

13 years of Madhes movement Crucial gains, Madhesi leaders ask for more

Kathmandu: Ramesh Mahato became the first martyr of Madhes movement after he got killed in course of the movement. Madhes-centric political parties still recall the fateful day he died as they assemble every year at Sahid Ramesh Chowk to reflect on his important contributions to the movement.

Almost a decade after the incident, two leaders close to the United Democratic Madhesi Front and Federal Alliance addressed the mass at the chowk on Tuesday, according to the organizer Krishna Bahadur Yadav. Intellectuals argued that the Madhesi community experienced positive changes after the first



movement. "After the first movement, there was a considerable number of Madhesi people in the Constituent Assembly. Madhesis got identity in the constitution itself," said Bijay Prasad Mishra, an analyst of the Madhes movement. "But the situation did not remain favorable for long. The disgruntled Madhesis were forced to

hit the streets again as their demands remained unfulfilled," he added. Another analyst, Tula Narayan Sah, claimed that the Madhes movement has lost its achievement a decade after the movement. "Constitutional identity, representations, and political power gained after the first Madhes movement has been lost. 13 years on, Madhes has lagged behind in all

aspects. The current Madhes movement is to bring the old glory back," he said.

Sah believes that the achievements of the Madhes movement could not be institutionalized because of weak leadership to implement their agendas. "That's why the Madhesis lost the already gained achievements," he said.

Meanwhile, parents of the first Madhes martyr Ramesh Mahato are still sobbing in memory of their son. Remembering her beloved son, Rani Devi said countless women too lost their sons while fighting for their rights. "Like all these mothers, I too am very saddened

as the recent movement ended without any achievement," she said.

In the Madhes movement, 52 protestors achieved martyrdom. While urging the leaders to respect equality, Maya Devi said the leaders should stop further killings.

"Several Madhesi leaders became ministers one after another. But what did the Madhesi people gain? The sacrifice of several good sons like Ramesh turned out to be in vain. Although I lost my son, let none be deprived of their rights," she added.

A landmark agreement signed between the government headed by the late PM Girija

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Oli, Modi to inaugurate Biratnagar ICP

Kathmandu: The much-hyped Integrated Check Post (ICP) in Biratnagar will come into operation from next week. The formal inauguration of the ICP is scheduled for January 21, 2020.

Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi will inaugurate the ICP coming Tuesday through video conference, said official at the Ministry of Industry Commerce and Supplies (MoICS). The formal inauguration



will be marked by pressing a switch by the prime ministries of both the countries through a live video conference,

said Muktiram Rijal, section officer of the Ministry. Likewise, India will hand over the ICP to Nepal

before the inaugural ceremony as the necessary works are underway in this regard, he said. The ICPs are constructed under the technical and financial support of India. Officials of Nepal and India had signed a pact to construct the ICP in 2005 and the foundation stone was laid in March 2017. The estimated cost of the project was IRs. 1.145 billion. Earlier, an IPC in

Birgunj had come into operation. It was the first ICP constructed in Nepal under the financial and technical support of India. Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi jointly inaugurated the Birgunj ICP from Hyderabad House in New Delhi in April 2018, during PM Oli's India visit.

The project will run under the Nepal Intermodal Transport Development Board

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Editorial

Gains of Madhesh movement yet institutionalize

The Madhesi people's fight against oppression, injustice and discrimination has a long history, dating back to the times when the Ranas ruled the country. But the one movement that indeed brought the Madhesi agenda directly to the centre, Kathmandu, and ensured substantial space in Nepal's political landscape started 13 years ago on day of Magh 5. In 2006, then Maoist rebels agreed to lay down their arms and join mainstream politics. A year later, the Madhesi people sensed that the Maoist party had lost interest in the federalism they fought for, and they launched a struggle. Upendra Yadav, a firebrand Madhesi leader, was detained for burning a copy of the interim constitution. To protest the arrest of Yadav, there were demonstrations in districts along the plains. Ramesh Mahato, a 16-year-old student, was part of a protest in Lahan where he was shot dead allegedly by a Maoist cadre. This fuelled the Madhesi protest further and then ultimately took the shape of Madhes Movement. The 2007 Madhes Movement is one of the milestones in Nepal's political journey. But Madhesi still question, 12 years later, whether the sacrifices they made have paid off. There have been some achievements, but political course is yet to be completed. Madhesi people were expecting three things—electoral constituencies on the basis of population, ensuring proportional representation and federalism. But more than three years after the promulgation of new constitution, dissatisfaction still remains among the Madhesi

Theoretically all three Madhes revolts remained successful but politically they all failed.

people. Madhesi were involved in three phases of revolt—first in 2007, second in 2008 and the third in 2015, but with dissatisfaction still continuing people of Madhes commemorate the first Madhes revolt every year. Theoretically all three Madhes revolts remained successful but politically they all failed. For any movement to become successful they must be guided by an ideology but that has not been established yet. Secondly there must be an organisation, which is weak, and thirdly a strong leadership, which is divided and fragmented. Nothing is predictable in politics. If dissatisfaction persists, who knows when it will erupt. The then Sanghiya Samajbadi Forum-Nepal (SSF-N) joined the Oli government while the Rastriya Janata Party-Nepal (RJP-N) has been supporting the government from outside after the ruling parties promised amendment to the constitution. But the constitution is yet to be amended basically to address the issues of citizenship and proportional inclusiveness. Since the government has forged some kind of agreement with both the SSF-N and RJP-N, which are expecting that Oli would take steps towards that end. To amend the constitution for incorporating the demands of Madhesi and Janajatis, there must be strong pressure on the government, which is not in sight as of now. The parties have already lost whatever the trust they had gained during the 2015 movement. People have many questions for the leaders. The major issue of the Madhes Movement was that of identity and proportional representation in the state mechanism, which was well established. But they are yet to be implemented. Madhesi parties are leading Province 2 and have a significant hold in the federal parliament, which gives them leverage to influence the power game. The representation of Madhesi and other disadvantaged groups was also increasing even though that is not satisfactory. There are other major issues as well which the parties have failed to take note of. If the issues of poverty and untouchability were also raised along with other core issues, the scenario could have been different by now.

Rivalry between US and China in Nepal delays MCC

Hari Bansh Jha

Now, it is up to the government of Nepal to choose if it would ratify the MCC in order to deliver critical services to the people and open door for new vistas of opportunities to the private sector for investment through the MCC compact or sour its relations with the US by discarding its ratification.

For quite some time, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), which the US Embassy in Nepal points out to be a part of Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS), has become a challenging issue in Nepal. It is a matter of serious concern, particularly for the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP) leaders, who are heavily divided on this issue. As a result, the process of ratification of the MCC is getting delayed. One of the major factors that has led to this situation is due to the rivalry between the US and China in Nepal.

The MCC was established in 2002 by the US Congress to enable the developing countries to use its fund for the development of infrastructure facilities and poverty alleviation. In view of its benefits, 50 countries in different sub-continent of the world accepted it.

While the MCC is a bilateral foreign aid agency of the US, the IPS is a strategic document of the US Department of Defence. Under the MCC, Washington provides grants to those countries which qualify a set criteria. Significantly enough, the MCC and the IPS are very much linked to each other.

It was at the initiative of the government of Nepal that an agreement was signed with the MCC for the improvement of roads and energy infrastructures for which the US agreed to provide this country grants worth \$500 million. At a time the MCC compact was signed on September 14, 2017, the Nepali Congress (NC) government was in power and the then Maoist party (which later on merged with the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) and became Nepal Communist Party) was part of the coalition government.

If the Nepalese parliament ratifies the MCC, which is one of the strings attached to it, the set projects will be implemented in crucial sectors for the period of five years beginning from 2020. To facilitate the process of implementation of the MCC, even the office of

Millennium Challenge Account-Nepal (MCA-N) was established in the Ministry of Finance in Nepal. Nepal government also allocated \$130 million for the compact projects, which include the construction of 400-kv transmission line from Nanglebhare of Kathmandu to Butwal and for the maintenance of 305-km road.

A lot of hue and cry has been made by certain political leaders in Nepal as if the IPS was a US military alliance and also that the ratification of the MCC by the parliament meant joining the US-led military alliance. They argued that the MCC aimed at giving counter to China, particularly to its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). It was also advocated that there was no ground for the government of Nepal to ratify the MCC as it has already signed BRI with China in 2017. Senior leaders of ruling NCP in the past not only disapproved IPS but also made a commitment with Chinese President Xi Jinping during his visit to Nepal that, the country would not allow MCC to get ratified through the parliament. It was repeated time and again that the MCC would be ratified only after it was confirmed that it was separate from the IPS. The MCC was also criticised for one of its provisions that give the upper hand to the US in the matter of auditing the expenses to be made during the project implementation period. Nepal government does not have that authority despite the fact that it would also provide a grant worth \$130 million in compact projects. Another provision of MCC that invited criticism was due to the rights that the US enjoys to terminate the project. Besides, there is also a provision whereby Indian consent is prerequisite for the implementation of the projects. All such strings laid down in the MCC grants give a feeling as if Nepal's sovereign rights would be eroded with its ratification. It is, however, not confirmed if Nepal would be a part of the US military

alliance by merely ratifying the MCC and also that it stands against any third country. Pros and cons of the MCC could have been discussed before the country accepted it. Most of the skepticisms against the MCC appears to be more for domestic consumption rather than realistic. Nepal needs to exhibit its intelligence, talents and courage to judge if the MCC is really in the interest of the nation or not. If there was any doubt about it, why was it that Nepal signed an agreement with the MCC? Implementation of MCC, later on, could also pave the way to Nepal to benefit from US research programmes in all such high-tech areas as genetic engineering, automation, biotech, lasers, space technology and intelligent robotics. All such countries that today boast of their development such as Japan, South Korea or China are all due to their closeness with the US as this country provided vast market to all of them. Now, it is up to the government of Nepal to choose if it would ratify the MCC in order to deliver critical services to the people and open door for new vistas of opportunities to the private sector for investment through the MCC compact or sour its relations with the US by discarding its ratification. Never before Nepal received such a huge amount of grants from any bilateral or multilateral agencies for the implementation of projects that could prove game-changer for this country. So, there is a general perception of the common mass of the Nepalese population is that this opportunity should not be lost. Despite certain hassles, the government of Nepal seems to be in favour of ratifying the MCC irrespective of the fact that it is linked to IPS. So expectations are that the MCC will be ratified by the Nepalese parliament. But, this would be at the cost of creating further cracks in relations between the two factions of the ruling NCP members—those who care for the MCC/IPS and the others against it.

Madhesi parties are still in struggle

-Madhesi party leaders have made the effort. However, they were failed to raise issues of Madhes with more honesty.

➤ **13 years after the Madhes rebellion was completed, how do you remember this 13 year period?**

• The Madhes rebellion is an example of the sacrifice and forfeit of the Madhesi people. There have been many revolts in the history of Nepal, it must be taken positively because it has brought many positive changes in the country. The Madhes rebellion has not been as successful as the people expected. The uprising in Madhesh was not only for Madhes but for the entire country. The Madhes rebellion represented the voice of the entire marginalized community of Nepal. The achievements that the people have come to expect from the Madhesi parties have not been as great. But there have been some achievements.

➤ **Madhes rebellion has created many leaders and parties in Madhesh but what good leadership is still lacking?**

• Many things are also natural because the state policy is also a boastful. The grips of the ruling class leaders are still the bodies of the state. They are having difficulty in producing a good leader. There are many distortions in our society too. Greed for money, racism, etc., seems to be a hindrance during the elections.

➤ **After the Madhesh Movement, the Madhesi Party's represented in every governments and Madhesi leaders got important ministries but they honest to address their demands?**

• Certainly many leaders from the Madhesi party held ministers,

important ministries. It is also important to know what kind of environment for them to work as ministers. There was no environment to work in favor of Madhesh while in the government. Notably, in Madhes' case, the kind of state power that should have seemed positive was not seen.

• Therefore, even after going to the government, the Madhesi parties did not find a favorable environment for working on the Madhes issue. The leaders could not raise the matter in the House as much as they spoke in Madhesh. The leaders of the Madhesi party have failed in the strategy which they had to devise to fight the marginalized communities.

➤ **After all, did not the leaders of the Madhesi party make honest efforts?**

• Madhesi party leaders have made the effort. However, there was no timely environment. They were failed to raise issues of Madhes with more honesty.

➤ **It is alleged that the Madhesi parties used the Madhesi agenda only as a tool to fulfill their**

• I am not agreed over it. Because it is not only the Madhesi parties who have the responsibility to solve the Madhes problem, it is the responsibility of the other national parties too. The national party is the one that raises every problem of the nation. Madhesi parties were in governments, but have never reached a decisive

level. At the decision-making and problem-solving level, there are always big parties. The big parties should only take votes from Madhesh, but it is not the Madhesi party alone who has the responsibility to solve the problems.

➤ **But Madhesi parties were born as an alternative of these big parties?**

• In fact, the Madhesi parties were born out of the agitation that the big parties because they did not want to give the rights to the oppressed communities of the country, including Madhesh. However, Madhesi parties are still in struggle. Therefore whatever achievements have been achieved for the oppressed community till now, it was due to the contribution of the Madhesh movement and Madhesi parties. It seems that the state still does not want the rights of marginalized communities.

➤ **Are the parties born from the Madhes movement regional or national?**

• Certainly Madhesi parties are national parties. So far the sensitive issues of the country have been raised by the Madhesi parties. It is not the regional party that raises the issues of the harassed community class, who do not raise these issues are the regional party. The national party is fighting for, managing, and raising the rights for communities that do not have access. There are also some groups in Madhesh that want split in



Sanjay Yadav

Youth Leader, RJP-Nepal

the country but Madhesi parties have always been calling for national unity for the sake of national security. Therefore, the Madhesi parties are not regional and they are national parties, who want to strengthen the issue of nationality.

➤ **Why are the Madhesi parties indifferent to the injured and martyr's families of the Madhes movement?**

• The injured and martyr's families of Madhesi movement has not forgotten. The Madhesi parties now have a government in Province 2 and it has brought various schemes for the families of the martyrs and injured, and has given some jobs too. Something has been done for the families of the injured and martyrs, but it has not been done as much as it should have.

➤ **Madhesi parties seem to have done something only to injured and martyr's families in Province 2. What have they done to those in other provinces?**

• The Madhesi parties are not in a strong position in other provinces and there is not even a state to form their own government. There is nothing that can be done for the injured and martyr's families living in other provinces. It is also the responsibility of the state, but the state is indifferent. The Madhes-centric parties are not in a position to do anything.

➤ **What is the status of the agenda of Madhes movement now?**

• The dream of the martyrs of the Madhesh movement has not yet come true. We are in a state of struggle now.

• Some things of the Madhes movement have been fulfilled. Nepal is now a federal democratic republic and federalism is about to become institutionalized. This can be considered an achievement. Likewise, the issue of proportional inclusion has been accepted by this state but does not need to be implemented until now. We are still struggling for that. We still need to be prepared for conflict to address the rest of our issues.

13 years...

Prasad Koirala and the Upendra Yadav-led Madhesi Janadhikar Forum Nepal on September 9, 2007 not only institutionalised federalism in the country but also stirred a fresh debate on Nepali nationalism.

A decade since the 2007 uprising, the struggle looks far from over for the Madhes-based parties.

“We were successful to institutionalise historical agendas like federalism, identity, inclusion and proportional representation of the marginalised and excluded communities. But we still have a long way to go in forming a truly just and equal society,” said Yadav, whose party became the Sanghiya Samajbadi Forum Nepal after merger with the Sanghiya Samajbadi Party.

SSF-N and several other Madhesi and Janajati parties have been protesting since the

constitution was promulgated on September 20, 2015 amid bloodshed in the Tarai. The regional parties accuse the major parties of not honouring the agreements signed after the first and the second Madhes uprisings.

The Koirala-led government signed two agreements with the Madhesi forces on September 9, 2007 and February 28, 2008, guaranteeing the protesters’ demand for federalism, inclusion and representation in all state bodies.

The popular uprising and the border blockade that started after the promulgation of the constitution did force the government to make the first amendment to the constitution but gave the regional parties little reasons to cheer. Sixteen months after the promulgation of the

constitution, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal’s government is gearing up for a second amendment to the constitution. Though a bill has been tabled in Parliament, it remains to be seen whether it will get through. The Madhes-based parties have demanded that the five Tarai districts of Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari, Kailali and Kanchanpur should be aligned with the Madhes provinces. They are also seeking inclusive and proportional representation in the state mechanism and full autonomy in the functioning of the provinces. There is confusion on the extent of autonomy that the federal states would be able to exercise. With little success coming their way in recent years despite pressing hard, many have started to suspect whether the Madhes Aandolan had lost its

significance. Some others believe that the Madhes-based parties had achieved what they wanted as the protests they spearheaded largely served its purpose. But Yadav feels the regional parties have a lot to do. “I still see frustration among youths. They’re coming up with new demands and radical views. It would be unfortunate for the country and the people if our fight fails to achieve its goal,” he warned.

Yadav said there were challenges but added that a larger alliance of the Madhesi, Janajati and other communities could help remove the obstacles.

“For a decade, Madhesi gave their lives, which benefited everyone. Now all should join their hands to institutionalise the changes and fight for equality and inclusion,” said Yadav.

Oli, Modi...

(NITDB) and board will lease it out to the private sector for smooth operation, he said.

The NITDB has allowed the Trans Nepal for its operation until the selection of the company through tender as the process will take a few months, he said. The ICP in Biratnagar will offer an effective platform for traders for trade logistics, he said. It will be equipped with customs, immigration, quarantine, banks, warehouse, litigation shed and parking that are required for the clearance of goods and movement of people from a single location, thereby reducing trading cost for traders.

The Biratnagar ICP would help reduce the cost and time of the country’s foreign trade. As per the agreement signed between government of Nepal and India in 2005, the government of India has initiated to construct ICP in Nepalgunj.

Highest corruption in Province 2 and 3

Kathmandu: Province 2 and 3 have recorded the highest number of cases of corruption in the previous fiscal year.

Province 2 recorded 29.5 per cent of the total number of corruption cases that took place in the year, according to the annual report of the anti-corruption watchdog CIAA. The Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) submitted its 29th annual report to President Bidya Devi Bhandari. Province 3 almost equals Province 2 in terms percentage of corruption, with the report saying 29.16 per cent. Karnali State recorded the lowest at 5.23 per cent. Province 1 recorded 8.84, Gandaki Province 6.07, Province 5 recorded 10.93 per cent and the Sudur Paschim recorded 7.40 per cent, according to CIAA spokesperson Pradip Kumar Koirala. Speaking at a press meet



organized, Koirala said 653 cases were investigated in detail, with 351 cases filed, 105 recommendation made to the concerned agency, 137 cases have been put on hold and 14 others. Likewise, the CIAA has suggested the government to hike the employees’ salaries since low salary was a reason for rising

corruption. Furthermore, the CIAA has drawn a conclusion that existing electoral system was to blame for the increased level of corruption while suggesting review and reforms in such system. High costs in election contribute to price hike of commodities as well as corruption, the CIAA mentioned.

Nepal requests India to study feasibility of Siliguri-Jhapa petro pipeline



Kathmandu: Nepal has requested India to conduct a feasibility study

about the proposed Siliguri-Jhapa cross-country petroleum pipeline. India is yet to give a final response to the request.

During a meeting of a joint working group on petroleum and gas held in New Delhi last week, Nepali officials made the

proposal, according to Dhruva Ghimire, a joint-secretary at the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies. Ghimire had led the Nepali delegation to the meeting. Though a concrete decision was yet to be made, the two governments have agreed that the Indian Oil

Corporation would assess the feasibility based on a proposal to be submitted by the Nepal Oil Corporation.

The NOC officials say they floated the alternative transport route as the cost of transporting fuel from Biratnagar to Barauni is excessive.

Rs 500 thousand to Mahato family



Dhanusha: The Province 2 government has decided to provide a relief assistance of Rs 500 thousand to the family of Dilip Mahato. Mahato, a resident of Shreepur, Mithila municipality-5, is a campaign activist against

the excessive sand and gravel mining in the riverbed and banks. Police said he died in a road accident on Friday. But the locals and Mahato's kith and kin allege that he was killed by the people involved in the aggregate mining

business in course of protesting against their rampant aggregate mining business.

Province 2 government minister for internal affairs and law, Gyanendra Kumar Yadav said a meeting of the state government council of ministers this morning decided to give the relief amount to the Mahato's family.

Chief attorney of Province 2 government Dipendra Jha said the state government was making initiatives for taking stern action against those accused in Mahato's killing. He said a draft of the Province 2 Environmental Law has been prepared which will check the over-exploitation of the Chure region due to aggregate mining and crusher industries.

Kwatra named ambassador to Nepal

Kathmandu: After a long speculation following the retirement of Manjeev Singh Puri, Indian government choose India's seasoned diplomat Vinay Mohan Kwatra, currently Indian Ambassador to France, head Nepal's mission as its next ambassador to Nepal. Kwatra, currently India's ambassador to France, will succeed Manjeev Singh Puri, whose term ended in December-end, sources have said. He has already served as a joint secretary at the office of the Prime Minister of India. He has also headed the Policy Planning and Research Division of the Ministry of External Affairs of India. Kwatra is expected to take up his assignment shortly in Kathmandu.

Preparations for NC polls completes

Kathmandu: The Election Commission (EC) said all preparations for upper house members election scheduled for January 23 have been completed.

The election body said it has already transported logistics such as ballot papers, inks and voter ID cards among others to provincial headquarters where upper house election is taking place.

The EC 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 Rastriya Janata Party Nepal and one from Samajbadi 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 the NC-led alliance, it has fielded 16 candidates whereas the party has pledged to support two candidates from the RJPN.

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.

Vistara to launch Delhi-Kathmandu flight service



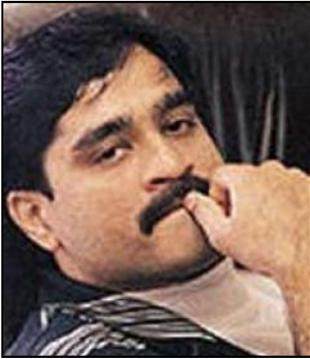
Kathmandu: Indian airline company, Vistara is launching daily flight service between New Delhi and Kathmandu from February 11.

According to the company's website, the bookings for the flights have opened from Tuesday. The company has said that the round-trip all-inclusive fares for Delhi-Kathmandu-Delhi start at INR 9,999. Likewise, for the round-trip, all-inclusive fares for Kathmandu-Delhi-Kathmandu start at NPR 16,999.

In a statement, the company's CEO Leslie Thng said they are pleased to launch services to Kathmandu adding that the timing could not have been any better, as Nepal is currently observing its global tourism campaign — Visit Nepal 2020 aiming to bring in 2 million tourists this year. Thng said that these factors make Kathmandu a promising addition to Vistara's growing network.

Vistara, dubbed as India's only five-star carrier, is an Indian airline company established as a joint venture of Tata Groups and Singapore Airlines.

Dawood Ibrahim has large base in Nepal: Report



New Delhi: Underworld don and erstwhile member of the D-Company, Ejaz Lakdawala, has claimed to Mumbai Police that India's most-wanted fugitive Dawood Ibrahim has a large base in Kathmandu, that he uses for pushing Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICN) into the Indian territory through the porous border and operates with the aid of a few key officials at the Pakistan Embassy in the Nepal capital. The fugitive gangster, Lakdawala, arrested by the Mumbai Police from Patna on January 8, also disclosed two specific addresses of Dawood Ibrahim in Karachi during his

police remand.

The two addresses told to the top officials at the Crime Branch are: 6A, Khayaban Tanzim Phase-5, Defence Housing Area, Karachi and D-13, Block 4, Clifton, Karachi.

One address is of Khayaban Tanzim phase, in Defence Housing Area while the other is of his Clifton-based bungalow in Karachi.

He has also confirmed addresses of Dawood's brother Anees Ibrahim and Chhota Shakeel, who also live in the Defence Housing Area of Karachi.

"Officials of other agencies are also questioning Lakdawala. We can only add at this stage that he is a prize catch, who has crucial information about the D-Company's FICN and drug racket," a senior official of the Mumbai Police told IANS over the phone.

Once hiding in Canada, Lakdawala was also involved in peddling drugs into Europe through Rotterdam port in the Netherlands. The gangster revealed that the D-Company's drug racket was first operated by

late Iqbal Mirchi and of late by Chhota Shakeel, who is looking after the lucrative contraband business.

Lakdawala said that much of the drugs are smuggled out of Afghanistan and later pushed through the Karachi port to South East Asia, as well as to destinations in Europe.

The D-Company has a significant hold in Thailand and Bangladesh from where drugs are further smuggled to other destinations including India.

Sources said that Ejaz Lakdawala, who along with Chhota Rajan parted ways with Dawood Ibrahim post the 1993 serial blasts in Mumbai, had attempted to eliminate the D-Company boss, during the funeral of Dawood's daughter Maria, in Karachi a decade ago. The operation was led by Chhota Rajan's sharp shooter Vicky Malhotra. However Dawood did not turn up at the funeral procession, and the mission had to be aborted. Later, Lakdawala had a dispute over payments with Rajan and established his own gang, somewhere in Cambodia.

Uttar Pradesh-based gangster Babloo Srivastava, presently lodged in Bareilly Central Jail, also had close links with Lakdawala. Both were involved in several cases of extortion across India.

Underworld don Ejaz Lakdawala's daughter Soniya Lakdawala was also looking after the gang's monetary operations, sources said.

A fake passport, used by Soniya to flee from India, was instrumental in the nabbing of Ejaz Lakdawala.

To hide Lakdawala's identity, Soniya deliberately used a different name. Sources said that Soniya changed her name to Shifa Shaikh, after her wedding to one Shahid Shaikh from Mumbai. Her name before her wedding, as per her passport, was Soniya Advani.

Mumbai Police said that at a later stage, to verify certain information, daughter and father would be confronted during interrogation.

The Intelligence reports suggest that D-Company is planning to kill Ejaz Lakdawala once he is lodged in jail.

Social development offices now in all districts



Kathmandu: The government is planning to establish social development offices in all districts.

According to a press release issued by the secretariat of Minister for Women, Children and Senior Citizens Parbat Gurung, the social development offices will be established to expedite social

development-related works at the local level.

The meeting between Federal Minister for Women, Children and Senior Citizens Parbat Gurung and social development ministers from various provinces agreed in principle to set up social development offices in all districts.

"We want to execute social development works across the country as priority projects," Federal Minister for Women, Children and Senior Citizens Gurung said. The minister said that the federal government will launch social development programs in coordination with the provincial and local governments.

NC leader Poudel meets Indian Defense Minister Singh



Kathmandu: Nepali Congress senior leader Ram Chandra Poudel and Minister for Defense of India, and former Chairperson of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Rajnath Singh, discussed in New Delhi, India. On the occasion, the discussion was held on bilateral

relations and the current political situation said leader Poudel. Leader Poudel had left for India on Monday for the treatment of hypertension. Chiranjivi Adhikari, Personal secretary of leader Poudel, said the political meeting was held in course of the visit for treatment.

Rs 500 to each girl student from community schools: CM Raut

Parsa: Chief Minister Province 2 Lal Babu Raut has said the State government will provide Rs 500 as motivational allowance to each girl student from the community school in the State.

While inaugurating the daughter education insurance week

campaign at the Office of the Chief Minister and Council of Ministers here Thursday, he shared that the girl students from Grade 1 to 8 will receive the allowance from upcoming fiscal year. He further said they were planning to reach Rs 2 million insurance amount from existing Rs 10,000. The State

government is starting the implementation of the 'Beti Bachau-Beti Padhau' campaign (Save daughter, educate daughter) — an insurance scheme to encourage girl education launched last year. The insurance scheme is expected to reduce the dropout of girl students.



Shah Rukh Khan is proud of SRK Universe Nepal's works

Kathmandu: The 'SRK Universe Nepal', named after Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan, 22-year-old Saroj Bishwokarma and his group have been actively involved in social activities. Recently, they donated clothes, including blankets and other daily necessities worth thousands to an orphanage in Itahari.

Members of the group say that they all work for a common goal, to make their idol Khan proud of their works. "Our aim is to make our idol proud and we're happy that we have been doing that," told Bishwokarma, who has been serving as the group admin.

Their journey as a fan group started when Bishwokarma and his team opened a twitter fan page named as 'SRK fan club Nepal' in 2012. Over the years,



the page grew to have many followers and was finally recognized by Khan himself. Shortly after that, the crew was granted an opportunity to officially link with another group named 'SRK universe' which happens to be Khan's global fan page and has official fan groups in various parts of the world, including the U.S., UK

and Japan. They then changed the twitter handle to 'SRK Universe Nepal' and have gathered huge followers.

The group has above 0.1 million likes on their facebook page and about 6k followers and 5k followers on Instagram accounts and Twitter handles respectively. There are about 3,600 members from all over Nepal and they are all active in

various social works. These members are also provided with an opportunity to meet Khan every year on his birthday. "Khan is well known about our initiatives and is quite proud of our work," said Bishwokarma.

'SRK universe' first initiated social work back in 2017 when there was a flood in Itahari. With collective efforts from the members, they donated 50 thousand worth materials to the flood victims. According to the group, Khan carries a lot of love and respect to Nepal and Nepali people. "The fact that we have been engaging in social activities using his name makes him more proud and content," Bishwokarma told Republica. The group is also planning to open a non-governmental organization to serve the needy ones using Khan's name.

BOPs established in Banke, Bardiya

Nepalgunj: Border Outposts have been established in the Tarai districts of Banke and Bardiya. With this as there are now six BOPs in Banke and five in Bardiya.

The government had decided to establish 114 BOPs across the country. Armed Police Force Number 30 Battalion Bageshwari, Banke's SP Dipak Adhikari said a BOP was established at Jayaspur of Nepalgunj sub-metropolis-16 in Banke yesterday. DIG Narayan Datta Poudel at APF Nepal Province 5 Bindabasini Bahini, Rupandehi inaugurated the BOP.

Speaking at the inauguration programme, DIG Poudel said the BOP would help control



criminal activities, smuggling and increase border security. At the programme, Banke Chief District Officer Kumar Bahadur Khadka said addition BOP at Jayaspur would help check illegal import and export.

SP Adhikari thanked all who helped to set up the BOP near the customs office in Nepalgunj. Lieutenant Colonel at Bhairab Prasad Gaan Nakul Thapa and SP Bir Bahadur Oli at District Police Office, Banke, among others were present at the programme.

Similarly, another BOP was established at Gulariya Municipality of Bardiya. Province 5 APF DIG Narayan Datta Poudel, Chief District Officer Prem Lal Lamichhane, Mayor Muktinath Yadav of Gulariya Municipality jointly inaugurated the newly set-up border outpost. APF 31 Number Battalion headquarters Gulariya Chief Yadav Bishwokarma said the BOP would help minimise criminal activities along the border areas. He said BOPs would also be established in Dhanaura of Madhuban Municipality, Badhiya Taal of Kanthapur, Thigharawa of Rajapur. According to Bishwokarma, as many as eight BOPs will be established.

Government asks India to resume palm oil import



Kathmandu: A week after India stopped importing refined palm oil from Nepal, the country's top export item, the government has formally asked the southern neighbour to allow Nepali traders to export the commodity in the Indian market. Citing that the ban imposed on

import of palm oil is against Nepal-India trade relations and does not align with the spirit of bilateral trade treaties between the two nations, the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies (MoICS) sent a letter to related Indian authorities through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs urging the Indian government to lift the ban imposed on import of the product.

Similarly, the government in its letter sent to the Indian government has stated that the refined palm oil that Nepali traders have been exporting to India is highly refined and complies with the value addition

provision. Also, MoICS has stated that Nepali traders have been exporting only consumer packs of refined palm oil to India and Nepal is not a bulk exporter of the commodity. The Indian government last week had issued a notification stating a complete restriction on import of refined bleached deodorised palm oil and refined bleached deodorised palmolein. Though the restriction was aimed at taming Malaysia, it also affected Nepal, which had exported refined palm oil worth Rs 8.36 billion to India in the first four months of this fiscal, making it the country's largest export item.

Though Nepal never had competitive or comparative advantage in

exporting palm oil to India, rising export of the product in recent months had been playing a crucial role in raising the country's export base and narrow down the trade deficit.

Nepali traders import crude palm oil from Malaysia and Indonesia, process and package it here, before sending it to India. Traders were lured towards this business as India had imposed a duty of 40 per cent on import of palm oil from Malaysia and Indonesia, the two largest producers of palm oil in the world. Nepal's palm oil, on the other hand, was subject to a duty of just six per cent in India as per the spirit of the bilateral trade treaty.

A Chinese conman's two weeks in Nepal

Kathmandu: Zhou Li (not his real name) was glad he escaped Nepal before the big Christmas Eve police raid.

A couple of days before the Nepali cops detained 122 Chinese nationals Dec. 24 for suspected involvement in financial crimes, Zhou fled to China from an online gaming company where he worked for about two weeks in Katmandu, the Nepali capital.

The employer, whose name Zhou declined to disclose out of safety concerns, was not on the list for the raid, but it carries out the same deceptive scheme as those that were hit. These businesses are suspected of using social media to con wealthy single or divorced Chinese women out of money. In an exclusive interview with Caixin, Zhou, from Yueyang in central China's Hunan province, unveiled how an international fraud scheme played out.

Online chatting, air travel reimbursement, monthly salary of at least 10,000 yuan (\$1,440) plus bonus. That was the offer that convinced Zhou, 23 and unemployed, and a friend to step on an airplane to Nepal. The friend said his relative worked at Amazon.com's customer call center in Japan. Zhou said he thought the job in Nepal would be similar.

Upon arrival at Kathmandu airport, Zhou and his friend were picked up by a local contact and settled at a hotel tucked away in a secluded alley. According to the location Zhou provided, the hotel is close to Boudhanath Stupa, a popular tourist site on the northeastern outskirts of Kathmandu.

The company recently relocated from the Philippines because of tightened scrutiny by authorities. It leased more than 10 rooms from the hotel to house employees. Three to four employees shared a room, and there were many bugs in the rooms, Zhou said. The company used a vacant street-level retailing space at the hotel as its office.



Zhou was told employees had to be accompanied by designated personnel whenever they went outside the hotel for safety reasons.

On his first day at work, Zhou was given a used laptop computer, a used cell phone and a prepaid phone card. He was also given a training document, which he finished reading in about half an hour. The document taught new recruits how to compile a fake profile, introduce themselves and chat with women on dating websites.

Most often-picked professions include construction labor contractor, business partner, building material wholesaler and restaurant owner, Zhou said. They were instructed to target single or divorced women on Chinese dating websites and then lure them into spending money playing online gambling games designed by the company.

The employees were assigned different roles in the boiler room operation. Some were responsible for recruiting people from their hometowns; some screened potential clients on dating sites; and those who could type fast were assigned five targets a day. New recruits like Zhou were assigned two each day. Anyone who successfully attracted clients to spend money on the gambling games could get a 20% commission.

Zhou started his routine at 4 a.m. every day, including

sending morning greetings to his targets. Usually he would tell them he just finished jogging or had a meeting to attend, to create an image of a successful and busy businessman. Around noon, he would text the targets asking them what they had for lunch.

The key strategy was to learn the targets' interests and establish a bond with them, Zhou said. Some of his more skilled colleagues could chat with a dozen women online simultaneously. After gaining the targets' trust, they would claim they had "inside information" and could help the targets win money in online gambling. After taking the bait, the players would win the first few games under the gaming company's manipulation to lure them into betting more money.

Zhou heard that a colleague got a client to spend more than 800,000 yuan in two days. Most of the targets were women in their 40s and 50s who usually weren't internet-savvy.

Southeast Asia bans drive companies to Nepal

Since the second half of 2019, many such online gambling companies, mostly operated by Chinese citizens, relocated to Nepal from Southeast Asian countries such as Cambodia and the Philippines, pushed out by a ban on online gambling by Cambodia and a halt in new licenses for online gaming in the Philippines.

Nepal has a relatively relaxed

legal and business environment for casino and online gambling operators. The country also grants 90-day visas on arrival to Chinese citizens to attract foreign tourists, making it convenient for online gambling operators to recruit people from China.

Some local Chinese residents in Nepal told Caixin they noticed that many young Chinese men appeared in Kathmandu since September, claiming they were in e-commerce or internet businesses. They usually rented a big villa as their office and employee dormitory. Some local residents complained that these people drove up rents.

One of the main sites in December's raid was an eight-story building on the northwest outskirts of Kathmandu. Local residents told Caixin that through windows they saw people working in front of computers. Not long before the arrest, the tenants spoke with the owner of a house across the street, offering 9,000 yuan a month, or four times the current rent.

The arrests were one of the biggest crackdowns on crime involving foreigners in the Himalayan country last year. But local residents said they think the raids hit only the tip of an iceberg. Nepali police said they are still closely monitoring about 800 suspected Chinese nationals.

"We could not catch most of them as they might have run away," said Uttam Raj Subedi, chief of Nepal police in Kathmandu. "We are still on high alert."

When Zhou told his boss his intention to quit, the company confiscated his passport and required that he pay back the flight ticket and his expenses in Nepal before returning it so he could leave. Zhou said he stole back his passport while others in the company were holding a party to welcome new recruits. He fled to the airport and took the cheapest flight back home, he said.