

## CLIMATE CHANGE OR STICK IN THE MUD?

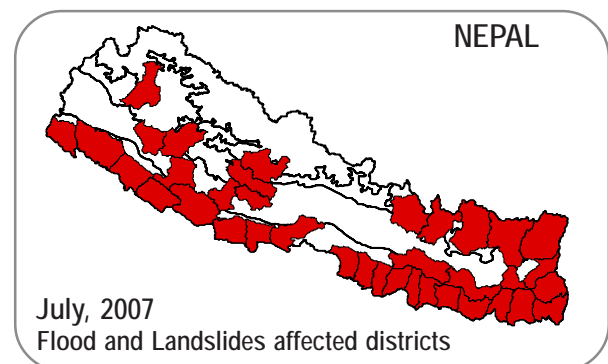
Apar Paudyal M.Sc.

With the onset of monsoon every year, Nepal receives an incessant amount of rainfall causing landslides and flash floods with widespread damage to the lives and to their belongings. Generally July is peak hours for monsoon downpour in Nepal. In this July over 75 people's lives were lost and other 86000 were left stranded homeless in 37 districts of Nepal due to incessant rainfall and landslides in various occasion. Inundation hit hard life of the entire Terai low land region and landslides to some mid-hills region and above in Nepal.

The disasters broke out with the two days continuous downpour during 12-13 July causing massive landslides in Baglung and Bajura districts that took 26 lives, leaving 20 injured and 3 missing. Same day in Khumjung 14 families were displaced and landslides destroyed homes, crops and farmland and loss estimated to be of Rs 3.3 million. Two days after the death toll at Baglung was totaled 34 and hundred homeless. Similarly, five in Bajura, three in Jajarkot, two in Ilam were died and 15 families were left homeless in Ramechhap. Five days later, the landslides casualties in total took 44 human lives.

The torrential downpour further hit life hard to Mohottari and Udaypur district in 23 July when river floods waterlogged more than two dozen villages and rendering hundreds homeless. The after effect cut off the transport services and import of essential commodities from India. The following day, torrential downpour took furious state in Sarlai, Rautahat and Gulmi districts making dozens of village under water. Floods soars high as 3 feet in many parts of low land belt of Nepal on 25 July causing two more death and one missing. Villages were inundated and major highway routes were blocked. On the very next day, six more people were killed by floods and landslides in Salyan and Saptari. Monsoon continues to deluge life in Terai totaling more than 75 lives across the country at the end of the July. Expert from Meteorological Forecasting Division said that the levels of rainfall this July was recorded significantly higher in comparison to last year (2006) record and expect rain for few more days.

Aftermath flood results viral fever in Sunsari and Morang that had gripped increasing numbers suffering from pneumonia and gastro-enteritis diseases. Nepal Medical Association (NMA) has urged the concerned authorities to take immediate steps to avert likely water-induced epidemics such as diarrhea, cholera, typhoid and gastroenteritis and vector borne diseases such as malaria, hepatitis A and E in flood-affected areas. Also they pledge to supply chlorinated water and hygienic food to the victims. Government had decided immediate compensation of Rs 15,000 to each families those who are killed due to floods and landslides, Rs 10,000 each to those whose houses have been completely destroyed and Rs 5,000 to those whose houses have been partially damaged. The disaster relief fund was doubled from 25 million rupees to 50 million rupees. Rescue operation and rapid response teams are active despite of the challenge posed by continuous rainfall in the hardest hit areas.



The bone of contention arises over few facts. First, several huge structure such as barrages and dams constructed by the Indian government near the bordering areas have blocked the flow of water. Second, human nature to cultivate again in the inundated fields' and dozens of villages that are flooded in monsoon are inhabited again. Third, natural disaster alert and relief measures in Nepal is solely aftermath event operation. Therefore, how these issues will be addressed for the future is the fundamental questions for disaster preparedness and reduction strategy in the ravaged areas.

## CAN OPPORTUNITIES BE SEIZED?

Dr Mark L Hildebrandt, a Fulbright scholar put forward his note to alarm Nepal on the pace of global climate change with the possible temperature rise. Present and future generations of Nepal will have to deal with accompanying hazards resulting from these rises, including floods, droughts, altered monsoon patterns, poor air quality, and worsening health conditions. To cope with this challenge political leader of Nepal should realize on the resource base and must gear up in three areas. They are: use water resources, promote renewable energy and improve agriculture technology.

## IS BIODIESEL AN OPTION?

The prospective argument to use Jatropha oil seed as a domestic alternative bio-diesel by substituting the imported conventional energy is in dispute made by scientist around the world. Scientist had presented their compelling case of unintended consequence from the use of ethanol irrespective of the sources of bio-diesel.

First, the argument of byproduct level in the atmosphere ejecting out by using ethanol as a fuel. According to Stanford university scientist (Guardian unlimited: April, 18 2007) based on their computer model to simulate air quality in the year 2020, claimed that cars that run on ethanol could be more damaging to human health than conventional petrol vehicles. The experiment was based on comparing the effects of a fleet of vehicles running on gasoline with a fleet running on E85, a bio-fuel that is 85% ethanol and 15% gasoline. The results were two fold. First, it increases the level of ozone and second, while it reduced atmospheric levels of two cancer-causing compounds- benzene and butadiene but it had increased the levels of two others- formaldehyde and acetaldehyde.

Second, the ethanol blend bio-diesel is not ready to use without modification of conventional engine. UK scientist, Peter Barlow had identified the problems over use of ethanol as a fuel in all sort of engine and fuel system. When it is reacted with catalyst the engine and fuel system fails, largely due to corrosion from the un-reacted

impurities in the system. Suggesting this as an irrelevant case and yet to be resolved for efficient use.

Third, though growing energy crops yield fuel, jobs and money, environmentalists fear that to supply the current energy consumption, large tracts of land have to be cleared in order to grow bio-fuel crops that could incur at the cost of replacing the food crops. To fulfill the current consumption level, issues related to negative impact on land preservation, conservation of biological diversity and other environmental effects must be addressed.

## ELECTRIC VEHICLES TIMES

During the interaction organized under the aegis of the Clean Energy Nepal and Environment and Public Health Organization, experts stress over using electric vehicles as alternatives to cope with the petroleum crisis in Nepal. To minimize the economic burden caused by import of petrol options like trolley buses, electric cars and use of hydropower in transport sector could help avert the problems of fuel crisis. Expert argued that the problem with promotion lies in the Government being revenue sensitive and not being environment sensitive.

## HUNTING AT DHORPATAN

Based on status survey of game species Blue sheep and Himalayan Thar, government is set to issue a game license for hunting in Dhorpatan Hunting Reserve (DHR). Dhorpatan Hunting Reserve is the prime habitat of blue sheep, a highly-prized trophy animal and the main target of hunters. Other game species are Ghoral, Serow, Himalayan Thar, Black Bear, Pheasant and Partridge. Endangered species including red panda, cheep pheasant and snow leopard are also protected in DHR. However, critics argued that the rationale behind such an opening is neither justifiable or can it be a "priority" of the government for two reasons: first, it causes mismanagement in conservation and promotion of endangered wildlife species in the national parks leading to their depletion or extinction; and second, the country is undergoing a very critical phase of political transition, CA polls are at the doorstep, which makes "hunting" an irrelevant issue to include in government's priority.

Apar Paudyal is master's graduate in environmental science. Readers can write to him at [apar\\_paudyal@hotmail.com](mailto:apar_paudyal@hotmail.com). Some of the contents are reproduced from the daily national newspapers The Kathmandu Post and The Himalayan times.