risk. Despite rising temperatures, the need for basic necessities such as nutritious food, clean water, education, and shelter remains high. One effective method for rebuilding children's lives and restoring a sense of normalcy is to

return them to school and facilitate their learning. This allows them to socialize with their peers, acquire knowledge, and recover.

Following the earthquake, UNICEF worked alongside the government and partners to distribute essential supplies to children and their families, including tarpaulins, blankets, medical tents, recreational and educational kits, and hygiene materials.

The earthquake caused damage to 898 school buildings, with 294 being fully damaged and 604 being partially damaged. This has affected the education of approximately 134,000 school-aged children.

Over 17,000 children have returned to school thanks to 223 temporary learning centers established by UNICEF with the support of development partners. Additionally, transitional learning centers, capable of withstanding extreme weather conditions, are being established to enable children to continue their education until school buildings are fully repaired.

Furthermore, UNICEF worked with local governments



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and partners to repair 565 damaged toilets and construct 251 temporary toilets. Additionally, UNICEF provided support for the government's campaign to vaccinate children against deadly diseases such as measles, rubella, and typhoid.

However, more needs to be done to support children and their families. Currently, only 7% of UNICEF's US\$15.7 million appeal has been funded. This funding includes contributions from the UNICEF Global Humanitarian Thematic Fund, which is the most flexible form of funding and allows for rapid and strategic responses to humanitarian crises, as well as support from UNICEF National Committees. UNICEF is requesting an additional US\$14.7 million in funding to continue providing life-saving support to children.

UNICEF expresses gratitude to all donors and supporters for providing essential resources. However, more work is needed to rebuild lives and instill hope in children for the future," stated Akunga. "UNICEF is dedicated to collaborating with the Government of Nepal, partners, and donors to assist children and young people in

dire need of aid. We are seeking investment from donors and partners to sustain our provision of life-saving supplies and services, which aid in the survival and well-being of children.

USAID In Recovery

The United States Government, through USAID, has announced \$1.37 million to support recovery efforts following the devastating 2023 earthquake in Jajarkot, Nepal.

The earthquake, which

had a magnitude of 5.6, struck on November 3, 2023, in Jajarkot and Rukum West districts. It claimed the lives of at least 154 people, injured hundreds, and caused damage to homes and buildings. The earthquake caused widespread displacement, disrupted essential services, and created urgent needs for shelter, food, clean water, and medical care.

In response, USAID quickly shifted its existing programs to provide necessary relief supplies, water quality kits, and support for physical rehabilitation. In addition to the \$23.3 million that USAID invested in disaster risk reduction and resilience in Karnali since 2019, rapid support was provided. Longer-term recovery, reconstruction, and rehabilitation work will continue in the coming months.

With the monsoon season approaching, earthquake victims in Jajarkot and Rukum may face severe difficulties without temporary shelters. UNICEF's report has already indicated the likelihood of this scenario for children.



LATE HIMALAYA SUMSHER RANA

A Legendary Figure

Died year ago at the age of 95, Himalaya Sumsher Rana will be remembered forever in Nepalese history

By A CORRESPONDENT

Birth and death are natural processes. However, out of billions of births, only a few are remembered forever. Similarly, some people are immortalized for their contributions. Although he died last year, the late Himalaya Sumsher Rana is still remembered for his contributions to the nation.

Despite having such a high profile, Rana was a simple and humble personality and always maintained his decency with all the people who came to meet him. Late Rana was popular among civil society leaders due to his humble attitude.

He was the first governor of Nepal Rastra Bank, credited with bringing Nepali currency into wider circulation within the country. He passed away on February 5, 203 at the age of 95, leaving a significant void.

His contributions to Nepal's financial sector are unparalleled, and no one can take his place in Nepali history. Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) Governor Maha Prasad Adhikari remembered Rana as a prominent economist, economic thinker, and promoter of Nepal's financial sector. Adhikari expressed his condolences.

Rana established the base



for monetary and banking infrastructure in Nepal by bringing the Nepali currency into circulation and determining the exchange rate for the Nepali currency with the Indian currency for the sustainable development of Nepal's banking system.

His loss will be unbearable as he was a guardian of Nepal Rastra. Rana served as Nepal's first central bank governor from April 26, 1956, to February 7, 1961.

He was born on January 8, 1928, in the liberal Rana family of Dev Sumsher Rana. After stud-

ying at Durbar High School, he post-graduated from Bombay University, India, and returned home to join the political revolution of 1950 against Rana Rule.

After a successful revolution, Rana joined the civil service. He later became the first governor of the central bank, having previously served as finance secretary under the leadership of then Finance Minister Subarna Shumsher Rana.

Rana served as the Secretary of Finance and is credited with modernizing customs administra-



tion, strengthening inland revenue administration, and establishing the Office of the Auditor General for financial transparency in public spending during their tenure.

Nepal's first commercial bank, Nepal Bank Limited, had already been established during the 1950s, but a central bank was still needed.

As a finance secretary, he drafted NRB's charter as an officer-on-special-duty. In its Golden Jubilee Publication, 'Nepal Rastra Bank in Fifty Years,' the central bank highlighted the key tasks Rana carried out as its first governor.

The foremost challenge at that time was to increase the circulation of Nepali currency throughout Nepal. The Nepalese currency was declared the only legal tender of the country with the promulgation of the Act to Increase Nepalese Currency Circulation in 1957.

The NRB issued its own currency notes for the first time on February 19, 1959 (Democracy Day), supplementing the Act. Four denominations, Re1, Rs5, Rs10,

and Rs100, were issued.

At that time in the Nepali economy, Indian currency was widely circulated and its exchange rate with the Nepali currency was uncertain. This was another anomaly.

During Governor Rana's tenure, the stabilization of the exchange rate between the Nepali and Indian currency and the enactment of two Acts were significant milestones. They enhanced public confidence in the national currency and eliminated the dual currency period, according to the NRB.

During Rana's tenure as governor, foreign currency accounts were maintained with the central banks of India and England, as well as the commercial banks of the United States and Japan, to facilitate foreign exchange transactions.

Bhekh Bahadur Thapa, former Finance and Foreign Minister and former Central Bank Governor, remembers Rana as a figure who contributed to modernizing Nepal's economy.

Thapa, who served as the

central bank governor from August 1966 to July 1967, said that Rana introduced modern banknotes in the country and helped modernize the Nepali economy.

After retiring from the central bank, Rana was affiliated with the United Nations, serving in various capacities in different countries.

Rana established Himalayan Bank in 1993 in a joint venture with Habib Bank Limited of Pakistan, and he was a pioneer in bringing foreign direct investment to Nepal. The bank became one of the top private sector banks in the country.

Rana partnered with Tuborg and Carlsberg, the Danish breweries, to establish the Gorkha Brewery Company and introduce international beer brands to Nepal.

In addition to his economic activities, he also played an active role in promoting peace and democracy in the country. During the decade-long conflict, Rana worked to bring the Maoist rebels into peaceful politics.

Over the past few years, Rana has chaired the General Election Observation Committee and monitored elections.

A Politically Liberal

Rana witnessed many political upheavals in Nepal and abroad during his 95-year-long life. He was the great-grandson of Dev Sumsher Rana, a liberal Prime Minister of Nepal. Rana himself was a liberal Rana.

After King Mahendra took political action in 1960, dissolving Nepal's first elected Parliament and jailing Prime Minister B P Koirala, Rana was sacked.

Rana joined the United



Nations and served for four decades in Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. He lived through political turmoil in those countries, all of which he recounts with personalized details in his memoir.

He was also awarded Japan's Order of the Rising Sun by the Japanese Ambassador to Nepal in May 2022 for his contribution to developing banking relations with Japan.

This was in recognition of Rastra Bank opening its first foreign account in the Bank of Japan in 1957. He was also an enthusiastic football player. He captained the New Road Team (NRT), which was active in mobilizing youths against the Rana regime.

In 2004, during the insurgency, he used his considerable diplomatic skills to try to broker a peace deal between the government and Maoist rebels.

None of his family members are currently in regular civil service. However, his sons, daughters, and grandsons have served the

country in various capacities.

Pratima Pande, his elder daughter, has been involved in heritage conservation and the promotion of Nepal's legacy and identity. She has worked with institutions such as the Nepal Britain Society and served as Honorary Consul General of Italy. Similarly, Ashoke Sumsher Rana, his elder son, has served the country in the financial sector as the CEO of Himalayan Bank, a reputable bank in Nepal.

Sangeeta Thapa, another daughter, is a well-known figure in the global art scene for her efforts to promote Nepalese art. As the Director and Curator of Siddhartha Art Gallery, Thapa is responsible for branding Nepalese art worldwide. Amar Rana, the younger son, has also made contributions through his own work after working for almost a year at Nepal TV.

Rana was born into an aristocratic family and is the great-great-grandson of liberal Rana Prime Minister Dev Sumsher. He inherits many of his

great-great-grandfather's character and legacy. Like his grandfather, who declared himself a servant of the people, he remains humble as an ordinary citizen.

Rana grew up in a liberal family environment and had no trouble adjusting to a new system even after 2007. Although most Ranas are given higher positions at birth, Himalaya Sumsher sided with the commoners in 2007 by signing a document in India demanding a liberal system in Nepal. The impact of education and liberal views can be seen throughout his career.

As the Chinese philosopher Confucius said, a society will be remembered forever for its contribution to the nation. Late Rana will also be remembered forever.

On The Belt And Road Cooperation And Partnership ‘Model Agreement’



BY: DR. BIPIN ADHIKARI

In a recent development, the “Belt and Road Cooperation and Partnership Agreement,” commonly referred to as the “Model Agreement,” was officially unveiled in Hong Kong on October 13, 2023, during the 6th ‘Belt and Road’ Initiative International Forum. This significant event was a collaborative effort organized by the International Academy of “Belt and Road,” the Hong Kong WTO Research Institute, and the Academy of International Strategy and Law at Zhejiang University.

The Model Agreement, a non-governmental initiative, aims to address numerous critical issues associated with China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), often recognized as the New Silk Road. However, the BRI in its current form is widely regarded as one of the most extensive and ambitious infrastructure projects ever conceived, and involves numerous countries and regions, aiming to improve connectivity, trade, and economic development on a massive scale. Whether it is the “biggest” modern project can be a matter of perspective and criteria. It certainly ranks among the largest and most far-reaching initiatives of its kind in recent history. The Model Agreement is anticipated to offer soft norms for the consideration of the contracting parties to facilitate the creation of a mutually beneficial arrangement for BRI projects.

A Comprehensive Expert Document

The Model Agreement, a comprehensive expert document, comprises 15 key chapters addressing all legitimate criticisms directed at the BRI as a global project. These chapters cover a wide range of critical areas, including General Principles and Definitions, Right to Development, Sustainable Development, Transparency and Anti-Corruption, Facilitation of Trade in Goods, Services, and Service Providers, Digital Economy and Cybersecurity,

Investment, Intellectual Property, Public Health, Finance, Infrastructure, Competition, Environment, Labor Standards, and Dispute Resolution.

The provisions within these chapters within the Model Agreement are primarily tailored to deal with the legitimate criticisms and meet the requirements of both current and potential participant nations in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). It strives to strike a delicate balance between the needs of developing and least developed countries and the overall development of the region and the world as a whole.

While adhering to the fundamental principles and regulations of the existing international order, the “Model Agreement” has attempted to carefully address the specific goals and requirements of the BRI. This adaptation ensures that the Agreement aligns with the BRI’s distinct purpose while upholding and promoting the established principles of the international community.

In Article 8 of the Model Agreement, which pertains to transparency and anti-corruption, the general principle, for example, is established that the contracting parties commit to upholding transparency as a fundamental principle. This commitment entails making all information concerning BRI projects accessible to all interested parties. This information includes details about policies, laws, regulations, administrative rulings, licensing, certification, qualification and registration requirements, technical regulations, standards, guidelines, procedures, and practices, among other relevant matters. Importantly, this information should be consistently and promptly provided by the contracting parties, either free of charge or at a reasonable cost.

Additionally, the contracting parties express their

collective dedication to eradicating bribery and corruption within BRI projects. Recognizing the necessity of fostering integrity in both the public and private sectors, they emphasize that each sector bears complementary responsibilities in this regard. In essence, this Article underscores the commitment to transparency and the joint effort to combat corruption, thereby promoting ethical and accountable practices within the Belt and Road Initiative.

The Model Agreement includes a broad commitment to principles such as sovereignty, good faith, the ‘pactasuntservanda’ principle (agreements must be kept), the rule of law, non-discrimination, due process, and cooperation between governments and stakeholders. It also emphasizes the standardization of business practices and ethical conduct. Article 20 of the Model Agreement specifically addresses dispute resolution. It stipulates that the contracting parties are obligated to resolve any disputes related to BRI projects through amicable and peaceful means. This approach is taken to ensure that the peace, security, and justice within the Belt and Road countries and regions are not put in jeopardy.

In sum, the Model Agreement serves as a comprehensive framework that effectively addresses many of the general concerns raised by various countries and experts regarding the Belt and Road Initiative. It promotes a commitment to ethical conduct, the rule of law, and peaceful dispute resolution, with the overarching goal of enhancing peace, security, and justice in the Belt and Road region.

Current Issues

Introduced in 2013 under the leadership of Chinese President Xi Jinping, this extensive array of development and investment initiatives initially aimed to connect East Asia and Europe through the establishment of physical infrastructure. Over the past decade, the initiative has significantly expanded its scope, reaching into Africa, Oceania, and Latin America, thereby substantially amplifying China’s economic and political influence.

Some analysts view this expansion as a potentially disconcerting manifestation of China’s increasing global influence. Furthermore, concerns have risen as the costs associated with many of these projects have soared, leading

to opposition in certain host countries.

Simultaneously, according to James McBride, Noah Berman, and Andrew Chatzky, who contributed an article to the Council on Foreign Relations in New York recently, the United States shares the apprehensions of some Asian nations regarding the Belt and Road Initiative’s potential as a Trojan horse for China-led regional development and military expansion. President Joe Biden has continued the skeptical stance toward Beijing’s actions, following in the footsteps of his predecessors. However, Washington has encountered challenges in presenting a more attractive economic vision to the governments participating in the initiative.

According to these critics, the Belt and Road Initiative has not been without its share of detractors. In the eyes of certain nations that incur substantial debt to finance their infrastructure improvements, BRI funding is perceived as a possible double-edged sword. China regards BRI projects as commercial ventures, offering loans at rates approximating market interest rates, with the expectation of full repayment. However, some BRI investments have entailed less than transparent bidding procedures and mandated the involvement of Chinese firms. Consequently, the involvement of these contractors has led to cost inflation, causing the cancellation of projects and generating political pushback.

One of the most prominent criticisms revolves around the possibility of debt dependency induced by BRI projects in participating countries. Detractors assert that the substantial loans and financial assistance offered by China can lead to unsustainable debt burdens for these nations. Consequently, this could pave the way for economic and political reliance on China, potentially allowing Beijing to wield undue influence.

Furthermore, critics argue that BRI initiatives often lack transparency in their financial arrangements, concealing or failing to disclose crucial terms and conditions. This opacity can give rise to concerns about the actual costs and implications of involvement in BRI projects.

Large-scale BRI infrastructure projects, in particular, have raised concerns about their significant environmental and social impacts. Critics express apprehension



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regarding issues such as deforestation, habitat destruction, pollution, and the displacement of local communities. They contend that these concerns underscore an insufficient emphasis on environmental and social safeguards within the BRI framework.

Reports have emerged highlighting substandard construction quality and safety standards in certain BRI projects, prompting concerns about the long-term durability and safety of the infrastructure developed within the initiative. Critics have voiced these apprehensions, emphasizing the need for rigorous quality and safety controls.

Accusations of corruption have also marred some BRI projects, both within the host countries and among the Chinese companies involved. Critics argue that corruption and a lack of accountability can lead to mismanagement and inefficiencies within the initiative, undermining its overall goals.

Furthermore, a subset of critics perceives the BRI as a vehicle for China to extend its global influence and secure strategic advantages in various regions. They express reservations about Beijing's potential use of BRI projects for geopolitical and strategic objectives, underlining the need for vigilant assessment of the initiative's broader implications.

A term often associated with BRI criticism, "debt trap diplomacy" suggests that China intentionally extends loans to countries that it knows cannot repay, allowing China to seize assets or exert political influence when countries default on their BRI-related debts. Critics argue that BRI projects primarily benefit Chinese companies, promoting their economic interests and boosting infrastructure development in China itself. They contend that host countries may not receive equitable economic benefits. Critics express concerns about potential threats to the sovereignty and security of participating countries, particularly in regions with geopolitical tensions. They worry that BRI projects may compromise national security or strategic interests.

Against these odds, the success of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) hinges on several key elements: transparency and accountability in project selection and funding, a commitment to high-quality and sustainable infrastructure, addressing concerns regarding debt sustainability through responsible lending practices, fostering international collaboration and partnerships, engaging local communities, ensuring political stability in host countries, flexibility in adapting to changing circumstances, robust risk management strategies, a focus on economic viability and benefit sharing, and effective dispute resolution mechanisms. A long-term perspective and ongoing adaptation to evolving challenges are also critical for the BRI to achieve its goal of promoting regional and global development, trade, and cooperation while mitigating potential pitfalls and concerns. These are precisely the issues on which the Model Agreement helps contracting parties to mitigate.

The United States Transition

While these criticisms do exist, sometimes in an exaggerated form, the United States has transitioned from its initial ambivalence to near-complete skepticism regarding China's intentions and a clear desire to compete with the Belt and Road Initiative. During the Trump administration, the prevailing view was that the BRI was essentially an influence campaign that entrapped developing countries through "debt-trap diplomacy."

In response, the U.S. initiated a project in January 2022 to invest in 5 to 10 major infrastructure projects globally as part of a broader G-7 effort aimed at countering China's Belt and Road Initiative. The United States is prepared to provide developing nations with a comprehensive set of U.S. financial tools, encompassing equity stakes, loan guarantees, political insurance, grants, and technical expertise. These resources will be channeled towards areas such as climate, health, digital technology, and gender equality.

It's important to note that the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, which plays a key role in these efforts, is a relatively recent establishment and is still in the process of identifying flagship projects. The aim is to have these projects up and running by the beginning of the next year. The Model Agreement can help them too.

Conclusion

It is essential to acknowledge that while these criticisms are articulated by some, it is also true that opinions on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) span a wide spectrum. There are nations and leaders who perceive significant value in participating in these projects, viewing them as opportunities for economic growth and development.

The impact and implications of the BRI are not monolithic; they are influenced by diverse perspectives and contextual factors. As China is marking the 10th anniversary of the BRI, an initiative that has garnered substantial support from the global community, there exists a shared aspiration for it to align with the trajectory of human development and peace. There is a mutual hope that the BRI can serve as a platform for realizing the fundamental goals of human dignity and world peace, as articulated in the UN Charter.

The recently introduced Model Agreement, collaboratively developed by an assembly of international scholars and experts, represents a compendium of recommendations in this direction. While these may appear as modest contributions, they have the potential to facilitate and enhance the engagement of countries in the Belt and Road Initiative. Ultimately, the path forward for the BRI involves a complex interplay of perspectives, negotiations, and ongoing efforts towards achieving the common objectives of global welfare, peace, and prosperity.

Helvetas Nepal's InElam

Banana Revolution!

Helvetas Nepal's InElam Project has successfully positioned itself as a model for converting subsistence-based agriculture into a profitable enterprise through banana cultivation. This achievement has been made possible through close collaboration with the local government, provincial governments, the private sector, and the youth. By providing assistance to young individuals in the field of banana production, the InElam project has effectively transformed Sudur Paschim, Lumbini and Karnali Province into thriving banana hubs. As a result, young farmers have transitioned from subsistence farming to cultivating a lucrative cash crop.

By Keshab Poudel

Surendra Chaudhary, 38, suffered from starvation while cultivating crops such as rice, wheat, maize, and lentils for food. However, he transformed his own lifestyle and the lives of several poor and marginalized farmers by cultivating bananas.

After almost a decade of hard work, Chaudhary became a prominent banana farmer and revolutionized farming techniques in the Sudur Paschim Province.

Surendra Chaudhary was one of the first farmers selected by Helvetas Nepal's Elam Project, the precursor to InElam, to cultivate bananas.

He never had a chance to get a fairly paid job in Nepal.

With the idea of making paper from banana trees, he launched his own business. Today, he creates jobs for disadvantaged Nepalese.

Chaudhary's story is inspiring, and sometimes it feels like a fairy tale to him. Unfortunately, his father was once evicted from his own property. Surendra's parents built a new life on a patch of land where they found refuge, which was a third of an acre. However, as the son of a day laborer, he couldn't attend school, and as a teenager, he sustained himself with odd jobs.

The little money he earned was insufficient to make his dream of owning a banana

farm a reality. Fortunately, he learned about Elam, a project that supports good business ideas. He contacted Helvetas and completed a 35-day course on sustainable banana cultivation over three years. The course covered marketing, accounting, creating a business plan, and learning about banana diseases and pesticides. His business idea was to sell bananas and use the stalks to make paper. Surendra Chaudhary, 38, suffered from starvation while cultivating crops such as rice, wheat, maize, and lentils for food. However, he transformed his own lifestyle and the lives of several poor and marginalized farmers by cultivating bananas.



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earned was insufficient to make his dream of owning a banana farm a reality. Fortunately, Surendra discovered Elam, a project that supports promising business ideas. He contacted Helvetas and completed a 35-day course on sustainable banana cultivation over three years. The course covered marketing, accounting, business plan creation, and banana disease and pesticide management. His business plan was to sell bananas and use the stalks to produce paper.

"Elam changed my life," says Surendra, who is now 44. After spending a month experimenting with banana paper, Surendra became Nepal's first banana paper producer. Now, almost 15 years later, he owns about ten hectares of land and specializes in cultivating banana seedlings, which bring in more profit than banana paper.

He oversees a team of 29 employees and has constructed a state-of-the-art nursery that produces an abundance of seedlings. Additionally, he has built a con-

crete house.

In this residence, his wife has set up a tailoring business. Surendra, breaking through familial barriers, was the first to send his son to college, where he pursued a degree in electrical engineering. From once being a disregarded day laborer, Surendra has risen to become the esteemed president of his district's association of banana producers.

"The banana means everything to me," he expresses. "It is akin to a deity. Truly, without the banana, I would be nothing." Reflecting on our achievements and current prosperity, it is clear that my life has taken a stark departure from the poverty of my past. It feels as though my life began anew with the initiation of Helvetas' project.

Annually, Nepal faces a deficit of half a million jobs. Helvetas recognizes this challenge and empowers socially disadvantaged young individuals to start small businesses. Through this process, individuals acquire skills in creating business plans,

managing accounts, and reinvesting profits. The establishment of many small businesses contributes to job creation within their own country.

Helvetas Nepal's InElam Project has had a significant impact on the expansion of entrepreneurs and enterprises in Karnali, Madhesh, Sudur Paschim, and Lumbini Provinces.

Our Business Expansion Orientation program is designed to assist micro-enterprises that are already in operation and have the potential for expansion. The program aims to enhance the business skills of micro-entrepreneurs and provide support for planned enterprise growth. We offer a comprehensive Business Plan for Growth, addressing key areas such as market and marketing strategies, selling skills, and facilitating credit linkage.

Surendra Chaudhary's inspiring journey is a testament to the transformative power of



entrepreneurship. He faced challenges in securing a well-paying job in Nepal, so he took the initiative to start his own business. His venture involved making paper from banana trees, providing employment opportunities for disadvantaged Nepalese.

Surendra's success can be attributed to his participation in the Elam project, which supported innovative business ideas. Through Helvetas, he underwent a comprehensive 35-day course over three years, covering sus-

tainable banana cultivation, marketing, accounting, business plan creation, and knowledge about banana diseases and pesticides.

Over the years, Surendra expanded his enterprise, currently owning about ten hectares of land and specializing in banana seedlings, which proved to be more profitable than banana paper.

"Elam changed my life," reflects Surendra, highlighting the transformative impact of entrepreneurship training and support. His success story underscores the potential for positive change when individuals with determination and innovative ideas receive the right guidance and support.

Helvetas Nepal has also connected its entrepreneurship program with youth like Top Lal BK from Bardia Municipality in Lumbini Province. After facing severe situations abroad, including in Europe and the Gulf, Top Lal BK started banana farming on a small scale with the help of learning and support from Chaudhary. Now, he is a leading banana producer, cultivating bananas on over 32 Bighas (four





knowledge and experiences with farmers whenever they require my services. I have communicated with them over the phone, in person, and in groups, wherever they need me.

For farmers, Chaudhary is like a friend. He does not charge any money if the place is near his residence. If the place is far away, he charges a small amount for transportation.

InElam is collaborating with farmers to develop and expand banana farming. They are supporting farmers through policy, technology, and financial means. Tek Bahadur Singh from Helvetas Nepal stated that they advocate for policy changes to promote Nepali farmers, including those like Chaudhary, a youth farmer. Just a month ago, we visited the Minister of Finance, the head of the Federal Parliamentary Committee, and the Minister of Agriculture and Livestock. We do similar things at the provincial level as well. Helvetas has also been collaborating with farmers on policy initiatives and advocacy.

Youth like Chaudhary from Kanchanpur have become sources of inspiration for those who aspire to be professionals and entrepreneurs. Collaboration between cooperatives, local municipalities, and Helvetas is becoming a model for banana farm-

acres) of rented land. Top Lal BK stated, 'My annual turnover is around Rs. 10 million. This is a significant amount of money that I could not make anywhere else in the world.'

Surendra Chaudhary pioneered banana farming in Kanchanpur district of Sudur Paschim. However, his student BK is now the biggest banana farmer in the region. Chaudhary said, 'If there is support from organizations like Helvetas, nothing is impossible.' He started banana farming a decade ago, and now sells bananas worth Rs. 7 million annually.

Ten years ago, with the support of Helvetas Nepal's Elam project, Chaudhary became a successful banana farmer and entrepreneur in Sudur Paschim Province.

Thanks to the efforts of Chaudhary and other young entrepreneurs, with the support of Helvetas Nepal, Kanchanpur and Kailali in Sudur Paschim Prov-

ince are now hubs for banana farming. Chaudhary is credited with turning Sudur Paschim Province into a hub for banana farming.

Tek Bahadur Singh, from Helvetas Nepal, has contributed greatly to attracting young farmers like Chaudhary and BK to banana farming in Sudur Paschim Province. Helvetas Nepal's InElam Project provides technical and financial support to small and marginalized farmers like Chaudhary for commercial banana farming, and has made a strong impact on the expansion of banana farming in western Nepal.

Chaudhary cultivates bananas on 5 acres of land and also produces and sells banana saplings. He is willing to provide training, counseling, and lobbying services to other banana farmers.

Chaudhary does not consider himself an expert. However, I am always ready to share my

er development in Nepal.

Hari Gurung, program manager of InElam Project, stated that their project provides support to banana farmers at the policy, technological, advocacy, and financial levels. Helvetas Nepal's InElam project promotes technological innovation and micro-entrepreneurship to establish micro-entrepreneurship in Nepal.

Helvetas Nepal has successfully brought change to the Sudur Paschim Province, including the banana revolution. The provincial government is grateful for its contributions to generating employment through cash crops like bananas in the region. Joint Secretary Tika Ram Thapa of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperative of Sudur Paschim Province said, 'The ministry has been working closely with Helvetas Nepal.' Joint Secretary Tika Ram Thapa of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperative of Sudur Paschim Province said, 'The ministry has been working closely with Helvetas Nepal.' Joint Secretary Tika Ram Thapa of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperative of Sudur Paschim Province said, 'The ministry has been working closely with Helvetas Nepal.'

Akriti Rana from Helvetas Nepal explained that InElam promotes resource-based enterprises that focus on generating employment by utilizing local resources and creating value chains through a market system development approach. The organization aims to provide employment opportunities to disadvantaged women and men in Nepal through the productive use of local resources, including banana farming.



The project aims to support unemployed and underemployed individuals, with a particular emphasis on disadvantaged groups. This includes exploring markets and conducting sub-sector analyses, testing and developing new products, approaches, and technologies, and piloting implementation through partnerships with the private sector.

“Investing in a small business is a reasonable use of money, especially when the formal sector cannot provide jobs for the growing number of youths. Encouraging youth to become entrepreneurs using local resources is the best option,” said Dr. Prabin Manandhar, country director of Helvetas Nepal. “Our program has demonstrated that it can replicate to broader scale to make Nepal as net exporter of banana.”

The project facilitates market system development for enterprise growth. The Elam project promotes entrepreneurship among micro entrepreneurs through modular-based business training. These trainings have been developed based on years of experience in micro enterprise development and employment. Training manuals for each module are prepared in Nepali and uploaded to the HELVETAS Nepal website for public use.

Business awareness for start-up new enterprise orientation: Along with helping possible micro entrepreneurs to choose suitable capability, the module also helps them develop entrepreneurship skill. Business Plan for business-start up: will choose among those who have business plan and will support them establish an organized enterprise based on business plan.

Agents Of Change – Making All Countries In Asia And The Pacific More Dynamic, Healthier, Wealthier, And Better



BY: DR. QU DONGYU

We all know that we live in a changing world. In the vast area of Asia and the Pacific that change is most evident. Over the past 20 years, the economies of many nations in the region have been moving out of the category of ‘least developed’ and graduating into a ‘middle income’ status. However, the positive changes that help to make our lives better, healthier, and more prosperous, are not happening at the same time equally across all countries, or even equitably within them.

On the one hand, Asia and the Pacific is now home to three of the world’s five largest economies. These and other countries in the region help to feed much of the rest of the world – the majority of aquaculture, rice production and the rapidly growing protein sector is found here.

On the other hand, hunger is still widespread in some parts of the region – indeed more than 371 million are undernourished in Asia and the Pacific – or half the world’s total. Nearly two billion people cannot afford a healthy diet. Despite considerable progress, poverty remains a problem for many families. Meantime, inequalities persist among and within countries, between men and women and for youth, and indigenous peoples, and between cities and rural areas.

To address these challenges, FAO is increasingly striving to leverage science and innovation, including new technologies – especially digital solutions – developed in both the public and private

sectors, particularly through four regional priorities designed to deliver the Four Betters (Better Production, Better Nutrition, a Better Environment, and a Better Life, leaving no one behind).

FAO’s Regional Priorities for Asia and the Pacific

The first FAO Asia-Pacific regional priority is to transform the region’s agrifood systems to be more efficient, more inclusive, more resilient, and more sustainable, with more affordable healthy diets. Increasing agricultural production is paramount for food and nutrient security, but it needs to happen in a climate-friendly process. To that end, we are supporting countries to bolster climate-adaptation and resilience, low-carbon agriculture, modernize seed systems, implement integrated farming management, control trans-boundary pests and diseases, disseminate good agriculture practices (GAP) and transfer technologies to smallholders and family farmers. We are also promoting increasing digitalization and mechanization among local communities.

The second regional priority is to accelerate sustainable natural resources management for biodiversity conservation and climate action. FAO is leading the development of a new generation of analysis and tools to support the design and improved targeting of investments in agrifood systems. In Asia and the Pacific, we are supporting countries to strategize and develop proposals to

access climate finance and to achieve their climate ambitions in agrifood systems and rural development.

The third priority is to support inclusive rural transformation for equitable rural societies through economic growth, job creation and assistance for the vulnerable populations to reduce inequality, leaving no country and no person behind. FAO's The 1000 Digital Villages Initiative, the Hand-in-Hand Initiative and the One Country One Priority Product Initiative promote sustainable livelihoods and decent incomes in the Asia-Pacific region, while encouraging the wide participation of women and youth in agrifood systems transformation.

The fourth priority aims to achieve the above in the unique context of the region's Small Island Developing States (SIDS). At FAO, we are working with the SIDS to implement anticipatory actions against multiple hazards and risks, while initiating a process leading to the formulation of the Pacific Action Plan on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors (2024–2030). This Plan is critical for bringing sustainability and resilience to agriculture and natural resources such as soil and water.

In working on these priorities, we are speeding up and scaling up tangible and accountable results on the ground through the implementation of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 and relevant strategies.

Tailored investment plans and partnerships

In Asia and the Pacific, we are also assisting countries to promote tailored investment plans for poverty reduction including social protection; fighting food loss and waste and conserving water; and building adaptive capacities in response to country and regional needs.

Meantime, we continue to scale up South-South and Triangular Cooperation and expand partnerships and strategic alliances with a wide range of players, including International Financial Institutions (IFIs), the private sector, regional institutions bodies, civil society, and others. Through these partnerships, we aim to bridge investment and financing gaps to ensure that financing reaches those who need it most, especially smallholder and family farmers.

These advances and more will form the basis of much of the discussion at the upcoming 37th Session of the FAO Regional Ministerial Conference for Asia and the Pacific (19-22 February), which is gathering Government Ministers from FAO's Members from the region in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

The changes we still need are many. But, together, with strong political will and commitment, and with enabling policies, sufficient investment and innovative business models, this region can be an agent of the changes needed - and continue to inspire the world.

Dr. QU Dongyu, Director-General, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)



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- आधिकारिक संस्थाबाट स्वास्थ्य परीक्षण र बीमा गराऔं,
- अनिवार्य रूपमा अभिमुखिकरण तालिम लिऔं,
- अनिवार्य रूपमा श्रम स्वीकृती लिऔं,
- कामदार भिसामा मात्र वैदेशिक रोजगारमा जाऔं,
- वैदेशिक रोजगारीमा जानुअघि घर-परिवारसँग सरसल्लाह गरौं,
- मानसिक रूपमा तयार होऔं र
- आफ्नो सबै कागजातको एकएक प्रति घर-परिवारलाई छोडौं।



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गज्जब ६

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