

AFCAN REVIEW

Volume 3, 2022



**Association of Former Career Ambassadors
of Nepal (AFCAN)**



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(2022)

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Foreword

We are happy to bring out the third issue of AFCAN Review which is being published regularly since 2020 A.D. Normally, it widely covers the views on the national and international issues and perspectives. Nepal, situated between two huge countries like a yam between two boulders, has been trying to play its proper role in the bilateral, regional and international fields by taking more proactive role to make her valuable presence even in the global horizon. Standing at the crossroads of history, Nepal has to be active to avoid any unwanted situation of the power games since we have to understand the sensitivities of our neighbours in the North and South. The desirable option is to remain non-aligned, while carrying out our economic and socio-cultural activities as a strong durable bridge between them. Nepal will secure its own economic interests side-by-side by cooperating with neighbours, which will also be helpful in the promotion of larger interests of the developing countries.

We are thankful to all contributors for their valuable articles written in the present context, guided by the ideas of nation-building and prosperity for all.

I am confident that this publication will offer a different taste of the subjects included herein, and their approaches to disseminating knowledge and experience in the related field will be appreciated. I must admit how much thankful I am for the opinions and suggestions received on the previous issue. Certainly, it helped us to improve the present volume for its readers. It would not be out of place if I hope that this volume would be useful to all stakeholders, including Ministry of Foreign Affairs, embassies and diplomats as well as all those interested in this particular discipline.

I hereby wish to extend my sincere thanks to the members of the Editorial Board for their sincerity and hard work in this publication.

May I also avail this opportunity to express best wishes on the occasion of Happy New Year 2023 to everyone!

Dr. Rambhakta P. B. Thakur

President

Association of Former Career Ambassadors of Nepal (AFCAN)

December, 2022

Note by the Editors

We are glad to bring out the third issue of AFCAN Review covering articles on various aspects of foreign policy, diplomacy and international affairs. We in AFCAN believe in sharing of ideas, views and experiences on thematic and sectoral issues of cross-border relationships with the objective of enhancing and enriching Nepal's ties with the outside world at bilateral, regional and international levels. The pursuit for balanced, nuanced and strengthened relationships in the immediate neighborhood first, and then beyond with other global and regional powers, including all friendly countries, has historically been crucial foreign policy priority of Nepal.

The nation remains largely settled on the political system of people's choice, and is in the process of graduating from the LDC status by 2026. This is time for much-desired transformational change and forward momentum. However, unprecedented global shocks and vulnerabilities have, at the same time, brought formidable challenges in our socio-economic life. The negative impacts of COVID-19, catastrophic climate change, Russia-Ukraine war and external economic shocks have been ubiquitous, but harder hit by these events have been the less powerful and less equipped countries. These countries are now forced to put extra efforts for additional resources, technology and innovation in order to tackle the inevitable fallouts of the deteriorating situation.

Disruption in global supply chains, rising prices of food, fuel and commodity, hike in interest rates, unabated inflation and the looming recession are shaking the confidence of states to fuel much-needed economic growth and sustainable development. Turning points reached in both geopolitics and geo-economics as a consequence of change in great-power configuration are becoming additional sources of tension for maintenance of peace and security in the world. Fresh bouts of regionalization and localization of business and economic activities in dispense with globalization have undermined inclusive world order to the disadvantage of the poor countries. Rising geopolitical rivalry, protectionism and nationalism are inviting unforeseen crisis of mind-boggling proportion. Inclusive multilateralism, the epitome of the United Nations system, has been in disarray. It has been very challenging to keep rules-based international order functioning.

Countries lying in geopolitically sensitive parts of the world such as Nepal have to safeguard their sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence against these odds that are developing in the international arena and make sure that they meet the growth

trajectory, sustain and further development gains and welfare of the people and, importantly, create employment opportunities by enlarging the scope and scale of the economy. Mustering international partnership and cooperation in all sectors of national interests are critically important to achieve these goals.

Foreign policy direction of Nepal as enshrined in the Constitution is clear and precise. The content, approach and behavioral aspects of the foreign policy have to be fine-tuned, modified and adjusted in accordance with the changing situation ‘walking on a tightrope’. A ‘minimum power’ state of cherished independent history, Nepal does not have the luxury of departing from the ideal path of non-alignment, international rule of law and the values of world peace and security. Ours is a path of friendship with all, and enmity with none. In view of this, strategic research and analysis of the opportunities and challenges developing in the neighborhood and beyond is critical for our periodic adjustments.

For result-orientation, deft handling of the tools of economic diplomacy is a must for which our diplomacy has to internalize all necessary art and science. This entails proper training and grooming of the diplomatic personnel on one hand, while also ensuring a culture of working together with the line agencies, private sector and civil society organizations in defining and operationalizing all key issues of national interests. We also need to shape national foreign policy behavior in such a way that objectivity and reason replaces emotionalism and reactionary tendencies. Political leadership should be guided by diplomatic judgment and strategic analysis of events and situations while taking decisions on all issues pertaining to foreign relations. Strengthening the role of foreign policy think tanks as well as relevant academic and training institutions could go a long way in this direction.

This issue covers articles from seasoned diplomats, professionals and practitioners of foreign policy and diplomacy. We have tried to keep the views and concepts expressed in the original articles as intact as possible with minimum changes. The writers are themselves responsible for ideas and opinions expressed in the articles. We are hopeful that readers will find these contents interesting and insightful.

Deepak Dhital

Jhabindra Prasad Aryal

Ramesh Prasad Khanal

December, 2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SN	Title	Author	Pg.
1	Foreword	AFCAN President	i
2	Note by the Editors	Editorial Board	iii
3	China's Global Initiatives: GDI, GSI and BRI	Sundar Nath Bhattarai	1
4	Foreign Policy of Nepal and Emerging Global Trends	Kedar Bhakta Shrestha	8
5	A Watershed Moment: Transformative Solutions to Interlocking Challenges	Bharat Raj Paudyal	17
6	Can SAARC Survive the Prolonged Stalemate?	Prof. Dr. Mohan P. Lohani	23
7	Furthering Discourse on Hydro Diplomacy	Dr. Rambhakta PB Thakur	29
8	Practical Aspects of Diplomatic Code of Conduct in Nepal	Bhagirath Basnet	42
9	Nepal in the UN Peacekeeping Operations: A Platform for Country's Multilateral Diplomacy and Global Visibility	Brig. Gen.(Rtd.) Dharma Bahadur Baniya	46
10	The Passport: A Brief Evolutionary History	Rudra K. Nepal	59
11	Journey Through Malaysia: A Diplomat's Diary	Hari Kumar Shrestha	73
12	Nepal's Foreign Policy and Diplomacy: A Historical Perspective	Mohan Krishna Shrestha	91
13	Exchange of High Level Visits: An Instrument of Strengthening Foreign Relations in the Context of Nepal	Nir Bahadur Karki	102
14	परराष्ट्र मामिलामा सुधारको आवश्यकता: एक विश्लेषण	डा. निरञ्जनमान सिंह बस्न्यात	108
15	नेपालको विकासको लागि इजरायलको आधुनिक कृषि मोडल	डा. अञ्जान शाक्य	116
16	नेपाली मुस्कान: हाम्रो कुटनैतिक पहिचान	रमेश प्रसाद खनाल	121
17	Some glimpses of major AFCAN events & activites	-	127

China's Global Initiatives: GDI, GSI and BRI



- Sundar Nath Bhattarai ¹

Development is the perennial pursuit of human society. Under the continued impact of profound changes, when development stands at the crossroad, the need for further development becomes all the more urgent and pressing. The prolonged challenges that the world had to face due to abrupt outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic and the massive burden arising from post-recovery along with various other profound changes occurring in the world, including fallouts of Russia-Ukraine war, have pushed back the deliverance of UN Sustainable development goals by 2030, which the international community is pursuing to achieve.

Global Development Initiative (GDI):

It was at this juncture that President Xi Jinping had put forth his proposal of Global Development Initiative (GDI) at the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly on September 21, 2021, which was also the 50th anniversary of restoration of China's rightful place in the United Nations. President Xi called on the international community to accelerate the implementation of sustainable development goals towards a most robust, greener and more balanced global development, and also foster a Global Community of Development with a shared future. His GDI proposal has been viewed as a major initiative of this era in setting out a practical blueprint for the countries of the world and international development cooperation, championing in essence, the actions of UN Sustainable Development goals and inclusive world governance system.

State Councillor and Foreign Minister, Mr. Wang Yi, who has also been recently nominated a CPC Politburo member, had stated: "Xi's proposal can be said to have been motivated primarily to raise the awareness of the challenges threatening the delivery of SDGs and re-prioritize and renew the global commitment of these goals". He further added: 'the core concept of this initiative is people-oriented and seeks realization of their well-rounded development with the ultimate goal of meeting the aspirations of all nations for a better life, by solving all difficult issues and creating more opportunities for development, leaving no countries and individuals behind.'

¹ Founding President of AFCAN and Officiating Chairman, China Study Center Nepal

GDI can be an important cooperation platform for an open and inclusive partnership. It seems to have gained synergy from other initiatives including Belt and Road and has pulled together the strengths of multilateral cooperation mechanism such as the United Nations, which China regards as the core viable centre of multilateral governance system, the BRICS, the G20 and various regional and sub-regional platforms.

President Xi, while introducing the proposal, emphasized on the need for harmony between man and nature on a priority basis for development. He also pledged to follow China's previous commitment to peaking CO2 emission before 2030 and carbon neutrality before 2060. China, he said, "will not build new coal-fired power projects abroad and will step up support for other developing countries in developing green and low carbon energy."

The GDI proposed by President Xi has drawn acclaim from leaders, scholars, and officials on a wider scale. The UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres remarked: "GDI is of great importance in advancing the realization of the UN Sustainable Goals 2030, in view of negativity and imbalance in global development". While expressing happiness at the announcement of Xi's commitment to climate change, the UN Secretary General called for 'decisive action' by all countries, especially the members of G20, to effectively contribute to emission reduction.

President Xi's GDI proposal has garnered wide support of the international community and has led to the formation of a Group of Friends at the United Nations. The first High Level Meeting of the Group of Friends of the GDI was held on May 9, 2022, at the United Nations Headquarters, with participation of Mr. Wang Yi and the UN Secretary General Mr. Antonio Guterres, together with more than 100 UN member countries and 27 prominent international organizations.

The group focused on the strengthening of this prime initiative and its need to be developed in a more elaborate form and scope with clarity on timeline and sectoral themes, in order to make it a more effective instrument of development, matching the overall social economic and political course evolving in the world today.

The Group resolved to carry forward the objectives of GDI through policy dialogues, sharing of experience and promotion of practical cooperation. It emphasized the primary need for focusing on global crisis that confronts the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals. It also stressed the most pressing concern of the developing countries in such areas as poverty reduction, food security, economic recovery, employment, education, health and green development, which deserve priority concentration, while dovetailing Global Development Initiatives with South-South Cooperation, and the tapping of potential resources, which are lacking at the moment.

It is well known that President Xi has initially made two unprecedented mega pledges to South-South Cooperation Assistance Fund, one amounting to U.S. dollar 3.1 billion to help developing countries tackle climate change, and the second amounts to US dollar 2 billion for the developing countries to implement the UN development agenda. The size of pledges has given a big political weight to the Chinese contribution. It is said that Xi's initiatives do thus carry, on most occasions, the feel of a 'game changer' in international relations.

Mention may be made of a recently held meeting of a High-level Dialogue on Global Development in Beijing on June 24, 2022, via video link, which has taken place in support of Xi's Global Development Initiative during which President Xi delivered an important speech entitled 'Forging High Quality Partnership for a New Era of Global Development'. He opined: "the Meeting is taking place when Covid-19 pandemic is eroding decades of gains in global development, implementation of UN's 2030 agenda for sustainable development is countering difficulties, the North-South gap keeps widening, and crises are emerging in food and energy security". He urged the meeting to jointly create an enabling international environment and forge a global development partnership, "where the developed countries would fulfil their obligations, the developing countries would deepen their cooperation and the North and the South would work to forge a united, equal, balanced and inclusive development partnership".

Among various other important conferences held prior to this was one related to the important organization like that of International Civil Society Solidarity Forum, which vowed to promote Global Development Initiative of President Xi in line with its guidelines and in concerted effort, along with other global development partners, as a combined driving force. Such supports to GDI in widening scales are indicative of the confidence of the prominent institutions and people at large, in the viability of Xi's GDI proposal towards the attainment of universal global objective of promoting well-being of the people and countries at large, the developing countries in particular.

Global Security Initiative (GSI):

It is highly relevant for us to lend some thought on President Xi's Global Security Initiative, proposed by him in July 2022, during the high-level meeting of BOAO Forum for Asia, which aroused worldwide attention. As cursorily commented by western media, it is a latest display of China's ambition to be a leader of global governance and security architecture. Some others argued that the proposal of Global Security Initiative put forth by President Xi, was to counter US-sponsored Indo-Pacific Strategy, the Quad (US, India, Australia and Japan grouping), G7's Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII), USA's Build Back Better World

(B3W), EU's Global Gateway, all designed to hammer down the ingenuity of China's developmental connectivity initiatives and to ostensibly contain China's rise.

Global Security Initiative, as envisaged by China, is said to have been based on the principle of 'indivisible security', meaning that no country can strengthen its own security at the expense of others, and calls for a 'common comprehensible, cooperative and sustainable security and building-up of an Asian Security Model of mutual respect, openness and integration'. This principle is embodied in many national strategic documents and is based on the idea that 'insecurity of one state affects the welfare of all others'. In other words, it frames national security as a non-rivalrous global public good. The Chinese description of GSI, still lacking in details, there seems to be no need for many countries to rush to get on board the new China-led Initiative of GSI. Nepal has also decided not to be a party to this Initiative in keeping with its general policy of refraining from joining any strategic security alliances.

There are numerous arguments for and against Global Security Initiative (GSI). But China's argument that security and peaceful environment are inevitable prerequisites for peaceful development of the world, and are complementary to each other, seems to gain ground.

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI):

Speaking about China's global initiatives, our attention is automatically drawn towards, first and foremost, the unprecedented Belt and Road Initiative, put forth by President Xi in immediate aftermath of his resumption of the office of Presidency of the People's Republic of China in 2013. To understand Xi's Global Development Initiative in its overall perspective, it would be pertinent to keep abreast, in some detail, with the arduous course that the Belt and Road Initiative, the predecessor of all China's global initiatives, had to undergo, in a related term, to develop itself into a concept of singular unchallengeable value in its overall accomplishments.

The initiative, which was initially named as "Silk Road Economic Belt" and later as "One Belt One Road" (OBOR), has finally assumed the name of Belt and Road, popularly called BRI. The concept of BRI initiative, once at its peak, has remained all pervasive, in all activities throughout, in China's governmental and societal hierarchies, from central to provincial, and township to village levels, when the name itself became adorable in parlance, in and outside, China. BRI has been described as the most visionary and largest ever infrastructural programme in human history with promised investment of over U.S. dollar 8000 billion, with half of the world's population and a third of global GDP directly involved.

Belt and Road Initiative, in spite of numerous confrontational challenges and fallacious charges levelled against it, perpetrated by the US and its allies, in particular, as China's hegemonic design of subjugating the developing countries through its state policy of 'debt trap', was, on the contrary, well received by more than 100 countries and 87 prominent international organizations, out of which, 147 have signed MOU with China on BRI. The Central Asian countries, being on the main-land route of Belt and Road, have been identified to embark upon greater number of BRI projects, followed by Sub-Saharan region of Africa. In the Asian neighbourhood, countries undertaking BRI projects of substantive scales, are Indonesia, Laos, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Thailand. And countries from South Pacific to Latin America are being benefited by building their various infrastructure projects on Chinese assistance under BRI. Most of these projects are completed while others are in the process of early completion.

BRI has achieved hard won progress and significant outcome through its inherent extensive connectivity parameters under its umbrella, both in the intra-regional and intercontinental scale. BRI has remained, and is expected to continue to remain, a matchless initiative for meeting the acute developmental needs of countries involved, also as accelerator of GDI's objectives, in the days ahead.

As for Nepal, it is a committed member of BRI, having signed its MOU with China in 2017, wherein Nepal attended both BRI World Summit, at the highest level of the President of Nepal in 2018, which culminated with the agreement on Trans-Himalayan Connectivity Network, with cross-border railways between Nepal and China. It has also signed up other nine projects under BRI relating to cross-border roads, bridges and tunnels, trade and transit ports, energy, electric transmission lines and health projects. The reluctance of the incumbent Government of Nepal to accept loans on BRI projects, seems to have also been well considered by China, as demonstrated by the agreement signed by Mr. Wang Yi and the Nepalese Foreign Minister Mr. Narayan Khadka, in Qingdao, August 9-11, this year, where both parties agreed to advance high quality Belt and Road cooperation, at which Wang Yi announced that China will undertake feasibility study of Rasuwa-Kathmandu cross border railway and will send Chinese experts to Nepal to conduct the survey work within this year.

In an overall assessment of Belt and Road Initiative, the most controversial project under BRI was the Sri Lankan port of Hambantota, often cited as an erroneous example of China's 'debt trap', whereas the port was leased to China, to pay off Sri Lanka's other foreign debts, unrelated to the port. This misinformation was dismissed by most of the interlocutors and researchers in the field. However, China's second BRI Summit decided to resort to the selection of only high-quality projects under BRI to avoid the confusion and cause of failure in future.

Belt and Road Initiative, now in improved form, with solid provision for financing mechanisms of its own, like Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB) and New Development Bank (BRICS), and BRI's incorporation in China's Constitution of 2017, it is certain that BRI will remain as one of the strongest pillars of Chinese foreign policy, retaining its own unique connectivity-induced global development role for a long time to come, together with the assertive role that Xi Jinping's new Global Development Initiative will also be predominantly playing.

It is unfortunate that the world at present finds itself in the most unstable and uncertain turn of history. Passing through dreadful and long-drawn calamity of pandemic and bearing the heavy responsibility of its post recovery, humankind is undergoing several untold sufferings and skirmishes, one after another, big and small, in different parts of the world, more pronounced being the Russia-Ukraine war and its heavy fallouts, and the rise of war-borne and confrontational behaviours among the countries around.

We have recently witnessed how China, in its recent epoch-making 20th CPC National Congress, has successfully come out to stand firmly, both internally and externally, in spite of the prevailing volatile uncertain socio-economic and political situation, and has drawn a firm blueprint for carrying forward its modernization through its own path, upholding high the banner of Socialism with Chinese characteristics in a new era under the core leadership of President Xi. The strong support of 1.4 billion people of all ethnic groups in unison, its modernized army and dedicated party cadres at all levels, are by themselves, assured guarantees to Xi's successful tenure of next five years and also conceivably beyond, through 2035, the juncture in the mid-path to the final attainment of rejuvenation by the year 2049, the centenary of the establishment of the People's Republic of China.

President Xi Jinping, with wholehearted unreserved mandate entrusted to him by the 20th CPC National Congress, is expected to forge ahead with firm determination and confidence to effectively carry forward his plans of action both in internal as well as global leadership fronts.

Major International events like SCO (Sept. 15/16), G20 (Nov. 15/16) and APEC (Nov. 18/19) Summits, which followed China's successful CPC 20th Congress, provided opportune moments to President Xi, to explain to the flurry of World leaders attending the Summits, the decisions made by the CPC on its long-drawn objectives of achieving its national rejuvenation and China's peaceful overtures for global developments, and its commitment to working together in cooperation with all the countries of the world and its global partners, towards the solution of multiple problems and challenges facing the world today for shared benefits of mankind.

The most notable was Xi-Biden candid dialogue, during G20 in Bali, where a kind of mutual understanding was reached to work together in a spirit of equality and respect, through reconciliation rather than confrontation as prevailing since some long years, by openly laying out respective priorities and understanding of each other's 'red-lines'. This can be taken as their tacit agreements on their common deliverables, pending however major breakthrough, which can be hoped to contribute to a meaningful improvements in Sino-US bilateral ties through the days in the offing.

At APEC Summit in Thailand, in the absence of both Biden and Putin, Xi had assumed singular dominant and pervasive role in asserting the exigencies of strategic Sino-Pacific relationship and its high imperatives for maintenance of peace and stability in and around the region of South China Sea, while also seizing the occasion to announce that China is holding next International Summit on the *Belt and Road Initiative* in a more elaborate form earlier in the coming year.

Nepal is firmly committed to 'One China Policy' and recognizes Taiwan, Tibet and Xinjiang as sovereign parts of the People's Republic of China, which it thinks is also the basic principle of global understanding. Nepalese Foreign Minister, Khadka, during his visit to Qingdao, responding to Taiwan situation, reiterated Nepal's commitment to One China Policy and assured State Councillor Wang Yi that Nepal will not allow any activities from its soil against China. Nepal has expressed, on all occasions, its unreserved sympathy and support for the right of countries to their choice of system of governance, suitable to their own characteristics and situations, including China's concept of whole-process democracy. Nepal has witnessed China's rise from a hunger-stricken country to the present status of a modernized state. We appreciate China's successful achievement of its first centennial goal in building itself as a Moderately Prosperous Society in all respects. We also appreciate China's stupendous efforts made towards abolishing absolute poverty from the country by the end of 2020, well before the target-date set by the UN SDGs.

China is in its long march towards its Second Centennial Mid-Century Goal, to build China 'as a modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, culturally advanced and harmonious', and attain its dream of rejuvenation, as per its set objectives.

Foreign Policy of Nepal and Emerging Global Trends



- Kedar Bhakta Shrestha¹

Before starting to discuss the emerging global issues and the foreign policy of Nepal, it would be appropriate to broadly identify what these issues are. Also, we have to be clear in our minds as to what we are talking about - whether they are issues, events, orders and trends.

There are outstanding issues like climate change and environment, trade, rise of fundamentalism, cross border terrorism, drug and human trafficking, refugees and migration, foreign employment, poverty, unemployment, human rights, gender equality, democratic deficit, etc. There are yet newer issues arising out of globalization - such as the impact of the Information and Communications technology revolution, cybercrime, artificial intelligence, crypto currency and so on.

Again there are events, seen or unforeseen like BREXIT, Covid pandemic, natural disasters or the recent Ukraine war which impact international relations, one way or the other, in varying degrees to different parts or countries of the world.

And then there is the larger picture of the emerging trends and evolving world order roughly since the beginning of the 21st century- the most visible and important one being the shift of economic power towards Asia and the phenomenal rise of China.

Before we deal with the above issues and try to relate them to Nepal's foreign policy stances, I propose to make a quick listing of important events/ initiatives shaping Nepal's foreign relations and policies over the years after the second world war and up to the end of the 20th century.

Even during the isolationist Rana regime, Nepal tried to expand its engagement with the outside world as evinced by some of the following actions:

- a) Nepal participated in the Asian Relations Conference hosted by the provisional Prime Minister of India Jawahar Lal Nehru and held in New Delhi in March-April 1947. A high level delegation led by General Bijaya Shamsheer JB Rana participated in it.

¹ Former Foreign Secretary of Nepal, Former Ambassador to EU, Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg, Ambassador to the USA, Past President of the AFCAN

- b) Nepal established diplomatic relations with the United States on 25 April 1947 and with France on 20 April 1949
- c) On July 22, 1949 Nepal applied for the UN membership with a 22 - page letter explaining the country's sovereign status and other pertinent matters related therein. The letter was written by none other than Gen Bijaya Shamsher. But Nepal became the victim of international power play and its application was vetoed by the USSR.

After the advent of democracy, Nepal gradually expanded its diplomatic ties with different countries of the world and also established its missions in important capitals abroad. Some of the important events/actions include:

- a) Admission to the UN on 14 December 1955
- b) Establishment of diplomatic relations with China in 1955
- c) Establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel in 1960
- d) Participation in the 1st Non-aligned Summit in Belgrade as a founder member
- e) Opening of the Kathmandu- Kodari Road in 1967
- f) Nepal as UN Security Council member in 1969-70
- g) Early recognition of Bangladesh in 1971 - 6th country
- h) Start of large-scale participation in UN peacekeeping operations - a contingent of 671 personnel in UNEF -II in Golan Heights
- i) Zone of Peace Proposal in 1975
- j) Hosting Colombo Plan Conference in 1977
- k) Founding of SAARC in 1985 and establishment of its Headquarters in Kathmandu in 1987
- l) Nepal again becomes UN Security Council member in 1988-89
- m) Several state visits - both in-bound as well as outbound.

The above events and actions spanning more than half a century help us understand the trajectory of Nepalese foreign policy as well as its evolution and implementation. The oft-quoted dictum says that a country's foreign policy is shaped and guided by its national interests and influenced by its geo-political factors and historical legacy. Nepal cannot be an exception to these observations. Our constitution clearly stipulates that our international relations would be conducted on the basis of national sovereignty, territorial integrity, mutual respect, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries and peaceful coexistence.

Based on the above observations, let me enumerate the focal issues of our foreign policy in the context of emerging global and regional trends. Maintaining cordial and promoting mutually beneficial relations with our immediate neighbours are of foremost importance in the conduct of our foreign relations.

Nepal-India-China

Geography and socio-cultural factors have shaped and nurtured Nepal- India relations for centuries. Even today, Nepal's trade and economic relations, socio-cultural interaction and engagements with India are so deep and far-reaching that it touches almost every aspect of our everyday life. In spite of the fact that Nepal has considerably diversified its trade, India still accounts for almost two- third of its external trade. India is also extensively involved in economic cooperation in areas such as infrastructure, health, education, energy. Because the relations are so extensive, there are many problems and issues that arise from time to time as well as the ones that have remained unresolved for a long time. We need to address such problematic issues with a fresh mindset on both sides.

With China, our relations have grown considerably, especially in the field of trade and economic cooperation. Chinese tourist arrivals in the pre-Covid period registered a growth in number that stood second only to that from India. There were direct air links between Nepal and a number of Chinese cities during the pre-Covid period. They are being gradually reopened now. There are a large number of Chinese investments and joint venture projects. Also, Chinese contractors are engaged in several construction undertakings.

Relations between China and India have multiple dimensions wherein they have cooperative, competitive and occasionally confrontational relations. Both the countries cooperate in areas such as trade and climate change. Both compete with each other when they try to expand their areas of influence as well as to cultivate friendship and goodwill with countries far and near. Their confrontational acts mostly relate to the border disputes that flare up from time to time.

China and India are both members of the BRICS group. They are also members of Asian Infrastructure Development and Shanghai Cooperation Organization. It is sometimes difficult to understand how the two countries will amicably work under the umbrella of these institutions. India has refused to join the Belt and Road Initiative launched by China mainly because BRI is perceived as an ambitious goal to expand China's global reach in the mode of the bygone Silk Route.

Nepal has to walk a tightrope in its relations with either of its immediate neighbours. It has to take into account the genuine strategic and security concerns of both the countries. It should play “Nepal Card” in the conduct of its relations not only with both of them but with other countries as well.

There are a number of projects agreed upon between Nepal and both of our immediate neighbours. But many of them have not been implemented even after so many years. Many have not progressed beyond the pre-feasibility stage.

Nepal-China-US

The growing economic power of China and its increasing military might has prompted it to be more assertive in the conduct of foreign relations. It has laid claims to areas and islands like Spratly and Paracel around the South and East China Seas raising potential conflict with countries like the Philippines, Indonesia, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam, who also claim these territories. Apart from the huge natural resources reported to be lying below these reefs and islands, the area also lies in the important maritime route. The United States wants to ensure safe and unrestricted movement of maritime transport and has enhanced its presence in the area.

The claim and counter-claim of these areas rich with natural resources and vital for ensuring freedom of navigation have increased the involvement of the United States in and around the area, and have become a source of conflict and show of strength both by China and the United States. Acts of miscalculation or trigger-happy policies are likely to spark conflicts that could have far-reaching consequences.

While China has become more assertive in its dealings in the region, the United States has set up a number of mechanisms like Quad Group, Indo-Pacific Strategy, AUKUS (Australia, UK and USA) to counter China’s growing moves in the region. The controversy regarding the signing of MCC by Nepal can be a case in point. Its opponents view the MCC as a part of the Indo-Pacific Strategy and a counter to China’s BRI. They claim that signing of MCC by Nepal would mean stationing US armed forces in Nepal. This is an exaggerated and unfounded claim.

MCC has been signed by countries as far away as El Salvador, Nicaragua and Bolivia in Central and Latin America and Benin and Senegal in western Africa having to do very little with the Indo-Pacific region. Indo-Pacific Strategy may be a counter to China’s BRI but to put MCC as part of Indo-Pacific Strategy may be stretching facts a bit too far for two reasons - a) MCC has many countries outside the Indo-Pacific region and b) MCC (2004) pre-dates Indo Pacific Strategy (2017) by a number of years. No less a person than India’s former Foreign Secretary and National Security Adviser Mr. Shiv Shanker Menon, judging the Quad Security Dialogue inadequate for addressing India’s strategic concerns in land and sea, observes in his recent book “the

so-called Indo-Pacific strategy is a purely maritime strategy that implicitly concedes the continental order to powers other than the United States, namely, China and Russia”.

It is not easy to precisely foresee what turn and twist China -US relations will take in the coming years or decades. It is, however, almost certain that China would have overtaken the United States in GDP terms and also considerably enhanced its military capability in the next five to seven years. This enhanced economic and military power will make China more confident and assertive in its dealings in the region. However, this may not necessarily lead to what is called “the Thucydide’s trap”- as coined by Graham Allison - author of the book - Destined for War- in the context of the Peloponnesian War between Sparta and Athens. This war was the result of Sparta’s fear arising out of Athens’s rise.

However, it is becoming increasingly clear that Nepal now appears more clearly and frequently in the big powers’ radar screen than previously. Hence it should maintain a careful balance in its dealings with China and the United States, as it has to with India and China.

Enter Russia

The recent invasion of Ukraine by Russia has deeply shaken the fault lines of western European geo-political landscape. It is difficult at this stage to predict how much the war would prolong or how it would end. It seems Russia is trying to regain, as much as possible, the glory and reach of the Soviet days. It will not be possible for Russia to do so as times and situations have changed drastically over all these years.

Traditionally neutral countries like Finland and Sweden have applied for NATO membership and would have been admitted to it but for the objection by Turkey on grounds of their harboring anti-Turkish terror groups. It seems Ukraine will join the European Union sooner than later. These developments will have far reaching consequences for Russian and the western countries’ relations.

Countries far and wide have felt the adverse consequences of the Ukraine war. The prices of gas and oil have shot up considerably and Nepal has already seen a sharp rise in oil prices. The disruption of sunflower oil imports from Ukraine has already seen a remarkable reduction of its export by Nepal.

The world will see a shortage of wheat supplies as its production will be affected due to the Russo-Ukrainian war - both major producers. Several important metals and microchips exported by Russia will no longer be available to western industries- thereby reducing their production capabilities. A number of west European countries, specially Germany, will have to tap alternative sources of its energy supplies- currently coming from Russia.

Russia seems to have so far somehow managed the effects of the western sanctions. But it will not be able to withstand for much long the pains, pressures and the consequences of the sanctions. Although its US dollar assets are estimated to be as high as \$640 billion, they remain mostly frozen. There have already been talks of default by Russia on its due payments.

Major Emerging Economic Powers

The MINT group of countries was coined by Fidelity investments in 2011 and popularised by the British economist working with Goldman Sachs, Jim O' Neill- who coined the now famous acronym -BRICS.

MINT stands for Mexico, Nigeria, Indonesia and Turkey and are likely to emerge as strong economic powerhouse in the years to come. The well-established Asian economic power houses such as South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Malaysia will continue to mark their strong presence in the world economic scene.

Nepal should maintain and enhance its trade, investment and other economic relations with the above countries. Nepal has residential embassies in all the G-7 countries except Italy and in all the BRICS countries. Among the MINT countries, Nepal has no embassies and among the other emerging economic powers, it has missions in South Korea and Malaysia. Nepal is thus comfortably placed to pursue and strengthen its trade and economic relations with the above countries.

Nepal has missions in a number of countries in the middle east Arab countries. This is necessitated by the presence of a large number of Nepalese migrant workers. Qatar, United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia are the largest destinations for Nepalese labour force. There are regular voices raised for enhancing employment opportunities inside Nepal itself and thus reducing the migratory process of the Nepalese labourers. This will not be possible anytime soon. As long as we have to continue sending our fellow citizens to these and other major labour destination countries like Malaysia and South Korea, we will have to look after their rights and welfare.

United Nations and other International and Regional Organizations

Nepal's performance in the UN during the last few years have been of a mixed nature. It suffered a humiliating defeat for the non- permanent seat of the UN Security Council in 2006, securing the lowest number of votes (28) against Indonesia (158). This stands in stark contrast to Nepal securing the highest number of votes for the 1969-70 tenure and third highest for the 1988-89 Security Council non- permanent seat. Again in 2011, Nepal's candidate for the UN General Assembly President, Kul Chandra Gautam was defeated by Qatar's Al-Nasser. These adverse results may be attributed to poor planning and analysis as well as inadequate lobbying. However,

Nepal managed to boost its image when it was elected to two subsequent terms in the UN Human Rights Council - for 1918-20 and 2021-23.

One activity that has helped boost Nepal's image abroad is its participation in the UN's peacekeeping missions. Starting with the UNEF -2 in 1974, when Nepal sent a contingent of 671 troops to the Golan heights, it has been a major contributor to the UN peacekeeping operations and now stands among the top. It should continue to be among the leading troop contributing countries.

The establishment of SAARC in 1985 was hailed as a major achievement, raising hopes for peace and progress in the region. But the slow progress in cooperative actions and lack of any noteworthy achievement had begun to raise doubts about the viability of the organization. It is a pity that SAARC has not been able to have its Summit meeting since the last one held in Kathmandu in November 2014. There seems to be no sign of any Summit meeting any time soon.

Meanwhile organizations like BIMSTEC and BBIN have emerged. BIMSTEC comprises SAARC members minus Maldives and Pakistan but has Myanmar and Thailand as members. We have not seen much of its activities except for the usual routine meetings. Myanmar is not quite firm in its footing in the region. It feels closer to ASEAN and is unsure of its role and destiny in aligning with BIMSTEC. Thailand, as a founder member of ASEAN is deeply involved with the organization and is ambivalent of its role in the BIMSTEC. There is no harm to expand cooperation under BIMSTEC but it should not be a substitute for SAARC which has its own usefulness and *raison d'être*. Nepal, as its Chairman, should keep trying to revive SAARC.

BBIN Initiative is a welcome development aimed at water resource management, connectivity of power, transport and infrastructure. The signing of the Motor Vehicles Agreement is a positive move. If the planned projects are taken up and implemented earnestly, it will no doubt help boost trade, transport and water resource management in the region.

Climate Change, Environment, Trade and Other Issues

Climate change and its effect on the environment is a major issue. Global warming and resultant floods, wildfires, drought, erosion in coastal areas cause havoc every year in the affected areas. Rising sea levels threaten the very existence of low lying-regions. For Nepal, the melting of the snow in the Himalayan region, is a matter of grave concern. Increasing pollution in the urban areas has become a universal problem. Greenhouse gas emissions from human activities exacerbate the greenhouse effect, causing climate change. The major polluting countries lack sincere commitment to reduce carbon emissions.

Nepal signed a multi-million dollar agreement with the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility. Under this agreement Nepal can potentially access up to US \$ 45 million by 2025 by protecting forests. Also, Nepal can earn by selling its carbon credit to bigger polluters. These are very complicated and cumbersome matters. Nepal has to improve its skill in carbon trading and strive to make the most out of its Community Forestry achievements.

Trade is another complex and complicated domain which Nepal should understand and learn to navigate through. It must develop its negotiating and bargaining skills to get the most out of its international trading activities.

Foreign employment has been a major source of foreign exchange for Nepal and remittances account for nearly 25% of the national GDP. Remittances will continue to be vital for our national economy for a long time. With the growth of economic activities in the future, Nepal should be able to gradually reduce the number of labor migrants. But for the moment and also for the foreseeable future, Nepal should enhance its diplomatic skill and reach for promoting the welfare and interests of the Nepalese workers abroad.

Natural Disasters and the Pandemic

The earthquake of 2015 devastated Nepal and caused huge loss of life and destruction of thousands upon thousands of houses, schools, temples, bridges and other structures. Friendly countries and international groups were quick to arrive and render help in rescue, relief and rehabilitation work. But there had been several cases of delay and mismanagement in the course of relief work. Nepal should learn from this experience, should such occasions arise, to handle calamities more efficiently in the future.

Covid-19 struck countries far and wide with varying degrees of intensity. Nepal lost 12000 lives due to the pandemic. Although there was some confusion, mismanagement, lack of coordination and even unnecessary delay in procurement procedure due to some vested interests, by and large, Nepal seems to have handled the pandemic in a reasonably satisfactory manner. Having learnt the lesson from the pandemic, they should be better prepared to face such crisis in future.

Conclusion

Nepal should keep its ears to the ground and enhance its capacity to comprehend, interpret and analyse events and trends in the neighbourhood, in the near abroad, in the region and beyond. It should maintain a balanced relationship with both of its neighbours, always being sensitive to both of their security and strategic interests. It should develop relations in the region and beyond in a manner that would safeguard and promote its national interests. Foreign policy with a national consensus will have

more weight abroad. Hence, we should try to have as much of a national consensus as possible in matters relating to our foreign policy.

Foreign relations give shape and content to a country's foreign policy. The vehicle and conduit for foreign relations is diplomacy. We should enhance our diplomatic skill and reach to best suit our national interests and to promote our international image. Consistency and firmness with character, not vacillation, should guide our foreign policy.

(Based on the speech delivered by the author at a program jointly organised by the Centre for South Asian Studies and Centre for Diplomacy and Development on 2 June 2022 in Kathmandu, Nepal.)

A Watershed Moment: Transformative Solutions to Interlocking Challenges



- *Bharat Raj Poudyal¹*

There could have been no better time to deliberate on ‘A watershed moment: transformative solutions to interlocking challenges’, the theme of this year’s General Debate.

We are living indeed in a watershed moment.

- A moment when the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical tensions, inequalities, and climate crisis threaten our pursuit of peace and prosperity;
- A moment when the values of solidarity and cooperation are put to test, with trust and confidence in short supply;
- A moment when humanity is caught between hope and despair, unity and division, and harmony and dissension; and
- A moment, when the world is striving to forge a new consensus amid competing interests, priorities and challenges.

For the third year in a row, COVID-19 continues to add strain to our lives, livelihoods, and economies. But there is a hope. The production and availability of COVID-19 vaccines has minimized the risk and severity of the disease and enhanced our ability to save lives. In Nepal, we have been able to fully vaccinate 96 percent of the target population, with almost everyone receiving at least one dose. We thank our immediate neighbours - India and China, our development partners, and the United Nations System for their valuable support. But this is not the case everywhere. Poor and vulnerable people in many parts of world have still been kept away from the ‘dose of hope.’. The pandemic will not end unless it ends for all people in all countries. We must ensure vaccine equity so that no one is left behind.

¹ *Excerpt from the Statement delivered by Foreign Secretary and Leader of Nepali Delegation at the 77th Session of United Nations General Assembly, New York, (26 Sept., 2022)*

The 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals are at risk. The pandemic has hit hard on our march into the decade of action. This has been followed by cascading crises marked by geopolitical divides, disruption of supply chain, and climate emergency. The resulting high food and fuel price, massive inflation, and debt burden severely hit the limited fiscal capacity of the poorer countries, especially the least developed ones.

All these crises have cumulative negative impact on financing of the SDGs. It is more acute in the countries in special situations like LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS.

As per the pre-pandemic estimate, Nepal would require an average annual investment of 19 billion US dollars to achieve the SDGs. With the shortfall of financing, our hard-earned development gains are at risk at a time we are preparing to graduate from the LDC status by 2026.

However, graduation is our long-held aspiration, and we remain committed to using this opportunity to bring a structural transformation to the national economy. We will do everything possible to make our graduation process smooth, sustainable, and irreversible. For this, we need additional international support in the form of investment, technology transfer, aid for trade, and technical assistance. This is critical for us to recover from the pandemic, rescue the SDGs, and turn global partnership into a reality.

No country can thrive without integration into the global market. The rising tendency towards protectionism and stalled trade negotiation are delaying the much-needed reform in international trading system, which is tipped in favour of some. The poorer countries are yet to benefit from it. We must ensure open, fair, and non-discriminatory transparent trade rules so that all countries can benefit from it. Similarly, the current global financial system has seriously failed the developing world. It is unfair to continue this undemocratic and unresponsive system. We call for the much-needed reform of international financial architecture, for making it inclusive, fair, and equally beneficial to all. The countries under debt stress need urgent debt relief, restructuring, and cancellation. The international community must swiftly help them come out of their debt crises.

In Nepal, we are bearing the disproportionate burden of climate change and facing climate shocks such as frequent landslides, storms, floods, and wildfires. The melting of glaciers and the drying-up of snow-fed rivers have been adversely affecting the lives and livelihoods of people downstream and rendering us one of the most vulnerable countries. Our region recently experienced the heartbreaking loss of lives and properties due to unusually heavy downpours, melting of the glaciers and resulting floods. To combat the climate crisis and address vulnerabilities, we have localized the adaptation plans. While remaining fully committed to the Paris Agreement, we have

set ambitious target of reaching a net-zero emissions by 2045 as announced by the Prime Minister of Nepal Rt. Hon. Mr. Sher Bahadur Deuba during the COP 26. However, climate change is a global problem, and it needs global action. For this, the large emitters – which account for over 80 percent of all global emissions, must take bold steps to keep the 1.5° Celsius climate goal alive. The commitment of 100 billion US dollars of climate financing must turn into a reality. The COP 27 needs to move from pledges into action.

Geopolitical rivalry and fractured system and polarization have pushed global peace and security into peril. The world is becoming more complex with rising transnational challenges such as terrorism, radicalism, extremism, and mass migration.

Today, the world faces the highest number of violent conflicts since 1945, within and between countries, divided by the fault lines of race, religion, ethnicity, and origin. The question that keeps us haunting today is whether enough is being done to protect the people from the scourge of wars, preventing them from happening in the first place. Investment in the prevention of conflicts is more effective than addressing their consequences.

The technological advancement today has the capacity to inflict devastating physical action instantly. And yet, it is appalling to see how our world body gets crippled when it comes to the interplay of interests of the major powers at the Security Council. As our dependence on new technology deepens, the issue of cyber security emerges as one of the greatest challenges that demands our collective resolve to setting norms and building capacity to prevent the threat it poses. We must also put in place the necessary safeguards to curb malicious use of new technologies.

In 2021, global military spending surpassed two trillion US dollars. Countries are chasing an elusive notion of security by leaving behind billions of people hungry, sick, and destitute. Genuine security depends on the ability to address the underlying causes of conflict - poverty, hunger, and unemployment.

Stockpile of nuclear arsenals constitutes perennial threat to humanity. Therefore, elimination of them is the only guarantee of the non-use of these weapons in the future. Nepal reiterates its call for general and complete disarmament of all weapons of mass destruction, including biological, chemical, nuclear and radiological weapons in a time-bound manner.

Nepal opposes the arms race in outer space and emphasizes on the peaceful use of it for the benefit of humankind. As the host of the UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, Nepal continues to support regional disarmament initiatives as building blocks of global disarmament. We remain committed to reviving the Kathmandu Process, which we believe complements global arms control and

disarmament efforts. Nepal condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and calls for an early conclusion of a comprehensive convention against terrorism.

We are deeply concerned about the deaths and suffering of civilians in the war in Ukraine. We call for an urgent cessation of hostilities and violence and urge all concerned parties to exercise maximum restraint and return to the path of dialogue.

Nepal opposes any threat or use of force against the territorial integrity, political independence, and sovereignty of a country under any pretext and circumstance.

Afghanistan has remained on the precipice of uncertainties and violence. The Afghan people are exposed to a shocking level of poverty and humanitarian sufferings. We call that unhindered humanitarian aid and public services including health and education for all sections of the Afghan society must be ensured.

We urge all parties concerned in Myanmar to respect the will of the people to elect their representatives, paving the way to restore the democratic process.

The people in Libya, Syria, and Yemen have been facing hardships and sufferings for long. The concerned parties need to resort to peaceful means of conflict resolution to end the violence and return to peace.

Protracted violence and conflicts continue to inflict pain and suffering on Palestinian and Israeli civilians. Nepal reiterates its long-standing view for a two-state solution, whereby Palestine and Israel live side by side in peace and security within the recognized international borders.

Nepal pursues path of democratic system with people's welfare at the centre. Our democratic process is characterized by people's struggle, sacrifice, dialogue, and resilience.

In May this year, we successfully held democratic elections to the local governments in peaceful, free, and fair manner. We are now set to hold periodic elections for federal parliament and provincial assemblies in November. For a democracy like Nepal, these are much more than just periodic elections. They are the testament to our ability of ensuring peaceful transfer of power. They are the means to enhance people's trust in democracy, promote legitimacy and accountability, and strengthen the rule of law.

The principles of inclusion and participation constitute the core of Nepal's governance system. The Constitution of Nepal guarantees the proportional representation and participation of all sections of our society in national life. It guarantees at least 33 percent representation of women in federal and provincial parliaments and 40 percent at the local level. As a result, the participation of women, youth, and disadvantaged groups has increased significantly in politics and other spheres of national life. It has

not only ensured their rightful place but also injected dynamism, justice, and fairness into society.

Nepal's commitment to human rights is unequivocal. The Constitution of Nepal incorporates universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms. As a member of the Human Rights Council for the second consecutive term, Nepal continues to add value to the work of the Council. Our approach to human rights is firmly grounded in the principles of universality, indivisibility, objectivity, and non-selectivity.

We are committed to concluding the transitional justice process by addressing the concerns of the victims, complying with the directive of the Supreme Court, abiding by the spirit of Comprehensive Peace Accord and our international commitments. Taking this in earnest, the Government of Nepal presented an amendment Bill to the Parliament to reform the related laws.

We uphold the rights of the child as the most sacred obligation of the State with their protection, wellbeing, health, education, and development at the centre.

We attach high importance to the safety, security, dignity, and well-being of migrant workers and emphasize on the effective implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. We also attach high importance on quality education, skills, entrepreneurship and employment to the youth to unleash their potentials for sustained economic development, peace, and prosperity in society.

We recognize the significant role that diaspora can play to bring capital, technology and skills to the country of origin.

Though we are not a party to the Refugee Convention and its Protocol, we have been hosting thousands of refugees on humanitarian grounds. We believe that forced eviction of citizens, anywhere and under any circumstance, is a grave crime. Refugees' right to return to their homeland in safety, honour, and dignity must always be ensured.

The cardinal principle of 'seeing the world as one family' shapes our worldview in external relations. Our foreign policy dwells on the notions of peace, non-violence, and non-aggression, which find their eloquent expression in the teachings of Gautam Buddha, the enlightened son of Nepal.

Nepal enjoys cordial relations with all countries around the world. This is a result of both my country's historical evolution and the friendly nature of our people. Given the goodwill Nepal receives from our friends, we feel it to contribute more for international peace, progress and social justice.

We engage with our neighbours and friends in the international community based on the principles of the UN Charter, non-alignment, *Panchsheel*, international law, and the norms of world peace. We play active roles in SAARC, BIMSTEC and ACD to promote regional cooperation. Our partnership with the UN has been built on the foundation of trust and cooperation.

We firmly believe in multilateralism with the United Nations at its centre. With its unmatched coverage, legitimacy and convening power, the United Nations is the most appropriate forum for promoting global cooperation based on sovereign equality and mutual respect.

Currently the second-largest troops and police contributing country, Nepal has been a consistent contributor to UN peacekeeping for the last six and a half decades. We have deployed our peacekeepers at every call and without caveat, even in difficult situations.

Nepal supports all major initiatives aimed at reforming UN peace operations. We have endorsed the Kigali principles, the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P), and A4P+ initiatives, among others. We have zero-tolerance policy against sexual exploitation and abuse in peace operations.

We condemn the targeted attacks against the blue helmets. Perpetrators of such crimes should be brought to justice.

We believe that countries should have fair share of leadership positions at the headquarters and in the field according to the level and history of their contribution to UN peacekeeping.

Nepal supports UN reform initiatives, including revitalizing the General Assembly and reforming the Security Council, to make it more representative, inclusive, and transparent. We also support reform initiatives based on the Secretary-General's report 'Our Common Agenda'. These endeavours will not produce results unless the Member States take bold and transformative steps to make our organization fit for the future. We must enable the UN to deliver on the needs of the furthest behind first.

To conclude, Mr. President, the decisions we make today will determine what our future will look like. Our choice to act or not to act will have a huge impact on generations to come. Let us look at what opportunities lie ahead of us. Let us give solidarity and cooperation a chance. As a peace-loving country, Nepal remains committed to contributing to our collective efforts of making this world peaceful, prosperous, and equitable.

Can SAARC Survive the Prolonged Stalemate?



- Prof. Dr. Mohan Prasad Lohani¹

Introduction

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation or SAARC, which was launched at Dhaka, Bangladesh in December 1985 after more than five years of intensive preparatory work at the level of foreign secretaries and foreign ministers of the region, opening, thus, a new era of regional cooperation ‘for the promotion of peace and progress, mutual trust and goodwill in South Asia’ was, indeed, an expression of the common desire of South Asian leaders to ‘promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to improve their quality of life.’ SAARC is going to complete 37 years of its existence in December this year.

As a member of the Nepali delegation led by late King Birendra, I recall attending the first SAARC Summit in Dhaka in December 1985. SAARC was launched with a great deal of fanfare and euphoria. The inaugural session, precisely speaking, was like a South Asian festival in which not only heads of state and government, ministers for foreign affairs and senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but also civil society leaders, representatives of the private sector and the media, experts, professionals and the people in general participated enthusiastically, joyfully and on an optimistic note. There were great expectations, and high hopes were pinned on the statements of SAARC leaders, including the summit declaration and program of action.

The agenda of the first SAARC summit was comprehensive and wide-ranging-reforms from poverty alleviation in education and health facilities, addressing environmental issues to collective self-reliance based on partnership for cooperation to expedite the realization of common objectives like regional peace, stability and prosperity. President JR Jayawardane of Sri Lanka compared the newly launched regional association to a boat and urged the leaders seated in the podium in a cheerful mood to

¹ Former Ambassador of Nepal to Bangladesh

avert the possibility of any mutiny on the boat. Nobody missed the message implicit in the mutiny metaphor so insightfully expressed by the late President of Sri Lanka.

Terrorism was an issue of common concern and remains so even today in the region. The third SAARC summit hosted by Nepal in 1987 took up this issue and unanimously adopted SAARC Convention on Suppression of Terrorism and Additional Protocol dealing with the Prevention and Suppression of Financing of Terrorism. The New Delhi summit in 2007 which admitted Afghanistan as the 8th member called for continued collective efforts at the regional level to combat terrorism as most of the region's member states continue to be plagued by terrorist violence resulting in the senseless killing of innocent civilians and widespread destruction of public property. Indo-Pak relations became further strained after terrorist attacks in Mumbai, India in 2008 killed nearly 200 innocent people.

More than three decades and a half have elapsed since the first SAARC summit. SAARC's activities and its evolution over the years, including achievements and pitfalls have been critically reviewed, examined and analyzed by South Asian scholars, thinkers and academics through their research-based articles, write-ups and thematic papers. Y.N. Khanal, doyen of Nepal's foreign policy, speaking at a seminar in 1987, two years after the first SAARC summit, reviews this period critically and with insight:

‘Though one may argue that SAARC being only two years old, can be viewed in terms of more prospect and less retrospect, the current seminar is a timely exercise. In about a month or two, the third summit of the South Asian heads of state and government is taking place in Kathmandu. Since May 1980 when President Ziaur Rahman first wrote to the South Asian leaders on the subject, cautious progress has been made regarding both the areas of cooperation identified and the institutionalization of the cooperative grouping. Efforts are afoot in appropriate organs of the Association to explore further areas of cooperation. By November we will have completed almost two years, even after the formal launching of the Association at the Dhaka summit in December 1985 with its charter and the various hierarchical organs of operation ranging from the summit meeting through the council of ministers to the standing committee of the foreign secretaries. SAARC is a promising but difficult undertaking.’

The last sentence of the somewhat lengthy paragraph quoted above has two significant words – promising and difficult. While welcoming the launching of the Association with a lot of promise for regional peace, prosperity and stability, Prof. Khanal very tersely describes the undertaking as ‘difficult’, as he was fully aware of continued tension in Indo-Pak relations ever since the partition of Indian sub-continent in 1947 just after both India and Pakistan gained independence. The latter, in particular, retained its identity as a new-born country with Muslim dominant population.

In an overview of SAARC written immediately after the fifth SAARC summit at Male in 1990, late Prof. Khanal's observation is more straightforward and unambiguous: 'A suppressed strain of unease about bilateral relations ran subconsciously through the meeting. Given the state of the region, no spectacular progress was expected but it needs to be stated that the impact of progress so far made in cooperative as distinct from competitive regional polity has remained insignificant.' The outcome of the summit in terms of regional cooperation was dismissed as insignificant.

Needless to point out, the centrality of India in SAARC has been pointed out and emphasized by several scholars and experts. In a paper presented at the National Seminar organized by the Institute of Foreign Affairs held on August 20-21, 1999 in Kathmandu, eminent economist Dr. Yuba Raj Khatiwada, commenting on how SAARC as a regional organization can achieve success, makes the following frank observation: 'The success of SAARC as a regional organization for mutual cooperation and development is contingent upon India's initiatives to promote a cooperative atmosphere in South Asia. In view of its pervasively dominating position in South Asia, it has to be realized that India constitutes the core while all its neighbors form a periphery of the South Asian region, and often regional organizations are built around dominant core states.'

SAARC is different from other regional organizations in the sense that the SAARC Charter categorically states all decisions in the process are to be taken on the basis of unanimity, contentious and bilateral issues shall be excluded from the formal SAARC deliberations. Sri Lanka host to the 5th summit in 1989 declined to hold it on the ground that Indian troops known as Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) stationed in Sri Lanka to quell the Tamil Tigers had not left this island country despite the ultimatum issued to the IPKF by then President Premadasa. Nepal, concerned over Premadasa's refusal to host the 5th SAARC summit, instructed me as I was concurrently accredited to Sri Lanka as ambassador to call upon President Premadasa and persuade him to go ahead with the summit. As special envoy when I met Premadasa and conveyed to him Nepal's position requesting him to abide by the Charter provision to exclude 'contentious bilateral disputes' from the summit, the President of Sri Lanka furiously told me that it was impossible for him to host the summit as his country was under foreign occupation with its sovereign status at stake or in question. Sri Lanka's refusal to host the summit was communicated by me to Nepal with the result that Male agreed to host the 5th summit in 1990. The fact that Colombo withdrew from the summit by not hosting it in 1989 because of differences with India over the continued presence of Indian army did not bode well for uninterrupted SAARC summits in the years to come.

Nepal which was to have hosted the 11th SAARC Summit in 1999 could not do so because of the Kargil war in Kashmir leading to strained Indo-Pak relations. Nepal had to wait for 3 years and a half before the 11th summit was held in Kathmandu in 2002. Because of embittered relations between India and Pakistan, Gen. Parvez Musharraf, President of Pakistan, was not allowed to overfly from Indian air space and he had to take a circuitous route via Beijing to attend the Kathmandu summit. During the last 3 decades and a half, only 18 summits have been held, despite agreement on organizing regular annual summit.

Deadlock in SAARC Summit

The practice of holding SAARC summit annually attended by 8 member states was discontinued after the 18th summit hosted by Nepal in 2014 decided to request Pakistan, in alphabetical order, to host the 19th summit in Islamabad in 2016. Pakistan had communicated to all its member states its readiness to host the 19th summit in Islamabad with adequate preparations and necessary arrangements. There was a setback when India refused to attend the 19th summit as a sizable number of its soldiers stationed in Kashmir were killed by terrorists allegedly aided and abetted by Pakistan. Pakistan has continued to deny outright its involvement in the killing of Indian soldiers. The 19th summit scheduled to take place in Islamabad in November 2016 has been indefinitely postponed giving rise to speculation and fears that SAARC's future is bleak, uncertain and the association itself is vulnerable to unceremonious collapse. SAARC has no doubt remained in a state of coma or limbo for more than six years, despite current SAARC chair Nepal's appeal to member states to bring SAARC back to life as a vibrant regional platform for dealing with all issues of regional interest and concern.

It has been suggested by SAARC observers, including Mr. YK Silwal and Mr. Arjun B. Thapa, secretaries-general of SAARC representing Nepal that Nepal's leadership as SAARC chair is crucial to revitalize this regional organization with enormous potential to thrash out existing problems and emerging challenges within a regional framework. Friends of SAARC who want to see this organization playing a decisive role in regional affairs are of the view that Nepal should send a special envoy at a high level to all SAARC capitals to impress upon them the necessity of keeping SAARC alive and active so that it would resume its activities as envisaged in the Charter, including declarations and programs of action adopted by 18 summits.

A senior Nepali diplomat who has also represented the country as director in the SAARC secretariat told me recently that one fails to understand why India and Pakistan cannot use the SAARC forum for dialogue while they continue to sit face to face across the table as members of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). This is really baffling to all member states.

The evolution of SAARC over the years cannot be dismissed as being insignificant, despite setbacks from time to time threatening the sustainability of this regional organization. Scholars like Lok Raj Baral and Shreedhar Khatri look at SAARC in a positive spirit. While Baral observes: ‘the South Asian region needs to be revisited by scholars and policy planners in order to boost the spirit of regional cooperation’, Khatri gives primacy to the people of the region in the following statement: ‘An essential ingredient for a vision of South Asia for the Third Decade is the people of the region.’ In fairness to SAARC and its relevance, it must be stated that SAARC, since its inception, has positively contributed to a resurgence of South Asian consciousness over the years. Assertion of a South Asian identity is the outcome of such consciousness. People-to-people contacts or connectivity is a recurring constant in all the SAARC summits (1985-2014). While inter-governmental meetings and agreements do facilitate the process of regional cooperation, for a much wider and more effective impact of such cooperation, it is essential to supplement inter-governmental efforts by responding to the aspirations of the peoples of South Asia, particularly their spontaneous desire to communicate and cooperate with each other at the people-to-people level.

An important decision of the 18th SAARC summit hosted by Nepal in 2014 was the positive response of all member states to promoting and accelerating regional cooperation in the energy sector. The implementation aspect of such cooperation has, however, remained disappointing as former secretary Dwarika Nath Dhungel observes critically:

‘The SAARC in general, in particular its framework on energy agreed and signed in 2014 by all SAARC members has remained in paper only, mainly for obvious reason i.e. the state of relationship between India and Pakistan. So long as the relationship between these two countries remains strained, SAARC and its framework are not going to bear fruit. Furthermore, India seems to be more interested to look towards east and use the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) as a more useful vehicle. But in view of the fact that SAARC as a regional organization has so far not succeeded due to historical legacy, such as India-Pakistan relationship, we will have to wait for some years to judge whether or not BIMSTEC is a useful mechanism to foster the cooperative economic relationship among its member countries.’ Implementation of programs of action already agreed upon in previous SAARC summit declarations and other decisions is a challenge to the effectiveness of this regional association. Emphasis on the needed impetus for the effective implementation of decisions and programmes of action approved during the previous summits comes out clearly in the following terse statement of the 14th Summit Declaration: ‘ There is an urgent need to move SAARC from declaratory to implementation phase.’

Conclusion

The prolonged stalemate should not and cannot be allowed to continue for long. It goes without saying that revitalizing SAARC is in the interest of all member states. As former SAARC secretary-general YK Silwal categorically states: SAARC has come to stay and both India and Pakistan need it. One of the key objectives of SAARC, as enshrined in its Charter, has been to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region and to provide all individuals the opportunity to live in dignity and to realize their full potentials.’ The objective is as relevant today as it was three and a half decades ago when the Association was formally established.

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Furthering Discourse on Hydro Diplomacy



- Dr. Rambhakta PB Thakur¹

Nepal is one of the richest nations in hydropower potentiality estimated at 83,000 MW in total. It is no wonder that water resources have been considered as white gold for Nepal. But, unfortunately, it has never been properly harnessed or exploited for wellbeing of the people or the development of the nation. As in Greece, long back 2,000 years ago, water resources had been traditionally used as a kinetic energy. Hydro means water in Greek. We had also the same type of hydropower used in the traditional ‘Ghatta’ (wooden wheel) in ancient Nepal.

Now, we are talking to convert the kinetic energy into electro-mechanical energy. In the history, it was only in 1882 that the first hydro plant was built in Wisconsin, USA. Nepal remained not very far in adopting the modern technology in those days. In Nepal, the first hydropower plant (50 KW) was established at Pharping in 1911, just 29 years after the world’s first plant was installed, during the Rana Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher's regime. We were the second in Asia in this transformation of energy. In those days, China took to this technology after us.

In the world today, the highest producers of hydro power are Canada, US, Brazil, China, Russia and Norway. Among the various countries, Canada ranks first in the production of hydropower as it has abundant water resources like Nepal.

After the establishment of the first hydro power in Pharping in 1911, the second hydropower plant (840 KW) was established in Sundarikal in 1936 and many more small scale power plants were installed here and there without any serious study or planning. Nepal has not been able to tap even one percent of its potential electricity capacity and as of 2019 about 30% of Nepal’s population is still deprived of grid-connected electricity. Right from the First Five Year Plan (1956-61) till today, many projects have been progressively launched through aid, loan, FDI and mixed investments with private and public (internal and external sources). These include Panauti plant (2400 KW), Trisuli plant (24000 KW), Kulekhani I (60 MW), Kulekhani II (32 MW), Gandak Plant (15 MW), Upper Tamakoshi (456 MW), Kali Gandaki (144 MW), Upper Tama Koshi (456 MW), Bhote Koshi (45 MW) etc. Those big

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projects in various phases of development include Chameli (30 MW), Budhi Gandaki (1200 MW), Upper Karnali (900 MW). Likewise, currently there are 124 projects in operation and another 244 projects have obtained licences for construction.

Growing demand for clean energy in india provides greater possibility to sell electricity across the border. Mutual understanding and cooperation for mutual benefits is the way forward towards this goal. Last fiscal year, Nepal was able to sell near about Rs. 4 billions worth of electricity. In the coming days, manifold rise in power expert will become an important tool to reduce the exalating trade deficit with India. Similarly, Bangladesh is also a power deficit country. With Bangladesh, there is an agreement signed to sell 50 MW and they are ready to make Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with Upper Karnali. Bangladesh is also ready to sign an investment modality of Sunkoshi-3. Demand for our electricity is so high in Bangladesh that Nepal may feel difficulty in fulfilling it. China, in the north is eager to develop the cooperation in the electricity transmission line to Tibet and to develop investment modality in this field as it is a reliable and cheaper supply to them. Climate change, global warming due to GHC emissions and increase in the numbers of disasters are the factors attracting all neighbors towards clean and green power such as hydroelectricity.

No doubt, Nepal has tremendous potentiality of hydroelectricity generation. For realizing it, billions of US dollars loans and/or foreign direct investment makes sense as there is a vast market in India and Bangladesh, even if we exclude China for the time being. However, the fluctuation in buying rate, undeserved restrictions in the Indian market unforeseen hindrances in smooth handling the deals, are still big challenges for Nepal to expedite the cross-border transmission of power. Power supply through India to Bangladesh could face even more challenges. On the other hand, failure in the payment of the cost of capital and accrued interest would fall as a big burden on Nepal (on loan-funded projects) if there is a faltering market demand from India and Bangladesh. There are many areas of policy adjustment and operational anomalies to be considered and addressed. If politics supersedes economics, for no reasons friction may arise in the utilization of generated power for unclean reasons and interests.

Increased production of power grid connectivity and cross border trade of power among the South Asian countries could help realize our common goal of prosperity and wellbeing.

With all these ideas in mind, AFCAN organized a Talk Program on “Energy Diplomacy: With Special reference toneighbouring India, Bangladesh and China”. Er. Kulman Ghising, Managing Director of Nepal Electricity Authority made the keynote presentation in an elaborate manner, and two reputed commentators Mr. Dipak Gyawali, former Minister of Water Resources and Mr. Surya Nath Upadhyay, former Secretary of Water Resource Ministry made comments on the presentation. Both the commentaters are experts on water resources and have contributed their

thoughts through many journals, and talk programs. They have much more practical knowledge on the subject such as demand, supply, market, existing challenges, political interferences, dominance and common accessibility for smooth trade-bilateral and regional. Market and trade rules must not become a victim of the political courses. The golden rule of trade should be respected by all parties. Let us share the views of the experts on available opportunity for boom in water resources utilization for common and equitable benefit and minimization of potential risks and adversities.

There is a scholarly discussion on the energy diplomacy of Nepal with reference to India, Bangladesh and China in the attached paper.

In the midst of growing threats of climate change and pollution, the importance of green energy such as hydropower has been increasing by leaps and bound to fuel rapid economic development of the world, and at the same time, reducing the catastrophic consequences of climate change. Against this odd, we can realize our own regional potential for effective utilization of higher proportion of green energy through deft handling of South Asian energy diplomacy and avoiding any conflicts or hurdles that may arise in power generation, transmission and ultimate consumption.

AFCAN Seminar on Hydro Diplomacy- A Summary of the Proceedings

AFCAN organized a seminar on Diplomacy on Water Resources on 25 July 2022.

1. Opening Remarks

Dr. Ram Bhakta Thakur gave the opening remarks regarding the purpose of organizing the Talk Program.

- Since we are in the state of self-sufficiency in national energy and have started seasonal export of electricity to India, its high time we start thinking about the newly realized export opportunities as well as challenges. Similar potential and challenges lie with export in Bangladesh and China.
- In Jestha alone we earned Rs. 1.8 billion in 28 days from selling electricity to India. What is our potential in future? What are our future prospects?
- As a nationalist, we all think about the betterment of our Nation. We lived our life as seekers, we hope our coming generation will live their life as lenders.
- How do we drive our nation through the current policy crisis, corruption, lack of technical prospects, lack of discipline, lack of funds and finance associated short coming? It's time to think.
- We have a shortfall of proper policy. We give licenses to countries/companies for study and development of projects. However, we shif from one country to another over the course of time. We need a consistent and coherent energy policy.
- Welcome all!

2. Presentation by Mr. Kulman Ghising

2.1. Overall Energy Scenario of Nepal

- Mr. Ghising was pleased to share his experiences and the present scenario of energy sector in Nepal so that it would be helpful for advancing energy diplomacy and relevant policy formulation.
- Hydropower is the main source of energy in Nepal, Other sources of energy have not been explored much.

- As per the white paper formulated by MOEWRI 2075, we have conceived a mix generation policy, including ROR, PROR, Storage and Solar Projects.
- We are going to meet the ROR and PROR targets. Similarly, we are also progressing well with the solar projects development, but we are lagging in storage type project development
- During 2017/2018, total installed capacity of hydropower in Nepal was 1074 MW. It has reached to 2190 MW in 2021/2022 and is projected to reach 3000 MW at the end of 2022/2023.
- The total energy demand (neither optimistic/ nor pessimistic simulation) forecasted in 2021/22 was 10,038 GWh (1,763 MW), which was approximately realized in real.
- Similarly, the projected 2029/2030 energy consumption is 23590 GWh (4143 MW, optimistically can go up to 6000 MW)
- Currently, 2190 MW projects are under operation and 3289 MW projects are under construction. Besides these, 1553 MW projects are at various stages of study currently. Hence, 7032 MW projects are in one or other form of development by NEA, NEA's subsidiary companies and Independent Power Producers (IPPs) currently.
- Following is the list of hydropower projects under study and development by different entities in Nepal:
 - Total PPAs Signed for IPPs' Power Projects: 357 (6,366 MW)
 - Hydropower projects under development by NEA/Subsidiary companies: 2557 MW
 - Hydropower projects under development by GON/IBN: 4950 MW
 - Hydropower projects under study by BKSHPL/VUCL/HIDCL: 2032 MW
 - Projects under development by SJVN, INDIA: 2079 MW (Indicative Capacity)

Total projects under different stages of development: 27,780 MW

- Having Looked at the latest data provided by the DOED, a total of approximately 32, 000 MW license has been distributed and the projects are under various stages of study and development. Out of this 30, 600 MW license relates to hydropower (5,000 reservoir+25,000 RoR and PRoR) and 600 MW relates to solar.
- Almost all the river licenses have been occupied and covered in map. Hence, it could be concluded that ROR an PROR schemes will be contained within 25000-30000 MW in Nepal.

- Nepal adopted Q40 design (Asar, Sawan Bhadau, Asoj and Kartik). However, Indian have design at Q25 (Arun 3, Upper Karnali) looking at the Indian market energy needs. Reducing the percentage availability discharge this lead to almost double the capacity (Asar, Sawan, Bhadau). Hence considering export demand, the change in policy is required so as to harvest the optimum energy from the available water resources and NEA is looking forward for this plausible change in design policy.
- In 2022 alone, there has been a tremendous growth in electricity availability and domestic consumption. While the electricity availability has increased by 22.7 %, the domestic consumption has increased by 19.15%. Similar increasing trend in export has also been seen.
- After the project Tamakoshi, NEA Subsidiary Company energy has increased substantially.
- In 2022, from December to April import of approximately 200 MW is required in peak time. With maximum peak import estimated to be 249 MW.
- With 754 GWh as the total import in dry months and 3790 MW as the surplus energy, it has been estimated that a net export of 3036 GWh will be made in 2022/2023
- By 2024/25, our dry season import has been estimated to reduce to nil
- Export has facilitated us to make our load curve flat.
- As energy demand in night gets reduced, NEA has been providing electricity to domestic industries at Rs 4.50 per unit during night so as to encourage higher industrial consumption at night. However, adjustment is needed in the rise of export possibility and higher tariff during night compared to day. This has changed the context of energy pricing.

2.2. Cross Boarder Trading

2.2.1. India

- Since 1992 after the formation of Power Exchange Committee (PEC), Nepal has been importing electricity from Bihar, UP and Uttarakhand using 132, 33 and 11 KV lines.
- NEA has been importing using Short Term Bilateral Annual Contracts from PTC since 2008 and NVVN since 2016.
- Since 2008 NEA and PTC using Dhalkebar Muzaffarpur 400 KV Line.
- Since 2016 NEA and NVVN using Tanakpur-Mahendra Nagar Transmission Line, 132 KV.
- Currently there are different kind of markets in India. Like Term Ahead Market, Real Time Market and Day Ahead Market.

- Access to Real Time and Term Ahead Market has been requested and positive response has been received.
- Currently, Nepal has been importing and exporting through NNVN using Day Ahead Market (bid every day) using 400 KV DM and 132 TM transmission lines.

2.2.2. Bangladesh

- 20, 000 MW energy generation capacity
- Unlike in Nepal. Bangladesh has a low demand in dry months: Poush, Magh, Fagun
- Main source of energy is Gas (60 %)
- Thermal plant is in addition (Japanese and Chinese investment)
- Capacity of Hydro is only 250 MW
- Due to high cost associated with land acquisition, they are reluctant to opt for solar energy.
- They do have diesel plants.
- As electricity rate is heavily subsidized to promote industries BPDB is in loss. Their energy production is based on imported fossil fuel (gas and coal). Hence, they have stated in their policy paper that they will buy 9,000 MW from Nepal by 2040 and are also requesting India to let them buy from Bhutan.

2.2.3. China

- Secretary level energy meeting had been held out for the first time with China.
- There are two possibility of grid connection between China and Nepal namely: Kerung-Lhasa grid connection and Kimathanka-Shigatse Grid Connection.
- As per the MOU signed during the KP Oli administration for the development of Cross-Boarder Transmission Line, design of transmission line including EIA for 75 km long 400 KV transmission line from Ratomate to Rasuwagadhi to be constructed in Nepal side has been almost finished.
- The Chinese Government is responsible for the construction of 700/800 km long Lhasa - Jherung 500 KV transmission line. However, proactive involvement and initiation from Chinese part is lacking.
- Nepal being only a stretch of 200 km (N-S) and as all the South Asia Region's electricity is in a state of being interconnected with each other, this wider connectivity will lead to long-run benefit for China too.
- China has approximately 5 lakhs MW installed hydro capacity.
- The total installed capacity (energy as whole) of China is 20 Lakhs MW.
- As per 2017/2018, per capita consumption of China and India is 4475 KWh and 1122 KWh respectively

2.3. Policy Perspective

2.3.1. Government of Nepal

- MOEWRI has appointed NEA on 2076/11/16 (February 28, 2020) as the Authority to coordinate with DA of India on the issues including planning, grid operations and electricity transactions.
- GoN has granted prior approval to NEA on 2077/04/05 (July 20, 2020) for all types of power trading with India and Bangladesh.
- GoN has issued the first trading license to Nepal Power Trading Company (NPTC), NEA's subsidiary, to trade power in domestic and cross border market on 2078/10/02 (January 16, 2022).
- Formation of Nepal Power Trade Company (NPTC), NEA's subsidiary company, to trade power in domestic and cross-boarder markets.
- MOEWRI has been formulating guidelines/procedures for cross-border power trading and power trading licenses
- New Electricity Act that acknowledges power trading as a distinct business is under the parliamentary consideration for approval.

2.3.2. Government of India

- Government of India issued guidelines for import/export (cross-border) of electricity on December 18, 2018.
- CERC, India issued associated regulations on March 8, 2019.
- CEA issued associated Procedures of Designated Authority on February 26, 2021

2.4. Progress Made in Transmission Line Till Date

Beside the existing interconnections and their upgrades, new cross boarder high-capacity transmission lines are being constructed. The details of the cross-border transmission line and their current state are tabulated in table below.

Time-frame	Nepal-India Cross-Border Interconnections
Existing	Muzaffarpur-Dhalkebar 400kV D/c (Twin) line
Apr 23	Sitamarhi-dhalkebar 400kV D/c (Quad) line: being constructed by M/s SAPDC (developer of Arun-3 HED)
2025-26	Gorakhpur-New Butwal 400kV D/c (Quad) line: being constructed by JV of NEA and POWERGRID
2026-27	Purnea (New)-Inaruwa 400kV D/c (Quad) line
2027-28	Bareilly-Lumki (Dododhara) 400kV D/c (Quad) line

To support these cross-border interconnections, 400 kV backbone lines within Nepal are under implementation with support from WB, ADB and MCC

New Butwal-Gorakhpur TL:

- GoN granted approval (Cabinet level) for investment on Indian portion of New Butwal – Gorakhpur 400 kV TL through 50:50 JV Company between NEA and POWERGRID on August 3, 2021.
- NEA and POWERGRID signed the Joint Venture & Share Holders’ Agreement at New Delhi, India on September 8, 2021.
- PGCIL issued tender on July 9, 2022 for the construction of Indian side of New Butwal – Gorakhpur Transmission Line.
- The joint venture company incorporation is under process.

2.5. Challenges Ahead

- Daily and Seasonal variation of supply and demand.
- Transmission line construction within and across the country. Issues related to tree cutting, land acquisition and environmental clearances.
- Surplus energy management.
- Domestic transmission and distribution infrastructure.
- Cross border market availability.
- Strong grid connectivity for grid stability.
- Strong political commitment to implement the decisions made.
- Availability of required investment.
- Seamless access to all types of energy market.
- Cost of generation and transmission.
- Geopolitical context.
- River basin master plan are being affected by other infrastructure projects such as roads, town development.
- Limited Hydro resources should be utilized optimally and at the earliest possible: ROR, PROR, Reservoir and Pump Storage.

2.6. Opportunities

- To fulfill COP26 commitment (India carbon neutral by 2070, Nepal carbon neutral by 2045), hydro resources will prove to be crucial both for Nepal and South Asia.
- Nepal can meet the target before if we focus on hydro generation and energy transition from fossil fuels to electric and hydrogen fuel.
- Nepal’s hydro can become the region’s battery storage if we develop it properly.

- Hydro can complement other renewable resources such as solar and wind in renewable mix.
- Carbon trade can be another source of income for Nepal in future.
- Establishment of data centers (a single large-sized data center can consume 500/600 MW).
- Increase electricity consumption by electricity transition.
- Induction.
- Industrial electrification (Boilers, Brick Factory, Mines, Iron Blades).
- Electric cars.
- Establishment of sessional industries.
- Electrification to all.

2.7. Comments from Commentator

2.7.1. Suryanath Upadhyaya

- It's high time NEA has an institutional clearance. At present it is responsible for energy production, selling, purchasing and transferring energy. There is a need of backing institution to aid this process. This might be achieved either by forming a new institution or by fragmenting the NEA to specialize in each of the topics mentioned above.
- If we are talking about increasing rapid energy production, we need to ease the process with policy reforms. Environment-related issues and provisions, land acquisition issues and provision need to be reformed. Fragmentation, demarcation, classification of land might be very helpful in land acquisition process so as to expedite the construction-related issues being faced currently.
- Project development is an interdisciplinary process. Clearance about responsibilities and rights amongst the stakeholders involved will prove beneficial. Currently, ministerial understandings between different ministries are not observed and hence delays in construction are evident.
- Water resources should not be misunderstood only as hydropower/electricity. Multiple uses of water should be holistically considered. Unforeseen benefits that a dam construction brings downstream (from flood control, irrigation, other multiple use) should be quantified and negotiators, diplomats, policy experts should have clarity about their stand and be able to negotiate holistically with the Southern Alliances.
- ROR, PRoR and Storage projects should have different but integrated policies.
- Electricity and Water resources Acts formulated in 2049 is still followed. Time based updates and reforms has to be carried out.

2.7.2. Mr. Deepak Gyawali

- India pursues a dominant foreign policy based on the analysis of Intelligence Bureau when it comes to water and energy. We have a ministry of water resources and foreign ministry but our foreign ministry has a very weak presence in water-related diplomatic discussion. Our foreign policy & diplomacy needs a revamp to strengthen negotiating capability.
- Our policy-making has been distorted.
- We even don't know what benefits us and what we want.
- China is not interested in our projects and importing our energy. They are interested in making money they are not letting us make money. They want to sell equipment and take the construction contracts.
- We should clearly understand that India is more interested in our water use than our electricity. They have nuclear power, thermal power and other sources for electricity production. They are more interested in using our water to irrigating the vast land of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.
- We should focus in using hydro for nation-building not for exporting. 6 cent per unit achieved by selling the hydropower energy, if invested wisely, would provide a 86 cent product. By selling energy to India, we will be losing the opportunity to generate 86 cents from the same energy.
- Since India has a tremendous energy consumption capacity in itself, India will not let this cheap electricity sell to Bangladesh. What do our diplomats have to say about this? Have they thought of this?
- We are talking as if we are producing electricity not for our nation-building but rather building other countries. This is our shortcoming! Where will this lead us?

2.8. Comments from the Floor

2.8.1. Dr. Sambharam Simkhada

- Energy sector is the principal pillar for Nepal's development.
- The problem with Nepalese diplomats is that they are not clear themselves. Hence how will they present to others?
- Is the projection for 2029/2030 (4143 MW) based on internal consumption or export-based projection? This clarity is critical. Has the policy clarity been reflected in this projection? What is our policy? To export or to consume internally?
- Nepal will lead into environmental/ ecological disaster in next 10 years because of haphazard development (Dozer Development).

- Is there synchronization between overall national development and hydro development? Else all the plants for hydro development (both internal and export) will be overlapped with the hydro development and this will lead to resources wastage. For example, the best site for the reservoir construction might get hindered by rapid settlements. Hence synchronization with national development is a must.
- It is good to maintain good relations with Bangladesh and Tibet. However, India has so much energy consuming capacity that in terms of energy selling and based on practical experiences gained so far, only selling energy to India could be overwhelm us. The only thing that we need is to have a strong negotiating capacity.

2.8.2. Mr. Lilamani Poudel

- Koshi, Gandaki, and Mahakali were unfortunate agreements for Nepal. Territory in Nepal gets inundated and India gets all the benefits (irrigation and flood controls).
- Koshi barrage has been agreed for 200 years, they have the operation control, Nepal has no control at all. By doing these agreements, we lost our water ownership.
- At least projects mentioned above were based on government initiatives and inter-governmental involvement. In case of Upper Karnali, the MOU has been done with a Mauritius-based company (not Indian Government). We even do not know where to contact them if they leave Nepal.
- Hence, in case of Chisapani and Chatara Dam, let's learn from our previous mistakes and quantify the benefits from flood control, irrigation and other added benefits on the Indian side and the loss due to dam construction on Nepal side (loss of agricultural land, food production and settlement area, etc.) before sitting for negotiation. Our concentration should not be only in power production but also in benefits sharing with India from dam construction in Nepal. If we don't get wise enough and learn from past mistakes, our only strength and resources (water resource) will be lost.
- Irrigation from high dam construction yields 5 times added benefits compared to benefits from electricity. Hence, only targeting free electricity from project construction and letting India control our water will never let Nepal grow and is not in favor of Nepal. Policy makers should be clear about this.
- If only India shares the benefits from flood control and increment in agricultural yields from irrigating hectares of land then only Nepal should be ready for dam construction, or else it's not in favor of Nepal.
- Three Gorges Dam in China (the biggest hydropower in the world) was principally a flood control measures adopted to save the downstream of Yellow river. Electricity generated is a byproduct. We should learn from Three Gorges while

constructing Budi Gandaki dam. If, the water from the Budigandaki Reservoir is utilized to the fullest to irrigate the plains of Chitwan and Nawalparasi, we should invest in the dam project.

- No power is better than expensive power. We should not invest by taking loans in Budigandaki by taking 90 billion rupees loans just for power.

2.8.3. Mr. Bansidhar Mishra

- European Union has asked Bangladesh to go for green energy. They might not use the garment produced from fossil fuel electricity (carbon emission)
- Hence, they are in need of green energy and looking for possibility of energy import from Bhutan and Nepal.
- They are ready for both investment and purchase.
- Nepal should focus on internal consumption too. Nepal's development is not possible with train construction. Construction of east west and north south railways will create a market for internal consumption.

2.8.4. Mr. Bhagirath Basnet

- We only discussed about selling electricity, but didn't talk about water utilization.
- We should also explore about energy production prospects using other sources (wind, solar helium, nuclear) besides hydropower.

2.8.5. Mr. Pradhumna Bikram Shah

- Installed Capacity of Brazil is 1,14,000 MW and the total feasible energy production capacity is 3,00,000 MW.
- Nepal is in 43rd place, not 2nd in terms of Water Resources.
- Brazil had shown interest in developing lower Arun (Arun 4). Since Upstream Arun 3 was studied as Peaking Project, Brazil had asked for time to study the impact of the upstream project in lower Arun (ROR).
- However, recently this project was provided to India for development. This has caused misunderstanding with Brazil.
- For developing Pancheswor project, Nepal could learn from the experience from Itaipu Dam projected constructed on the boarder of Brazil and Paraguay.
- The Panchewor Project development was signed in 1996. However, till date not even a DPR has been carried out. This shows that India is not willing to develop the project. It is interested in Nepal's water and has been utilizing it since long time.

Practical Aspects of Diplomatic Code of Conduct in Nepal



Bhagirath Basnet¹

The Diplomatic Code of Conduct carries ethics, dignities and values beyond formal courtesies. Its evolution across the globe reveals a significant history of struggles for unbiased respect established by international conventions. In the past, diplomats often received bad treatments from host countries. The matter became really serious in 1709, when a Russian envoy was treated badly in London. It resulted into the accordance of diplomatic immunities to foreign ambassadors by the British Parliament. Later, other European countries also offered similar protections to diplomats. Such protections survived World War I and II, although they have been breached in many instances.

In 1850, when Jung Bahadur Rana, then prime minister of Nepal paid a state visit to the United Kingdom, he was treated badly at Southampton, England. Jung Bahadur was asked by a customs officer to open his baggage. Prime Minister Rana immediately reacted threatening to cancel his visit. The issue subsided later, when the officer took his words back and apologized for that matter. These are just an example to remind readers the values associated with the diplomatic code of conduct.

The voices on the diplomatic conduct for the first time were formalized internationally in the Congress of Vienna in 1815. Following the congress, the Convention regarding Diplomatic Officers in 1928 in Havana, offered the ground rules for diplomatic conducts. A more comprehensive version was drafted in 1961 by the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations that came into effect since 1964. Consular staffs who carry out support functions are also covered by the Vienna Convention and offered fewer immunities and privileges.

Overtime, the format and practice of diplomatic mission changed. In old times, envoys used to be highly senior persons on a visit to foreign capitals with a political message from their sovereigns and used to have the opportunity to convey the message directly to their master's counterparts. The envoys were accompanied with a small number of support staff and the visit lasted for a few days. With the rise of global connectivity, the international relationships have broadened in many aspects. The old practices

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of high-level diplomatic visits are replaced by permanent diplomatic missions across countries. Several levels of diplomatic staff in large numbers are posted for diplomatic missions to handle different aspects of relations. This establishes culture of professionally-trained and educated diplomats in the mission to handle complex and sophisticated relationships. The host countries also reciprocate with diplomatic immunities, freedom and tax-free privileges. Host countries may extend more privileges, immunities, if they wish; some of them offer such extras out of politeness or lack of system, and others do so based on their special relations or on reciprocity.

One of the fundamental functions of diplomats, despite added scope of the diplomatic mission, is to resolve problems between the two countries through cordial meetings. Generally, strict protocols are maintained during such meetings. However, ambassadors have to contend with meeting with junior officials and junior ministers. For example, ambassadors in the United Kingdom seldom get an appointment to meet the foreign secretary, let alone prime minister. In the United States, foreign ambassadors seldom meet with the secretary of state. The same rule holds good in China, Germany, Belgium and other countries. Even in many other Asian and Latin American countries, such diplomatic protocols and restrictions are largely observed. Ambassadors meet senior ministers and officials of host countries only informally on social occasions, such as group meetings or national day receptions. In general, meeting with senior officials and policy makers is a rare exception, unless under special provision.

However, the practices of Nepal-based diplomatic missions do not conform to the international practices. I think no one will disagree with me if I state the foreign diplomats in Nepal are enjoying privileges of generous immunities and also getting unfettered access to prime ministers, senior ministers, political leaderships, and officials without reciprocity or special relations in returns. In Nepal, crimes committed by foreign diplomats get seldom investigated, and these representatives are seldom held accountable for breaching host country laws and rules. The diplomats often get unrestricted access to political leaders and senior policy-makers and freedom to advise and criticize Nepal government, something their counterparts in the respective nations cannot even contemplate.

For instance, foreign ambassadors in Kathmandu can walk into the offices of the prime minister, foreign minister and any senior government officials in short notice. They can call the heads of state and high ranked government officials directly and set up appointments. Surprisingly, Nepalese policy makers too eagerly wait for such opportunities to meet, dine and chat with ambassadors.

Recently, once most of the results of the general election 2022 was out, Indian Ambassador met with the then Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and current Prime Minister Prachanda. The meeting mainly focused on the formation of new government in Nepal. The news was widely carried out by major media.

Many independent critics claim such dealings are often in exchange of political interests and personal interests such as foreign trips, scholarships and visa to their family or supporters. One of the reasons for such accusation is such meetings never follow diplomatic protocols and the contents of such meetings are not put in record. Another aspect is, politicians and ministers from same party often hold conflicting views on many aspects of Nepal's foreign policy. For example, Nepal professes one-China policy but there are instances of some ministers participating openly in a pro-Tibet program. One minister shows commitment towards the International Criminal Court treaty in one forum, another government minister from the same political party argues against the treaty in another forum.

Although the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been charged with the management of foreign relations and diplomacy under the Nepal Government (Allocation of Business) Rules-2064, it has not been able to carry out its functions properly. There are mainly two reasons for this:

First, the Foreign Ministry does not have the capacity and will to carry out its functions effectively. On the one hand, it has a shortage of resources and specialist skills needed in trade, investment, disarmament, immigration, international laws, languages, etc. On the other, when it has those skills and resources, it seldom utilizes them optimally. A Russian language expert, for example, is seldom posted to Moscow.

Secondly, foreign affairs get little importance in Nepal's scheme of things. Influential politicians opt for finance, home and development ministries from where they can nurture their constituencies, build political support and enrich personally. The Foreign Ministry, therefore, is often headed by an ineffectual senior minister or junior minister who cannot influence his/her cabinet colleagues to abide by the Provisions of Nepal Government Rules of Business Allocation and get necessary resources allocated to the ministry and its missions abroad to make them effective.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nepal occasionally circulates the Code of Conduct for diplomats, but such codes are seldom respected by the Nepal-based foreign diplomats, nor any genuine concerns shown from the Nepalese leadership.

On the face of it, recently, Home Minister Rabi Lamichane has instructed police personnel to take the prior approval from the Ministry before meeting with any diplomats of the foreign missions. He warned for disciplinary actions against those officials who do not comply with this instruction. The instruction has come with good intention. However, the action falls under the "management of foreign relations and diplomacy under the Rules of Business" and as such should have been applied through the Foreign Ministry.

Such "free for all" activities are well-known in Nepal, but no commitments have come from the responsible parties to rectify the situation. Under such circumstances, it is not justifiable to find fault with the potential activities and behaviour of the foreign diplomats.

I would like to make some sincere recommendations to mitigate the current problems. We need commitments to the fundamentals that the world struggled over centuries in the establishment of the diplomatic code of conduct. We can learn from the history that the significance of the diplomatic code of conduct lies on certain principles. The principle of nationality, the principle of sovereignty, the principle of non-dominance and, the most important among all of them, is the morality. These principles will only be accomplished if wanton political influences over bureaucracy could be restricted, and the bureaucratic system becomes professional. The political influence will not stop until our leadership realizes nationality and morality beyond their personal and political interests and the bureaucracy will not run efficiently in this era, if it lacks officials with proper skill and knowledge to confidently overcome any political pressure and act professionally. Moreover, Nepal faces a very sensitive geopolitical situation in its neighborhood and it can serve its interests best by deploying smart foreign policy and diplomacy, which should not be used as a tool for promoting private gains of individual leaders at the cost of the nation.

Hopefully, this time the code will prove more than an empty promise expressed only in paper. It will be well, if the newly formed Nepali political and bureaucratic leaders show more seriousness this time and do not turn the code into a 'non-code' of conduct, as they have done in the past. Nepal's geopolitical sensitivity and vulnerability requires seriousness in the management of its foreign relations and conduct of diplomacy.

Nepal in the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: A Platform for Country's Multilateral Diplomacy and Global Visibility



- Brig Gen (Retd.) Dharma Bahadur Baniya¹

Abstract

Peacekeeping operations are one of the key elements of the United Nations (UN) efforts to restore peace and security in the world. The UN Charter gives the UN Security Council (also the General Assembly) the power and responsibility to take collective actions to maintain international peace and security. Helping countries navigate the difficult path from conflict to peace, peacekeeping has unique strengths including legitimacy, burden sharing, and an ability to deploy and sustain troops and police from around the globe and integrating them with civilian peacekeepers to advance multidimensional mandates. The UN member states, irrespective of size and power, have contributed their troops and police personnel in the UN peacekeeping missions. In this context, Nepal is contributing to this noble cause for more than six decades with dedication and commitment. With this background, this article begins with a brief overview on Nepal's contribution to the UN peacekeeping Operations (UNPKOs). The article then briefly highlights the challenges faced by Nepalese peacekeepers. Finally, the article concludes with implications to the national prestige of Nepal and forward relevant recommendations to enhance the country's image by contributing in the UN peacekeeping. The article is subjectively prepared by analytically reviewing literatures on Nepal's contribution in the UN peacekeeping missions.

Key words: Contribution, foreign policy, Global peace and security, mandate implementation, niche diplomacy, small states, United Nations.

Introduction

The United Nations Organization (UN) was formally established after signing the UN charter on 24 Oct 1945 by the representatives of 50 countries assembled in San Francisco, the United States of America (US). The first sentence of the preamble of the UN charter (containing 111 articles in 19 chapters), says, "We the people of the

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United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime brought untold sorrow to mankind” (United Nations). Currently, there are 193 member states associated with this global organization.

Nepal proposed to become the UN member on 22 July 1949. However, the request was rejected by the Security Council due to a veto against it by the Soviet Union on 7 Sept 1949. Despite being the oldest sovereign nation in South Asia, Nepal had to wait for its membership till 14 Dec 1955 (Anupam, 14 Dec 2020). The 16 nations including Nepal got UN membership on this day. The other 15 nations were Austria, Albania, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Jordan, Laos, Libya, Portugal, Romania, Sri Lanka, and Spain. Before Nepal, India (1945), Afghanistan (1946) and Pakistan (1947) were UN members from the subcontinent. Nepal’s first Permanent Representative to the UN was Mr. Rishikesh Shah (1956-1960) and the 13th and the incumbent Representative is Mr. Amrit Kumar Rai.

The United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), the first UN peacekeeping mission (observer mission) was deployed between Palestine authority and state of Israel on 29 May 1948, and is still operational. Since then, nearly 1.5 million military and police personnel have served in 70 UN peacekeeping missions from 130 nations. Nearly 3,000 UN peacekeepers from 120 countries have made their supreme sacrifice while serving under the UN flag (United Nations Peacekeeping, 31 Aug 2022).

Brief Overview on Nepal’s Contribution in the UNPKOs

The Nepali Army (NA)

Nepal’s contribution in the UNPKOs begins with the deployment of military observers. Nepal demonstrated extraordinary diplomatic excellence by contributing first ever peacekeeping contribution by deploying its five military observers in Lebanon (United Nations Observer Group in Lebanon, UNOGIL) on 12 June 1958 at a time when many smaller states around the world were still under the colonial rules. The first Nepali contingent, Purano Gorakh Battalion was deployed in the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF II) in Egypt in 1974. Since then, Nepal has made a record by contributing in 44 UNPKOs in 43 countries in which 1,41,525 personnel have already participated (Nepali Army, DPKO, Nov 2022).

The NA’s long association with UN peace support operations expanded with the contribution of military contingents, military observers and staff officers ranging from - modest deployment (Chapter VI such as the UNEF II, UNIFIL, etc), peace enforcement (Chapter VII such as the UNOSOM II, MONUC, etc) and serving with regional peacekeeping force (Chapter VIII such as the UNOMIL working together with the Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS Monitoring Group,

the ECOMG). The ECOMOG was a regional peacekeeping force from the ECOWAS. The NA has also contributed significantly through the provision of niche capabilities such as engineers, medical teams, provost marshal and Special Forces contingents. Nepal has been able to demonstrate its visible presence in the global platform by contributing senior appointments in the UNDPKO and leadership positions in the Force Headquarters of the most of the sensitive missions such as the UNIKOM, UNFICYP, UNMIS, UNDOF, etc. As of 31 Oct 2022, Nepal stands as the third largest troops contributing country (TCC) with 5826 peacekeepers (Force Commanders, Sector Commanders, staff officers, military observes and contingents) by deploying in all 12 ongoing UN peacekeeping missions. Their devotion to duty and excellent performance has been acclaimed by the UN (Ibid.). The NA as a neutral, nonaligned, unbiased and professional force is widely accepted by the UN as well as by the ideologically motivated warring factions in most of the challenging missions around the world. However, this contribution was not a cakewalk as our 71 NA personnel have made their supreme sacrifice along with the physical disability of 66 personnel while discharging their duties as UN peacekeepers (Ibid.).

Nepal Police

The UN started deploying first police contingent from the ONUC in 1960. Now, there is a remarkable police deployment in almost all the peacekeeping missions around the world. Under international rule of law and human rights frameworks, the role of a UN Police has grown from simple observation to include executive policing and operational support, reforming and restructuring host nations' (HN) law enforcement agencies, and building capacity so that the HN's police can provide policing services to their communities more effectively. So far 129 countries have already contributed their police officers in the UNPKOs (<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/un-police>). Currently, around 9,000 UN Police officers in 12 UNPKOs from 94 countries are serving in the international peace and security by supporting countries in conflict, post-conflict and crisis situations (United Nations Police).

In this context, Nepal started its police contribution in the UNPKOs from UNPROFOR in former Yugoslavia from 12 March 1992 (Bhusal and Parajuli, 2017). Serving as advisers and staff officers in the DPKO; and staff officers, instructors and monitors in the Force Headquarters and in the field missions, a total of 8579 police personnel have already served in 32 missions. Currently, 45 Police officers are serving in 8 missions. While discharging their duties, 11 police personnel have laid their lives along with 6 permanent disabilities in action (Nepal Police, Nov 2022).

Armed Police Force (APF)

Nepal started APF contribution in the UNPKOs from the UNGCI, Iraq since 19 Oct 2002. Serving as the advisers and staff officers in the DPKO; and staff officers, instructors, monitors, guard contingents and the Formed Police Units in the Force Headquarters and in the field missions, a total of 8399 APF personnel have already served in 14 missions. Currently, 194 APF personnel are serving in 3 missions. While discharging their duties, 2 APF personnel have sacrificed their lives with no disabilities in action (Armed Police Force, Nov 2022).

Challenges faced by Nepal in the UNPKOs

United Nations peacekeeping remains one of the most effective tools to respond to today's challenges of global peace and security. However, the 21st Century brings enormous challenges to the international community's peace and security – and peacekeeping will have to address many of these challenges. 84 Nepali uniformed peacekeepers (NA, Nepal Police and APF) have paid their supreme sacrifices for the cause of world peace and security along with the permanent disabilities of 72 personnel. Hence, it will be relevant to give some insights on the challenges faced by the country and Nepalese peacekeepers.

Political instability, donor-driven economy, diplomatic shortcomings and poor synchronization between the government's line ministries - MOD, MOFA and MOFi - are major challenges while operationalizing our peacekeeping efforts. Though, the UN peacekeeping is one of the major foreign policy tools of Nepal, political leadership and the government do not seem to be whole-heartedly committed to diplomatic lobbying with the UN headquarters and directing government authorities in funding, procuring, equipping, capacity building, and overall management of peacekeepers at home and field missions (Bhattarai, 2013). The state of impunity on cases against mismanagement of welfare funds, corruption, wrong procurement of equipment and selection process at home and inept leadership to control human rights violation, sexual exploitation and abuses (SEA) and poor performance in the field mission have undermined our hard earned image in the international field (Rawal, 2015). In April 2018, Nepali peacekeepers deployed in South Sudan reportedly faced allegations of child rape (South China Morning Post, 2018). These impediments may have long-term implications for Nepal's image in the international community if they remain unresolved.

Safety and security of our peacekeepers is a 'top priority' for Nepal. However, the security threats and targeted attacks against UN peacekeepers have increased considerably. Uneven political support, organized crime, breakdowns in law and order, and attacks by extremists are becoming the regular phenomena in the most of the UN peacekeeping missions. Hence, Nepal encourages the Secretariat to adequately

guarantee the safety and security of the lives and dignity of the peacekeepers through the wide ranges of force protection measures. Nepal also emphasizes the importance of their health security against the ongoing pandemic as well as other health hazards in the future.

Today's multidimensional peacekeeping operations are tasked with not only maintaining peace and security, but also facilitating the political process, implementing difficult mandates, protecting civilians, assisting in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, supporting elections, protecting and promoting human rights, strengthening democracy and assisting in the restoration of the rule of law in the mission area. This kind of environment demands robust peacekeeping missions. But, the lack of timely procurement of contingent-owned equipment compatible to wider range of peace enforcement operations has hampered the timely deployment, mandate implementation and safety and security of our peacekeepers in the field missions.

The delayed reimbursement for the service rendered to the UN peacekeeping missions has affected in maintaining and enhancing the operational capabilities of our peacekeepers. This kind of late reimbursement by the UN has become a routine phenomenon for Nepal. It has contributed to the difficulties in the timely procurement of new equipment, logistics supports to ongoing missions, capacity building of peacekeepers and sometimes withholding the proposed contributions, which ultimately affects our operational readiness as well as to the conflict resolution by the UN.

The demand for high-tech troops is ever-increasing in the modern multidimensional peacekeeping missions. The use of latest technologies like drones, artificial intelligence, strategic communications, countering disinformation, improvised explosive devices and extremist threats, inter-operability with multi-national peacekeepers in the joint environment, force protection measures, etc. is increasing to ensure the effective implementation of the mission mandates, including protection of civilians, and safety and security of peacekeepers. Investment on time, efforts and resources to achieve these capabilities has emerged as a new challenge to us.

As of 01 Nov 2022, 75485 personnel (UN Military experts, troops and police) from 123 troops contributing countries (TCC) are currently serving in the 12 peacekeeping field missions around the world. In spite of the great numbers of TCC, states with larger military powers only provide a fraction compared to smaller states. The P5 countries contributed only 3513 personnel (4.65 percent of total contribution) to include - China (2245, 10th), France (624, 33rd), UK (531, 40th), Russia (80, 64th) and U.S (33, 77th). If we examine the top 20 TCC' contribution - such as Bangladesh (7101, 1st), India (5866, 2rd), Nepal (5826, 3rd), Rwanda (5753, 4th), Pakistan (4392, 5th), Egypt (2792, 6th), Ghana (2752, 7th), Indonesia (2575, 8th), Senegal (2411, 9th), China (2245, 10th), Morocco (1709, 11th), Ethiopia (1490, 12th), Tanzania (1487,

13th), Chad (1473, 14th), South Africa (1189, 15th), Cameroon (1116, 16th), Togo (1081, 17th), Uruguay (1050, 18th), Cote D'Ivoire (985, 19th) and Niger (968, 20th), it is encouraging to note that there are small and middle power TCCs that contribute substantial numbers to the UNPKOs (United Nations Peacekeeping, 31 Aug 2022). Excluding, India as the middle power and China as the P5 state, remaining P5 and many other militarily bigger states do not even figure in the top 20 contributors. Though the developing small states have bigger contribution as compared to their hard power, these states are accused of participating in the peacekeeping missions for the money and are unable to hold senior leadership positions in the Secretariat as well as in the field missions. Their sacrifices have rarely noticed unless they give up their lives. However, historical record shows that many officials from the developing countries have demonstrated their extra-ordinary leadership qualities in discharging their duties in the UN peacekeeping. Hence, small states like Nepal need not to be excluded from the leadership position in the Secretariat as well as in the field missions.

The UN demands more women contribution in the peacekeeping missions. As of Dec 2021, uniformed women contribution in the peacekeeping missions was 7.8 percent. The 2028 target for women serving in military contingents and military observers / staff officers is 15% and 25% respectively. Similarly, women contribution in formed police units and individual police officers is 20% and 30% respectively (United Nations Peacekeeping). Though Nepal fully supports the gender equality and women empowerment, women serving in uniform continue to encounter numerical disproportion with male counterparts. Recruiting and retaining more women in peacekeeping missions from Nepal may take longer time to meet the UN standard.

Implications to the National Prestige of Nepal

Nepal has consistently upheld Article 51 of the UN Charter, which calls for the maintenance of international peace and security. Through the contribution in UN peacekeeping, Nepal has earned an international repute as a country committed to upholding the principles as stipulated in the UN Charter. We wish to prosper in peace and spread the same message to the global community through our blue helmets. Nepal's contribution has always been effective instruments in enhancing the global image and strengthening our security, sovereignty and independence (Maskey, 1996). After all, peace, harmony and compassion are the innate attributes that we inherited from Lord Buddha, the apostle of peace and the enlightened son of Nepal.

'The norms of world peace' has been the foundation of Nepal's foreign policy, which is based on the UN Charter, non-alignment, principles of Panchasheel, international laws and the norms of world peace. Nepal's contribution to the UN peacekeeping fulfills this very principle of non-alignment, neutrality and impartiality, the cornerstone of Nepal's foreign policy (Newar, 2004). Our contribution has been notable, not only for

the consistency in its commitments and length of time spent, but also for the selfless bravery shown by our troops and police personnel. Our army is well-known for its significant contributions as a “peace champion” in the UN peacekeeping.

Nepal’s neutrality has always been lauded when it comes to peacekeeping in areas where the warring parties are driven by conflicting ideologies, such as the Israel-Palestine conflict. In such conflicts, the international community shows interest in Nepal as it is a non-Muslim state and can remain perfectly neutral. Israel is suspicious with the troops from Muslim countries that there might be sympathizers to the Islamic militants (Ibid.). Nepal’s neutrality is the offshoot of its firm belief in the UN Charter, non-intervention and also as a pioneer member of the Non-Aligned Movement, which wholly strengthened Nepal’s foreign policy of world peace, even during the Cold War period. While the rivalry between the US and the USSR was underway, Nepal was one of the few countries to contribute troops to the UN. Nepal also remained as a troop contributor to the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) in the State of Jammu and Kashmir in 1948 (Bhattarai, 2013). Since then, all successive regimes and governments have perceived the regular contribution to the UN peacekeeping missions as an instrument to elevate Nepal’s global profile, as a mechanism to boost national security and at the same time contribute to multilateral diplomacy (Thapa, 1995).

Nepal’s contribution in UN peacekeeping has helped Nepal to project its image in the world politics. During the Cold War period, Nepal led the Commission of Investigation into the Circumstances resulting in the tragic death of then Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold, who was killed in a plane crash at Ndola in Lusaka in 1961 (Bhusal and Parajuli, 2017). In 1969-70 and 1988-89, Nepal was elected as a non-permanent member of the UNSC (Khand, 2009). When the UN and Kofi Annan as the Secretary General were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2001, then Brig Gen Ratna Gurung of the NA was included in the Secretary-General’s official entourage that visited Oslo to receive the Prize. Nepal also served as an organizing committee member of the UN Peace Building Commission for 2008/2009 in the category of TCC for its contribution to peacekeeping (Rawal, 2015). Nepal has also contributed to the UNPKOs by providing its niche capabilities such as engineers, medical teams, provost marshals, and Special Forces contingents (Nepali Army BPOTC). Nepal’s resolute and untiring adherence to world peace and the UN Charter, in particular, is noticeable in Nepal’s unflinching acceptance in almost all the UNPKOs. This recognition is believed to have been reinforced by our century old peacekeeping contributions (Khand, 2009).

Nepal’s contribution in the UN peacekeeping has extensively enhanced Nepal’s image abroad as a stern believer in collective security. In recognition to our contribution, Nepali peacekeepers have served in senior appointments at the DPKO; and as the Force Commanders, military observers, staff officers and contingents in the field missions.

Many Nepali peacekeepers have been awarded and eulogized for their bravery, discipline and sincerity in maintaining stability, peace and security in the conflict-ridden and post-conflict societies (UN Peacekeeping, 2020). One of the brave peace martyrs was Major Kabindra Jung Thapa who sacrificed his life by demonstrating utmost bravery and valor to protect his fellow peacekeepers (civilian and military) during human rights verification mission in the MONUC, DR Congo in June 2005. Major Thapa died protecting his comrades. He died protecting the cause of peace and human rights. He died protecting the United Nations (Moon, 3 Nov 2008). He died gallantly by faming our country in the international field.

Nepal's contribution in the UN peacekeeping has enhanced our multilateral diplomacy. Today, Nepal as the 2nd largest TCC in the UN peacekeeping is entrusted to contribute in all 12 ongoing UN peacekeeping missions. Also, the political parties in Nepal have emphasized the role of Nepali peacekeepers and realized the importance of our contribution on Nepal's foreign policy maneuverings (Rawal, 2015). Nepal has signed a MoU under the UN Standby Arrangements System to contribute 5,000 troops, including doctors, engineers, observers and headquarters staff and civilian police monitors to deploy at short notice in the mission area (UN Press Release, 1998). This is the symbol of recognition by the UN as a result of our consistent contribution in the UN peacekeeping missions.

Nepal's consistent and professional contribution in the UNPKOs has resulted in the professional and personal development of Nepali peacekeepers as well as contributed to the socio-economic development of the country (Rawal, 2015). Financial support received from peacekeeping is higher than the standard salary given in Nepal, which keeps our soldiers motivated and makes them more committed (International Crisis Group, 2010). Peacekeeping is becoming a vital source of earning foreign currencies before the Nepali youth became a significant part of the international labor market. The UN allowance and remittance are an important source of the NA as well as other security forces' welfare fund, which supports different welfare programmes - medical, educational facilities and humanitarian support - to the serving personnel, veterans and their families (Bhattarai, 2013).

The longstanding contribution of our personnel has helped them treasure and advance their operational and organizational skills, expertise and confidence required in a professional servicemen. The regular contribution of the NA, Nepal Police and APF in the UN peacekeeping has helped peacekeepers better understand the universal values and norms of human rights, the importance of the rule of law and significance of professionalism (Bhattarai, 2013), which ultimately contributes in the image building and credibility of the motherland and the UN in the international field.

Contribution in the UN peacekeeping has also enhanced the inter-operability and common standard of the Nepali security forces serving with multinational forces in the international joint environment. It is noteworthy to mention that our contribution in the peacekeeping has also enhanced our military diplomacy, which further helps strengthen our overall national diplomacy and foreign policy. They are the torch bearers of peace diplomacy of our country.

Nepal's contribution in the UN peacekeeping has become one of the most important means to project Nepal's soft power in the international arena. Nye (1990, pp. 5-7) provided in-depth concept on soft power as “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment. And attractiveness arises from the country's culture, political ideas and foreign policies”. Nye's core argument is that soft power resources are increasingly important in the modern information age and it is extremely foolish to ignore or neglectfully squander them (Nye, 2004, p. 9). Contribution in the UN peacekeeping is one of the main agenda of our foreign policy, and soft power becomes much more than image, public relation and temporary popularity. It constitutes very real power, an ability to gain political objectives in the international system. Hence, our contribution in the UN peacekeeping mission is becoming a powerful platform for creating and maintaining soft power for Nepal (Rawal, 24 Nov 2021).

Besides peacekeeping, the Birendra Peacekeeping Operation Training Centre (BPOTC), Panchkhal, conducts pre-deployment training (PDT) and peacekeeping related exercises to Nepali peacekeepers (NA, Nepal Police and APF) (Sharma, 2009). The BPOTC also provides training to the multinational peacekeepers from around the globe through its exercise called “SHANTI PRAYAS”, which is designed to enhance peacekeeping capabilities and skills of countries that are part of the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI). With such kinds of training capabilities of the international standard, the BPOTC possesses tremendous potential to be transformed into the “Regional Peacekeeping Training Center” in the SAARC. If our diplomacy succeeds in doing that, our image and credibility in the UN world will be further enhanced.

Recommendations

Today's peacekeeping operations are called upon not only to maintain peace and security, but also to facilitate the political process, protect civilians, assist in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants; support democratic values such as organizing elections, protecting and promoting human rights and assisting in the creation and restoration of rule of law. Nepal's consistency and effectiveness in such complex mandates depends upon how and in what extent, the political leadership, diplomatic mechanism and the government support our peacekeepers prior

to and during mandate implementation in the mission area. Nepal should come up with a long-term strategy and vision regarding peacekeeping, such as specific policy guidelines, improved logistics, effective capacity building systems and transparent selection criteria that are compatible with international standards. It is very important for the government's consistent involvement along with proper coordination between the line ministries on peacekeeping matters. Effective coordination between the UN and Permanent Mission of Nepal is also vital to handle the strategic concerns such as appointment of high ranking officials in the UN headquarters and field missions, expansion of Nepali contribution, HN's political support, amendment of MoU, force protection measures, timely reimbursement, amendment of mandates resulted by the mission's operational environment, etc.

Nepal's contribution in the UN peacekeeping mission is an effective tool to achieve foreign policy goals in the spirit of the UN principles of world peace and security and promotion of national as well as military diplomacy and soft power. But after the political changes of 1990, peacekeeping is seen only as a private matter of the security forces only. Our contribution cannot be effective by the hard work of the security forces alone. Political and diplomatic supports are indispensable if we really want to be visible in the multilateral diplomacy and achieve our foreign policy goals and soft power in the contested international environment. We can learn ocean of lessons from Bangladesh and Rwanda of the level of commitments demonstrated by their political leadership and government authorities to optimize their contribution in the UN peacekeeping.

There is a lot of competition among smaller and middle power states to contribute in the UNPKOs in today's world. Most of these states volunteer prior to the UN's request for troop's contribution along with readily deployable logistics resources and heavy equipment and armaments compatible with multi-dimensional missions. But, Nepali security forces really lack such capabilities that are absolutely necessary to carry out robust peacekeeping duties (example: Nepal Police in Sudan). At several occasions, the UN has pointed out such deficiencies towards Nepal. Therefore, the government should whole heartedly support to fund, procure, equip, train, sustain and maintain our forces prior to and during the mandates execution. It is the sole responsibility of the government but not of the individual security forces only.

Nepal has become a synonym for the UN peacekeeping. Our contribution in this noble cause has been respectfully acknowledged by the UN. Therefore, Nepal should not only continue, but needs to diplomatically lobby for senior appointments (such as Secretary General, SRSG, USG, ASG, Military Advisor, etc...) and greater contribution in the future UNPKOs. An expanded contribution in the UNPKOs should be one of the major foreign policy agendas of the country for our global image, soft power, security and survival (Shrestha, 2012, p. 48).

Since four decades, the BPOTC is conducting mission specific pre-deployment training to our security forces. This center is also conducting various peacekeeping related trainings and exercises to the regional as well as multinational peacekeepers across the world. The NA is admiring to upgrade it into the 'Center for Peacekeeping Excellence'. Therefore, government should provide diplomatic and financial support to establish this center as the 'Regional Peacekeeping Center'. After all, BPOTC can serve as a means of our 'Niche' as well as military diplomacy.

Let us take an example of the efforts made by the ECOWAS to enhance its regional peacekeeping capacity in a collective security environment. The ECOWAS has established peacekeeping training institution as - Tactical level in Mali, Operational Level in the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center in Ghana and Strategic level in the National Defense University (NDU) in Nigeria. In our case also, the tactical level, operational level and strategic level capacity building responsibility in the peacekeeping can be delegated to the BPOTC, the Army Command and Staff College and the proposed NDU respectively. This will help conduct focussed capacity building activities in the respective training institutions and avoid messing up all the peacekeepers in one place.

Nepali security forces are committed to strictly adhere the principle of zero tolerance policy against all forms of human rights violation, SEA, corruption and serious misconducts at home as well as in the peacekeeping missions. Therefore, Nepal should demonstrate that there exists no state of impunity by punishing inept leadership as well as personnel involved in such serious misconducts. We should not defame our country by protecting the wrong doers.

Conclusion

Nepal is one of the consistent TCC supporting the UN in global peace operations. Due to the unpredictable nature of the operational environment, increased security challenges and the multidimensional tasks to be performed, Nepali peacekeepers need to be more professional and effective in the UN peacekeeping. Political stability, whole hearted government's support, far-sighted diplomacy, clear mission policy, doctrinally trained and motivated peacekeepers with mission-specific training, sufficient sustainment capability, etc. are critical to the effective execution peacekeeping responsibilities.

Both the government of Nepal and the UN have to work together to ensure the effectiveness of our peacekeepers. A fully supported and professional contribution in the UNPKOs will undoubtedly help in the enhancement of our foreign policy goals, national diplomacy including military diplomacy, soft power and international credibility, which will ultimately contribute to ensure our sovereignty, security and survival. It is the time to demonstrate Nepal as a small state is the synonym of 'the UN peacekeeping'. We need to propagate this ideal as the 'national identity' through

our professional contribution in the UN peacekeeping missions. We must ensure our global image, security and survival by ‘knowledge and wisdom’ not by hard power.

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The Passport: A Brief Evolutionary History



- Rudra K. Nepal¹

Formerly man had only a body and soul. Now he needs passport as well, for without it he will not be treated as a human being.

—Stefan Zweig

A man consists of a body, a soul, and a passport.

—Russian Proverb

Modern passport is one of the most visible symbols of a sovereign state beyond its borders. Passports are state documents issued to citizens wishing to visit abroad. Being granted a passport means being officially cleared to exit the country. But it is in no way an authorization to enter a foreign land. That would require a visa duly issued by the receiving state. *Oppenheim's International Law* authoritatively says, “By customary international law no state can claim the right for its nationals to enter into, and reside on, the territory of a foreign state” (Jennings & Watts: 897). This fact is starkly reflected in the acceptance or denial decisions state officials regularly take on countless visa applications submitted to the diplomatic missions, at thousands of passport control points in international airports where hundreds of thousands of foreign passport holders queue up for entry clearance day in and day out, and at numerous international border crossings across the world on a regular basis.

The passport is a state property and the bearer is only its user-custodian. The government can withdraw it anytime it considers necessary to do so in the interest of the nation. Any tampering with the passport or causing a willful damage to it not only invalidates the document but also makes such unauthorized acts punishable under the law. This is true for all countries. The current Nepali ePassport has a 7-point notice printed on the back inside cover one of which warns the bearer: *This passport must not be altered or mutilated in any manner. No stamp, statement, notation or other addition should be placed or made in the passport other than by the officials of Nepal or foreign countries who are authorized to do so in connection with official matters. Any unauthorized alteration in this passport shall render it INVALID.*

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The passport is meant to facilitate foreign travel and to ensure protection of the bearer on behalf of the issuing state. But most observers believe that they are more an instrument of control rather than of facilitation. One of them observes: “Passports are the primary documents that state use to regulate the permeability of their borders” (Salter: 2). The Henley Passport Index, which ranks different passports on the basis of their holders’ access to destinations without a prior visa, shows how easy or difficult it is for foreigners to cross international borders and get entry to a foreign land. The Henley Index for 2022 ranks the Japanese passport at the top because a Japanese passport holder has access to 193 foreign destinations without having to have a prior visa. The Nepali passport ranks 106th with just 38 destinations accessible in this way. The difference is remarkable and the reason for that is more or less understandable. As a travel document officially issued by a sovereign state to its citizens, all passports are the same. But the power they inhere differs significantly because states are not equal in international power hierarchy. Theoretically, all states are equal under international law; in the real world they rarely are.

Historical Evolution Trend

In its earliest form, the passport as a letter of introduction was simply a travel facilitator. With changing times, its nature and character also began to change. The safe conduct letters of the early medieval period and the system of mandatory internal passes introduced in a number of European countries during the early modern period derive their justifications from the security needs and concerns of the states concerned. With the emergence of the nation-states claiming and exercising sovereignty over a certain territory and people as one of their defining attributes in the seventeenth century, the concept of ‘nationals’ and ‘aliens’ began to take roots. With recurring inter-state wars and socio-political upheavals of various kinds debilitating them every now and then, national security naturally became the first priority of these states. Autocracies had to remain even more alert and cautious about their own security interests. In such a situation, movement control both in terms of border management and the movement of people within the state itself became a pressing security need. States began to embrace nationals as citizens while the rest were treated as aliens. Today’s regime of international passport is a continuation of that concept of nationals and aliens practiced by states as sovereign entities through a network of elaborate national bureaucracies.

From the early days of hand-written passports issued in a single sheet of paper to that of today’s biometric ePassports in a sleek and slender booklet form, the transition has been phenomenal. It has been a journey of continuous improvement aesthetically and also in terms of progressive refinement of the document in its security features and functionality. It would be quite exciting to look back and ponder over the steady progression the passport has made as a document of continuing value, from the days

of the single-sheet handwritten papers to that of today's highly sophisticated machine readable biometric book-lets.

With this in the background, a quick survey of the evolution and ancestry of the modern passport is attempted below.

Early Passports

The ancestry of the document known to us today as the “passport” is fairly long although the centenary edition of the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (2011) dates the word “passport” itself in its modern sense to the fifteenth century. Pre-modern passports were issued in a variety of forms and under various names, such as a **pass**, a **letter of introduction**, **letter of identity**, a **safe conduct** or **safe conduct pass**, a **laissez-passer**, **the King's Licence**, etc. Such documents were issued by a variety of entities including the Pope and church officials, the kings, local councils, prominent merchants, or even by private persons of high social standing.

In the West, the search for an ancestry of the passport takes one back to about 450 BC. A biblical reference from *Nehemiah 2.7* is often cited as the first recorded issuance of a document more or less akin, in effect if not in form and content, to today's passport. Upon being appointed governor over Palestine, Nehemiah requested for, and was granted, a letter of safe conduct by the King of Persia to facilitate his safe travel to that destination. This is often cited in Western sources as the first instance of a document serving as a precursor of today's passport (The United States Passport Office: 1976; Martin Lloyd: 2008; Craig Robertson: 2010).

The English word ‘passport’ is derived from the French words—*passer* and *port* meaning to leave a port or harbour. But gated cities in earlier times were also inaccessible to strangers without a passport. This suggests that a passport was needed not only to leave a port or harbour, but also to enter and exit the gated communities. Therefore, documents issued for this purpose were also a forerunner to today's passports.

By the early nineteenth century, a new form of passport issued by the state certifying the holder's identity with assurances of protection while travelling abroad gradually began to appear.

The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (SOED, 2007) defines a passport as “an official document issued by a government certifying the holder's identity and citizenship, and entitling the holder to travel under its protection to and from foreign countries.” This definition clearly underlines the main attributes of the modern passport as a formal official document and the main purpose of holding it. The *Black's Law Dictionary* (2009) comes close to the SOED when it defines a passport as “a formal document certifying a person's identity and citizenship so that the person may travel to and from a foreign country.” The *Palgrave Macmillan Dictionary of Diplomacy* (2012),

likewise, defines a passport as “a travel document issued by a state which certifies the identity and nationality of its holder.” Despite these dictionary definitions laying a clear emphasis on the link between a passport and the citizenship of the bearer, international law does not fully endorse this position. *Oppenheim’s International Law* says: “In particular, the issue of a passport does not conclusively establish as against other states that the person to whom it is issued has the nationality of the issuing state. It constitutes merely prima facie evidence of nationality, which is normally accepted for the usual immigration and police purposes” (Jennings & Watts: 855 fn 16). More than two decades later, Sara Dehm reiterates the same position. “Under international law, a passport is generally considered prima facie, but by no means conclusive, evidence of a person’s nationality” (Dehm: 351).

Until the Middle Ages, the passport was considered a privilege and granted only to a few persons of high social standing, or those in the service of the state, such as royal envoys and foreign emissaries. Travel being hard and hazardous, most people tended to avoid it. Foreign travel was not a pleasure either. The Roman Empire used to grant diplomas and special papers as a favour to messengers and other privileged persons to facilitate their travel within the confines of the Empire. By the thirteenth century commercial relations between countries started to grow which enhanced the importance of merchants making them eligible for holding passports as a protective measure. More than 800 years ago, Magna Carta (1215) had made a specific mention of the privilege of free movement for the merchants.

By the end of the 14th century, the safe conduct pass, or *sauf conduit*, was as good as a passport although the bearers of the two were quite different categories of people. A safe conduct was generally issued to an enemy representative engaged in negotiations with it whereas passports were issued by a state to its own people to facilitate their travel to a foreign territory.

From the middle of the 15th century, an innovative diplomatic practice of sending resident ambassadors to foreign courts was adopted by Italy. And this novel idea was gradually spread to other European courts as well by the next century. It is at this point in the evolution of diplomacy and diplomatic representation that the term passport appears to have found its earliest mention in the legal literature. “In the 1460s, a traveler bearing a passport no longer needed to be a royal envoy. ...Sources dating from the mid-fifteenth century make increasingly frequent mention of the *passeports* that Louis XI required his envoys to carry”, soon after which the French term *passeport* literally meaning “go through the door” spread in several European languages— “as *passaporti* in Italian, as *passzettel* or *bassborten* in corresponding German regulations” (Groebner: 172). The letters of recommendation and safe conduct that envoys were required to produce on demand to authenticate their official status were called *litterae passus*—passes and permits which from the mid-fifteenth century onward began

to be called the *passeports*. King Louis XI required his envoys to carry *passeports* (Groebner: 172). Even the soldiers on leave had to carry *passeports* duly issued by their commanding officer to enable them to return as required by another regulation issued by Louis XI in 1462. “From the second half of the fifteenth century to the mid-sixteenth century, the high medieval and late medieval letter of safe conduct issued exclusively to diplomats, envoys, and merchants gradually developed into the *passeport* or officially licensed *laissez-passer* as a valid document of passage. ... Carrying a *passeport*, an authorised sealed document furnishing personal details about their bearer, was no longer a privilege, but an obligation” (Groebner: 175). The *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* indicates that the spelling “passport” in English appeared in print in the second half of the sixteenth century.

The first mention of passport in English law has been traced to the year 1548 in the sense of today’s Army leave pass (Lloyd: 25-26). Likewise, in an international agreement the word passport first appeared in a treaty of commerce and alliance signed between Great Britain and Denmark and known as the Treaty of Copenhagen of 1670 “wherein the term is analogous to a ‘sea-letter’ and provides that ships, goods, and men ought to carry ‘letters of passport and certificates’ during times of war in order to prevent fraud and clear any suspicion of their nationality” (Dehm: 344). In the seventeenth century, Hugo Grotius termed passports as “specific wartime instruments that a sovereign granted to non-nationals as a ‘licence to pass freely’ through their territory.”

From the mid-sixteenth to the early seventeenth century, passports were issued to paupers and vagabonds “as a permit to proceed to a specified destination and (often) to ask alms on the way”, says the *OED* (2nd ed., 1989). In this particular signification, the word passport was not very ennobling in the eyes of the aristocratic class of people in Europe. To them, it was demeaning to have to carry a passport as an identity document when they became mandatory for all in later years, especially during the war time and afterwards. They were grown to believe that nobility was not something which needed a documentary identification. Only when “respectability” in the form of class, race and gender started to wane that the passport as an identity document began to rise in significance—“and this only began to occur at the turn of the twentieth century” (Robertson: 15).

The French revolutionaries revoked the existing passport laws in 1791 as an unwanted constraint on the right to freedom of movement. But it quickly turned out to be a very short-lived experiment. In 1792, when threats to the new republic started to emerge, a new and stricter passport legislation was enacted to control movement. Passports were also made compulsory for all visiting foreigners. Craig Robertson observes, “Despite its limited success, the French Passport system offered a model that most European states adopted at some point during the nineteenth century” (Robertson: 14).

Modern passports were not in common use until the early years of the twentieth century. Between 1859 and 1863, countries such as Norway, Sweden, Italy and Portugal had done away with their passport systems. “By the late nineteenth century when freedom of movement reached its apogee, only a few countries—Persia, Rumania, Russia, Serbia were among them—required the wayfaring alien to present a passport. Nor would the traveller, at least in time of peace, have needed a passport to leave his own country” (Jaffe: 17). “Across the Atlantic, many South American countries such as Venezuela, Uruguay, Mexico, Ecuador, Bolivia and Peru enjoyed constitutions in which the right to travel freely without a passport was clearly stated and extended to all foreigners” (Lloyd: 95). “By the beginning of the twentieth century, passports were in most cases a facility or a politeness, they were not a requirement” (Lloyd: 96). “In his historical survey of 1907, the French jurist Adrien See remarked that passports were an “oddity” of bygone days, at best an object of legal historical research, but without any bearing on the present” (Groebner: 235). Only Bulgaria, Romania, Russia and Turkey were an exception in Europe.

With the ominous signs of the Great War looming on the European horizon, the passport system reemerged, initially as a temporary measure of national security. While the war itself ended after four years, the passport regime that had been re-established in the context of the war refused to retire. The massive socio-economic upheavals and chaos wrought by the Great War provided a new nationalist pretext for the war-torn states and their wary governments to further tighten their borders. One scholar closely observing these developments wrote in 1931, “despite solemn declarations in the peace treaties, requests from international organizations and promises made by several governments, the compulsory passport system was not abolished, or even modified. It was to some extent made even stricter” (Reale: 506). Nepal was still under the rule of the Ranas in a state of autocratic isolation. And it was only since the 1930s that Nepal started issuing passports to its nationals officially sanctioned to travel abroad. The design and details recommended by the League of Nations in 1920, which was itself influenced by then newly adopted British passport, might have served as a model for the Nepali passport also, although Nepal was not, and did not become a member of this short-lived international organization.

As noted earlier, modern passport remains one of the most powerful symbols of the sovereign independent character of a nation-state. In 1920, the Second Committee of the League of Nations affirmed this when it concluded that “the issue of a passport was an administrative act, an act of sovereignty and authority” and that the League had no such powers as it was “not a State possessing sovereignty of its own.” The United Nations *laissez-passer* (as provided for in Article 7 of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations 1946) is more or less akin to a passport in several ways, but not in every respect.

John Torpey considers the passport as an example of a nation-state's successful usurpation of the "monopoly of the legitimate means of movement" from rival claimants, such as churches and private enterprises, of yesteryears (Torpey: 2). In his view, it was a gradual process that evolved after the medieval period. Groebner, however, takes it as far back as the Middle Ages. He writes, "There are very few inventions of the Middle Ages that continue to preoccupy us as much as the passport" (Groebner: 8). Craig Robertson oppugns. While questioning this claim of Groebner's, Robertson writes: "The introduction of a passport system in France immediately after the French Revolution is usually cited as the point of origin for the modern passport" (Robertson: 14), and observes that Groebner's "claim for the medieval origin of modern passports demands some important clarification" (Robertson: 264 note 26). Martin Lloyd, pointing out the disconnect between the passport of modern times and documents bearing that name in earlier times, concludes that "the search for the first passport is no longer a simple case of finding the oldest document in the world which is called a passport, and the question of when the first passport was issued becomes less easy to answer" (Lloyd: 21).

Having briefly reviewed the evolutionary course of the passport since its early days up until the early twentieth century, let us now move ahead with the clear understanding that in modern times all passport related matters are handled by the states through a national bureaucracy under the relevant acts, rules and regulations. And member states of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) have agreed to make all passports meant for international travel to be of uniform standards and specifications as set by the Organization as recently as in 2005. At this point, and before we take up how and in what ways international institutional involvements have been instrumental in the standardization of the passport as a globally recognized and accepted travel document at different stages of its evolution, let us have a quick look to the current status of the Nepali passport regime as well.

The Nepali Passport

Nepal did not have a systematic mechanism to handle the passport matters for long, nor did it have an act until the first Passport Act of Nepal was enacted in 1967. More than fifty years later, in 2019, a new Passport Act was legislated by the Federal Parliament. The new Act defines the passport as a "machine readable, electronic or biometric" document issued by the Government of Nepal to the Nepali citizens wishing to visit abroad. The Passport Act of Nepal 2019 also makes it mandatory for the Department of Passport to ensure that all passports or travel documents issued by the Department in the name of the Government of Nepal are fully in compliance with ICAO standards and specifications. The new Act classifies Nepali passports into four types: Diplomatic; Special; Service; and Ordinary. Additionally, travel documents and seaman's passport are also issued under the Act. The new Act is more liberal and more democratic in the

sense that while curtailing the discretionary powers of the issuing authority, it limits all passport denials only on specific legal grounds. Punishments in the form of penalty and/or incarceration are also clearly spelt out in the Act in case of violation of the law. Passport denial decisions are appealable in the High Court.

Issuance of passports for foreign travel had been the responsibility of the foreign department since it came into existence during the Rana period. It appears that Nepal issued its first passport in the 1930s when an official delegation was sent to the United Kingdom. The immediate purpose of the mission was to confer, on behalf of the Nepali King, the highest Order of Nepal—the Glorious Order of *Ojaswi Rajanya*—on King George V of England. Having accomplished the task, the delegation stayed on to establish the first Nepali Legation in London which came into operation in June 1934 with Gen. Bahadur Shumsher as its first Head of Mission with the rank of Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary. It is worth recalling that as practised by several European countries for centuries since the early modern period, and by Russia and China as well, Nepal also had adopted the practice of controlling movement of the people by issuing internal passports (*rahadani* in Nepali) to its own nationals during the Rana period.

Recent reports in the Nepali media that Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana did not have to carry a passport when he visited England in 1850 are historically correct. Even Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher, who visited England more than 50 years later, in 1908, did not need a passport to travel abroad. In fact, Nepal did not even have a regular system of issuing passports to its out-bound nationals at that time. Under the British law also, passports were not mandatory for foreigners to enter Great Britain. A declaration of one's home country and nationality at the port of entry was good enough.

Passport in Nepal

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) which came into existence with the advent of democracy in 1951 served as a natural successor to the foreign department of the Rana period and took over the task of issuing Nepali passports thereafter. In later years, until the establishment of the Central Passport Office on 25 May 2010, the Protocol Division of the MOFA used to handle the passport matters. On 26 January 2012, the Department of Passport was created under the MOFA. Its main functions, according to the Department's website, include “issuing passports to Nepali citizens and travel documents to legally eligible persons in accordance with the law and relevant regulations, directives and procedures”. Its focus has been on “issuing the Machine Readable Passports, Electronic Passports, Bio-metric Passports, and Emergency Passports as necessary, pursuant to the standards specified by the ICAO.” The Department recently reported that during the one year period from 17 November

2021 to 16 November 2022, a total of 933, 293 electronic passports have been issued. With almost two thousand Nepali youths exiting every day for overseas employment from the Tribhuvan International Airport, the Department of Passport remains a hub of activity, crowded and chaotic all the time. And as one of the most significant and clearly identifiable domestic face of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs dealing directly with such a huge number of Nepali youths' day-in and day-out, the Department of Passport needs to be adequately resourced and fully enabled to cope with such a massive public relations activity with ease and aplomb. Occasional questions raised in the public sphere about passport-related matters should be institutionally sorted out with due priority.

The Department's new initiative to prepare an inventory of the old Nepali passports as historical documents deserves appreciation.

It is evident from the discussions so far that passports were intermittently treated as obligatory or optional in response to the national needs and external conditions of the time. There was neither uniformity in the form of document issued by different states nor in the personal details of the bearer inscribed on it. In absence of an overarching institutional mechanism to deal with this "problem" collectively at the global level, it had just lingered. The advent of the League of Nations ushered a new beginning in this field.

The League and Passport Standardization

The League of Nations, created in the aftermath of the Great War, was a novel experiment in the areas of inter-state cooperation and collective security. The League's very brief existence often belies its profound significance in terms of its role as an exemplary initiative for institutionalizing the instruments of international peace, security, and cooperation. One of its early successful initiatives was in the area of standardization of the passport by engaging the Provisional Committee on Communications and Transit to take up the matter as early as possible. Accordingly, the International Conference on Passports, Customs Formalities and Through Tickets was held in Paris in October 1920 where the total abolition of the passport regime and a return to the prewar state of passport-free travel came for consideration. In the event, the Conference opined: "Being of the opinion, further, that the legitimate concern of every Government for the safeguarding of its security and rights prohibits for the time being, the total abolition of restrictions and the complete return to prewar conditions which the Conference hopes, nevertheless, to see gradually reestablished in the near future". One Western legal scholar summarizes the Conference recommendations as follows: "the establishment of uniform "international-type" of passport identical for all countries to supersede and replace all other types of passports currently in use; validity of the passport would be either two years with possible extension, or for a

single journey; the fee charged for issuing a passport was not to be of a fiscal character or based on discrimination with respect to nationals and non-nationals” (Turack: 231) “The “international-type” of passport proposed by the Conference would contain 32 pages, would be drawn up in at least two languages, and would be in a booklet form bound in cardboard, bearing the country’s name at the top, the coat of arms in the centre and the word “Passport” at the bottom. Each government was at liberty to include any additional information in the passport which might assist the bearer. A new passport would be issued whenever a passport’s pages were filled. It was contemplated that the “international-type” passport would be introduced by 1 July 1921 at the latest” (Turack: 231). The exact size of the international type of passport recommended by the League was to be fifteen-and-a-half by ten-and-a-half centimetres. The Paris Conference of the League had also made recommendations regarding officials who could be granted diplomatic passports.

It is worth noting that the League’s focus at that time was only on how to facilitate international passenger traffic by rail, which was hindered by passport and customs formalities, as well as by the difficulties of obtaining through tickets in the immediate post-war situation.

Six years later, in 1926, the Second Passport Conference convened by the League Council opened in Geneva on 12 May 1926. The Sixth Assembly of the League had recommended “that steps be taken towards suppressing the passport regime to the widest extent possible, in order to mitigate the disadvantages and expenses perpetuated by that system.” The question of abolition of the existing passport regime was once again on the agenda for discussion. But the meeting once again came to the conclusion that time had not yet arrived for such a drastic decision. With this, the only way ahead was to make joint endeavours by member states towards developing a more efficient, less cumbersome and more travel-friendly passport regime for international travellers. The Conference stood in support of the international-type of passport and called for its wider use with certain improvements as annexed in its report. The Conference also, among others, recommended for at least two-year or even five-year validity for passports, covering all countries of the world as far as possible, and without being guided by the motive of revenue collection.

In September 1927, the issue of “travel facility for persons without nationality” or “of doubtful nationality” was taken up at the Third General Conference on Communications and Transit. The Conference recommended “Identity and Travelling Document” instead of “Passport” to be granted to such people. Follow up enquiries on the status of implementation of the recommendations of the 1926 Conference confirmed that most of these were generally accepted and applied. Some bilateral passport waiver agreements were also reported to have been concluded. But overall, it was a work in progress.

Meanwhile, the League of Nations must also be given due credit for successfully instituting in 1922 what came to be known more generally as the Nansen Passport, initially targeting the Russian refugees, and later extended to the Armenians, Assyrians, Assyro-Chaldeans and Turks (Reale: 507).

The UN Inherits the task

The United Nations inherited some of the League's unfinished tasks when it came into being on 24 October 1945. The subjects of passport and frontier formalities came within the purview of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). In the immediate post-Second World War environment, interest in the international regime of passports once again revived. The ECOSOC in its second session adopted a resolution which conceived of a meeting of experts to prepare for a World Conference on Passports and Frontier Formalities. Accordingly, a Meeting of the Committee of Experts held in Geneva in April 1947 came to the conclusion that "the general abolition of the requirement that a passport be carried for purposes of international travel is not feasible at present; but bilateral or multilateral agreements to waive such a requirement should be encouraged on a basis of reciprocity." The meeting also recommended that "The 'international-type' of passport recommended by the Conferences in 1920 and 1926, or an improved version which takes account of the characteristics of the international type, should be generally used."

Meanwhile, the Report and recommendations of the Committee of Experts together with the Council's view that "it was desirable to reduce, simplify and unify passport and other frontier formalities to the point that it would be consistent with national security" were conveyed to the Member States for consideration. As a final recommendation, the meeting of experts suggested that "ECOSOC, after a suitable interval, consider the desirability of a further meeting of experts being convened to review progress". From that point on, the subject was moved to a new platform under the United Nations itself and was taken up at the United Nations Conference on International Travel and Tourism held in Rome in August 1963. The Rome Conference concluded that the passport being "the most suitable international travel document", it could not find it feasible to recommend their abolition. Nevertheless, all governments were invited to examine their passport laws and regulations periodically so as to get them simplified progressively without compromising their national interests and security. Several other recommendations including decentralization of the passport offices, an initial period of five year validity with provision for an equal period of renewal, valid for travel to all countries as far as possible were also made.

On 6 December 1963 the ECOSOC, after considering the report of the Conference, adopted Resolution 995 (XXXVI) calling on all UN Member States and the Specialized Agencies to consider and implement the recommendations of the Conference, and requesting the Secretary-General to report to it during 1966 on the state of acceptance and application of the recommendations which the Secretary-General duly

accomplished on 6 January 1966, with some additional information appended to it as late as 8 June 1966. Henceforth, travel and passport issues started getting linked more and more to the national security concerns as the aviation industry made new strides in mechanical safety standards and technological sophistication making air travel increasingly more affordable, safer, preferable and popular.

The ICAO comes in

“One of the interesting facts about the modern passport regime is that despite call for one in 1947 there was never an international passport conference”, writes Salter (p. 85). Instead, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), one of the seven technical specialized agencies, which “works to arrive at international civil aviation standards and practices for a safe, efficient, secure, economically sustainable, and environmentally responsible civil service sector” was brought in to deal with the passport standardization work so that swift passage of air passengers through the airport border controls could be ensured. The ICAO began work on machine readable travel documents in 1968 with the formation of a Panel on Passport Cards. The Panel recommended, among others, “the adoption of optical character recognition (OCR) as the machine reading technology of choice for reasons of maturity, cost-effectiveness and reliability.” The Panel’s specifications and guidance material were published as the first edition of the now famous Doc 9303, titled *A Passport with Machine Readable Capability* in 1980. The USA became the first country to issue an MRP in 1981, followed shortly by Canada and Australia. The G8 countries as a group agreed to implement a biometric passport system in May 2003. The ICAO Doc 9303 has undergone several revisions in the last forty years, and its latest 2021 edition (eighth) consists of an elaborate 13-part manual under the title Machine Readable Travel Documents (MRTDs).

ICAO’s leading role in developing “standard specifications for passports and other travel documents” emanates from the Convention on International Civil Aviation (the Chicago Convention) which mandates the Organization to develop and maintain international standards and recommended practices in relation to passports under Annex 9—*Facilitation*. Accordingly, ICAO member states approved a new standard in 2005 that required all states to begin issuing MRPs by April 2010, while also setting the cut-off date for all non-machine readable travel documents to November 2015. By September 2022, 164 countries are reported to have already started issuing ePassports or biometric passports. ICAO claims that “the physical characteristics and data security features of the documents themselves offer strong defence against alteration, forgery and counterfeit” while “adoption of the standardized format for the visual zone of an MRTD facilitates inspection by airline and government officials, with the result that clearance of low-risk traffic is expedited, problem cases are more readily identified, and enforcement is improved.”

Thus, the passport as a document in constant evolution has now arrived at a level of much higher sophistication underpinned by technological advancement consonant with the evercomplex twenty-first century security needs of the member states of ICAO and the larger welfare interests of mankind as a whole.

Conclusion

Having defiantly resisted repeated earlier attempts to abolish it, the passport continues to remain an essential identity document for an international traveller today. Its evolution has been long and incremental, gradually adopting new technologies while also constantly adapting to the dictates of the time. Until the early twentieth century, a single sheet of paper with descriptions of identifiable bodily features and externally visible body marks of the bearer were inscribed on the passport. Photographs became a mandatory requirement in the U.S. since the end of December 1914. It is fascinating to recall an apparently incredible but a factual reality that until 1929 hand irons were used to dry the liquid glue applied to affix photographs on the U.S. passports, often getting them scorched and damaged in the process. Hand irons were replaced by automatic electric irons in that year. It took another three decades to have them Teflon coated for improving their protective performance. Now all that is history.

Hard cover passport booklets were introduced in the early 1920s when the League of Nations came in and began work on passport standardization. After 1945, the United Nations inherited the task as a continuing process. By the 1960s, ICAO's leading role was considered a must in the entire process of passport standardization in keeping with the mandates of the Chicago Convention of 1944. With the first publication of ICAO Doc 9303 in 1980, the age of MRTDs began in earnest. By November 2015, the final count down for globally adopting a new regime of ePassports came to an end. By September last year, 164 countries had already started issuing ePassports or biometric passports. In this evolutionary process, we notice that early passports were just in the nature of a safe conduct letter and a good travel facilitator, whereas today's passports are more prone to suspicion and deeper scrutinization at the entry points often inhibiting rather than facilitating travels. Global adoption of the ePassport with an embedded biometric identification system clearly highlights the heightened security concerns of the state and their pressing surveillance needs. One British author even likens the advent of the Machine Readable Passport to George Orwell's surveilling Big Brother in *1984* (Lloyd: 132).

Passports have a long history. They symbolize an important aspect of state sovereignty in a most visible manner. Since states always prize their sovereign rights above everything else, they are least likely to let the passport go. So, we will continue to have it, will continue to have to face it, and will continue to have to deal with it. We have certainly reached a much more advanced and sophisticated stage of the passport technology at our service today. However, let us not forget that evolution is a process,

not a destination. A continuous search for new ways of handling old issues is a sure sign of progress and advancement of the human mind.

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Journey Through Malaysia: A Diplomat's Diary



- Hari Kumar Shrestha¹

Nepal's embassy in Bangkok looked after the interests of Nepali nationals in Malaysia before the establishment of residential mission in Kuala Lumpur in 2003. After Malaysia opened Nepal as a source country for migrant workers in 2001, the number of Nepali youths heading for Malaysia increased exponentially from 'trickle to torrent' in a short period of time. It was not feasible to provide consular services from Bangkok to the surging number of Nepali workers in Malaysia and to look after their welfare. Hence the government decided to open the residential mission in KL in 2003, and assigned Shri Deepak Dhital, who had been serving as Deputy Chief of Mission in the embassy of Nepal, Bangkok, as Charge d Affaires a.i. I happened to be his immediate successor.

Malaysia was a preferred destination to Nepali youths for foreign employment for many reasons. Malaysia - also popularly known as Malaya in Nepal - had a strong Gurkha connection. Gurkha soldiers serving in the British army had valiantly fought against the brutal communist insurgency in Malaysia soon after its independence. The historic Gurkha connection worked as a strong motivating factor for thousands of Nepalis to swarm in Malaysia for jobs. The push factors were also equally compelling. During the turbulent years of the Maoist armed conflict in Nepal, thousands of Nepali youths headed for the Gulf countries of the Middle East and Malaysia in search of job and livelihood.

However, Malaysia was no longer the same place seen by the first generation of Gurkha soldiers and their families. It had changed beyond recognition in the fifty years since its independence from Britain in 1957. In a relatively short period of time, Malaysia had transformed from a plantation and mining economy to a modern export-oriented manufacturing and service economy. Its spectacular economic growth was propelled mainly by the export-led manufacturing growth for which it heavily relied on cheap foreign workers. Malaysian companies followed the path of low wage and low cost model in manufacturing sectors to bring down cost and become competitive in international markets. Malaysia's labour laws were also heavily tilted in favour of

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the industries rather than the workers as that they lacked even the basic provisions of minimum wages for workers and the trade union rights.

Reality Check

My first day in office was a reality check of some sort - a pattern that almost repeated till my departure from Malaysia. I had not even imagined that I would land in a soup on the very first day of my joining the office when I was greeted by about a hundred Nepali workers assembled in the embassy premises with their bags and baggage seeking emergency help from the embassy. On my first day in office, and with little briefing on labour issues, I did not have much clue or practical solution to the problems of picketing Nepali workers. However, one thing that I could do was to listen to their grievances closely and carefully.

After patiently listening to their grievances, I could derive some common elements of their problems: non-payment of wages as per the employment contracts, poor working conditions, and harassment by the employers. Those were common problems faced by the workers, which we had to deal in coming days and months. Of course, there was no immediate solution to those problems. Moreover, part of the problems had their origin in Nepal, and their solution needed to be found in our own country. Also, many workers had come to Malaysia with unrealistic expectations duped by unscrupulous agents. That needed to be corrected on our home front through adequate information and trainings of workers before their landing in destination countries.

After patient hearing to the workers, my gut feeling somehow told me that if the workers were not paid as per their contractual agreement, they had every reason to seek remedy, and had every right to go back to their country if their problems were not addressed. With that strong reasoning, we negotiated with the company representatives throughout the whole day. It was a tough negotiation: they had their own story about negligence, inefficiency, and absenteeism of workers, which were hardly tolerated in the disciplinarian work culture of Malaysia.

The company representatives eventually came around for a negotiated settlement as large number of workers had walked out from work, which had immediate bearing on keeping the factory running. They agreed to retake the workers and settle their dues but they would not compromise on the target set for each worker - a basic parameter generally observed in factories. It was a long and hard tripartite negotiation but I was happy that my first day in office ended with some positive outcome. That experience provided me a practical guide for dealing with the workers' problem in future.

My first outing outside KL came after a few months' time as I had to rush to the Cameron Highlands to seek first-hand information about the wellbeing of Nepali workers employed in a vegetable farm, whose living quarters were gutted by fire. It was

about four hours' drive to reach the place from KL driving through the expressway up to Ipoh - an industrial town in the north of peninsular Malaysia, and passing through a winding road that resembled to Nepal's hilly roads.

Cameron Highlands was named after William Cameron, a British government surveyor, who discovered the plateau in 1885 during a mapping expedition of the Titiwangsa range in central-western Malaysia. Later, the British developed it as a hill station as the place was blessed with pleasant weather. The weather condition and topography is ideal for growing seasonal fruits, vegetables, various kinds of flowers, and for tea plantation. Malaysia has plenty of land resources but it has only few places like the Cameron Highlands suitable to grow seasonal fruits and vegetables. The place is known for high-value farming and is a must visit place to see and learn the techniques of intensive cultivation.

I did not have the luxury of sightseeing tour of the Highlands; instead I directly headed to the site, which was adjacent to a vegetable farm. Nepali migrant workers working in tea gardens, vegetable farms, and flower orchards in the Highlands mostly lived in tin sheds near the farms. That unfortunate incident caused from electric short-circuit had damaged the manager's quarters, workers' huts, and also the plastic green houses. Luckily, there had been no human casualties as the accident happened in the daytime when the workers were in the field.

Nepali workers working in the Highlands were mostly from Rasuwa and some remote parts of Myagdi district of western Nepal. For them, the Cameron Highlands was as remote place as their own home villages in Nepal. Having worked for years in vegetable farms, they had not even seen the Petronas Twin Towers. Their only monthly outing had been to the sleepy town of Ipoh for sending their hard-earned remittances back home.

In the evening, I met the chairman of Small Farmer's Association of the Cameron Highlands, who shared with me the experience of high value farming, and thriving agro-business in the Highlands. Scarcity of suitable land and small holdings in the Highlands had necessitated the farmers to adopt to intensive farming by using best technology. Meanwhile, agro-business in the Cameron Highlands had flourished by the innovative way of its own supply chain. The cut flowers produced in the Highlands would reach the Japanese market in three-day's time while fresh fruits and vegetables would reach the Singaporean kitchens the next day.

Besides, similarity of terrain between Nepal's hilly areas and the Cameron Highlands, there was a great deal of fascination towards Nepal and Nepali people among the old generation of people living in the Highlands. The thread was connected by the Gurkhas serving in the British Army during the counter insurgency operation in Malaysia. At the peak of the insurgency, a garrison of the British Gurkhas was based

in the Highlands to fight the elusive communist insurgents. The elder generation of people living in the Highlands still have a vivid memory of short and sturdy Gurkhas, displaying their trademark 'khukuri' during regular morning drills.

However, the impression of smart and fair-skinned Gurkhas among the Malaysian people was put to a back burner by thousands of migrant Nepali workers pouring in Malaysia as ordinary workers. Among them were shabby looking Nepalis coming to the Cameron Highlands for menial jobs.

Gurkha Cemetary in Ipoh and Gurkha Village at Rawang

Soon after its independence from Britain, a violent communist insurgency swept in the hinterlands and rural areas that posed a great political and security challenge to Malaysia. The ideologically-driven insurgents were able to capitalise support of rural peasants, and the domestic terrain being favourable, was most suitable for their guerrilla operations. The communist insurgents in Malaysia were considered to be one of the formidable rebels in the region, who had once come close to the nation's capital - KL. The sophistication and the level of their preparedness for a protracted insurgency was evident from a fortified underground bunker, which the insurgents had built and operated in the town of Port Dickson - just ninety km south of the capital. The underground bunker, which has now become a major tourist attraction, had a good facility of command and communication, and even served as a field hospital for treatment of the wounded comrades.

Malaysia ranks among a few textbook case of the successful counter-insurgency operation, crafted by its former British colonial masters. The war against the insurgents was simultaneously fought in the dense tropical forests of Malaysia, and against the deeply mired poverty and destitution of rural peasantries. In that pursuit, the Malaysian government launched a massive agrarian reform programme aimed at uplifting the lives of rural people. Those measures proved to be highly effective in isolating the insurgents from their rural support base. Meanwhile, ideological support to the insurgents also gradually waned in the subsequent years as the red communism witnessed a series of debacles in South-East Asia. The insurgents also faced setbacks in the jungle warfare when they were pushed further deep inside the jungle from mopping-up and combing operations carried by the formidable Gurkhas, who had already earned fame as the finest soldiers in the world.

During the height of the deadly insurgency, the British Army had deployed around fifteen thousand British Gurkhas in Malaysia for combat and sweeping operation before the insurgents were decimated with their few remnants pushed to the border of southern Thailand. However, the victory over the determined and the ideologically-driven insurgents did not come that easily. The rebels had inflicted heavy toll on the security forces, including the British Gurkhas. More than one thousand Gurkhas

are recorded to have lost their lives fighting brutal war against the insurgents in the inhospitable tropical rainforests of Malaysia.

The unparalleled valour and bravery of the Gurkhas are still deeply embedded in the memory of the older generation Malaysian people, who consider the Gurkhas as their saviour. The heroic sacrifice of the Gurkhas in the most critical juncture in the history of Malaysia was duly recognised as Malaysia's first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman visited Nepal to express sincere tribute to the Gurkhas who had shed their blood during the most critical juncture in the post-independence period in the history of Malaysia.

However, with the passage of time, memory of the Gurkhas among the current generation of Malaysians has gradually withered away since they have grown up in relative prosperity, and with scant historical knowledge about the valiant sacrifice of the Gurkhas to their homeland. Taking this reality into account, the Gurkha Veterans Association of Malaysia, and other war veteran's organizations have made laudable initiatives in recent years to enliven the history of the Gurkhas and their heroism by observing annual Remembrance Day to pay tribute to the fallen Gurkhas at the Gurkha Cemetery in Ipoh – a town located some 150 km north of KL.

The Gurkha cemetery is situated adjacent to the vast cemetery of the British officers killed during the Second World War and the insurgency period in Malaysia. The cemetery is distinctly marked by the names of fallen Gurkha soldiers, whose plaques stand in rows - Gurungs, Magars, Rais, Limbus, and others, who sacrificed lives in their prime age fighting battles in dense tropical forests of Malaysia. There are also names of women and children in the cemetery, presumably killed in the crossfire or dead from such common diseases as malaria or typhoid. It was an emotional moment for all us present in the memorial service when the last post was played in honour of the fallen comrades by the Gurkha soldiers specially brought from neighbouring Brunei for the service.

It was also fitting tribute to the Gurkhas and due recognition of their heroic sacrifice when the Malaysian government during the premiership of Dr. Mahathir Mohamad allotted a plot of forest land in Rawang - some forty km north of KL, to Nepali diaspora living in Malaysia to develop it as a Gurkha Village. The whole idea behind the Gurkha Village was to develop it as a living museum and to preserve and promote distinct Nepali identity and cultural heritages in Malaysia. However, the dream project of Gurkha Village has yet to materialise owing to lack of community leadership and the resources crunch of small number of Nepali diaspora scattered in various parts of Malaysia.

Little Nepal in KL

Like China Towns and Little India that we see in many parts of the world, Nepali community in Malaysia could also take a pride in Little Nepal in KL. This had been made possible by surging number of migrant Nepali workers in Malaysia, who were the harbinger of evolution and growth of Little Nepal in KL. It was a decrepit old quarter of KL - known as Kotaraya - where migrant Nepali workers gathered from early days on, which later came to be known as Little Nepal. Once the hub of the old town, Kotaraya had gradually lost its past glory after business and corporate offices moved to the shiny business district in the vicinity of the Twin Towers. Those glittering places were off-limit to hundreds of thousands of foreign migrant workers from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, Vietnam etc for their weekly gathering. Instead, Kotaraya area became a convenient place for ragtag foreign migrant workers from different countries for social gathering during weekends and holiday times.

Centrally located but relatively neglected, Kotaraya soon became popular among Nepali migrant workers as a meeting place. The main purpose for their gathering was to find ways and means to remit their hard-earned saving to their families in Nepal. It also provided an important venue for getting updates about Nepal and for sharing their trials and tribulations with each other. As necessity was mother of all inventions, it soon gave rise to remittance business, initially through informal *hundi* channel and later through registered remittance houses. Meanwhile, an ingenious Nepali entrepreneur had started remittance business in Malaysia by opening an office at Kotaraya, targeting mainly Nepali workers. In a short period time, International Money Express (IME) was able to win the workers' confidence as a safe and reliable means to remit their savings to Nepal. It soon became a household name in Nepal and a thriving remittance house, thanks to its monopoly business in Malaysia for many years.

After Bank Negara - the central bank of Malaysia - relaxed its policy on workers' remittance, many remittance companies entered remittance business in Malaysia. In a short time, dozens of new remittance houses from Nepal opened their branches at Kotaraya area alone. It had a multiplier effect to transform Kotaraya from a sleepy quarter to a thriving Nepali bazaar. The proliferation of remittance houses at Kotaraya also contributed to mushrooming growth of ancillary businesses in that locality: provision stores, retail outlets of electrical and electronic appliances, mobile phones, television sets, Nepali music CDs etc. owned mostly by Nepali businessmen. The place also became a hub to many Nepali restaurants, thanks to congregation of large number of Nepali workers during weekend and holiday time.

A leisurely walk at Jalan Silang area of Kotaraya during weekend or holiday time provided a real experience of Little Nepal. It gave a feeling of being at home away from home - cacophony of loud Nepali music, fresh smell of steamed *momo* and

authentic Nepali dishes coming from Nepali restaurants, and hundreds of Nepali youths mingling and chatting with each other. The place resembled as a real Little Nepal - Nepali youths coming from different parts of Nepal - from east to west, north to south, from *Himal*, *Pahad*, and *Madhesh* - forming a close mosaic of various shades, colours, and ethnicity living harmoniously in the foreign land.

Little Nepal at Kotaraya also provided a venue to Nepali youths for creative activities like literature, music, sports and other social events in their own ways. In spite of day-to-day ordeals faced by the workers, there was no dearth of promising youths who came with their creations in various genres of literary writings - touching pieces of poems, *gajhals*, *muktkas*, short stories, humours etc. In most cases, they were their own stories and the audience were also mostly drawn from their own ranks. Given my own time constraints, I would attend those functions and listen to their heart-rending stories.

It was also a preferred place for varieties of entertainment to migrant Nepali workers. As the number of Nepali workers ballooned in Malaysia, it also witnessed mushrooming growth of various Nepali social and cultural organizations. Those organizations were not overtly politicised since the Malaysian government did not allow any political activities for foreigners in its soil. Those Nepali organizations were primarily of social nature, and were active in organising various cultural programmes- *Loshars*, *Dashain*, *Tihar*, *Sakela* etc in their own way. Every year, such events were organised in KL and other cities in Malaysia in which reputed artists from Nepal were brought for cultural shows. No doubt, Kotaraya was a prime hub for such events.

Another thriving business at Kotaraya was the publication of tabloid Nepali newspapers - mostly in a two-page format, which covered news about Nepal downloaded from internet, gossips and masala stories, and advertisements of Nepali restaurants and shops. Those papers sold like hot cakes to migrant Nepali workers. The Malaysian government rules prohibited publication of foreign newspapers in the country without registration but the authorities had kept silence since those tabloids - published in Nepali language - were limited within the Nepali community. Moreover, they could hardly be considered as newspapers in a real sense as there were hardly any professional journalists involved to bringing out those papers. They were mostly the creation of novices doing copy and paste journalism by uploading senzational stories about Nepal to cater to the taste of workers.

As the concentration of Nepali business community gathered momentum at Kotaraya and as their business started to flourish, the place also became a fertile ground for petty crimes – burglaries, thefts, pick-pockets, muggings etc. The area soon became notorious playground for big criminal groups for their alleged involvement in extortion and ransom by intimidating and terrorising the Nepali business community. Ironically, a notorious Nepali criminal gang had become a major headache to Nepali business

community at Kotaraya as they were forced to pay monthly ransom to the gang. The criminal gang was eventually nabbed by special operation by the Malaysian police. It was an ugly side of Little Nepal in KL, which otherwise was a nice place to visit.

Property at Putrajaya

Since its establishment in 2003, the embassy was housed in a cramped rented office space at Jalan Ampang - the central business district of KL. The office space was barely sufficient to cater the needs of burgeoning number of Nepali workers, which had swollen each day. The area had witnessed significant rise in property price, and rental was considerably high. As such, major chunk of annual expenditure of the mission went on the payment of rental bill of the chancery and residences of diplomatic mission of the embassy.

Against that backdrop, it was high time for us to explore the possibility of acquiring a plot of land in the diplomatic enclave at Putrajaya - the administrative capital of Malaysia. Although the enclave was still in the planning stage, many diplomatic missions, including Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka from South Asia had already acquired property in the enclave. India had already built its chancery at Duta Street - once conceived as the diplomatic precinct in KL suburb. However, the Malaysian government later developed an exclusive diplomatic enclave at Putrajaya by clearing rubber plantation and palm forest. Since the diplomatic enclave at Putrajaya had limited scope for further expansion, we could have missed the boat if we had not made decision for acquiring property in Putrajaya right on time.

Located some 40 km south of KL, Putrajaya is the modern administrative capital of Malaysia. The city was Dr. Mahathir's brainchild to showcase Malaysia as a modern and developed country. While KL has gained prominence as Malaysia's financial and commercial hub, Putrajaya was planned to serve as the administrative capital and for residential purposes. In contrast to KL's skyline dominated by glass and steel skyscrapers and high-rise buildings, Putrajaya is aesthetically zoned in administrative quarters, residential districts, shopping areas, recreational centres, public parks and wetlands in a planned way.

One important feature of city planning of Putrajaya was an exclusive diplomatic precinct for foreign diplomatic missions. Although the diplomatic enclave was in early stage of development, the planning itself was quite impressive. It included an international school, a community centre, pedestrian walking area, and small but beautifully developed park. A small township was also being developed adjacent to the enclave to provide amenities and services to the diplomatic community such as groceries, stationery shops, supermarket, cafes and restaurants. It provided a good option for diplomatic missions, which did not have their own property in KL and had

been paying high rentals, to move to the diplomatic enclave at Putrajaya in the long run by acquiring suitable plot of land.

Putrajaya Corporation - a fully government-owned corporation was responsible for the development of the diplomatic enclave. The whole process acquiring property on the freehold basis was laid down in a transparent manner in the form of an agreement that included the price of allotted plots, mode of the payment, land registration, and handover of the property to the embassy. There was no involvement of third parties or commission agents in any stages of the deal. This made our task much easier to convince the ministry consider the embassy project at Putrajaya.

In the process, we organised a field visit for a technical team from Nepal consisting of representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finance Ministry, and the Department of Building and Physical Planning, who came to Malaysia for technical and financial assessment of the project. I was assigned as member-secretary of the team. The team promptly submitted a detailed report to the government with recommendation for acquiring a plot of land in the diplomatic enclave to meet the requirement of a medium-sized mission.

The report of the technical team provided a solid foundation for approval of the project by the government. However, it took almost a year for the sanction of budget for the project that was only released at the last leg of Nepali fiscal year 2007. Despite limited time period, the deal could be completed in stipulated time, including payment, transfer of the property, and registration of the land in the name of the embassy as it was the inter-governmental deal. Thus, we could proudly showcase the plaque of the Embassy of Nepal in our plot of land at the diplomatic enclave of Putrajaya. Ironically, after the lapse of 15 year's period, there has been no serious homework for its development.

Tourist Guide

With skeleton staffs, the embassy was heavily preoccupied with day-to-day labour issues that left us with limited window to explore other areas of fruitful cooperation with Malaysia. Besides foreign employment, there was great scope for Nepal's tourism promotion in Malaysia especially targeting young generation of Malaysians for sightseeing, holidaying, trekking and adventure tourism in Nepal. The promotion and marketing was the key for attracting Malaysian tourists to Nepal.

Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) and some travel tour operators from Nepal had been striving to get a foothold in emerging tourism market of Malaysia by organising some promotion and marketing events. The tourism promotion activities were mainly through the participation in various travel marts held in KL. However, Nepal's presence in such big events was less visible compared to other big actors - big airlines, prominent travel agencies and brand hotels aggressively marketing in such mega travel shows.

For a country like Nepal with limited resources, the pragmatic and sensible approach would have been to build strong support base through low cost but sustained promotional and marketing campaigns for Nepal's tourism industry. In that quest, familiarization trip - involving dedicated travel tour operators, travel writers, and media - both electronic and print media - was found to be an important tool for destination promotion.

Taking this into account, I personally took some extra time and efforts to take a select group of travel tour operators, travel writers, and media people from Malaysia for a week-long FAM trip to Nepal in the spring time of 2007. The trip was made possible with active support of Nepal Tourism Board (NTB), and the national carrier - the Nepal Airlines, which provided complementary round trip air tickets to FAM participants.

NTB charted an attractive week-long itinerary for FAM participants, which included white-water rafting in the Trishuli River, a short trekking of Annapurna circuit, home-stay experience at Sirubari, fascinating experience of sunrise from Sarangkot in Pokhara, night stay at Sauraha and elephant safari at Chitawan National Park. The nature has endowed Nepal with such enchanting natural beauties and rich and diverse cultural heritages that it has the potential to establish itself as a premier touristic destination.

The FAM participants were mesmerised from the breath-taking view of Machapuchre and the Annapurna range and their images reflected in the Fewa Lake. They were equally thrilled to have a fascinating view of the sunrise from Sarangkot hilltop, and the panoramic view of the Pokhara valley. The most exciting part of the FAM trip was a moderate day-long trekking from Lumle to the Austrian Camp. Located at an elevation of six thousand feet, the place had been popular to tourists for hiking and camping as it gave a commanding view of the Annapurna range, cluster of Gurung villages, and thick rhododendron forests in the vicinity.

After the trekking part, I left the team in the dependable hands of NTB liaison officer for the remaining part of FAM trip –Sirubari, Sauraha and Nagarkot as I had other pressing official business in Kathmandu. On the whole, the FAM trip was fruitful and rewarding as the print media journalists published a series of well-informed and first-hand account of their travel, including historical, cultural, and natural heritages of Nepal. The electronic media aired captivating travel show, with video footage they had captured during the FAM trip. It gave me an immense satisfaction to have been a tourist guide in our effort to promote Nepal in Malaysia.

Economics of Labour Migration

During ten years of violent conflict in Nepal, the national economy came under serious strain. The annual GDP growth rate saw a downward slide from 6 percent in the early Nineties to barely 2-3 percent in the subsequent decade. The industrial

production dwindled due to increased industrial unrest, disturbances, power outage, and occasional strikes called by labour unions. The flow of FDI dried as investors' confidence was badly shaken. The tourism sector, the major backbone of the national economy, was badly dented owing to the worsening security situation and occasional shutdowns. While imports continued to balloon, exports plummeted substantially, further worsening the country's balance of trade. By all accounts, the overall economic situation of the country was bleak.

During the most tumultuous period of internal conflict in Nepal, it was the workers' hard-earned remittance that provided succour to the beleaguered economy and prevented it from total collapse. During the peak of the conflict, more than 2 million Nepali youths were estimated to have left the country for foreign employment, mostly in the Gulf countries of the Middle East and Malaysia. The trend of labour migration has continued to grow unabatedly ever since to have reached to 4 million at present. Corresponding to the rise in labour migration, the workers' remittance in Nepal has also seen significant increase in recent years to reach the mark of US\$ 8 billion annually in 2021. Workers' remittance, which forms almost a quarter of the GDP, has now become the number one source of foreign exchange earning of the country superseding the tourism sector, and the export earnings.

Labour migration and workers' remittance have, therefore, assumed critical underpinnings in the country's economic and social development. Foreign employment has not only assumed prominence in development discourse but it has also become a core element of Nepal's foreign policy and economic diplomacy in recent years. This has been illustrated by the establishment of new diplomatic missions, particularly in various labour destination countries. Out of Nepal's 39 diplomatic missions abroad, several of them are located in the labour destination countries, mainly in the Gulf region, Malaysia, and South Korea, with primary responsibility of dealing the migrant workers' problems.

Labour migration has many facets – economic, social, and humanitarian as well. The outflow of large number of people in their prime age has also important implications on demographic and labour economics in the country. From the exodus of youth labour force, the country has experienced acute shortage of labour, particularly in farming and ancillary sectors. In several instances, burden of supporting the family and farming works has been left to female members or elderly people in the families.

The decline in agricultural production in Nepal, although not directly attributed to labour migration, has important consequences to the national economy. Once self-sufficient in food production, Nepal has now turned into a net food importer. Nepal also imports substantial amount of fruits, vegetables, livestock and dairy products to meet the domestic demand. As the country has seen rapid growth of urbanization and urban migration, demand for those items has also seen a steep rise in recent years. The

shortfall in the production of essential food stuffs to meet domestic demand has led to a huge pressure on the government treasury to foot the import bills every year. In this context, the opportunity cost of foreign employment and workers' remittance and their implications on the national economy has been a matter of in-depth study and policy discourse.

In many instances, labour migration has also invited unintended consequences on family and society. Increasing incidence of dislocation and disintegration of families are often attributed to labour migration. Long separation from family takes a heavy toll on family, especially on children and elderly and for their well-being. The psychological effects on children are often deep, which is manifested from rising cases of delinquent crimes, violence, drug addiction, high dropout rate in schools etc. There are also many instances of family break-ups, which have detrimental effects to the closely knit traditional family values and ethos.

While there is no doubt that the 'remittance dollars' have contributed to lifting sizeable population from poverty level in Nepal, it has also given rise to spending on unproductive sectors. Nepal Household Survey, 2012 revealed that more than sixty percent of workers' remittance was spent on unproductive activities such as buying real estate, building houses, purchase of consumer items, and on social spending. Only less than thirty percent was spent on productive activities like starting small businesses, such as poultry, livestock, horticulture etc.

Also, there has been substantial outflow amount as agency fees due to involvement of third party agents in the hiring process of workers, which has not been fully taken into account while calculating the aggregate amount of workers' remittance in the country. In most of the cases, manpower companies in Nepal do not have direct access to actual employer companies and have to rely on agents for recruiting workers and pay hefty commission fees to them. The cumulative amount paid by Nepali manpower companies to third party agents in various destination countries, mostly through informal *hundi* channel, could have been substantial. The third parties involvement in workers' recruitment process has also ethical and legal implications. Since their involvement is nowhere reflected in official documents in any stages of hiring workers, they have no responsibilities to workers' wellbeing in a legal sense. In many instances, workers have been subjected to exploitation from unscrupulous agents, but they are deprived from legal remedies.

There has also been a strong correlation between the rise in labour migration and growth of foreign airlines operating in Nepal. Many foreign airlines have operated daily flights from Kathmandu to the Gulf countries, Malaysia, and Korea in recent years and have benefited from lucrative business of ferrying thousands of Nepali workers to those countries. Some airlines have even deployed Nepali nationals as crew members and flight attendants to specifically cater to Nepali workers on board.

While Kathmandu airport witnessed large presence of foreign airlines, Nepal's own national flag carrier - Nepal Airlines - was fast shrinking, with limited fleet of aging planes. It was a lost opportunity for the national flag carrier to make fortune by catering service to its own Nepali nationals, whose number continued to surge whereas other foreign airlines had booming businesses in Nepal. The political interference and gross mismanagement of Nepal Airlines had virtually grounded the national flag carrier. Even in such a dire state also, its operation in the KL sector had saved Nepal Airlines from default because it enjoyed a near monopoly market in that sector.

The sustainability of labour migration and its long-term implications on the national economy have also been intensely debated in recent years. There has been an increasing tendency on the part of recipient countries to gradually reduce the dependence on foreign workers, and to create job opportunities for domestic workforce. Also, demand for jobs in labour intensive manufacturing sectors has seen significant reduction as many emerging economies have been moving from low wage manufacturing to high value production. This was the case with Singapore in 1980s, the model which has been replicated by many other emerging economies of South-East Asia and some Gulf countries as well. As such, there is no guarantee for destination countries to absorb a large number of foreign workers in low-end jobs in the years to come. Likelihood of sharp contraction in the demand for workers from those countries in the foreseeable future is real.

The most disturbing aspect of labour migration is the human cost as number of death tolls of Nepali migrant workers in their prime age is growing. It is not only in harsh desert climate of the Gulf countries of the Middle East but also in the moderate climatic condition of Malaysia that death rate of Nepali workers has been considerably high. The total death figures of Nepali workers in Malaysia, during my assignment in the embassy from 2005 to 2009, crossed more than 900 people - more than one death case in every two days. While some deaths occurred from industrial or traffic accidents, many death cases were found from sudden cardiac arrest. The reasons for workers' sudden fatalities were attributed to exhaustion, dehydration, poor nutrition, and from drinking binge. It was distressing for us in the embassy to sign death certificates of deceased workers, almost on a daily basis, for repatriation of their dead bodies to Nepal. To make the matter worse, death compensation of foreign workers in Malaysia was few and far between, except in industrial accidents.

The agony of family members in Nepal who lost their loved ones in foreign soil cannot be described in words. Contemporary Nepali folk music and folk songs revolve around the untold miseries of the loved ones toiling hard in the deserts of the Gulf countries and in sweating tropical heat of Malaysia, and melancholy of forlorn young wives longing for early reunion with their beloved. No doubt, life is hard in rural Nepal, and is particularly harsh for women and children who endure immense hardships in the

hope of decent lives that their sons and young husbands working abroad would bring for them. However, all are not that lucky to embrace their beloved ones coming home with hard-earned savings. The gloomy and sullen faces waiting at Kathmandu airport to receive the body bags of the deceased workers provides a vivid testimony that all is not well in the foreign employment sector.

In retrospect, the ramifications and overall implications of labour migration on family, society, and the nation at large are far more wide and deep than they are generally perceived. While workers' remittance has provided important cushion to the national economy and played significant part to safeguarding the economy from default, it is a stop-gap remedy and not a permanent solution to the country's economic prosperity. Numerous studies and empirical evidences in many countries have shown that labour migration and workers' remittance can temporarily fill the gap and support the national economy but cannot be a permanent solution. Researchers and analysts often cite the example of the Philippines, which possesses vast pool of educated and skilled human resources but has remained heavily reliant on foreign employment as the main source of foreign exchange earnings in the form of workers' remittance. Still, the country remained an economic backwater for long and lagged behind other emerging economies of the ASEAN region. In contrast, latecomers like Vietnam and Cambodia are fast catching up with other ASEAN economies through rapid industrialization of their economies by attracting foreign investment.

From above discussions, it is evident that foreign employment for many Nepali youths has been a matter of compulsion rather than a choice. It is therefore important for us to create job opportunities for young workforce in productive sectors in the country rather than making them reliant on foreign employment. Also, as the nature and scope of labour migration is gradually shifting towards more on high value production and services sector we need move from lowly paid manual jobs to skilled and semiskilled jobs for our workers through skill development programmes.

Vision 2020

When passed through the Federal Highway from KL to Port Kelang (the first expressway in Malaysia and a toll-free highway), one comes across an electronic billboard in front of the high ground of TV and Radio Malaysia flashing colourful image of *Wawasan 20:20* in Malay language, translated as 'Vision 2020' in English. Launched in 1991, the Vision 2020 - brainchild of Malaysia's long-serving Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad - envisioned a roadmap of a fully developed country status for Malaysia by the year 2020 - a country which was economically prosperous, socially harmonious, and politically matured democracy. The roadmap essentially embodied the characteristics of not only economic prosperity but also social and political transformation of the country.

Dr. Mahathir was a key architect to transform Malaysia from a sleepy backwater to one of the economic success stories of the ASEAN region in a short period of time. During his two decades-long iron fist prime ministerial role, Malaysia's economic landscape changed beyond recognition from a plantation and mining economy to a modern export-oriented manufacturing and service economy. During his administration, Malaysia achieved significant stride in infrastructure development, industrial growth, health, education, rural development and social progress.

The Vision 2020 engineered by Dr. Mahathir was essentially influenced from the Singaporean growth model, which had laid more emphasis on economic prosperity than political moderation. Dr. Mahathir and his successors also followed the similar strategy of liberal economic policy by opening the country for foreign investment but maintained a strong grip on political power. The futuristic vision of Dr. Mahathir is reflected in the Petronas Twin Towers - built on a secluded race course, which has now become the icon in KL's skyline. Once mimicked as Dr. Mahathir's folly, the shining and buzzing Twin Towers – only such edifice left in the world after the collapse of the World Trade Centre in New York from the terrorist attacks in September 2001 - have become a symbol of Malaysia's growing economic strength and its enhanced status in the region.

While Malaysia's economic growth progressed on a sound track, social fabric of the country has been fraught with delicate ethno-religious complexities. The ethno-religious divide and the concentration of wealth in smaller segment of population has the potential to unravel the delicate superstructure of the Malaysian nation-state. Dr. Mahathir, a realist and pragmatic politician was convinced that only rapid and sustainable economic growth could bridge the economic and social imbalance and bring political stability and social cohesion in the country.

In development discourse, parallelism is often drawn on the development experience of Malaysia with that of the African country of Ghana. Malaysia and Ghana - both gained their independence from the British colonialism at the same time in 1957. While the resource-rich Ghana was embroiled in a quagmire in ensuing years owing to governance failure and leadership crisis that led to deep political instability and military coups, Malaysia was able to leap-frog economically during Dr. Mahathir's strong authoritarian leadership.

With the rise of income and wealth, a sense of complacency and some degree of arrogance set in the ruling elites of Malaysia and its business leaders that gave rise to the fear of Malaysia sliding to the so-called 'middle-income trap'. The fear was not unfounded because Malaysia, once dubbed to be the next Asian tiger following the footsteps of Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea, trailed behind them. Meanwhile, the Asian financial crisis of 1997 seriously dented Malaysia's economy. Malaysia's spectacular economic growth in the Eighties and early Nineties decelerated

owing to the global economic slowdown. During the Asian financial crisis, the GDP recorded a negative growth rate for the first time in the economic history of Malaysia, with sharp decline of export growth and deep slump in the inflow of foreign investment.

The economic slump also posed a question mark on the sustainability of multi-billion dollars signature projects, such as the ill-fated 'crooked bridge project' linking the southern industrial city of Johor Bahru with Singapore to replace the existing causeway. The bridge project, which was a pet project of Dr. Mahathir's government, had to be aborted halfway through its construction phase as Singapore did not show enthusiasm to join the project. The government had also made huge investment to build a separate administrative capital in Putrajaya and a cyber-city named Cyberjaya in the outskirts of KL. The development of those grandiose projects was also slowed down in the post-Mahathir era as they incurred huge economic cost without commensurate benefits.

Meanwhile, large-scale corruption and financial scam came to surface, which seriously eroded the confidence of the people in the ruling party and the government. Bribery and corruption was thought to be widespread in the government bureaucracy, particularly in the agencies responsible for public services delivery. The National Economic Policy (NEP), introduced in 1970s for uplifting the marginalised Malay population and indigenous people - known as *Bhumiputras*, also came under growing criticism as the never ending policy for patronising the ethnic Malay population at the cost of other ethnic groups. The critics of the NEP contended that its continuation to present time was incomprehensible as it undermined meritocracy and engendered a differentiated society to further alienate the ethnic minority population.

Malaysia is a multi-religious, multi-ethnic, and multi-cultural society characterised by fragile inter-communal relationships. The violent ethnic riot in 1969 shattered the myth of '*One Malaysia*' and '*the Malaysian Uniqueness*' and exposed the delicate ethno-religious complexities and volatile communal relationships. The sense of insecurity from potential communal violence is still strong in the minority ethnic communities in Malaysia. The ruling Malay elites are also not immune from the fear of similar outbreak of ethnic conflict in the country. This may be the underlining factor that despite growing criticism, the Malaysian government refuses to repeal the infamous and draconian Internal Security Act (ISA), introduced in 1969 in the wake of the ethnic violence. The government has often invoked the Act to silence the opposition voice in the name of maintaining law and order. Analysts tend to believe that with its emphasis on economics rather than politics, Malaysia's economic progress during the past fifty years has been spectacular while its road to democracy has been incremental.

Also, broad-based and inclusive growth and development remains a key challenge to Malaysia as it has one of the highest Gini-coefficient in the region with large disparity in income levels in the population and widening rural-urban divide. The success of

Vision 2020 rests on the accomplishment reduction of income inequality, especially with respect to minority ethnic groups and underprivileged communities.

In retrospect, despite setbacks owing to domestic and external factors on the roadmap of Vision 2020 articulated by Dr. Mahathir, it still provides a guidepost for Malaysia to put Malaysia in the league of affluent countries of the world.

New Frontiers in Bilateral Relations

By the year 2007, the number of migrant Nepali workers in Malaysia had swollen to reach more than 3 hundred thousand people. The embassy, with just three diplomatic staffs and skeleton local staffs, was overstretched to deal with the problems of increasing number of workers. Besides, there existed vast potential to expand and deepen Nepal's bilateral relations with Malaysia in such areas as trade, tourism and investment, which had received scant attention as the embassy was heavily bogged down by the labour issues. Upgrading the mission had also become imperative from reciprocal consideration since Malaysia had already upgraded its embassy in Kathmandu at ambassadorial level.

The long overdue necessity of upgrading the mission finally came to fruition when the government, in a major foreign policy thrust, made a crucial decision in 2007 to upgrade Nepal's newly established diplomatic missions in Australia, Denmark, Israel, and South Korea as well as the missions in Malaysia and the United Arab Emirates to full-fledged ambassadorial level. It was a timely decision since some of those countries were Nepal's key development partners while others were important destinations to Nepali youths for foreign employment.

In succeeding years, human resources of the embassy was further strengthened as the government decided to send labour attaché in Nepal's diplomatic missions in major labour destination countries, including Malaysia. With added human resources, the embassy could now take up proactive initiatives in other important areas of bilateral cooperation with Malaysia, which had hitherto remained in the side lines. There exist tremendous potentials for deepening and expanding cooperation between Nepal and Malaysia in such areas as trade, tourism, and investment promotion, besides labour migration and workers' remittance, Nepal can take benefits from Malaysia's development experiences, particularly its success story in infrastructure growth and human resource development. Also, there is a great scope of attracting FDI from Malaysia in such priority areas as infrastructural projects and joint industrial ventures in Nepal. Similarly, Nepal can also attract huge number of Malaysian tourists, particularly young people for trekking, hiking and adventure tourism.

One of the most important elements of Nepal-Malaysia relations is the historical Gurkha connection, which can be capitalised for taking the bilateral relations to the next level. Malaysia highly values its historical relations with Nepal, especially the sacrifice of the Gurkhas during the most difficult period of the Malaysian history after gaining independence. Opportunities abound for expanding and deepening cooperation between the two countries for which sustained efforts are needed. Equally important is that we should come out from the present narrow horizon as a sending country of cheap migrant workers to Malaysia.

Goodbye Malaysia

As I completed my four year's tour of duty in the embassy in 2009, my journey through Malaysia also came to the close. Although stressful, my assignment in KL had been educative and fulfilling in many ways. I was immensely touched by the generosity and warmth of friendly people of Malaysia towards Nepal and Nepali people. I also had the opportunity to closely observe the break-neck speed of economic development that was taking place in Malaysia, and growing confidence of Malaysian people about their future. The attractive tourism marketing slogan of '*Malaysia: Truly Asia*' was more than a tourism brand to establish Malaysia in the global tourism map; it was also a dream project of Malaysia to showcase as an affluent and harmonious rainbow colour nation.

As I wrapped up my diplomatic journey and boarded Nepal Airlines flight to Kathmandu in November 2009, my heart and mind was still preoccupied with painful saga of migrant Nepali workers toiling hard in the foreign soil, which I had closely observed during my four year's stay in KL. The next day, when I reported to the ministry, my colleagues and friends were a bit surprised from my somewhat rundown physical appearance. The first question they asked me was: Have you got diabetes? Although I had not gone through regular health screening, I was pretty sure that I was not a diabetic patient. I was at a loss from their simplistic and naive worldview.

Nepal's Foreign Policy and Diplomacy: A Historical Perspective



- Mohan Krishna Shrestha¹

Indrajatra is one of the major festivals being celebrated in Kathmandu valley in early September. Kathmanduites celebrate this street festival with gusto and fanfare. On this day, living Goddess Kumari, believed to be a reincarnation of Goddess Bhagwati, is being carried by devotees in a chariot along with chariots of Bhairab and Ganesh. That day in Kathmandu Durbar Square area, thousands of people throng to witness this exciting and popular festival.

This Indrajatra day also has a deep significance in Nepal's history. On that fateful day in 1769 A.D, while people were celebrating this tumultuous festival, they never imagined that an incident of unimaginable proportion was destined to happen. The Gurkha King, Prithvi Narayan Shah's military force invaded Kathmandu from seven alleys. Such a blitzkrieg took the King and people quite perplexed. They were in ecstatic mood and totally defenseless. King Jaya Prakash Malla, ruler of Kathmandu, finding no way, fled and sought refuge in the nearby Taleju temple, later on, fled to Bhaktapur.

People of Kathmandu easily surrendered and accepted King Prithvi as their new King. In this way, without any opposition from anyone, King Prithvi very easily captured Kathmandu and secured the Throne. He later conquered Patan and Bhaktapur also, which were two other important principalities within the Kathmandu valley. Nepal, which was divided into 22/24 principalities was unified and a new country was born. King Prithvi's valiant and far-sighted military actions, in fact, was instrumental to make new and unified Nepal.

King Prithvi, securing the throne of unified Nepal, went to receive the blessings of Living Goddess Kumari, showing his obeisance to the cultural values and legacy of the local people. Unification process was thus accomplished in a consummate way.

To understand clearly about different stages of the evolution of Nepal's foreign policy and diplomacy, I have classified this process into following phases:

¹ *Ambassador of Nepal to France (2010-1014)*

First Phase

King Prithvi was a visionary leader of a strategic mindset. Soon after unifying the country, he noted that Nepal is like a '*Yam between the two Boulders*', meaning the country is soft and weak in comparison to the mighty neighbours in the North and South. He, therefore, cautioned the subjects to maintain cordial relations with both neighbours and never to antagonize them for any reason. This theory holds authenticity even today and carries important admonition to the Nepali people. His another famous dictum was that bribery is a great sin. It, therefore, should be punishable by law to both briber and receiver. He died at the age of 52 years without fulfilling his dream of making a strong Nepal.

King Prithvi was a military strategist and he devoted his life for the unification process of the country. He held anti-British conviction with foresight that the British harbored colonial ambitions during those days. He, therefore, invited French military advisers to train his military personnel and also produce muskets usable for the military.

Second phase

In the history of Nepal, another phase of strong leadership came with the rise of Prime Minister Bhimsen Thapa. He served the country from 1806 to 1837 A.D. He also favored French over British. French military advisers were invited to Nepal during his rule and trained military personnel. Prime Minister was said to be cruel and autocratic leader. He, therefore, faced many enemies. Ultimately his end came once he was charged for masterminding to kill a prince. He was imprisoned and given a very inhuman treatment as per historical facts. He committed suicide in jail after hearing the rumour that his wife was forced to parade nude in the city.

Third Phase

Another important phase in Nepal's diplomatic history came with the emergence of Jung Bahadur Rana as Prime Minister. During those days, Gagan Singh Thapa was a strong military person and was a close associate of the queen. He was assassinated by an unidentified assassin one day. Queen Rajendra Laxmi was furious and she commanded Jung Bahadur to find out the culprit. Seizing the opportunity to fulfill his ambition, Jung Bahadur ordered all top civilian and military personnel to assemble at Kot Palace near Hanumandhoka Durbar Square. It was on 14 September 1846 that the meeting was held in a very tense atmosphere and soon after, killings started. Jung Bahadur, his brothers and cohorts started massacring their enemies one by one. Blood stream flowed and it was presumed dozens of top civil, military and palace guards were murdered ruthlessly. Jung Bahadur easily controlled the situation. Subsequently, he was appointed as Prime Minister.

Soon after seizing power, Jung Bahadur made a rule to pass on the post of Prime Minister to his brothers on seniority basis. However, this system did not last long. Bir Shumsher, his nephew and son of his youngest brother Dhir Shumsher and his other brothers assassinated their uncle Prime Minister Ranodhip Singh and seized the power. Bir Shumsher was sworn in as new Prime Minister. Since then, the historical course of the country changed dramatically. Enmity between the descendants of Jung Bahadur and sons from Dhir Shumsher ensued for long.

Jung Bahadur was a ruthless leader with ambition. He was astute from the military and diplomatic point of view also. He travelled to Britain in 1850 A.D. and also visited France from 15 August to 10 October 1850 on his way back to Nepal. He pursued a policy of appeasement with the British rulers because he knew that in those days, Britain was the most powerful country both from military and economic points of view. This pro-British policy continued for almost 104 years until autocratic Rana rule came to an end in 1950.

Nepal and Britain fought a war between 1814 and 1816 A.D. and finally signed the Treaty of Sugauli. This treaty deprived Nepal of few districts in the southern terai region accounting to one fifth of its territory. During the rule of Jung Bahadur, a sepoy mutiny occurred in 1857 A.D. in Lucknow, India. Nepal sent military personnels to help British rulers under the leadership of Jung Bahadur himself. Nepali military forces were instrumental to quell the mutiny and establish peace. The British Government was pleased with this cooperation and wanted to reward Nepal. Jung Bahadur demanded the return of those lost districts of Banke, Bardia, Kailali and Kanchanpur. Demand was fulfilled and those territories were, subsequently, returned to Nepal. In this way, he was successful to retrieve our lost territories.

Historical facts indicate that when Jug Bahadur reached British seaport for a visit to the country, custom officials demanded to open the luggage of his entourage. Jung Bahadur argued that he is the Prime Minister of a sovereign country, and such actions are unacceptable. He even threatened to return without officiating the visit. In those days, bargaining for gun salutes were also demanded on protocol basis showing the integrity of a sovereign country. Jung Bahadur also died early.

For the next 104 years from 1846 to 1950, successive Rana Prime Ministers ruled the country in an autocratic manner, making sovereign monarchs' titular and powerless Heads of State. During this long period, Nepal's foreign policy basically remained pro-British. Nepal did not have any sort of relations with other countries except the establishment of diplomatic relations with USA and India in 1947 and with France in 1949. During this period, Nepal and India signed a Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1950. Some of its clauses of the Treaty have attracted attention in Nepal for thier amendments.

The popular revolution of 1951 ended the Rana Rule and ushered in an era of democracy with the joint efforts of King Tribhuvan and the political leaders.

Fourth Phase

From 1951 to 1960, Nepal pursued an active and timely foreign policy. First among all actions, Nepal was admitted to the United Nations as a member on 14 December 1955 and subsequently, joined other UN specialized agencies like, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNFPA, ILO, WHO and many others. These specialized agencies have been providing technical and financial assistance to developing countries in the fields of education, health, labor, women and children. Further, Nepal also joined Bretton Woods institutions like World Bank, International Monetary Fund, International Finance Corporation. Nepal also became a member of Asian Development Bank based in Manila. By now, Nepal has also become a member of the newly established Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank based in Beijing.

During late 1950s and 1960s, many countries, specially, in Asia and African continents, were under the yoke of colonialism. After the establishment of the United Nations, a process of decolonization began and several countries around the globe, became free from colonial grips. Nepal knew the value of remaining free from colonialism. Nepal has had a proud history of independent state even during colonial heydays.

In 1955, Afro-Asian Conference was held in Bandung of Indonesia. It was attended by many Asian African countries. Nepal also sent a high-level delegation to the conference. It was a precursor to the establishment of Non-Aligned Movement. NAM was, thus born, under the leadership of then leaders, Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, President Soekarno of Indonesia, and Joseph Broz Tito of Yugoslavia. Nepal's delegation was led by Maj.Gen. Sobhag Jung Thapa and other delegates were Prof. Ram Prasad Manandhar, Prof. Yadu Nath Khanal, Prof. Naresh Man Singh and Col. Padma Bahadur Khatri.

NAM successfully attracted countries which did not join either North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or Warsaw Pact Countries. At present, there are 120 member countries in NAM and its triennial summits are being held smoothly.

Fifth Phase

The First Summit of NAM was held in Belgrade, Yugoslav capital in 1961. It was attended by King Mahendra as the leader of the Nepali delegation. Since then, NAM summits, held every three years, have been attended at the level of either the Head of the State or Head of the Government. It shows how much importance Nepal attaches to this movement. Among many other pious objectives, enhancing South-South cooperation is of special attraction and importance to many developing countries, including Nepal.

In 1961, Nepal achieved a milestone in international diplomacy. It was the appointment of Nepal's Permanent Representative to the United Nations. Dag Hammarskjöld of Norway was elected as the Second Secretary-General of the United Nations. But his life came to an end, rather too early, in the tragic plane crash in the Katanga region of Congo when he was flying with his entourage in a UN mission. The incident brought a big uproar at the international level. A commission for the investigation of the incident was constituted by the UN Secretary General. Mr. Rishikesh Shah, our Permanent Representative and Ambassador was appointed as its Coordinator. It was a huge and important task entrusted to Nepal due to her impartial and neutral character. It was barely six years after Nepal was admitted to the UN system and this responsibility came on her shoulder.

Since joining the UN organization, Nepal had remained effortful to contribute in all possible ways to further the objectives and principles of the UN.

The world was fraught with many hot-spots with intra and inter-state wars. Peace and stability were elusive in many parts of the world. UN started sending peacekeeping forces to such trouble spots to maintain peace and security. Nepal also started sending peacekeepers under UN to troubled countries since 1958. Thousands of Nepalese military and police personnel have rendered their unbiased and honest services. Dozens of our peace-keeping personnel have lost their precious lives while rendering services. At present also, Nepalese peace-keepers are serving in many conflict-prone countries like Burundi, Lebanon, Congo, South Sudan, Yemen and many others.

During 1961 to 1990 period, Nepal was ruled by party-less Panchayat system. But, Nepal's foreign policy was intact and committed to the Non-Aligned principles. Nepal never wavered in her commitments to the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference, peaceful solution of the problems, non-use of territory by foreign forces and enhancement of mutual cooperation.

In February 1975, one very significant and notable step was taken by Nepal. At the dinner hosted in honour of international guests on the eve of King Birendra's coronation, Nepal proposed to be declared a ***Zone of Peace (ZoP)***. It was guided by Nepal's earnest desire to remain peaceful and stable. ZOP was supported by a total of 116 countries. But our big southern neighbor never supported it. With the restoration of the multi-party system of government in 1990, ZOP proposal has been lost in the backyard. In a trouble-infested world, such ZOP concept would surely contribute to the maintenance of peace and stability. Peace, progress and stability are required everywhere in the world for humans to live decently.

Nepal also played an effective and active role in the Convention on the Law of the Sea which was signed in Montego Bay of Jamaica in 1982. Although a landlocked country, Nepal voiced her opinions in this treaty, as loudly as possible, since our foreign trade is mostly conducted through seas.

Nepal was elected as a Non-Permanent member of the Security Council twice in 1967-1968 and 1988-1989.

Sixth Phase

In 1990, with the restoration of multi-party system of Government, Nepal continued to pursue non-aligned foreign policy. On diplomatic front, Nepal began establishing diplomatic relations with many countries of Asian, African, European and Latin American continents. Diplomatic relations provide common platform for exchanging cooperation in the international fora where common international issues are dealt with.

By now, there are 193 member countries in the UN organization where even micro-states like Vatican, Monaco, as well as, large states like Russian Federation, Canada, USA and China also hold the same status and voting rights. UN is a platform where, every nation, irrespective of its size and strength can air her voice to be heard. A country can pursue foreign policy and diplomacy together. Good diplomats run effective foreign policies. Say of a learned leader weigh much in national politics and diplomacy.

In 1996, Government incorporated a new and relevant element in its foreign policy for more effective realization of foreign policy goals. Economic diplomacy was made an integral part of the foreign policy. It carried six main objectives to begin with, i.e. tourism promotion, export promotion, foreign direct investment, water resources development, foreign employment opportunities and increment in foreign aid. All these objectives are an integral and most important part of the national economy. Various programs and projects are being implemented for their promotion on a continued basis, carrying both the domestic front and abroad.

Seventh Phase

On 15 May 2008, Nepal ushered in a completely new political system - a Federal Democratic Republic. This ended the 239 years' monarchical system. A new constitution was promulgated on 20 September 2015. Nepal has enshrined her foreign policy based on Non Alignment and commitment to the UN Charter and international laws in all succeeding effects of constitution-writing.

Nepal's foreign policy objectives

Nepal is pursuing a foreign policy to enhance the dignity of the nation by safeguarding sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence, and promoting economic wellbeing and prosperity. It is also aimed at contributing to global peace, harmony and security.

Nepal's foreign policy is guided by the following basic principles:

1. Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty;
2. Non-interference in each other's internal affairs;
3. Respect for mutual equality;
4. Non-aggression and the peaceful settlement of disputes;
5. Cooperation for mutual benefit;
6. Abiding faith in the Charter of the United Nations;
7. Value of world peace.

Nepal fully adheres to the principles of Non-Aligned Movement, Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law. Nepal is actively pursuing an independent foreign policy keeping in mind these sound principles.

Countries, irrespective of their sizes, find the United Nations as a true platform where they can air their state policies on international issues. This author has seen representatives from tiny Seychelles island nation (458 sq. km.) and Bahrain, a pearl shaped tiny island nation in the middle-east (707sq.km.) speaking volubly at UNGA. UN's principles are based on sovereign equality. It is, therefore, an equal platform for all countries.

One issue which always pinpricks me is that over 67 years of our membership in the UN, we have not availed an opportunity to be elected as the President of UNGA. Whereas, Bangladesh, born just in 1971 and Maldives, a country of 1142 tiny islands, have presided over the UNGA, as elected President. This is a pertinent issue which Nepal must take seriously and in the coming days.

A piece of happy news is that, recently, our Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Amrit Bahadur Rai was entrusted with the task of conducting UNGA sessions by its President. He also chaired the Second Committee on Economic and Finance issues making a double whammy.

Barely new year 2022 had dawned, the world saw an unprecedented scenario on 24 February 2022. Ukraine being invaded by mighty Russian Federation on geo-political grounds. Despite ten months of horrendous war, there is no sign of its ending. While thousands of precious lives have been lost and material damage is almost unaccountable, a more suffocating point is that there has not been any serious efforts

from world leaders to end the war. Rather, countries are being divided for and against the war. What a travesty in this civilized world of the 21st century. Scenes of incessant bombing and use of mammoth weapons are horrible.

Nepal has been following an independent foreign policy since long. One good step is continuous establishment of diplomatic relationships. Nepal has established diplomatic relations with 177 countries out of 193 member countries of the UN. We have also established a total of 39 diplomatic missions so far. In the changing context in the international scenario, we need a proactive foreign policy which is in tune with changing times.

Problems of yester-year are being replaced by newer problems. In today's world, even the principle of sovereignty and territorial integrity are being trampled. Cyber-crimes are increasing. Climate change is posing a serious threat even to the humanity's survival. Gulf between the rich and poor nations are widening and prosperity looks like an island in the ocean of poverty. Science and technology has achieved much progress. At the same time, formidable vulnerabilities and threats have emerged which have bearings on the survival of mankind.

Where We Are Now

We are landlocked and least developed but not poor and destitute. In fact, from a geographical point of view, we are number 94, from population point of view we are 49th, and from Gross Domestic Product point of view we are 103 as of now. We have enough natural and human resources. Of course, we should have been much more developed and richer by now. But reverse is the truth. There is too many self-centered politics and politicization in the country. But we can hope that with the changing times, more powerful and visionary leaders will emerge to lead our beloved country to progress and prosperity. We need to promote freedom, human rights, transparency, accountability, efficient administration and, most importantly, curb corruption until it comes to an end.

What We Need to Do From Now On:

1. In Diplomatic Field

For small and developing countries, active and efficient diplomacy is a powerful medium to promote her national interests. It is, therefore, inevitable that Nepal must pursue an active professionalized and forward looking diplomacy. Capable and committed persons must be appointed as ambassadors. And such appointees must work for the promotion of the country's varied interests. The government must ensure adequate financial and human resources to the Embassies so that they are facilitated for formulation and implementation of good policies to promote our interests in the countries they are appointed to. Evaluation on the performance of our Ambassadors

is a must. Nepal cannot afford to waste time and financial resources on inactive diplomacy. The Foreign Ministry must guide our diplomatic missions properly in carrying out their avowed tasks. Our diplomats must be given a chance to prove their capabilities and dedication to work.

2. Trade and Industrial Field

In foreign trade area, Nepal is suffering a huge trade deficit each year. We have opted for an import-based economy for raising revenues. Export led industrial development would have been good for the overall benefit of the country. Goods which can be produced in the country should not be imported. Establishment of industries means use of local raw materials, generation of employment opportunities and accrual of taxes. But we have been importing almost all goods, from cereals to industrial raw materials to manufactured goods. The contribution of industrial sector to gross domestic product is very low i.e., about 5 percent. Experts argue that until and unless such percentage reaches 18 percent, industrial sector cannot be construed to have contributed well. Import substitution is the need of the day. In recent years, both exports and imports have been increasing. But export-import ratio is rather very alarming, at 1:9. Imports dwarf exports very badly. It is, therefore, very much necessary that by intensifying industrial development, we must produce more goods for exports to the international markets. Countries like Hong Kong, Japan, Korea and Singapore made great advances by successful export promotion strategies.

Nexus between the government and private sector must be built on strong trust and confidence. Policies are made by the Government the private sector plays an important role to carryout these policies. For enhancing trade and industrial sector, the capability of the private sector must be enhanced.

3. Promotion of Soft Powers

Nepal has many facets of soft powers which are well known in the world. Besides, adventure, natural, cultural and spiritual soft powers, a new area of medical soft power has also come to fore. Nepal also holds promising ground in MICE tourism. Our world renowned soft power attractions include Mt. Everest, the highest peak in the world and other highest peaks. Lumbini, the sacred birthplace of Lord Buddha, Living Goddess Kumari, valiance of Gorkhali soldiers, other natural beauties, mountains, rivers and rivulets, lakes, cusine and costumes, temples and palaces, religious spots, artistic, religious and cultural heritages, etc. are our abiding soft powers. Art, sculpture, music are also great assets and soft powers which attract attention from the world. Our multi-ethnicity, multi-culturalism and multi-linguistic fabric of society is yet another great soft power. The presence of 125 ethnic communities and 123 linguistic backgrounds are yet another attraction. Nepalese are considered, generally, warm and hospitable people. It has, thus created a huge reservoir of goodwill and affection among many

people across the world. Nepal is a treasure house of tangible and intangible soft powers. We need to promote all available soft power with appropriate medium and promotional tactics.

4. Peacekeeping Forces

Contribution of UN Peace keeping forces is also one important soft power of Nepal. After Nepal joined the United Nations in 1955, she began to send peacekeepers to different countries under the United Nations. Nepal's peacekeepers drawn from Nepal Army, Armed Police Force and Nepal Police had rendered their valuable services in almost 15 different peace keeping missions around the world. A total of 142,585 peace keepers have so far rendered their valuable services under UN PKOs. Among this figure 1,982 are women peace keepers. 71 Nepalese peace-keepers have sacrificed their invaluable life for the sake of world peace and stability. Nepalese peace keepers have, so far, worked in 44 missions.

At present, there are 6,016 peacekeeping personnel from Nepal in 12 peacekeeping missions. A total of 429 women are working as peacekeepers from Nepal. In view of the number of peacekeepers, Nepal had the opportunity to be ranked number 2 contributor. It is expected that this might go up in view of the appreciation of Nepal for its contribution

UN's peacekeeping operations are scattered in wide areas and countries like Burundi, Congo DPR, Code d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Lebanon, Liberia, and Western Sahara. Nepalese peace-keepers have got a good appreciation for their impartial and dedicated services.

5. Changes in the Thinking and Attitudes

We Nepalese must understand the value of time. Now, it is very necessary that we bring changes in our attitudes and manner of our work. We must abandon inferiority complex and advance with positive thinking and attitude. We must uphold peace, shared prosperity and reconciliation in society and promote mutual understanding and cooperation. We must consider our beloved motherland as a common property and everyone must contribute to our national development. If politics and diplomacy are intact and progressive, these will, definitely, help our country to advance assertively in the progressive path.

6. Refinement in Society

Negative thinking and attitude prevalent in society must be refined as soon as possible. Such negativism takes society and the country down to a ruinous path. There are many news, everyday, about the rape, murder, theft, robbery and other sins which shows that there exist huge social problems in our country. Spiritual thinking and education can

refine such scenario. Negative thoughts and attitudes can be deleted from the human mind through spiritual ways. It will also make a human being understand the value of one-time life. It will exhort people to engage in positive and useful work. One can be guided to become a true citizen who takes care of his family, society and works to contribute to the national development.

Exchange of High Level Visits: An Instrument of Strengthening Foreign Relations in the Context of Nepal



- Nir Bahadur Karki¹

Abstract:

This article makes an effort to highlight the importance and impact of high level leaders' visits of Nepal to different friendly countries, tracing from the reign of the first Rana Prime minister Junga Bahadur Rana to the recent past. The visits to foreign lands with the passage of time that dates back to 172 years as it started with his official visit in 1850 to Great Britain and countries in route latter followed by another Rana premier of the same dynasty Chandra Sumsher in 1908 with Sher Bahadur Deuba as a first post Rana premier to pay an official visit to the UK in 1996. King Mahendra's and King Birendra's many multilateral and bilateral visits to many Asian, European and American countries during their reign heralded Nepal's exposures abroad more than what was before though the former is labelled as snatcher of power placing democracy in uncertainty. Almost of all those visits were reciprocated by their counterparts during their respective reign. Though the post emergence of democratic era, Nepal's leaders are paying quite a few visits to abroad but those visits are not reciprocated by their counterparts as a result of Nepal's ineffective diplomacy while managing Nepal's foreign policies. This article concludes with conviction that the external trips of leaders must be reciprocated by the leaders of same stature of other countries which needs to be coupled with result bearing agenda for mutual benefit of the guest receiving and guest sending countries that require skilled diplomacy among the actors involved in Nepal's foreign relations. One sided visit hardly yield any fruit to the country in boosting her image abroad as has been the case in Nepal during last two decades.

The visits of high-ranking dignitaries abroad occupy a place of importance for the host country in determining the nature, manner and success of bilateral relationship which also influence multilateral relations for both receiving and sending countries. This is achieved through courtesy based diplomatic dialogue with immediate and long

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term agenda among the concerned counterparts both in time of normalcy and hostility among the nations. The high level visits to foreign lands, therefore, serve as the key determinants in designing, formulating and managing foreign policy of any given country no matter big or small in shape and size, rich or poor in economic or military strength.

Mutual Benefits:

Seemingly from a mere ritualistic to a strategic political, economic and defense point of view, arranging the visits for the leaders from abroad to the host country and officials overseas visits for the leaders constitutes an integral part of the work of Ministry of Foreign Affairs specially of the Office of the Chief of Protocol and its concerned Division dealing with the host or guest country having preoccupied mind set of mutual benefit to the concerned countries. Such thoughtfully organized Visits of high ranking leaders present the host country greater benefits to the nations since long time to date. With few exception, this applies universally in maintaining relations among the community of nations.

Importance:

A World War Second hero former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill once had remarked that the benefit to be acquired by a visit of his country's queen to a foreign country would equal to the benefits of 10 ministers' visit. By 2018 the late queen Elizabeth second of the United Kingdom , the world's longest reigning monarch had paid state visits to 116 countries of her a total of 265 official visits including repeated trips to few countries including to Nepal twice and herself had hosted to her 113 counterparts from the foreign lands that included the late king Mahendra and Birendra of Nepal (Sunday Times, 2018).

Had Mao Tse Tung visited the United States of America in the early 1950s of immediate past century, as he had initially desired, not only the relation between the United States and China but also the course of communism would have taken another direction (Khadka, 2008). Though not Mao Tse Tung to the US but the US then president Richard Nixon paid an arousing official visit to China in 1972 that had been hailed as a hall mark and a diplomatic triumph of both Nixon and Henry Kissinger in the contemporary American foreign affairs.

Obviously visit by high ranking dignitaries to other countries of authoritative dialogue better results to a country as the degree of achievement is determined by the level of authoritative dialogue and diplomatic skills. This is important not only for the political, diplomatic and defense purpose, but also for economic, trade and commercial and cultural cooperation amongst the countries.

Nepal's Context:

Visits by the Nepalese leaders to other countries can be traced from the period of isolation to modernization and from the autocratic to the democratic emergence. i.e. from the Rana regime to the modern era. What it suggests is that even during the hereditary Rana regime, official visits to other countries took place though on a limited. It started with the trip of the first Rana Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana in 1850 to Great Britain, the then world power. This was followed by the visit of another prime minister of the same dynasty— Chandra Shumsher Rana in 1908.

The post-Rana period naturally witnessed higher frequencies of visits, both by the Nepalese leaders abroad as well as return visits by the foreign dignitaries to Nepal. However, the visits by foreign dignitaries have been far less, especially during the past two decades. The visit of Jung Bahadur Rana to the UK benefited to the host country more than to Nepal since Rana helped Britain by sending the Gorkha Army to quell the Sipoy Mutiny in 1857 launched against the East India Company rule in India. Of course his visit played an instrumental role since Rana succeeded in regaining the four terai districts of western Nepal namely, Kanchanpur, Kailali, Banke and Bardia that constitutes 22 percent of Nepal's current agricultural products which were lost under the unjustified Sugauli Treaty. Sher Bahadur Deuba is the first post Rana regime premier to pay an official visit to Great Britain in 1996 at the invitation of Prime Minister John Major's tenure.

Tanka Prasad Acharya was the first premier to pay an official visit to the People's Republic of China and Japan in the mid 1950s. No other premier of Nepal made an official visit to foreign countries during 1950s.

The sudden dismissal of Matrika Prasad Koirala as prime minister barred him from leading a Nepali delegation to the first-ever held Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung of Indonesia (the predecessor of the Non-Aligned Movement), which was Nepal's first participation in an international forum in 1955. Had Koirala been there as leader of Nepalese delegation also, that would not have been his bilateral visit to Indonesia, but just for an international event. A top-ranking bureaucrat-cum-diplomat Shobhag Jung Thapa led the Nepalese delegation instead. That event earned to Nepal good name and fame amongst the community of nations especially among the Afro-Asian countries. It got furthered following the Belgrade Summit of Non-Aligned Movement in September 1961, which was led by the late King Mahendra.

Acharya's suite was followed by the first elected prime minister B. P. Koirala to China, and his other official trips took place to India and Israel. Koirala also led the Nepalese delegation to the UN General Assembly in 1960 in response to the UN call to send a high level delegation under the leadership of either head of the state or head

of the government to mark the 15th anniversary of the establishment of this world organization in October 1945, right after the end of the World War Second.

While the official visit to India and China by a Nepalese premier has been a ritual but construed as a gesture of close ties with them which has been a common feature after 1960s to date with few exception, same to other countries is of additional importance depending upon the stature of the premier both within and outside the country, image and country situation both in Nepal and in the inviting or host country(ies).

Sher Bahadur Deuba had has the highest frequency of official visits to the foreign countries among the Nepalese premiers as he is the first post-Rana premier to pay an official visit to the United Kingdom at the invitation of his then British counterpart John Major in 1996. During his non-premier period also he is reported frequently visiting quite a few countries as the guest of host countries' government like Australia, China, Japan and European countries. Not all of those countries visited by Deuba were reciprocated by his counterparts' visit to Nepal though the president of China Jiang Zemin, the president of Germany, chancellor Helmut Kohl had official visits to Nepal during Deuba's period of premiership.

Though blamed for putting democracy in peril on the domestic front, king Mahendra had high frequency of state visits to the foreign lands. He was one of the architects of Modern Nepal's foreign policy that heralded rising image and profile of Nepal in international front, bilaterally and multilaterally. He led the Nepalese delegations to the nonaligned summits from the first to the third-in Belgrade, the capital city of then Yugoslavia, Cairo and Lusaka in 1961, 1965 and in 1970, respectively. He also paid many bilateral state visits including twice to the United States in 1960 and in 1967, United Kingdom in 1960, Federal Germany, Russia, France, Japan, Egypt, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, of course India and China and many other countries with state honour. Most of his visits abroad were reciprocated by his counterparts' visits to Nepal.

King Birendra had established himself as a distinct personality amongst the leading world counterparts of his time, especially through the Non-Aligned Summits and SAARC community of nations coupled with his numerous bilateral and multinational visits on different times. They included, among many, state visits to many countries including the United States, United Kingdom, Japan, Australia, France, the former Soviet Union, Thailand and so on. And even more so to India that ranged from state visits to religious visits at the host's invitation, and to China 10 times that included state, official and non-official visits ,including in transit to and from other countries but with state honours. Those visits were followed by reciprocity of sizable visits by the foreign heads of the states to Nepal.

The kings' bilateral and multilateral visits were significantly reciprocated by their counterparts to Nepal that included, amongst others, the Queen Elizabeth of Great Britain in 1961 and 1986 at the invitation of king Mahendra and king Birendra respectively, the vice-president of the United States in 1969, German president Henry Looke in 1967, Yugoslavian president Marshal Tito, President of China, India, Russia and many more. The post 1990's witnessed no remarkable visits from abroad to Nepal except the visit of prime minister of Japan in August which reportedly was well ushered by the then Nepalese ambassador to Japan Kedar Bhakta Mathema from his end, also another significant visit to Nepal included that of the US secretary of state and the UK' foreign secretary. Nepal could not avail any opportunity to host high level dignitaries even from her neighbouring countries during the period.

Late king Mahendra had addressed the joint session of the US Congress House of Representatives and the Senate during his first state visit to the United State in 1960 and also had addressed to the UN General Assembly during the second state visit in 1967.

Late King Birendra was invited by the UN to address an international Conference of the Least Developed Nations in France in 1981 and by China to address another international gathering. Also he was made the Guest of Honour by India on the occasion of their Republican Day.

These few events obviously display how Nepal's leaders were honoured abroad in the past.

The incumbent Indian premier Narendra Modi was an ice-breaker by visiting Nepal for both bilateral and regional purpose after I.K Gujral's visit to Nepal in the mid 1990s. Though Atal Bihari Vaipai was in Nepal to attend the 11th SAARC Summit, it was not his bilateral visit to Nepal.

In similar manner, the state visit of India's President R.K. Narayan during King Birendra's reign was not followed by any of his successors except the visit of Pranab Mukharji after many years. The case remained same with Nepal's northern neighbour China. The state visit paid by China's President Xi Chinpung was an event that took place after 23 years of same level visit by president Jiang Zemin in December 1996. However, Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao had paid a one-day hectic visit to Nepal in 2012.

Finally, the visits of top Nepalese officials and high level leaders abroad must be organized with equal dignity between the host and the guest countries in order to promote mutual cooperation in economic, social and cultural fields among all the friendly countries, including the neighbouring countries.

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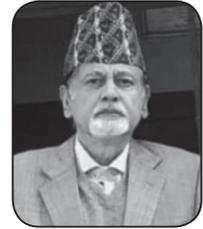
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परराष्ट्र मामिलामा सुधारको आवश्यकता



-डा. निरञ्जन मान सिंह बस्न्यात¹

१. पृष्ठभूमि

नेपालको परराष्ट्र नीतिको आधारभूत सिद्धान्तहरू नेपालको संविधान^२ को धारा छज्ज (द) को ज्ञ र दू मा परिभाषित तथा व्याख्या भएको छ। यी कुराहरू राज्यका निर्देशक सिद्धान्त, नीति तथा दायित्व शिर्षकमा संविधानको भाग छ अन्तर्गत विशेष रूपले उल्लेख गरिएको छ। नेपालको परराष्ट्र नीति असंलग्नताको सिद्धान्त, संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघको बढापत्रको सिद्धान्त तथा उद्देश्यहरू र प्रचलित अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय कानून बमोजिम सञ्चालन हुने भनिएको छ। धारा छज्ज (क) अन्तर्गत पनि राज्यका नीतिहरूमा राष्ट्रिय एकता र राष्ट्रिय सुरक्षा सम्बन्धी नीतिहरूको व्याख्या गर्दै “नेपालको स्वतन्त्रता, सार्वभौम सत्ता, भौगोलिक अखण्डता र स्वाधीनताको संरक्षण गर्दै राष्ट्रिय एकता अक्षुण्ण राख्ने” आदि विषयहरू उल्लेख भएको छ। त्यसैगरी “पूर्व कर्मचारी, सैनिक र प्रहरी लगायतका पूर्व राष्ट्र सेवकहरूमा रहेको पान, सीप र अनुभवलाई राष्ट्रहितमा समुचित उपयोग गर्ने” विषय पनि समाहित गरिएको छ। यो कुरा धारा छज्ज(क) को ठ मा लेखिएको छ।

संविधानको धारा छघ बमोजिम राज्यका निर्देशक सिद्धान्तमा उल्लेख भएका विषयवस्तुको सम्बन्धमा (परराष्ट्र मामिला समेत) गरेका काम र उपलब्धिहरूको वार्षिक प्रतिवेदन नेपाल सरकारले राष्ट्रपति समक्ष पेश गर्ने व्यवस्था छ तथा प्रधानमन्त्रीले उक्त प्रतिवेदन संसदमा प्रलफलको लागि पेश गर्ने समुचित व्यवस्था छ। साथै धारा छद्द मा राज्यका निर्देशक सिद्धान्त, नीति र दायित्वको प्रगतिशील कार्यान्वयन भएको नभएको अनुगमन र मूल्यांकन गर्न संसदमा एक समितिको समेत व्यवस्था छ।

२. नेपालको परराष्ट्र नीति: एक संक्षिप्त इतिहास

परराष्ट्र नीतिको कुरा गर्दा राष्ट्र निर्माता श्री छ बढामहाराजाधिराज पृथ्वीनारायण शाहको ‘दिव्य उपदेश’ र समय समयमा जारी गरिएको उहाँको अन्य रुक्का, लालमोहर आदिहरूमा उल्लेखित निर्देशनहरू पनि महत्वपूर्ण छन्। पृथ्वीनारायण शाहको उपदेश मध्ये “यो राज्य दुई ङुङ्गाको तरुल जस्तो रहेछ” भन्ने वाक्यले नेपालको परराष्ट्र नीतिको रानीतिक स्थितिलाई जोड दिएको छ। उपदेशमा उल्लेखित अर्को महत्वपूर्ण कुरा “दखिनका समुन्द्रका वादशाह सित श ता राख्नु, तर त्यो महा चतुर छ, हिन्दुस्थान दवाई राखेको छ, सर्जमिनमा परिरहेछ। हिन्दुस्थान जम्यो (आपसमा मिले) भने कउन पर्ला भनि किल्ला खोज्न आउनेछ। एकदिन त्यो बल आउनेछ, जाई कक्क (लडाई) नगर्नु भिकी कक्क गर्नु लडाईमा पुगेन भने लोलोपोतो अनेक कलश्ल गरिकन पनि आउनेछ”^३ भन्ने कुरा पनि महत्वपूर्ण छ, किनभने

¹ Former Ambassador of Nepal to Malaysia

आजकल नेपालको संविधानको धारा ६८ को प्रावधान विपरित जबरजस्ती धर्म परिवर्तन गर्ने कार्य र सरकारलाई प्रभाव पार्ने काम पनि अत्यधिक रूपमा बरि रहेको पाइन्छ ।

पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले वि.सं. जडद्वद्ध को असोज जडद्व गते भएको सिन्धुलीगरीमा अंग्रेज विरुद्धको लडाईं अगाडि रामेशा पकरबासका रामचन्द्र प्रसाईलाई लेखेको जडद्वघ भाद्रवदी ढ रोज घ को पत्रमा “गोरखा नेपाल (काष्मादौं उपत्यका) भन्नु येकै हो, बेलामा फेरने पेक्ष बस्यो त जले (जल्ले) पाँदा पनि आफ्नैमा रहन्या हो, सिन्धुलीमा फिलुङ्गी च९५ भन्याको निस्तुक (पक्का) हो जयप्रकाशको भरमै आया पनि हिन्दुस्थाना षान्याले नेपाल ५६ला भन्नु प्रैन गोरखा भन्नु उनै गोरखनाथ हुन् त दुवै एकै हुन् फिलुङ्गी भन्याको ब्वाँसो हो आज उ च९यो भन्या सबैले वाचु प्रैन”^{१३} भनी लेखेका थिए । धेरै राष्ट्रहरूलाई उपनिवेश बनाउदै शक्तिशाली भएका अंग्रेजहरूलाई ‘ब्वाँसो’ भनी पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले पहिचान गरिसकेका थिए ।

पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले एउटा कार्यालय खोली जैसी कोण नाम दिई त्यसमा भानु जैसी अर्ज्याल र बालकृष्ण अर्ज्याललाई राखी अहिलेको परराष्ट्र मन्त्रालयको अड्डा सुरु गरिसकेका थिए । त्यस कोणले पहिले तिब्बतसँगको सम्बन्ध मात्र हेर्थ्यो भने पश्चिम गएर सिक्किम, भुटान, चीन र ब्रिटिस ईष्ट इन्डिया कम्पनी बारेको मामला पनि हेर्न थाल्यो । पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले आवश्यकता अनुसार विभिन्न समयमा ईष्ट इन्डिया कम्पनीको लागि कलकत्तामा दीनानाथ उपाध्याय, तिब्बतमा लाल गिरी, सिक्किममा विश्वनाथ उपाध्याय र गंगाचन्द्र आचार्य, पद्मनामा किरिङ माली, लखनौमा वैकुण्ठ उपाध्यायलाई नवाव सुजौउदौलाको दरबारमा तथा बृहस्पति पण्डितलाई पूर्णियामा ईष्ट इन्डिया कम्पनीका अधिकृतसँग वार्ता गर्न पठाएका थिए । त्यसै गरी काजी केहर सिंह बस्न्यातलाई चाँदीको शु४६क चलाउने बारे तिब्बतसँग वार्ता गर्न पठाएका थिए । साथै उनलाई पद्मनामा ईष्ट इन्डिया कम्पनीका मिस्टर यामबोल्डका लागि पत्र दिई विशेष दूतको रूपमा पठाएको पाइन्छ । यसरी नेपालको परराष्ट्र मामिला एउटा एकीकृत राष्ट्रको रूपमा यस रूपमा अडि बरेको थियो । नेपालको पहिलो राजदूतको रूपमा दीनानाथ उपाध्यायलाई मान्न सकिन्छ जसले ईष्ट इन्डिया कम्पनीसँग मकवानपुरलाई गोरखाले जितेपश्चि त्यसको तलहड्डी (तराई क्षेत्र) लाई नेपालमा गाभ्न वार्ता गरी सफल भएका थिए । उनी पहिले मकवानपुरका सेन राजाहरूका कर्मचारी थिए ।

पृथ्वीनारायण शाहले आफ्नो उपदेशमा दक्षिण तर्फको सम्बन्धको विषय आफ्ना विश्वासीला भारदारहरू शिवराम सिंह बस्न्यातका सन्ततिलाई र उत्तरतर्फको सम्बन्धको विषयमा कालु पाण्डेका सन्ततिलाई नपुद्गाउनु भनी विशेष उल्लेख गरेको पाइन्छ । पश्चिम भिमसेन थापा मुख्तियार भएपश्चि जैसी कोणलाई मुन्सिखानामा परिणत गरी व्यवस्थित गरियो । दृढ पौष जडद्वढ मा राजा राजेन्द्र विक्रम शाहको पालामा कान्छी महारानीलाई अधिकार सुम्पदा पनि परराष्ट्र मामिलाका बारेमा उल्लेख भएको थियो, जसमा चार बुँदा थिए । बुदा नं.घ मा चीन, ईष्ट इन्डिया कम्पनी र तिब्बतसँगको सम्बन्धको बारेमा पूर्ण अख्तियारी दिईएको थियो । बुँदा नं. ङ मा कुनै पनि देशसँग आइपरेको खण्डमा यु४ गर्न सक्ने अथवा सन्धी गर्न सक्ने अख्तियारी दिईएको पाइन्छ ।

कोतपर्व भन्दा अडि प्रधानमन्त्री फत्येजड शाहको मातहतमा परराष्ट्र मामिला सम्बन्धी काम पनि दिईएको थियो । घञ्ज भाद्र जडद्वघ को रातमा भएको कोतपर्वमा फत्येजड शाह मारिए पश्चि जंगबहादुर कुँवर सर्वेसर्वा भई परराष्ट्र सम्बन्ध पनि उनको मातहतमा आयो । त्यसपश्चि सबै राणा प्रधानमन्त्रीहरूले जडद्व वर्षसम्म परराष्ट्र मामिला मुन्सिखाना मार्फत सञ्चालन गरेकामा श्री घ चन्द्र शमशेरको पालामा सन् जडद्वघ मा ब्रिटिस सरकारसँग भएको द्वपक्षिय सम्झौताद्वारा नेपाललाई एक स्वतन्त्र राष्ट्रको रूपमा

सार्वभौम देशको मान्यता प्राप्त भएको ३६नालाई महत्वपूर्ण मानिएको ५ । अन्तिम रा०ा प्रधानमन्त्री मोहन शमशेरले परराष्ट्र विभाग गठन गरी आफ्नो प्रोरा मेजर जनरल विजय शमशेरलाई महानिर्देशक (दाइरेक्टर जनरल) नियुक्त गरेका थिए । उनको कार्यकालमा जून मार्च जठद्ध मा नेपालले संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघको सदस्यताका लागि आवेदन दिएको थियो । सोही साल सेप्टेम्बरमा बसेको सुरक्षा परिषदको बैठकमा तत्कालीन युएसएसआरले भिक्षे प्रयोग गरेको हुदाँ नेपाल सदस्य बन्ने प्रस्ताव खारेज भएको थियो । त्यसको ८ वर्ष पछि जठ्ठ दिसेम्बर जठ्ठछछ मा नेपाल संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघको सदस्य भएको सबैलाई विदितै ५ । सन् जठ्ठछज को राजनैतिक परिवर्तन पछि परराष्ट्र विभागलाई परराष्ट्र मन्त्रालयमा परि०ात गरि श्री नरेन्द्रम०ा आचार्य दीक्षितलाई परराष्ट्र सचिव नियुक्त गरिएको थियो ।

३. वर्तमान स्थिति

आजको एक्काइसौं शताब्दीमा आइपुग्दा नेपालले माथि उल्लेखित सि०ान्तहरू र प्रचलित अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय कानून अन्तर्गत नै सबै मुलुकहरूसँग बाह्य सम्बन्ध राख्दै आएको हो । तर गत दुई दशकदेखि परराष्ट्र मामिलाका विषयमा देशको आन्तरिक राजनीतिमा दलहरूमा देखा परेको खिचातानी र ती दलहरूले अवलम्बन गरेका गलत कार्यनीतिका कार०ाले खास गरी अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय सम्बन्धका विषयमा विचलन र विकृति आएको पाइन्छ । उदाहरणको लागि चीनसँग विआरआई र अमेरिकासँग भएको एमसिसि तथा एसपीपी सम्झौताले गर्दा संसारका दुई महत्वपूर्ण राष्ट्रहरूको सम्बन्ध प्रतिस्पर्धात्मक रहेको वर्तमान परिप्रेक्ष्यमा नेपालमा भूराजनीति हस्तक्षेप र आन्तरिक रूपमा हलचल पैदा गरेको ५ । यी दुई देशहरू बीचको वैमनस्यताले गर्दा नेपाल कै भूमिमा लडाईं शुरु हुन सक्छ कि भन्ने आशंका पैदा भएको ५ । यी दुई राष्ट्रहरूलाई नेपालको भूमि भित्र आमने सामने भई भिड्न सक्ने अवस्था कसरी सृजना हुन नदिने भन्ने ठूलो चुनौति द्दकारो रूपमा देखिएको ५ । यो हाम्रो परराष्ट्र नीति सञ्चालनकर्ताहरू जस्तै प्रधानमन्त्री, परराष्ट्र मन्त्री, रक्षा मन्त्री तथा अन्य महत्वपूर्ण सरोकारवालाहरूको लागि एउटा ठूलो ढाउको दुखाईको विषय हुनु पर्ने हो, तर कसैले यस विषयलाई संवेदनशील भई गम्भिरतापूर्वक महसुस गरेको नदेखिनु ज्यादै शोचनीय ५ । अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय व्यापार, सैनिक प्रतिस्पर्धा र प्रविधिमा होदवाजी तथा वैमनस्यता भएका चीन र अमेरिकाको विदेश नीतिले गर्दा नेपालको सार्वभौमसत्ता खतरामा पर्न सक्ने देखिन्छ ।

यसै वर्ष सन् दण्दद को फेब्रुअरी द्द देखि शुरु भएको रुस-युक्रेन यु०ले गर्दा नेपाल जस्ता अतिकम विकसित देशहरूको अर्थतन्त्रमा ठूलो नकारात्मक प्रभाव परेको ५ । यस यु० भए देखि नेपालमा पनि हरेक सामानको भाउ बरेकोले गर्दा सामान्य ३र गृहस्थीमा पनि त्यसको नराम्रो असर परेको देखिन्छ । समग्रमा उल्लेख गर्दा अहिलेको अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय सम्बन्धमा धेरै नै उथलपुथल कोभिद-जठ ले पनि ल्याएको ५ र साथै ठूलाठूला देशहरूका बीच यु०को धम्कि पनि आइरहेको पाईन्छ । रुसका राष्ट्रपति पुदिनले युक्रेनमा आ०ाविक हतियार प्रयोग गर्ने धम्की दिनाले नेपाल जस्तो शान्तिप्रिय मुलुकलाई असहज बनाएको ५ । रुस सहित आ०ाविक हतियार युक्त नौ राष्ट्रहरूलाई सम्पूर्ण रूपमा उक्त हतियारलाई निषेध तथा निर्मुल पार्न प्रतिब० गर्न संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघको महासभावाद् सन् दण्दजठ मा पारित भई सन् दण्दज मा आवश्यक छण राष्ट्रहरूवाद् अनुसमर्थन (Ratification) भए पछि महासन्धीमा परि०ात भएको यो "The Treaty on The Prohibition of Nuclear Wapons" लाई नेपाल जस्तो बु०को जन्म भएको शान्तिपूर्ण देशले अभैसम्म अनुमोदन नगर्नु एउटा खेदको विषय भएको ५ । आशा ५ आगामी सरकारले यसलाई अनुमोदन गर्नेछ । हालसम्म यो महासन्धीलाई टड राष्ट्रहरूले अनुमोदन गरी सकेका ५न् भने नेपाल सहित दज्ज देशले हस्ताक्षर गरेका ५न् ।

चीनले दक्षिण चीन समुद्रमा अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय नेभिगेसनमा देखाएको कब्जा गर्ने नीति र त्यसमा संयुक्तराज्य अमेरिकाले गरेको प्रतिक्रिया पनि एउटा विश्वयुद्ध निम्ताउने खतराको रूपमा लिन सकिन्छ । गत वर्ष सेप्टेम्बरमा अमेरिका र बेलायत मिलेर अष्ट्रेलियालाई आठविक हतियार जडित पनडुब्बी जहाज प्रदान गर्ने निर्णय पनि खतरापूर्णा ५ भने ताईवानलाई लिएर अमेरिका र चीन बीच तत्कालै युद्ध हुन सक्ने स्थिति ५ ।

साथै दक्षिण एसियामा पनि सार्क सदस्य राष्ट्रहरू मध्ये श्रीलंका आर्थिक रूपमा पूर्णरूपले धराशायी हुनु, अफगानिस्तानबाहेक अमेरिकी सेनाले शोदेर जानु, पाकिस्तानमा पूर्व प्रधानमन्त्री इमरान खानलाई हत्या गर्ने उद्देश्यले गरिएको हमला तथा राजनैतिक अस्थिरता हुनुका साथै अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय आर्थिक मन्दी आउनु आदि समस्याहरू विद्यमान छन् । यस्तो स्थितिमा नेपालले चलाखीपूर्ण तरिकाले आफ्नो अर्थतन्त्र सुदृढ गर्ने चुनौतीको अतिरिक्त आफ्नो कूद्नीतिलाई बढी गतिशील र परिपक्व बनाउन जरुरी ५ ।

भारतसँग महाकाली नदी वारी नेपालको कालापानी, लिपुलेक र लिम्पियाधुराले ओगटेको करिब घण्टा बर्ग किलोमिटर भूमी मिति ड नोभेम्बर दृण्ड मा आफ्नो भूभागमा समेटेर भारतले अधिकारिक नक्सा प्रकाशन गरेको ५ । सन् दृण्ड देखि नै भारतले पिथौरागढ देखि मानसरोवर जाने मार्ग निर्माणा गर्दा खेरी पनि हाम्रो सरकार र नेताहरूले थाहा पाउन नसकेको र जब नयाँ दिल्लीबाहेक भर्चुअल माध्यमबाट भारतका रक्षामन्त्री श्री राजनाथ सिंहले उक्त सडक उद्घाटन गरे अनि मात्र नेपालका सरकारी निकाय र नेताहरूले थाहा पाएको जस्तो गरेको देखिएको थियो । त्यसपछि नेपाल सरकारले पनि नेपालको संविधानको अनुसूची ६ मा संशोधन नै गरी दृण्ड जुन दृण्ड मा कालापानी, लिपुलेक र लिम्पियाधुरालाई नेपालको भूभागमा अंकित गरेर एउटा “चुच्चे” नक्सा पास गरी जनता सामु ल्यायो तर यो विवादलाई दुवैपक्ष देबुलमा बसी वार्ताद्वारा समाधान हुन पर्नेमा हुन सकिरहेको छैन । भारतले यस विषयमा नेपाल पक्षले वार्ता गर्न दुई पटक गरेको ताकेतालाई समेत वेवास्ता गरेको पाइन्छ । यस अतिरिक्त दुवै देशको समस्याहरू समाधान गर्ने उद्देश्यले दुवै प्रधानमन्त्रीहरूबाट निर्णय भई गठन भएको ईपीजीले तयार पारेको संयुक्त प्रतिवेदन भारतले अफसम्म पनि बुझ्न नमानेकोले अनिश्चित र अनिर्णित भई अल्झिरहेको ५ । त्यसै गरी भारतको चीनसँग सम्बन्ध विग्रदै गई रहेको परिप्रेक्ष्यमा नेपाललाई पनि त्यसको असर नपर्ला भन्न सकिन्छ ।

माथि उल्लेखित कारणले गर्दा तीन महत्वपूर्ण मुलुकहरू अमेरिका, चीन र भारतसँगको नेपालको सम्बन्ध राम्रोसँग सुचारु रूपले अगाडि बढ्न सकेको पाइँदैन । अहिलेको परराष्ट्र सम्बन्धको जल्दाबल्दा समस्या भनेका यिनै हुन् । तर यी मित्रराष्ट्रहरूले हालसम्म नेपालको विकासको लागि योगदान गर्दै आएका भएता पनि यस्ता समस्याहरूलाई कूद्नीतिको माध्यमद्वारा कसरी समाधान गर्ने भन्ने कुरा अगाडि बसाउन देशमा आन्तरिक राजनैतिक स्थिरता हुन अत्यावश्यक ५ भने अर्कोतर्फ नेपालका कूद्नीतिहरू देश हितका लागि सक्षम र सतर्क हुनु पर्ने देखिन्छ ।

यस विषयमा गम्भिरतापूर्वक विचार गर्दा प्रधानमन्त्री, परराष्ट्रमन्त्री तथा अन्य नेताहरू अत्यन्त सजग हुनुपर्नुका साथै खासगरी परराष्ट्र मन्त्रालय पनि संगठनत्मक हिसाबले र कार्यक्षमताको आधारमा चुस्तदुरुस्त हुनुपर्ने आवश्यकता ५ । अर्कोतर्फ परराष्ट्र मन्त्रालयको संगठनत्मक णाँचा (Organizational structure) धेरै वर्षदेखि एउटै मोडलमा रहेको ५ र बेलाबेला केही महाशाखाहरू थप गर्ने कार्य त भएको

५ तर अहिले गठान्त्रको प्रादुर्भाव भएको र प्रदेशहरु गठन भएको अवस्थामा पनि यसको संगठनात्मक ँँचाको पूर्ण रूपले पुनरावलोकन हुनुपर्ने आजको आवश्यकता हो तर सो हुन सकिरहेको छैन ।

यसै बीच गत असोजमा सम्पन्न चीनिया कम्युनिष्ट पार्टी (सिपिसि) को दृष्टि औं बैष्क भन्दा केही दिन अघि अमेरिकाले जारी गरेको प्रतिवेदनमा चीनलाई मुख्य प्रतिद्वन्दी भनेको र ईन्डो प्यासिफिक क्षेत्रलाई एउटा सुदृष्ट २०१९ र २०३१ अनुसार काम गर्ने जनाएको ५ तथा ताइवानको मुसालाई पनि प्रमुख विषय बनाएको ५ । यसैगरी राष्ट्रपति सि जिनपिङद्वारा दृष्टि औं सिपिसिको बैष्कको अन्त्यमा जारी गरिएको प्रतिवेदनमा वैकल्पिक विश्व व्यवस्थाको बारेमा उल्लेख हुनुका साथै नयाँ प्रविधि अवलम्बन गरी चिनियाँ फौजलाई आधुनिकरण गरिने ५ भनिएको ५ । उता अमेरिकाले भने चीनलाई अधिनायकवादी व्यवस्था भएको मुलुक भनेको ५ भने आफूलाई प्रजातन्त्रको हिमायती भनी उल्लेख गरेको ५ । यस्तो अवस्थामा नेपाललाई आफ्नो कूडनीति सञ्चालनमा निकै कठिन हुन सक्ने देखिन्छ र अमेरिका रोज्ने कि प्रिमेकी चीन भन्ने अहम् प्रश्न खडा भएको ५ । हालै गत जेट नोभेम्बरमा इन्डोनेसियाको बालीमा सम्पन्न भएको G20 को बैष्कको अवसरमा राष्ट्रपति जो बाईडेन र राष्ट्रपति सि जिनपिङको भेदले तातेको वातावरणलाई केही शितलता प्रदान गर्न सक्ने अपेक्षा गर्न सकिन्छ ।

यस्तो भूराजनैतिक वैमनस्यता अमेरिका र चीनबीच ५ भने अर्कोतिर भारत-अमेरिका र भारत-रुस सम्बन्ध राम्रोसँग सहयोगात्मक हिसाबले अघि बढिरहेको पाईन्छ । तर भारत-चीन बीच जुन दृष्टिगत मा भएको दोक्लाम र्दना तथा जुन दृष्टिगत मा लराखको गलवान उपत्यकामा भएको र्दना पछि चिसिँदै गएको र वैमनस्यता बढेको अवस्था ५ ।

४. सुधारका लागि सुभावहरू:

वर्तमान अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय स्थिति हेरी नेपालले आफ्नो घघ दुतावासहरु, ट वडा महावाणिज्य दूतावासहरु र नेपालद्वारा विदेशमा नियुक्त भएका महावाणिज्य/वाणिज्यदूतहरुलाई बढी सक्रिय बनाउन जरुरी ५ । साथै श्रमिक गन्तव्य मुलुकहरुमा नेपाली कामदारको हकहितको रक्षा गर्नुका साथै उनीहरुको श्रम जीवनलाई सहज बनाउन भूमिका खेल्नु पर्ने अवस्था ५ । यी सबै कुराहरुलाई ध्यानमा राखी निम्नलिखित केही महत्वपूर्ण सुभावहरु प्रस्तुत गरिन्छ:

क) पूर्व उपप्रधानमन्त्री तथा परराष्ट्रमन्त्री कृष्ण बहादुर महाराले आफूले परराष्ट्र मन्त्रालयको जिम्मेवारी सम्हालेको केही दिन पछि दृष्टि श्रावण दृष्टिगत मा नेपाल सरकार समक्ष परराष्ट्र मन्त्रालयको सुधारको तत्कालीन कार्य योजना प्रस्तुत गर्नु भएको थियो । त्यसमा उहाँले दूरदृष्टि (Vision) प्रस्तुत गरी “स्वतन्त्र परराष्ट्र नीति र सर्वोपरी राष्ट्रिय हित”को उल्लेख गर्नु भएको थियो । त्यसैगरी लक्ष्यमा (Mission Statement) (क) अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय स्तरमा नेपालको सम्मान र प्रतिष्ठा अझ माथि उठाउने र (ख) सुदृष्ट नेपालकोलागि आर्थिक कूडनीतिको प्रभावकारी सञ्चालन गर्ने भन्ने उल्लेख गर्नु भएको ५ । यी माथिका कुरा प्राप्त गर्न परराष्ट्र मन्त्रालयको हालको मौजुदा संगठनात्मक ँँचामा व्यापक परिवर्तन गर्न जरुरी देखिन्छ । त्यसको लागि नयाँ सरकारले सम्बन्धित प्रबुध वर्ग सम्मिलित एउटा अध्ययन समिति गठन गरी सो को सिफारिसमा परिवर्तन गर्न पर्ने सुभाव दिईन्छ । यस समितिले पहिला अध्ययन भएका प्रतिवेदनहरुको अतिरिक्त दृष्टिगत सालमा श्रीधर खत्रीको संयोजकत्वमा तयार पारिएको अध्ययन प्रतिवेदन पुनरावलोकन गरी अहिलेको स्थितिलाई कसरी प्रगतिशील सुधार

गर्न सकिनेश सो बारे प्रतिवेदन पेश गर्न सुभाब गरिन्श । सो प्रतिवेदन लागू गर्न दृश ईच्छा तथा राजनैतिक प्रतिबधता हुनुपर्ने देखिन्श ।

यसरी मन्त्रालयको संगठनात्मक ९ाँचा परिवर्तन गर्दा अन्य कुराहरुको अतिरिक्त नेपालको दुई महत्वपूर्ण शक्तिशाली शिमेकी राष्ट्रसँगको बहुआयामिक सम्बन्धको दृष्टीकोणबाट भारतको लागि मात्र एउटा बेग्लै महाशाखा गठन गर्नु पर्ने तथा त्यसैगरी चीनको लागि पनि एउटा बेग्लै महाशाखा गठन हुनुपर्ने सुभाब दिन सकिन्श । हालसालै नेपालको सीमा सम्बन्धी केही अप्थाराहरु उत्पन्न भई यी काम पनि महत्वपूर्ण भएकोले परराष्ट्र मन्त्रालयमा एउटा सीमा शाखा पनि गठन हुनुपर्ने ढ्कारो रुपमा देखा परेको ५ ।

अहिलेको अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय परिदृश्यमा परराष्ट्र मामिलामा विभिन्न नयाँ सरोकारवालाहरु देखा परेका ५न्, जस्तै अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय गैरसरकारी संस्था (INGO), नागरिक समाज, अन्तरदेशीय व्यवसाय (MNC), परोपकारी संस्था, अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय रुपमा प्रसिध नागरिकहरु देखि लिएर आतंकवादी समुह, लागु पदार्थ ओसारपसार गर्ने समुह आदि जस्ता थुप्रै सरोकारवालाहरु पाइन्शन् । यस्ता संस्थाहरु तथा समुहहरूसँगको स्वार्थलाई कुदनीतिक रुपमा राम्रो उदेश्य भएको संस्थासँग सामान्यतया तथा खराब संस्था विरुध सामना गर्नको लागि एउटा बेग्लै महाशाखा पनि हुनु पर्ने देखिन्श ।^{१८} त्यसै गरि जनसरोकार कुदनीति (Public Diplomacy) मा हामी कमजोर रहेकोले यसलाई सुदृश तथा सवल बनाउनु पर्ने देखिन्श ।

ख) कुदनीतिक आचार संहिता: तत्कालिन उपप्रधानमन्त्री तथा परराष्ट्रमन्त्री नारायणकाजी श्रेष्ठले दृण्टठ सालमा मन्त्रपरिषदमा विदेशी राजदूतहरु र विदेशी पाहुनाको लागि आचारसंहिता बनाई पेश गर्नु भएको थियो । नेताहरुले विदेशी राजदूतहरुलाई आफ्नो निजी निवासमा परराष्ट्रका प्रतिनिधि बिना भेदने गरेको पाईन्श तथा विदेशी राजदूतहरुले बिना स्वीकृति देशका विभिन्न जिल्लाहरुमा (अत्यावश्यक द्विपक्षिय हितमा बाहेक) भ्रमण गर्ने कार्यलाई रोक्नु पर्ने देखिन्श । किनभने यसरी शक्ति राष्ट्रहरुले देशको आन्तरिक मामिलामा हस्तक्षेप गरिरहेका ५न् र सरकारमा भएका नेताहरु मूकदर्शक बनिरहेको पाईन्श । त्यसैले प्रस्तावित कुदनीतिक आचार संहितालाई अभ परिमार्जन गर्ने र मन्त्रपरिषदबाट स्वीकृत गरी अविलम्ब लागू गर्नु पर्ने देखिएको ५ । यदि यो गर्न नसकेमा वैदेशिक हस्तक्षेप चर्को रुपमा बश सक्छ ।

ग) नेपालको संविधानमा परराष्ट्र नीति सम्बन्धमा उल्लेख हुनुका साथै यथेष्ट रुपमा व्याख्या भएता पनि राजनैतिक दलहरुले रानीति वा कार्यनीति आ-आफ्नो ९गले परिचालन गरेका हुदाँ विचलन तथा विकृति पाईएको ५ । नेपालको असंलग्नताको सिधतामा पनि आँच आउन थालेको देखिन्श । परराष्ट्रनीति तथा कार्यनीतिमा भएका सम्पूर्ण विचलन र विकृतिहरुलाई समाधान तथा सुधार गर्न सबै राजनैतिक दलको एउटा संयुक्त वैश्व वस्तुपर्ने आवश्यकता ढ्कारो देखिन्श, किनभने विगतमा दल अनुसारको परराष्ट्र कार्यनीति अंगीकार गरेकोले नेपालको सम्मान र प्रतिष्ठ खस्कंदै गएको ५ । कुनै दलको व्यक्ति प्रधानमन्त्री अथवा परराष्ट्र मन्त्री हुदाँ सो दलको कुनै देशसँग राम्रो सम्बन्ध भई उतै ९ल्किने प्रवृत्ति विगतमा देखिएको थियो, अब पनि त्यसो नहोला भन्न सकिन्न । सबै दलहरुले परराष्ट्र नीति कार्यनीति सम्बन्धमा निर्णय गरी एउटै स्वर भएमा विदेशमा राम्रो सन्देश जाने भएकोले एउटा सर्वसम्मत दस्तावेजमा सहमति हुनु पर्ने तथा सो अनुसार परराष्ट्र कार्यनीति

सञ्चालन गरेमा मात्र राष्ट्रको इज्जत र प्रतिष्ठा अभिवृद्धि हुने थियो भन्ने यो लेखकको दृष्टि विश्वास ५ । राजदुत नियुक्त गर्दा कुन देशमा कसलाई राजदुत नियुक्त गर्दा राम्रो प्रतिफल आउँछ आउदैन हेरेर मात्र यस्ता निर्णय गर्नु पर्छ जुन आज हुन नसकेकोले विदेशमा नेपालको ५वी गिर्दै गएको ५ ।

- ३) आर्थिक कूद्नीति: यस विषयमा आर्थिक कूद्नीति कार्यान्वयन गर्न सबै दुतावासहरूलाई केही रकम हरेक वर्ष प्रत्यायोजन गर्ने गरिएको ५ । तर त्यसबाहेक आशातित् सफलता प्राप्त हुन नसकेको हुनाले यस विषयमा हरेक राजदुतावासहरूले आर्थिक विकास सम्बन्धी (अर्थ, बाणिज्य, आपूर्ति तथा उद्योग विकास) विषयमा पान भएका कूद्नीतिहरूलाई दुतावासमा खडाउन आवश्यक देखिन्छ । साथै आर्थिक कूद्नीतिको विशेष कार्यक्रम तर्जुमा गरी कुनै राजदुतावासले पेश गरेमा राम्रो प्रतिफल आउने भएमा बजेट यथेष्ट व्यवस्था गरिनु पर्दछ ।
- ड) वैदेशिक रोजगारी: यस विषयमा नेपाली कामदारहरू स्वदेश तथा विदेशमा विभिन्न समस्याहरूमा परिरहेको पाइन्छ । करिब टुल्लु लाख नेपाली युवाहरू विदेशमा कार्यरत छन्, उनीहरूले गन्तव्य स्थानमा जानु भन्दा अगाडि नेपाल भित्र उगी लगायत थुप्रै समस्याहरू भोगिरहेका छन् । विदेशमा पनि हत्या, हिंसा, अकाल मृत्यु, उगी, दुर्घटना आदि समस्याबाहेक पीडित भईरहेको पाइन्छ । सरकारले स्वदेश तथा विदेशका समस्याहरू तदारुकताका साथ समाधान गर्न गम्भीर भई आवश्यक कदम चाल्नु पर्ने देखिन्छ । आज देश भित्र रोजगारीको अवसर नहुँदा युवाहरूमा नैराश्यता ज्यादै बढेको पाइन्छ जुन राम्रो संकेत होइन ।
- च) विदेशी मुलुकहरूद्वारा काठमाडौंमा नियुक्त गरिएका केही अवैतनिक महाबाणिज्यदूत तथा बाणिज्यदूतहरूले सवारी साधनमा प्रयोग गरि आएको निलो प्लेट र सम्बन्धित देशको झन्डा दुरुपयोग भइ अवान्छित क्रियाकलाप भएको पाईएको हुदाँ (सबैले होइन) यो प्राबधान खारेज गरिनु उपयुक्त हुन्छ । यस्तै भएर होला मलेसिया लगायत थुप्रै देशमा यस्ता प्राबधान नरहेको पाइन्छ ।
- ५) अध्ययन तथा तालिम: परराष्ट्र मन्त्रालयमा नयाँ पुस्ताका अधिकृत तथा सहायक कर्मचारीहरूको प्रवेश बढेको परिपेक्ष्यमा उनीहरूको कार्य क्षमता बढाउन देश भित्र र देश बाहिर तालिम अथवा अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय सम्बन्धका विविध विषयमा उच्च शिक्षा अध्ययनको व्यवस्था गर्नु पर्ने देखिन्छ । हालसालै विदेशबाहेक पनि तालिमहरू दिने शत्रुवृत्तिहरू कम आउने भईरहेको र देश भित्र पनि राम्रो अध्ययन गर्ने अवसर न्यूनतम भएकोले पनि परराष्ट्र मन्त्रालयले यथेष्ट ध्यान पुर्याउन जरुरी ५ । साथै अंग्रेजी बाहेक युएनका अन्य पाँच भाषाको अतिरिक्त जर्मन र जापानिज भाषालाई महत्व दिई तालिम दिइएमा सम्बन्धित दुतावासमा खर्चि जाँदा धेरै सहज हुन्छ । भाषाको पानले वार्तामा सहभागी हुँदा पनि यसले राम्रो प्रभाव पार्न सक्छ ।

यस सम्बन्धमा परराष्ट्र मामिला अध्ययन प्रतिष्ठानलाई आवश्यक पर्ने बजेट उपलब्ध गराई विभिन्न तहका अधिकृत तथा नव नियुक्त राजदुतहरूलाई समय समयमा तालिम दिनु पर्ने देखिन्छ । यस्तो तालिम दिँदा शिक्षाचार लगायत सम्बन्धित विषयका विशेषज्ञहरू तथा पूर्व कूद्नीतिहरूलाई अध्यापन गर्न निमन्त्रित गर्नु उपयुक्त देखिन्छ । साथै सो प्रतिष्ठानका कार्यकारी निर्देशकको निवृत्त हुने उमेर छुट्ट बर्षबाहेक वंशई टुल्लु वर्ष पुऱ्याउन पर्ने देखिन्छ र सो पदमा सम्बन्धित विषय (अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय सम्बन्ध तथा कूद्नीति) मा पोख्त व्यक्तिलाई मात्र नियुक्ति गरेमा सो प्रतिष्ठानले उत्तरोत्तर प्रगति

गर्ने र देशको परराष्ट्र मामिलामा केही सुधार हुन सक्ने देखिन्छ । उक्त प्रतिष्ठानलाई आवश्यकता अनुसारको वार्षिक बजेट पनि उपलब्ध गराईनु पर्ने देखिन्छ ।

५. उपसंहार

विगतमा नेपालको कुद्नीतिलाई सक्षम र सबल बनाउन प्रयास भएको देखिन्छ । विभिन्न समयमा गठन भएका यस सम्बन्धमा अध्ययन समितिहरूले राम्रा राम्रा सुझावहरू नदिएका होइनन्, तर राजनैतिक इच्छा शक्ति यथेष्ट नभएकोले कार्यान्वयन पक्ष कमजोर हुन गएको हुदाँ आशातित् सुधारहरू हुन सकेको प्रैत । अब आउने नयाँ सरकारले नेपालको समग्र कुद्नीतिको विषयमा आवश्यक सुधारहरू गर्नु अत्यन्त समयोचित हुन्छ भन्नुमा कुनै अतिशयोक्ति नहोला ।

सन्दर्भ सामाग्री

३. नेपालको संविधान, दृण्ठद ।
- द. दिनेश राज पन्त, श्री छ पृथ्वीनारायण शाहको दिव्योपदेश र संक्षिप्त जीवनी, मञ्जरी पब्लिकेशन, दोस्रो संस्करण । दृण्ठद, काठमाडौँ, पृष्ठ ६३ र ६४ ।
- घ. अनेकौँका दृष्टिमा राष्ट्र निर्माता, प्रधान सम्पादक हरि प्रसाद सोदारी, काठमाडौँ, दृण्ठद, पृष्ठ ३४३ ।
- द. उपप्रधानमन्त्री तथा परराष्ट्र मन्त्री कृष्ण बहादुर महाराद्वारा प्रस्तुत “नेपाल सरकार, परराष्ट्र मंत्रालयको तत्कालीन कार्य योजना” दृण्ठद ।
- छ. मुरारीराज शर्माको संयोजकत्वमा तयार भएको अध्ययन प्रतिवेदन दृण्ठद ।
- ट. दा. निरञ्जन मान सिंह बस्न्यात, आधुनिक कुद्नीति र नेपालको परराष्ट्रनीति (Modern Diplomacy and Foreign Policy of Nepal), वार्षिक पत्रिका, मार्च दृण्ठद, नेपाल विश्व सम्बन्ध परिषद् काठमाडौँ, पृष्ठ ८६-८७ ।

नेपालको विकासका लागि इजरायलको आधुनिक कृषि मोडल



- डा. अञ्जान शाक्य

विगत सयौं वर्ष अघिदेखि नेपाल एक कृषि प्रधान मूलुकका रुपमा रहेको छ । तर नेपाल कृषि प्रधान मूलुकको रुपमा भने नारामा मात्रै सीमित रहेको देखियो । हालसम्म नेपालमा नारामा भनेको जस्तो समग्र कृषि क्षेत्रको विकास भने हुन सकेको छैन । वास्तवमा कृषि क्षेत्रको विकासले नै नेपालमा विकासका लहरहरु फैलिदै जाने हो । नेपालमा हाल ६५% को हाराहारीमा नेपालीहरु कृषि क्षेत्रमा आबद्ध छन् । यति धेरै जनसख्या कृषि क्षेत्रमा लागेको भएतापनि सुचकांक भने नकारात्मक छ । नेपालमा परम्परागत कृषिको कारणले गर्दा उत्पादन राम्रोसँग हुन सकेको छैन । यस्तै भएका कृषि उत्पादनलाई पनि उचित तरिकाले वितरण गर्न सकेको देखिंदैन । अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय बजारमा नेपालमा उत्पादन भएका कुनै निश्चित कृषिजन्य बस्तुहरुको माग भएता पनि ती बस्तुको माग अनुसारको उत्पादन हुन नसक्दा निर्यातमा उल्लेख्य सुधार हुन सकेको छैन । अझ भन्ने हो भने त निर्यातमा त सुधार भएन विडम्बनाको कुरा त हामीले आफ्नै देशमा उत्पादन भएका फलफुल तरकारी तथा अन्य खाद्य पदार्थ उपभोग गर्न समेत पाउन सकेनौं । बरु उल्टै अर्बौं रुपैयाँ मूल्य बराबरको फलफुल तरकारी आयात गरेर देशको अर्थतन्त्रलाई नै नकारात्मक असर पारिराखेका छौं । यस्तै कृषि क्षेत्रमा हुने रोजगारीका अवसरहरु पनि हामीले गुमाइरहेका छौं । कृषि क्षेत्र अहिलेको अवस्थामा यति बृहत क्षेत्र हो जहाँ सुक्ष्म तरिकाले यस क्षेत्रलाई विस्तार गर्ने हो भने हजारौंको सख्यामा यूवा, किसान, उद्यमी, प्राध्यापक, रिसर्चर, प्रोग्रामर, विधार्थी, विज्ञहरु आदिले काम गर्ने अवसर पाउनेछन् । यसका लागि आधुनिक कृषि अर्थात कृषिमा आधुनिकीकरण गर्न आवश्यक छ, जुन आधुनिक कृषिको मोडल इजरायलबाट प्राप्त गर्न सकिन्छ ।

इजरायलको विकासमा कृषिको योगदान

इजरायल मुलुक १४ मे, १९४८ मा स्थापना भएको हो । इजरायल स्थापनाको ७३ वर्षमा यो मूलुकले धेरै विकासका फड्कोहरु मारेको छ । हुन त इजरायल विकास हुनुमा शिक्षा, कृषि, स्वास्थ्य, हाइटेक, पूर्वाधार, विज्ञान-प्रविधि, तालिम इत्यादि धेरै तत्वहरु छन् । त्यस मध्ये इजरायलको कृषि क्षेत्रको आधुनिकीकरण विशेष रुपमा पर्छ । शुरु शुरुका समयमा यहाँ पनि परम्परागत शैलीले काम गर्दा कृषि क्षेत्र सुस्त गतिमा चलेको थियो । इजरायल मरुभूमी भएको स्थानमा अवस्थित भएको हुनाले पानीको अभाव हुन्थ्यो । उर्वर जमीन नभएको हुनाले उत्पादन खासै उल्लेख्य रुपमा हुन सक्दैन थियो । झन त्यो बेला छिमेकी राष्ट्रहरुसंगको शत्रुताले गर्दा छिमेकी मूलुकहरुबाट सहयोग प्राप्त हुँदैनथ्यो । सहयोगको अपेक्षा राख्नु दिवा

सपना देख्नु सरह हुन्थ्यो । पिउने पानीको श्रोत नै कम भएको यस्तो ठाउँमा खेती गर्नका लागि पानी त हुने नै भएन । त्यसपछि त्यहाँका नागरिकहरु संगठित भएर कृषिमा क्रान्ति ल्याउन नयाँ प्रविधि अपनाउनु पर्नेमा केन्द्रित भए । कृषिमा क्रान्ति ल्याउन सरकार, विज्ञ र नागरिक एकजुट भए । यसपछि इजरायलीहरुले कृषिमा आधुनिकीकरण गर्न थाले । सिंचाइ खेती, हाइड्रोपोनिक लगायत नयाँ नयाँ प्रविधिहरुको विकास हुन थाल्यो । जसले गर्दा कृषि क्षेत्रमा विश्वलाइ नै चकित पार्ने गरी इजरायलीहरुले आधुनिक कृषिको विकास गरे । अहिले इजरायलमा कृषि क्षेत्र उच्च विकसित एक उद्योगको रुपमा स्थापित भएकोछ । इजरायलको भूगोल प्राकृतिक रुपमा कृषिको दृष्टिकोणमा उपयोगी नभएता पनि आज इजरायल ताजा कृषि उत्पादनको प्रमुख निर्यातक हो र कृषि प्रविधिमा संसारमै नेतृत्व लिइरहेका छन् । इजरायलको आधा भन्दा बढी जमीन मरुभूमी रहेको छ त केवल २० % जमीन प्राकृतिक रुपमा कृषि योग्य जमीन छ । मरुभूमी भएकै कारण पनि यहाँ पानीको प्रचुर अभाव हुनु एक प्रमुख समस्याको रुपमा रहेको छ । यी समस्याहरु भित्र अवसरहरुको खोजी गर्दै drip irrigation, seedless fruits, hybrid products, aquaculture, hydroponic greenhouses, seeds production, dairy and poultry farming, fertilizers pesticides जस्ता विभिन्न प्रविधिहरुको विकास गरी कृषि क्षेत्रमा विश्व मै उदाहरणीय सफलता हासिल गर्दै गएको पाइन्छ । सन २०१९ मा ३ % , २०२० मा २.५ % र हाल ९० लाखको जनसंख्यामा केवल १.७ % मात्र कृषि पेशामा आबद्ध छन् । तर यति थोरै जनसंख्याले लगभग ९८ % आफ्नो बाँकी जनताको लागि खाद्य पदार्थ उत्पादन गर्ने मात्र नभइ बाहिरी मूलुकमा निर्यात समेत गर्न सफल भएका छन् ।

यसरी कृषि क्षेत्रमा ठूलो सफलता हासिल गर्नुमा त्यहाँ रहेका कम्प्युनिटिहरुको योगदान अतुलनीय रहेको छ । इजरायलले कठिन परिस्थितिलाइ अवगत गरी आफ्नो सुरक्षा, विकास, प्रगति, समृद्धि र सुखका लागि भनेर किबुज कम्प्युनिटि Kibbutz community को प्रणालीलाइ कार्यान्वयन गरे र यसले कृषि क्षेत्रको विकासमा ठूलो योगदान पुर्याएको मान्न सकिन्छ ।

किबुज कम्प्युनिटि सहकारीको जस्तै समुदाय मिलेर काम गर्ने स्वरुपको देखिन्छ तर सहकारीसंग केही भिन्नता छ । जस्तै किबुज कम्प्युनिटिको काम गर्ने सन्दर्भमा किबुजका सदस्यहरुसंगै एकै ठाउँमा बसोबास गर्ने, संगै खानपीन गर्ने र संगै जीविका गुजारा गरी एकताबद्ध रुपमा संगठित हुन्छन् । यो कम्प्युनिटि संचालनको क्रममा विकसित हुँदै अर्को कम्प्युनिटि पनि बन्न पुग्यो जसलाइ Moshav Community भनिन्छ । यी दुइ कम्प्युनिटिहरुबीच केही कुरामा भिन्नता छ तर दुवै कम्प्युनिटिले कृषि व्यवस्थाको विकासमा अग्रणी भूमिका खेलेको पाइन्छ । यी कम्प्युनिटिहरुको कारण नै इजरायलका ग्रामीण क्षेत्रहरुमा द्रुततर गतिमा विकास भएको हो । यी कम्प्युनिटिहरुको कारणले गर्दा कृषकहरुलाइ उधमीको रुपमा परिणत गरेका छन् । ती कम्प्युनिटिहरुले विकास गरेका प्रविधिका कारण त्यहाँ एउटा गाइले एक वर्षमा १२००० लिटर दूध दिन्छ । प्रति हेक्टर प्रत्येक मौसममा ३०० टन गोलभेंडा उत्पादन गर्दछन् । बाहिरी मूलुकहरुमा बढ्दै गएको माग अनुरूप इजरायलले बढी चेरी गोलभेंडाको विकास गरे । त्यसमा पनि इजरायली पहेंलो चेरी गोलभेंडा युरोपमा प्रख्यात छ । अझ महत्वपूर्ण कुरा भनेको बजारको भाउ अनुसार यस्ता गोलभेंडाको बीउ फलफुलको बीउ भन्दा पनि महत्व रहेको छ । युरोपमा यस्ता बीउ सयौं हजार डलरमा विक्री हुन्छन् । एक आराभा (desert) क्षेत्रमा मात्र ६०० घर परिवार (३००० मानिसहरुले) १५०००० टन तरकारीहरु उत्पादन

गर्दछन् । प्रति हेक्टर प्रत्येक मौसममा ३० लाख गुलाफहरु उत्पादन गरेर निर्यात गर्छन् । यो कृषिमा यसरी विकास गर्न सकेको विरुवालाइ पानी र मलको मात्राको सही सदुपयोग (fertigation) भएर हो । Fertigated crops छिटो सप्रिन्छ । बालीनालीलाइ उच्च गुणस्तर युक्त बनाइन्छ । हाइब्रिड बीउ को महत्व रहेको छ जसले गर्दा इजरायलको मौसम सुहाँउदो नयाँ प्रजातिका बीउहरु उत्पादन गर्दछ । जसका कारण बीउलाइ किरा र रोग लाग्नबाट जोगाउँछ र प्रतिरोधात्मक बनाउँछ ।

इजरायलको एउटा NRS पोल्ट्री फार्मले ६ वर्षको अनुसन्धान पछि कुखुराको वंशानुगतमा हाइब्रिडबाट परिमार्जित गरि कुखुरी (female chicken) को उत्पादनमा विकास गरे । उक्त कुखुरीहरुले पोथी अण्डा (female eggs) मात्र पार्ने प्रविधिको विकास गरे । NRS Poultry farm का प्रमुख Eli Mor का अनुसार यसबाट ७ अर्व भाले कुखुरा (male chicks) मार्न बाट जोगाउन सफल भए । उनका अनुसार पशु कल्याण हुने गरी प्रविधिको विकास गरिएको छ । जसले गर्दा फार्ममा दक्षतामा सुधार, मूल्यमा कमी र पशु कल्याणको प्रवर्धन हुन्छ । यस्तै प्रविधि गाइमा पनि प्रयोग गरेको उनले बताउँछन्। यसरी इजरायलको कृषि एवं पशुपालन क्षेत्रमा विकास हुनुमा Agriculture Center of Excellence को स्थापना र यसको भरपुर सदुपयोग नै प्रमुख कारण मान्न सकिन्छ ।

कृषक बाहेक अरु नागरिकहरु विभिन्न अन्य पेशाहरु जस्तै वैज्ञानिक, डाक्टर, इन्जिनियर, प्रशासक, उद्यमी, हाइटेक विज्ञ आदि धेरै क्षेत्रमा संलग्न हुने अवसर प्रदान गरेकोछ जसले गर्दा अरु क्षेत्रमा समेत पनि अभूतपूर्व सफलता हासिल गरी विश्वका अन्य मुलुकमा प्रविधि निर्यात गरेर राष्ट्रिय आम्दानी बढाउन सफल भएकोछ । इजरायलका नेताहरुमा समेत आफ्ना नागरिकहरुलाइ विश्व कै उत्कृष्ट नागरिकको रुपमा विकास गर्ने दृष्टिकोण र योजनाहरु रहेको देख्न सकिन्छ । यसै सन्दर्भमा पूर्व प्रधानमन्त्री वेञ्जामिन नेतान्याहुले पनि बेला बेलामा दिइने अभिव्यक्तिहरुमा इजरायलले उत्कृष्ट नागरिक उत्पादन गर्न सकेकोमा गर्व गरेको पाइन्छ । यी सफलता हासिल हुनुको पछाडि इजरायलले हरेक क्षेत्रमा अनुसन्धान र विकास (Research and Development) मा बढी लगानी गरेको पाइन्छ । उनीहरु सँधै उत्कृष्ट परिणाममा केन्द्रित हुन्छन् । समस्या भएमा र आएमा निरन्तर रुपमा समाधानका खोजी गर्दछन् । आफ्ना प्रगति भएका छन् कि छैनन् निरीक्षण तथा अनुगमन गरिरहन्छन् । अर्को महत्वपूर्ण कुरा भनेको सरकारले प्रत्येक उद्यमीहरुलाइ प्रोत्साहन र सहयोग निरन्तर रुपमा गरिरहन्छ । उदाहरणको लागि २०१९ मा कोरोना महामारीकै कारण धेरै क्षेत्रहरु संगै बढि मात्रामा पर्यटन, शिक्षा, यातायात आदि जस्ता क्षेत्रहरुमा धेरै नकारात्मक असर परेको थियो । तर यस्तो प्रतिकुल अवस्थामा पनि शुरुको चरणमा नकारात्मक असर परे पनि केही समय भित्रै इजरायल सरकारले सिर्जनात्मक नीतिहरु बनाएर स्टार्ट अपलाइ प्रोत्साहन दिएर उद्यमशीलताको प्रवर्धन गर्‍यो जसले गर्दा विश्वका विभिन्न विकसित मुलुकहरुको आर्थिक अवस्था स्वस्कँदा पनि इजरायलमा भने ४० % ले लगानी बृद्धि भयो र आर्थिक स्थिति झन सुधार गरेर विश्वलाइ नै चकित बनाए । इजरायलले paradigm shift गर्दै उच्च प्रविधि र आविष्कारको क्षेत्रमा लगानी बढायो । कुनैपनि स्टार्ट अप व्यवसायको लागि आवश्यक सहयोगहरु सरकारले दिन थाल्यो । संस्थागत लगानीकर्तालाई उत्थान गर्न यदि लगानीको पोर्टफोलियो हास भएमा ४० % रकम फिर्ता हुने योजनाहरु अपनाउन थाल्यो । यस्तै अनेकन नीतिहरु ल्याएर देशको अर्थतन्त्रलाइ झन बढी मजबुत बनाए । इजरायलीहरुको विज्ञता नै इजरायल दिन प्रतिदिन विकसित एवं शक्तिशाली हुँदै जानुको प्रमुख कारण मान्न सकिन्छ ।

संसारमा छरिएर रहेका यहूदीहरूमा राष्ट्रियताको भावनाले ओतप्रोत भएका कारणले इजरायलमा आएर बस्न थालेपनि उनीहरू एकताबद्ध भएर इजरायलको विकासका लागि दिलो ज्यान दिएर लागि परेको हामी देख्न सक्छौं । इजरायलीहरूको उद्देश्य नै आफ्नो मुलुक विकास गर्नु रहेको हुनाले आफ्नो धर्म संस्कृतिको संरक्षण संबर्धन गर्नु रहेकोले हामी आजको विकसित इजरायल देख्न पाएको हो ।

नेपालले लिनुपर्ने कदमहरू:

आइरिस राजनितिक नेता Edward W. Stewart ले भन्नु भएको छ - Agriculture is the foundation of all other industries” (कृषि अन्य सबै उद्योगहरूको जग हो)

यो भनाइलाई मननु गर्ने हो भने र नेपाललाई विकास गर्ने हो भने हालको अवस्थामा रहेका परम्परागत कृषिलाइ आधुनिकीकरण गर्न इजरायलमा जस्तै Agriculture Center of Excellence (सर्वोत्कृष्ट कृषि केन्द्र) स्थापना गरेर आधुनिक कृषि गर्न अत्यावश्यक देखिन्छ । नेपालमा ६५% भन्दा बढी जनसंख्या कृषि क्षेत्रमा संलग्न रहेको छ । तैपनि वार्षिक रुपमा अरबौं रुपैयाँको तरकारी र फलफुलहरू हामी आयात गर्दछौं जुन दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण तथ्य हो । हाम्रो जनशक्ति व्यर्थै खेर गइरहेको पुष्टि हुन्छ । त्यसैले पनि हामी नेपालीहरू पनि इजरायलमा जस्तो थोरै जनशक्ति मात्र आधुनिक कृषि क्षेत्रमा संलग्न हुने र जनसंख्याको ठूलो हिस्सा अन्य क्षेत्रमा संलग्न हुन सके रोजगारीमा अभिवृद्धि, अर्थतन्त्रमा आत्मनिर्भर र विश्वमा नेपालीले गरेका सिर्जनात्मक सोच विचार, प्रविधिहरू, जडिबुटिहरू तथा कृषिजन्य उत्पादनहरू लगायत धेरै कुराको निर्यात गरी नेपाललाई द्रुततर गतिमा विकास गर्न सकिन्छ । इजरायलले जस्तै नेपाल सरकारले पनि उत्कृष्ट नागरिक बनाउने तिर विभिन्न योजनाहरू ल्याउनु पर्दछ। यस्तै कृषकलाइ उद्यमी बनाउन नेपाल सरकारले आवश्यक नीति तथा योजनाहरू ल्याउनु पर्दछ र ती योजनाहरू कार्यान्वयन गर्न निजी क्षेत्र, सरकार र सहकारी सबै मिलेर लागू पर्दछ ।

नेपाल र इजरायलको दौत्य सम्बन्धको ६१ औं वर्ष पुगेको सन्दर्भमा यो २०१९ देखि २०२१ सम्मको वर्ष दुई मूलुकबीचको सम्बन्ध वी पी कोइराला पछिको अविस्मरणीय र घनीभूत बनाउन सफल रहेको कुरा नेपाली राजदुतावासले गरेको कार्यक्रममा इजरायली सरकार र त्यहाँका नागरिक अगुवाले नै भनेका थिए । त्यस अवधिमा दर्जनौं सम्झौता तथा समझदारी पत्रमा हस्ताक्षर लगायत थुप्रै क्षेत्रहरूमा सहकार्यहरू अगाडि बढेका थिए । यस मध्ये नेपालमा Agriculture Center of Excellence (ACoE) सातैवटा प्रदेशमा खोल्ने सन्दर्भमा समझदारी पत्रमा सेप्टेम्बर, २०२० मा इजरायलका लागि नेपाली राजदूत र इजरायलका परराष्ट्रमन्त्री बीच हस्ताक्षर भएको थियो । तर आज २० महिना पुगिसक्दा पनि यो सम्झौता कार्यान्वयन हुन सकेको छैन । जबकी सन २०१९ को अन्त तिर Mashav को प्रमुखलाई नेपाली राजदूत सहित नेपाल भ्रमण गराइ खेतीयोग्य जमीन र सेन्टर खोल्ने स्थान देखाउने कार्य समेत सम्पन्न भइसकेको छ । नेपालले यदि कृषिमा आधुनिकीकरण गर्ने हो भने ACoE खोलेर विश्व कै उत्कृष्ट इजरायलको प्रविधि भित्र्याउन अति आवश्यक छ । यसै सन्दर्भमा नेपाली विधार्थीहरू ५०० जति हरेक वर्ष इजरायलको कृषि सेन्टरहरूमा अध्ययन गर्न जान्छन् । अहिले लगभग ३२०० को हाराहारीमा ती विधार्थीहरू नेपाल फर्किसकेका छन् । केहीले नेपाल फर्केर कृषि क्षेत्रमा काम गरेका छन् । जस्तै लमजुंगमा १२७ जना मिलेर आराभा नेपाल संस्था खोलेर इजरायली कृषि प्रविधि भित्र्याएर आफ्नो देश अनुकूल हुनेगरि कृषि क्षेत्रको विकास गरिरहेका

छन् । यस्तै झापा चितवन लगायत केही ठाउँमा इजरायलबाट फर्केका थोरै विधार्थीहरू मात्र कृषि क्षेत्रमा सहभागी हुनुले नेपालको कृषि क्षेत्रका लागि खासै योगदान भएको देखिँदैन । यस्तै इजरायल सरकारसंग सेप्टेम्बर, २०२० मा इजरायलका लागि नेपाली राजदूत र इजरायलका परराष्ट्रमन्त्री बीच नेपाली श्रमिक सम्बन्धि छाता सम्झौतामा हस्ताक्षर भएको थियो र यसै अनुरूप अब कृषि क्षेत्रमा हजारौ नेपाली कृषकहरू इजरायलमा रोजगारी र तालिम लिन पाउने भएका छन्, जसले गर्दा इजरायल बसाई पश्चात नेपाल फर्केपछि कृषि क्षेत्रमा योगदान पुग्नेछ । त्यसैले तत्काल इजरायलसंग सम्झौता भएनुसार नेपालको सात वटै प्रदेशमा ACoE खोलेर नेपालमा आधुनिक कृषि विकास गर्नुपर्दछ । यस अलावा हाइटेक क्षेत्र, AI क्षेत्र, स्वास्थ्य, विज्ञान प्रविधि, शिक्षा क्षेत्र लगायत धेरै क्षेत्रमा इजरायलसंग सहकार्य तथा सहयोग लिई ती यावत क्षेत्रका प्रविधिहरू नेपालमा भित्र्याउन सके नेपालले छोटो समयमा साँच्चिकै विकासको फड्को मार्न सक्दछ । यो कुरामा हामी सबै सचेत हुने कि ?



- रमेश प्रसाद खनाल¹

नेपाली मुस्कान: हाम्रो कूटनैतिक पहिचान

मानव मात्र त्यस्तो प्राणी होला जो आफ्ना दुख सुख मनका भावलाई अनुहार आँखा शरीरको भाव भंगीमाले प्रकट गर्ने सामर्थ्य राख्दछ । हुन त अन्य प्राणीले पनि विभिन्न तरिकाबाट आआफ्नो मनोभाव प्रकटीकरण गर्दछन् नै भलै हामीले त्यो बुझौ वा नबुझौ । अनुहार अझ खास गरि आँखाले मनोभाव दर्शाउने गर्दछ । “आँखाको भाखा आखैले हे, ... राम्ररी बुझी सम्झनु” भनेर नारायण गोपालले धेरै अघि नै गीत गाउदै हामीलाई बताएका थिए नै । मैले कस्तो आँखाले अरुलाई हेर्दछु मैले पनि तेस्तै परिणाम पाउने रहेछु भन्ने अनुभव संगाले मैले आफ्नो तीन दशकको कूटनैतिक सेवामा कार्यरत रहँदा ।

मेरो कूटनैतिक सरुवामा अन्तिम सरुवा राजदूत पदको नियुक्ति बाहेक सबै सरुवा एशिया महादेशका देशहरूमा मात्र भए । म त्यसैले आफूलाई पक्का एशियाली ठान्छु । मेरो भाषा र कूटनैतिक तालिम पनि जापान, एशियामा नै भयो । मन्त्रालयबाट पहिलो कूटनैतिक सरुवा एशिया महादेशको जमिन, जनसंख्या, अर्थतन्त्रको दृष्टिबाट सबै भन्दा ठुलो मुलुक चीनको बेइजिङमा भयो भने दोस्रो सरुवा पश्चिमा राष्ट्रले भन्ने मध्य एशिया (नेपालको त पश्चिम एशिया) को भौगोलिक तवरमा दोस्रो ठुलो राष्ट्र साउदी अरेबियाको राजधानी रियादमा भयो। तेस्रो सरुवामा १९७१ मा मात्र जन्म भएको दक्षिण एशियाको नयाँ राष्ट्र बंगलादेशमा गरिएँ। त्यस पछिको अर्को सरुवा भयो भू-मध्य सागरको किनारमा रहेको र १९४८ मा मात्र स्थापना भएको अर्को पश्चिम एशियाली मुलुक इजरायलको तेल अभिवमा भयो । मेरो कूटनैतिक सेवाको अन्तिम पडाव भने पश्चिम यूरोपको ठुलो देश विश्वमा आर्थिक बिकासको दृष्टिबाट चौथो नम्बरमा रहेको जर्मनीको राजधानी बर्लिनमा भएर टुंगियो । यसरी सन् १९८८ जुलाईमा शुरु भएको मेरो कूटनैतिक यात्राको समापन २०२० को अक्टोबरमा भयो। यस अवधिमा मैले तीन मुख्य मानव सभ्यता भएका मुलुकहरूमा काम गर्ने र त्यहाको जीवन, संस्कृति, रहन सहन आदि अनुभव गर्ने, जान्ने बुझ्ने सुनौलो अवसर पाएँ। महाचीनको शताब्दिऔको सभ्यता र संस्कृति १९६७ को ‘सांस्कृतिक क्रान्ति’ ले बिनाश गरे पनि केही महत्वपूर्ण सभ्यताका प्रतिकहरू बाँकी नै थिए । रुप फेरिए पनि चिनिया संस्कृतिका मुलभूत कुराहरु यथावत थिए। त्यसै गरि ईस्लाम धर्मको प्रादुर्भाव भएको स्थान अरेबियन सभ्यताको केन्द्र मक्का र मदिनाको देश साउदी अरेबिया मेरो निमिति नितान्त नौलो अनुभव थियो । बाहिर निस्कनु पर्दा आफ्नो श्रीमती र छोरीले कालो रंगको बुर्का लगाएर हिड्नु पर्दा भने यो कस्तो ठाउँमा आएर फसियो भन्ने

¹ Former Ambassador of Nepal to Germany/Former Chief of Protocol

जस्तो लाग्थ्यो तर त्यो पनि बिस्तारै बानि पर्दै गयो । पछि त आफै 'किन बुर्का (अभाया) नलाएको' भनेर सम्झाउने पो भएछु ।

यहुदी धर्मावलम्बीको निमित्त १९४८ एउटा बेगलै मुलुकको रुपमा स्थापित ईजरायल मेरो अर्को महत्वपूर्ण पडाव बन्न गयो । करिब २२ हजार वर्ग किलोमिटरमा फैलिएको यो देशमा यहुदी धर्म, क्रिश्चियन धर्म, ईश्लाम धर्म तथा बहाई धर्मको केन्द्र र सभ्यताको अनुपम मिलन बिन्दु रहेको पाएँ । क्रिश्चियन धर्मका प्रवर्तक जिशस क्राइस्टको जन्म भएको बेथलेहम शहर अहिलेको प्यालेस्टाइन क्षेत्रमा पर्दछ भने क्राइस्टलाइ चार हात खुट्टामा किला गाडी जिउँदै झुन्ड्याईएको (कुसिफाई) गरेको स्थान भने अचेलको पुरानो जेरुसलेम शहर भित्र पर्दछ जहाँ अहिले चर्च अफ सेपुल्चर(मृतकलाई गाडिने र छोपिने पवित्र मानिने सुगन्धित प्रस्तर) छ । ईश्लाम धर्मका प्रवर्तक प्रोफेट मोहम्मदले जेरुसलेम स्थित अल अक्सा मस्जिदबाट स्वर्ग प्रस्थान गर्नु भएको बिश्वास गरिने भएकोले मक्का र मदिना पछि जेरुसलेम ईश्लाम धर्मावलम्बीहरुको निमित्त तेस्रो महत्वपूर्ण तीर्थस्थल मानिएको छ । यसैसंग जोडिएको छ यहुदीहरुको ऐतिहासिक टेम्पल माउन्टको वेस्टर्न वाल(पश्चिमी पर्खाल) जहाको पर्खाल पट्टि फर्किएर यहुदीहरु प्रार्थना गर्दछन् । यो पर्खाल यहुदीहरुको दोस्रो मन्दिर ध्वस्त पारिएर बचेको भाग भन्ने ऐतिहासिक कथन छ । यहाँ जुन सुकै धर्म आस्थाका मानिसहरुको पनि प्रवेश बर्जित छैन तर जो कसैले पनि मन्दिर परिसर भित्र प्रवेश गर्दा भने 'किपा' (कपाल ढाक्ने सानो खालको टोपी) लगाउनु पर्दछ । अचेल त प्लास्टिकको पुनः प्रयोग गर्न सकिने किपा प्रवेश बिन्दुमा नै राखिदिएको हुँदा त्यो किपा लगाउने र पश्चिमी पर्खालमा गएर शिरले ढोग्दै प्रार्थना गर्ने गरिन्छ। महिला र पुरुषको खण्ड बेगला बेगलै छ प्रार्थना गर्ने स्थान । महिलाहरुले भने आफ्नो शल वा रुमालले शिर ढाक्नु पर्दछ । तीन धर्मका महत्वपूर्ण स्थान रहेको जेरुसलेम विश्वको ध्यानाकर्षणको केन्द्र हुन पुग्यो स्वाभाविक नै देखिन्छ । ईजरायलको अर्को धार्मिक तीर्थ स्थल हो हाईफ्रा शहर स्थित बहाई केन्द्र । बहाई गार्डेनले सुसज्जित हाईफ्रा पुगदा अर्कै लोकमा पुगेको अनुभूति हुन्छ। हाईफ्राको डाँडामा बनाईएको त्यो बगैचाको सजावटले एक प्रकारको अलौकिक आनन्द दिन्छ भने प्रकृतिसंग नजिक हुन अभिप्रेरित गर्दछ । बहाई धर्मको शुरुवात ईरानबाट भए पनि यस धर्मका प्रवर्तक बहाउल्लाहा ईरानी ईश्लामिक उग्रताबादीको कट्टरपना र अत्याचारबाट बच्न पश्चिम एशियामा शरण लिन बाध्य भएको र पछि प्यालेस्टाइन (आजको ईजरायल) को आक्को नामक शहरमा आफ्नो धार्मिक क्रियाकलाप गर्ने केन्द्र स्थापना गरेको देखिन्छ । त्यही केन्द्रको बिस्तारित रुप पछि आक्कोबाट नजिक पर्ने हाईफ्रा शहरमा बहाईको अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय केन्द्र स्थापना भएको छ । ईजरायलमा विद्यमान सबै धर्मको उत्तिकै कानूनी मान्यता र सम्मान भए पनि राजनैतिक रुपमा इजरायल र प्यालेस्टाइन बीच बर्षौँदेखि चलिरहेको द्वन्द्व भने अझै साम्य हुन सकेको छैन ।

विश्वका कुनै पनि मुलुकमा जाँदा जब म आफुलाई नेपाली भनेर चिनाउछु धेरै मानिसहरु ओहो नेपालको हो भनेर खुशी मिश्रित आश्चर्य ब्यक्त गर्छन् । नेपाल भ्रमण गरेका बिदेशी परे भने त उनीहरु तुरुन्तै मित्रवत भैहाल्छन् । इजरायलमा कार्यरत रहँदा 'नेपाली' भन्ने बित्तिकै पाउने सकारात्मक प्रतिक्रिया गाज्जबको हुन्थ्यो । धार्मिक कारण बाहेक इजरायलमा १८ बर्ष पुगेका पुरुषले ३ वर्ष र महिलाले २ बर्ष अनिवार्य सैन्य तालीम लिनु पर्छ; सेनामा कार्यरत नै रहनु पर्छ । त्यो अवधिको समाप्ति पछि भने सेनामा काम गर्ने वा अन्य पेशामा जाने व्यक्तिको स्वेच्छामा भर पर्दछ। २/३ बर्षको कठिन सैन्य तालीम वा सेवा पछि धेरै जसो युवाहरुले सैन्य तालिमका क्रममा आर्जन गरेको रकमबाट सैन्य तालिमको तनावबाट मुक्त हुन ६ महिनाको

बिदा पाउने भएकोले बिभिन्न देशहरुको भ्रमणमा जाने रहेछन् । त्यही क्रममा उनीहरुको रोजाईमा पर्ने मुलुकहरुमा नेपाल पनि पर्ने गर्दछ । यसरी नेपाल भ्रमण गरि इजरायल फर्किएका युवाहरु नै पछि इजरायलका विभिन्न तह र तबकामा कार्यरत भएको अवस्थामा भेट हुँदा उनीहरुको हामी प्रतिको ब्यबहार नै फरक हुन्थ्यो । उच्च तहमा पुगेका व्यक्तिहरूसंग तुरुन्तै सम्पर्क राख्न र आफ्ना कुराहरु पेश गर्न सहज भएको महशुस हुन्थ्यो किनकि उनीहरुको नेपाल प्रतिको सकारात्मक दृष्टिकोणले हाम्रो कुटनैतिक कर्ममा पनि सहजता आउथ्यो । त्यतिबेला म कतिपयलाइ सोध्ने गर्छु- ‘नेपालको तपाइहरुलाइ के मन पर्यो ?’ सबै जसोको उत्तर हुन्छ - ‘मानिस र तिनको ओठमा रहिरहने मुस्कान!’ म आज यही नेपाली मुस्कानका बारेमा मेरो अनुभव बाँड्न चाहन्छु ।

विश्व एकाइशौ शताब्दीमा उन्नतिको शिखर तर्फ लम्केकोलम्क्यै छ बेतोडसंग । बिज्ञान र प्रबिधिले फडको मारेको मायै छ । आज रहेको एउटा प्रबिधि भोलि अर्को भैसक्रे अवस्थाले प्रबिधिको आविष्कार र बिकास नै एक ब्यबसाय भएर एकले अर्कोलाइ उछिन्ने होडबाजी छ । मानवलाइ सहज हुने संचार प्रबिधि होस् वा यातायातका साधन, औषधि उपचार होस् वा खाद्य उत्पादन अथवा मानव संसार नै ध्वस्त पार्ने एटम बमदेखि न्युक्लियर बम होस्, घातक हतियार होस् कि बिकाससंगै आउने अनेक महामारी र त्यसको तोडको बिकास -आजको विश्वका शक्तिशाली राष्ट्रहरु एकले अर्कोलाइ जिन्ने होडबाजीमा छन् । कसले कसलाई उछिन्ने भन्ने उछिनपाछिनमा मानिसहरु यसरी डुबेका छन् कि उनीहरुलाई आफू कहाँ छु, आफ्नो कर्तव्य के हो थाहा नभए जस्तो भएको छ । मानिसहरु सम्पति सुख, आनन्द र मोजको भौतिक संसारमा यसरी चुर्लुम्म डुबेका छन् कि तिनले आफ्नो सामाजिक परिवेश र एकअर्का प्रति राख्नु पर्ने सामान्य आदर, समभाव तथा सदभाव बिस्तारै बिर्सदै गैरहेको आभाष हुन्छ । मानिस सामाजिक प्राणी हो भनेर जति नै भने पनि बिकसित भनिएका देशहरुमा एक मानिस अर्को मानिस भन्दा राम्रो, सम्पन्न र सुखी भएको हुन चाहने होडमा ऊ असामाजिक हुँदै गैरहेको, आत्मकेन्द्रित हुँदै गएको, एकले अर्कोलाइ प्रतिद्वन्दी देखेको र एकले अर्कोलाई संसयका साथ हेर्ने जंगली युगको शुरुवात त भएको होइन भने जस्तो प्रतित हुन थालेको छ । जव एक मानिस अर्को मानिससंग भेट्दा खिसिक्क मुस्काउनुको सट्टा केही तर्सिएको जस्तो, आतंकित भए जस्तो र सशंकित भए जस्तो देखिन्छ, त्यहाँ मुस्कानको गुन्जायश नै रहदैन, त्यहाँ आत्मियता र सदभावको जगेर्ना हुन सक्ने त कुरै भएन ।

मानिसको ब्यबहारमा मौसम, ईतिहास, बिगत र बर्तमान, उसको हुर्काइ र पढाइ, साथि संगति, सामाजिक परिवेश, भौगोलिक अवस्थिति र बसाइ, सामाजिक बनोट, धर्म संस्कृति, परम्पराले पनि ठुलो प्रभाव पार्दो रहेछ । मेरो माइलो भाइ सुरेशले ५/६ वर्ष उच्च अध्ययनको क्रममा नर्वेको राजधानि ओस्लो शहरमा बितायो । उसले नर्वेबाट बिदामा नेपाल आउदा भन्थ्यो- “ओहो, नर्वेका मानिसहरु त कोहीसंग कोही नहुने, एकलै एकलै बस्न मन पराउने! उनीहरुको सबैभन्दा ठुलो सोख (हब्बी) भनेकै एक्लै कुनै अनकन्टार ठाउँमा गएर माछा मार्ने भन्थे रे एउटा सर्वेक्षणमा त्यहाका मान्छेहरु-” यस्तो सुन्दा हामी छक्क पर्थ्यौं । मानिस सामाजिक प्राणी भनिन्छ तर त्यही मानिस किन मानिसबाट टाढा हुन चाहन्छ? बिकास संगसंगै मानिस अलग थलग हुँदै किन जाँदै छ? हिजो साथीभाईसंग रमाउने मानिस आज किन मोबाइलमा त्यो खुशी खोज्छ जुन हिजो प्रतक्ष पाउथ्यो... फेसबुक, ट्वीटर जस्ता सामाजिक भनिने संजालले त मान्छेलाई ‘असामाजिक’ पो बनाउदै लगे जस्तो भान भैरहेको छ । मानिसहरुको संवेग अब यस्तै संजाल हो कि

जन्जालमा पोखिने भयो- भेट हुँदा नचिने झैं गर्ने नबोल्ने मानिस संजालमा भने ठिक्क पारिरहेको हुन्छ। साथिभाई मिलेर गरिने रमाइलो र हाँसो ठट्टा अब बिगतका कुनै कथा जस्तो भएको आभाष हुनु पक्कै मानव सभ्यताको निमित्त नै चिन्ताजनक बिषय बन्नु पर्ने होइन र ? अनि त्यस्तोमा एकअर्का प्रति कहाँबाट होस् मुस्कानको आदान प्रदान! त्यो भन्दा म ठुलो, त्यो भन्दा म के कम अनि आफूलाई मात्र केन्द्रमा देखेले मुस्कानबाट प्रकट हुने आत्मियताको पत्तो कहाँबाट पावस्! भौतिक बिकासको चरमचुलीमा पुगेर एकअर्का प्रतिको आत्मिय ब्यबहार नरहने हो भने मानव हुनुको अर्थ र अस्तित्वको पनि के काम र मानव समाजको के अर्थ ?

कतिपय देशमा कुटनैतिक काम वा तालिमको लागि म रहँदा होस् वा निजि भ्रमणमा जाँदा होस् मेरो रुपरंगत हेरेर म प्रति धारणा बनाउने रहेछन मानिसहरु । हामी नेपाली त कति भाग्यमानी भने हामी त पहिल्यै देखि बिबिध रुप र रंग, भाषा र भेष, धर्म र संस्कृति बीच हुर्केको भएर होला हाम्रो मानिसहरु प्रतिको धारणा त सार्वभौमिक हुने रहेछ; सर्वकालिक हुनेरहेछ । त्यो त हाम्रो सम्पति पो रहेछ जुन धेरै देशका मानिसहरुमा नहुन सक्ने पनि देखे मैले, अनुभव गरेको मैले । तर हाम्रो रुप, भेषभुषा र हिडाई बोलाई हेरेर विदेशमा ‘तिमि यो देश को हो?’ भनेर सोध्ने धेरै हुँदा रहेछन् । शायद त्यो अमुक देशको भनेर सोध्ने मानिसले आफ्नो अज्ञानता ब्यक्त गरिरहेको हो वा जानी जानी मेरो राष्ट्रको पहिचानलाई होच्याउन खोजेको हो भन्ने आशंका मनमा उठ्ने रहेछ। हिमाल, पहाड, तराइ, मधेशमा बस्ने नेपालीहरुको रुपरंगत भाषाभेष फरक हुनु भौगोलिक र वातावरणगत बिषय हो । नेपालीको निमित्त त्यो सामान्य बिषय हो, सर्बस्वीकार्य हो। एक आपसको सदभाव नेपालीजन साधारणमा कुटकुट भरिएको छ र त्यही नै साँचो अर्थमा ‘नेपालीपन’ हो भन्ने लाग्दथ्यो। बिबिध रुपरंगको समिश्रण रहेको नेपालीको निमित्त बिबिधता प्राकृतिक रुपमा नै स्वीकार्य हुन्छ, तर विदेशीले भने ‘नेपाली’ भन्न साथै एक कुनै निश्चित रुप रंगको मात्र हुने जस्तो गर्दा म भन्थे-एक दर्जन नेपाली जम्मा भए भने त्यहाँ हरेक रुप र रंग भेटिन्छ; त्यसैले कुनै एक प्रकारको रंग र रुप मात्र नेपाली हो भन्ने नै हुँदैन, सबै प्रकारको रुपरंग नै ‘नेपाली’ पनको परिचायक हो, भन्थे म। यस्तै, नेपालीको विश्व परिचय बनेको वीरताको गाथाले आज पनि विश्वका शक्तिशाली राष्ट्रहरुको सुरक्षा पंगितमा अग्रणी स्थानमा नेपाली गोर्खाली उभिने गर्दछन। ‘सुर्य कहिल्यै नअस्ताउने साम्राज्यको अधिपति’ बेलायतको सेनामा होस् वा बेलायतको उपनिवेशबाट ७५ बर्ष अघि मुक्त भै स्वन्त्रत भएको मुलुक भारतको सेनामा होस् -नेपाली गोर्खाली सेनाको रेजिमेन्ट अनिवार्य रुपमा रहनुको अर्थ नेपाली वीरता, शौर्यपन र शाहस अनि बलिदानको अमिट छाप ती राष्ट्रहरुमा अझै पनि रहेको स्पष्ट हुन्छ । वीरता र जस्तो सुकै परिस्थितिमा पनि होस र साहस नगुमाएर शत्रुलाई पराजय दिलाउन खेलेको भूमिकाले नेपाली सवैको नाम विश्व ईतिहासमा साहश र शौर्यको निमित्त अमिट भएर रहन गएको छ । विश्वमा कहिल्यै कसैको अधिनमा नरहेका केही सीमित राष्ट्रहरु मध्ये एक प्राचिन राष्ट्र नेपाल र नेपाली जति नै दुःखको अवस्थाबाट जीवन गुजार्नु परे पनि उसको ओठमा मुस्कान रहेकै हुन्छ । यो शायद नेपालको भौगोलिक बिबिधताको परिणाम पनि हो, यहाँको सहिष्णुताको अनुपम उदाहरण पनि हो । युगौ देखि रहदै आएको एकअर्का बीचको सहिष्णुता र समझदारी नै नेपालीहरुको शक्ति हो र त्यही शक्तिले अनेक कष्टका बीच एक संघर्षमय जीवनलाई दुखसुखको परिचायक मान्ने जीवन दर्शन भएर पनि नेपालीहरु मुसुक्क मुसुराएर बोल्ने प्रवृत्ति बिकास भएको हो भन्दा फरक नपर्ला !

मानिस कति सम्म बिगतको पीडामा बाच्दो रहेछ र सन्तान दर सन्तान त्यो एक पुस्ताबाट अर्को पुस्तासम्म पनि सदैँ (ट्रान्सफर) हुँदै आउदो रहेछ भन्ने कुरा मैले व्यक्तिगत रूपमा इजरायलमा रहँदा अनुभव गरेँ । मध्यपूर्वमा भूमध्य सागरको किनारमा रहेको यो मुलुकमा मैले सन् २०१० देखि २०१३ सम्म कुटनैतिक सेवामा काम गर्ने मौका पाए । यस पोस्टिंगको अवसरमा छुट्टी भयो कि दुइ बुढाबुढी मन लागेको ठाउँ घुम्न जान, साथिभाइसंग समय बिताउन 'फ्री' भएका थियो । हाम्रो अपार्टमेन्ट तेल अभिवबाट करिब २०।२५ किलो मिटर टाढा हर्जेनिया शहरमा थियो । भूमध्य सागरको किनार र मनमोहक हर्जेनिया बिचबाट हिडेर ५ मिनेटको दुरीमा रहेको यो ८ तले अपार्टमेन्ट सुबिधा सम्पन्न रहेछ । हरियाली भरिपूर्ण पार्क र हिड्ने बाटोको तोकिएको ठाउँ भएको हर्जेनिया कुटनैतिक क्षेत्र नै थियो भन्दा पनि हुन्छ । यहाँ धेरै देशका राजदूतहरु र कुटनीतिज्ञहरुको बसाइ थियो । अमेरिका, भारत, चीन लगायत धेरै देशका राजदूतहरुको निवास रहेको यो ठाउँ सुरक्षाका दृष्टिकोणले पनि ढुक्कको ठाउँ मानिन्थ्यो । गाजा क्षेत्रबाट प्रहार हुने मिसाइल यहाँ सम्म आई पुग्दैन रे भन्थे ! यस्तो खुशहाल वातावरणमा पनि किन हो शुरुशुरुमा एक प्रकारको खल्लोपन भने महशुस हुन्थ्यो हामीलाई हाम्रो अपार्टमेन्ट कै कुरा गरौं न । त्यो आठ तले अपार्टमेन्टमा केही बिदेशी नियोगका अधिकारी बाहेक धेरै जस्तो स्थानीयहरु नै बसोबास गर्थे । कहिलेकाँही बिदेशीसंग लिफ्ट वा पौडी पोखरीमा भेट हुँदा 'हाइ' 'हल्लो' हुन्थ्यो, मुस्काउने काम पनि हुन्थ्यो । पुस्ता दर पुस्ता सदैँ आएको यहूदीहरु माथि भएको थिचोमिचो, अन्याय र अत्याचार खासगरी हिटलरले द्वितीय विश्वयुद्ध अघि मच्चाएको मानव नरसंहार (होलोकस्ट)ले उनीहरु मानसिक रूपमा आक्रान्त थिए नै; त्यो पीडा अहिलेको पुस्तासम्म आइपुगेको त्यो उनीहरुको अनुहार र ब्यबहारमा कतै झल्कन पुगेको हो कि भन्ने आभास हुन गयो हामीलाई शुरुका केही दिन त । तर कार्यकाल समाप्त भएर फर्किने बेला सम्म सबै इजरायलीहरुको हामी प्रतिको सद्भाव र आत्मीयपन हाम्रो मुस्कानमा उनीहरुको मुस्कानले सम्बन्ध बढाउने अवस्थामा पुगेको थियो ।

यो देशमा एकै प्रकारका यहूदी मात्रै होलान भन्ने मानिसहरुको सोच जस्तै मेरो पनि थियो । धर्म पो एकै रहेछ मानिसहरु त विभिन्न प्रकारका हुने रहेछन । धर्मले उनीहरुलाई जोड्ने काम गरेको रहेछ । यूरोपेली यहूदीमा पनि फरक फरक हुँदा रहेछन् । अमेरिका, अफ्रीका र एशियाको भारतको कोचिनका यहूदी पनि भेट्न पाइयो । वास्तवमा यहूदीहरु हजारौं बर्ष अघि छिन्नभिन्न भै रोमन र त्यसपछि क्रिस्चियन अनि मुसलमानहरुको आक्रमण पश्चात आफ्नो धर्म एवं संस्कृति रक्षका लागि बिभिन्न देशमा शरण लिन पुगेका रहेछन् । यसरी हजारौं बर्ष एक ठाउँबाट अर्को ठाउँ भट्टिकन बाध्य मानिस, अनि हिटलर लगायतका अत्याचार, यहूदी जातिकै सर्व बिनाशालिला "होलोकस्ट" (जहाँ ६० लाख यहूदी समेत अन्य अल्पसंख्यकहरुको आम बिनाश गरिएको थियो) भोगेका थिए उनीहरु र उनीहरुका पुर्खाहरुले । उनीहरुले पाएको यातना, पीडा र दुःख शायद अकल्पनीय थियो । उनीहरु कुनै अर्को मान्छेलाई सजिलै बिश्वास गर्ने अवस्थामा थिएनन् र शायद हुदैनन् पनि ।

नेपाली मुस्कान, सरदार पाण्डे र त्यस बखतको नेपाल

नेपालीको मुस्कान र यसले बिश्वब्यापी रूपमा पाएको पहिचानको सम्बन्धमा सरदार श्री भीम बहादुर पाण्डेले आफ्नो पुस्तक "त्यस बखत को नेपाल" को भाग १ मा सटिक रूपमा लेख्नु भएको रहेछ । म भन्दा ४५ बर्ष अघि जन्मनु भएका अनि म कुटनैतिक सेवामा प्रवेश गरेको ४ बर्ष पुग्दा नपुग्दै दिबंगत हुनु भएका सरदार पाण्डे म जस्ता अनगिन्ति सार्वजनिक सेवामा जीवन अर्पिका मानिसहरुको प्रेरणाको अजस स्रोत

र आदरणीय हुनुहुन्थ्यो । राणा कालको चरम चरणमा बि.स. १९७३ सालमा जन्मनु भएका पाँडेले आफुले देखेका, भोगेका, जानेका बिषयहरु संगालेर हामी पछिल्लो पुस्तालाइ छोड्नु भएको “त्यस बखतको नेपाल” नामक कृति मेरो निमित्त भने नेपालको ईतिहास, शासक र शासन प्रक्रिया, सामाजिक, सांस्कृतिक, आर्थिक एबम कुटनैतिक अवस्थिति बारे मिहिन तवरमा तयार पारिएको ग्रन्थ हाम्रो ईतिहासको निमित्त ठुलो सौगात छोडेर जानु भएको रहेछ।

सरदार पाँडेले नेपाली मुस्कानको बारेमा स्पष्ट लेख्नु भएको छ : “... मानिसको मन कालो नभएकोले मुख हँसिलो थियो, हँसिलो मुख हो निर्दोष र कन्चन दिलको प्रतिबिम्ब। हँसिलो मुखको लागि पनि नेपालीहरु बिश्वबिख्यात हुनाको कारण यही हो।” वहाँ आगाडि लेख्नुहुन्छ: “आजतक नेपालीहरुको हँसिलो मुखलाई विश्वविख्यात हुनाको खास कारण हो, पुस्तान देखि उनीहरुमा मुसुक्क हाँसेर बोल्ने, खानदानी बानि र अखण्ड राष्ट्रिय स्वन्तन्त्रता । अझै पनि नेपाललाई कसैकसैले ‘अजीव’ भन्नको कारण हो नेपालीको मुखमा झुन्डिएको त्यो मधुर मुस्कान । अरु गुणहरु मासिदै गए पनि हाम्रो खिस्स हाँसेर बोल्ने बानी यथावत छ । त्यो कसैले रोकेर नरोकिने र मारेर नमर्ने कुरा हुँदा ।”²

मैले वहाँलाई भेट्ने शौभाग्य पाइन तर मेरो बा(रामप्रसाद खनाल) बाट भने मैले सानै देखि वहाँको गरिमामय व्यक्तित्व बारे जान्न सुन्न पाएको थिए केही मात्रामा भए पनि । एउटा परिबन्दले वहाँको व्यक्तित्वसंग अचानक निकट हुन पाउने कडी बन्नु भयो वहाँका सुपुत्र मेजर जनरल श्री पवन बहादुर पाँडे । मैले सन् १९९९ मा संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघको साधारण सभामा न्युयोर्कमा परराष्ट्र मन्त्रालयबाट एक प्रतिनिधिको रुपमा २ महिना काजमा सहभागी हुने सुअवसर पाए । त्यस बेला नेपालका स्थायी प्रतिनिधि तथा राजदूत हुनुहुन्थ्यो श्री नरेन्द्र बिक्रम शाह । त्यही नियोगमा नेपालको पहिलो सैनिक सल्लाहकारको रुपमा कार्यरत हुनुहुन्थ्यो महारथी श्री पवनबहादुर पाँडे जो सरदार भिम बहादुर पाँडेका सुपुत्र हुनुहुन्थ्यो । वहाँसंगको त्यो छोटो बसाइमा पनि राम्रो मित्रता हुन पुग्यो जुन आज पर्यन्त जारी छ ।

सरदार भीम बहादुर पाँडे सन् १९६५ मा पश्चिम जर्मनीको तत्कालीन राजधानी बोनमा नेपालको राजदूतावास स्थापना गर्ने नेपालको पहिलो आवासीय राजदूतको रुपमा नियुक्त हुनु भएको थियो भने नेपाल र जर्मनीको द्विपक्षीय सम्बन्धलाई नयाँ उचाईमा पुर्याउनु वहाँले पुर्याउनु भएको योगदान ईतिहासमा दर्ज भएर रहेको छ । शौभाग्यबस वहाँको पदचाप पछ्याउदै पांच दशक पछि सन् २०१६ म पनि त्यो देशको निमित्त नेपालको ११ औं आवासीय राजदूत हुन पुगे । बर्लिनमा हरेक बिहान वहाँको तस्बिर अघिल्लिर बसेर मेरो दैनिकी शुरु गर्दा वहाँ पनि त्यहीं कतै हुनुभएको आभाष स्पर्श गर्न पाउथे म । जस्तोसुकै दुखमा पनि नेपालीहरुको ओठमा रहने त्यो निस्छल मुस्कान हाम्रो शान र शक्ति हो भने यही नै नेपालीको असली कूटनैतिक पहिचान रहेको बिषयमा त्यतिबेला लेख्नु भएका सरदार भीमबहादुर पाँडेको त्यो मधुर मुस्कान हेर्दै मेरो दिनको शुरुवात हुन्थ्यो। नेपालीको मुस्कान नेपालीलाइ संसार भर चिनाउने एक यस्तो कूटनैतिक माध्यम हो जसको उचित उपयोग गरेर हामी संसारका मानिसका दिल र दिमाग जित्न सक्दछौ भनेर बोध गराउने श्री भीम बहादुर पाँडे प्रति सगौरव समर्पित गर्दछु यो लेख । अस्तु ।

2 त्यस बखतको नेपाल-भाग -१, पृष्ठ ३२३ ले. सरदार भीम बहादुर पाँडे ।

Some glimpses of major AFCAN events & activities (2022)



*Breakfast meeting with H.E. Sri Lankan Ambassador Himalee Arunatilaka
(May 2, 2022)*



*Breakfast meeting with H.E. Sri Lankan Ambassador Himalee Arunatilaka
(May 2, 2022)*



*Breakfast meeting with H.E. Israeli Ambassador Mr. Hanan Goder
(May 25, 2022)*



*Breakfast meeting with H.E. Israeli Ambassador Mr. Hanan Goder
(May 25, 2022)*



Diplomatic briefing to newly nominated Career Ambassadors of Nepal to various countries (June 28, 2022)



Briefing on Nepal's Foreign Policy and presentation of AFCAN Review to member of parliament Dr. Deepak Prasad Bhatta (July 03, 2022) at the Federal Parliament



Courtesy call on Hon. Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr. Narayan Khadka



Diplomatic briefing to the newly nominated Political Ambassadors of Nepal to various countries (July 10, 2022)



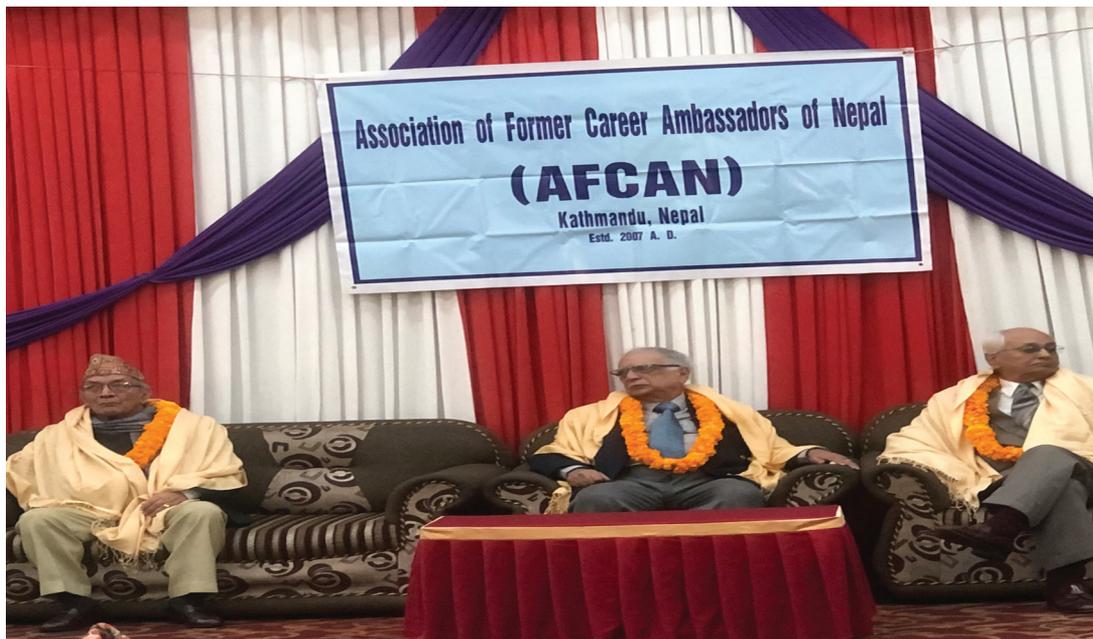
*Breakfast meeting with H.E. German Ambassador Dr. Thomas Prinz
(July 15, 2022)*



*Breakfast meeting with H.E. German Ambassador Dr. Thomas Prinz
(July 15, 2022)*



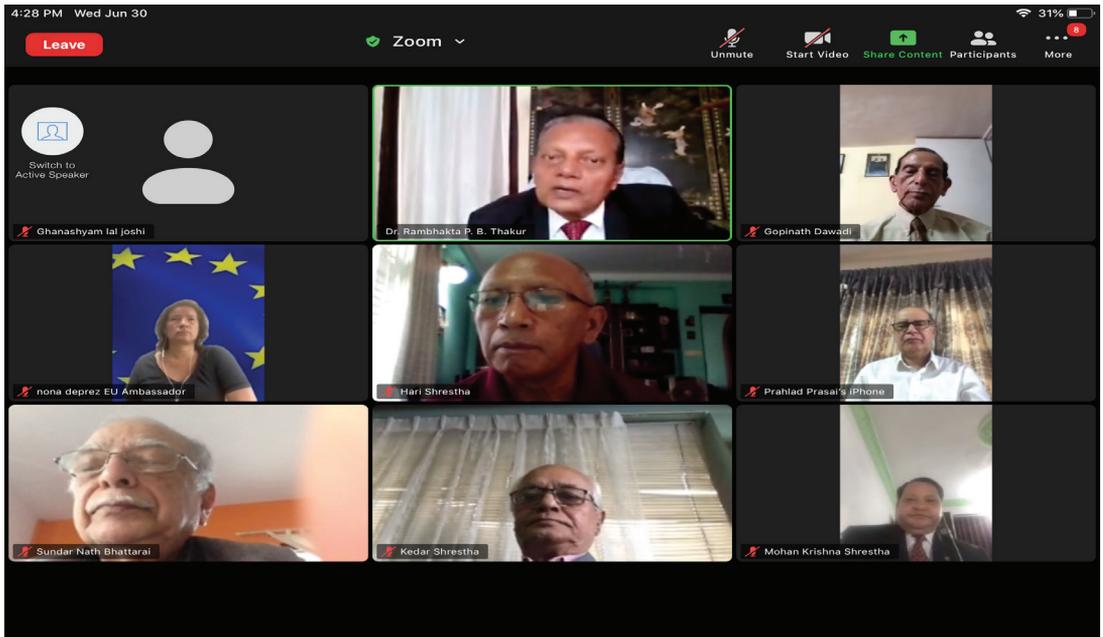
*Talk Programme on Energy Diplomacy hosted by the AFCAN
(July 25, 2022)*



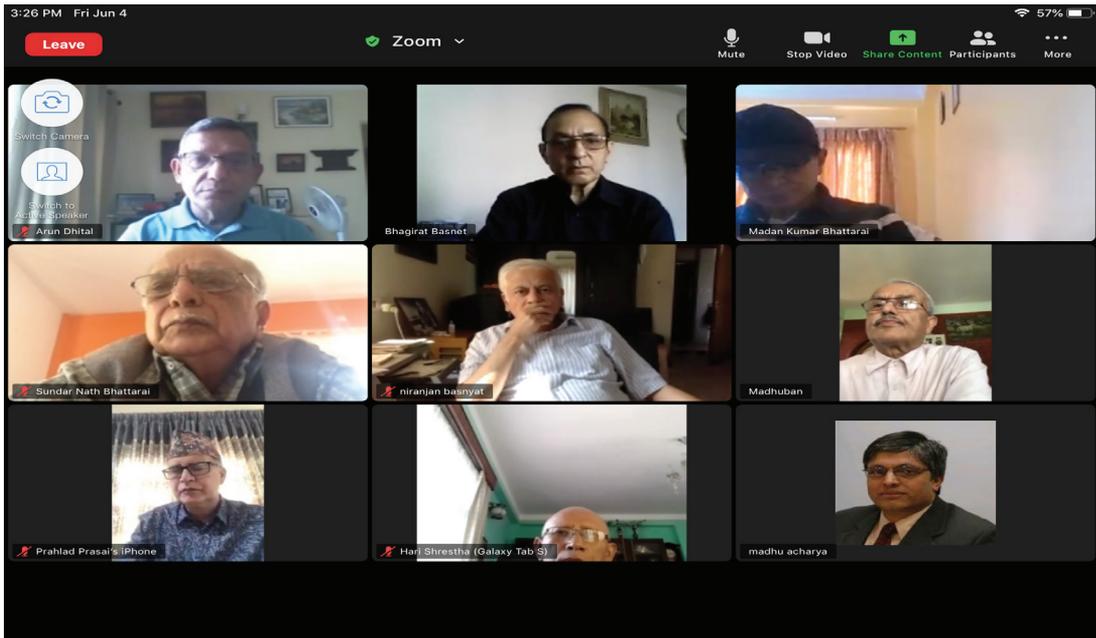
*Shawl-Honoring to Senior Ambassadors in Annual Family Dinner of AFCAN family
& friends (November 03, 2022)*



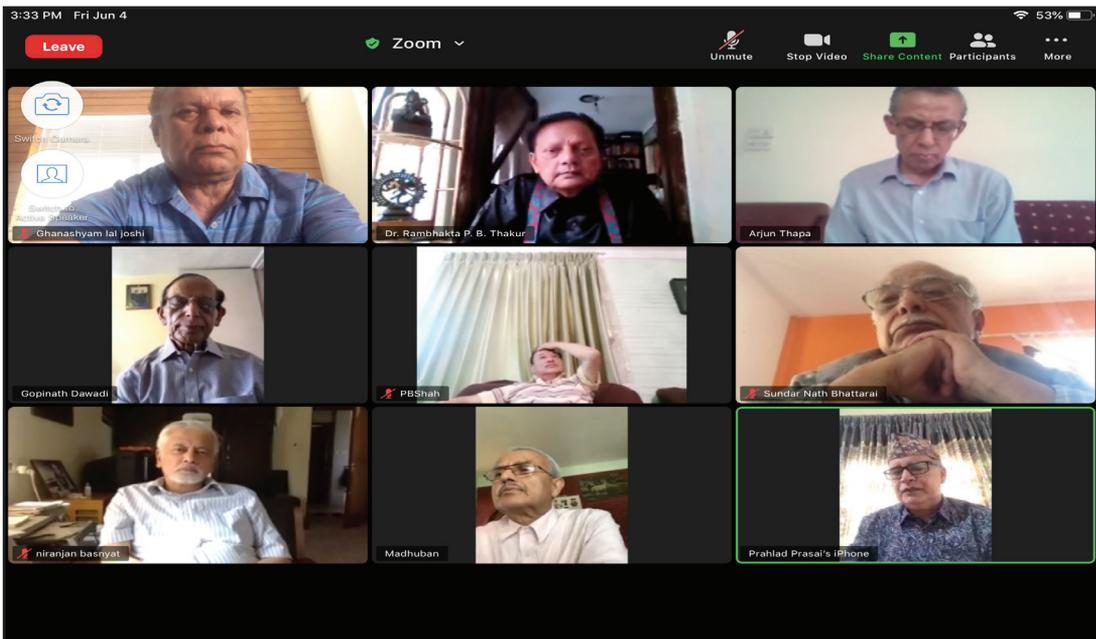
Shawl-Honoring to Senior Ambassadors in Annual Family Dinner of AFCAN family & friends (November 03, 2022)



Zoom Meeting with EU Ambassador (January 23, 2022)



Zoom Meeting with Members of AFCAN (January 23, 2022)



Zoom Meeting with Members of AFCAN (January 23, 2022)

AFCAN: a Brief Introduction

The Association of Former Career Ambassadors of Nepal (AFCAN) was established in 2007. It is a non-profit making association, and is registered with the concerned authority of the Government of Nepal. Its objectives are, inter alia, to contribute to the promotion of Nepal's national interests in accordance with the country's foreign policy; conducting studies, researches, interactions and dialogues within the Association and with other bodies and providing independent institutional views and advice to the Government of Nepal on matters of foreign relations, which might be helpful in policy formulation and execution.

AFCAN has been working closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through occasional consultations on matters of importance on foreign relations. It has organised several workshops and seminars on important issues such as Foreign Direct Investment, External Trade, Foreign Employment, Tourism, Water Resources, etc. It also organizes occasional interactions with experts on matters of critical importance for the country.

Another highlight of AFCAN's activities is the "AFCAN Breakfast Roundtable", which is an interaction programme with foreign ambassadors accredited to Nepal, with newly appointed Nepali ambassadors preparing to take up their assignments in foreign countries, and with other experts of specific fields.

In order to provide a common platform to share views, observations and thoughts on national and international issues of common concerns, the AFCAN has also initiated to publish the AFCAN REVIEW as an annual compendium of articles, write-ups and observations from 2020 onwards.