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**Policy, Planning, Development Diplomacy
and Nepali Diaspora Division**

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A. Bilateral Affairs

1. US-President Signed on Proclamation of TFTEA

The US President Barack Obama signed a proclamation regarding the implementation of the Trade Facilitation and Trade Enlargement Act (TFTEA), 2015 on 15 December 2016 that includes Nepal Trade Preference. With the implementation of this Act, Nepal has received duty free access of 66 products to the US market which includes mainly luggage, travel bags, attaché cases, hand bags, pocket goods, carpets, shawls, travel blankets, hats, gloves, headbands, etc.

An announcement regarding re-selection of Nepal for the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC)'s Compact Program was made during the meeting held between Ambassador of Nepal to the United States, Mr. Arjun Bahadur Karki and Regional Director of MCC Mrs. Fatma Sumar on 14 December 2016. The MCC is an innovative and independent U.S. foreign aid agency that is helping lead to fight against global poverty. An MCC-Nepal team has been formed by the Government of Nepal in order to design and propose MCC-programs especially on energy and infrastructure in coordination with the MCC-US.

2. Seventh Meeting of Project Steering Committee for the Development of ICPs

The Seventh Meeting of the Project Steering Committee (PSC) for the development of Integrated

Check Posts (ICPs) along the India-Nepal border was held in Kathmandu on 15 December 2016. The meeting was co-chaired by Mr. Deependra Nath Sharma, Secretary, Ministry of Urban Development, Government of Nepal and Smt. Sanjeevane Kuty, Secretary, Border Management, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

Various issues relating to the early completion and operationalization of the ICPs in Birgunj and Biratnagar as well as finalization of detailed engineering reports for ICPs in Nepalgunj and Bhairahawa were discussed during the meeting.

3. Political Bureau Member of the CPC Central Committee of the PRC Visited Nepal

His Excellency Mr. Liu Qibao, Member of Political Bureau and Secretariat of Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, and Chief of the CPC Publicity Department, the People's Republic of China visited Nepal on 18-20 December 2016. Mr. Qibao was accompanied by senior officials of the International Department and Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China. Hon'ble Mr. Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance held bilateral discussions with him. During the talks, matters of mutual interests were discussed.

His Excellency Mr. Liu Qibao also paid courtesy calls on the Rt. Hon'ble President Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari; the Rt. Hon'ble Prime Minister Pushpa

Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', and leaders of political parties of Nepal during his stay in Nepal.



H.E. Mr. Liu Qibao, Political Bureau Member of Communist Party of China and Rt. Hon'ble Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari, President of Nepal

He also attended the launching ceremony of Nepali edition of President Xi Jinping's book "The Governance of China" jointly organized by the State Council of Information of China, China Study Center and the Chinese Embassy.

During his visit, he attended the opening ceremony of the seventh China Festival in Kathmandu jointly organized by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Civil Aviation of Nepal, and Ministry of Culture of China and Embassy of China in Nepal. It was held on 19-22 December 2016.

4. Visit of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia

At an invitation of Hon'ble Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal, His Excellency Mr. Tsend Munkh-Orgil, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia paid an official visit to Nepal on 18-20 December 2016. Two Foreign Ministers held bilateral talks and reviewed the major issues of bilateral relations and mutual interests on 19 December 2016. Following the official talks, the two ministers signed the Agreement on the Exemption from Visa Requirements for the Holders of Diplomatic and Official (Special) Passports of Nepal and Mongolia. The following matters were agreed during the talks to further expanding bilateral cooperation:

- Nepali side appreciated the active role played

by Mongolia for the establishment of the International Think Tank for Land Locked Developing Countries (LLDCs), and agreed to accede to its agreement after completing the domestic procedures.

- Both sides agreed to establish a Bilateral Consultation Mechanism between the Foreign Ministries of the two countries to maintain regular contacts and share views on the matters of mutual interest.
- The Mongolian side reiterated its commitment for the establishment of a Mongolian monastery in Lumbini - the birthplace of Lord Buddha.
- Both sides agreed to exchange visits of parliamentarians, media persons, cultural groups to further promote tourism, people-to-people contacts and cultural cooperation between Nepal and Mongolia.
- The Nepali side agreed to share its peacekeeping experiences with Mongolia.
- Both sides also agreed to collaborate and cooperate in the UN forums to further promote the cause of LLDCs.

The Mongolian Foreign Minister also paid courtesy calls on the Rt. Hon'ble Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari, President, the Rt. Hon'ble Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', and the Rt. Hon'ble Speaker Mrs. Onsari Gharti, of the Legislature-Parliament of Nepal on 19 December, 2016.

5. Nepal and Mongolia Signed Agreement on Visa Exemption

Hon'ble Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal and His Excellency Mr. Tsend Munkh-Orgil, Foreign Minister of Mongolia signed an Agreement on the Exemption from Visa Requirements for the Holders of Diplomatic and Official (Special) Passports of Nepal and Mongolia during the visit of the Foreign Minister of Mongolia to Nepal in Kathmandu on 19 December 2016. The agreement aims at further strengthening the existing friendly relations and cooperation between the two countries by facilitating the travels of their officials. The agreement enters into force on the thirtieth day following the date of signature.



H.E. Mr. Tsend Munkh-Orgil, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia and Hon'ble Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat signed the Agreement on Visa Exemption



Hon'ble Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal and H.E. Mr. Biama Chilin, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the People's Congress of TAR, PR China

6. Nepal India Bilateral Talks on Air Services

Nepal-India bilateral talks on Air Services and Air Traffic Service Routes for operation between India and Nepal were held in New Delhi on 20-21 December 2016. The Nepali delegation was led by Mr. Suresh Acharya, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation. Mr. Arun Kumar, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation of India led the Indian delegation. The meeting had discussions on various issues related to the aviation policy and air traffic service routes and entry points between Nepal and India.

7. Visit of the Chairman of Standing Committee of People's Congress of the Tibet Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China

At an invitation of Secretary General of the Legislature Parliament of Nepal, His Excellency Mr. Biama Chilin, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the People's Congress of Tibet Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China visited Nepal on 21-27 December 2016. During the visit he paid courtesy calls on the Rt. Hon'ble Mrs. Onsari Gharti, Speaker of Legislature Parliament of Nepal, Hon'ble Mr. Bimalendra Nidhi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs, Hon'ble Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat, Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Hon'ble Mr. Hitraj Pande, Minister for Federal Affairs and Local Development.

He also visited Pokhara and inaugurated street solar power project in Pokhara Sub-metropolitan City, which is being installed by the support of the TAR Government.

8. Signing of One Billion RMB Grant Agreement for the Reconstruction Projects

The agreement for the utilization of one billion RMB (approx. NRs. 15.7 billion) grant provided to Nepal by the Government of the People's Republic of China was signed by His Excellency Mr. Leela Mani Paudyal, Ambassador of Nepal to the People's Republic of China on behalf of the Government of Nepal and His Excellency Mr. Zhang Xiangchen, Vice Minister of Ministry of Commerce of China, on behalf of the People's Republic of China in Beijing on 23 December 2016. The one billion RMB will be utilized for the implementation of Syaphrubesi-Rasuwadga Highway Repair and Improvement Project, Upgrading and Renovation Project of Civil Service Hospital, and other Post-disaster Reconstruction Projects mutually agreed upon between the two Governments. This amount is the part of total three billion RMB grant amount pledged by the Government of People's Republic of China to Nepal for the post disaster reconstruction works.

9. Kathmandu and Chengdu Established Sister-city Relations

Kathmandu Metropolitan City and Chengdu City of Sichuan Province of the People's Republic of China signed an Agreement on the establishment of Sister City relations in Kathmandu on 23 December 2016.

The objectives of the agreement are to enhance mutual understanding and friendship between Nepali and Chinese people, and to consolidate and develop friendly cooperation between the two cities. The two cities agreed to make concerted efforts on the basis of equality and mutual benefit by focusing the areas of trade, culture, tourism, education, agriculture, health-care, urban planning and crisis management for mutual cooperation at the municipal levels so as to further promote bilateral relations between the two countries.

10. Meeting of the Board of Directors of B.P. Koirala India-Nepal Foundation

The 32nd Meeting of the Board of Directors of B. P. Koirala India-Nepal Foundation was held in Alwar, Rajasthan, India on 31 December 2016. The meeting was Co-Chaired by His Excellency Mr. Deep Kumar Upadhyay, Ambassador of Nepal to India and His Excellency Mr. Ranjit Rae, Ambassador of India to Nepal. The meeting reviewed the progress of the Foundation in the last 25 years of its operation in such areas as culture, art, technology, literature and women's empowerment.

The B. P. Koirala Foundation Delhi Secretariat based at the Embassy of Nepal completed 54 different projects in 2016.

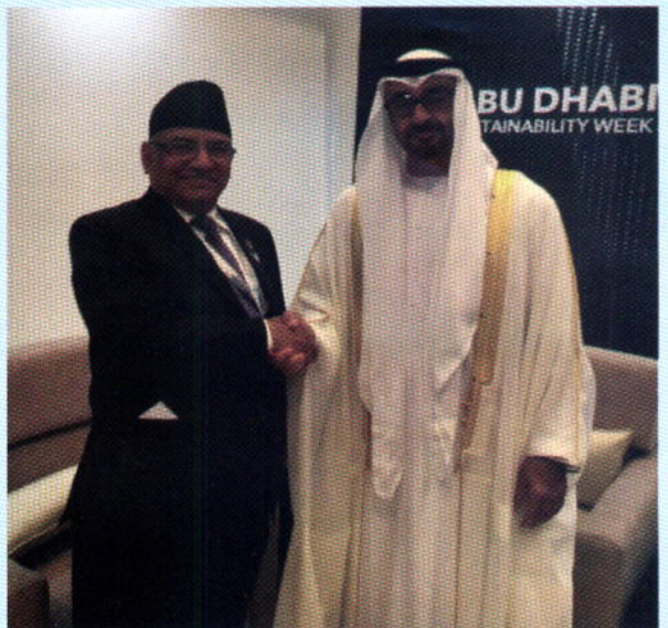
11. Visit of Foreign Minister to Qatar

At the invitation of His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Bin Jassim Al-Thani, Minister Foreign Affairs of Qatar, Hon'ble Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat, Minister for Foreign Affairs, paid an official visit to the State of Qatar from 10-12 January 2017. Hon'ble Foreign Minister had a bilateral meeting with his counterpart on January 11. A wide range of matters of mutual concern including the safety and welfare of Nepali workers, establishment of a polytechnic institute in Nepal for training and skill development were discussed during the meeting. Hon'ble Minister for Foreign Affairs paid a courtesy call on His Highness Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani, Emir of Qatar the same day. His Highness Emir of Qatar assured the safety and protection of Nepali workers in Qatar, and finding ways for further expanding the bilateral relations. His Highness Emir assured to send a team

of high level officials of Qatar in Nepal to explore the possible areas of bilateral cooperation. Later in the afternoon, Hon'ble Foreign Minister also had a bilateral meeting with His Excellency Dr. Issa Saad Al-Jafali Al-Nuaimi, Minister for Administrative Development and Labor and Social Affairs of Qatar. Various issues pertaining to safety, security and welfare of Nepali workers working in Qatar were discussed in the meeting. The meetings were held in a warm and friendly environment.

12. Visit of the Prime Minister to UAE

At the invitation of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, The Rt. Hon'ble Prime Minister, Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' paid an official visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on 14-17 January 2017. The Rt. Hon'ble Prime Minister addressed the World Future Energy Summit as one of the keynote speakers highlighting the need of sustainable clean renewable energy, leading role of the UAE in development of clean renewable energy as well as the ample opportunities in developing clean renewable energy in Nepal. During the visit, the Rt. Hon'ble Prime Minister also had a bilateral meeting with His Highness Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi.



Rt. Hon'ble Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' and His Highness Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces

Similarly, the Rt. Hon'ble Prime Minister held a bilateral meeting with the Vice President and His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai. During the meetings, the matters pertaining to bilateral interests were discussed. His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces assured to send a team of high level officials from the UAE in Nepal to explore the possible areas of bilateral cooperation. The Rt. Hon'ble Prime Minister had an interaction program with the Nepali community in the UAE during the visit.

13. Minister for Foreign Affairs Addressed Raisina Dialogue

Hon'ble Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat, Minister for Foreign Affairs, addressed the opening panel of second edition of the Raisina Dialogue organised in New Delhi by the Ministry of External Affairs of India in partnership with the Observer Research Foundation on 18 January 2017.

Speaking on the theme of '**Big Politics and New Challenges**', Hon'ble Foreign Minister underscored the importance of multilateral approach in addressing major challenges the world faces today. Highlighting the fact that the world is more integrated than ever in terms of knowledge, technology, trade and investment, the Foreign Minister expressed concern over rhetoric of barriers and divisive forces in the form of sectarian violence, religious extremism and terrorism that are gaining ground and posing great threat to individual liberty, democratic institutions and rule of law.

During his stay in New Delhi, Hon'ble Foreign Minister had a meeting with Finance Minister of India, His Excellency Mr. Arun Jaitley. The two Ministers deliberated on issues including economic cooperation, post-earthquake reconstruction, trade and transit, and exchange of demonetized high denomination Indian currency notes in Nepal.

The Hon'ble Foreign Minister also had a meeting with Minister of State of External Affairs of India, His Excellency V.K. Singh where views were exchanged on wide range of matters of Nepal-India relations.

14. London Mayor Calls on the Rt. Hon'ble President

Lord Mayor of the City of London, Rt. Hon'ble Dr. Andrew Parmley visited Nepal from 21-24 January 2017. During the visit, he paid courtesy calls on the Rt. Hon'ble President Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari, Rt. Hon'ble Prime Minister Mr. Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', Hon'ble Finance Minister Krishna Bahadur Mahara. He held a meeting with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Investment Board of Nepal, Mr. Maha Prasad Adhikari. During the meetings, discussions were held on the business and investment opportunities in Nepal especially on hydropower and infrastructure development. The Lord Mayor during his meetings also invited a high level participation from Nepal in the investment conference on Nepal's hydropower development to be organized by his office, the Mansion House of the City of London in March 2017.

A Nepali Delegation led by Hon'ble Mr. Om Prakash Mishra, Judge of the Supreme Court, visited UK and France from 11-16 December 2016. The delegation held meetings with the President of the Supreme Court of the UK and other high level judicial officials of the UK and France.

15. Third Meeting of Bangladesh-Nepal Additional/Joint Secretary Level Technical Committee on Trade

The third meeting of Bangladesh-Nepal Additional/Joint Secretary Level Technical Committee on Trade was held in Dhaka on 23-24 January 2017. The Nepali delegation was led by Mr. Rabi Shanker Sainju, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Commerce. Mr. Md. Shafiqul Islam, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Commerce led the Bangladeshi delegation. The meeting discussed on various aspects of Nepal-Bangladesh trade and connectivity including operational modalities for the carriage of transit cargo between Nepal and Bangladesh, Duty free/ Preferential Market Access for the Agricultural and Industrial Produces, Harmonization of Sanitary Phytosanitary (SPS) measures and others.

16. Meeting of Nepal-India Oversight Mechanism

The second meeting of Nepal-India Oversight Mechanism, jointly led by Foreign Secretary Mr. Shanker Das Bairagi and Ambassador of India to Nepal His Excellency Mr. Ranjit Rae, was held in

Kathmandu on 30 January 2017.

The meeting made a comprehensive review of the progress achieved in economic and development corporation projects between Nepal and India since the first meeting of the mechanism was held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Nepal in Kathmandu on 29 November 2016. Besides discussing issues relating to cross border rail projects, integrated check posts, cross-border transmission lines, Arun III and Upper Karnali Hydropower Projects, Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project, Postal Roads, Line of Credit Projects and Reconstruction Projects, the meeting covered other pertinent matters.

It may be recalled that the Nepal-India Oversight Mechanism was agreed to be set up during the State Visit to India by the Rt. Hon'ble Prime Minister Mr. Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' in September 2016 in order to take measures to ensure that all ongoing bilateral economic and development projects are implemented within defined timeline.

B. Multilateral Affairs

1. Ninth Bali Democracy Forum Held in Indonesia

Hon'ble Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat, Minister for Foreign Affairs, led the Nepali delegation to the Ninth Bali Democracy Forum held in Bali, Indonesia, on 8-9 December 2016. The Bali Democracy Forum is annually convened since 2008 by the Government of Indonesia as a platform for open inter-governmental dialogue among participating countries of Asia and the Pacific focusing a theme on democracy and governance. The Ninth Bali Democracy Forum was inaugurated by His Excellency Mr. Joko Widodo, President of the Republic of Indonesia. His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations and Chairman of the Kofi Annan Foundation, had given the key-note speech on the theme '**Religion, Democracy and Pluralism**'. The Foreign Minister Mahat addressed the plenary session which was chaired by Her Excellency Retno L.P. Marsudi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the

Republic of Indonesia. In his address, Mr. Mahat said that democracy is not only about competition but also about accommodation and dialogue to reach a consensus. He mentioned that Nepal's peace process was a successful example of ending conflict through dialogue and that the world could learn from Nepal to end conflicts in other parts of the world.

2. Nepal Endorses Kigali Principles

The Government of Nepal decided to extend its support to the Kigali Principles on the protection of civilians on 27 January 2017. As one of the major troops and police contributing countries to the UN peacekeeping operations, support of Nepal to the Kigali Principles reinforced its longstanding policy of protecting civilians during peace operations deployed under the mandate of the United Nations. The Kigali Principles on the protection of civilians are a non-binding set of pledges to implement certain best practices in peacekeeping. They were issued at the conclusion of the High-level International Conference on the Protection of Civilians held in Rwanda on 28-29 May 2015.

C. Regional Affairs

1. Meeting of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials on Energy

The Secretary of the Ministry of Energy led a three-member Nepali delegation to participate in the Fourth Meeting of BIMSTEC Senior Officials on Energy held in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar on 11-12 January 2017. Officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Energy were also included in the delegation.

The Meeting finalized the draft MOU on the establishment of the BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection. During the Meeting, Nepal offered to host the Third BIMSTEC Energy Ministers' Meeting in Kathmandu on 30-31 March 2017, and urged all the Member states to expedite/complete their internal procedures for signing the said MOU at the Third BIMSTEC Energy Ministers' Meeting. The meeting also emphasised on the early operationalisation of the BIMSTEC Energy Centre to be set up in India.

2. Fifteenth ACD Ministerial Meeting

Foreign Secretary Mr. Shanker Das Bairagi led the Nepali delegation to the Fifteenth Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) Ministerial Meeting, held in Abu Dhabi on 15-17 January 2017. The Meeting was convened with the theme of “Sustainable Energy”. Addressing the Meeting, Mr. Bairagi underscored the importance of enhanced cooperation at bilateral, sub-regional and regional levels to ensure sustainable, affordable, reliable and modern energy to all as promised in the SDGs. He called for investment in Nepal’s hydropower which, if harnessed properly, could help meet not only domestic needs for clean and renewable energy but also could provide a reliable source of renewable energy source for the region. He also invited ACD Member States to participate in the Nepal Investment Summit to be held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 2-3 March 2017, and requested them to encourage their investors to participate in it.

The Fifteenth Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) Ministerial Meeting under the chairmanship of the United Arab Emirates concluded after adopting the Abu Dhabi Declaration and ACD Energy Action Plan. The proposed Energy Action Plan has identified areas of cooperation, implementation process, funding and others in energy sector for ensuring energy security among the members. Likewise, the declaration has underscored the importance of interrelation between energy-water and food security, private sector in research and development and increased energy access and connectivity among the members.

The Ministerial Meeting was preceded by the Senior Officials Meeting and Energy Working Group/Drafting Committee Meeting on 15-16 January. Mr. Mani Prasad Bhattarai, Chief of Regional Organizations Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs led the Nepali delegation for the Energy Working Group/Drafting Committee. Senior Officials from the Ministry of Energy and Charge d’affaires a.i. of the Embassy of Nepal in Abu Dhabi were also present in the delegation.

ACD is a continent-wide forum with 34 members from across Asia. It was established in June 2002 with the main objectives of promoting cooperation

and interdependence among Asian countries in various areas of cooperation; expanding trade and financial market within Asia and enhancing Asia’s economic competitiveness in the global market; and, ultimately, transforming the Asian continent into an ‘Asian Community’. Nepal joined this forum in March 2016.

3. Visit of Chairman of Chinese-Chairmanship Working Group for CICA

The Chairman of Chinese-Chairmanship Working Group for Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) His Excellency Mr. Gu Ziping visited Kathmandu from 12-15 January 2017. During his visit, he had a meeting with Mr. Mani Prasad Bhattarai, chief of the Regional Organizations Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During the discussion with the visiting dignitary, Mr. Bhattarai expressed sincere appreciation to the visiting side for recommending Nepal to join the CICA and also stated that Nepal’s membership in this forum is under consideration. At the same time, Mr. Bhattarai opined that such a forum would be useful for Nepal in sharing ideas and receiving benefits from different activities. Mr. Gu briefed about the CICA, and touched upon important areas of security issues, confidence building among others wherein Nepal could reap several benefits. He further stated that China had assumed its Chairmanship since 2014 and informed that its membership entails financial contribution to this organization on a voluntary basis.

4. Visit of Deputy Director of the Executive Committee of the Regional Counter-Terrorism Structure of SCO



SCO Delegation with Foreign Secretary, Mr. Shanker Das Bairagi

The Deputy Director of the Executive Committee

of the Regional Counter-Terrorism Structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) His Excellency Mr. Zhon Qing visited Nepal on 16-24 January 2017 for attending the Asia-Pacific Regional Conference of Interpol. Meanwhile, Mr. Qing had a meeting with the Foreign Secretary of Nepal Mr. Shanker Das Bairagi at the latter's office on 23 January 2017. During the Meeting, His Excellency Mr. Qing stated that memorandum on granting Nepal the status of dialogue partner has laid solid basis for cooperation between Nepal and SCO. After giving brief introduction of his office, one of the organizational structures of the SCO, Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) based in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, His Excellency Mr. Qing asked to designate a specific organization of the Government of Nepal to coordinate in matters of terrorism, transnational organized crime, human/drug trafficking etc. He further expressed the willingness to sign an additional protocol to make the cooperation between RATS and Nepal more pragmatic. Foreign Secretary Mr. Bairagi expressed his full commitment on implementation of MOU and readiness to conclude an additional protocol for deeper engagement with SCO Framework. He affirmed Nepal's principled position on terrorism and sought specific support from the RATS on training and human resource development.

5. Visit of Secretary General of BIMSTEC

The Secretary General of BIMSTEC His Excellency Mr. Sumith Nakandala paid a visit to Nepal from 21-23 January 2017 ahead of the Seventeenth Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting scheduled to be held in Kathmandu on 5-7 February 2017. During the visit, His Excellency Mr. Nakandala held a meeting with the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Shanker Das Bairagi on 22 January 2017. While briefing to the Foreign Secretary on the progress and ongoing activities of the BIMSTEC mechanism, His Excellency Mr. Nakandala underlined the need for revitalisation of the BIMSTEC process. In response, the Foreign Secretary stated that as the current chair of BIMSTEC, Nepal remains committed to extend the every possible cooperation to implement past decisions and make BIMSTEC vibrant and action-oriented with clear future directions. The 17th Session, going to be held after the gap of three years,

will review past commitments and implementation status, and give momentum for future, he further added.

6. Meeting of Governing Board of STAC

Twenty-sixth Meeting of the Governing Board of STAC (SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Center) was held in Kathmandu on 11-12 January 2017. The Governing Board Members from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Pakistan along with representatives of SAARC Secretary-General and Ministries of Foreign/ External Affairs of Governments of Afghanistan, India and Nepal participated in the Meeting.



Representatives from the member countries meeting of the Governing Board of STAC

The current chairperson of the Board, Dr. Feda Mohammad Paikan, Manager, National HIV/AIDS Control Programme, Ministry of Public Health, and Government of Afghanistan opened the Meeting. Dr. Sharat Chandra Verma, Director, STAC delivered welcome remarks in the opening session. While delivering her remarks Ms. Fathimath Najwa, Director, SAARC Secretariat requested the Governing Board Members, while planning the activities of the Center to;

- Have a better focus on the demands and needs of the region,
- Commit to ensure the already agreed activities that are implemented according to the plan; and
- Follow up on the usefulness and impact of the activities once implemented.

The Board discussed on the proposed activities of the Centre for the Year 2017, and recommended the same for approval by the SAARC Programming Committee. The Board also had a wide range of discussions on various matters including

Strengthening of STAC Laboratory as SAARC Supra-national Reference Laboratory for TB and HIV/AIDS, Recruitment of Deputy Director, Technical Officer (HIV/AIDS) and GSS, Video Conference Facilities at the Center, Conferment of SAARC Prize on HIV/AIDS-2016.

D. Protocol, Passport, Consular and Other Activities

I. Protocol Activities

1. Credential Presentation Ceremony

The Rt. Hon'ble President Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari received the Letters of Credence from His Excellency Mr. Sam Andre Auguste Schreiner, His Excellency Mr. Asfaw Dingamo Kame and His Excellency Mr. Mirzosharif JALOLOV, Ambassadors-designates of Luxembourg, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Republic of Tajikistan to Nepal respectively on 21 December 2016. All the Ambassadors are based in New Delhi with concurrent accreditation to Nepal.

2. Tenure Extension/Promotion of Honorary Consuls of Nepal

Government of Nepal has extended the tenure of Mr. Mervin A. Brustin, Honorary Consul General of Nepal to Illinois, Chicago, United States till 26 February 2020. Similarly, Mr. Paolo Nugari, Honorary Consul of Nepal to Rome has been promoted to the position of Honorary Consul General.

Likewise, the term of office of Prof. Dr. Fatma Günseli Malkoc, Honorary Consul General of Nepal to Istanbul has been extended up to 15 December 2019.

II. Passport Activities

1. Launch of Mobile Apps

Hon'ble Prakash Sharan Mahat, Minister for Foreign Affairs launched the Mobile Apps of the Department of Passport amidst a program organized by the Department on January 3, 2017. Speaking on the occasion, Hon'ble Foreign Minister highlighted the features of Mobile Apps and its benefits. Mr. Shanker Das Bairagi, Foreign Secretary and Mr.

Sushil Kumar Lamsal, Director General of the Department of Passport also shed lights about the initiative. This new feature is expected to facilitate the online applications for the Machine Readable Passports (MRPs).

2. Interaction Program In Different Districts

Interaction programs were organized in various District Administration Offices of Parsa, Rautahat and Dhanusha on 22, 23 and 25 December 2016 respectively. In the program, representatives, including Chief District Officers and Senior Officials of eight districts (Bara, Parsa, Rautahat, Sarlahi, Mahottari, Dhanusha, Siraha and Saptari) and representatives from Hariwan, Bardibas, Goushala, Yadukuha, Lahan, and Kanchanpur Area Administration Offices participated in the program. A team from the Department was dispatched to these areas in the leadership of Ms. Richa Bhattarai, Section Officer of the Department of Passport.

Similarly, a team led by Mr. Jimson Rumdali Rai, Section Officer of the Department was dispatched to organize interaction programs in mid and Far Western Region. Programs were organized in Banke and Kailali on 22 and 24 December 2016 respectively. Representatives, including Chief District Officers and Senior Officials of eight districts (Banke, Bardiya, Dang, Surkhet, Kailali, Doti, Baitadi and Dadeldhura) participated in the program. Representatives from different Area Administration Offices (Tulsipur, Kohalpur, Babiyachour, Rajapur, Basgadhi and Narainapur) also attended the program.

3. Issuance of Passports

Following number of passports have been issued in the month of December 2016 and January 2017.

Month	Diplomatic Passport	Official Passport	Ordinary Passport	Travel Document
December 2016	34	80	49792	14
January 2017	36	110	56008	9
Total	70	190	105800	23

4. In-House Orientation Program

An in-house orientation program was conducted by the Department of Passport to train the newly deputed *Nayab Subbas* (Non-gazetted first class officials) about the activities, functional procedures, vision and mission etc. of the Department. The said orientation program was conducted for eight sessions.

III. Consular Activities

- Hon'ble Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat officially launched online legal services system on 27 January 2017 that allows service seekers to benefit from various consular services such as claiming compensation and insurance in case of death and injury, bringing the dead bodies from foreign lands, rescuing Nepalese in foreign lands, among others. The service seekers may also benefit to check the progress regarding the matter on their requests via online.
- As a big stride forward in the traditional working style, this system is expected to save time and money, and make the record system systematic and effective. This system may also enhance access of people to the public services.
- The attestation services are delivered within half an hour of the submission of required documents.
- The exemption and visa related services are provided in the following day of the submission of application and other required documents.

The office starts at 9AM and closes at 5PM (Friday 9AM to 4PM) as the Department started two hours' additional services beyond the normal working hours.

S.N.	Details of Services	Number of Works Performed
A	Consular and Legal Counseling Section	
1	Recommendation for Medical treatment, Religious tour, World cycling tour, and others	4

2	Recommendation for Indian education certificate, nationality verification and those who are visiting India for study purpose	253
3	Recommendation for Indian pension	6
4	Recommendation for issuing Nepalese driving license on the basis of foreign driving license held by the Nepali citizen	669
5	Recommendations letter to Indian Embassy for character verification report to Nepali citizens during their period of stay in India	53
6	Recommendations for procurement of chemicals & explosives	15
7	Recommendations letter to Indian Embassy for issuing vehicle permit for vehicles to enter India	5
8	Correspondence to the concerned authorities of Nepal regarding the citizenship renouncement of Nepalese citizens as per their application submitted to the Nepalese missions abroad	26
9	Correspondence letter regarding authenticity of Power of Attorney issued by Nepalese missions abroad	245
10	Correspondence to the concerned authorities of Nepal regarding authenticity of documents issued by the Government of Nepal	46
11	POA, VOR, H-Form Request (Malaysia), and correspondence to the District Administration Office for compensation to Nepalese citizens died abroad	19
12	Correspondence concerning search and rescue of Nepalese nationals to the Nepalese Missions abroad	64
13	Correspondence with regards to repatriation of dead body of Nepalese nationals abroad	12
14	Correspondence to the government agencies in Nepal	14

15	Number of draft received for the compensation from Malasiya	8
16	Handover of compensation amount from Malaysia to the concerned families	2
17	Correspondence to the Nepalese Missions on various subjects including insurance and compensation enquiry	10
18	Correspondence to the foreign missions based in Nepal	0
19	Telephone and e-mail enquiries about insurance and compensation with the Nepalese Missions abroad	25
B	Visa and Exemption Section	
1	Issuance of diplomatic/official/gratis visa	481
2	Issuance of diplomatic/official ID Card	82
3	Issuance of SAARC visa stickers	24
4	Number of recommendation for exemption	583
5	Number of visa recommendation to the foreign missions on GON's nominations	378
C	Attestation section	
1	Number of attested documents	30,925
	Total	33,949

IV. Other Activities

HLEDIMC Meeting Held in MOFA

Meeting of the High Level Economic Diplomacy Implementation and Monitoring Committee (HLEDIMC) was held in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singha Durbar on 29 December 2016. Hon'ble Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat, Minister for Foreign Affairs, chaired the meeting.

Reviewing the past practices, the meeting focused on the various aspects of Nepal's economic

diplomacy, and suggested the ways forward for its effective implementation in coordination with various stakeholders while mobilizing Nepali diplomatic missions stationed abroad.

Mr. Shanker Das Bairagi, the Foreign Secretary, while beginning the meeting, highlighted the opportunities and challenges of Nepal's economic diplomacy. He emphasized for its effectiveness through proper coordination among stakeholders. He insisted on holding the meeting on a regular and timely basis every year. Mr. Mani Prasad Bhattarai, Joint Secretary of the Policy, Planning, Development Diplomacy, and Nepali Diaspora Division presented the backgrounds, current status and future plans in his brief power point presentation about Nepal's economic diplomacy.

The secretaries, joint secretaries and representatives from different Ministries of Government of Nepal, leaders from Private Sector Business Organizations, and representatives from Non Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) were present in the meeting. The members of the committee had comprehensive interaction about trade, investment, foreign employment, tourism, technology transfer and Nepali Diaspora.

As the result of discussion, the meeting decided to form Country-Specific Strategy Drafting Committee under the convenorship of Mr. Mani Prasad Bhattarai, Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This committee was composed of representatives from Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Civil Aviation; Ministry of Labor; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Industry; Ministry of Commerce; Investment Board of Nepal; Trade and Export Promotion Center; Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce & Industries; Nepal Chamber of Commerce; Confederation of Nepalese Industries; and Federation of Nepal Cottage and Small Industries. The committee was mandated to make country-specific strategies in each dimension of economic diplomacy for the countries of strategic importance for Nepal, and submit to the high level committee within the current fiscal year.

Hon'ble Dr. Mahat closed the meeting with his concluding remarks.