

Nepal Abroad

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Nepal Abroad

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UN Rights Chief Raises Concern Over Impunity

Kathmandu, March 20: Visiting United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanethem Pillay Friday met with Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' and President Dr Ram Baran Yadav and discussed with them Nepal's human rights situation and sought extension of her Nepal office.

At a meeting with Prachanda at Baluwatar, Pillay showed concern over Nepal's progress in ending impunity and finding out about the conditions of the disappeared people.

The Prime Minister told Pillay that the government was effortful to form crucial commissions, including a panel to probe the whereabouts of the disappeared, and a truth and reconciliation commission, according to PM's press advisor Om Sharma.

Human rights situation was not improving as desired because of

the transitional phase of the country, the PM was quoted as saying to Pillay.

PM Prachanda said that he would consult with political parties to decide on the extension of the OHCHR office in Nepal, which ends in June 2009.

UN High Commissioner Pillay met with President Yadav at Shital Niwas and called for ending the culture of impunity in Nepal.

Pillay, who arrived here on Wednesday on a five-day visit, will leave for India on Sunday. Meanwhile, the United Nations will press for clearer resolutions, legislation and policies to make education a priority in humanitarian response, concluded a thematic debate in New York.



The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanethem Pillay meeting with former Prime Minister Giriraj P Koirala in Kathmandu. Former Nepalese Ambassador to USA Dr. Suresh Chalise is seen briefing the media about the meeting between Pillay and Koirala.

The United Nations General Assembly debate heard the call for states to regard attacks on schools as war crimes.

Top UN experts, representatives of Member States, civil society, teachers and learners pressed for concrete measures to ensure the pro-

vision and protection of education in situations of crisis and emergency.

Sradda Thapa, a student from Nepal described the impact of the long insurgency in her country. "During the war both the government and the Maoists sought control of

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Obama Announces New Rules For Stimulus Spending

- By Kent Klein Washington March 20 2009 VOA

U.S. President Barack Obama issued new guidelines Friday on how the state and federal governments can spend their share of the \$787 billion economic recovery plan. The tough new rules are intended to ensure that the money is spent on worthy projects.

President Obama says the huge stimulus package will "require a new level of transparency" in how taxpayers' money is spent. "It is the most sweeping recovery plan in our nation's history. With a plan of such size comes an obligation to be vigilant with every dime that we spend," he said.

Mr. Obama told lawmakers from the 50 states, meeting at the White House, the initiatives that will get priority must show they can create jobs or provide other "enduring benefits."

The president also said he wants to reduce the influence of lobbyists. "Decisions about how Re-

covery Act dollars are spent will be based on the merits. Let me repeat that: Decisions about how recovery money will be spent will be based on the merits. They will not be made as a way of doing favors for lobbyists," he said.

Mr. Obama said any lobbyist who talks with a member of his administration about a stimulus project will have the proposal posted on the Internet.

He said the recovery plan "cannot and will not be an excuse for waste and abuse."

North Carolina state House Speaker Joe Hackney, who met with the president, said state governments are doing their best to spend the money efficiently. "We will cooperate fully, in terms of the transparency and accountability that is being asked of us. I am told that 46 states already have their own websites up, to let anyone in

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Helping Maoists Form Govt Was UML Blunder: Nepal

Bhimduttanagar, March 20: Constitutional Committee head Madhav Kumar Nepal Friday said that the nation would get a new constitution within the next two years.

"We will reach our destination although we have a rough road ahead. No one should doubt over the timely drafting of the new statute," said Nepal, adding that the country's future was brighter.

He was speaking at a press conference organized by Press Chautari Nepal, Kanchanpur branch, here.

He said that they would get the help of 'best brains' in drafting the new statute. "We will make optimal efforts for consensus while framing the statute. If this effort fails, we will apply other methods to prepare the main law of the land in the given timeframe."

He also said that all the political parties had been extending their cooperation to the works of collecting public opinions on the new statute.

Constituent Assembly members have actively and vigorously been involved in soliciting the people's views on the new statute, he added.

Nepal, also a senior CPN-UML leader, expressed his ire against UCPN-Maoist saying that the UML committed a blunder by helping the former rebels to form the government.

"It was UML's big mistake to bring the UCPN-Maoist with its parallel army in the government," said Nepal.

He said that the country was heading towards complexities due to the shortcoming of the government.

Dwelling on the ongoing controversy besetting Nepal Army, he said, "The Maoists should solve the problem through dialogue as they will lose their credibility if they fail to handle the sensitive subject like army."

He said that it was wrong for not extending the tenure of brigadier generals. "Behind not extending their tenure, the Maoists have a motive to create further chaos in the country."

Expressing his discontent over the performance of the government, the UML leader said that one could not expect political culture from the Maoists as the latter were still under the grip of militarism. (TRN)

Editorial:

Missing Solidarity

Very little information is made available and discussed about the struggle of the people of Nepalese origin claiming their rights for an independent state within the Indian Union, and hence their struggle remains limited to the region, often causing delayed response from the central Indian government for all serious petitions made by the political organizations from the Gorkhaland area.

It was during the later part of the Panchayat regime, that had confined the Nepalese society (in Nepal) with limited and strictly monitored flow of information, the progress of the Nepalese minority movement in Bhutan remained unnoticed by the majority of the people in Nepal and outside. The result was the unexpected arrival of mass refugees in the eastern Nepal. Although developing mass movement of 1990 was also the reason their struggle in Bhutan couldn't get noticed. Although the resettlement plan may sound pleasing, the pain of quitting the motherland remains among the Bhutanese refugees even today.

While we may have missed extending any form of support to the then struggling Bhutanese minority of Nepalese origin, we now have an opportunity to express solidarity with the Nepalese people living in the north Bengal area, popularly known as the Darjeeling Hills area. We need not visit the history class

to understand the history of the Darjeeling, but recollecting patriotic poems prescribed during school years should be enough in revitalizing the thoughts and recognizing the relations we have with those Nepalese people living on the other side of the Nepalese territory. They are separated with the main land Nepal, not because of choice but the Treaty of Sugauli signed in 1884 AD between the British India and the Nepalese government. We have in common virtually everything except the country.

All of us may not be able to extend financial assistance, however, trying to understand and following the progress made by their movement, talking to friends, families and relatives and sometimes writing your concern about the movement to the nearest Indian diplomatic missions, and to the Indian government in India may be but a few examples of how we can support their struggle. Writing a word of appreciation for leaders of the movement would also be of great encouragement for them. They're struggling for an independent state not because of mass migration under any 'regional' grand design but a natural aspiration for self-recognition in the Indian union.

Those living abroad are overwhelmed with daily schedule of making the living, yet many of us get time to browse developing stories from Nepal. Can we not spare few extra time for other struggling Nepalese?

UN Rights Chief Raises...

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schools in the villages" she said. "Occupation of schools wasn't all there was to it, schools were also perfect for recruitment."

Radhika Coomaraswamy, the UN's special representative for children and armed conflict, stated that "Any attacks or bombardments on schools is a violation of humanitarian law. Education and that sense of safety are crucial for children." Few development partners, however, include education as part of their humanitarian response. "Our appeal to fulfil the right

to education remains an empty shell if it is not supported by resources," said Nicholas Burnett, Assistant Director-General for Education for UNESCO.

He noted that only six bilateral donors include education in their humanitarian policy and response. There is a perception, he said, that education is a development issue and not a humanitarian issue.

Participants said that education should account for 4.2% of all humanitarian assistance, more than

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Ethnic Identity Crisis Gathers Momentum

Kathmandu, March 20 : At least two major ethnic groups in the southeastern Terai region [See Background] bordering India have joined strikes and protests in recent weeks against their classification in the new draft constitution as Madhesi, Nepal's dominant ethnic group.

Tharu make up 6.75 percent of Nepal's 28 million inhabitants, according to the government's Central Bureau of Statistics, and have been galvanised by the Tharuhat Joint Struggle Committee.

"I'm a Tharu. That's my true identity. I'm not a Madhesi," Geeta Chaudhary, a student, told IRIN in Kathmandu.

This is a common sentiment among Tharus, the original inhabitants of the Terai. Despite their numbers, they are one of the most neglected, exploited and impoverished ethnic groups in Nepal.

Most were slaves for high caste landlords under the bonded labour system known as 'kamaiya', which was abolished in 2006. Even today, however, thousands of extremely poor and illiterate Tharu girls work as indentured servants.

"In many ways, we have been the worst victims of poverty and political neglect," said Chaudhary.

"It [the classification move] was a direct attack on our ethnic identity and an insult to the entire Tharu community," said Raj Kumar Lekhi, general secretary of Tharu Kalyankari Sabha, a prominent Tharu campaigning group.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the recent strikes had a serious impact in terms of blocking supplies of food and petrol in hill areas, causing shortages and price hikes. Protestors also blocked the movement of humanitarian service vehicles and ambulances.

Muslims

Terai Muslims - some 4.3 percent of Nepal's population - are equally incensed, and joined the protests against their categorisation by the government as Madhesis purely because they live



Photo: Naresh Newar/IRIN

Members of the Tharu community in Nepal seek greater rights

in the Terai.

Like the Tharu, Muslims have been on the margins of development and mainstream politics.

"We expected that our 'New Nepal' would not discriminate against us but we are still being treated as refugees," said Muslim journalist Rahamatulla Miya.

The "New Nepal" concept has been popular since the end of the decade-long armed conflict (1996-2006) which ended with the abolition of the 300-year-old monarchy, but for minority ethnic groups, the situation

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Nepalese Calendar

Sun Mar 22 / Chaitra 09 '65
PapMochan Ekadashin Bratam
Mon Mar 23 / Chaitra 10'65
Duwadashin
Tue Mar 24 / Chaitra 11'65
Pradoshbratam
Wed Mar 25 / Chaitra 12'65
Pishachchaturdashinbratam
Thu Mar 26 / Chaitra 13'65
Darshasradham/Nisi
Fri Mar 27 / Chaitra 14'65
Pratipada
Sat Mar 28 / Chaitra 15'65
Dwitiya

Nepal Needs To Switch From Traditional Farming

Kathmandu, March 17: Nepal needs to switch away from traditional and subsistence farming to commercial and competitive agro-business to yield a mass production, which alone can ensure economic prosperity and growth, government and private sector representatives told journalists here on Tuesday.

About 66 per cent of Nepalese rely on agriculture, which contributes some 33 per cent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the nation, thus the need of the hour is to turn towards commercial value and competitiveness of agriculture, they emphasised.

With this thinking, the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives and the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) are organising a five-day Agro

Expo 2009 from April at Bhrikutumandap.

Under the Public Private Partnership (PPP) and One Village One Product Programme, the expo has been aimed to provide first hand information in the prospects of agro-businesses, linked with rural economic development.

The expo is expected to showcase agro-based products having commercial value and competitive edge. The theme, 'Economic Upliftment through Agro Business Development' will highlight the existing marketing channels and technologies adopted in Nepalese agro business sector.

The exhibit will feature be agro-based industrial products, alter-

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Engineers Insist on Regular Repair

Kathmandu, March 20: Civil engineers have pointed out the need to regularly monitor and maintain road networks to make the road maintenance cost-effective.

Speaking at a one-day national seminar on Sustainable Road Asset Management in Nepal, jointly organised by Nepal Engineers' Association and Roads Board Nepal in the capital today, engineer Purna Kadariya, secretary at Ministry of Physical Planning and Works, said the government had pledged huge investment in developing road assets, which could be witnessed in its three-year interim plan. Accordingly, all the 75 districts will be linked by roads in two years.

Stating that total investment on roads had reached Rs 200 billion, Kadariya said the maintenance funds allocated for this fiscal had decreased

as compared to last year. He also said that the present climatic condition was the major challenge to road construction and maintenance. "The long dry spell evaporates the moisture necessary for blacktopping while floods cause havoc on the construction and maintenance of roads," he said.

Vice president of National Planning Commission Dr Gunanidhi Sharma said creating a road network was central to developing other infrastructure, boosting national development and creating employment opportunities. Citing that lack of coordination among government departments had caused deterioration of roads, for example due to unplanned digging for laying pipes or cables, he called upon all the engi-

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Food Crisis Hits Chapangs Hard in Dhading

Dhading, March 20 (TH): Chapangs residing Dhading are facing acute shortage of food, due to a long spell of drought-like situation and recent wildfire in many parts of the district.

According to member of Nepal Chepang Organisation, Dhading, Ambar Bahadur Chepang, many people from his community in Chingwang, Lawang, Jyamararang, Sugabhanjyang of Mahadevasthan VDC, Bomrang, Bumarang, Dumbang and Bhalingtar of Dhusha VDC and Jogimara and Pida VDCs have been facing food shortage

for the last three months.

The Chepangs said the wildfire and drought-like situation hit them hard as they were unable to find wild roots in the jungle. The impoverished Chepangs hardly manage to produce food grains enough for six months a year.

Central secretary of the organisation Tilak Chepang said while almost 80 per cent of the Chepangs were landless, the remaining 20 per cent hardly manage to keep themselves alive through agricultural production in the remote southern parts the district.

Calendar of Events

March 21: Nepalese Students' Association (NeSA) at New Mexico State University is organizing symposium entitled "Development Issues, Challenges, and Strategies for Nepal." and invites all to participate. The symposium is scheduled on Saturday, March 21, 2009 at Colfax (210), Corbett Center, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM 88003 from 9.00am to 5.00pm. Abstracts Submission deadline March 17, 2009. Key Speakers **Prof. Dr. Alok Bohara** University of New Mexico Albuquerque NM, **Prof. Rachel Stevens** New Mexico State University Las Cruces NM, **Dr. Rajat Rajbhandari** Texas Transportation Institute El Paso TX. Contact Desh Raj Sonyok program co-ordinator @ drsonyok@nmsu.edu. for details visit <http://web.nmsu.edu/~nesa>.

March 22: The Nepalese Society Texas (NST) invites all to attend a public meeting to boost the community activities and work together on Sunday March 22nd 2009 at First United methodist Church Irving Texas (Nepali School) from 2.00pm. For details contact Ram C Pokhrel 682 521 7475

March 22: The The Newah Organization Of America Language Center (NOALC) has scheduled to host an interaction program on Sunday March 22nd 2009 as a part of feedback program on its effort to improve and expand spoken and written Newah language at the City of Fairfax Regional library 10360 North street fairfax VA 22030 from 12.00pm to 4.00pm contact Ishwar Rajbhandari 202 550 4839 Eros Tuladhar 703 757 0193 Rajesh Shrestha 703 996 6476. For details visit nepalhorizons.com

March 29: The Dallas Everest Lions Club (DELCL) has scheduled the fund raising event "An evening in Nepal 2009" on Sunday March 29 2009 at United Methodist Church 3700 W. Northgate Drive Irving 75062 from 6.00pm. Contact Shashi Bhattarai 817 501 7557 Shoyambhu Shakya 562 212 4264 Shiva Kafle 682 597 2075 Mahendra Poudyal 972 971 3398 Ram C Pokhrel 682 521 7475 Makar Bajracharya 214 517 6341 Binita J Shrestha 817 805 1318. for details visit dallaseverestlions.org and nepalhorizons.com

April 04: NASO Community, an organization to support the cause of backward Communities of Nepal has scheduled an interaction program on "Constitution Of New Nepal And Questions Of Social Inclusion" on Saturday April 4th 2009 at Arlington Contu Library 1015 North Quincy Street Arlington VA 22201 from 1.00pm to 4.00pm. Contact Dharma Bishwokarma 443 690 5677. For details visit nepalhorizons.com

April 11: The Association of Nepalese in Minnesota (ANMN) has scheduled to celebrate Nepalese New Year 2066 on Saturday April 11th 2009 at University of Minnesota (U of M) Student Center St Paul MN. For detail update contact info@anmn.org.

Thursdays: The Shri Sai Baba of Shirdi Bhajan / Kirtan is conducted at Durga Temple 8400 Durga Place, Fairfax Station VA every Thursdays from 7pm to 8pm. Sai Satsang in Dallas, TX: Sri Shirdi Sai Baba Satsang is held every Sunday between 4pm and 6pm CST in remembrance of Sri Sai Baba and Sri Babuji at Center for Spiritual Living, 4801 Spring Valley Road, Suite 115, Dallas TX 75244

Saturdays: The Durga Temple & Chinmaya Mission welcomes everyone to **Bhagavad Gita Satsang** every Saturday at the Durga Temple 8400 Durga Place, Fairfax Station VA from 10:30am to noon. For further information contact coordinators at 703 793 8855 / 703 646 5924.

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Population: Some Boom, Some Decline

Wildly varying fertility rates among nations threaten global stability

Joseph Chamie YaleGlobal, 18 March 2009

Population	Year	Years to add 1 billion
1 billion	1804	From the start of humanity
2 billion	1927	123 years later
3 billion	1960	33 years later
4 billion	1974	14 years later
5 billion	1987	13 years later
6 billion	1999	12 years later
7 billion	2011	12 years later certain
8 billion	2025	14 years later likely
9 billion	2045	20 years later reasonable

World Population Milestones

Wildly varying fertility rates among nations threaten global stability

NEW YORK: The dangers of population explosion hit newspaper headlines as the US intelligence chief warns about it. Indeed the world population could reach 7 billion in just two years and 8 billion perhaps in next two decades. But that's not the only story. Dramatic declines in fertility rates in some countries and high rates in others pose a critical challenge. Without restoring some balance, the world could be headed towards instability and turmoil.

One must be reminded that the growth of world population – which now stands at an estimated 6.8 billion human inhabitants – has greatly impacted all life forms and the entire natural environment on the planet.

Although the population of the world continues to grow substantially, 79 million per year, the rate of growth has declined by nearly half over the last 40 years – from 2.0 to 1.2 percent per annum. The cause for the slowdown is declining fertility rates.

However, while average global fertility has dropped from about 5 to 2.6 births per woman during the past 50 years, considerable uncertainty exists about the future. Insofar as fertility is the engine driving the future size of world population, this uncertainty about the path of fertility in the coming years is one of the central and challenging questions of this century.

Prior to the 20th century, world population grew slowly because while fertility rates were high so were mortality rates. For example, between years 0 and 1500, world population is estimated to have grown from around 300 million to 500 million. The 1 billion population mark was reached at the start of the 19th century (see Table 1).

In striking contrast to the past, the 20th century ushered in the world's most rapid rates of population growth because while mortality rates fell to relatively low levels, fertility rates generally remained comparatively high. World population nearly quadrupled during the past century, with 80 percent of the growth occurring during its second half. The 2 billion mark was

reached in 1927, 3 billion in 1960, 4 billion in 1974, 5 billion in 1987, 6 billion in 1999.

Behind these global population figures are enormous differences among regions and countries. For example, of the 79 million people added to the world every year, six of the most populous countries – India, China, Nigeria, Pakistan, Indonesia and Bangladesh – account for approximately half of this growth. India alone accounts for 21 percent of global population growth, followed by China, which contributes 11 percent. As a consequence, India's population is expected to exceed China's in about 20 years.

In contrast, among the more developed regions, little demographic growth is taking place. Many European countries and Japan are entering a period of population decline, and these trends are likely to continue. In contrast, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the US are projected to continue growing due to relatively higher fertility and international migration.

In terms of annual rates of growth, the world's most rapidly growing region is Africa due to the large gap between high birth rates and comparatively low death rates. During the last half century, Africa's population more than tripled, increasing from 227 million to 819 million. High fertility and vigorous demographic growth are expected to continue, with the African continent projected to be 2 billion inhabitants by mid-century. The populations of Asia and Latin America are also expected to increase by about 25 percent over the next 50 years.

While the future population growth remains uncertain, some trends are clear: First, most current rates of population growth are unsustainable over the long term. For example, if fertility rates were to remain fixed at today's levels, then world population would exceed 11 billion by mid-century. Furthermore, while some countries, such as Germany, Italy, Japan and Russia, would decline to a small fraction of their current population size, others such as Ethiopia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Yemen would increase many times their current size.

In the near term, there's little doubt that the world's population will reach 7 billion, probably by 2011. Will the world reach 8 billion? Most demographic observers would say that it's highly likely, perhaps by 2025. After that, things become considerably less certain.

While on average fertility levels continue to decline, considerable variations exist across and within regions. Among more developed countries, rates are often below replacement levels, i.e., about 2 births per woman, with some populations already shrinking. The average level for Europe, for example, is well below replacement at 1.5 births per woman. A notable exception to this trend is the US, where fertility has been close to the replacement level for a number of years. Fertility rates in less developed countries, in contrast, are often well above replacement at 3 or more births per woman. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, the average fertility level is 5 births per woman. Again, a notable exception to this general pattern among developing countries is China, where fertility is 1.8 births per woman.

Some demographers expect that world fertility will remain above replacement for some time to come, pointing out that nearly all of Sub-Saharan Africa and most of South and West Asia have high fertility levels. Others, however, see below-replacement fertility becoming the global norm in coming decades. Average

world fertility, they note, is about half the level it was in the 1950s, with fertility declines near replacement in such diverse cultures as Algeria, Iran and Vietnam. Lower mortality, urbanization, increased education, especially girls, the growing employment of women, later ages at marriage and the greater availability of modern methods of contraception are strong, universal forces that point toward low levels of fertility. Also, they draw attention to the fact that today approximately 45 percent of the world's population resides in countries with below-replacement fertility versus less than 1 percent of world in the 1950s.

Over time, relatively small differences in fertility rates can lead to enormous differences in population size. For instance, if fertility rates eventually settled at about one-quarter child above replacement, i.e., 2.35 births per woman, world population would more than double to 14 billion by the century's end and continue growing thereafter. On the other hand, if fertility rates settle at about one-quarter child below replacement fertility, or 1.85 births per woman, world population would be around 5.5 billion by the end of the century and continue declining thereafter. In other words, replacement fertility in the long term is essentially the tipping point for population change: above it growth and below it decline.

As noted earlier, this uncertainty about the path of fertility is a central and challenging question of this century given its impact on the future size of world population. Many demographers making long-range population projections see fertility levels eventually fluctuating around the replacement level. To do otherwise, as noted above, would lead in the long term to either extremely large, expanding populations or very small, shrinking populations. Assuming fertility rates gravitate to replacement during the coming decades and subsequently fluctuate closely around it, world population could in due course stabilize at around 9 to 10 billion.

Stabilization of world population is perhaps the paramount

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Credit Crunch? Not for Some Asian Companies

- By Heda Bayron Bangkok March 20 2009 VOA

As some large U.S. and European companies teeter on the verge of bankruptcy because they could not find the cash to finance their businesses, some Southeast Asian companies seem to be defying the global credit crunch. Corporate bond issuances surged nearly seven-fold since the start of the year.

San Miguel Brewery, the Philippines' largest beer maker, raised 40 billion pesos or \$800 million this week by issuing bonds. It was the largest ever such capital raising in the Philippines. More so, it was oversubscribed - meaning there were more investors willing to lend money than the company needed.

San Miguel's successful fund raising is one of several bond issuances by large and established companies in the region since the start of the year - a stark contrast to the frozen credit environment crippling many U.S. and European companies.

In Thailand, companies have so far raised \$2 billion through bonds this year. New corporate bond issuances rose nearly seven-fold from January to mid-March.

These companies have been raising funds at home, taking advantage of Asia's excess savings and an appetite for higher yield,

less risky investments.

Nattapol Chavalitcheevin, president of the Thai Bond Market Association, says bank deposit interest rates have fallen close to zero, forcing many savers and investors to look for alternatives.

"The saving rate dropped from 0.75 percent to 0.5 percent only," said Nattapol. "So that's why investors are looking for new investment which can earn higher return. So that's why corporate bonds can be issued in the domestic market. Mutual fund companies also set up new funds to invest in corporate bonds because government bond yield is quite low. For example, the yield of a five-year government bond 2.4 percent."

Central banks across Asia have been slashing interest rates to encourage banks to lend money to businesses after the global credit crunch that started last year. But instead of traditional bank borrowing, companies are tapping retail and institutional investors by issuing bonds.

In doing so, companies are essentially borrowing money from a large pool of investors, promising to repay the full amount plus interest after a specific period.

'Safe haven' assets

Banks themselves are looking for these so-called "safe haven" investments.

"I am with one institution managing seven billion baht of cash, and we have a big headache where to put the money," said Narongchai Akrasanee, chairman of Thailand's Export-Import Bank. "We don't know where to put the money to earn some interest for our savings."

Investors in the Thai state-owned energy company PTT's 15 billion baht or \$423 million bond last month could earn five percent interest in the first five years. San Miguel Brewery's bond offered interest 250 basis points higher than comparable government bonds.

Analysts say these blue chip companies find it easier to issue bonds because they have established market shares, reliable revenues and high credit rating.

Lee Jong-wha, regional economic integration head of the Manila-based Asian Development Bank said last month that he expects to see an increase in local currency-denominated bond issuances this year - both from companies and governments.

"Demand for safe haven as-

sets is substantially larger and the yield is low and the decline in inflation expectation will pull in global investors to the region's local currency bond market," said Lee.

The Thai Bond Market Association says local currency corporate bond issuances could reach \$7 billion this year, slightly up from last year.

Although the market has been receptive to local companies' borrowings so far, Nattapol says the global economic downturn could slash some companies' revenues and affect their credit rating, making it harder or costlier for them to raise money in the future. Companies in the rapidly slowing export sector, he says, are at risk.

"That makes investors reluctant to invest in corporate bond in the future," said Nattapol. "For this year there are companies [which are] not sure whether in the medium term [they] can maintain their rating or not. Investors who worry about credit risk may take a long time to make decisions to invest in corporate bonds with lower ratings."

While the appetite is there, experts say Asian companies are taking advantage of this window of opportunity to better their financial position for uncertain times ahead.

USCIS Announces New Requirements for Hiring H-1B Foreign Workers

Changes Apply to Companies that Receive TARP Funding

Washington March 20 (USCIS): U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) today announced additional requirements for employers, who receive funds through the Troubled Asset Relief Program or under section 13 of the Federal Reserve Act (covered funding), before they may hire a foreign national to work in the H-1B specialty occupation category.

The new "Employ American Workers Act," (EAWA), signed into law by President Obama as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act on Feb. 17, 2009, was enacted to ensure that companies receiving covered funding do not displace U.S. workers. Under this legislation any company that has received covered funding and seeks to hire new H-1B workers is considered an "H-1B dependent employer." All H-1B

dependent employers must make additional attestations to the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) when filing the Labor Condition Application.

EAWA applies to any Labor Condition Application (LCA) and/or H-1B petition filed on or after Feb. 17, 2009, involving any employment by a new employer, including concurrent employment and regardless of whether the beneficiary is already in H-1B status. The EAWA also applies to new hires based on a petition approved before Feb. 17, 2009, if the H-1B employee had not actually commenced employment before that date.

EAWA does not apply to H-1B petitions seeking to change the status of a beneficiary already working for the employer in another work-authorized category. It also does not

apply to H-1B petitions seeking an extension of stay for a current employee with the same employer.

USCIS is revising Form I-129, Petition for Nonimmigrant Worker, to include a question asking whether the petitioner has received covered funding. USCIS will post this revised form on the USCIS Web site in time for the next cap subject H-1B filing period that begins on April 1, 2009. While USCIS encourages petitioners, whenever possible, to use the most up-to-date form, USCIS will not require use of the revised form in time for the start of the filing period for fiscal year 2010.

However, USCIS urges H-1B petitions who have already prepared packages for mailing using the previous Form I-129 (January 2009 version) to complete only the page

in the revised version of the Form I-129 (March 2009) which has the new question on EAWA attestation requirements and to file this single page with the prepared package. The single page referenced is the first page on the H-1B Data Collection and Filing Fee Exemption Supplement.

USCIS reminds petitioners that a valid LCA must be on file with DOL at the time the H-1B petition is filed with USCIS. This means that if the petitioner indicates on its petition that it is subject to the EAWA, but the Labor Condition Application does not contain the proper attestations relating to H-1B dependent employers, USCIS will deny the H-1B petition.

For more information, please see the accompanying Questions and Answers document about the Employ American Workers Act and its effect on H-1B petitions.

Ethnic Identity Crisis...

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has barely changed.

"The Muslims want recognition of their identity and proper representation in the constitution and not to be categorised as Madhesi or any other community," said Attahar Hussain, president of Muslim Mukti Morcha, which rallies Nepalese Muslims.

Some Muslim activists told IRIN it was difficult to raise issues of discrimination and injustice without being accused of fuelling religious fundamentalism.

Still time

Tharu leader Lekhi explained that there was still time to get the draft constitution amended: "Our identity movement has been successful so far and there are signs that the government will agree to our demand."

An indication of the importance of the issue in Nepal is evident from interventions by Prime Minister Puspa Kamal Dahal, who has been in talks with leaders of the protests. Parliament is to hold a session on 29 March to address the demands of the various ethnic groups. *(IRIN News)*

Nepal Needs To Switch...

cont'd from pg 3 ...

native energy, aqua-culture, and bee keeping and honey, coffee, floriculture, fruits and vegetables, livestock and meat products.

Similarly, herbal cosmetics, milk and dairy products, natural textile, non-timber forest products, poultry farming, sericulture and tea products will also be displayed at the expo.

Surendra Subedi, assistant spokesperson of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, said that there were large numbers of farmers adopting the traditional and subsistence

agriculture in Nepal.

He said that the ministry was preparing an effective policy to encourage traditional farmers to add commercial values to their production.

He said that as part of PPP, the One Village One Product Programme, had been implemented within nine districts.

Krishna Prasad Tamrakar, Vice-president of FNCCI, said that the private sector had been expediting its work towards commercial farming in order to identify the wide range of agro-production for two decades. *(The Rising Nepal)*

Kudos To Our Footballers ...

cont'd from pg 8...

credit for the accomplishment.

A bigger challenge awaits the team in the form of Asian Federation Confederation Cup, starting in Kathmandu from March 26 to 30. Football goers have high expectations, especially with our success at the PM tourney.

It is hoped that the team does not fritter away the momentum gathered and rise to the occasion. What is required is cohesion, consistency, aggression and competitiveness on their part. Now that the national team is in the hands of veteran coach Yogamber Suwal we have to wait and see how he ap-

proaches the championship.

Suwal is no stranger to us. In his marathon 40 years association with football he coached Nepal Police Club (then Mahendra Police Club) for 25 years with great aplomb. For the first time in 1995 he was appointed as head coach of the national team.

Nepal has formidable opponents in Palestine, Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan. Going by the strengths of the teams it will not be a smooth ride for the host by all accounts. Having said so, should Nepal play to their potential I have a hunch that they stand a very good chance to emerge victorious. Let us all be optimistic at this time.

Population: Some Boom...

cont'd from pg 4 ...

issue of the 21st century. Without global population stabilization, humankind will find it enormously more difficult to deal with the critical issues facing the planet, such as global warming, biodiversity, the environment, energy, food/water supplies, migration and security. The path to population stabilization requires sustained and critical attention and informed policymaking at all levels. Today's decisions not only

affect human well-being, but also the quality of all life forms on Earth in the coming decades and beyond.

Joseph Chamie, former director of the United Nations Population Division, is research director at the Center for Migration Studies.

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UN Rights Chief Raises...

cont'd from pg 2...

double its current level. Increased funding must be provided despite the financial crisis, said UN Deputy Secretary General Asha-Rose Migiro. "Books and teaching are the bricks and mortar we can use to rebuild our economies."

The UN estimates that nearly half of the world's out of school children live in conflict-torn countries. "The right to education is a matter of international law and a moral imperative," said Ms Migiro. "Education is first step towards restoring security and hope. When not possible to get education in schools we need to identify alternative "safe spaces" where children can learn no matter what else is going on." Participants stressed the need to make school inviolable in situations of conflict. "Schools should be respected and protected as sanctuaries and

zones of peace," said Brendan O'Malley, author of UNESCO's Education under Attack. He suggested that the UN commission a symbol to denote international and local recognition of schools as safe sanctuaries.

Wildenes Etienne, a teacher in Haiti, noted that in his country, only 15% of teachers were trained. As a result, "children are being set up for failure because they are receiving a poor education. 55% of armed children in shantytowns have not gone beyond the fourth year of schooling."

"Rebuilding education systems after natural disasters conflict or other emergencies is often the opportunity to make education more inclusive, based on values of peace, tolerance and non-discrimination," said Mr Burnett. The debate was held on March 18. *(TRN)*

Obama Announces New...

cont'd from pg 1 ...

America know where the money has been spent," he said.

Mr. Obama told the lawmakers he is trying to lead by example, so he rejected a request to update electrical and heating systems in the family's residence in the White House, because it would not create many jobs. But he said he hopes

Congress will pay for the project in the future.

The president also discussed spending priorities with New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and governors Arnold Schwarzenegger of California and Ed Rendell of Pennsylvania. They talked about creating jobs through rebuilding transportation infrastructure.

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Some US Families, Victims Of Financial Crisis, Move Into Low-Cost Motels

By Sean Maroney Washington March 19 2009 VOA

The National Center on Family Homelessness estimated this month that 1.5 million U.S. children were homeless at one time or another between 2005 and 2006. The center also says America's homelessness problem is likely to worsen this year because of foreclosures and job losses due to the ongoing recession.

Some middle class families have lost their homes, and because they cannot afford high rent, now are moving into low-cost motels.

Johnny, Tammy Garza and their four children are calling a motel room their home. "It's actually hard to have this many people in a small room like this," Johnny said.

The Garzas are joining a new class of Americans who are victims of the nation's financial crisis. They now live in cheap motel rooms.

"We have two burners over there and we have a little toaster oven to cook with and we have all the pots and pans," Tammy said.

In a drive across America, you can see old motels in many communities. They offer a less expensive, temporary night's stay. There are many reports that for a growing number of homeless families, motel rooms are no longer temporary.

"We're seeing more families. We're seeing more intact families that are suffering from the economy," Jim Palmer said. Palmer is with Orange County Rescue Mission.

Jonathan Emison and his girlfriend were lucky. They had the rare opportunity to move from a motel to a subsidized apartment. A motel room may be a better option than living out of a car, but Emison says there still are dangers for families.

"You never know when you're going to have a gang come in," Emison said. "You never know when there's going to be a pedophile."

The Garzas hope to move to an apartment within a few months.

"Last month, Tammy said. "I was blessed with a job at a hospital."

There already is a list of homeless families waiting to move into the Garza's motel room. Unless the economy improves, that list may get longer.

Engineers Insist...

...cont'd from pg 3

neers to pay attention to it. NEA president Kishore Shakya said road accidents had not been caused merely by the fault of drivers but also by the sorry state of the roads.

Stating that the national strength of engineers was not capable of carrying out the government's ambitious plan of national development, he urged the NPC to introduce plans for developing professional efficiency of the skilled human resources.

Four technical papers were presented in the seminar. *(Himalayan News Service)*

Capital Market Key To Change: FM Bhattarai

Kathmandu, March 20: Finance minister Dr Baburam Bhattarai on Thursday tried to boost the confidence of investors saying that government was committed to the development of the capital market. "Capital market is the key to industrialisation," Dr Bhattarai said during his first visit to the Nepal Stock Exchange Ltd (Nepse) -- the sole secondary market.

"However, the dominance of financial institutions should be reduced and more real sectors need to be listed," added the Maoist finance minister.

Contradicting popular belief that he is not serious about the development of capital market, the finance minister paid a visit to the secondary market that is considered a fast-track to capitalism.

On the occasion, acting revenue secretary Krishna Hari Baskota said that a few players have a monopoly of the market. "Despite the huge number of investors, it is only a few people who still have a hold over it," he added.

"The capital market can be a tool for poverty reduction," said

Shankar Man Singh, general manager of the government-owned Nepse. "It needs to be expanded to the rural areas," he added.

At a time when two other stock exchanges are in the pipeline, the government should be serious about developing Nepse. "Nepse is an example of how a government-run institution can fare better, if run in a transparent manner" said Dr Narayan Prasad Poudel, Nepse chairman.

Established in 1993, Nepse has seen a sea change in its technology and development over the last one-and-a-half decades but still the number of brokers is small and the delay in transfer of share certificates is one of the hurdles pulling back market development. *(The Himalayan Times)*

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Euro 1	108.51	109.32
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Australian \$1	54.55	54.96
Swiss Franc 1	70.58	71.10
Singapore Dollar	53.00	53.39
Japanese Yen 10	8.43	8.49
Chinese Yuan 1	11.78	11.87
Indian Rupees 100	160.00	160.15
Swedish Kroner 1	9.95	---
Danish Kroner 1	14.56	---
Hong Kong Dollar 1	10.38	---
Saudi Arab Riyal 1	21.45	21.61
Qatari Riyal 1	22.10	22.26
Thai Bhat 1	2.26	2.28
UAE Dirham 1	21.90	22.06
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[Source: Nepal Rastra Bank, for March 20 '09]

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Kudos To Our Footballers

- By Sushil Thapa Fairfax VA sushilthapa@verizon.net

When the last Sri Lankan penalty taker missed the target the jam packed Dashrath stadium erupted like a volcano to celebrate Nepal's rare success in years. In a nail biting finish Nepal Red finally made it happen at the expense of Sri Lanka in the final of the PM International Invitational Football Championship held in Katmandu.

The vociferous partisan crowd had to wait for the dreaded tie-breaker to break the impasse. And when it happened Nepal had the last laugh, triumphing 4-2 much to everyone's delight. The 120 minute of action was exhilarating and a tale of missed chances.

The host got off to a somewhat sluggish start and took time to settle down. Once they found their groove they dominated the proceedings, especially after the lemon break. On the other hand, the physically tough Sri Lankan played aggressively and came close to finding the net on several occasions.

By and large, the two sides were evenly matched in every department of the game though Nepal had the home advantage. By fielding

Juman Rai, carrying an injury, veteran coach Yugamber Suwal risked his star striker.

The move instantly paid off, however. The home team functioned like a well oiled machine, and constantly barnstormed the opposition citadel but was let down by poor finish. Going by spectators' reaction it was clear that they were frustrated to see their team make a hash of opportunities that came by. Much to their relief eventually their frustration transformed into ecstasy after Nepal prevailed in the tie-breaker.

In a display of sportsman spirit and positive gesture the head coach of Sri Lanka praised Nepal for their positive brand of football. As far as officiating of the tournament was concerned the referees and linesmen favored the home team to some degree according to media reports.

It is very important that we maintain the integrity and dignity of international tournaments as host. We cannot allow foreign teams suffer at the hands of local referees and linesmen who tend to favor the home side.

Long as we have neutral referees and linesmen there would be no

doubting Thomas and finger pointing. The unsporting behavior displayed by some section of the crowd who were seen hurling bottles and other unidentifiable objects, targeting the visitors was very unfortunate and must cease.

This kind of crowd behavior is common but totally unacceptable. We cannot let ourselves overcome by our emotions and ruin the beautiful game of football. We have to become civilized spectators and learn to respect our rivals.

The organizing committee must take the issues seriously and see what they can do to stop it from happening again in the future. Media reports also slammed the security arrangement for the competition, calling it lax, something hard to believe. Despite the high level terrorists' threat in the region security lapses were visible.

As host we are obligated to provide the best of the best security. At no cost we should compromise with security issues, and make players look like sitting ducks for enemy fire.

Over all the tournament

was a success but the management left much to be desired. The fixture was cramped and looked though the host was rushing to finish the tournament, thus stretching some of the teams.

Personally, I am elated that the management has rewarded the victorious Nepal Red financially. The incentive definitely will boost the morale of players who put in a tireless performance. I salute the players who have stuck to the game with objectives to earn accolades for the country and make a career in football despite the sad state of domestic football.

Back to the competition, unlike Nepal Red, Nepal Blue played to their potential but were unimpressive, failing to advance to the last four. The league cum knock out championship did not quite generate the excitement everyone had anticipated. Most matches were played in front of a sparse crowd, and quality was glaringly amiss.

Ganesh Thapa led All Nepal Football Association (ANFA) responsible for the sorry state of domestic football ought to refrain themselves from going gaga over the team's success. Only players and coaches deserve

...Contd. on pg 6

Short Story:

The Tale Of The Racehorses

- Aashish Jha, CA
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Once upon a time in a small town there was a family of horses that ran in chariot races. There was a dad horse, a mom horse, a brother horse, and a sister horse. All the horses were really fast. Together they had won many races and people really loved them.

Even though they were popular and had won many races, the brother horse always wanted to win more races and bigger races. He always wanted to get more popular. One day the brother horse decided to run in the Nariiot, a very long race where many horses from all over the world came to run. They were all big and strong horses and the brother horse and his family was too small and inexperienced for such a huge race. Dad horse, mom horse and sister horse did not want to participate in the Nariiot but brother horse insisted. When the rest of his family resented the idea of participating in the Nariiot, the brother horse yelled, shouted, and cried until the others agreed.

Once they listed their names in the Nariiot, they practiced for many days. Each day the dad horse and mom horse ran very hard and so did the sister horse. The brother horse ran the hardest because he wanted to be the best horse in the Nariiot. He was very fast but his dad, mom, and his sister were not as fast as he was. Even though they were trying their best to run as fast as him, they could not and the brother horse complained all the time saying that they were not fast enough for the Nariiot. He quarreled with them every day such that no one in the family liked to talk to him anymore. But to appease him they kept running harder and harder every day.

Finally, the big day came. On that day of the Nariiot, there were horses of all color: black, white, brown and some even purple ones. They were many tall and muscular stallions and geldings. The brother horse although being the tallest in the family looked like a colt in front of

the other horses. Everyone lined up at the starting line in the huge racetrack at the Nariiot. This was the first time the brother horse and his family was running along side the big and stronger horses for very long time.

The race began. The horses started running. The brother horse ran his hardest and so did his family members. Although they did very well in the race, they were not able to wallop a few chariots. One time they came close to being the first chariot in the race but the dad horse and the mom horse were too old and weak to keep up with other stronger bigger horses instead of giving their best effort. Sister horse was too young and delicate compared to other competitors but she too ran as fast as she could. When they started to lose the race, brother horse was not happy so he kept yelling at them to run faster and faster. The race ended and the family did not win.

Although they did not win the Nariiot, all the participants complimented them on their effort. The brother horse went and high-fived all the horses who complimented them. He even danced for the crowd. The crowd loved him and cheered for him. There were even photographers who took his pictures for big magazines. The brother horse loved it so much that he forgot about his family. Not even once did he thank his family members for the grand performance. Never did he show any affection for their woes and blisters.

While he was enjoying his fame, the father horse and the mother horse were gasping for their lives because they had ran so hard. Sister horse was not able to even walk comfortably anymore because she had blisters all over her feet. And they were very sad because the brother horse had totally forgotten about them. They quietly went to their wagon and with a great deal of agony started to pull it towards their home.

...Contd. next week