

'MCC will be ratified from this session of parliament'

US conditions are for democracy and democratic rights: PM

Kathmandu: Prime Minister K P Oli has said that the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), which has become a controversial issue of late, will be endorsed from the current session of the Parliament.

"So far as MCC is concerned, there should have been speculations about how the things might be interpreted prior to the agreement," PM Oli said, "Unfortunately, we signed an agreement and later when it comes to its ratification or its implementation, we started the discussion and study about it," he told editors at his official residence in Baluwatar recently.

He said that the preliminary discussions should be executed with sincerity and generally



are executed as such discussions are made by the experts on the issues. "Nowhere in the world are the agreements given to the public for discussion and then ratified," he said commenting on the rationale that everyone has the right to read the agreement before the state signs them.

"Experts are sent for the discussion on such issues, and those experts

handle the issues assigned to them. The documents presented for ratification go through various procedures," he added.

PM Oli also said that the same procedure was executed in the case of MCC as well.

The MCC, a 500-million US dollar project, was approached from Nepal's side long before. Citing that Nepal did not meet the requirements deemed necessary to make a

country eligible to get the grant, Nepal was not considered for the project earlier.

Lately, after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) when the country paved room for a new federal system, the country bettered everything in the indicators and managed to bag the project.

After consultations at various levels, the compact was signed in

that he is aware of the concerns about MCC relating it with Indo-Pacific Strategy. "Some friends say MCC is under Indo-Pacific policy," PM Oli added citing each nation can have their own strategy, "We are aware that the USA has a global strategy and global politics; why Indo Pacific Strategy only?" He took it normal for super-power nation to have some interest in expanding its strategy.

'Hopes for 19th SAARC Summit'

Kathmandu: Prime Minister K P Sharma has expressed hopes the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Member States Summit will come up with a consensus to convene the 19th SAARC Summit at an early date.

"The SAARC is an expression of our regional solidarity in South Asia. It has become a

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September 2017.

PM Oli made it clear

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Nepal and Indian banks pledge Rs. 100 billion for Arun III

Kathmandu: Arun III Hydropower Project has fulfilled the conditions of the financing agreement for the development of the project.

It signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for financial closure with the Everest Bank and Nabil Bank and five Indian banks. The banks have pledged an investment of Rs. 100 billion in the project. Nepali banks will make about Rs. 15.36 billion investment in the



project, said Arun Dhimal, Chief Executive Officer of the project.

State Bank of India, Punjab National Bank, Union Bank, Canara Bank and Exim Bank of India

will invest about Rs. 85 billion in the project while Rs. 25 billion will be mobilised by the Sutlej Jal Vidyut Nigam (SJVN), a company owned by the Indian government, as the

equity investment. Nepal Rastra Bank and Investment Board of Nepal had given their permission for the agreement for the financial closure.

The 900-megawatt project is being developed by the SJVN in Sankhuwasabha district.

The dam site of the project is at Numko Fyaksinda and power house at Pukhuwa of Makalu Rural Municipality of

Sankhuwasabha district. The project has achieved about 25 per cent progress even before the financial closure and the entire work is projected to be complete within next three years. If completed within the stipulated time, the project would be the largest hydroelectricity project executed in the country.

Estimated cost of the project is Rs. 104 billion while another Rs. 11 billion will be

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Editorial

National shame

The Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) has on Monday filed a corruption case against one hundred and 75 persons including the former Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) and Nepali Congress (NC) leader Bijaya Kumar Gachchhadar. In the charge sheet filed in the Special Court, the names of former ministers Chandradev Joshi and Dambar Shrestha along with six senior government officials including former secretary Deep Basnyat, who is also the former Chief Commissioner of the CIAAA included in connection with Lalita Niwas land Scam. Furor seems to have sparked among the general public after 113 ropanis public land located at right under the nose of the Prime Minister's residence at Baluwatar, Kathmandu is proved to have illegally transferred in the person's name including of the government head Nepal Communist Party (NCP) General Secretary Bishnu Poudel. According to the finding reports of the committee formed under the leadership of former secretary Sarada Prasad Trital, the saga of transforming the public land into persons' name was begun with cabinet decision of the government led by NCP senior leader Madhav Kumar Nepal in 4 May, 2010. As the committee has categorically revealed about the facts of embezzlement of public land, social media are buzzed with criticism against of the NCP and leaders for amassing property illegally. Even though the Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli has repeatedly been reiterating to probe the public land grab case, suspicions are rified now that the culprit would be acquitted in any pretext. The incident of public land grab case has given a clear

The government must scrap the erroneous decision taken by the Nepal-led government in 2010 so as not to allow the malicious transfer of ownership of public land to individuals.

indication that grabbing the public land would have made a lucrative business across the country in connection of the political leaders and civil servants as even a small plot of land in Kathmandu and other urban centers commanding prohibitive prices. Then government led by the then king Mahendra in 1964 had decided to acquire 299 ropani land of Lalita Niwas at Baluwatar. The land and other 1298 ropani land occupied by other six Rana era castles namely Mahavir Bhawan at Naxal, Harihar Bhawan at Lalitpur, Sita Bhawan at Naxal and Laxmi Niwas at Babar Mahal were acquired under Land Acquisition Act with due compensation. However, the remaining 14 ropani and 11 ana land belonging to late Nepali Congress leader Subarna Shumsher Rana was acquired by the Mahendra led government without paying due compensation. According to the report, of the 284 ropanis of the acquired land, residences of prime minister, chief justice, speaker and Nepal Rastra Bank's building covers around 172 ropanis while remaining 113 ropanis were embezzled by land mafia in collusion with politician and officials. Over a period of time, these huge plots of land have been divided and sold to many private individuals after the cabinet of then Nepal led government in May 2010 had facilitated the transfer of the land to private individuals. This incident categorically indicates that public lands were transferred into private property under the protection of the leaders of any political parties. The government must scrap the erroneous decision taken by the Nepal-led government in 2010 so as not to allow the malicious transfer of ownership of public land to individuals. Likewise it would better to form a high level commission to investigate and identify the public land of across the country.

Gen Bajwa: Conquest by Popular consent

Did the judiciary, by no means hostile to the military, anticipate the alacrity with which the lawmakers would act to smoothen out the whole process? It would seem so. After a few sleepless nights, Khan had smooth sailing. His political opponents were only willing to strike deals. None wanted to anger the elephant in the room.

The history of South Asia (India of yore in its larger geographical sense) has been replete with conquests for which the area that is Pakistan today was the gateway. By and large ruthless, the more enlightened among the conquerors combined that trait with show of pragmatism. They co-opted the new subjects and became popular. Pakistan's own history has been one of military takeovers after which the generals sought legitimacy by floating political parties, contesting elections, becoming Heads of State and the first among them, Ayub Khan, promoting himself to Field Marshal. They inter-changed the khaki and the civilian sherwani as occasions demanded. Pervez Musharraf was the last of them to seize power. His new-century successors are pragmatic - and cautious — enough to rule from behind, influencing every aspect of the polity without directly wielding power. Their preferences differ, though. Ashfaq Kayani wanted his tenure doubled from three to six. He succeeded. Raheel Sharif basked in personal popularity, but the personality cult prevented job extension. He went on to head an international Islamic force. It's a phantom army, but the job is lucrative. His successor Jawed Bajwa has proved to be

the smartest and the most successful, so far. He removed an inconvenient prime minister (Nawaz Sharif) with the judiciary's help, engineered an entire election and put hand-picked Imran Khan in power. His bid for job extension was sought to be scuttled by the top judiciary — actually a judge headed for retirement. However, the judges put Khan on the guillotine: change a faulty Army Act within six months if you want to retain Bajwa and the army's support, or else! Did the judiciary, by no means hostile to the military, anticipate the alacrity with which the lawmakers would act to smoothen out the whole process? It would seem so. After a few sleepless nights, Khan had smooth sailing. His political opponents were only willing to strike deals. None wanted to anger the elephant in the room. Parliament was a mere rubber stamp. Some lawmakers excitedly claimed that by passing this law, they were exercising civilian-democratic 'supremacy' over the military! Now the military has the civilians, both lawmakers and judges, on the leash. The judiciary corrected its waywardness of convicting Pervez Musharraf by completely throwing out that court, its

procedures and of course the verdict. The blame went to the most convenient scapegoat of the day — Nawaz Sharif — his head already under the scalpel. No appeal, the government's top attorney announced. Any deal that Khan may have struck with the opposition PPP and PML(N), their top leaders either in jail or in exile with the court and the agencies of the State breathing down their necks, may be left for Khan to fulfil — with the elephant's consent cum connivance. The military made no promise so need not fulfil any. It's winners-take-all. But Bajwa is the sole winner. To repeat, he is the smartest and the most successful of the army chiefs, having not just the PM and the government, but the opposition also at his back and call. Firmly saddled for three years, Bajwa can focus on improving (help improve) the economy, steer foreign policy, woo China and America, dare India and pilot the Afghan discourse to Pakistan's advantage. Ayub Khan would be envious of Bajwa. Khan can continue to say the civil-military leadership is "on the same page." Only, the 'page' must be read carefully — military is the whole 'page' of which the civilians are just a narrow margin.

Difficult to trust on Upendra Yadav for party unity

➤ *You have been elected to the National Assembly, what issues do you raise in the National Assembly now?*

• We are the identity forces, and we will raise our voice against discrimination through the House. I will raise my voice against discrimination through streets and House.

➤ *The cooperation with NCP was successful in National Assembly elections and your party also supported NCP candidate for Speaker. Now is this collaboration going forward or ended?*

• We had an electoral alliance. It was agreed that NCP to vote us and we also to vote NC and finally we succeeded. We were success in this plan.

• If NCP-led government addresses the demands of amending the constitution, the release of Resham Chaudhary, the withdrawal of false issues, etc., this cooperation will continue.

➤ *Discussions are also being heard about giving the post of Deputy Speaker and participation in the federal government. What is the party's opinion on this matter?*

• There is a constitutional provision that the Speaker and Deputy Speaker from different party and gender. The male person has become the Speaker from NCP and the Deputy Speaker will become woman from other party. NC, RJP, Socialist Party could get the post of Deputy Speaker. But so far, nothing has been formally discussed on this topic.

➤ *As you get closer to the NCP, the distance with Socialist Party seems to be increasing, have you noticed?*

• Even in this national assembly election, we have to cooperate with the NC

because of Socialist Party. Four seats were vacant in Province 2. Among them two seats were us, one was Socialist and other one was Congress. We have repeatedly told Upendra Yadav that we should cooperate and move forward but his intention was wrong. He said that our competition in the Madhes is the Congress. Upendra Yadav considers himself as Madhesbadi. It is difficult to be united if such an idea remains within him.⁴

➤ *But Upendra Yadav is saying there is no Madhesism?*

• He is changing his thoughts and speech from time to time. He also changed color. While saying that he was not participating in the election, he reluctantly joined the party by making a decision within his party. Madhesh has no basis for believing in him. We also have doubts about what will he do.

➤ *RJP Coordinator Mahendra Yadav is claiming that unity is announced in a few days?*

If NCP-led government addresses our demands, this cooperation will continue. Till now RJP has not formally discussed on the topic of Deputy Speaker. We have repeatedly told Upendra Yadav that we should cooperate and move forward but his intention was wrong. If the government of Province 2 is not able to function effectively, then the CM should take responsibility.

• We want all parties in Madhes to be united. Not only he is but others are also saying same. Unity is possible when all united and trust each other. The Coordinator is not only the party and unity could not happen if he only wants.

➤ *What's the ideological difference with Socialist Part?*

• Most of all there is a crisis of faith. It is difficult to trust on Upendra Yadav. He can cheat at any time.

➤ *So the possibility of unity is hardly slim?*

• We want unity on our part and it is a lack of faith or unity.

➤ *There is RJP-Socialist Party joint government in Province 2. If alliance with NCP will strengthen then there is possibility of NCP-RJP government?*

• That is not the thinking now. We have formed a government in collaboration with Socialist Party on the basis of the votes of the people. However, the government is not running in right direction. The Chief Minister has not paid much attention even if the parliament is obstructed for a long time without paying consumers. The government has not been able to provide expected result as the people expect. There is no discussion yet on the formation of the government of NCP and RJP. But there is nothing



Mrigendra Kumar Singh

National Assembly member, RJP-Nepal

allegations from RJP that the ministers from the party are failing to function properly?

• If the ministers do not fulfill their responsibilities, the Chief Minister is to alert them. If no one can work, such minister should be removed. If the government is not able to function effectively, then the CM should take responsibility.

➤ *When does RJP to participate to the*

on national issues? In the past, the party is not clear about the boundary dispute with India and also about the MCC?

• Could not we ask to settle the border dispute from diplomatic initiatives? We are positive about the MCC. If the country benefits, there is no problem accepting assistance from any country. It is not just about raising the issue of ultra-nationalism. It is only natural to seek assistance for development of the country.

➤ *There are ups and down in relations between Nepal and India time to time, how do you find the current relationship?*

• Nepal-India relation was ancient. Nepal and India have been associated with the Mahabharata and Ramayana. Nepal and India could not affect what the people ask. Just because someone protests, does not mean that relations between Nepal and India deteriorate and improve.

federal government?

• RJP could not leave its agenda just on the name of joining the government. If environment is made then we would think about our participation. Like Upendra Yadav, the RJP could not join the government in hurry.

➤ *Why does RJP not have much opinion*

impossible in politics that can happen in the future.

➤ *Does RJP looking for an alternative to the present government?*

• We have not sought yet an alternative of provincial government but that may happen.

➤ *There are*

‘MCC will be...

“The US is also regarded as the most powerful and the wealthiest nation of the world which has its military camps in various parts of the world,” the PM said. “Logics don’t work, laws don’t prevail for it,” he added.

PM Oli took it natural for such a superpower to have some strategy. “Superpower nations may have a global or regional strategy, we have to look at our agreement: what our agreement is about and what it actually says.”

“We should look at the MCC Compact and should care about it,” he said, “MCC Compact is an agreement for 5 years, we should complete the project within the stipulated timeframe, otherwise the project will be halted at where it reaches then, but the fund meant for it collapses.”

PM Oli seems anxious that the urgency of the project is not

realized by many. “We generate electricity, we are the richest in terms of the water resources. We need transmission lines. That needs a lot of money, the USA has agreed to help us with transmission lines which will go from here to Gorakhpur.” He also shed light on how India was linked with the project. As the line has to be extended up to Gorakhpur, India seeking India’s consent on the issue is natural. “As the transmission line is meant to sell electricity to and via India, India is already connected in the project,” he said, “As the agreement with India is already done, now the remaining things like contributing to the alignment, cooperating in forest and road clearance, etc.” Prime Minister Oli further stated that most of the works

in this regard are in process. “We have met most of the criteria, we have met the requirements, what else can be the conditions for accepting the loan. The USA has some conditions like democracy, transparency, he claimed.

Oli regarded this as usual to seek compliance with democracy, transparency and against human rights. “No country supports dictators or corrupted leaders or individuals. American conditions are for the safeguard of democracy and democratic rights.”

Further clarifying the issue, he said that in 2012, the US said Nepal met the criteria. “After knowing that we are eligible, we intensified the talks and in 2017 we managed to sign an agreement, he maintained.

“Actually the agreement was signed by the government which

was formed dismantling my government, yet, I should say good to good, I believe, the agreement is good,” the PM added, “I read the text, I have read it and I say it’s good, it should be ratified and it will be ratified too.”

Speaking about MCC’s military affiliation, PM Oli made it clear that the fund meant for MCC cannot be transferred to any other projects like the military, among others. “We have specified our project and mentioned which part of the road network and which sector of transmission lines are to be constructed under the MCC project,” the Prime Minister said, “So, there is nothing negative in it. Hence, we will ratify MCC, MCC will be ratified from this session.”

‘Hopes for...

common identity for the people of this region,” said PM Oli who visited the SAARC Headquarters in Thamel for the first time as Prime Minister and SAARC Chair.

“It represents the hope of over 1.7 billion people for this region for accelerated economic growth, social progress and cultural development.”

“We are eagerly looking forward to handing over the Chairmanship. I hope the SAARC Member States will come up with a consensus to convene the 19th SAARC Summit at an early date,” he added.

PM Oli also expressed happiness to host the SAARC Secretariat and SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Center.

“Neighborhood relations and regional cooperation are one of the priorities of our foreign policy. As a founding member and current Chair of SAARC, Nepal strongly believes in regional cooperation in order to promote the collective well-being of the people of South Asia,” he said. On the occasion, PM Oli planted a Rudraksya (Utrasum bead) tree sapling in the headquarter premises.

invested in transmission line construction to supply the electricity from project. Earlier, the company had said that financial closure of the project would be completed by September 2018. It has got multiple extension of deadline for the same. Late prime minister of Nepal Sushil Koirala and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had signed an agreement to develop the project in 2014.

Nepal and Indian...

According to the Project Development Agreement (PDA) signed in 2014 between the Investment Board of Nepal (IBN) and SJVN, the latter should develop the transmission line. However, the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) proposed that it would construct the transmission line for the project and the developer should bear the cost of it. Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi had jointly laid the

foundation stone of the project in Sankhuwasabha district by pressing a switch from Kathmandu during Modi’s Nepal visit in May 2018. Nepal will get 21.9 per cent, or 197 mw, energy and 29 per cent equity in the project free of cost. The government had distributed Rs. 1.19 billion compensation for land acquisition in the affected areas at Num, Pathibhara and Yaphu in Makalu and Diding and Pukhuwa in Chichila Rural Municipality.

NCP offers Deputy Speaker to RJP

Kathmandu: Ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP) has floated a condition that if Rastriya Janata Party Nepal changes equation in the government of province 2, it is ready to give the post of Deputy Speaker to the latter. The ruling party leaders are willing to give the post of Deputy Speaker on the condition that it should change the equation in the province government, according to the RJPN leaders. But, the NCP leaders want to forge an agreement in a package. According sources, the



Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli had held talks with RJP Leader Mahantha Thakur to this effect recently. In the meeting, Prime Minister Oli urged Thakur to forge an

agreement in a package for it, sources said. The relationship has improved between the NCP and RJP following the National Assembly elections.

India allocates Rs 12 billion to finalise DPR of Sapta Koshi

Kathmandu: The Indian government through its budget for next fiscal year 2020-21 has allocated INR 7.5 billion (Rs 12 billion) to finalise the detailed project report (DPR) of the Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project (PMP) and also to prepare DPR of the Sapta Koshi High Dam project.

As per the Union Budget of India, the DPR of the Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project will be finalised through joint efforts in coordination with the government of Nepal. It also states that preparatory works to prepare the DPR of the Sapta Koshi High Dam and Sub-Koshi Diversion Project will also be expedited. The budget has stated that it will also cover the Sunkoshi-Marin Diversion Project, which is being developed for flood control purposes.

It has said that due to the annual floods caused by various rivers flowing from Nepal, the Sapta Koshi High Dam project and Sunkoshi-Marin Diversion Project will help to reduce the damage caused by floods and river erosion in selected river catchments.



On December 1 last year, highlevel officials from both countries had agreed to extend the tenure of the team of experts of the PMP by one year to December 2020 to finalise the DPR of the PMP. The DPR of the project has already been prepared by Water and Power Consultancy Services (WAPCOS) Ltd, an undertaking of the Indian government. However, both the governments are yet to endorse it due to the issue of downstream benefits.

Both Nepal and India have agreed to give life to the 4,800-megawatt capacity multipurpose project, to be

constructed on the Mahakali River of the Far-Western Province of Nepal along the India border. The Pancheshwar Development Authority, which has been assigned the responsibility for the construction of the project, however, has yet to finalise the necessary policy documents, final bylaws, administration policy and human resources policy of the project development agreement. The Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project was conceived under the Mahakali Treaty between Nepal and India in 1996. Apart from generating electricity, the project will provide irrigation

facility to 0.13 million hectares of land in Nepal and 0.24 million hectares of land in India, in addition to other incidental benefits, including flood protection. Meanwhile, on July 27 last year, government officials from Nepal and India held a meeting to discuss the problems created by the Koshi River, and proposed Koshi High Dam and Sunkoshi-Marin Diversion Multipurpose Project. But, the 16th meeting of the joint team of experts was not able to make any concrete decision regarding the DPR of the project, among other issues. However, the meeting had reviewed the progress made in areas of environmental impact assessment studies, resettlement and rehabilitation plan, Glacier Lake Outburst Flood studies, power potential studies, power system and power evacuation studies and drilling activities at Koshi High Dam site. The ambitious multi-billion dollar project will provide irrigation facilities, control floods and generate 3,000 megawatts of electricity.

Bamdev Gautam: Rise of a power center in NCP



Kathmandu: With the evolution of Bamdev Gautam as the vice-chairperson of the ruling head Nepal Communist Party (NCP) even amending in the party statute, new form of debate has emerged in the political

arena, particularly in the NCP. Although Gautam ranks fifth in the party pecking order after KP Sharma Oli, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Jhalanath Khanal and Madhav Kumar Nepal, he has now become power center in the ruling party, thanks to the tactical linkage between Gautam and co-chairperson Dahal.

Some insiders of the party, particularly the loyal to Gautam, have projected him as the future prime minister of the country. It is suspected that Dahal and Gautam would have made a secret deal to support each other for the post of party chairman and prime minister respectively.

As Gautam is also the chief of organization department,

which used to be considered as key in a communist party including the NCP, his role would be vital one to make winner in the party position. As Gautam is also skillful enough to change the internal power equations, it is believed that recent collusion between co-chairperson Dahal and Gautam would have led him to become powerful in the party.

The new equation formed in the party seems to have targeted just to balance the growing influence of Oli. It is likely that Gautam's influence could increase further in the party as his position of organization department is doubled with the post vice-president.

Gautam is credited for his efforts to get the then two communist parties-CPN-UML

and UCPN (Maoist) to merge into NCP. It is said that he had made efforts to bring together the long-time communist rivals—Dahal and Oli to merge the party. Despite of his growing influence in the party, he had lost the parliamentary race from Bardiya constituency no 1, thanks to the internal rivalry in the party.

Nepali Congress's local leader Sanjay Gautam had defeated him by 727 votes in the elections. Since then, he had been remaining relative shadow in the party. Gautam used to accuse Oli for not only shadowing him in the party but also to defeat in the elections.

Five Indian companies interested for Birgunj ICD

Birgunj: Five companies have submitted their bid documents expressing interest to take over the management of Inland Container Depot of Birgunj. According to Intermodal Transportation Development Committee, five companies have submitted their bids by January 24 – the last day to submit bids. The minimum estimated amount is Rs 2.4 billion for a period of five years. Container Corporation of India Ltd – an entity of Indian Railways, Adani Logistics Ltd – the operator of Mundra Dry Port of



Gujarat and Dhamra Dry Port of Odisha, Pristine Logistics – the operator of Kanpur ICD, J M Bakshi Group – the operator of dry ports in Visakhapatnam and Haldia, and Apna Logistics Solution-Jagdamba JV of Hyderabad are competing in the bidding process, according to

officials of the committee. Intermodal Transportation Development Committee is the government agency that oversees management of dry ports. The successful bidder will have to look after overall management of Birgunj ICD, including

operation and management of freighter trains, loading and unloading of trains and warehousing etc of imported and exported goods. Himalayan Terminal has been looking after the management of Birgunj ICD ever since its inception. It received contract for the second term of five years in January, 2015. Himalayan Terminal first bagged the management contract in 2004, agreeing to pay the committee Rs 530 million for 10 years. According to traders, dry port has made trading lot easier. Use of railway service for transport of goods is safer and faster compared to roads, they added.

Ambassador Acharya met Indian Foreign Secretary Shringla



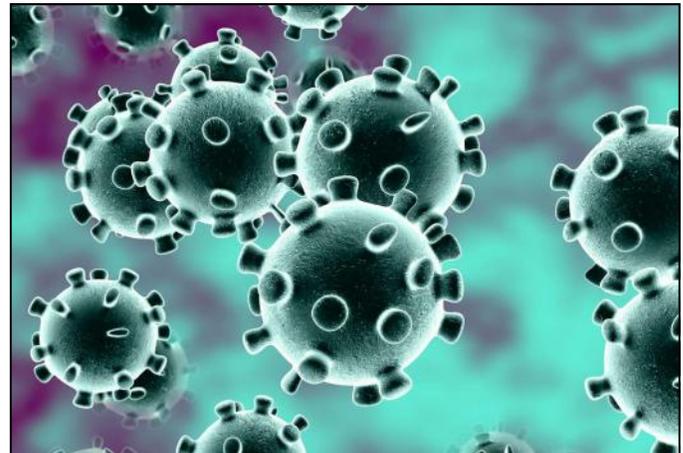
New Delhi: Indian Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla held a meeting with Nepal's envoy to India Nilambar Acharya in New Delhi.

The meeting which was “the first formal” interaction between the two was in “line with Government of India’s ‘Neighbourhood First’ policy and demonstrates the priority India attaches to its close and multi-faceted relationship

with Nepal,” the government statement said.

Both expressed satisfaction at the positive trajectory of relations with “frequent highest level political exchanges and interactions, and expeditious implementation of major connectivity and infrastructure projects of bilateral cooperation,” the statement said. Shringla underlined India’s commitment in taking forward ties “based on mutual trust and benefit,” it said.

Corona health desk set up in Mahottari



Mahottari: In order to check possible outbreak of coronavirus infection, health desks have been set up in 11 different places in Mahottari along the Indian border.

According to the Mahottari District Health Office, people entering through the border checkpoints would be screened to confirm whether the entrants have coronavirus infection.

Health desks have come into operation in Khairabani, Raghunathpur, Samsi,

Pokharbhinda, Itaharwakatti, Katti, Sisawakataiya, Bathana, Maruwahi, Bhiththamor and Matihani along the border of Nepal and India, shared senior health administrator Nagendra Prasad Chaudhary.

In line with the directive of the Ministry of Health and Population, health desks were set up in the areas in coordination with the concerned district administration office, he shared. Each desk has been equipped with instruments and human resource.

Bus service from Bhimduttanagar to Haridwar



Kathmandu: A bus service has come into operation from

Bhimduttanagar of Kanchanpur to Haridwar and Deheradun of India.

Pawandoot Bus Operator Company Pvt Ltd has initiated the Nepal-India friendly bus service. Member of the House of Representatives Nar Bahadur Dhama inaugurated the bus

service amidst a program on Wednesday.

The distance from Bhimduttanagar to Haridwar and Deheradun is around 350 kilometers. A bus with air conditioner will leave for the destination from Bhimduttanagar daily.

Company Chair Dharma Bahadur Mahara said the bus service operation would make passengers’ travel to Haridwar and Deheradun convenient. The service would also help promote Visit Nepal Year-2020, the company sources said.

Pakistan uses Nepali soil for its terror activities against India?

Kathmandu: Pakistan has been using Nepal's soil for its ISI terror activities against India. Nepal Police have arrested several Pakistan nationals, staying illegally in Nepal, having a connection with the Indian Mujhaddin as well as hardliner activists for carrying out illegal activities. On May 24, 2019, Nepal Police arrested 3 Pakistanis — Nasir Uddin, Mohammad Akhtar and Nadiya Anbar — and confiscated around 8 million fake Indian currency from them. Police said the three Pakistani nationals were working for their kingpin Yunus Ansari, son of Ex-Minister of Nepal Salim Miya Ansari. The arrest of these people and the seizure of a large amount of counterfeit Indian money indicates that Nepal could have been taken as a breeding ground for those involved in printing and circulating fake currencies within the territory of Nepal and outside, including in India, sources said.

Police arrested three people waiting for Uddin, who had landed at the Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) last year. They have been identified as Yunus Ansari, Suyal Khan and Sudan Ranabhat.

"The three individuals waiting outside the TIA were arrested. Preliminary investigation reveals that the final receiver of the illegally smuggled



currency was none other than Ansari," Gajendra Kumar Thakur, chief at the airport customs, said.

Investigating agencies of Nepal have pinned four routes used to bring and sneak counterfeit Indian money into the territory of India. The routes have been identified as the Karachi-Doha-Kathmandu; Pakistan-Oman-Kathmandu; Bangkok-Kathmandu; and Singapore-Kathmandu. Apart from these routes, some other routes have also been used to bring in counterfeit Indian money to Nepal. Thakur said they send the bills to the Nepal Rastra Bank for analysis upon suspicion to be fake.

Uddin was passing through a regular security check at the TIA when the content of his briefcase triggered suspicion among the officials at the airport customs, he informed. The x-ray machine at the

customs detected a huge quantity of papers in the briefcase. Customs officials put an 'RC' tag, (such a tag is put on luggage deemed suspicious) on his briefcase and let Uddin pass through the security check.

The officials found the briefcase filled with the Indian currency of Rs 2,000 bills when they checked the briefcase manually. Thakur said no sooner had the officials taken away Uddin for interrogation, Anbar and Atar removed the tag from their briefcase.

The customs officials planned to arrest the people coming to receive the trio. As per their plan, they sent Uddin outside the airport with an empty briefcase where three people, Yunus Ansari, Suyal Khan and Sudan Ranabhat, were waiting for him. Customs officials, with the help of the police, then arrested them.

Ansari, the main boss, has been arrested twice for counterfeiting currency in the past, according to the police. Police said Ansari was

first arrested in 2010 along with Rs 2.5 million counterfeit Indian currency from Thamel. He was sent to jail and was released a couple of years after. Police arrested him again in 2014 from Lalitpur with around Rs 3.5 million fake Indian currency, according to Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Shyam Lal Gyawali.

Ansari was shot at by Jasjeet Singh alias Bijaya, inside the jail when he was still serving his sentence in the central jail after his arrest from Thamel. Bijaya has reached the jail on the pretext of meeting Charles Sobhraj, notorious bikini killer.

Meanwhile, on July 3, 2019, police arrested two Pakistani nationals, including a woman — Mohshin Khan, 32, and Puja Mohshin Khan, 31, from Bhaktapur on charges of theft from a shop in Kathmandu. The duo hailed from Islamabad, Pakistan's capital. Likewise, on July 28, 2019, Nepal Police arrested two Pakistani nationals — Sohail Feroze and Kashif Parvez — for their alleged involvement in illegal activities in Nepal. Meanwhile, police also arrested Khalid Mahmood in Nepal for women trafficking. Similarly, police had also arrested Yasin Bhatkal in 2013, an alleged Founder of Indian Mujahideen and having ties with Pakistani-based militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba, accused of carrying out bomb attacks in India, from Nepal.

Nepal, India, Bangladesh and Bhutan to ink BBIN

Kathmandu: Officials from Nepal, India, Bangladesh, and Bhutan (NIBB) agreed to speedily finalize passenger and cargo protocols for the implementation of the NIBB Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA). A meeting of the officials held in New Delhi discussed the passenger and cargo protocols which will give effect to the agreement to regulate passenger, personal and cargo vehicular traffic between the four countries that was signed in June 2015, the external affairs ministry said in a statement. This was the first meeting of the group of officials since January 2018, when the two protocols were last discussed. "The meeting was



held in a friendly and cordial atmosphere, with the delegations agreeing upon the need to expeditiously finalize the passenger and cargo protocols for implementation of the NIBB MVA. The meeting agreed to endeavor to revert by May 2020 on the process of internal

consultations by respective countries based on the discussions of the meeting," the statement said. The delegations also discussed a draft enabling memorandum of understanding (MoU) to be signed by Bangladesh, India, and Nepal for implementing the MVA by the three countries. The delegations of the three countries agreed to consider

expediting the finalization of this MoU. Bhutan consented to the entry into force of the MVA among the three other countries without any obligation to it, pending the completion of internal procedures for ratifying the MVA. The Bhutanese delegation participated in the meeting in an observer capacity, as decided by the country's government. The delegations highlighted the importance of enhanced regional connectivity, including facilitation of regional cross-border road transport, and expressed satisfaction at the progress made by each country in internal consultations with stakeholders for the protocol for movement of passengers. They also discussed various aspects of the draft protocol for the movement of cargo vehicles.

Corona virus prevention health desk set up at Jamunaha



Banke: A 'health desk' has been brought into operation at Jamunaha, the transit point at the Nepal-India border in Banke district, to prevent the entry of corona virus infection. People entering Nepal through this transit point would be tested to check for corona virus infection, Dilli Raj Pokharel, chief of the public health section at the Nepalgunj Sub-

metropolitan City, said.

Two health workers have been assigned to operate the health desk. The health desk will especially examine the health of people suffering from fever, flu and suspected corona virus infection entering Nepal from this transit point. Two infra-red thermometers would be used for this purpose, Pokharel said.

People's rights will be ensured by amending the constitution: Prachanda

Siraha: Co-chairperson of the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP) and former prime minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' said responsibility to unite the country rested on his shoulders. "I've got the responsibility to weave mountains, hills and Tarai regions into single string and also lead the struggle for development and prosperity of the country," said Dahal inaugurating the second Flag Fair Festival-2020, in Siraha's Sakuwanankarkatti Rural Municipality. Referring to the dissenting Madhes-based parties, Dahal reiterated his commitment to ensuring the rights and identity of the Madhes. "People's rights will be ensured, even by amending the constitution, if required," said Dahal, who identified development as the first priority in the Madhes. "We are aware of the fact that the concerns of the Madhesi people cannot be addressed by putting development agenda on the back



burner. We are pretty aware of this reality and this is something that only the present government and our party can do," he said. "As for the development of the Madhes, work on a number of projects, including Nijgadh International Airport, the East-West Railway, fast track, medical college, university, factories and irrigation-related infrastructure have started," he said. "Siraha to me is like parental home as it is to daughters in our Nepali culture," he said.

India lifts ban on palm oil



Kathmandu: The Indian government has relaxed its ban on the import of palm oil as it has allowed a trader to import the oil from Nepal, claims Nepal's State Minister for Industry, Commerce and Supplies, Moti Lal Dugad. The minister hopes that other companies will also gradually obtain approval, adding the ban has turned ineffective at least for the case of Nepal. India had introduced the ban in the first week of January and it had affected Nepali traders also. Nepali officials had urged their Indian counterparts to withdraw the ban. Though Nepal does not produce palm oil, it has been one of the largest exports of the country. As Indian traders can buy

the palm oil that Nepali traders sell after importing it from the countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia at a cheaper rate than purchasing it from Malaysian traders directly, the Nepali firms are enthusiastically trading it. The imbalance exists as India imposes a high tax rate on the import of items from countries like Malaysia and Indonesia. There are more than one dozen palm oil processing companies in Biratnagar and Birgunj of Nepal, according to the traders. They have invested around Rs 25 billion in the business, which employs around 11,000 people regularly.

Buddha Air's Kathmandu-Rajbiraj direct flights

Kathmandu: Buddha Air, a private airline company of the country, has started its direct flights in Kathmandu-Rajbiraj sector.

With ATR 72 aircraft, the company has begun operating one daily flight in this sector. As a promotional fare, the airline has set ticket price at Rs 2,500 per person. As per the company, the flight service will benefit passengers from Saptari, Udayapur, Siraha and Sunsari. Moreover, as Rajbiraj is also a significant place for religious and tourism activities, the company believes this flight operation will facilitate passengers travelling to nearby religious and tourist destinations via Rajbiraj airport.

Likewise, Rajbiraj is also quite near the border side areas of Saharsa, Supaul, Nirmali, Birpur, Raghapur, Pipara, Pratapganj and other destinations of India. Hence, the flight operation in this sector will enhance the travel convenience for tourists from both Nepal and India, Buddha Air stated.

Until now, only Shree Airlines was operating regular flights in



the Kathmandu-Rajbiraj route. Earlier, Shree Airlines had halted the flights on this route citing low occupancy rate but had resumed the flights again. Amid this, the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN) is renovating the Rajbiraj airport. CAAN recently completed the construction of a new terminal building at Rajbiraj airport, while the blacktopping of the runway is ongoing. It also plans to prepare a master plan for the development and expansion of the airport.

Buddha Air is now operating flights to Pokhara, Biratnagar, Bharatpur, Bhadrapur, Bhairahawa, Nepalgunj, Dhangadhi, Surkhet, Janakpur, Simara, Tumlingtar, Rajbiraj and mountain flights in the domestic sector. It is also operating an international flight from Kathmandu to Varanasi in India.