

Unification of Madhesi parties

Is it only political stunt or reality?



Madhesi unity has always been a desirable goal but the unity never materializes for reasons no one knows. Nor has there been any research to bring to light the forces that have caused disunity. The compelling reason for unity or, more desirably, for the one Madhesi party representing all of Madhes, is the territorial separation of Madhes from rest of Nepal, which is collectively designated as Pahad or the

mountain territory. Territorial distinction has imparted the regions their separate identities with respect to ethnicities, cultures and development potential.

For Madhesi people to have just one party would be a natural choice to help them pursue common goals and shared destiny. In practice, however, Madhes remains an intensely divided territory packed with some two dozen parties representing various

castes, clans and factions. The wide range of divisions has progressively diminished Madhesi clout in national politics by making it difficult for Madhesi candidates to win elections. During the last Constituent Assembly election in 2013, for example, half of Madhesi voters plumped for non-regional parties and the other half was split among the many Madhesi candidates.

It now looks as if at least some Madhesi parties have come to appreciate the benefits of unity. Six Madhes-based parties have come together to form one single entity but without the 'Madhes' labeling. It isn't obvious why they dropped Madhes from the new party name but the intention may be that this will help them be seen as a national party. Looking back at the

electoral performance of 2013, these six parties won just six of the 240 direct election seats, with under half a million votes cast for them, which is just 10 percent of total Madhesi votes. These numbers do not suggest that coming

stayed out of the unity drive and one further point of weakness is that no effort has been made to connect with CK Raut group that would have given much strength to the unity drive. It is not written in stone that Raut will not enter mainstream

The moral failings of Madhes movement has been that while the public has taken risks and faced bullets, benefits have accrued mostly or entirely to leaders.

together of these six parties will unite Madhesi voters or attract a large number of followers and make it a national party. The other point is that two of the largest vote-getting Madhesi parties—those represented by Bijay Gachhadar and Upendra Yadav—have

politics if there is a reasonable expectation that a united Madhesi party would fight for Madhesi rights. Looking outside the realm of Madhesi parties, a large chunk of Madhesi voters—at least half—had voted for the national parties, largely non-Madhesi

Continue in page 4...

'Deduction in Indian Aid Impacts Nepal's Development'

Kathmandu: Stakeholders said during an interaction that reduction in India's assistance to neighboring countries would affect the development of Nepal. The participants in the interaction on 'Major Highlights of Indian Federal Budget 2020/2021 and Opportunities for Nepali Traders and Investors', organised by Birjung-based Consulate General of India shared about the impact of India's budget on

Nepal's economy. Since the economies of India and Nepal are interconnected to each other, India's budget will directly impact Nepal's economy, according to Minister for Industry, Tourism, Forest and Environment Ram Naresh Raya of Province 2. Presenting a joint working paper at the programme, Dr Dipendra Kumar Chaudhari and Chartered Accountant Mukesh Shah said that India's budget matters

not only to Nepal's economy but also to other neighboring countries. They claimed that the 33 percent deduction of India's support to Nepal will directly affect the country's development and construction activities. India cut off the amount to Rs 8 billion from Rs 12 billion allocated in its budget for 2019/20. They said that Nepal's export to India can be reduced due to an increase in customs duty from India's side to promote its domestic products. Till



date, Nepal has been exporting soybean oil, fiber, palm oil, shoes, cigarettes and other agricultural products to India.

Consul General Dr Kotraswamy M said India's aid for Nepal seems to have declined as it has cut off its investment for Nepal's development projects.



Editorial

Protection of Chure

Former President Dr Ram Baran Yadav, who has been stressing the need for preserving the Chure hills right from the time he assumed the high office in 2008 as he is very familiar with the consequences of deforestation and soil erosion in the Chure hills, is not happy with the performance of the government regarding Chure conservation. He is of the firm belief that protection of the Chure hills is essential to keep life in the Terai region safe, which he reiterated during his on-site visit under the President Chure Conservation Programme the other day. He rightly stressed the need for the effective enforcement of the laws relating to Chure conservation to stop deforestation in the region and highlighted the importance of Chure preservation to conserve the water sources and protect the fertile lands of the Terai. Obviously, the Chure hills are the lifeline of the people residing in the Terai, providing water and other essential resources. However, the excessive exploitation of the resources, mostly the trees and stones, by the illegal quarries operating here has put the entire region at high risk of desertification. The landslides in the Chure cause massive floods,

Bold and result-oriented intervention is now required for Chure. Not only our ecology, but the livelihood of millions is at stake.

damaging the paddy fields and settlements in the Terai. The government has failed to implement some of the measures it introduced to control the operation of stone quarries and export of stones in the past. The nexus between the business people engaged in exporting stones to India and law-enforcement authorities is often blamed for the continued exploitation of the Chure. The resources of these hills are supplied to the local markets as well as India.

Therefore, there is an urgent need to save the Chure hills by formulating and implementing additional laws. If we fail to save the Chure in time, we will be helpless when natural calamities strike as a result of the destruction of these hills.

Excessive extraction of natural resources has put the fragile Chure range—spanning over 36 districts and accounting for 12.6 percent of country's total area—on the brink of an environmental disaster. Excessive extraction of sand, boulders and stones are causing desertification. Water sources are drying up, causing great inconvenience to the locals for irrigating the lands and conducting other agriculture related works. The cases of flooding have increased every year and rampant extraction of resources in this region has been ascribed as the cause of massive flooding in the plains. Chure serves as a lifeline to sustain Nepal's eco-system both up in the hills and the mountains and the areas in the plains. If extraction continues at this rate, a vast majority of people living in the plains will have to suffer the consequence. The Oli government proved its mettle by dismantling transport syndicates and it has been rightly appreciated for this. It has set a good precedent that with one single bold move even the strong nexus of illegal actors can be broken. Similar bold and result-oriented intervention is now required for Chure. Not only our ecology, but the livelihood of millions is at stake.

China cannot dictate terms to a free media in Nepal

Akanshya Shah

This was unusual and surprising because so far China has always opted for diplomatic routes through the home and foreign ministries to express its unhappiness over certain events in Nepal.

Nepal has over the last few years developed deeper bilateral ties with China, a country which had for decades limited its role as a friendly country and being happy with Nepal taking the One China policy and restricting activities of some 20,000 Tibetan refugees present in the country. Nepal has over the last few years developed deeper bilateral ties with China, a country which had for decades limited its role as a friendly country and being happy with Nepal taking the One China policy and restricting activities of some 20,000 Tibetan refugees present in the country.

On February 19, which coincided with the Democracy Day of Nepal, Nepali media faced an unusual situation emanating from a strongly worded statement from the Chinese embassy in Kathmandu. It said that an article reproduced by The Kathmandu Post on February 18 from The Korea Herald written by former United States ambassador to Nato, Ivo Daalder, was published with "malicious intention", and that it "deliberately smeared the efforts of the Chinese government and people" fighting the new coronavirus epidemic. The article critical of China's response to the Covid-19 also carried a picture of China's leader Mao Zedong on the country's 1,000-yuan banknote wearing a mask. The embassy accused the newspaper for having "viciously attacked the political system of China."

But the statement did not end there. By personally targeting the Post's outgoing editor, Anup Kaphle, it said that there were "ulterior motives" behind the consistent attacks on China, and that "It is regrettable that Mr Anup Kaphle, chief editor of The Kathmandu Post has always been biased on China-related issues." In most inappropriate and undiplomatic language, the statement further read, "This time he (Kaphle) went as far as disregarding the facts and becoming a parrot of some anti-China forces and, therefore, his ulterior purpose is destined to failure," adding without specifics, "The

Chinese Embassy in Nepal has made solemn representations to the newspaper and himself and reserves the right of further action." The threat was immediately condemned by a group of 17 editors of Nepal's newspapers and magazines who said the statement violated "diplomatic norms."

This was unusual and surprising because so far China has always opted for diplomatic routes through the home and foreign ministries to express its unhappiness over certain events in Nepal. China is also considered to be a pragmatic player in Nepal, and the public opinion is one of a "friendly and supportive" neighbour. Chinese ambassador to Nepal, How Yanqi, who is quite popular in the country due to her fluency in the Nepali language and her affection for Nepali music and culture, immediately tweeted the statement that provoked a fierce debate on the social media with many calling it a challenge to Nepal's sovereignty and an interference in the functioning of the free media. Some even asked what kind of backlash would be seen in Kathmandu if such a statement was issued by the Indian embassy given the past experiences and in light of India being perceived as an interfering neighbour. But there were strong opposing voices too that questioned the rationale of the article in the first place at a time when a close neighbour "is passing through a difficult time."

But clearly this is a sign of high-handedness on the part of a diplomatic mission, emboldened by its high comfort level with the ruling establishment in Kathmandu. This also highlights how Chinese engagement with a small country is leading to its diplomacy becoming arrogant. There is no evidence of such a statement from the Chinese embassy in Seoul where the article was first published. But in the case of Nepal, this stems from the efforts of the communist leaders to bend over backwards for China in order to replace over-

dependency on India.

Nepal has over the last few years developed deeper bilateral ties with China, a country which had for decades limited its role as a friendly country and being happy with Nepal taking the One China policy and restricting activities of some 20,000 Tibetan refugees present in the country. But slowly, and especially from 2015, the year Nepal was wrecked by the devastating earthquake followed by a border blockade due to anti-Constitution protests by the people of the Terai region, China-Nepal relations moved from a developmental partnership to a strategic one. From being a signatory to the Belt and Road Initiative, Nepal now has access to seven transit points and three land ports in China. Besides crucial infrastructure development in Nepal, the two neighbours have committed a cooperation in wide-ranging sectors from energy to culture, tourism, education, traditional medicine, and others, thereby making bilateral relations a comprehensive and an all-encompassing one. President Xi Jinping's Nepal visit in October 2019 elevated bilateral ties to secure China the space in Nepal that India traditionally occupied.

These developments have taken shape keeping in view the present Nepali establishment's desire to cultivate closer ties with China as a counterweight to India. The deep political linkage between the Communist Party leaders of Nepal and China has now come out in a more visible manner. It is to be seen if KP Oli, whose Nepal Communist Party fought the last general elections on a strong "nationalist" agenda (which translates to being anti-India in Nepal), would show the same boldness in dealing with China and reminding the latter that the constitution of Nepal upholds the freedom of speech, and that a foreign power cannot dictate terms to a free media in a democratic polity.

Constitution amendment not only matter of Madhesh

➤ *Why it was necessary for NCP to bring Bamdev Gautam in National Assembly as he was defeated by the people?*

• Winning and losing elections is a process. The party may have considered it necessary for such an important role in making Bamdev Gautam a member of the National Assembly. Narayan Kaji Shrestha, who was also defeated, was also brought to the National Assembly. Therefore bringing key leaders is to make the NCP's government more effective.

➤ *Why only the old leader? Isn't the new face with a vision in the NCP?*

• We ourselves are not satisfied with the momentum of the NCP government going forward, this government would have to come up with new backgrounds, goals and roles. While we are the most trusted party in Nepal, it is not a continuation of past governments. It is the government that has come from a different background and purpose. That is why some important leaders need a role.

It is wrong young people in the new generation can't work. But some of the key leaders whose role may be in need of the party may be convinced.

➤ *Should Bamdev Gautam to be brought in place of Finance Minister Dr Yuvraj Khatiwada?*

• This is not to say that Bamdev Gautam is going to be brought to the National Assembly for bringing in the government. Other than that, there may be some other motives. The party later decides on where his needs are felt.

➤ *There is a two-thirds government under*

the leadership of NCP, also known as the most powerful in Nepal's history. But why couldn't the public feel it?

• Compared to past, there has been a lot of work towards development. The country has gone a long way towards economic prosperity. But this is not sufficient. Although the Federal Democratic Republic now arrives, constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy modality remain. The past style of the Congress government should be ended. Although now called the federal democratic republican system, the mindset of those who want to keep the environment completely has not changed. We want to develop the federal democratic republic as a model everywhere as political change has

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taken place. Incorrect thinking and tendencies need to end. So this government has done more work than any other government. However, this has not given the state a new impetus.

➤ *It has been two years since this government was formed. General people do not feel, why?*

• If the NCP leaders are involved, then this is the party that is wrong. If there was a Congress, it would have protected the corrupt. But the NCP cadres have dared to say the wrong things of their party. It's a positive thing. However, the NCP leaders should not be

protected in the wrong doings.

➤ *But, the leaders of the NCP have been involved in one another after another?*

• It's a positive thing. In the Lalita Niwas scam, the government has also been accused of taking a strategy to protect itself and to deceive the opposition.

• All knows what the Lalita Niwas scam is and what happened? In the process, even if the leaders of our party have acted with wrong intentions and thinking, he too will not be exempt. No one get impunity even they are leader or cadre of NCP.

➤ *In that case, did not the NCP protect its leader Bishnu Poudel?*

• Investigation into the land is being held in the name of Bishnu Poudel's son. When it comes to his topic, our party leaders cadres have said that they should be

investigated.

➤ *But, when Prabhu Sah criticized the clarification was sought by the party, why?*

• In some cases, we have to speak on the basis of the evidence. No one should be accused of prejudice. As Krishna Bahadur Mahara was falsely accused, the court cleared. After being accused, he assisted in the investigation of the law. So the NCP does not protect the wrong. If someone is falsely accused, it should not be made on the basis of that allegation.

➤ *Is the audio scandal of immediate*



Shiv Kumar Mandal

Member, House of Representatives, NCP

minister Gokul Baskota that has come out of the current media, a fair investigation?

• This audio scandal is a heinous crime if proven. Since NCP leader is an activist, it is not exempt to act against the law. If the allegation is substantiated, then the prosecution must have a stake. It certainly involves a fair investigation. It does not have any kind of problem, but it has no problem. But, whoever brings out such audio, if he cannot prove it, then he should be prosecuted.

➤ *How likely is that cooperation to go forward?*

• Issue was met with RJP in the National Assembly elections and then cooperated. It is important to understand the government's views on the demands raised by the RJP and the views of the RJP on the participation of the government. If the idea of RJP is to move forward with the NCP, it cannot be carried

forward but it is not necessary if there is cooperation only on the basis of a transaction.

➤ *RJP has been demanding amendment of the constitution, including the release of Reshamlal Chaudhary since the past. What is the government's view on these issues?*

• The subject of amendment of the constitution is not only the subject of the RJP. The basic issues that have not yet been addressed through the constitution need to be addressed through constitutional amendments. In the past, when Socialist Party also joined the government, they had joined the government by agreeing to the 2 points on the amendment of the constitution. However, it was not yet the case that Upendraji had discussed with the prime minister or the party president about the issue of amending the constitution. It is only dramatic to say that he quit the government as soon as the constitution was not amended after leaving the government.

Unification...

ones that are ambivalent—even hostile—to Madhesi interests. Madhesi people's pick of national party candidates nonetheless tells much about the perception of Madhesi parties and their leaders. Day-to-day contacts with Pahade leaders and cadres make Madhesi public trust them more than Madhesi leaders they encounter. Also, official channels are almost entirely controlled by Pahade personnel. The other point to consider about the viability and vitality of the new Madhesi group is their half-hearted attempt at unity. They have agreed to create a new party—Rastriya Janata Party Nepal—that noticeably leaves out 'Madhes' from the new party's name. By doing so, they may get some mileage as a national rather than a regional group but they shouldn't expect non-Madhesi public to vote for them. The logic is simple: if all of these six parties together attracted no more than 10 percent of Madhesi votes, why would any Pahade voters trust

them? The other point is that as until now there has been no case of a Madhesi candidate winning election from Pahade region, whereas Pahade candidates secure a great number of seats in the Madhesi region.

Finally, the fickleness of the unity drive is evident from the reluctance of respective party leaders to give-up their own leadership in favor of just one leader, preferably one chosen from outside the group. The truth is that these leaders are prepared to give up little or nothing—they will take turns heading the new party every six months—which is a ridiculous, even deceptive, way of claiming unity.

If there is a real drive for unity and making it work, they must choose an outsider to head the united party and the current leaders need to opt out. Nothing of this sort is likely to happen and, on the inside, each party will likely pursue its own separate agenda and keep

control of its cadres so as to assert its independent existence. Unity then remains fickle and fragile and could fall apart at the slightest hurdle.

The unity attempt of the six Madhesi parties is commendable. But a lot more is needed than just agreeing to a rotating leadership. The missing point is the declaration of a common purpose for Madhesi people in order to help them enter the national mainstream, lifting them from their current state of marginalization and exclusion.

In large part, these Unitarian leaders need to recognize that Madhesis have been deprived of their citizenship rights; for all intent and purpose, they exist as sub-citizens or non-citizens of the country. Any political group claiming to represent Madhesi people needs to focus on securing equal rights for Madhesis and little of anything else. No other political commitment by Madhesi leaders would make them more

legitimate in the eyes of the Madhesi people.

Unfortunately, the Madhesi parties have not been serious about Madhesi rights. Instead, they are stuck with esoteric visions of federalism, autonomy, separation, independence and other high-sounding labels. However, in the context of the geopolitical constraints of Madhes, none of these grand visions seems relevant, much less beneficial to the Madhesi people. In most parts, if any of these objectives is realized, its major beneficiary will likely be a narrow group of people who are close to the leadership. The moral failings of Madhes movement has been that while the public has taken risks and faced bullets, benefits have accrued mostly or entirely to leaders. If, instead, the rights issue is brought upfront and adopted as the main objective of battle for Madhesi rights, Madhesi public will understand why they need to side with Madhesi leaders and Madhesi parties. No other message will be necessary to mobilize Madhesi masses.

Janakpur-Jayanagar Railway Company hiring additional workforce



Kathmandu: The government is preparing to recruit an additional 226 workforces for the operation of a railway service from Kurtha in Dhanusha to Jayanagar India. The railway company's existing workforce is very limited and additional employees including the company chief are being recruited to address the dearth, the Department of Railways, Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport Management.

According to the Department's director-general Balam Mishra, the Council of Ministers last month had given permission to hire additional human resources for the railway service operation.

The Department is waiting for its endorsement by the Board of Directors to make the vacancy announcement.

The most required workforce is for the engineering service. Employees for administration and accounting services are also necessary.

The Department itself is handling the recruitment process as the company sans director-general, it is said. The railway track has been already constructed for the project and two train sets have been manufactured in India and they are arriving here soon, Mishra said.

The government had initiated the procurement process for the two sets through India's government company, and the service can be operated once the sets arrive, he said. Two sets will have altogether ten coaches with a capacity of boarding up to 12,000 passengers at once. The railway service track is 35 kilometers which will be extended up to Bijulpura in the future.

ICU rendered useless for lack of doctors



Sarlahi: The Intensive Care Unit of the Nawalpur snakebite treatment centre at ward no. 1 of Lalbandi municipality has been out of service due to lack of doctors. The ICU is also equipped with a ventilator.

The ICU along with the ventilator was established almost eight months ago at the total cost of Rs. 3 million. The government of State no 2 had provided support to the establishment of the ICU. The ICU and ventilator have been rendered useless for lack of a doctor, said chair of the centre management committee Bodharaj Kafley. "Our repeated

plea to the Health Ministry to depute a doctor has not been heard yet," he said.

The centre was established six years ago, considering the increasing incidents of snake bites in Sarlahi and neighbouring districts. It usually receives 10 to 12 cases in a day during the summer season. It has so far provided treatment to 4,500 patients.

The centre also has an ambulance to ferry the patients of snakebites. With support from the UNDP in Nepal, a solar power system is being installed to provide round-the-clock service to the patients, Kafley said.

Newly appointed Indian envoy Kwatra arrives

Kathmandu: Newly appointed Ambassador of India to Nepal Vinay Mohan Kwatra has arrived in Kathmandu on Sunday. Kwatra will assume his office later this week after presenting his credentials to President Bidya Devi Bhandari.

He was serving as the ambassador to France before he was handed the Nepal job on Jan 15, two weeks after Manjeev Singh Puri departed Kathmandu ending his three-year tenure.

Kwatra is a member of the Indian Foreign Service with experience since 1988 in a range of assignments.

A diploma in International Relations, he served as Third Secretary and then Second Secretary in the Permanent



Mission of India in Geneva until 1993, where he handled work relating to the UN specialized agencies, as also the Human Rights Commission. He also served as a desk officer at the headquarters dealing with the

United Nations, and subsequently in the Diplomatic Missions in South Africa and Uzbekistan between 1993 and 2003. He then served as Counselor and later as the Deputy Chief of Mission in the Embassy of India, Beijing, China

till 2006.

He represented India at the SAARC Secretariat in Nepal as head of the Trade, Economy and Finance Bureau between 2006 and 2010. From May 2010 till July 2013, he served as Minister (Commerce) in the Embassy of India, Washington. Between July 2013 and October 2015, Mr. Kwatra headed the Policy Planning & Research Division of the Ministry of External Affairs and later served as the head of Americas Division in the Foreign Ministry where he dealt with India's relations with the United States and Canada. From October 2015 till August 2017, Mr. Kwatra served as a Joint Secretary in the office of the Prime Minister of India.

Encroachment upon forest continues unabated in Mahottari



Mahottari: The community forest at ward no 1 and 3 of Bardibas municipality in the district have witnessed increasing encroachment. Five hectares of the Newaredanda Kamidanda community forest expanded in 58.3 hectares of land has been encroached in recent years, said the Division Forest Office.

Division chief Hemanta Prasad Shah informed that as many as 100 persons were involved in encroaching upon the forest area for two years. The forest area is surveyed in a gap of three year.

Currently, the survey is being conducted in the presence of Secretary at Ministry of Industry, Tourism and Environment of State 2, Prem Narayan Kandel. In the encroached land, construction of concrete houses is thriving. Those occupying forest area are setting boundary with wire and plots.

The Division office has

decided to take together the local levels, security agencies and the federal and State level bodies to retrieve the encroached forest lands, Shah added. Meanwhile, the people occupying the land have argued that they were living there not by felling trees but by retaining the land their ancestors cultivated.

In addition to this, the forest area under the Sagarnath Forest Development Project has been facing encroachment and deforestation of late. Wildfire is another threat to the forest. "It is worrying that wildfire destroy our forest in the Spring season, the time trees get new buds," said Min Rahapal, resident at Belgachhi of Gaushala municipality-8, showing the smouldering tree trunks. Felling trees illegally is also rife in this season, he added. Ward no 5 chairman of Bardibas municipality, Dal Bahadur Thapa, also admitted that the encroachment of Sagarnath forest was continuous for 30 years.

The locals worried why the wildfire was not controlled. Laxmi Prasad Mahato from Laxminiya of Gaushala municipality blamed the forest office for such ignorance and apathy.

Lawmaker Giri accuses NCP of promoting corruption



Kathmandu: Socialist Party lawmaker Sarita Giri has accused the ruling Nepal Communist Party of promoting corruption in the country. Speaking at the meeting of the House of Representatives, Giri claimed that the entire ruling party has been indulged into corruption.

"The corruption is thriving in the country since both the NCP and the NCP-led government are promoting corruption in multiple ways," she said.

Giri went on to say that the NCP is promoting corruption

in the name of achieving the goal of Socialism in the country.

Leader Giri also said that the government is trying to cover up the recent audio scandal of immediate past Information Minister Gokul Prasad Baskota, in which, he was found bargaining Rs 700 million in bribe from a Swiss company.

"I urge Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli to launch fair probe into the audio scandal," she said.

India-US finalize defense deals worth \$3 billion

New Delhi: A successful two-day trip culminated with a carefully handled press interaction by US President Donald Trump. India and US decided to forge ahead on all spheres of the relationship despite the concerns regarding the tough negotiations on trade but the US President clearly side-stepped all domestic issues of India or those that India considers "internal".

"I am going to be not at all controversial and blow the two days, plus two days of travel on one answer, one little answer...that will be the end of the trip. They will not talk about the trip," he said while addressing the media at ITC Maurya in New Delhi.

The issue of religious freedom did come up during the restricted dialogue and President Trump said that he got a "powerful" answer from the Prime Minister.

"I had a very powerful answer



from the PM... He told me, as far as Muslims are concerned, there are 200 million Muslims in India, a fairly short while ago there were 14 million," he said. During a briefing after the talks, Foreign Secretary Harsh Shringla said,

"On religious freedom, there was an appreciation on both sides that pluralism and diversity are a common binding factor in both countries."

Another controversial issue that came up during the talks was

Kashmir. Trump clarified that he never "offered" to "mediate" but added that there are always two sides to a story and if needed, he will do what it takes.

While the two sides have been on the same page on all counts, a certain discomfort was felt with Trump praising Pakistan on Indian soil. He lauded the efforts of Pakistan in fighting terror at the Motera stadium in Ahmedabad, during the joint press statement and at the separate media interaction. "In our discussions, Prime Minister Modi and I affirmed our two countries' commitment to protecting our citizens from radical Islamic terrorism. In this effort, the United States is also working productively with Pakistan to confront terrorists who operate on its soil", President Trump said alongside PM Modi in the lawns of Hyderabad House in New Delhi after the talks.

Oli not in mood to recommend Gautam to National Assembly



Kathmandu: The Nepal Communist Party Secretariat Wednesday nominated party Vice-chair Bam Dev Gautam as the National Assembly member but Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli is unlikely to take him to the upper house.

Gautam's name was finalized against Oli's will and the chair has warned he would renominate Finance Minister Yuvaraj Khatiwada who two-year tenure as due to expire next week. He was appointed to the upper house by the president upon the recommendation of the Oli government.

Oli has fallen into minority especially after Pushpa Kamal Dahal was named the executive chair of the party in return for letting the Prime Minister lead the government for a full five-year term. Previously, the two chair duo had reached a secret deal to head the government for an equal period. And most of the secretariat members except Ishwar Pokhrel have aligned with Dahal of late, most of the decisions including the election of Agni Sapkota as Speaker have been taken against Oli's will.

Sources have claimed that Dahal, senior leader Jhala Nath Khanal, Madhav Nepal and Gautam had assembled at Dahal's residence in Khumaltar before the secretariat meeting. He had also warned the secretariat members he would not tolerate any conspiracies against him during the meeting, according to reports.

"If you have already decided to nominate Gautam to National Assembly, lets nominate him." "But I am ready to face the challenge." Soon after the meeting, Oli had called senior leader Madhav Kumar Nepal and warned him the Council of Minister would not recommend Gautam for the vacant president quota.

And it was Dahal who proposed Gautam's name for the upper house and, as well as a plan for constitution amendment clearing the way for Gautam, who lost the 2017 parliamentary election, to head the government in the capacity of prime minister. However, the plan was not materialized as the secretariat dissolved the planned three-member taskforce comprising of Nepal, Subash Nembang and Khimal Devkota before it was even formed owing to criticisms within the party and public outcry.

Oli has accused his rival faction of forwarding Gautam's name in the influence of some industrialists who are unhappy with Finance Minister Khatiwada.

Trade points in northern border to remain closed

Kathmandu: Nepal's northern border with China, which has remained closed since a month following the coronavirus outbreak in mainland China, is unlikely to open anytime soon. Government authorities have said they are not in a hurry to open the border as the epidemic has not been fully contained in China.

Tatopani and Rasuwagadhi, the two major customs point between Nepal and China, have remained shut since January 29 to prevent further spreading of the deadly virus.

More than 500 containers of goods ordered by Nepali importers have remained stuck across the border in Kerung. Those containers contain goods worth Rs 3 billion.

High-ranking government officials hand held a meeting earlier this week to discuss about resuming trade from the border point. The meeting chaired by secretaries of the finance, home, health and industry ministries concluded that it is not safe to reopen the border points unless they have modern equipment and facilities to screen the visitors. As the government currently



lacks equipment to screen the people coming from China, the authorities have decided not to reopen the border for the time being, informed Joint Secretary Uttar Kumar Khatri of the finance ministry.

He said that the government's priority at the moment is protecting its citizens from the deadly virus rather than resuming trade.

"The fear of infection has not yet subsided. Keeping in consideration the national security, it seems likely that the resumption of trade from the border will take some more time," added Khatri.

According to him, the government will ease the restriction once the threat level decreases.

India evacuates Nepali from quarantined cruise ship Diamond Princess in Japan

New Delhi: India has evacuated 124 people including Nepali who have quarantined on board the Diamond Princess due to COVID19.

Air India flight has just landed in Delhi from Tokyo, carrying 119 Indians & 5 nationals from Sri Lanka, Nepal, South Africa and Peru who Appreciate the facilitation of Japanese authorities. Thank you

The Union minister said out of 138 Indians originally on board the Diamond Princess, 16 Indian crew members have tested positive for coronavirus. He said those tested positive are receiving necessary medical care and treatment at onshore medical facilities in Japan.

All the evacuees will undergo a 14-day quarantine at a medical facility set-up by the Indian Army in Manesar.



Three Indian crew members did not board the special flight and conveyed their wish to continue their stay onboard the cruise ship to complete the period of extended quarantine put in place by the government of Japan, a government statement said. They were among the 3,711 people on board the Diamond Princess ship when it docked

at the Yokohama port, near Tokyo, on February 3.

The ship was quarantined after a passenger who disembarked last month in Hong Kong was found to be the carrier of the disease. India had earlier operated two special Air India flights on February 1 and 2 and airlifted 647 Indian nationals, mostly students, and seven Maldivian nationals. Wednesday's flight was cleared by

China after allegations of delay by Indian officials.

Similarly, The Indian Air Force (IAF) relief aircraft evacuated 76 Indians and 36 foreign nationals from the Chinese city of Wuhan, the epicenter of coronavirus outbreak. The C17 transport aircraft that left for China earlier with 15 tonnes of medical supplies from India to the virus-hit Wuhan landed in Delhi early Thursday morning. Special flights of the Indian Air Force and Air India arrived in Delhi on Thursday morning after evacuating Indians and foreigners from coronavirus-hit Wuhan and quarantined cruise ship, Diamond Princess, in Japan. "On its return from Wuhan, the IAF flight has brought back 76 Indians & 36 nationals from 7 countries – Bangladesh, Myanmar, Maldives, China, South Africa, USA, and Madagascar. Appreciate facilitation by the Chinese government," Jaishankar tweeted.

India to handover railway to Nepal on March 31



Janakpur: India is handing over two trains to operate along the Janakpur-Jayanagar railway route in Nepal on March 31. However, the government is not sure when the operation will resume.

Bala Ram Mishra, the director general of the Department of Railway, says the Indian company manufacturing the engines says the trains will be handed over to Nepal on March 31, but it will take a few more

months for Nepal to bring them into operation.

Earlier, the government had signed a contract with the Indian government-owned company to purchase the trains at the cost of Rs 847 million. Each train will have five containers and they can carry 1,200 passengers at a time. The government has already decided to assign the state-owned Nepal Railway Company to operate and manage the newly upgrade Janakpur-Jayanagar railway line.

NCP nominates Gautam as NA member



Kathmandu: The Nepal Communist Party has decided to nominate Bam Dev Gautam as a National Assembly (NA) member. A secretariat meeting of the ruling party held in Baluwatar took the decision. Gautam will be nominated to the upper house by President Bidya Devi Bhandari upon the recommendation of the Council of Ministers. He will succeed NA member and incumbent Minister for Finance Yubaraj Khatriwada whose two year tenure is due to expire next month.

The meeting has also dissolved the task force formed to carry out necessary homework to amend the constitution paving way for a

NA member to become the head of the government, according to party Spokesperson Narayan Kaji Shrestha.

The decision to dissolve the three-member task force led by Madhav Kumar Nepal has dashed Gautam's hopes to become the prime minister. Gautam has demanded an amendment in the Article 76 which only allows the member of House of Representatives to become the prime minister. The election of the upper house held on Jan 23 has already elected 18 members to replace the outgoing 19 member in the 59-member National Assembly.

India to prepare Raxaul-Kathmandu railway DPR



Kathmandu: India has started preparations for a detailed project report for the construction of Raxaul-Kathmandu railway though it is yet to sign a memorandum of understanding with the Nepal government in this regard. Officials at the Department of Railway in Nepal say India has already allocated budget for the

DPR preparation. Earlier, Nepal had asked India to prepare the DPR. Though India has already accepted the request, a formal MoU is yet to be signed.

“Since the budget has already been allocated, the Indian team will soon come to Nepal and begin its work,” the department’s chief Bala Ram Mishra says, “But we have not been informed about the developments officially.” In the past also, India had launched a preliminary study for the project without signing the agreement. India has already handed over the preliminary engineering and traffic survey report to Nepal.

Nepalgunj to organize Self-Defense Training for girls

Nepalgunj: The Nepalgunj sub-metropolis is going to organise self-defense training for women and girls in Nepalgunj.

The training will help women and girls to protect themselves in difficult and vulnerable times, said chief of the women and children unit Manju Pandey.

A public notice has been issued calling for applications from interested and eligible women and girls. The age criteria for taking part in the training are between 10 to 50 years.

The girls affiliated to girls group, child clubs and girl students will be given the first



priority, according to the sub-metropolis.

The training will be organized at Nepalgunj stadium from 6:00 am to 10:00 am and it will be held from coming March 3.

Daughters’ insurance campaign concludes



Jaleshwar: Under the Chief Minister Save Daughters Educate Daughters campaign 2,455 girls have been insured in Mahottari district.

According to Kajal Jha, Daughters Insurance Plan Officer for Mahottari district, the campaign had begun on January 15 in all 15 local levels of the district.

Jha informed that 221 daughters from Jaleshwar Municipality, 123 from Yekdada Gaupalika, 173 from Matihani Municipality, 133 from Ramgopal Municipality, 159 from Aaurahi Municipality and 119 from Bhangaha Municipality have been insured. Similarly, 128 girls of Lohar Patti Municipality, 206 of Bardibas Municipality, 223 of Samsi Gaupalika, 114 of Sonam Gaupaika and 201 of Gaushala Municipality have been covered under the scheme.

The State government had decided to provide Rs. 100,000 for insurance of daughters born after January 15 this year.

Around 20,000 girls had been missed out so the campaign had been extended by a week so as to give another chance for those girls who somehow failed to register their name under the campaign.

State 2 also pledged to provide three-month free internet access to the insured girls, but the government has not been able to provide the facility so far.

According to Laxmi Kumar Sah, a resident of Ward – 2, the State government couldn’t provide the internet service even after a month of the campaign.

According to Nageshwar Singh, Manager of Subisu Net Branch, they had not received the list of insured girls from the ministry yet.

Jha said that Municipalities and Gaupalikas had been preparing the insurance list and as soon as they prepared it they would provide the internet service.

Mithila Culture Study Centre being constructed



Janakpurdham: Construction of the Mithila Culture Study Centre has been started here. The Centre will feature the cultural heritage of all communities in Mithila.

The building has been designed including the ‘abode of the deities’ with the miniature painting of all the gods and goddesses. It reflects the identity and culture of the Mithila region. The Centre building is being constructed at Janakpurdham Sub-metropolitan City-7 by the Maithil Brahman Mahasabha. The plan is to construct the structure within two years, Mahasabha President Bhagawan Jha said.

According to him, the Centre would have a meeting hall on the first floor, the abode of the deities in the second floor, the Mithila museum in the third floor, library and an auditorium in the fourth floor while the fifth and sixth floor would have residential rooms.

The building will be constructed at a total cost of Rs 110 million. Janakpur Sub-metropolitan City will contribute Rs 500 thousand while the rest of the cost would be met through donation. Mahasabha president Jha said the income from the operation of the Centre would be used for providing stipends to the students from the economically deprived communities.