

Bitter struggle behind sweet sugar

Sugarcane farmers doubt implementation of deal with govt

Kathmandu: Sugarcane farmers have withdrawn their indefinite protest following the government's assurance that the state would get the defaulting sugar mills to pay their outstanding dues by January 21. The sugarcane farmers and the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies reached a five-point deal that also includes setting up a task force to study an automated system to fix sugarcane prices every year. The task force has also been mandated to prepare reports on providing fertilisers, seeds and machinery required for sugarcane farming to make the country self-sufficient on sugar and even export the surplus. Tussles flare up every year between sugarcane cultivators and sugar producers over the rates of the crop. Most of the times, factory owners refuse to clear the dues on time and delay the collection of sugarcane, which is a cash crop that needs to be harvested and sent for processing on time. Farmers often incur huge losses because of the delay in their



product reaching sugar mills. The Cabinet on February 26, 2015, had instructed the Industry Ministry to fix sugarcane prices after tussles erupted between the mills and sugarcane farmers, but the policy has not been implemented consistently. In order to address the grievances that the farmers are not paid the subsidy allocated by the government, the ministry said it would request the Finance and Agriculture Ministries to release the amount on time.

The government has also assured the farmers that a public relation unit will be set up at the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies to address their grievances regarding delayed payment and supply of farm inputs. "We are now hopeful of getting our money from the sugar mills," Rajesh Yadav, a sugarcane farmer, told.. "We have decided to return home tomorrow. But if things don't happen as promised by the government, we will come back to protest again."

According to joint-secretary Dinesh Bhattarai, spokesperson for the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies, the owner of Annapurna Sugar Mills, Rakesh Kumar Agrawal, came in contact and made payments of Rs5 million on Thursday and Friday. In 2018, the Home Ministry ordered sugar mills that had not been paying the farmers on time to prepare a reliable payment plan, as the debts had been piling up. But the mills ignored the directive. In February 2014, a delegation of sugarcane producers from Nawalparasi district met with then-Prime Minister Sushil Koirala and requested him to address their problems. On January 3, 2011, the local administration was forced to impose a daylong curfew on a 13-km stretch of the East-West Highway in Sarlahi district following a strike enforced by farmers demanding fixation of cane prices. At least 40 police

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Modi renewed 'neighborhood first' on New Year

Kathmandu: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has renewed his 'neighborhood first' policy on the first day of New Year 2020 by making telephone calls to his counterparts in the neighboring countries including Nepal. There are high hopes that the irritants that exist between Nepal and India including border issues would be resolved in the new year.

The phone call by Indian Prime Minister Modi to his Nepali counterpart KP Oli on Wednesday morning comes in the wake of Nepal looking for starting a fresh diplomatic negotiation to settle the



border issues surrounding Kalapani and other areas with India. Prime Minister Oli in a tweet said they during the phone conversation

shared that the year 2019 proved to be a successful year in elevating bilateral ties to a new height. Prime Minister Oli said he expressed

confidence that the year 2020 will be equally successful in taking Nepal-India relations to the next level by resolving the pending issues.

During the phone conversation, according to a press statement issued by Press Information Bureau of India, Modi expressed his satisfaction at the progress of India-Nepal relations in 2019, with the completion of several projects including Motihari-Amlekhgunj petroleum pipeline in a record time. The leaders also agreed for an early inauguration of the Integrated Check

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Editorial

Be honest to implement consensus

A five-point agreement was signed between the agitating sugarcane farmers and the government. With the inking of the agreement, the sugarcane farmers have postponed their protests, which they were staging in Kathmandu for the last several days. The sugarcane farmers from various Terai districts have been staging protest in Maitighar, Kathmandu since last Sunday after the mill owners did not pay them in time. After the agreement, Industry, Commerce and Supply Ministry would coordinate and facilitate to provide all dues money to the farmers from the sugar mills by January 21. The scale of injustice done to the sugarcane farmers is appalling. The sugar mill owners have not paid the farmers for years and they owe them millions of rupees. Shree Ram Sugar Mills owes Rs 420 million, Annapurna Sugar Rs 400 million, Indira Sugar Mills Rs 100 million, Lumbini Sugar Mills Rs 100 million, Mahalaxmi Sugar Mills Rs 200 million and Bagmati Sugar Mills Rs 110 million to the farmers,

Sugarcane farmers have suffered a lot during their struggle for justice. They should not be made to suffer anymore.

according to the recent report. The mill owners may forward various excuses for this but the main reason they have not paid is because they don't want to. Here is a simple logic. Sugarcane is a cash crop. Sugar is such a commodity that easily sells in the market and consumers immediately pay for it. So mill owners make hefty profit. To take in raw materials from poor farmers to run the industry on their blood and sweat, to make profits from their blood and sweat but not to pay them is a crime. Reports show that mill owners receive huge money from state coffers as subsidy. They even take in money allocated by the government exclusively for the farmers and it is the farmers whom they push to the state of suffering.

It is an irony that the farmers have been pushed from pillar to post in a democratic republic that is known as agricultural nation committed to building a socialism-oriented economy. The Constitution contains oodles of welfare provisions in support of farmers and workers. Now the government must act as a facilitator between the farmers, industrialists and market to ensure that every player performs honestly and no one plays smart to dupe the weaker sections of society and rig the fragile system to fulfil his/her vested interests.

Sugar mill owners have made such pledges several times in the past but they have not kept them. Thus, we need to watch when this agreement will materialize and at the same time also pressure the government to abide by this pledge. We need to stand by sugarcane farmers, until justice is done to them. The government needs to send a clear message to the unscrupulous mill owners that they will be jailed if they do not pay to the farmers. Sugarcane farmers have suffered a lot during their struggle for justice. They should not be made to suffer anymore. The government should address all their concerns in such a way that they do not have to worry about not being paid by mill owners, ever again.

India is not a nation-state or a state-nation

— Abhinav Prakash —

At present, most of the geographically contiguous parts of India are united under a single political authority and this political unification derives its justification from a shared civilisational heritage.

In a column for the Hindustan Times, the political scientist, Milan Vaishnav, asked an important question: Is India a nation-state, or a state-nation? This question is sometimes asked to reconcile the oddity of the countries such as India and China within the framework of the European construct of the nation-states. The nation-state is a modern construct, comprising a single nation as its dominant constituency, and nations are based on a common language, religion, ethnicity, history and myths. A modern nation-state is bound by a defined geographical area under a sovereign power. Whereas a state-nation is said to comprise several "imagined communities" or nations where multiple identities can coexist. Does India fit into either of these frameworks? Doubtful.

The immense plurality of India on caste, religious, ethnic, linguistic and cultural grounds defies the traditional wisdom of a nation-state. But to reject the idea of nation-state, and argue it is simply several nations within a state is also inaccurate. There certainly exists a feeling of belonging to an entity with which these communities are organically linked to, beyond just belonging to the post-colonial state. The sense of Indian identity emanates not from the 19th century when India began to imagine itself as a nation-state in response to the challenge by the colonialism, but from the civilisational continuity and heritage of past several millennia.

At present, most of the geographically contiguous parts of India are united under a single political authority and this political unification derives its justification from a shared civilisational heritage. And this political unity under a single State is what can be

termed as a civilisational-state. A civilisational-state doesn't just represents an ethnic or linguistic community or a single religious community, but a unique civilisation distinct from others.

A civilisation can give rise to several types of political units over millennia, from kingdoms to empires to republics. Several political formations can also co-exist within civilisational boundaries with different territorial boundaries at the same time, as has been evident in India where belonging to different kingdoms didn't preclude belonging to Bharatvarsha. Several languages, religious communities, ethnic groups can also exist within the civilisational boundaries and still feel related to each other as they have done for millennia in India.

It was only last year that I travelled to the southern city of Mangaluru for the first time. Though I come from far away Ayodhya in the Gangetic plains in the north, I was related to Mangaluru by not one but three myths and legends binding my caste, region and district to the place, all this while having no formal or direct relation to the region, nor any history of family or caste migration. This has been the Indian way of reconciling the "different", and weaving them into a mosaic which not just preaches tolerance but acceptance and belonging to each other.

This civilisational boundary, when united under a single political unity like the Indian state today, becomes a civilisational-state. The territorial boundaries of the Republic of India hinge upon the extent of the civilisational boundaries. One way to look at the Partition of India is as a process in which a large section of the population shifted its allegiance to another civilisational

narrative, started to imagine itself as the part of the different lore, leading to the mental and civilisational separation from the rest of the communities. The journey of the ideological father of Pakistan, Iqbal, is a testimony to this process. Hindutva came into existence as an anti-imperialist construct answering the challenge posed by the modern world built on the concept of a nation-state. Proponents of this worldview naturally saw India as a nation, and Hindutva provided the intellectual foundation for it. And it was not alone in arguing for India being a single nation. After all, the national bird or the national flower were all adopted by the Indian National Congress-led government with little objection.

But while the Hindutva movement has long abandoned the slogan of "Hindi, Hindu and Hindustan", the singular Nehruvian "Idea of India" is still sought to be imposed on all Indians. The Right wing in India does not seek to impose a single culture, language or to end religious diversity, but instead sees itself as the protector of this diversity from the threat of homogenising Abrahamic constructs.

It has watched with alarm how, in Pakistan and Bangladesh, this diversity has been rapidly lost, and is determined to not let that happen to India. It has slowly come to view India not through the lens of the European nation-states but as a civilisation and the Indian State, has a historic duty to defend and rejuvenate after centuries of invasions and chaos. The Right wing has moved, but its opponents are stuck in the rhetoric of the Weimar Republic.

(Writer is an assistant professor at SRCC, Delhi University)

The democratic alliance only protects the Madhes

➤ *How do you see the political situation in Madhes now?*

• Those who are in power are doing more to solve Madhes's problem they tried to dissolve Madhes power like Rana rule. There is still work to be done to divide the Madhesi power. The Tarai Congress was formed but it was collapsed dramatically. The ruling party has been working to end Madhes's existence by tearing down Madhes. The ruler here could not accept the existence of Madhes.

➤ *Why has Madhes not yet got good leadership?*

• The way the rulers are working in our country has not established any leadership in Madhes. During the Panchayat period, the king took up Bedananda Jha for ending the Tarai Congress. However, its General Secretary, Ram Janam Tiwari, did join the Nepali Congress. In the past, there was the Nepal Sadbhavana Party under the chairmanship of Gajendra Narayan Singh. At that time some people formed a party of six. Such things are still a game of power. The struggle is getting longer.

➤ *Are Madhesi-centric parties now appreciating Madhesi leaders who have contributed to the movements in different periods?*

• Those things have not been done in the past and still do not happen. In BS 2018, there was Durga Nanda Jha who fired bombs in front of Janakpur Janaki Temple over King Mahendra. His image has not been made to this day. Congress has repeatedly gone to government but didn't pay attention to such things. Likewise, the victims of democratic

struggle have not been made iconic or honored. Even now, the Madhesi parties do not think that the martyrs of Madhes should act as respects.

➤ *Is it means warriors of Madhes forgotten?*

• People in the party who are in power, they forget the people who are committed to the party. Whether it is the UML, the Maoists or the Congress, there has been a significant contribution of Madhesi leaders. The contribution of those who are devoted to the party and the people is not being discussed much. That's what nationality is. Nationality is what the Dhoti or cap. Wearing a hat is nationalistic and abusing India has a "nationality"? However, much has to be done about those who have actually fought for Nepal, who have been martyred for the republic.

➤ *How do you see Madhes-centric RJP and Socialist Party?*

• Those in power are always working to tear down the Madhesi power. Upendra Yadav also fallen into such trap and Rajendra Mahoto is going into this trap. The power is conspiring against the Madhes-centric parties. There have been tactics that will not allow the power of Madhes to come together. Its victims have been the Madhes-centric parties.

➤ *The unity between the RJP and the Socialist Party has been going on for a long time, but the conclusion has not been reached. What is the reason?*

• One party is out of government and the other is working out to join the government. There is now a need to move beyond these two powers to go to government. It is not only the RJP and the

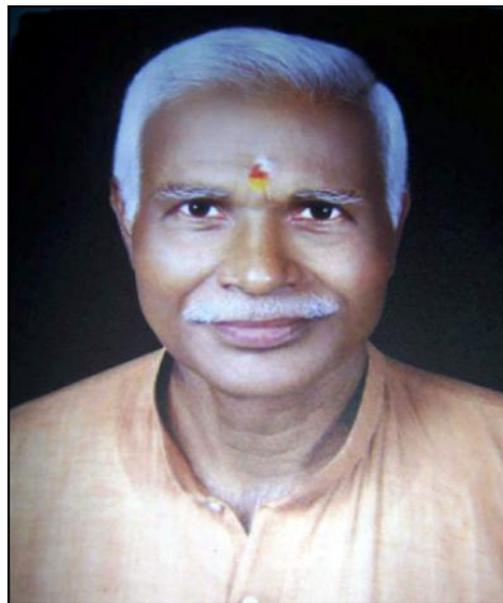
Socialist Party but the democratic sovereign powers should go together. In the last election, it would have been nice if Madhes-centric parties had joined the Congress. Now, as much as communist is called, if it were democratic, it would not be so. It would have been better for the country if there had not been one party but a democratic alliance. They need to think about it.

➤ *After all, is it necessary to have only a political party in Nepal?*

• This was seen even during the Panchayat period. Even today, in the country, it is seen as a democratic and leftist ideology. It would have been nice if the parties went ahead with that calculation. At present, Parliament is being disrupted when the House is not there. Commissions are in disagreement but they have not been able to select the meeting. It is a matter of showcasing the leadership.

➤ *What is the Madhesi-centric parties' government doing in Province 2?*

• When the constitution was being drafted, many of us, at that time, suggested that the state should be named only by the name of the first parliament. Earlier, the nomination of Parliament meant that the rule of law for the province was to create "rules" and not to elect the state. But, such things are not done, there are confusing things. So that everything is in a state of weariness. Lack of law and order is creating unnecessary disputes between states and the center. The thinking of the central government is very narrow. When the country is under federal law, the



Rajeshwor Nepali

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province must be strengthened. For that, the union should also give the province rights. Such a course would have to get the attention of the lion's palace.

➤ *In means there is feeling of the province government?*

• There are some things to do, but if I had to say "Love" then that would not be happening. It's been two years since the state government was formed. The state government is doing some minor work but no concrete work has been done. What will we do in the state when the center has not done enough work? A prosperous Nepal does not just give the slogan of Nepali. Needless to say, the state government has done absolutely nothing.

➤ *How does the Nepal-India border dispute look?*

• If there is a dispute, it should be resolved. Nepal-India

border dispute is not today. 50 years have been more. You have to think about why things like Kalapani, LipuLake and Limpiadhura are coming up, why the government of our country allowed them to do so at that time. What is going on right now, how to resolve border issues? The leaders of this country must work out a mutual agreement.

➤ *What does the relationship between Nepal and India look now?*

• Nepal-India has ties of thousands of years. That is, Nepal and India were not named here. At that time, Sita and Ram have not affected our relationship since they were married. If someone is chanting anti-India slogan, the relationship will not deteriorate. On the eve of the English New Year, many tourists from India came to Janakpur. Therefore, some strategic issues do not affect the relations of the country.

Bitter struggle...



Nojgadh: Supervision and monitoring of bordering areas encroached by India in Bara district has been carried out. A team comprising representatives from Foreign Ministry, Defense Ministry, Nepal Army, Nepal Police and District Administration Office carried out the supervision and monitoring of bordering areas and no man's land in the district.

There is 464 kilometers open border with India in eight districts of State-2: 60 kilometers in Bara, 51 kilometers in Sarlahi, 32 kilometers in Rautahat, 107 kilometers in Parsa, 38 kilometers in Mahottari, 41 kilometers in Dhanusha, 57 kilometers in Siraha and 78 kilometers in Saptari district. Border with India is found encroached as well as small and big pillars getting lost in the area day by day. Chief District Officer of Bara, Phanindra Mani Pokharel, said that onsite supervision and monitoring of border pillars were carried out at Martihawa and Musarwa of Bara. The team comprises Joint-Secretary of Foreign Ministry, Yagya Bahadur Hamal, Joint-Secretary at the Defense Ministry, Yagya Prasad Bhattarai, CDO Pokharel, and Superintendent of Armed Police Force, Prakash Thapa, among others.

Modi renewed...

Post in Biratnagar and the housing reconstruction project in Nepal through video conference.

Prime Minister Oli, during the phone conversation also touched on the border-related issues including Kalapani and expressed Nepal's desire to resolve them at the earliest. Apart from Prime Minister Oli, Indian Prime Minister Modi had called King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck of Bhutan, Prime Minister Lyonchhen Lotay Tshering of Bhutan, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa of Sri Lanka, President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih of the Maldives and Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

personnel were injured in clashes with the irate farmers.

Bitter struggle

Sugarcane is crushed to make sugar that sweetens our mouth. But the difficulties that sugarcane farmers in Nepal have had these last few years speak in volumes about their bitter struggle.

Each season, they harvested sugarcane and sold to the sugar mill. But, these unscrupulous sugar mill owners delayed payments despite numerous follow ups for the same. Left with no other options, these disappointed farmers have taken to the streets in Kathmandu – coming all the way from their home districts Bara, Parsa, and Sarlahi, among others.

The plight these desperate farmers face today has a long story. They borrowed money from local money lenders for sugarcane plantation with a hope to pay back the loan after selling the harvest. They also dreamt of making some surplus money so that they could address the needs of their family. But these hopes were dashed badly as mill owners would rarely pay the amount they owed to the farmers. The amount they owed in interest and principal continued accumulating, while their family lived under acute hardship for lack of money. They started visiting district headquarters, met chief district officers (CDOs), district-level leaders and so-called influential people for help. But no help was forthcoming from them.

Then they left for Kathmandu – the federal capital city, where they had never been before – to continue their struggle. For the last two weeks, they have been organizing sit-in at the Maitighar Mandala. One of them is Raudi Mahato of Sisautiya, Sarlahi. The 62-year-old has already caught cold. His eyes are swollen and feet ache terribly. His thin clothes hardly guard him in the chilling nights. But Mahato is determined to continue his struggle despite all these adversities. "Let's not talk about cold. I won't return home until I receive my outstanding payment," said Mahato in a

determined manner.

Living in Kathmandu is not easy for someone who does not have enough money or any relative here. "We don't have anyone here. Some kind-hearted people have offered us refuge for the nights. Sometimes we have to live under the open sky," shared Mahato. The communist government with a comfortable majority is steering the nation. The party, which claims it is championing for the cause farmers and laborers, is now at the helm of the government. It is ironic that the same poor and marginalized people like sugarcane farmers are left to fend for themselves.

Mahato had taken two bigha of land on lease for sugarcane farming. His entire family is involved in farming. The Mahatos sold sugarcane to Annapurna Sugar Mills every year, but were left unpaid for three consecutive years. Naive as he was, Mahato trusted his 'Master' only to be betrayed at the end. Annapurna Sugar Mills owes Mahato Rs 400,000. But it has been paying a petty sum of Rs 5,000-10,000 as if it is offering alms. After failing to receive the due amount, Mahato stopped planting sugarcane altogether from this year. The loan of Rs 200,000 he took for planting sugarcane is increasing at the rate of 36% per annum. This amount haunts him day and night, making him unable to even have sound sleep.

Agitating farmers claim that Annapurna Sugar Mills needs to pay a total of Rs 500 million, while Mahalaxmi Sugar Mills owes them Rs 210 million. It's not their will to launch a demonstration in this chilly weather when it is the time for wheat plantation. "What can we do? We have no option of being here to get our voices heard although we should have been busy in our fields these days," said Mahato. Many advised him to take up the issue to local level political leaders. At times, he also thought that it was a better option. But there was a problem. He did not know any political leader. "I sweat in the field, play with plow and tend to the crops. But why don't I get the price of my sweat?" complained Mahato, who looked exhausted, feeble

and desperate from inside. Moneylenders keep exerting pressure on him to make immediate payments of the loan. "Sugar mill does not pay. But moneylenders keep asking for money. We have become like squatters," he lamented.

Many farmers like Mahato had staged a hunger strike in the district headquarters previously. They were assured of payments and sent back home. They have been wandering this and that office asking for the price of their sweat. "We are finally here in Kathmandu. Hopefully, Kathmandu won't turn a blind eye to our sufferings," they say. The farmers held talks with different government authorities and reached agreement at least four times with sugar mills for immediate release of their pending dues. But they were never paid. The agitating farmers are demanding not only the outstanding payment, but also compensation for the delay.

Most of farmers in Sarlahi are yet to get payments for canes sold since 2013. Grants provided by the governments have not been deposited in their accounts either. The government has fixed minimum support price for a quintal of sugarcane at Rs 536.56. Of the total amount, sugar mills should pay Rs 471.28 per quintal, while Rs 65.28 is to be paid by the government as subsidy.

Doubt over implementation

Sugarcane farmers are doubtful about the implementation of a recent agreement reached with the government.

"We are doubtful over the implementation of the deal as similar agreements reached in the past were not implemented," said sugarcane farmer Rakesh Yadav. Several sugar mills owe approximately Rs 1.40 billion in dues to the farmers. The farmers have also not got the Rs 1.34 billion subsidies that the government provides them through the mills.

Mahalaxmi Sugar Mill and Annapurna Sugar Mill of Sarlahi, Shree Ram Sugar Mill of Rautahat, Everest Sugar Mill of Mahottari, Himalayan Sugar Mill of Siraha, Bagmati Sugar Mill of Nawalparasi owe large sums of money to farmers.

Candidates file nominations for NA

Kathmandu: The candidates contesting the upcoming National Assembly elections for January 23 have registered their nominations. The candidates fielded their candidacies at the offices of Election Commission in the respective province headquarters.

In view of the polls, two major political parties—Nepal Communist Party and Nepali Congress have already announced their candidates for the election. Both the parties have forged electoral alliance in an attempt to counter each other. NCP and RJP-Nepal have reached an understanding to support each other in the election to counter the rival alliance of NC and Socialist Party.

The Election Commission is holding the election on January 23 to elect 18 upper house members. The terms of 19 incumbent members are expiring on March 3. Among them, 18 members will be elected from the political parties. As per the constitution, the president will nominate one member on her own. Previously, the upper house

members were elected through a single transferable voting system. Out of the 59 seats in the upper house, NCP had then secured 42 seats, including three nominated by the president.

Among the 59 members in the upper house, 19 have a tenure of two years, 20 have four-year tenures and the rest have six years, according to upper house regulations. Among the 19 outgoing members, nine are from the NCP, seven from Nepali Congress, two from RJP- Nepal and one from Socialist Party.

This time, the EC is electing the members on a majority basis. NCP, which commands majority in the local and provincial assemblies, is likely to bag most of the upper house seats in the election. In a bid to counter NC-led alliance, it has fielded 16 candidates whereas the party has pledged to support two candidates from RJP-Nepal.

Provincial assembly members and the chiefs and deputy chiefs of local units will cast their votes to elect the new upper house members. According to the EC, a total of 2056 voters will cast their votes in the January 23 election.

1,000 shelters to be constructed for dalits in Siraha and Saptari

Saptari: Houses are to be constructed for around 1,500 dalit families in Siraha and Saptari districts under the People's Housing Programme.

One thousand four hundred and thirty-two shelters are being constructed within July 15, 2020 of the current fiscal year from the budget allocated by the federal government, the Urban Development and Housing Office Rajbiraj stated.

Office Chief Krishna Dev Jha said 666 houses would be constructed for the needy people belonging to the Dom and Mushahar communities in Saptari district and 766 houses in Siraha district.

According to him, the government has earmarked Rs 332,500 for construction of two-room house with veranda with an additional Rs 10,000 for construction of toilet. The Office has written to all the 18 local levels in

Saptari district for allotting land for the construction of these shelters as most of the people from these communities are landless and have been found living in public land or others' land. The People's Housing Programme has been started with the goal of constructing 20 thousand shelters every year for the homeless people and people from the marginalized, endangered, dalit and helpless Muslim communities. About 20 thousand houses have been constructed under the Programme in the last 10 years. The programme was launched 10 years back from Siraha, Saptari and Kapilbastu districts with the goal of constructing one thousand houses each year. The Programme is expanded to all the districts in the country at present.

Sirsiya locals launch protest

Birgunj: Locals of Sirsiya, Birgunj Metropolitan City-25, have started a 12-hour movement, calling for managing them a settlement with the required infrastructures. The entry of containers and vehicles from the Integrated Check Point (ICP) has been affected due to this movement.

Sirsiya is located in the middle of the Inland Container Depot and the ICP. The locals here have begun a 12-hour agitation daily, said Ambika Prasad Kurmi, president of the struggle committee. The demonstrators have obstructed the vehicular movement organizing a peaceful demonstration and lighting fire on the road, Police Inspector at the Armed Police Force's Border Outpost Aalaun, Rabi Thapa, said. The protesters have been calling for suitable compensation for the 62 bighas land which the government had mortgaged since the last three years for the expansion of the inland container depot (ICD). Sirsiya locals have been demonstrating in front of the ICD since the morning today lighting fire at various places including Chandal Chowk.

The vehicles have not been allowed on the road due to the demo. The locals have been demanding the development of a systematic settlement with the required physical infrastructures after their settlement is relocated to make space for the ICD and proper compensation for their land. The locals started the 12-hour demo since Sunday.

Ambiguous laws hit development work: Raut

Bara: Province 2 Chief Minister Lal Babu Raut said ambiguous laws formulated by the federal government had hindered development work at local levels.

Speaking at the 14th annual general assembly of Tarai Transport Entrepreneurs Association, in Simara, CM Raut said the federal government has been creating obstacles in the functioning of local levels by formulating ambiguous laws and policies. He said the provincial government could not carry out development work in favour of industry and entrepreneurs due to lack of clear laws and policies.

“The federal government has become a hindrance for development



work,” he said, adding that jurisdiction of local levels should be clearly defined by law.

DPR agreement for Nijgadh-Bharatpur railway track

Nijgadh: An agreement has been reached to develop the detail project report or DPR of the Nijgadh-Hetauda-Bharatpur section of the Mechi-Mahakali electric railways. The Department of Railways recently signed the agreement with consultant Usin-Barsil-CCRRC-FBC JV. The company will complete the DPR in 15 months, as per the agreement, said Director General of the Department Balram Mishra. The Department had



called for quotation for a re-DPR of the railway track fall under the National Park and Wildlife reserve area.

No free medicines in government hospitals

Siraha: Manju Kumari Shah, of Govindpur Malhanwaki, was brought to Ramkumar Uma Prasad Murarka Hospital in Golindpur Malhanwaki on December 25, 2019 after she was in labour pain. As she was hospitalised in time, Manju gave birth to a son through normal delivery.

Even though she gave birth to her son through normal delivery in a government hospital, the hospital looked like as a private hospital for Manju.

After the delivery, the health workers of the hospital examined the health of both the mother and the son. The blood group of the mother and son was found different during the test.

As a result, the doctors at the hospital decided to inject Anti-D injection to avoid further complications.



Despite the fact that injection is provided free of cost at all government hospitals, Manju had to pay Rs.5,000 to buy it from a pharmacy outside the hospital. Her family had to spend over Rs. 25,000 in the government hospital during and

after her delivery.

Not only Manju was made to pay for the injection, every woman who needed the injection after delivery have been paying for it.

Puman Kamat, a staff nurse at the hospital, said that if the

blood group of mothers and newborn babies was found different, there was high chance that the mothers would not have another pregnancy.

Not only for Anti-D injection, but a lot of other free medicines are also lacking in government hospitals in the district.

Every woman coming to the hospital for receiving free check-ups and delivery services has to pay for medicines and injections, which are supposed to be provided free of cost, said locals.

Even though the government has decided to provide transportation costs for women who deliver their babies in the health institutions, the State government of the State 2 has not taken any initiative to provide the facility to the mothers.

VNY declared in Province 2



Janakpur: The national tourism campaign, 'Visit Nepal Year 2020', was inaugurated in all the seven provinces across the country.

The campaign with a theme 'Life Time Experience' was declared open in all States by organising various programmes.

The government officials, tourism entrepreneurs and general people took part in the programmes by welcoming the tourists at different entry points.

The VNY-2020 has been launched with a goal of bringing 2 million tourists throughout the year.

In Province 2 VNY 2020 was

formally inaugurated by organising various programmes in eight districts, including capital Janakpur Dham.

Minister of Industry, Tourism, Forest and Environment Ram Naresh Raya inaugurated the VNY at a function organised at Janaki Temple premises. Minister Raya said that the Province 2 government was committed to making the VNY a success.

The State government welcomed tourists who arrived in Janakpur Wednesday morning.

Similarly, Chief District Officer of Dhanusha Pradeep Raj Kandel welcomed the tourists who arrived in Janakpur via the Buddha Airlines at the Janakpur Airport.

India positive for talks on border issue

Kathmandu: Minister for Foreign Affairs Pradeep Kumar Gyawali said that India was positive for dialogue on border problems.

"Authorities of Nepal and India are holding a meeting of the bilateral mechanism. They are discussing the possible date of the meeting," he said while speaking at the meeting of the Directive Principles and Responsibilities of the State of the Constitution Implementation and Monitoring Committee of the Federal Parliament.

He said that although India had responded Nepal's letter in December 2019, further consultation about the date was going on.

"India is ready to settle the issue through dialogue. We are hopeful of resolving it through diplomatic channels," he said.

He reiterated that the border marking between the two countries would be made as per the Sugauli Treaty, and as per the treaty, there was no dispute that the Kalapani region, including Limpiyadhura belongs to Nepal. We have the evidences about it, he said.

Minister Gyawali said that the bilateral relations between the two countries and development cooperation would not be affected due to the border issue or while the talks were held.



According to him, a secretary-level mechanism will soon start working soon.

Minister for Home Affairs Ram Bahadur Thapa 'Badal' said that the government had started the process to establish border outposts at the disputed border areas. He said that the Cabinet had decided to make foot trail to link Limpiyadhura.

Similarly, Minister for Forest and Environment Shakti Bahadur Basnet said that the ministry had started the process to establish the BOP at three different locations. As the area is the public forest, the government need clearance from the environment ministry.

Likewise, Minister for Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation Padma Kumari Aryal said that the ministry was working in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in mapping the border area. However, mapping work at Susta and Kapapani was halted due to Indian dissatisfaction, she said.

Nepal, Bhutan and India should be declared Hindu State: Puri Shankaracharya

Kathmandu: Puri Shankaracharya said that many countries have been declared as Muslim and Christian nations, while there was no such country for the Hindus. He said the United Nations should designate India, Nepal and Bhutan Hindu nations.

According to a news published in Hindustan Times, Talking to reporters in his abode of Govardhan Math in Puri on Friday, Saraswati said that many countries have been declared as Muslim and Christian nations, while there was no such country for the Hindus. While the country is witnessing massive protests over fears that Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) may dilute the nation's secular



credentials enshrined in the Constitution, Puri Shankaracharya Swami Nishalananda Saraswati says India should be declared a 'Hindu Rashtra', meaning, a Hindu nation.

"At present there are no Hindu nations. Hence, it is the responsibility of the United Nations to declare India, Nepal and Bhutan as Hindu nations in the first phase. Hindus, who are being persecuted in other countries should be rehabilitated

in these three countries," said Saraswati.

The news paper said that the Shankaracharya said if any Muslim feels neglected in any other country and wants to leave the particular nation, he/she should be rehabilitated in any of the Muslim nations.

On CAA, Puri Shankaracharya said, "The present violence and unrest could have been avoided if adequate steps were taken for proper consultations, discussions and awareness before its enactment." In Odisha, protests against the CAA were held in Niali area of Cuttack and Biramitrapur area of Sundargarh district.

Shankaracharya's advocacy for a Hindu nation comes on the day Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayana wrote to chief ministers of 11 states including Odisha to oppose the CAA.

Congres Vice President Nidhi pays homage to late Indian leader Tripathi

Kathmandu: Nepali Congress Vice President Bimalendra Nidhi paid his last homage to General Secretary of National Congress Party (NCP) of India DP Tripathi at his residence in New Delhi on Friday.

A Central Working Committee (CWC) meeting of the NC had decided to send Vice President Nidhi on behalf of the party to New Delhi to pay homage to late Tripathi, who always stood in favor of Nepal even when Nepal and India experienced troubled relations. The CWC meeting had also passed a condolence note on the demise of Tripathi.

Along with Nidhi, NC



lawmakers Pradip Giri and Binod Chaudhary also paid last homage to late Tripathi at the NCP's Head Office at Ravi Shankar Shukla Marg in New Delhi and participated in the funeral ceremony held at Lodhi Road later in the

afternoon. Ambassador of Nepal to India Nilamber Acharya had also joined the team of NC leaders in paying last homage to Tripathi. Late Tripathi, who passed away on Thursday after prolonged illness at the age of 67, had a direct one-to-one relation with all top

leaders of major political parties in Nepal. Talking to Republica from New Delhi, Nidhi recalled his close relation with Tripathi and his support during the political struggles in Nepal to restore democratic system during Panchayati regime.

Known as a great socialist leader of India, Tripathi emerged from anti-emergency movement during Indira Gandhi's rule and stood for social democratic values not only in India but also in Nepal. Tripathi stood for the cause of Nepal democracy restoration movement in 1990, movement against King Gyanendra Shah's direct rule in 2005 and during the blockade imposed by BJP-led government in India in 2015/16.

Visit Nepal Year 2020 officially inaugurated



Kathmandu: The Visit Nepal Year 2020 has been officially inaugurated amidst a special

ceremony held at Dasharath Stadium. The VNY 2020 is being observed as a national festival with a target to bring in 2 million tourists, with a determination to establish tourism sector as the major foundation of Nepal's economic prosperity.

President Bidya Devi Bhandari inaugurated the VNY 2020 amidst a grand ceremony held at the Stadium. Also present at the function were the Chief Justice, the National Assembly Chairman,

former Prime Ministers, political party leaders, dignitaries from various countries including tourism ministers, heads of constitutional bodies, heads of diplomatic mission, members of parliament and ministers.

In his welcome speech, Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation Yogesh Bhattarai said that the VNY 2020 was only an entry point and that the government was preparing to observe the coming decade as the tourism decade.

Prior to the official inauguration,

march past by associations related to the tourism sector, social organisations were held while the Nepal Army, Nepal Police and Armed Police Force made a special presentation. Renowned musical bands of Nepal also performed on the occasion.

Also speaking on the occasion, VNY 2020 Secretariat Coordinator Suraj Baidya said the inaugural ceremony was focused on highlighting Nepal's culture, heritage, costume and lifestyle while promoting tourism in the country.

Kalapani belongs to Nepal, shouldn't allow it to fester: Ambassador Acharya

New Delhi: The disputed Kalapani area belonged to Nepal and the issue must be addressed soon to prevent irritants in bilateral ties, Nepal's ambassador to India Nilambar Acharya told TOI on Tuesday as Kathmandu mounted pressure on New Delhi to resolve the boundary issue soon.

The Kalapani border dispute flared up again recently after India released its new political map, following the reorganisation of J&K, showing the area at a China-Nepal-India tri-junction as its own. Acharya said there was a foreign secretary-level mechanism between India and Nepal to resolve issues related to outstanding border disputes and it needed to be used to address the Kalapani dispute. "That's the way to go about it. Even according to the Treaty of Sugauli (which established the boundary of Nepal in 1815), Kalapani belongs to Nepal. That's the sentiment the citizens of Nepal share," he said to *Times of India*.

"We understand India is not averse to dialogue but Nepal would like to have early talks about the issue.



Nepal does not see Kalapani as a small issue. It will further help build trust between the two countries if this issue is resolved. Such disputes should not be allowed to fester," added Acharya, as he mentioned that close to 98 per cent of Nepal's border with India was already settled.

Nepal is learnt to have earlier proposed a date for dialogue over the issue but the Indian side was apparently not prepared. The two countries are said to be in touch diplomatically to finalise a date for talks on the issue.

India claims Kalapani, where the Lipulekh China-Nepal-India tri-junction is located, as a part of Uttarakhand. This though is bitterly contested by Nepal, which depicts the area in its map. After India released its new map, Nepal officially lodged a protest and declared that it remained committed to protecting its international borders. India had said in response that the new map had "in no manner revised our boundary with Nepal".

Nepal has two tri-junctions with China and India — Lipulekh in the Kalapani area in western Nepal

and Jhimsang Chuli in the east. Kalapani is such an emotive issue for Nepal and its citizens that India's decision to expand trade with China through the Lipulekh Pass created a furore in Kathmandu with the Nepal Parliament seeking to know from the government if the India-China agreement undermined Nepal's sovereignty. The high mountain pass in Kalapani though serves as an important vantage point for India to keep an eye on Chinese movements.

While the new Indian map has reignited the Kalapani dispute, the Indian government has other issues too to address quickly to prevent these from impeding progress in bilateral ties. As the ambassador said, the Eminent Persons' Group report, which seeks a review of the 1950 India-Nepal Friendship Treaty, is yet to be submitted to the Indian government. Nepal also wants an early resumption of the Saarc summit process despite India being opposed to it as the next summit is slated for Islamabad.

India reiterates its position



New Delhi: India has reiterated its claims that it has not encroached on Nepali land. Responding to a question during the weekly media briefing about whether Prime Minister (PM) KP Sharma Oli and his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi discussed the issue of Lipulekh and Kalapani during the telephonic conversation on Wednesday, Spokesperson at the Indian Ministry of External Affairs Raveesh Kumar reiterated the Indian claims.

"As far as the boundary question is concerned, we have made our position very clear. I can only reiterate that our map accurately depicts the sovereign territory of India. The new map has in no manner revised our boundary with Nepal," Kumar stated.

"The boundary delineation exercise with Nepal is ongoing under the existing mechanism. We reiterate our commitment to resolve outstanding boundary issues through dialogue in the spirit of close and friendly bilateral relations between the two countries."

The inclusion of Lipulekh and Kalapani of Nepal in the new political map published by India in November has been widely condemned with the ruling and opposition parties alike protesting the Indian act.

'I'm in govt to amend constitution'

Jaleshwar: Socialist Party Chairperson Upendra Yadav has claimed that a huge protest is likely again in Madhesh.

Addressing the district convention of party's youth wing in Mahottari's Jaleshwar, Yadav said that the incumbent government betrayed his party by ignoring the past agreements and added that a massive protest would be staged for the rights of Madhesh and Madhesis.

The former Deputy Prime Minister said that the protests would continue until the constitution was amended by ensuring equal rights to the agitating side.



Yadav was of the view that his party would continue the protests both from the street and the Parliament and the protests would continue until the rights were achieved.

NC and Socialist forge electoral alliance

Kathmandu: The main opposition Nepali Congress (NC) has decided to field its candidate for the National Assembly election although the party's chance of winning any seat is almost nil.

The NC and the Socialist Party forged an electoral alliance in Province 2 to share two upper house

seats each. Samajbadi will support NC's candidates from women and minority category while the NC will support Socialist's candidates from Dalit and other category.

The Election Commission has scheduled Sunday as nomination date for the January 23 election for 18 upper house seats that are falling vacant from March 3. Given

the majority of the ruling Nepal Communist Party in the electoral college of voters in six provinces and its election alliance with the RJP Nepal in Province 2, the two parties are most likely to sweep the upper house election.

The opposition NC has 13 seats in the 59-member upper house while Socialist Party has two

seats. The terms of seven NC members is expiring in March, which was decided by a lucky draw last year. NC is most likely to shrink to six seats after losing all seven seats in the upper house after March. Similarly Socialist Party is also likely to lose a seat as the party has slim chance of winning the vacant member's position again.