

# MOFA BULLETIN

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Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
**Policy, Planning, Development Diplomacy  
and Nepali Diaspora Division**

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### **Chief Patron:**

Hon'ble Krishna Bahadur  
Mahara, Deputy Prime Minister  
and Minister for Foreign Affairs

### **Patron:**

Mr. Shanker Das Bairagi,  
Foreign Secretary

### **Editorial Team**

Mr. Tirtha Raj Wagle,  
Joint Secretary  
Dr. Damaru Ballabha Paudel,  
Under Secretary

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## **A. Bilateral Affairs**

### **1. Third Meeting of Nepal-India Oversight Mechanism**

The third meeting of Nepal-India Oversight Mechanism, jointly led by Foreign Secretary Mr. Shanker Das Bairagi and Ambassador of India to Nepal His Excellency Mr. Manjeev Singh Puri, was held in Kathmandu on 12 April 2017.

The meeting made a comprehensive review of the progress made in bilateral economic and development cooperation projects and identified the measures to be undertaken by the respective Governments or entities to ensure the timely and successful implementation of the projects. The issues relating to cross border rail projects, Integrated Check Posts, Terai Roads Project, cross-border transmission lines, Arun III and Upper Karnali Hydropower projects, Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project, Mahakali Bridges, Postal roads, Line of Credit projects, reconstruction projects and other pertinent issues were discussed during the meeting.

### **2. Eleventh Meeting of the Joint Committee on Inundation and Flood Management**

The eleventh meeting of Nepal-India Joint Committee on Inundation and Flood Management (JCIFM) was held in Kathmandu from 16 to 21 April 2017. The Nepali delegation was led by Mr. Madhukar Prasad Rajbhandari, Director General of the Department of Water Induced Disaster Management (DWIDM), Government of Nepal and the Indian Delegation was led by Mr. A.K. Sinha, Member (Planning), Ganga Flood Control Commission (GFCC), Government of India.

The meeting of the Joint Committee in Kathmandu was preceded by joint field visit to the ongoing and proposed flood protection works along the Kamala, Bagmati and Lalbakaiya rivers. During the meeting, issues relating to physical and financial review of all works in Kamala, Bagmati and Lalbakaiya, ongoing works and release of fund, flood forecasting, and floods and inundation among others were discussed.



### 3. Rt. Hon'ble President Visits India

Rt. Hon'ble President Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari paid a State Visit to India from 17-21 April 2017 at the invitation of His Excellency Shri Pranab Mukherjee, President of India. The delegation comprised of Hon Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hon Ms. Sita Devi Yadav, Minister for Peace and Reconstruction, Mr. Shanker Das Bairagi, Foreign Secretary, Advisors to the Rt. Hon President, officials of the Government of Nepal and media persons.

The Rt. Hon'ble President was accorded a Ceremonial Reception at the Forecourt of Rashtrapati Bhavan on 18 April 2017, where she was received by His Excellency Shri Pranab Mukherjee, President, and His Excellency Shri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India. During the Ceremony, the Rt. Hon'ble President also inspected a Guard of Honor.

The Rt. Hon'ble President visited the Samadhi of Mahatma Gandhi at Rajghat and signed the Visitor's Book. She also visited the Yamuna Biodiversity Park at the Bank of Yamuna River and planted a sampling there.



*Rt. Hon'ble President with H.E. Sri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister and H.E. Mrs. Sushma Swaraj, Minister of External Affairs of India*

The Rt. Hon'ble President had a meeting with His Excellency Shri Pranab Mukherjee at Rashtrapati Bhavan on the same day. During the meeting, the two leaders exchanged views on the historical bonds between Nepal and India and shared that the regular exchange of visits at the highest level would further contribute to strengthening the close relations.



*Rt. Hon'ble President with His Excellency Shri Pranab Mukherjee, the President of India*

Both leaders discussed about various areas of cooperation including hydropower, infrastructure development, cross border connectivity and post-earthquake reconstruction and agreed on the need of further expanding such cooperation. The President of India hosted a Banquet in honour of the Rt. Hon'ble President and her delegation.

During the visit, the Rt. Hon'ble President was called on by His Excellency Shri Mohammad Hamid Ansari, Vice President, and His Excellency Shri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India. She was also called on by Her Excellency Mrs. Sushma Swaraj, Minister of External Affairs, His Excellency Shri Rajnath Singh, Minister of Home Affairs, His Excellency Shri Arun Jaitley, Finance Minister of India and other high-level political leaders.

Addressing an interaction program with business community organized by the Ministry of External Affairs of India, Confederation of Indian Industry, Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and ASSOCHAM India, the Rt. Hon'ble President encouraged Indian investors to visit Nepal and take advantage of the investment opportunities available here.

The Rt. Hon'ble President also visited Somnath and Dwarkadhish temples in Gujarat State of India on 19 April 2017. She was called on by His Excellency Shri Vijay Rupani, Chief Minister of Gujarat in Rajkot. The Rt. Hon'ble President attended a program 'women empowerment' in Bhubaneswar, capital city of Odisha State on 2 April 2017 which was organized by the Government of Odisha and Mission Shakti. While addressing the event, The Rt. Hon'ble President highlighted the salient features enshrined in the Constitution of Nepal for the empowerment of women including representation at political level and other measures adopted by the Government of Nepal, and said that exchange of knowledge and experience and sharing of good practices would be vital for women empowerment programs in the South Asian regional context. She was called on by His Excellency Dr. S. C. Jamir, Governor of Odisha. Rt. Hon'ble President also visited Lingaraja Temple and Jagannath Puri in Bhubaneswar.

#### **4. Senior Minister of State of Singapore Visits Nepal**

Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Singapore, His Excellency Dr. Mohamad Maliki Osman paid a visit to Nepal from 2 to 5 May 2017 to mark the completion of the Singapore Red Cross (SRC) humanitarian relief efforts which

were put in place in the wake of the April 2015 earthquake in Nepal.

During his visit, Dr. Maliki met Hon'ble Minister for Defense Mr. Bal Krishna Khad and the Chief of Army Staff General Rajendra Chhetri. The Senior Minister of State also interacted with the Singaporean community in Nepal during his stay in Kathmandu.

#### **5. Arrival of New Ambassador of the Republic of Korea**

His Excellency Mr. Park Young-sik, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Nepal presented his Letter of Credence to The Rt. Hon'ble President Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari at a special Ceremony in Sheetal Niwas on 03 May 2017. During the Ceremony Hon'ble Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Chief of Army Staff and other high-level dignitaries of the Government of Nepal were present. Ambassador Young-sik is a career diplomat who joined Korean Diplomatic service in 1989 and served in different capacities in Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Korea as well as in Korean Embassies in Vietnam, Australia and Indonesia. Before being appointed as Ambassador to Nepal, he was Director-General for International Cooperation of Ministry of Health and Welfare of the Republic of Korea.

#### **6. Hon'ble Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat Visits Singapore**

Hon'ble Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat, paid a visit to Singapore to attend the Trade, Tourism and Investment Promotion Program organized by the Embassy of Nepal in Bangkok in association with Honorary Consulate of

Nepal in Singapore and local Nepali community there on 4 May 2017.

In his keynote address as the Chief Guest of the Program participated by the local entrepreneurs and business community, Hon'ble Dr. Mahat highlighted the potential areas of investment in Nepal.



*Hon'ble Foreign Minister Addressing Trade, Tourism and Investment Promotion Program in Singapore*

Shedding light on the policy and institutional reform measures introduced recently, he added that Nepal is one of the most attractive destinations for foreign investment in the region having vast areas of investment opportunities such as infrastructure, development, health, agriculture, information and communication technology, mining and minerals, tourism.

During his stay in Singapore, Hon'ble Dr. Mahat held a meeting with H.E. Ms. Josephine Teo, Minister, Prime Minister's Office, Second Minister for Manpower and Second Minister for Foreign Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Singapore where both the Ministers discussed the matters of bilateral interests and mutual benefits. During his stay, Hon'ble Minister also met members of Nepali community living in Singapore.

## **7. Signing of the MOU on Construction of Nepal-China Cross-Border Economic Cooperation**

The Government of Nepal and the Government of the People's Republic of China signed Memorandum of Understanding on Construction of Nepal-China Cross-Border Economic Cooperation on 09 May 2017. Hon'ble Mr. Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance of Nepal and His Excellency Mr. Zhong Shan, Minister of Commerce of the People's Republic of China signed the MoU on behalf of their respective governments. The agreement aims to strengthening economic cooperation and accelerating development in border regions of the two countries and to carrying out study on constructing Nepal-China cross-border economic cooperation zones in a qualified region.

## **8. Congratulatory Messages to the Newly Elected President and Newly Appointed Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea**

Rt. Hon'ble President Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari and Rt. Hon'ble Prime Minister Mr. Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' sent their separate congratulatory messages to His Excellency Mr. Moon Jae-in, the newly elected President of the Republic of Korea on 10 May 2017.

In their messages, both the President and the Prime Minister congratulated His Excellency Mr. Moon for being elected as the 19th President of the Republic of Korea and conveyed best wishes for his successful tenure. They also expressed their confidence that the cordial friendly relations subsisting between Nepal and the Republic of Korea

will be further strengthened during the tenure of the President.

Similarly, Rt. Hon'ble Mr. Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', Prime Minister of Nepal, sent a congratulatory message to His Excellency Mr. Lee Nak-yeon, the newly appointed Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea on 01 June 2017.

In his message, the Prime Minister congratulated Mr. Lee on his appointment as Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea and expressed best wishes for his successful tenure. He also expressed his confidence that the bilateral relations between Nepal and the Republic of Korea would be further strengthened to mutual benefits of the two countries and peoples during his tenure.

## 9. Signing of MOU on Cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative

The Government of Nepal and the Government of the People's Republic of China signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative on 12 May 2017 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singh Durbar, Kathmandu.

Hon'ble Mr. Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Hon'ble Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat, Minister for Foreign Affairs, jointly witnessed the signing ceremony. Foreign Secretary Mr. Shanker Das Bairagi and Ambassador of China to Nepal Ms. Yu Hong signed the MoU on behalf of their respective governments.

The MOU aims at promoting cooperation on enhancing connectivity through trade facilitation, financial integration and people to people contact. The MOU seeks to

strengthen cooperation in connectivity sectors including transit transport, logistic systems, transport network and other related infrastructures development such as railway, road, civil aviation, power grid, information and communication.



*Foreign Secretary Mr. Shanker Das Bairagi and Ambassador of China to Nepal Ms. Yu Hong Shaking Hands after Signing the MoU, Hon'ble Mr. Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Hon'ble Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Jointly Witnessing the Signing Ceremony*

The MOU contains detailed framework for mutual cooperation in line with the MOU signed between the Governments of Nepal and China in December 2014.

## 10. Rt. Hon'ble President Visits Sri Lanka

The Rt. Hon'ble Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari paid an official visit to Sri Lanka from 13 to 16 May 2017 at the cordial invitation of the President of Sri Lanka, His Excellency Mr. Maithripala Sirisena. Hon'ble Mr. Keshab Kumar Budhathoki, Minister for General Administration accompanied the President. Advisors to the President, Secretaries and other officials from the Office of the President and Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as media persons were also part of the entourage.





*Rt. Hon'ble President with H.E. Mr. Maithripala Sirisena, the President of Sri Lanka from the right*

On 14 May 2017, the Rt. Hon'ble President Mrs. Bhandari, addressed as the chief guest the Closing Ceremony of the United Nations Vesak Day celebrations with the theme "Buddhist Teachings for Social Justice and Sustainable World Peace" in Kandy, Sri Lanka. The Rt. Hon'ble President highlighted the teachings of Lord Buddha and its relevance in the present day context for the world peace and social harmony.



*Rt. Hon'ble President Addressing the Vesak Day Celebration in Colombo*

She also conveyed the message of peace, tolerance and fraternity to the world from the land of Gautam Buddha. The event was attended by His Excellency the President, high-ranking officials of the Government of Sri Lanka as well as pertinent Buddhist Scholars from seventy-two countries. The

Rt. Hon'ble President also paid homage to Sacred Tooth relics of Gautam Buddha at Dalada Maligawa in Kandy.

The Rt. Hon'ble President had a bilateral meeting with His Excellency Mr. Maithripala Sirisena, President of Sri Lanka, in Colombo. Bilateral issues as well as other matters of common interest were discussed during the meeting.



*Rt. Hon'ble President Paying Homage to the Keleniya Temple in Colombo*

On 15 May 2017, the Rt. Hon'ble President paid homage to the Keleniya Temple in Colombo which is believed to have been visited by Gautam Buddha after attaining enlightenment. She also attended an Interaction Program with Nepali Community. Dinner Reception was hosted by the Embassy of Nepal in Colombo in honor of the President. Former President of Sri Lanka Ms. Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga also called on The Rt. Hon'ble President in Colombo on 16 May. Both leaders exchanged their views on women empowerment and their participation in politics as well socio-economic development. The President also participated in a program on Women Empowerment organized in her honour by Hon'ble Minister of Women and Child Affairs of Sri Lanka in Colombo the same day.

## 11. Nepal's High-Level Participation in the Belt and Road Forum

A delegation led by Hon'ble Mr. Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, participated in the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation held in Beijing on 14 - 16 May 2017. The delegation was comprised of Hon'ble Mr. Ramesh Lekhak, Minister for Physical Infrastructure and Transport, Hon'ble Mr. Surendra Kumar Karki, Minister for Information and Communication and other senior officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Commerce, Industry and Finance of the Government of Nepal.



*Nepali Delegation to the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation*

In the Forum, Hon'ble Minister for Information and Communication delivered a brief remark in the thematic session on Connectivity of Development Policies and Strategies. He underlined the need to explore the opportunities to enhance connectivity supported by policy coordination for inclusive, sustainable and harmonious development with shared vision and shared prosperity.

During the visit, Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Hon'ble Mahara had a meeting with H.E. Wang Yang, Vice

Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China on the sideline of the Forum on 14 May 2017. Matters of mutual interests were discussed during the meeting. Hon'ble Ministers, Ambassador of Nepal to China and other senior officials of the Government of Nepal were also present in the meeting.

During the visit, Hon'ble Ramesh Lekhak also had a meeting with his Chinese counterpart H.E. Li Xiaopeng, Minister of Transport of China at the latter's office on 16 May 2017. Hon'ble Minister Lekhak expressed that connectivity between Nepal and China through roads and railways are major priorities of Nepal and reiterated Nepal's request for early resumption of Tatopani border. Minister Lekhak further stated that establishment of a railway link connecting Nepal and China will be vital for socio-economic development of Nepal, expressing his belief on connectivity as a means to promote tourism, trade, investment, culture and people to people contact in a substantial way. He sought Chinese assistance for cross border connectivity and human resources development.



*Hon'ble Mr. Ramesh Lekhak, Minister for Physical Infrastructure and Transport, Hon'ble Mr. Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, H.E. Li Xiaopeng, Minister of Transport of China and Hon'ble Mr. Surendra Kumar Karki, Minister for Information and Communication (from the left)*



The Chinese Minister of Transport assured of China's full support in human resources development in the areas of cross-border connectivity and requested for proposal from Nepal. He proposed that a working team could be set up for all the cross-border related issues, and designated Director General of International Department of the Ministry from the Chinese side and requested to designate an appropriate official from the Nepali side too. Ambassador of Nepal to China and other senior officials of the Government of Nepal were present on the occasion.

The Embassy of Nepal in Beijing organized an interaction program on "Belt and Road Initiative: Opportunities and Challenges for Nepal-China relations" in the presence of Hon'ble Deputy Prime Minister and Ministers along with Chinese professors, scholars and think tanks in the Embassy on 16 May 2017. The Embassy also hosted a reception in honor of Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Hon'ble Krishna Bahadur Mahara and accompanying delegates at the Embassy.

## **B. Multilateral Affairs**

### **1. Joint Field Visit of the Executive Boards of UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP to Nepal**

A 28 members' delegation comprising of team leaders of the executive boards of different UN agencies such as UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS, and UNICEF visited Nepal on 16-24 April, 2017 and commended

the exemplary collaboration of the Government of Nepal with the various United Nations agencies.

The Joint Executive Boards' delegation was headed by H.E. Walton Alfonso Webson, President of the Bureau of the UNICEF Executive Board and Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations and comprised representatives from various programmes and agencies of the United Nations from their head offices in New York, Rome and Geneva.

The primary purpose of the visit was to review the country program, strategic plan and work of the UN agencies in Nepal and assess how these agencies are carrying out their mandate and directions of the United Nations. The delegation travelled to districts of Kailali, Bajhang, Baitadi, Rupandehi, Dang, Banke, Sindhuli, Nuwakot, Kavrepalanchowk and the Kathmandu valley and assessed Nepal's progress with regards to Sustainable Development Goals. Lauding the efforts made by Nepal to ensure "no one is left behind", the delegation wished Nepal success in its efforts under the Agenda 2030.

The delegation of the Joint Executive Board from UN also paid courtesy calls on Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' and Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat during which role of UN agencies in promoting SDGs were discussed.

### **2. OPCW Fifteenth Regional Meeting of National Authorities of States Parties in Asia**

The fifteenth regional meeting of National Authorities of State Parties to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) was held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from 16 to 18 May 2017.

On behalf of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nepal, Under Secretary Mr. Sudhir Bhattarai attended the meeting. The Meeting was attended by 35 participants from 30 countries served as a forum in which the State Parties to the OPCW discussed about their needs for assistance in relation to Article VII of the Chemical Weapons Convention, including the type and level of assistance that could be offered among State Parties in the region.

The meeting was also attended by representatives of organizations such as the International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA)/European Chemical Industry Council (CEFIC), Advisory Board on Education and Outreach of OPCW (ABEO), and United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 Committee.

## C. Regional Affairs

### 1. Ninth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Sub-group on Anti-money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism

The Ninth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Sub-group on Anti-money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism held in Yangon, Myanmar on 26-27 April 2017. The Meeting discussed at length the Illicit Flow of Funds (IFF) among the BIMSTEC Member States and agreed to share their

respective sanitized version of the National Risk Assessment Report with other Member States to prepare an action plan to prevent the IFF.

The meeting also felt necessity to engage with the UNODC and the BIMSTEC Secretariat was suggested to communicate with the UNODC seeking assistance in capacity building and training program on Financial Investigation and Financial Analysis. The delegation of Nepal made a presentation on "Some Case Studies of Nepal: Emerging Cyber Threats on Financial Sector" and highlighted two specific cases of ATM card fraud, involvement of some foreign nationals in those incidents and the arrest and trial of the criminals.

During the Meeting, Nepal offered to host the next/ Tenth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Sub-Group on Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism in Kathmandu in 2018.

### 2. Third Meeting of the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks



*BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks*

The Third Meeting of the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks (BNPTT) was held at the BIMSTEC Secretariat, Dhaka, Bangladesh on 22-23 April 2017. Given the important and vibrant role of the BNPTT in the changing regional and global scenario for meaningful regional integration, the Meeting finalized its TOR. It also agreed on the proposal to establish the Centre for

Bay of Bengal Studies and after deliberating on its modalities, decided to submit their comments and observations on the Non-Paper within one-month.

The Meeting reiterated that the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of BIMSTEC should be celebrated in a befitting manner, which will enhance the visibility of BIMSTEC. Some of the delegates announced their specific programs to be hosted to mark the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of BIMSTEC.

### **3. Third SAARC-ADB Special Meeting of Representatives of Commerce and Finance Ministries on Regional Economic Integration Study (Phase-II)**

The Third SAARC-ADB Special Meeting of Representatives of Commerce and Finance Ministries on Regional Economic Integration Study (Phase-II) was held in Islamabad on 12-13 April 2017. In the Meeting, the delegates made their presentations on transport connectivity in their respective country and with neighbouring member countries. The delegations also briefed the meeting on the implementation status of prioritized and identified corridors/projects (road, air, maritime, inland waterways) in the SAARC Regional Multimodal Transport Study (SRMTS) at the national level.

The Meeting recommended that Asian Development Bank may be approached to update the Study and a Workshop of the representatives of the Ministries of Transport may be convened with the support of ADB to discuss the updated Study to devise further course of action. The Member States agreed to convey their proposals to the SAARC Secretariat on new initiatives/projects which need to be incorporated in the SAARC Regional Multimodal Transport Study being

updated by the ADB by 15<sup>th</sup> May 2017. Nepal proposed to host the Sixth Meeting of Inter-Governmental Group on Transport at Kathmandu in August 2017.

The Meeting requested that the Study may be further updated by incorporating the views expressed by the delegations from Member States given in their country presentations and deliberations during the Meeting. The Meeting recommended that action on the pending issues may be taken by all Member States expeditiously under intimation to the SAARC Secretariat. With regard to the six identified prioritized recommendations of the Study on Regional Economic Integration (Phase-II), the Meeting noted the position of the Member States in regards to (i) Reduction/Removal of Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) and Para-Tariff Barriers (PTBs), (ii) Energy Cooperation, (iii) Trade Facilitation Measures, (iv) Investment Cooperation, (v) Reduction of products in the Sensitive Lists and (vi) SAARC Agreement on Trade in Services (SATIS).

It was recommended that all the Member States having concerns over Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) and Para-Tariff Barriers (PTBs) will consult with their respective stakeholders and after their consultations, will forward fresh Notifications of NTBs/PTBs faced by their export products in other SAARC countries to the SAARC Secretariat by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2017.

### **4. Eleventh Informal Meeting of SAARC Finance Ministers**

The Eleventh Informal Meeting of SAARC Finance Ministers was held in Yokohama, Japan on 5 May 2017 on the sidelines of the 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of ADB with the theme “50 years



of ADB and its operations in SAARC Countries”.

The Eleventh Informal Meeting was opened and chaired by H.E. Mr. Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance of Nepal. In his opening statement, Hon’ble Mr. Mahara stated that the SAARC region remains in high priority in ADB’s quest of poverty alleviation and economic development. He further mentioned that ADB’s engagement in the promotion of cooperation and integration in sub-regional level in the Asia-Pacific region is most remarkable and unique.

Similarly, Hon’ble Mr. Mahara briefly presented the current economic scenario of Nepal and shared the meeting that Nepal has registered 6.9 percent economic growth rate this year, which is highest in 25 years. The annual inflation rate is expected to remain below 5 per cent. Balance of Payments is surplus with foreign currency reserves of 10.7 billion US Dollars. Nepal is working to attract foreign investment, receiving a pledge of US \$ 14 billion investments during the Investment Summit held in Kathmandu in March 2017. All other macroeconomic indicators are positive except trade deficit.

The Meeting emphasized on some major issues i.e. improvement of infrastructure, connectivity and creating economic corridors among SAARC Member States, operationalization of the SAARC Agreement on Trade in Services (SATIS), finalization of the text of the Draft SAARC Agreement on Promotion and Protection of Investment at the earliest. It also stressed on the augmentation of intra-regional trade under SAFTA which is presently very sluggish although tariff rates are between 0% to 5%

by taking effective measures and by creating awareness among business community, convene Meetings of SAFTA Ministerial Council (SMC) and SAFTA Committee of Experts as these have not been held since July 2014 and making visa regimes more liberal to encourage people-to- people contacts.

## **5. Hon’ble Minister for Foreign Affairs Addresses the Symposium of Non-Resident Ambassadors**

Hon’ble Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat, delivered a keynote address at the inaugural session of the symposium on ‘enhancing bilateral economic cooperation with countries having diplomatic relations with Nepal’ organized in New Delhi on 5 May 2017 for Delhi-based ambassadors and diplomatic missions concurrently accredited to Nepal. The Symposium that ran for two days, was jointly organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Nepal, the Embassy of Nepal in New Delhi, the Institute for Strategic and Socio-economic Research and the Pavilion Group Nepal.

In his address, Hon’ble Minister for Foreign Affairs highlighted the need of consensus among the political parties in Nepal to develop conducive environment for foreign investment so as to achieve economic growth and realize the country’s vision of development.

Speaking about various sector-specific incentives provided to foreign investors, the Foreign Minister said that growing improvement of cross-border infrastructure and connectivity between Nepal and India provided further opportunities for expansion of trade and investment in Nepal.

The Minister of State for External Affairs of India, His Excellency Gen V. K. Singh, also addressed the symposium highlighting deep-rooted Nepal-India relations and substantial engagements between the two countries in trade, investment, tourism and other components of economy. He assured of India's continued support to Nepal's development efforts.

Foreign Secretary Shanker Das Bairagi speaking at the concluding session expressed gratitude to non-resident Ambassadors for their support and solidarity with Nepal and encouraged them to regularly visit Nepal for continued exchange of ideas and updated on the initiatives taken by Embassy of Nepal with regard to economic diversification and investment promotion.

## **D. Policy Related and Other Activities**

### **1. High-Level Foreign Policy Review Task Force**

High-Level Foreign Policy Review Task Force (HLFPRTF) was set up under the chairmanship of the Minister for Foreign Affairs in April 2017. The Task Force was mandated to review foreign policy and recommend priorities in consonance with our national interests and ways to implement them effectively. The Task Force consists of experts from political, defense, economic and institutional spheres.

### **2. MOFA Consultative Group of Experts**

MOFA constituted advisory groups with expertise in the fields of international relations, foreign policy and diplomacy. MOFA initiated consultation with the experts on various dimensions and areas of MOFA priorities.

## **E. Protocol, Passport and Consular Activities**

### **1. Protocol Matters**

The Protocol Division carried out all activities such as planning, programming, inter-agencies coordination, extending state protocols and hospitality in connection with the State Visit of The Rt. Hon'ble President Mrs. Vidya Devi Bhandari to the Republic of India from 17 to 21 April 2017; the official visit of The Rt. Hon'ble President Mrs. Vidya Devi Bhandari to Sri Lanka from 13 to 16 May 2017; and the visit of The Rt. Hon'ble President to Grand Palace of Thailand on 12 May 2017.

The Protocol Division organized a Ceremony on 3 May 2017 at Sheetal Niwas to present Letter of Credence to the Rt. Hon'ble President of Nepal Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari by the Ambassadors-designate of Thailand, Republic of Korea, Australia and Hungary to Nepal H. E. Mr. Bhakavat Tanskul, H.E. Mr. Park Young-Sik, H. E. Mr. Peter Graeme Budd, and H.E. Mr. Gyula Petho respectively. In this regard, Protocol Division made all the necessary arrangement for the Credential Ceremony with the coordination of the Office of the President, Ministry of Home, Ministry of Defense, Nepal police and Nepal Army.

The Division prepared the letter of Credence in favor of following Nepali Ambassadors to the countries mentioned hereunder:

S.N.	Name of Ambassadors	Countries	
		Residential	Non-Residential
1.	H.E. Mr. Tara Prasad Pokharel		Argentina, Chile, Paraguay
2.	H.E. Mr. Amrit Bahadur Rai		Zimbabwe
3.	H.E. Mr.		Lebanon

	Jhabindra Prasad Aryal		and Morocco
4.	H. E. Dr. Durga Bahadur Subedi		Ireland
5.	H.E. Mr. Lok Bahadur Thapa		OPCW, Luxemburg
6.	H.E. Ms. Sewa Lamsal Adhikari		Iran
7.	H.E. Prof. Chop Lal Bhusal	Bangladesh	
8.	H.E. Prof. Bishwambher Pyakuryal	Sri Lanka	
9.	H.E. Ms. Lucky Sherpa	Australia	
10.	H.E. Mr. Ramesh Prasad Koirala	Qatar	
11.	H.E. Ms. Sarmila Parajuli Dhakal	Oman	
12.	H.E. Mr. Bhim Kumar Udas	Myanmar	
13.	H.E. Mr. Yuba Nath Lamsal	Denmark	
14.	H.E. Prof. Mahendra Prasad Singh Rajput	Saudi Arabia	
15.	H.E. Mr. Niranjana Kumar Thapa	Israel	
16.	H.E. Ms. Prativa Rana	Japan	
17.	H.E. Mr. Arjun JB Singh	Rep of Korea	

The Letter of Recall of the predecessor of the above Ambassadors were also prepared together and made available to the respective Ambassadors.

Similarly, the Division has prepared Letter of Commissions in favour of Mr. Madhu Kumar Marasini, Consul General of Nepal based in New York and Mr. Rabi Bhattarai, Consul General of Nepal for Guangzhou, People's Republic of China

Likewise, Letter of Commission in favour of Mr. Balley Supatra Jano Seti, Honorary Consul of Nepal for Jakarta and Mr. Terry Teo Swee Leng, Honorary Consul of Nepal for Klang Valley, Malaysia were also prepared and sent through respective Nepali Embassies.

## 2. Passport Services

The number of passports issued in February and March 2017;

Month	Diplomatic Passport	Official Passport	Ordinary Passport	Travel Document
April	60	68	37,387	17
May	70	133	36,775	11
<b>Total</b>	130	201	74,162	28

HE Mr. Yves Carmona, Ambassador of France paid a courtesy call on the Director General of Department of Passports (DOP) Mr. Sushil Kumar Lamsal on 24 May 2017.



*Ambassador of France to Nepal with Director General of DoP during his visit to Department of Passport*

Welcoming the Ambassador to the Department, Mr. Lamsal briefed him about the works and activities of DOP. During the visit, HE Mr. Carmona visited the Oberthur personalization centre located inside the premises of DOP.

## 3. Consular Services

The issue-wise details of the service delivery of the Department of Consular Services during February-March 2017;

S.N.	Details of Services	No. of Works Performed
A	<b>Consular and Legal Counseling Section</b>	
1	Recommendation for Medical treatment, Religious tour, World cycling tour and others.	9



2	Recommendation for Indian education certificate, nationality verification and those who are visiting India for study purpose.	315
3	Recommendation for Indian pension.	2
4	Recommendation for issuing Nepalese driving license on the basis of foreign driving license held by the Nepalese citizen.	856
5	Recommendation letter to Indian Embassy for character verification report to Nepalese citizens during their period of stay in India.	48
6	Recommendation for procurement of chemicals & explosives.	23
7	Recommendation letter to Indian Embassy for issuing permit for vehicles to enter India.	4
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.	19
9	Correspondence letter regarding authenticity of Power of Attorney issued by Nepalese missions abroad.	186
10	Correspondence to the concerned authorities of Nepal regarding authenticity of documents issued by the Government of Nepal.	55
11	POA, VOR, H-Form Request (Malaysia), and correspondence to the District Administration Office for compensation to Nepalese citizens died abroad.	136
12	Correspondence concerning search and rescue of Nepalese nationals to the Nepalese Missions abroad.	156
13	Correspondence with regards to repatriation of dead body of Nepalese nationals abroad.	54

14	Correspondence to the government agencies in Nepal.	74
15	Number of draft received for the compensation from Malaysia.	24
16	Handover of compensation amount from Malaysia to the concerned family	18
<b>B</b>	<b>Visa and Exemption Section</b>	
1	Issuance of diplomatic/official/gratis visa	577
2	Issuance of diplomatic/official ID Card	67
3	Issuance of SAARC visa stickers.	28
4	Number of recommendation for exemption.	568
5	Number of visa recommendation to the foreign missions on GON's nominations.	263
<b>C</b>	<b>Attestation section</b>	
1	Number of attested documents.	38,817
<b>Total</b>		<b>42,299</b>