

THE KATHMANDU POST
EDITORIAL

Baby mommas

Curbing infant and maternal deaths requires more than healthcare

It wasn't too long ago that in many parts of the country, giving birth was a risky, and often fatal, ordeal. Maternal and infant mortality were a common occurrence until the early 1990s. In fact, in 1990, maternal mortality ratio was at a disgraceful 350 deaths per 100,000 live births. Compared to the 2010 Millennium Development Goals Progress Report 2010, we have come a long way. 229 is still not a good number and measures will need to be taken to meet the 213 target for 2015. However, improvement is evident and for this, both the government and the various organisations involved deserve a pat on the back. Though improving, the infant mortality figures don't look as good. In 1990, we saw 100 deaths per 100,000 births. This figure has reduced to 41, but that is still a high number. When it comes to infant mortality, we have a worse track record in infant death under five years of age. This figure has fared the worst throughout. Even today, under-five mortality is 50 out of 100,000.

Nepal is a country plagued by social stigmas and mothers and babies are no exception. Healthy babies and mothers require physical, mental, social, and economic well-being. While access to health resources, midwives and doctors, are the tangible and obvious reasons which cause infant and maternal mortality, poverty, social stigmas, and traditional practices continue to make the situation worse. The practice of untouchability for mothers who have just given birth, for example, is still in practice even in the most well-to-do and educated households. And while this may mean a relaxing time for those who can afford extravagance in the urban centres, a mother and a baby in a cowshed in the middle of winter in the cold far-western hills is a far-cry from relaxation—it is an invitation for illness, and possible fatality. One can only imagine its effect on the mother's state of mind. Likewise, the practice of selective eating habits for nursing mothers is another stigma that is causing both infant and maternal mortality brought about by malnutrition. A mother's body and mind are at their weakest after birth and it is in this condition that a mother nurses her baby. It is obvious that energy-giving wholesome foods and drinks should be consumed in plentiful amounts to provide for the mother, so that she secretes enough milk for the baby. But tradition dictates otherwise. Mothers are dissuaded, often forbidden from consuming green leafy (it is said they make the body cold), protein-rich meats and fish, and various beans. They are confined to a diet of mung lentils and white rice.

For a majority of Nepalis, these fables are not accepted as such. It is for this reason that a multi-sectoral approach needs to be adopted if infant and maternal mortality is to be halted. Access to health is primary, but dealing with the social, economic and mental ramifications of birth and motherhood, which are also to blame for mortality, will require more than just doctors and midwives.

THE national protests of 1950, 1990 and 2006 are very important events in the history of Nepal. These demonstrations were conducted for democracy and were organized and led by nationally recognized political parties. The 1950 revolution introduced

and the people's sentiments after that historical movement.

Ram Saraya Sada, a rickshaw puller from Padaria of Lahan, described the changes that came after the Madhes Movement. "I am from a poor and excluded family. I do not own any land. In January 2007, a massive people's movement took place. I never saw such a huge mass of angry people in my life. People of all castes and creeds, especially Madhesis, poured out to demand an end to discrimination and prejudice backed by the state and its ruling classes. Pahadi (hill) people also came to express their solidarity with the movement. After the movement, I have been feeling more freedom. No one can humiliate me as a "dhoti", "bhatya" or "bushar". The movement has inspired us as we can speak and make decisions freely. It has enhanced our self-confidence. Pahade humiliation has ended as they had been identifying us as other citizens instead of Nepali."

Gyanu Thapa, a 40-year-old woman who has been running a small hotel for the last 22 years, said, "I never felt humiliated in Lahan as being a Pahade. It has been said that some Pahadis left Lahan due to the Madhes Movement. But I think they fled due to rumours. I found out that some local groups had demanded donations from the Pahade community in the name of Madhes, and negative rumours began circulating. However, Lahan is at peace."

Harendra Raj Panta, a permanent resident of Chatari VDC of Siraha near the Nepal-India border, fluent speaker of the local language and owner of a stationery store, said, "The protest happened because our political parties did not pay attention to Tarai problem. The egocentric Khasa-oriented state has never treated Madhesis as Nepalis. As for me, I never felt humiliated despite being a Pahadi living in a Madhesi-majority area. I was born and grew up in a small village in Siraha. I know the local culture well and I respect it. We should respect each other."

After the movement, the existence of Madhesis has been asserted. The movement dismantled the traditional concept of nationalism propounded by Mahendra, and established the real feel of pluralism in Nepal. Some have accused the Madhes Movement of being an ethnic uprising, but this argument is



DEEPAK CHAUDHARY

democracy in Nepal. 1990 is remembered for bringing the multiparty system and 2006 for establishing people-centric democracy.

There was one movement that emerged particularly in the Tarai/Madhes region in January 2007. It was spontaneous, self-motivated and not organized or led by the national political parties. However, the Madhesi Janadikar Forum (not a political party at that time) led by Upendra Yadav played a vital role. The agitation lasted

The movement brought all Madhesis closer. Interaction between Madhesis in the east and the west is deepening

for more than a month, and more than 35 people attained martyrdom. Leaders and cadres of different political parties, intellectuals and the common Madhesi people participated in this movement.

This protest was sparked by the murder of a student Ramesh Mahato by Maoists in Lahan and spread all over the plains. Lahan is a small town on the East-West Highway. The major cause behind the protest in Tarai was the state's unfair policy towards Madhesis and the tendency of neglecting their existence. In January 2012, I visited Lahan and tried to focus on the changes

We have overcome

The Madhes Movement of 2007 dismantled the traditional concept of Nepali nationalism



not logical as all sections of the Tarai/Madhes population such as Muslim, Tharu, Yadav and Dalit participated in it. Subsequently, social movements like the Tharu, Janajati, Dalit, Muslim and OBC movements broke out for equality and social justice. Therefore, it was a revolution that gave inspiration to excluded and marginalized groups to fight for equality and social justice.

The foremost political achievements from the Madhes Movement are implementation of proportional representation, formation of electoral area according to population and incorporation of federalism and inclusion in the Interim Constitution. Because of proportional representation, excluded and marginalized groups have been included in the Constitutional Assembly (CA). After the 2007 movement, Madhesi presence in the state machinery has been gradually increasing. Nepal's first president and vice-president are both Madhesis. Due to the emergence of Madhesis in politics, the hegemony of national political parties is headed towards an end.

Meanwhile, Madhesi society, previously referred to as being traditional, is now drastically changing. The movement played a vital role in bringing Madhesis closer. Interaction between Madhesis in the east and the west is deepening. I noticed some social

ground realities that the trend of inter-caste marriage among Madhesis is now increasing too. Interaction between Madhesis and Pahadis is also going in the normal way. Before the Madhes movement, there was dominance and hegemony of Pahadis, that is, the interaction was one-way; now it is becoming two-way. Inter-caste marriages between Madhesis and Pahadis are also increasing. I think it is more important and it is a mark of synchronization and assimilation too.

Nevertheless, shifting of the old administration offices from the Tarai district capital to the highway was a cruel political decision by the previous government. It is creating some fissures between Madhesis and Pahadis and it may give rise to violence. Crime and corruption are rampant in Nepal, and they are seen more in Madhes. The transitional period should be concluded to bring an end to such trends.

Armed groups played an important role in the Madhes Movement, now they are likely waiting for a federal republican constitution. If the new constitution does not address Madhesi issues, they may unite for a struggle. All the Madhesis are waiting to see how the CA handles their concerns.

Chaudhary is the author of *Nepal's Madhesi, Santhal, and Tarai/Madhesi of Nepal*

Wild wild west

The Kathmandu Post
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The call for an 'Indivisible Far West' is a ploy being used by political leaders to benefit from both the hills and the Tarai

THE federalism debate in the Far West region began to heat up after the State Restructuring Commission submitted its two reports. The sloganeering which followed in the Far West has, to some extent, polarised the Pahade and Tharu community around the federalism debate. Strikes



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have been called by supporters of an 'Indivisible Far West', who have been demanding a single federal unit to incorporate nine districts, including two Tarai districts—Kailali and Kanchanpur—in the new federal design. In reaction, various Tharu organisations, including the Tharu Kalyan karini Sabha, began agitations in the western Tarai opposing the idea of a single state in the Far West, demanding instead, a Tharuhat Pradesh.

While the Madhesi Morcha has been supporting and expressing solidarity with the Tharu demand, almost all Pahade leaders who hail from the Far West have been lobbying for a single state in the region. Even former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba of the Nepali Congress, who became popular in the Tharu community after ridding of the *Kamaiya* (labour bondage) tradition in 2000, is now voicing support for the 'indivisible' Far West.

The demography of the Far West has changed substantially since the 1950s, with the influx of hill people in the region, rendering the Tharu community a minority. The region is known to be incredibly under developed, even though two prime ministers of the country—Deuba from Dadeldhura and Lokendra Bahadur Chand of Baitadi—hail from the region. Data reveals that the Bahun and Chhetri/Thakuri of the region have sound representation in politics, bureaucracy and army/police

of Nepal in comparison to the Tharus and other marginalised groups from the region. In an attempt to assert their identity, many Tharus see the 'Indivisible Far West' demand as one being propagated by the elites for dual benefit—holding *laddoos* in both hands. For the Tharu community, there is no benefit in a single Far West province, as history proves.

The Tharu ethnic leaders claim that most people of Pahade origin in the Far West are residents of both the hills and the Tarai plains. Even if they live in Bardiya, Tikapur, Attaria or Kanchanpur, when it comes to development and taking on political roles, they still lobby for, and in, their hill districts—Achham, Bajura, Dadeldhura, Doti and Darchula. They have been benefitting from both sides and these are the people who have been lobbying for a single province. Their tendency clearly seems to want to keep Tarai as a dumping site.

The single province concept is not appropriate for a variety of reasons. Looking at history, the socio-political scenario, as well as the geographical landscape, it makes no sense. But more importantly, the Tharus will never accept it. Instead, it may ignite violence. It is clear that the only way forward is close interaction between the communities. But also, the Pahade community living in the Far West Tarai should show some loyalty to the place where they reside, not only the far-off hill districts where they're from. The Pahade community can benefit just as much in the Tarai as they do in the hills, if not more.

Pahade pundits and politicians have opposed the 'One Madhesh One Pradhesh' idea, on grounds that the poor and more marginalised people of the Tarai will not be able to benefit from such a province. But they remain silent over the 'Indivisible Far West' idea. In the past year, Bahun/Chhetru ethnic campaigns have surfaced in opposition to ethnic federalism. But these are status-quoist ideals and which will only serve to widen the polarisation between groups.

On the other hand, Janajatis and



POST PHOTO

Madhesi have also been unable to resolve disputes surrounding the federalism project within their respective groups alone. Before anything can be taken further, these internal disputes will have to be worked out. But time is running out. Even if leaders are able to agree on number of provinces, their demarcations, and name the federal states in the few days left, that would be a big achievement. After settling disputes within and between Janajati groups and Madhesi, they can put pressure on top leaders of major political parties to deliver a statute with federalism, within the stipulated time.

Likewise, the responsibility of the Madhesi leaders will be important in resolving the federal issue within the Tarai. Ultimately however, even the Madhesi leaders cannot pave the socio-economic and political roadmaps for all Madhesi, as they're mandates are vague and unclear. That is why the Tharus have been opposing such unclear policies; they wish to take advantages according to their population size. In the Inclusion Bill, for example, the Tharu voice must be quoted according to their population ratio sep-

arately. Otherwise, strong resistance may surface. Likewise, the Tharu ethnic leadership should be heartily invited to negotiations on the new federal map by the Madhesi leaders at least.

But Tharus have also some misconceptions. Their rigid and negative stance toward the 'Madhes' word is creating obstacles in negotiations with Madhesi. They are also divided over the number of federal states within the Tarai/Madhes. While western Dangaura Tharu ethnic leaders are in favour of 'One Tharuhat Pradhesh,' the biggest Tharu ethnic organisation—Tharu Kalyankari Sabha—has been demanding multiple provinces in the Tarai. Likewise, some NGO-based activists have been campaigning against the 'Madhes' word.

Finally, it is no doubt that national political parties have a key role in paving the federal design and if they fail or are dubious towards federalism, ethnic and regional insurgence may well take shape.

Chaudhary is author of 'Nepal Ko Madhesi Samaj' and 'Tarai/Madhesh of Nepal; An Anthropological Study'

Voices from the east

Some are demanding that Morang, Sunsari and Jhapa be made a state named Morang

EASTERN Nepal has been heated up by a banda (shutdown) enforced by Brahmin Samaj demanding that Brahmins/Bahunas also be listed in the Adivasi Janajati (indigenous) category and that there should be reservation for them in the civil service. They are also opposing ethnic-based federalism.



DEEPAK CHAUDHARY

Just a month ago, Khas Samaj had imposed a banda demanding that the Khas community be given Adivasi Janajati status. They have claimed a Khas province in the western hill region to preserve their historical identity. Likewise, the Khas-Chhetri Samaj had called a three-day banda in eastern Nepal to press for Janajati status. For the last two years, Limbu organizations have been continuously holding strikes in the eastern region to fortify their demand for a

The demand for three Tarai districts by Limbuwan worked as an impetus for the formation of the Tharuwan Kochila state concept. The Bahunas and Chhetris seem to favour Morang province, and they are not interested in either Limbuwan or a single Madhes province. It is clear that the Bahunas and Chhetris would not prefer caste/ethnic or region-based provinces. In another way, the emergence of Limbuwan activities in the area seems to be more aggressive after the Madhes Movement.

MARSC chairperson Patra Dhimal said, "We are not talking about ethnic federalism, but our demand is for a Morang province consisting of three Tarai districts — Sunsari, Morang and Jhapa — with priority rights for the Adivasi Janajati because of the common psychology in the region. Before 1961, only one Morang district was in existence, and Morang is not considered to be an ethnic name. All the castes and religious groups can enjoy within Morang province or sub-province."

Actually, the social landscape of the Tarai districts across the Koshi has been drastically changing since 1950 when the state encouraged migration of hill people to the Tarai by clearing the forests of the Charkoshe Jhadi. Now a mixed social landscape can be seen in the region. However,



Limbuwan autonomous province. They have been claiming nine districts including three Tarai districts across the Koshi River as being part of Limbuwan.

Last January, the Eastern Tharuwan Kochila State Joint Council (ETKSJC) announced a banda for a Tharuwan Kochila autonomous province. The ETKSJC has claimed that six Tarai districts — Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari, Saptari, Siraha and Udayapur — should be one province named Tharuwan Kochila state. It has been reported that the ETKSJC is affiliated with the Maoist party. The founder of the ETKSJC, Santosh Chaudhary, is a Maoist leader. It is also heard that the CPN-UML has been lobbying through an NGO that the three districts of Morang, Sunsari and Jhapa should be one province and should not be included either in Madhes or Limbuwan.

Meanwhile, the Morang Autonomous Region Struggle Committee (MARSC) has been peacefully agitating and demanding that Morang, Sunsari and Jhapa be made into one province named Morang for the last two years. The MARSC is comprised of 15 tribal/Janajati groups residing in Sunsari, Morang and Jhapa districts. Similarly, the Rajbanshi and Tharu communities have been demanding an ethnic-based province called Tharuwan Kochila.

Eastern Nepal which consists of the region across the Koshi has been in ferment since the Tarai/Madhes Movement of 2007. Only after this movement have voices from the plains surfaced, and subsequently, the Kochila and Tharu movements also surfaced in the region. After that, the Limbuwan agitation has been going on for the last three years. In this way, the far eastern region has been continuously heated up by bandas by various social groups demanding their rights.

the indigenous people of the plains became a minority and many of them became landless. The influence of revolutionary communist thought from West Bengal and modernization from Darjeeling has changed and led to the development of a unique psychology in this region. That is why people of the region may prefer these three districts as a separate province or sub-province.

The MARSC concept of the three districts as a province may raise the question of economic viability if Saptari, Siraha and Udayapur are added. But discussions with the Maithilis will be needed on this matter. The idea of the MARSC seems logical. Recommendations for two provinces in the Tarai/Madhes have been made to both the State Restructuring Commission (SCR) and the Constitutional Committee.

The hills and the Tarai have different geological and geographical landscapes, different cultural and socio-economic environments. Almost all the tribes and Janajatis of the plains are found in these three districts. The Dravidian people live here and about two dozen tribal and Janajati groups have been residing here in a vulnerable condition. Therefore, it is the state's responsibility regarding the preservation of the cultural heritage of the region. A discourse on the MARSC's thought may be appropriate. To preserve the distinguished cultural heritage and environment, Morang can be one province or sub-province within the Tarai/Madhes.

I found that most people's concern is about the province's name. If the province is named Tharuwan or Kochila, the chances of opposition by other groups may be greater. So discussions will have to be held on the name of the province if a dispute arises.

Seeds of conflict

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Discrimination and backwardness in the Madhes have created ripe conditions for unrest



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There is a vast socio-economic disparity between communities and regions in Nepal. Province 2, which lies in the Madhes, and Karnali and Bheri zones are usually identified as being backward in terms of the economy and infrastructure. But Karnali is not as deprived as the Madhes. Studies show that state discrimination in the form of cultural deprivation and economic exploitation against Madhesi has created an identity crisis among them. As a result, Madhesi dissatisfaction has surfaced in continuous movements since 2007. Following political changes in 2006-07, inclusion and federalism have been adopted, and the representation of Madhesi and other marginalised people have increased slightly. It was thought that there would be peace in the Madhes after federalism and inclusion, but that has not happened.

Exploiting discontent by elites

Some say that political development and implementation has been progressing at a slow pace. At the same time, personal interests of the political elite have dominated socio-political issues. For this reason, there has been no proper solution, and chances of complexity and conflict have grown. The pace of development is still slow, and citizen dissatisfaction and anger have risen. The elite have been exploiting this discontent for their benefit.

Take, for example, the socio-economic and infrastructural development in the 10



VDCs of Belhi, Mauwaha, Phulka, Kachan, Khadagpur, Manraja, Banaula, Bhuthi, Sarswar and Malhaniya in Saptari district in Province 2. They are located near the Postal Road close to the Nepal-India border. The VDCs have a combined population of 48,746 as per the 2011 census. The level of development here is pitiable. Each VDC has just one sub-health post. There are no labs or doctors. The literacy rate is 25 to 29 percent, much lower than the national average of 67.5 percent. There is a wide gap between male and female literacy rates. Similarly, the number of schools in these VDCs is insufficient in proportion to the population, despite education being considered as one of the most important components of overall development.

Similarly, economic activities in these areas are dismal. Agriculture is the prime occupation of the people. About 80 percent of the area is covered by paddy fields. Paddy and wheat are the main cereal crops grown here. However, most of the households do not have enough to eat. In Bhuthi VDC, for instance, paddy is grown on 442 hectares and production amounts

to 1,137 tonnes which is very low. There is no proper irrigation system, so local farmers depend on the heavens for water.

Stagnant economic activity

Surface irrigation is provided through the Western Koshi Canal, but it is not properly managed. Only a few farmers have private tube wells. There is little commercial fishing and poultry farming. Commercial agriculture is not found in the area. Similarly, there is no market nearby where farmers can sell their produce. Agriculture is the main source of household income: it contributes 60 to 69 percent. Remittance ranks second in terms of total household income as it contributes 15 to 23 percent. Remittance has improved household incomes, and people have more money to spend. This can be clearly observed from their household goods, mobile phones, TV sets, dish antennas and motorcycles.

Half of the VDCs do not have electricity. Sarswar, Malhaniya and Kachan VDCs have partial electricity provisions and 15 to 20 percent of the households have electrical power. There are no factories or

financial institutions except one women's cooperative in Manraja VDC. Therefore, people have to go to Rajbiraj to conduct financial transactions or take loans. These areas are also not connected by black-topped roads. About 75 percent of the roads are dirt roads and 25 percent are gravel roads. Therefore, economic activity in the area is almost stagnant. In the absence of education and economic development as well as infrastructure development, social change has been slow. These situations are considered to be favourable for conflict. We should not forget that the People's War launched by the Maoists spread from Rukum and Rolpa districts in 1996. These two districts were represented as backward districts in the past.

Therefore, one argument may be raised that the socio-political movements that happen in the Madhes from time to time are due to the backwardness of the area. We have been engaging to resolve Madhes issues since 2007, but conflict has been ignited repeatedly. Many issues related to the Madhes such as inclusion, federalism and proportional representation have been included in the constitution. But some Madhesi complain that they are not being properly implemented.

Amid these socio-political issues, economic issues have been given less attention by politicians, activists and writers in our country. Many Madhesi are in the lower to lower middle class category, and policies to address their concerns have not been worked out properly. Besides political and constitutional solutions, development that benefits the people directly should be pursued simultaneously in order to bring them into the mainstream to avoid conflict.

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Tural/Madhes of Nepal and
Nepalako Madhesi Samaj*

<https://kathmandupost.com/opinion/2017/05/03/seeds-of-conflict>



RIAL

of the Blast

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Self-defense?

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Changing Bihar and Nepal

At present Bihar's economic growth rate is 11.36% per annum whereas India's average growth rate is around 8%. Interestingly, 90% of the people in Bihar live in villages and the growth is leading Bihar towards urbanization.



D Chaudhary

Recently Bihar government organized 'Global Summit on Changing Bihar 2012' on February 17 in Patna for attracting foreign investment in Bihar state of India. Prime Minister Babu Ram Bhattarai with a dozen of Nepalese officials and politicians participated in this summit as the Chief Guest at the invitation of Nitish Kumar, the Chief Minister of Bihar. Someone argued Prime Minister contravened the portfolio in the context of Bihar visit.

In the Summit, Bhattarai pointed out an urgent need for 'developmental partnership' between Nepal and Bihar. During his visit, Bhattarai called Bihar a 'role model' for development, economic advancement and social inclusion. Bihar is one of the five states of India that share long borders with Nepal where the busiest trade centers are located.

Bihar was known as one of the poorest and most corrupt states in India in the past, but it has now maintained an amazingly fast rate of growth. The credit goes to Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. Most Nepalese analysts, writers and politicians have been inspired from changes in Bihar.

Bihar showcases a glorious chapter of the civilization in ancient Bharatbarsa. The word 'Vihar' is considered the birthplace of monasteries. World peace envoy Guatam Buddha had spent half of his life in Bihar for preaching his philosophy. Famous ancient states like Magadh, Brijji, Lichhavi and Maurya were in existence in present Bihar, and Nepal's history is attached with these states in the context of civilization. Since the Medieval period, Bihar had been losing its dignity. Even after independence of India, Bihar could not maintain its socio-economic progress and vote-bank politics vehemently dominated over past four decade since 1960, and this culture hampered its progressive path. But the tales are altogether different now.

Bihar government invested a huge amount in education in the past. Sanskrit education has also been highly encouraged by state but majority of the people could not benefit from it. Socialist Movement around 1975 under the leadership of Jaya Prakash

Narayan increased social and political awareness but it could no longer sustain because it was suppressed by emergency during Indira Ghandhi's period. However, 1990's global freedom wave stirred the Bihari society toward freedom and liberty, and socialist leader Lalu Prasad Yadav emerged as new Chief Minister of Bihar with massive public support. Unfortunately, he could not lead Bihar toward progress. He was also blamed for caste-based politics like his predecessors. Sankrit education was closed but he could not improve modern education effectively. During his regime, more crime events, and hiked unemployment rates were recorded and the state exhibited lawlessness.

Now Bihar has got Nitish Kumar as a reformer and his coalition government has succeeded and paved Bihar towards development. He has primarily focused on the improvement of administrative and educational institutions, and this has helped him to ensure good governance. Bihar has a number of universities and a huge railway network, but it was necessary to maintain/modernize these institutions effectively. Improving in peace situation, Bihar soon emerged as 'the least corrupt state' in India. This way, good governance automatically accelerated development activities.

At present Bihar's economy growth rate is 11.36% per annum whereas India's average growth rate is around 8%. Interestingly, 90% of the people in Bihar live in villages and the trend is leading Bihar towards urbanization. Bihar's per capita income in 2009/10 was Rs. 16,119 as compared to Rs. 10,055 in 2006/07.

The percentage of students who are not attending school dropped from 12% to 3.5%. Bihar saw the largest increase in literacy rate across India in the last one decade. The literacy rate in general increased by 16.82% whereas the female literacy rate increased by 20.21%. Bihar government built 2400 km of road in 2011, compared to 415 km in 2004.

Nitish Kumar is developing Bihar as tourist hub in South Asia because Bihar has a great heritage of civilization, especially that of Buddhism. Shaibal Gupta, a social scientist, has said that if Bihar continues to keep its present growth rate, it will take 10 years to catch up with

national per capita income. It means Bihar has to do more for maintaining its economic growth rate and many challenges are there, population growth and social disparities being some.

Around 1990, Nepal was the destination of many Biharis for jobs and mostly they used to be involved in garment-factories in Kathmandu. Most of the Biharis had been inspired by Nepal's liberal social structure and peace. Liberal and flexible culture of the Janjatis, in fact, has been a mark of the Nepalese society and others have been influenced by it. Due to the Janjati influence, the Hindu social system in Nepal is not rigid as it is in UP or Bihar. Liberal societies obviously can pick up social development more quickly. However, lack of strong economy and employment leads to social ills and crimes, which is now apparently seeing in Nepal.

Then the question is: 'What lesson Nepal should take from Bihar?' Reformation of administrative and political institutions is a very important thing that can play a vital role for good governance. These should be prioritized. Good governance and responsible, accountable leadership is needed for Nepal. Good governance and development activities have not been that effective in Nepal. A huge amount of budget is allocated for local and infrastructural development over five decades but the result is found to be quite unsatisfactory. Some of the development works like Middle-Hill Highway and urbanization along with are the most important projects for hilly region's development. Likewise, Hulaki Margh is a backbone project for Madhesh. Fast track from Kathmandu to Nijgadh, Sikta Irrigation Project, Railway plan in Tarai, and some of biggest hydroelectric projects are major infrastructure projects in Nepal, but due to the lack of political stability and bad governance, it is not being implemented effectively. Education and health sectors are also not effective and not accessible to the poor.

Nepal needs to establish political changes through constitutional assembly first and make local bodies effective. If Nepal maintains political stability and good governance, it can register a paradigm shift in South Asian context.



The Syrian government's claims that terrorists are shelling parts of Homs are completely ridiculous. We know who is shelling Homs.

Robert Ford, US Ambassador to Syria

Editorial

EDITORIAL

Curbing corruption

Corruption, as everyone knows, is the most contagious ailment within the administrative structure of Nepal, though favoritism and nepotism too exist, and many know about it. Many times, the government has made commitments to tackle the problem, but nothing has practically come in action out of which people can feel concrete and tangible outcome of these moves. What is more frustrating is that even the highest executives in the government are unmistakably aware of this malice, but are not able to do anything concrete to curb it.

Addressing a function to mark the establishment day of the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) on Saturday, Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai admitted that corruption was still prevalent as a major political malice, but his address has failed to assure the nation that something concrete is coming soon to deliver people from this vicious circle. In fact, as the Prime Minister acknowledges, the most dangerous sources of corruption are high-ranking officials, leaders and bureaucrats, and their victims are the laities. The laities do not have easy access to the machineries that deal with corruption, and for fear of being nagged, they choose to remain silent.

It is therefore a dire necessity that corruption should be driven away from Nepalese political and administrative air, and Nepal should be cleansed from its image of one of the most corrupted counties in Asia. Saying that the governing 'would introduce program' to curb corruption is not enough. People have been cheated beyond limits, and it's time the government categorically says what, when and how succor against corruption is coming, and how the government would save its face in case its honked programs, once again, turn out to be a fiasco. What the nations needs are a strong political commitment and a respect for integrity and high order moral strength, besides stringent legal provisions against the corrupt ones.

Contempt for Gilani

The noose around Pakistan's Prime Minister Yousaf Reza Gilani has been further tightened. Contempt of court proceedings against the government took a decisive turn as the larger bench refused on Friday to entertain any of the pleas that could have delayed the framing of a charge-sheet against the chief executive and, henceforth, any obstruction in the dispensation of justice.

The intra-court appeal, filed by the counsel for prime minister, was meant to make another attempt of apprising the court that Gilani had acted in good faith by not writing to the Swiss authorities in opening a money-laundering case against President Asif Ali Zardari on account of the conclusions of his cabinet and the concerned ministry. The bench by refusing to entertain the plea had demonstrated that it is serious in seeing the case reaching its logical conclusion, without delays in the trial and prosecution of the corrupt who benefited from an impugned piece of legislation.

It is now a catch-22 situation for Gilani, as the court will formally move against him to frame charges on February 13. At the same time, jurists believe that it's now too late for the chief executive to even submit an unconditional apology. The framing of contempt charges and subsequent indictment seem to be the writing on the wall. No amount of persuasion is likely to change the mind of the Lords, who by virtue of their comments have made it clear that the government stands in violation of law and justice by ignoring its orders for almost two years. Though the final judgment in the contempt case may take time, thus inevitably providing enough breathing space to the government to articulate itself in the political realms, the axe of justice is unlikely to spare its very existence. The fix is in the adamant attitude of the executive that is bent upon destructing the entire democratic structure at the cost of not writing against the president. It is here that the court is firm in seeing that the law takes its course over all exigencies. The government could still establish a precedent by prosecuting the alleged corrupt and opening cases against the head of state in its surmount belief of holding high the norms of justice and constitution. There is hardly any other way out.

Editorial, Khaleej Times



D. CHAUDHARY

Federalism in trouble

Some revisionist and opportunist groups are making efforts to make the CA a dismal failure, and peace process a fiasco. Prolongation of the transitional period is making social, economic and political life more deteriorated.

The State Restructuring Commission (SRC) submitted its much-awaited final report a week before. SRC has recommended the government to federate the country into 11 provinces with priority rights to the domicile ethnic groups at the local level. Although, SRC's members were fractioned into two different thought with majority opting for federal provinces against the minority's proposal of six provinces. SRC's 11 provinces are - Limbuwan, Kirant, Tamsaling, Newa, Tamuwani, Narayani, Magrat, Karnali-Khaptad, Mithila-Bhojpur-Koch-Madhesh and Lumbini-Awadh-Tharuwan. One province is proposed particularly for Dalit but it is not mentioned explicitly where it will be.

Constitutional sub-committee has already proposed 14 provinces based on identity and economic viability with majority. These are Limbuwan, Sherpa, Kirant, Tamsaling, Sunkoshi, Newa, Tamuwani, Narayani, Magrat, Karnali, Jadan, Khaptad, Mithila-Bhojpur-Koch-Madhesh and Lumbini-Awadh-Tharuwan.

If we scan the final report of 10 provinces (one for Dalit, yet not clear) in comparison to 14, it is considered a good outcome but some questions for modification still might await answers. Due to less viability in terms of economy, small area and low population, the Sherpa, Sunkoshi and Jadan provinces, which were proposed by Constitutional sub-committee, have now been declined whereas, Karnali and Khaptad (Far Western Hilly regions) have been merged as Khaptad-Karnali in SRC's main report. Other provinces, proposed by the Constitutional sub-committee remained as they were. But, proposed province 'Narayani' can be seen as a default, and may raise question about its viability. Despite some differences within the SRC, report has attempted to resolve the number of provinces considering historical, cultural, economical and geographical realities. The SRC report suggests low number of provinces; power to people at the grass root and priority right to the excluded and marginalized communities. It has also proposed a way to resolve the disputes among provinces. Another way, the proposed

capitals of the respective provinces may be questioned because old cities have been avoided to some extent. Likewise, issue of right to self-determination may be questioned for being a matter of mere scoping. Actually, it was a hard work to give final shape for SRC at last the moment. Some federal experts have been constantly opining that 8 to 10 provinces would be viable in Nepal though.

Dissenting members of the SRC are claiming that 11 provinces are on ethnic basis and instead of that, they have proposed six provinces. They themselves have claimed that their proposal of six provinces is the best. A similar proposal of six provinces had already been proposed by constitutional sub-committee, by minority member. The proposal of six provinces has been accused of reiterating the current 'development region' concept. Interestingly, minority's opinion has been more highlighted by the central media.

Party's opinions towards SRC's decision seem to be divided. Particularly, leadership of the NC and UML seem unhappy and they have harshly criticized SRC member's ability. Ramchandra Poudel and Ramesh Lekhak of NC, and Bhim Rawal of UML have aired their dissatisfaction toward SRC's decision and said it would be dealt with at political level. Whereas Bijaya Gachhadar, Chairperson of the Madheshi Morcha claimed that the report presented by the minority faction resembles Panchayati style.

Someone claims that old values and thoughts established by nationally dominant groups of Nepal is still dominating the state restructuring issue. In contrast, some others claim that the majority proposal suffers from ethnic bias. Unfortunately, the scenario is getting worse and it is gradually shaping out into plurality. It is obvious that the proposed provinces are ethnicity based, just by reading the proposed names. But, if we forget the names of proposed provinces, who can say it is ethnically biased?

Likewise, someone can raise a question on the issue of priority rights, but remember it is a democratic norm and many countries have followed it for fostering the participation of the marginalized people in the mainstream. In consequence priority rights to

dominant ethnic groups at local level should be allowed for a certain period. On the contrary, minority's rights must be secured.

Various federal stakeholders are still opposing the reports of majority or minority factions of the SRC, and demanding provinces according to their favorability. Subsequently, conservative and egocentric voices from various sections toward federalism are heard more often than never, and general people are getting irritated towards the conflicting behaviors of these sections over the question of federalism. Actually, it is hard to finalize the state restructuring issue for everyone.

Now the ball has come into the political party's court for giving it the final shape. Constitutional obligation for State Restructuring Commission has been fulfilled after accomplishing the work. Thanks to its honesty, the United Maoist has given the shape of federal provinces, whereas NC and UML have not given a clear shape to federal provinces yet. NC started discussion on this matter in its central committee a month ago but has not surfaced its conclusion yet. Inside the UML, leader's individualism is dominating the party's official view. The conclusion of peace and constitution drafting is getting hindered due to intra-party clash of the big parties. The Supreme Court has already given its verdict about the CA's deadline. Some revisionist and opportunist groups are making efforts to make the CA a dismal failure, and peace process a fiasco. Prolongation of the transitional period is making social, economic and political life more deteriorated.

One thing is sure that the national political parties now cannot escape from this issue. They must conclude this issue within the stipulated timeframe. No one needs to feel defeated, and no one needs to feel misled because it is the part of nation-building process. Criticizing one-another on this matter may be easy but drawing conclusion is obviously a tough work. Not everyone can be satisfied on state restructuring matter. Therefore, political parties must take initiatives to conclude it, taking into consideration the past agreement and constitutional and state restructuring committees' reports seriously.

YOUR VOICE

Irresponsible parties

Dear Editor,

I liked your Saturday's banner news about the UML party's lie on party unity, but was not at all surprised. In fact, citizens like me have started taking party factionalism as something quite normal. This, I am saying out of frustration and disgust.

It is very ironic that our parties, which know very well that

unity and consensus among them have no alternative, have not been able to set examples within their parties. Everyone knows that the Maoist party is divided into two factions, each led by Chairman Prachanda, and Vice-chairman Mohan Baidya, though some people talk of a third faction with Baburam Bhattarai at the centre. The division within the UML, polarizing around Jhalanath Khanal and KP Oli is an old story, but coming up of Nepal-

Pokharal pole adds frustration to the commoners. What to talk of the Nepali Congress, that has Koirala and Deuba panels that negate one-another, and do not even hold discussions. Everyone knows about the fission reaction within the SADBhawana party that betrays its very name by registering the record split cases. I am fed up with these rifted and breaking parties. Could someone teach them a lesson?

Amrita Sunwar, Narayanghat



Every dog has like me the impulse to question, and I have like every dog the impulse not to answer.

Franz Kafka, Jewish novelist



Editorial

EDITORIAL

Bihar lessons

Dr. Baburam Bhattarai's recent statement that India's Bihar state could be a 'role model' for development suggests that Bihar cannot be underestimated anymore. The pace of development Nitish Kumar's government has ensured in the last few years has changed the face of Bihar. Biharis scattered in different parts of India, and of course abroad, are reportedly returning home to reap the harvest of development.

Bihar's economic growth is apparently a miracle, with its gross domestic product (GDP) growth reaching the miraculous mark of 11.44% in 2008-09, higher than the total average of India and China. This was an unimaginable leap of 22% from the statistics of 2006-07 and of 8% from that of 2007-08. Data taken from the Reserve Bank of India show that in 2009, Bihar's share of all-India deposits was 2.2%, which has increased to around 10% by now. The state government's economic survey for 2008-09 says that its construction sector grew by 23.3% in 2004-05, a huge 83.58% in 2005-06 and 30.2% in 2006-07, 43.85% in 2008-09 and is expected to cross 60% by the end of the current fiscal year. According to the state's figures, construction now contributes 13.4% of the state's GDP compared with 4.2% in 2003-04.

Compared to Nepal with an area of 147,181 square kilometers, Bihar is smaller with an area of 98,940 square kilometers. When it comes to economic and development statistics, Nepal is the poorest nation in South Asia after Afghanistan. Its growth rate is below 5%. It ranks 123rd of 183 countries in the World Bank's 2010 Doing Business indicators. Overall crop production has been increasing, but the rate is 1.5, too dismal to count to anything substantial. Development is almost at a halt, and the nation depends largely on remittance and foreign credits and donations. One of the poorest and least-developed countries in the world, its Free Standing Interest score for uneven development has been constantly worsening, mainly as a result of the resulted in an inter-annual decline in the GDP growth rate.

If Bihar can do miracles, we see no reasons why Nepal cannot. If our logic is that we have a tougher mountainous topography, we have electricity and tourism potential there. We need commitment to work.

Universities should not enforce 'slacker' rules

College, as your high school counselor might have told you, is a chance to explore different majors before deciding which career best suits you. But at one Big 12 university, indecisiveness might soon become a financial hazard.

In an effort to improve its embarrassing graduation rate — roughly 50 percent of undergraduates finish within four years — the University of Texas recently proposed implementing a so-called "slacker" rule, which would charge out-of-state tuition to in-state students if they don't earn a degree after a certain number of credit hours. Ideally, this would allow them to "reach commencement sooner, begin their careers or graduate school sooner and incur less debt," all while saving their parents a good deal of money.

For many people, college is an unparalleled opportunity for self-realization. And although changing your mind about, say, a career might seem painless enough, making good on that decision will entail a significant investment of time and money. Rather than discouraging these decisions, administrators should devise alternative means of boosting their graduation numbers. If anything, the university should subject students who consistently fail classes to tuition increases; they, like their peers who switch majors, are likely to stay longer than four years, but less likely to accomplish much in the process.

But we're not so convinced raising graduation rates should be a university's top priority in the first place. If Texas is genuinely committed to bolstering its students' quality of life, it should concentrate on hiring top faculty and stabilizing tuition rates. These initiatives will translate into long-term benefits for the state much more than any "slacker" rule.

Before similar policies gain traction across the country, university officials should seriously consider their implications. If enacted, students would be forced to choose their careers as early as possible and to endure the consequences for the remainder of their lives. And although everybody knows someone who has remained in schools two or three years too long, they wouldn't sacrifice their freedom to experiment with a variety of subjects simply for the sake of forcing these people out.

Editorial: The Pitt News

Lesson from China

Though Nepal has been receiving more money and a lot of aid from donor agencies and developed countries since 1950, it has failed to deliver development in the real sense. Nepal has failed to develop in both infrastructure development and social sectors.



D. CHAUDHARY

In the Asian context, famous German sociologist and political economist Max Weber had claimed that non-European civilizations could not have developed capitalism because they lacked the ideological resources to produce a capitalist spirit. If Max Weber were alive now, he would have been surprised seeing the emergence of China as a great giant of capitalism. Many people around the world have been surprised at the rise of China as world's largest economic giant in short period, in spite of adopting communism. On its present growth trajectory, the Chinese economy will have overtaken US by 2030. Earlier, European Union had been requesting China to help it resolve its debt crisis. It is indeed a researchable question as to how China achieved such socio-economic development in short period. Obviously, China's reform is not in gradual form; it has occurred in a relatively short period in a rapid pace. The political history of China seems unstable before 1948. When the communists came in power in 1948 under the leadership of Mao, Chinese administration started a renaissance. Cultural Revolution was launched from 1966 to 1976 to make people more aware and to demobilize old feudal value system. Since the end of the Cultural Revolution, education system in China has geared toward economic modernization. China laid more emphasis on education in the past. Education in China is a state-run system run by the Ministry of Education. All citizens must attend schools for at least nine years. The Ministry of Education reported a 99 percent attendance rate for primary school and an 80 percent rate for both primary and middle schools recently. China's

literacy rate is now around 91 percent.

China's social figure is composed of 56 ethnic groups. Among them, the majority consists of the Han Chinese, who are about 91.59 percent; the remaining 55 ethnic groups belong to minority according to Fifth National Population Census of 2000. About 91 percent of the people speak Chinese language as their mother tongue. So, the Chinese society seems to be homogenous rather than heterogeneous. Tibetan and Uyghur-Muslims are the major minority group heard about, more often. Social values of the Chinese seem liberal; spiritually most of the Chinese are inspired by the philosophy Confucius and Buddha. Women's status is high, and on decision making women are freer. Both male and female have been actively participating in development since 1948. I saw many Chinese women in Nepalese rural villages for selling Chinese goods in cheap rate. History reveals that during the Mao period, people had 18 hours of working days, and then only it was possible to develop China as superpower in a short period.

In 1978, China opened its door to direct foreign investment, and has now become the largest recipient in the world. Author, Pan Deng in his book 'Reflection of China's 30 Years of Reform', writes: "This has been the most prosperous and vibrant period of Chinese history, during which the Chinese people have gradually expanded their living space, development opportunities and all kinds of rights and benefits. Thanks to the country's opening and reform policies, we have eliminated poverty, begun living a relatively comfortable life and, after decades or even centuries of self-isolation, China has gradually re-merged into the world community." Another notable thing is that there are no strict superior-inferior hierarchical divisions in the context of labor toward works. I myself witnessed that many Chinese engineers in Nepal who themselves work as laymen, but our culture here is different. No engineer or officer works as laymen. Same is true for politicians. Though Nepal has been receiving more money and a lot of aid from donor agencies and developed countries since 1950, it has failed to deliver development in the real sense. Nepal has failed to develop in both infrastructure development and

social sectors. Until now, many district headquarters have not been connected by good road for all seasons. In spite of having a high potential of hydropower, the country could not construct for itself big hydropower plants and is facing load-shedding. In addition, Nepal's literacy rate is poor; gender discrimination is high, modern health centers are not being approached to the poor. People in the rural areas are facing malnutrition problem and other social evils, and superstition is still dominating in decision-making. The country's education system has failed to deliver changes; so little change has been recorded in rural development.

Although, globalization is forcibly dragging the society toward modernization, the state's ineffective role has been continuously retarding the pace of development. Let's hope it will ahead forward, after finalizing peace process and state restructuring.

Nepal must take some lesson from Chinese socio-economic revolution, and should not miss to take benefits from China's development. Chinese people's dedication to work is more remarkable. For any country's development, charismatic leadership is needed. Nepal is in political transitional and is attempting to conclude the peace and constitution drafting processes according to people's voices. Our neighbors must acknowledge this very situation of ours.

In spite of having bitter Indo-China relationship, Ex-prime Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi visited China around 1991, and he surprised seeing China's rapid development. After returning home, he started economic reform in India appointing PV Narsingh Rao as the Finance Minister and Manmohan Singh (now Prime Minister) as governor of Reserve Bank of India (India's central bank). Now India has taken a leap in development in spite of many social disparities.

Now time has come for Nepal to start thinking about socio-economic revolution. The country is moving in the process of nation-building through political freedom but our leaders have not been successful in leading the country along a good track. Meanwhile, China has less political freedom country but, there, leaders have been successful in escorting the nation along a route of prosperity.

Your Voice

◆ Shameful news

Dear Editor,

Lately, a number of shameful but shocking news have been coming to light through different media. Not long after the former DIG of police Ranjan Koirala burnt his wife to death, a father Bhakta Bahadur Rumba killed three of his daughters at Phaparbari village in Makawanpur

by smashing their juvenile heads with stones. Before the news had become stale, a woman called Dhegani Mahato vvas burnt to death in Chitwan district on the charge of practicing witchcraft. The news that another police personnel tried to burn his wife too came to light. I am not able to understand what this drama is all about.

Most of the incidents I have cited

above have occurred in plane, urban or semi-urban areas where the state security system has not much problem operating. How long are we supposed to give ears to such inhuman news? I think, a gradual waning of moral and ethical values among people, and more and overt commercialization of their minds is resulting into all these nonsense, inhuman crimes.

Abhisekh Neupane, Syangja

Send your opinions and views to tparticle@nayapatrika.com and letters to the editor to tpcomment@nayapatrika.com