

Nepal Abroad

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Region Should Accord Top Priority To Collective Work: PM

Kathmandu, Nov. 13 (TRN): Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' told the leaders of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) in New Delhi Thursday that the region should accord top priority to collective work for poverty alleviation.

Addressing the BIMSTEC Second Summit, PM Prachanda underscored the need to enhance intra-region trade and investment in the development of energy, including hydro-electricity. He called for implementation of poverty alleviation policies and programmes more effectively.

"Persistent and widespread poverty among the masses is one of the major challenges of our region. It is imperative to take initiatives at all levels to implement effective poverty alleviation



Photo Courtesy PIB/I

From left, Sri Lanka's President Mahinda Rajapaksa, Myanmar's Prime Minister Thein Sein, Bangladesh's chief advisor Fakhruddin Ahmed, India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Bhutan's Prime Minister Lyonchhen Jigmi Y. Thinley, Nepal's Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda and Thailand's Prime Minister Somchai Wangswat pose for photographs at the start of second Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation, in New Delhi, Thursday

policies and strategies through mutually beneficial project-based cooperation and other collaboration at the national, regional as well as inter-regional levels," PM Prachanda said at the Summit.

Focusing on energy, he said, "While there is an acute shortage of energy today, the members of the BIMSTEC region possess huge but unutilised natural gas reserves, and similarly huge un-

tapped hydropower. It is therefore, high time to focus our attention on the development of hydro electric projects from regional and sub-regional perspectives."

PM Prachanda expressed Nepal's readiness to welcome investments in hydropower generation for regional consumption.

"Nepal firmly believes that all member countries should commit themselves to promote denser economic interactions so that the ongoing negotiations on BIMSTEC Free Trade Area are concluded and implemented at an early date."

Prime Minister Prachanda pointed out the need to pursue projects related with the development of transport and communication to "promote connectivity and ensure better synergy and smoother flow of goods, services and people

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Obama Sets His Agenda

By Jeffrey Young, Washington, D.C. November 11 2008 VOA

When President Franklin D. Roosevelt took office in the depths of the Great Depression in 1933, he launched an ambitious legislative program in the first 100 days. Ever since, initial accomplishments of new U.S. presidents have been measured in the same time span. And President-elect Barack Obama will have both leftover issues from the Bush administration and his own campaign agenda to put before Congress in those first days when he takes office in January.

At his first news conference [Friday, November 7th] since winning the White House, President-elect Barack Obama said his top priority is getting Congress to act immediately to address a range of economic problems.

President-elect Obama said, "A particularly urgent priority is a further extension of unemployment insurance benefits for workers who cannot find work in the increasingly weak economy. A fiscal stimulus plan

that will jump-start economic growth is long overdue. I've talked about it during the last few months of the campaign -- we should get it done. We [also] have to address the spreading impact of the financial crisis on other sectors of our economy."

Presidents can set an agenda, as they do every year in the State of the Union address.

But they cannot order Congress to enact what they demand, as explained by Brian Darling, at The Heritage Foundation in Washington. "The president actually does not have all that much power to implement their [presidents'] agenda. They can bring measures to Congress. They can ask that Congress pass ideas like a middle-class tax cut." Darling continued, "But then Congress has the opportunity to write that legislation, to amend that legislation, and then pass that legislation in any form they see fit before it comes back to the presi-

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Caustic Matrika Hits Out At All And Sundry

Kathmandu, November 11 (HNS):Maoist leader Matrika Prasad Yadav today ruled out any possibility of a dialogue between the government and armed Tarai groups. He also fired salvo at ministers for Home, Finance and Local Development.

Yadav, who was forced to step down in September over a controversial land seizure campaign in Siraha, trained his gun on his new-found enemy, Home Minister Bam Dev Gautam.

He alleged that Gautam was against holding talks with Tarai-based armed groups. "Talks are unlikely to happen as long as the leader of criminals and an Indian citizen are in power," Yadav alleged. The Maoist leader termed Gautam "leader of criminals" and dubbed Minister for Local Development Ram Chandra Jha an "Indian citizen". Jha, who heads the three-member negotiating team, is believed to be in talks with rebel groups via back channels.

Yadav's relations with Gautam have been strained since the land-grab deal.

The ruling coalition also came in the line of the ex-minister's fire.

"The government isn't serious about holding talks with the armed outfits. It is only spreading rumours about it across the Tarai," he alleged.

"Bam Dev and his party — the CPN-UML — and Madhesi Janadhikar Forum joined the coalition to plot the failure of the Maoist-led government," added Yadav.

"Wearing daura suruwal doesn't make one a Nepali," he said, alluding to Jha.

"In fact, those who don the dhoti are more nationalistic than those who wear topi," said the Maoist leader. He warned of conspiracy to turn Madhes into a lawless Bihar.

Yadav conceded there were differences within the Maoists' rank and file.

"However, the revolutionar-

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Editorial:

Peace Still Elusive

Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) chief Kamal Thapa is again on the political scene championing his old slogan of reinstating the constitutional monarchy in the country, this time with more confidence than the period after the election to the Constituent Assembly. On Friday he organized a press meet at his hometown in Hetauda, Makwanpur district and revealed his party's plan to lead a peaceful national campaign to reinstate the now defunct monarchy.

Prior to his announcement, some media in Nepal had floated stories about commoners' life the former King is living, his daily schedule and bringing out such stories about him and his family, that makes people feel he's also no different than us now. It also appreciates about his ability to accept change, his concern for the prevailing political chaos and so on. Kantipur published a feature about former King (also available online) where, among others, it narrates the speculations made by Faniraj Pathak – former royal press secretary, about the prospect of Gyanendra Shah coming back to serve the country again in yet uncertain way.

Whatever the objective may have been in reporting such stories, intentionally or inadvertently, in most cases it gets translated positively amongst the common people (not necessarily the political activists) and only generates sympathy with admiration for the royals. Such stories do well to the former king than the republicans.

It is not a coincident that the non-communists forces (probably, majority in UML too) have realized the need to unite against the Maoists plan to transform the country into the People's Republic. Urgent appeal to amalgamate those in the right and the center has been floating in the air by all. The internal dissatisfaction within the NC and its inability to perform a role as a strong and effective opposition has been an advantageous moment for RPP and Rastriya Janashakti Party (RJP) to assert their presence once again. The RPP and RJP leaders appear more

assertive and speaking common people's mind than the main opposition Nepali Congress.

There is a popular opposition in Nepal and disapproval outside for the Maoists plan to integrate their militias that are indoctrinated with radical Maoists ideology into the national army. The integration plan, if succeeded would probably pave an easy way for them to establish the People's Republic. Many in Kathmandu suspect that the plans are progressing in the Maoists camp to establish a Nepalese embassy in South American continent, and enhance relations with those countries that the US government considers a 'rouge regime'. During his visit to New York, Prime Minister Pushpa K Dahal also met representatives of Cuba, Bolivia, Venezuela and Russia, and this trip might have probably inspired him to join the club.

If this plan were real and shaping in Kathmandu, then the government is moving Nepal toward isolation from the rest of the world, and as a consequence denies any international assistance that Finance Minister is desperately seeking by visiting capitalists and democratic countries to meet his budget needs.

Another popular movement appears to be waiting, as can be analyzed from the developments in Nepal. Should there be one in future, it is certain to be between the democrats and the communists. The democratic forces would have more popular support in Nepal this time, as common people got an opportunity to juxtapose the democratic years, and the short period with the Maoists government. Peace appears elusive, and the people only wander, if they had a good neighbor!

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Bhutanese Refugees Find New Life Beyond The Camps

Kathmandu, November 10 (IRIN): Thousands of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal have been successfully resettled in seven countries, including the USA, Australia, New Zealand, Netherlands, Norway, Denmark and Canada, according to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR).

The refugees are Bhutanese citizens of Nepalese origin, known as Lhotsampas in Bhutan. For the past 17 years, nearly 106,000 refugees have been sheltered in seven camps in eastern Nepal since their eviction from their homes by the Bhutanese government, which introduced a law stripping them of their citizenship and civil rights because of their ancestry.

After several years of failed bilateral talks between the Nepalese and Bhutanese governments to repa-



Photo: Naresh Newar/IRIN

Thousands of Bhutanese refugees who are Nepalese origin, after having lived in camps in Nepal for as long as 20 years, have been resettled to the United States and six other countries with the assistance of UNHCR and IOM

triate them, the refugees are now opting for third-country resettlement with the help of UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Since March 2008, 6,200 Bhutanese refugees have been resettled and more are in the process of leaving

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Letter to the editor

Ref: Unwanted Goddesses

Dear Editor,

Please allow me to comment on Bhumika Ghimire Jee's article "Unwanted Goddesses", Nepal Abroad, Nov. 8, 2008. She mixes unrelated Hindu social issue with Dharmic and Religious issues. Yes, mistreatment of females anywhere including in Hindu society is bad and must be countered. The reasons for such atrocities are in culture and money. There are many Hindu social workers cognizant of and contributing against such problem. There are strict laws against any of such abhorrent practices both in India and Nepal. Our Dharmic sense of female deities does not contribute to any such problem, if at all are against. Compare it with Christianity where God is a male. There is not a single female in the trinity. Perhaps, Bhumika jee would care to write an article on Christian witch burnings, and marriage vow of 'Love and Obey' part.

The ingrained social idea that 'productive sons are essential for survival of old parents, and daughters are married away' is the root

cause of this evil. It is not a Dharmic but social and financial security issue. Thus, a major solution against the evil is to figure out the security at old age. Which is already happening. Many girls go to schools and colleges. You do not have to be physically strong to earn any more. There are many cases where daughters, not sons, taking care of both own and in-law parents. These days, not all married couples live with their husband's parent. So the society is already in the process of solving it.

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Nepalese Calendar

Sun Nov 16 / Mangshir 01 '65
Chauthi
Mon Nov 17 / Mangshir 02 '65
Panchami
Tue Nov 18 / Mangshir 03 '65
Khasthi
Wed Nov 19 / Mangshir 04 '65
Saptami
Thu Nov 20 / Mangshir 05 '65
Govardhan puja/Astami
Fri Nov 21 / Mangshir 06 '65
Nawami
Sat Nov 22 / Mangshir 07 '65
Guhyeswari jatra/Dashami

An Interaction Program With Sapana Pradhan Malla



Photo Courtesy ANWA

One of the recipients of Gurber International Women's Rights prize 2008 Sapana Malla Pradhan (center) is seen sharing her experiences, awards and activities above at the Arlington Central Library in Arlington VA on Sunday November 9, 2008. The program was organized by America Nepal Women's Association (ANWA) and was attended by the Nepalese people from the DC metro area. Ms Madhavi Basnet Karki (left) is the current coordinator of ANWA.

Unveiling A Statue

-Daya R. Shakya, Portland OR

Breaking the traditional span of installing the statues of the Rana Prime Ministers and royals, the politically alarmed individual's statues were erected after the successful uprising of jana andolan I and II. It inspired to demolish royal statues all over the country and erected with statues of social and literary figures of those people who never gave up voicing against the cruel, anti social sentiments and breeders of marginalization.

After forming the government of elected representatives of Nepalese people, unveiling function of statues took place one after another. The recent function was for the person truly non political figure of Newar community. Late Kavi Keshari Chittadhar 'Hridaya', a great poet honored with title of 'saffron delicacy'. It was unveiled by Hon. PM Puspa Kamal Dahal on NS 1128-1-10 (November 8 2008) in the heart of west-



Late Kavi Keshari Chittadhar 'Hridaya'

ern side of Kathmandu Metropolitan area at Kalmati intersection. The site was previously occupied by the pioneer of Panchayat regime Late King Mahendra and now it is replaced by non political figure.

After the formation of democratic government, the nation is

...Contd. on pg 7

Appeal From Motherland Nepal, CA

Motherland Nepal, CA is seeking donations for Kumari Rai (from Itahari, Sunsari-Nepal), who is suffering from kidney failure and whose financial condition is challenging. If you can spare by not buying one can of beer or can of coke for a day you will save her life. so please help her by donating any amount of money.

Anil Pandey, President Motherland Nepal.

For details visit, themotherlandnepal.org

Calendar of Events

November 15: Arendra Shrestha brings Nepali Acoustic Vibes on Saturday November 15, 2008 from 6.30pm to 11.00pm at Southern Asian Seventh Day Adventist Church 2001 East Randolph Road Silver Spring MD 20904. For details visit nepalhorizons.com

November 22: The Newah Organization of America (NAO) has scheduled Saturday November 22, 2008 to celebrate the annual Nepal Sambat 1129 from 4pm to 9pm at Kemp Mill Elementary School in Silver Spring MD. 'Janakabi Durga Lal Shrestha (Khobilu)', the writer of a famous Nepali song 'Phoolko Aankhama Phoolai Sanshara' b Ani Choying Dolma will be the guest of honor. For more information visit newah.org

November 30: The America Nepal Society (ANS) invites all to participate in the farewell program of Ambassador Dr. Suresh C. Chalise on Sunday November 30, 2008 from 1.00pm to 5.00pm at Sherwood Regional Library 2501 Sherwood Hall Lane Alexandria VA 22306 For details visit nepalhorizons.com

December 06: The Asian Division's Friends Society of the Library of Congress is organizing 'Intangible Cultural Heritage - Musical Instruments in Asian Culture' on Saturday Decemeber 06 from 2.00pm to 4.00pm at Asian Reading Room, Asian Division, The Library of Congress 101 Independence Ave SE Washington DC 20540. For details contact Yuwu Song at yson@loc.gov or visit nepalhorizons.com.

December 20-23: Nepali Public Relations Committee America and Ad and Event Management Nepal Pvt. Ltd has scheduled to organize Nepal Festival USA - 2008 for thr first time in America at Manhattan New York. For details visit janasamparka.com, nepalevent.com and nepalfestival2008.com

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.

Saturdays: The Durga Temple & Chinmaya Mission welcomes everyone to **Bhagavad Gita Satsangh** 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.

To list the scheduled event(s) of your organization on the Community Events above, please email us: enews@nepalabroad.com

USAID Provides \$350,000 To Counter Gender-Based Violence In Nepal

The U.S. government, through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID/Nepal), has provided \$350,000 to reduce the incidence and impact of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Banke, Bardiya, Dang, Dailekh, Kailali and Surkhet districts of mid-western Nepal.

GBV is an acute human rights challenge in many conflict affected areas of Nepal. The 11-year conflict severely exacerbated the unequal power relationships between men and women, increasing women's vulnerability to numerous forms of exploitation including rape, domestic violence, verbal and psychological abuse, and physical and sexual torture.

Damage to traditional social and economic networks, loss of male heads of household, forced displacement, and reduced access to health and educational facilities dra-

matically diminished women's abilities to safeguard their wellbeing and that of their families.

"USAID assistance will help increase awareness of gender-based violence and ensure that those affected, including widows, receive critical psychosocial counseling, medical treatment, education and skills training and job placement services to reduce further risk," said Beth S. Paige, Mission Director of USAID Nepal.

"This project will also employ a proven strategy of engaging men and male religious leaders in reducing GBV. Advocacy undertaken by men in support of women's interest is one of the most effective means of fostering attitudinal change across communities."

This 12-month long program is being implemented through The Asia Foundation and its local NGO partners. (US Embassy Nepal 11/10)

The World Looks to Obama – Part III

With the US falling away as pet hate, Europeans must clean up their own act in order to cooperate with Obama

BRUSSELS, Nov 10 2008: European Union leaders have been effusive in their praise for US President-elect Barack Obama, commending him as an agent for "change and openness" who could revitalize flagging transatlantic relations and forge a partnership of equals with Europe to decisively tackle global crises. Under the euphoria, though, lurk many concerns about what will be asked of Europe both in dealing with foreign challenges and their own racial problems.

Across a continent where most politicians fail to enthral, European citizens are inspired by Obama's youth, personality and – while not yet prepared to vote for a non-white politician themselves – by his personal history and mixed racial background.

After eight years of hand-wringing over an American president addicted to hard power and unilateral action, French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner welcomed the election of "a man committed to dialogue between peoples and communities and cooperation among nations." European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso said he looked forward to working with Obama to broker "a new deal for a new world."

So far, so hopeful. Europeans want urgent EU-US action to overhaul the international financial system, including convening a conference to redesign the Bretton Woods postwar global financial architecture. EU proposals for such review will dominate a November 15th meeting of the Group of 20 advanced and emerging economies in Washington.

Kouchner and Barroso also called on Obama to take up the cause of "effective multilateralism," including tougher efforts to combat climate change, clinch a long-elusive Doha trade liberalization deal and toughen global nuclear non-proliferation rules. On foreign policy, EU foreign ministers say the US leader must give priority attention to the Middle East conflict and defuse strained relations with Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Russia. In all these areas, "we must work together and not in opposition," said EU ministers.

Europeans should be careful what they wish for. While many fret that Obama may find it difficult to fulfill EU expectations, dealing with

a new Europe-friendly US president is also likely to pose challenges to European governments.

To be given serious hearing by the US administration, the often-bickering 27-nation EU must get its own act together.

That's not going to be easy. True, the EU has been unusually effective in recent months, with French President Nicolas Sarkozy, as current EU chairman, successfully easing Russia-Georgian tensions in August and crafting a bold financial rescue plan for imperiled European banks.

But France will cede EU leadership to the Czech Republic next January, prompting fears that the former communist nation which only joined the EU in 2005 – whose president Vaclav Klaus is a renowned Eurosceptic – will be weaker and less effective in chairing the bloc.

In addition, plans for implementation of the EU reform treaty – with provisions for appointing a permanent EU president and first-ever foreign minister – remain on ice following rejection earlier this year by Irish voters. As such, there will be an unfortunate mismatch between a gutsy US administration taking charge in Washington and a rudderless EU, which as former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger once complained, still lacks a phone number that allies can dial in times of crises.

Switching from passive – albeit critical – bystander to responsible transatlantic partner requires a massive turnaround in EU thinking. Having spent the last eight years bashing the US over its tough handling of Iran, messy military policies in Iraq and changing goals in Afghanistan, the EU must define its own strategies and ambitions.

As such, the question is not whether Obama will shatter EU hopes but whether Europe can rise to the occasion, commented Spanish daily El Pais: "Europeans... have a tendency to project their desires and frustrations on to the US, so that EU foreign policy is often a commentary approving or condemning Washington." EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana agrees: "If Europe wants to be



heard, it has to offer more than just advice."

For the moment, however, Europe can only offer advice. Obama is expected to delight many in Europe by changing US policy on climate change, nuclear disarmament and accepting a ban on torture. But he has yet to react to EU calls for total revamp of international financial institutions, including Sarkozy's calls for stringent global regulations. In any case, the US president-elect has made clear that immediate focus will be on domestic economic reform rather than reshaping the global financial landscape.

EU policymakers expect strain on several foreign policy fronts, including Afghanistan. European governments are likely to ignore Obama's demands that they assume greater responsibility by sending more troops to contain the growing insurgency in the country. This in turn could cast a dark shadow over Obama's expected first visit to Europe next year to attend NATO's 60th anniversary celebrations in Strasbourg.

France will not deploy more soldiers in Afghanistan because the focus must be on transferring more power and responsibility to Afghan authorities, said Kouchner, adding: "I do not believe there will be a military solution in Afghanistan." Germany similarly opposes raising troop levels or sending its soldiers into more dangerous southern Afghanistan.

Fearing further escalation of the conflict, Europeans are uneasy over Obama's determination to carry out military strikes against Afghan insurgents sheltering inside Pakistan. And while the president-elect's statements favoring negotiations rather than military action to resolve stalemate over

Iran's controversial nuclear program are more in line with EU-thinking, the conversation could get tougher if the US opts for tougher sanctions against Tehran.

After this summer's crisis over Georgia when Washington took a more robust stance against Russia's military action than the EU, Europeans want Washington and Brussels to stop sending contradictory signals to Moscow and forge a united front on dealing with a belligerent Russia. On the economic front, Europeans intend to work hard to ensure that Obama's anti-free trade rhetoric during the electoral campaign is not translated into government policy.

Significantly, one positive fall-out of Obama's election victory is increased scrutiny of how European governments treat their minority communities. While members of Europe's Muslim and other minorities are slowly becoming more assertive and visible in business, politics and society, many continue to face an uphill struggle for recognition as full-fledged citizens.

Given rigid political party structures, breaking into mainstream politics is specially difficult for minority representatives, says Sajjad Karim, conservative member of the European Parliament. "The European political system favors middle-class, middle-aged, white males."

French human rights minister Rama Yade, of Senegalese origin, told the magazine Le Figaro: "The French themselves are ready, but our political system would stop an Obama appearing. Not because he's black, but because he comes from a background of recent immigration. Here, integration is much more difficult."

Echoing Yade, Trevor Phillips, head of a British equality watchdog group has said that while the British public "would rather like" a black leader, "institutional resistance" would block the path of an ethnic minority candidate. "The parties and unions and think-tanks are all very happy to sign up to the general idea of advancing the cause of minorities, but in practice they would like somebody else to do the business."

Obama's election has not
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Sapana Pradhan Malla Awarded in New York



Photo: ANWA

Ms. Sapana Malla Pradhan being awarded with Gruber International Women's Rights Prize 2008 on November 11, 2008. Ms. Malla is a practicing lawyer before the Supreme Court of Nepal and also a member of Nepal's Constituent Assembly. Recognizing her role in the women's rights movement in Nepal, the US-based private philanthropic organization established in 1993 Peter and Patricia Gruber Foundation has selected and awarded her for this year's Gruber International Women's Rights Prize under the category 'Advancing Gender Equality'. Ms. Malla was instrumental in securing the most recent legal reforms protecting the fundamental reproductive and property rights of women in Nepal and also The Human Trafficking Act that she helped to draft has become a legal model for the region. Ms. Malla will share the prize with Iraqi women rights activist Yanar Mohammad and Palestine feminist Dr Nadera Shalhoub.

A major focus of the Foundation's philanthropy is its International Prize Program, created to recognize excellence in science and humanities by highlighting five fields that create a better world: Cosmology, Genetics, Neuroscience, Justice, and Women's Rights. Each prize is given annually and carries an unrestricted cash award of \$500,000.00 and a gold medal.

Nepal Turning Blind Eye To Water Pollution

Bhumika Ghimire IN



As I was checking on various Nepali news websites last week, I was greeted with pictures of happy faces celebrating the festival of "Chaat".

Chaat is mostly celebrated in Nepal's Terai region and in parts of neighboring India. Hidden behind the happy faces though, a reality Nepal and its people are choosing to ignore. The country's rivers and water bodies are being damaged beyond repair and the result could be a catastrophic to wild-life and to the people.

During Chaat it is customary to visit nearby rivers, ponds, lakes to offer prayers to the sun and to the goddess celebrated during the festival. Unfortunately people forget to clean up after themselves after the prayers are done. So the water body is littered with flowers, and various food offerings.

Kathmandu's historic Rani Pokhari, a pond in center of the city, was opened to devotees celebrating Chaat. Needless to say, at the end of the day the fragile ecosystem was disturbed and damaged. Couple of years back, due to lowering water level and pollution Rani Pokhari's fishes were dying at an alarming rate. You could see the surface of the pond covered with dead fishes from a distance. And yet the local authorities opened up the pond to hundreds of visitors, who despite good intentions dam-

aged the city's historic and natural asset.

During Dashain, some communities take the idol of goddess Durga to nearby water body and "fuse" it with the water to signify the end of that year's celebration. Now think, year after year hundreds of idols painted with toxic chemicals accumulating in a river or a pond. Damage done to the fishes, water system and the environment is beyond repair.

Festivals are not the only culprit behind water body pollution in Nepal and Rani Pokhari is certainly the only victim. Around Kathmandu, you can see rivers being used as dumping sites, as free waste management system. Bagmati River, considered holy by Hindus has been turned into this giant sewage system. If you take a stroll around Chabahil and Mitrapark area in the city, you can see raw sewage from area homes being directly dumped into the river without any treatment.

Bagmati is also being abused by city's factories, their chemical waste goes directly into the river. While all this is happening, Kathmandu's residents strangely don't seem to care. There are some organizations and activists trying to clean up Bagmati but their efforts are too little in front of large scale pollution that is taking place.

Rivers outside Kathmandu, even in rural areas are

facing decline. According to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF)'s 2005 report, pesticides are paper industry are polluting Nepal's rivers making it difficult for fishes and the ecosystem to survive. River pollution is causing the decline in population of endangered gharial crocodile and the Gangetic river dolphin found in Nepal's Karnali River.

For a country like Nepal, which lacks natural resources other than its rivers, wild-life and beautiful landscape it is sad and mystifying to see that protecting those precious resources is not prioritized by the government or the people. There are some organizations-local and international and activists working to protect Nepal's environment but their effort, though heroic seems too little compared to the size of the problem.

Government has not shown any interest in formulating laws and regulation to punish those who pollute water bodies. The environment ministry is an agency founded to create a smoke screen so that donor agencies keep investing in protecting Nepal's environment while the nation's government sits still doing nothing.

What about the people? Bless the activists trying to protect Nepal's environment. In their honor I will refrain from criticizing

Nepal's people who think it is other people's job to clean up their mess.

It is not government's job to clean rivers but it is their job to make laws to punish those who pollute them. It is not the people's job to wait for the government to save the nature but it is their job to demand laws to protect the environment and natural resources. In case of Nepal, sadly, both the government and the people have failed. Let us hope that all the Durga idols lying deep in the country's rivers and the Chaat prayer offering floating in Rani Pokhari bring in a divine intervention to save the country's precious water bodies.

Congratulations !



Rawdeep Pokhrel
s/o Ram C & Sirjana
Sharma Pokhrel,
Dallas TX

DOB October 24, 2008



Sabina, Suvan, Suvani Aryal, VA

The World Looks To Obama

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only given a much-needed boost to America's tarnished global reputation but also injected Europe's minorities with new sense of worth. It may take years before Europeans achieve anything close to what the US has ac-

complished and the euphoria of a new dawn of US-EU relations may fade fast. But the 2008 election could mark a turning point in both transatlantic ties and represent a defining moment for minorities in Europe. And that, says Karim, is a "tremendous achievement."

Shada Islam is a senior program executive at the European Policy Centre. She writes for YaleGlobal Online in a personal capacity. "Reprinted with permission from YaleGlobal Online - www.yaleglobal.yale.edu - (c) 2008 Yale Center for the Study of Globalization."

Bhutanese Refugees...

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the camps every week, said UNHCR officials in Nepal.

UNHCR said the USA had offered to resettle 60,000-plus refugees from Bhutan over the next five years, with another 10,000 hosted by the other countries listed.

Norway, which has a quota of barely 1,000 immigrants from all over the world, has provided settlement for nearly 200 Bhutanese refugees, according to the Bhutanese Refugee Rights Coordinating Committee (RRCC).

New beginning

"After so many years of suffering and leading miserable lives as refugees, they now have a chance to live in dignity," Ashok Gurung, senior member of the RRCC, told IRIN in the capital, Kathmandu.

Gurung, himself a refugee, explained that refugees had now been happily living in host countries.

"I have a strong degree of respect for the courage it must take for refugees to make the decision to resettle and begin their new lives upon resettlement," Daisy Dell, the UNHCR representative in Nepal, told IRIN.

She added that the resettlement process was a huge cultural and social adjustment for refugees who have been living in harsh camp conditions for nearly two decades.

The resettled refugees are adjusting to their new environment and have found jobs that pay as high as US\$8 per hour working on farms, in hotels and other jobs, according to RRCC.

"They have to struggle initially and have to start from scratch as most are not highly educated," said Gurung. "It's the children who benefit the most." He added that local charity agencies and Christian missionary organisations were helping to sponsor or find financial support to enrol the children in school.

Breakthrough

"It's amazing," Dell told IRIN. "We recently surpassed 6,000 departures in less than 10 months." She explained that UNHCR had been working towards a comprehensive solution for the Bhutanese refugees for the past 17 years. "During that time our office has faced many challenges both in terms of refugee protection and camp-management issues and the larger political and security situation in Nepal," said Dell.

The agency has met resistance from some groups of refugees who have been advocating for repatriation to Bhutan and protesting against third-country resettlement.

According to some refugees, there are 13 different armed groups still opting for repatriation and the Nepal government has stepped up security with the help of armed police in the refugee camps. UNHCR's position is that resettlement is an individual choice.

"Without the support of the refugee community, the government of Nepal and the international community, the possibility of resettlement for some 100,000 refugees from Bhutan would not have become a reality," added Dell.

Region Should Accord...

contd. from pg 1...
across the region."

Updating the leaders on the political transformations happening in Nepal, PM Prachanda said that his government represented new force for change and was committed to consolidating peace and institutionalising inclusive democratic polity through a new constitution within two years.

"I feel that in a globalised world the external linkages also play an important role in promoting our common interests," he said. "We share historic connections, common cultural heritage and growing interactions."

On the sidelines of the summit, Prime Minister Prachanda

Contd. from page 8...

strode towards the nearby trash container to dispose the plastic boxes. She now looked at me with faint smile creased on her lips. It modestly pitied my ignorance.

"Bob almost everyone misconstrues the definition of feminism, but I guessed you were smarter than that." She rose slowly, stretched her legs lazily and tugged her fleece twice to shake the dried leafs off her outfit.

The Feminist...

"Feminists are those who gracefully live life of a woman", she continued "the people you mentioned are something else, and they proclaim themselves as feminists because it has been defined that way. Feminists are women who teach men how to love, not hate them. I presume you never have met a true feminist before, but at the moment..." she paused for a brief moment, "...you are looking at one."

Obama Sets His...

contd. from pg 1...

dent [to either sign it into law or veto it.]"

In moving his agenda through Congress, Mr. Obama will enjoy enlarged Democratic Party majorities in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. History professor Allan Lichtman at American University says that increased support will be critical to the new president for addressing today's serious problems. "The lessons from [previous] first term presidencies are [that] you have got to implement your changes quickly. You have a narrow window of opportunity [to enact legislation from your agenda]," he explains. "[President Franklin D.] Roosevelt had his 100 days. [President] Ronald Reagan implemented his "Reagan Revolution" in less than a year. You do not have the luxury of time, particularly in the midst of a crisis this severe."

Despite those Senate and House Democratic majorities, Mr. Obama will still have the opposition Republicans to deal with. And Nathan Gonzales, the Senior Editor for the

Rothenberg Political Report says it is not clear yet whether Republicans will cooperate or obstruct. He states, "There is going to be a wait-and-see period, I think, for the Republican Party where they regroup after this election, watch the Democrats and see what they do -- see what they do wrong in the eyes of the Republicans, and then, stake out their next set of issues."

Mr. Obama's candidacy ignited enthusiasm in many places around the globe.

Experts say he will focus some of his attention on international affairs in the first 100 days, as Georgetown University government professor Mark Rom points out. "He also, I anticipate, will reach out internationally to try to rebuild the stature of America in the world, by meeting with foreign leaders -- not without precondition -- but will meet with them in ways to suggest that the U.S. is open to more multi-lateral cooperation than in the past [during the Bush administration], and try to restore America's moral standing in the world."

Arun III

Raises

10,000 Job...

contd. from pg 7...

of demands to the Sutlej team as well.

"We want job opportunities, a steady supply of power, good road links, preservation of local culture, and rehabilitation of the displaced in adherence to the International Labour Organisations' Treaty, 1969," said Raj Kumar Rai, president, Arun III Stakeholders' Group.

Sutlej GM Sharma said he would consult the government on these demands.

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Caustic Matrika Hits...

contd. from pg 1...

ies are a stronger force since they are in the majority," he said. Yadav claimed to be in touch with the armed faction, headed by rebel leader Prateek.

The ex-minister didn't spare his party colleague and Finance

Minister Dr Baburam Bhattarai, who had floated the idea of changing the party's name, either.

"He gave this statement while on his visit to the US. It was intended to appease the foreigners. But this cannot be accepted," he added.

Unveiling A Statue...

contd. from pg 3...

on right track in recognizing and honoring the literary figures of regional language and literature. Poet Chittadhar was born on NS 1026, 8-26 (May 31, 1906) in Kathmandu and died on NS 1102, 9-18 (June 18, 1982).

His birth centenary was celebrated with great enthusiasm by organizing various literary programs two years ago. During the 76 years of life span, he was jailed many times during the Rana period charging him in writing and publishing creative works. Some of his books were seized by the then government authorities for not having proper permission to bring into country.

When he was released from jail he completed composing the great epic "Sugat Saurava", one of the marvelous creations of his life. It was translated into English language. In addition, he had written 41 books including two magazines and three compiled of poems and short stories, and essays in Nepal Bhasha. Many of the books were based on language, literature, art and culture of Nepal. He dedicated his life for the betterment of Nepalese languages including Nepal Bhasha and he left his will paper by donating all his personal possessions

including the immovable property and wealth to the institute named Nepal Bhasha Parishad.

Recognition of such a national hero after restoration of democratic Nepal is highly praiseworthy. The Nepalese people finally got chance to recognize the real heroes of Nepal. Similarly, we believe that the traditions of this recognition continue for ever under the formation of New Nepal.

Letter to the editor..

contd. from pg 2..

Of course, the problem and any solutions need to be articulated more.

Christian conversion is a separate issue, not to be coupled with the mistreatment of females. The planned Christian conversion is bad, because it wipes out the ancestral traditions of the tribal people. Christianity is a brain washing system for the social control, not a spirituality. They are not interested in friendship with heathens or exchanging views. They are for getting people in their lowest point and try any which way to convert.

Sincerely,
Tilak Shrestha, Ph.D.
tilakbs@hotmail.com

Arun III Raises 10,000 Job Hopes

Sankhuwasabha, Nov 13 (THT):The foundation stone for Arun III — touted as the biggest hydel project in the country — was laid yesterday. Officials of Sutlej Hydro-Electricity Corporation, the Indian partner roped in for the mega project, attended the ceremony along with 17 technical personnel from Nepal.

Rabindra Nath Sharma, general manager, Sutlej Hydro-Electricity Corporation, who had signed the agreement with the government on March 2, led the 10-member Indian delegation to the project site. Arun III is located at Num VDC in Sankhuwasabha.

"We made inspection of the project site and also assessed local needs," said Sharma. Sutlej will soon open offices in Kathmandu, Biratnagar, Khandbari and at the project site. The project aims to generate 402 MW in a single phase. A 1984 survey report had suggested that 201 MW of power could be generated in two phases.

"According to the Nepal Electricity Authority, Arun III will be commissioned by 2015. The

project cost is estimated to cost Rs 64 billion. The estimate was, however, drawn up three years ago. Infrastructure problems persist. The road to the project site is yet to be built," said Sharma. The project, a showpiece of development in eastern Nepal, is expected to provide 10,000 jobs directly or indirectly.

"We are confident that the project will be completed on time, if we get the cooperation from locals. The construction work will begin after the survey, which is likely to take at least two years," added Sharma.

"The Sutlej team has since returned to the capital," said Surya Prasad Upadhyaya, DSP.

Though the foundation ceremony was slated for September, it got delayed due to various reasons.

Residents of Bhojpur and Sankhuwasabha districts, whose lands are likely to be claimed by the project, are demanding "one house, one share".

Affected people have handed over an eight-point charter

...Contd. on pg 6

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hsharma111@aol.com
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Exchange Rates in Nepal

Currency	Buying (Rs)	Selling (Rs)
US \$ 1	78.70	79.30
Canadian \$1	65.00	65.49
Euro 1	100.02	100.78
Pound Sterling 1	116.52	117.40
Australian \$1	51.32	51.71
Swiss Franc 1	66.21	66.71
Singapore Dollar	51.95	52.35
Japanese Yen 10	8.13	8.19
Chinese Yuan 1	11.53	11.61
Indian Rupees 100	160.00	160.15
Swedish Kroner 1	9.99	---
Danish Kroner 1	13.43	---
Hong Kong Dollar 1	10.15	---
Saudi Arab Riyal 1	---	---
Qatari Riyal 1	---	---
Thai Bhat 1	---	---
UAE Dirham 1	---	---
Malaysian Ringgit 1	---	---

[Source: Nepal Rastra Bank, November 16 '08]

Child Trafficking In Nepal

Contd. From the previous week...

Trafficking is an integral offshoot of the need for outmigration in Nepal. Organizations working on trafficking issues estimate that thousands of women and children are trafficked each year out of Nepal into neighboring countries, primarily to India. It is estimated that close to 200,000 women and girls from Nepal are working under oppressive conditions in the various red light areas of Indian cities. These statistics are however based on assumptions that cannot be readily verified due to the underground nature of both the trade of trafficking as well as sex work. The expansive open border between India and Nepal rendering it readily accessible, as well as the long history of migration of Nepalese to India for employment are considered to be key mitigating factors in fueling cross border trafficking in recent years, along with deteriorating economic conditions in the countryside of Nepal and the chronically low status of women and girls.

In recent times, the rising concern about the trafficking of Nepali women and children has incorporated a critique of national and local level politi-

cal apathy on the issue, and the chronic lack of law enforcement and political will to address this problem. It is argued by critics from the NGO sector that while the government has voiced a commitment to mainstreaming gender and child rights issues, most of these programs continue to be conducted in isolation. The marginalization of women's and children's issues limits participation and contributes to further exclusion. It is noted that the present decentralization process in Nepal through the tiered structure of the DDCs and VDCs provides a very positive base to incorporate women's and children's programs.

SAARC Convention on Trafficking

In the last five years, there have been some important steps taken to address the issue of trafficking at a regional level. Presently, certain international conventions are being invoked to address the rights of children and their labor in hazardous sectors within the region; many of these sectors include sites to which girls and children are trafficked. At the same time, regional instruments are being put in

place (the Rawalpindi Resolution of 1996 and the SAARC Draft Convention of Trafficking of Women and Children) to specifically address the problem of trafficking.

Heads of States of South Asian countries have committed to addressing the problem of trafficking with the objective of eliminating it within the near future. This commitment was first reflected in the 1997 SAARC Summit in Male, Maldives, through a declaration which stated:

Expressing grave concern at the trafficking of women and children within and between countries, the Heads of State or Government pledged to coordinate their efforts and take effective measures to address this problem. They decided that this would include simplification of the repatriation procedures of the victims of trafficking. They also decided that the feasibility of establishing a Regional Convention for Prostitution be examined by the relevant Technical Committee" [Article 27 of the Declaration of the Ninth SAARC Summit in Male, Maldives, May 1997]



Sirjana Sharma, LLM
Southern M University, TX
creative_law2005@yahoo.com

Upon input and feedback from concerned stakeholders and NGOs, the SAARC Draft Convention on Trafficking was further discussed at the Colombo SAARC Summit. The process of input into the SAARC Convention continues in an active and varied manner. At least three major separate platforms have been spearheaded by the Resistance Network currently sponsored by UBINIG in Bangladesh. Several member organizations of this network met in August 1999 to provide further input into the Convention and discuss lobbying strategies to push for an acceptance of the recommendations.

...Contd.on next week

The Feminist

Contd. from the previous week...

"Have you seen that movie Sean Penn Directed?" She asked curiously.

I nodded. That was an extraordinary movie. How could I resist not seeing?

"The actor could have been a modern day Thoreau had he written a book before dying." She said, stopping short at the bank of the blue pond. The trail had suddenly disappeared under the pool of cobalt colored water.

I took few pictures of the pond, and some scarlet maple trees. There was a couple kissing over a blanket of red maples and there were kids playing in the foliage, I clicked the shutter open intermittently to capture everything I could see.

"Nice camera, which one is it?" She reached out for it.

"A Nikon, I bought it earlier this year, takes amazing pictures." I beamed. I was proud of the ownership.

She scanned the camera briefly, flipped it over a few times and handed it back to me. "Fucking gizmos, they do anything on earth to

bait your credit cards."

Did she just swear? If she did, I'd like to hear it again. I never hear a Buddhist Ivy leaguer curse before; probably because I never met one before. What a woman – I wondered. Sandra occupied me with her theories and conversations all the time and now, she amused me more with her cursing ability.

I looked at her closely for the first time; she wore a blue cashmere sweater snagged at few places, an old pair of jeans and Nike sneakers which had few maple leaves stuck to the heels. She made a pony tail and wore no make up. The little wrinkles in her face although displayed her time warped self, they were not able to masquerade her beauty away. There certainly were heydays in her youth, perhaps students at Brown pursued her from music lessons to tedious classes or maybe there were some lucky fews she kissed in the New Hampshire Mountains. She could, by all means have been a 21st century Mae West, but chose not to.

Had it been any other woman, with those academic privi-

leges she would have been a bellidose individual ready to pounce on anyone who came across her, especially men, I have witnessed them all, women who wore pleated skirts and pearl necklaces and shop in Newbury streets, those cybersansar's confused looking models from Nepal, with breasts half exposed but ridiculously low GPAs, and those south Asian politicians who invariably desiccate their throat, cursing male chauvinism. They all have few things in common; they call themselves feminists, claim to fight against men's atrocities but are more spiteful when it comes to women instead.

I have always kept away from those neo-feminism worshippers. They make me nervous, not that they claim to have known it all, but they always approach with combative attitude which I find resentful. If men are bigots women are sexists too, and it requires one to be at a certain level of maturity to overcome these attributes.

"I never met anyone like you Sandra," I told her as we were

chewing off our turkey sandwich. We had already toured the reservation and had walked over a mile, it was time we sat ourselves and ate; it was well past lunch time.



Anurag Sharma -
Boston, MA
bobby_eiu@yahoo.com

"Hmm..." she chomped a large part of her sandwich, and chewed it with precision, "what makes you think so Bob?"

"Well...you are not pompous despite being so educated, and you do not have chip on your shoulders, you rationalize, you are thoughtful, you are humble and austere." I wanted to say more but stopped when I saw her laughing.

"Stop...you're embarrassing me." She laughed hysterically still chewing the sandwich.

"I mean it Sandra, you are not one of those swearing feminists." I

...Contd. on pg 6