



# शान्तिका पहलहरू

# PEACE INITIATIVES

NEWSLETTER OF FRIENDS FOR PEACE



## EDITORIAL

With the formation of a new coalition government, followed by the successful presidential and prime ministerial elections, Nepal has made an epochal leap to enter a modern democratic age, pulling itself out of the age-old clutches of feudalism. It has, once and for all, shattered the dreams of regressive forces to roll back the wheels of history. After coming into existence in the wake of election held on 10 April, the Constituent Assembly (CA) has been able to catch the imagination of the people as a new and vibrant institution capable of providing direction to Nepali politics amidst the chaotic political storms stirring the nation for the last more than twelve years. The election for the presidency, which marked the abolition of 247-year-old monarchy forever, is the second major step the CA has taken. Every Nepali now can proudly say that the sovereignty of the nation is secure in the hands of the people themselves.

The greatest achievement of the process is that a son of an ordinary Nepali farmer has become the head of state of Nepal. Again, the President and the Vice-president both represent an ethnicity and a region, which had a long grudge against the central state power for being the victims of callous indifference, exclusion and exploitation. Their elections by the CA to the topmost two posts of the nation have definitely relayed a positive message that a process has been set afoot to redress past injustices. The election also signifies a new awakening of the sense of inclusion in the Nepali society. It can now be expected that more variety will be added in the national political canvas as more representatives from other ethnic and indigenous communities will step forward to hold crucial positions in the prospective governments.

Despite landmark achievements and a meaningful historical watershed, the recent run-

up to the election was marred by unpleasant sights of trade off among major political parties. The democratic alliance forged together by 12-point agreement between the CPN (Maoist) and the seven political parties has developed visible cracks. This does not bode well for the future of the peace process, as there are no other alternatives before the pro-democratic political forces than to move ahead with politics of consensus. The CA has been formed to draft a new democratic constitution. Declaration of republicanism, abolition of monarchy and holding of presidential election were only some of the preliminary tasks it had to deal with before starting to draft the constitution. There are still some more works, which need urgent attention before the CA is well attuned to writing a new constitution.

Before the CA can proceed towards drafting the constitution, the major political parties must strengthen their unity on the basis of the principle of power sharing agreed upon in previous agreements. The present context and the composition of the CA are clear injunction to the parties to cultivate a team spirit. Building consensus on carrying a common agenda is always an uphill task but this is the only way left for the parties to reach the goal of sustainable peace in the country.

As in all critical periods in the past, Friends for Peace is scrutinizing the unfolding events with deep concerns. At the same time, it is also planning its future activities with a view to help major political parties forge consensus and help the CA members connect themselves with their grassroots constituents. If the information and knowledge resources of Friends for Peace can contribute to help narrow down growing socio-political chasm and build bridges of conciliation on both

### Visit FFP

[www.friendsforpeace.org.np](http://www.friendsforpeace.org.np)

### Email

[info@ffp.org.np](mailto:info@ffp.org.np)

### Editorial Desk

D B Gurung  
Narad N Bharadwaj  
Shiva K Dhungana  
K P Neupane

### Design

Ujjwal Rana

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## National Interaction on Challenges and Opportunities for Constituent Assembly and Book Launch

Friends for Peace (FFP) organized a book launch and an interaction program on 7 August 2008. Chief Guest Mr. Ed Doe, Counselor (program) and Consul CIDA, Head of Aid, released the book titled *Modular Training Course on Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding*. He highlighted the importance of the content of the manual. Delivering welcome speech, Mr. D. B. Gurung, Executive Director of FFP, stressed the need of disseminating knowledge and experience in the field of conflict transformation and peacebuilding. Mr. Tulasi Nepal, the author of the manual, shed light on its essence, and advised readers to use the manual as useful ingredients. Following the book launch, an interaction program on “Challenges and Opportunities for Constituent Assembly” took place between eight eminent CA members and four constitutional experts.



Speaking on constitutionalism, Mr. Daman Nath Dhungana, a constitutional expert, stressed the need to rule the nation by elected representatives. Mr. Dhungana also focused on minimizing the conflict to the highest extent. Mr. Padma Ratna Tuladhar, one of the renowned civil society members and human rights activists, pointed out that the peaceful transformation of conflict has stood as a potent challenge to Constituent Assembly. Hon. Dr. Minendra Rijal, one of the eminent CA members, asserted that the management of weapons, formation of consensus government and formulation of a minimum common agenda has constituted major challenges to the CA.

Hon. Barsha Man Pun, num de gurre Ananta, one of the heavyweights of CPN (Maoist), pointed out that failure to address the causes of civil strife, feudalism, external interference, miss-governance of the past, poverty and high illiteracy, has emerged as a challenge to CA and peace process. Hon. Pradeep Gyawali, CA member, CPN(UML), stated that the increasing recent political polarization – leftist versus rightist, has fuelled rift among the political forces, abetting instability. Hon. Tirtha Ram Dangol said that the establishment of inclusive political system with the end of centralized governance has been the challenge to the CA.

Similarly, Hon. Anil Kumar Jha focused on the need of building reconciliation among 25 political parties to create a proper ambience for writing constitution. Hon. Sushma Sharma urged major political parties to eliminate existing social contradiction in order to restructure the state. Hon. Vikchhu Ananda advised political leaders not to be dictated by external forces while writing the new constitution. He also asked them to embrace religious norms and values. Prof. Krishna Khanal opined that the rift between leaders’ and peoples’ aspirations has posed challenge to CA.

Dr. Surya Prasad Dhungel, one of the noted constitutional experts, stressed on how to build pressure upon political parties for writing a model constitution. The interaction, which was followed by vibrant floor discussion, witnessed nearly hundred participants from all walks of life. Mr. Balkrishna Mabuhang, the moderator of the program, lent importance on sharing of ideas among CA members, grassroots people and constitutional experts with a view to producing a better constitution. In his concluding speech, Chairperson, Mr. Laxman Prasad Aryal, highlighted the importance of the program, and thanked the participants for their contribution.

## National Interaction on the Role of Media in Constitution Making Process and Book Launch

FFP organized a book launch on 3 September 2008 to unveil a new book entitled *Nepal: Negotiating a Path through Quagmire*, an assortment of essays (2001-2007), authored by Mr. D. B. Gurung, Executive Director of FFP. Prof. D. P. Bhandari was the Chief Guest of the function. Mr. Prabodh Devkota, a Lecturer of English at Patan Multiple Campus and Mr. Ajay Bhadra Khanal, Acting Editor of The Himalayan Times, commented on the book. Mr. Laxman Prasad Aryal, FFP Chairperson, chaired the program. Mr. Balkrishna Mabuhang, Executive Member of FFP, welcomed the audience and moderated the function.



Addressing the function, Chief Guest Prof. D. P. Bhandari stated that Mr. Gurung's book encompasses literature, socio-political commentaries, ethnic and Gurkha issues. He emphasized that although Gurung derives from an ethnic community, he rightly deserves the title of "Brahmin", given his prolific outputs in the spheres of literature and social science. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. D. B. Gurung, the writer of the book, highlighted the role of author, strength of pen and duties and responsibilities of the present government. "Writer is the denizen of the world, needs no travel documents to visit the boundless domains of imagination...." he asserted.

Offering comments on the book, Mr. Prabodh Devkota averred that Mr. Gurung was the first writer who created a nascent discourse on British Gurkhas issues in Nepal. Mr. Devkota said that his book is a representative historical document that has created global political awareness. Likewise, Mr. Ajaya Bhadra Khanal, appreciated Gurung's creative and intellectual honesty, portrayal of humor, wits and insights, and Shakespearean imagination in his writings. FFP Chairperson offered vote of thanks.

The interaction program on "the Role of Media in Constitution Making Process" took place immediately after the book launch. The speakers of the interaction program were Constituent Assembly Members and senior journalists, both from print and electronic media. Five CA members and seven journalists participated in the function. Addressing the program, Hon. Suprabha Ghimire, CA Member from Nepali Congress Party, asked the media to be wider in collecting news and represent voices of the marginalized and grassroots.

Hon. Khim Lal Devkota, CA Member, Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) appealed to the media to circulate messages on the objectives of the CA and to remind its stakeholders about people's needs and aspirations. Mr. Devkota asked the media to make CA members responsible and sensitive towards their duties. He advised journalists to disseminate the contents of the new constitution to the people. He also asked the media to educate the people, making the right interpretations of the facts.

Hon. Sharad Singh Bhandari, CA member, Madhesi Janaadhikar Forum, expressed the needs of giving orientation to the people about what the constitution was about. "The media has to bridge the gap between the grassroots people and Constituent Assembly and vice versa," he said. Hon. Padma Lal Bishwokarma asked the media to act as a faithful watch dog. He urged the journalists not to be apprehensive of the incumbent Maoist-led government.

Mr. Tirtha Koirala, Chief, News and Current Affair of the Kantipur TV, advocated a truthful reporting against the so-called neutrality in news transmission. He asserted that media should be impartial. However, he focused on dynamic state of media that tends to discover the truth and keep the public well informed. Ms. Nirmala Sharma, Secretary General of Sancharika Samuha, demanded the privatization of media sector. She stood against the establishment of media houses run by the government. She requested intellectuals to speak out on the role of media. Mr. Ajaya Bhadra Khanal, Acting Editor of the Himalayan Times, urged the participants to have three dimensional views to observe the world: Things should not be viewed only in black and white dimension. The interaction, which was followed by a vibrant floor discussion, witnessed nearly 110 participants from various sectors of society. Concluding the program, FFP Chairperson Mr. Laxman Prasad Aryal extended the vote of thanks.

## Terai Research

It is apparent that Madhes and the Madhesis have been bearing the brunt of exclusion, discrimination and injustices for ages inflicted by the state of Nepal. Statistical facts substantiate some of these charges. There is no mechanism to corroborate the facts as to what extent these issues reflect the concerns of the poor, vulnerable and socially excluded (PVSE) groups within the Terai communities.



Thus, on the basis of relevant statistics, information and perception collected at national and local level, a need was felt for a retrospective study to verify various claims and questions raised by political parties and civil society groups. Our idea was to undertake this research with the help of first hand field based study that unearths the voices and concerns of the Dalits, women, the poor, the marginalized, the indigenous people and the higher caste community in the Terai. It would help in comparatively analyzing facts, and formulating specific recommendations for genuinely addressing the issues arising from the Madhes Movement, and effecting sustainable solution to the Madhes problem.

Thus, FFP carried out field research on "Retrospective Analysis of Madhes Issues and Exploring the Options for Sustainable Solution" from 4 to 19 August 2008 in three districts (Morang, Dhanusha and Banke). A team comprising three researchers led by a Team Leader was to collect information with the help of quantitative and qualitative survey. A sample of 200 households from each district covering cross-sections of Madhesi society were interviewed to gather information on local perceptions on various Madhes agendas raised by the political leaders as well as other armed groups in Terai. The information gathered through household survey was complemented with the information collected through focus group discussions (FGD), Key Informants' Interview (KII) and case studies.

The overall objective of this research is to validate the various demands raised by different sections and quarters of Madhesi society based on the perceptions and understanding of the people of Madhes in general. It will also furnish recommendations in order to help national policy makers formulate correct principles and policies to address the issues raised by the Madhes Movement.

The recently concluded research had the following objectives:

- To explore the inter- and intra-ethnic contradictions in Terai, and assess their causes;
- To explore the socio-economic and political linkages of Terai with the rest of the country;
- To explore the agendas of various interest groups (political and others) operating in Terai to address the problems of the people of Terai
- To reflect local perspectives on the emerging issues of Terai such as autonomy, right to self-determination, inclusion and national integrity.

Finally, this research was visualized in order to shift our research focus from national level peace process to local priorities with special focus on addressing the political, social, cultural and ethnic problems of the Terai.

## FFP Staff Participation in International Workshop

Shiva K Dhungana, Research Officer of Friends for Peace (FFP), participated in the 'Residential Workshop on Migration and Remittances: Nontraditional Issues in Asian Security Discourse' during 22-23 August 2008 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The programme was organized by Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), University of Dhaka, and supported by The Consortium of Non-Traditional Security Studies in Asia (NTS-Asia), S Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyong Technological University, Singapore.

This workshop was designed to impart a sound understanding of governance of migration and remittance in regional and international frameworks linking it with emerging interrelationship of armed conflict and international labor migration, global terrorism and the global terror financing and its linkages with labor remittance flow. It provided a platform to the South and Southeast Asian young policymakers, academics and researchers to share their views and thoughts on the issue, and develop a functional network among them. The governance of migration and remittances has increasingly been securitized especially following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Over the years, new laws have been introduced for greater surveillance over monetary flows for detecting money laundering. This may adversely affect migrants' remittances. The securitization of migration and remittances may contribute to more irregular migration as well as monetary flows. The real challenge for policymakers now is to ensure security without jeopardizing the development outcome of migration.

This workshop highlighted the importance of migration as a livelihood strategy, conflict mitigation strategy, the developmental impact of global remittance and likely consequences of securitizing migration and remittance. It further discussed issues like human security, food security, climate change, energy security, environmental security, gender and security, health security, irregular migration, political transitions, poverty and economic security, transnational crime as part of non-traditional security issues of current global community.

## Prof. Ed Garcia's Visit

Prof. Ed Garcia, a senior policy advisor for International Alert, was in Nepal from 18-20 August 2008 at the invitation of Friends for Peace and International Alert. Prof. Garcia also served as Alert's peace envoy in Africa, Asia and Latin America in 1994. He co-authored the 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines. As a member of Constitutional Commission formed soon after the people's power upheaval the same year, he chaired the public hearing committee, and worked in the committees on the Bill of Rights and Social Justice.



Prof. Garcia shared his experiences among CA members, indigenous society leaders and journalists during his visit to Nepal. Giving interview to Kantipur Television, one of the national TV channels of Nepal, he spoke on the need of broad public consultation and hearing in drafting constitution in Nepal. He urged all the party leaders of Nepal to listen to people's voice in order to formulate one of the best constitutions across the globe. He stated that world community can learn lesson from Nepal about conflict transformation and peacebuilding.

## A Note of Congratulations

FFP Treasurer Mr. Padma Jyoti has been nominated as the honourable member of the Constituent Assembly by the Government of Nepal. FFP family would like to congratulate Hon. Jyoti for his appointment in the high office of CA and wish him success in playing a meaningful role in drafting the new Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal.



## FFP's Publications To date

- The Sri Lanka Experience (Nepali and English), July 2004
- Peace Initiatives in Dolakha and Ramechhap Districts: A Rapid Assessment (Nepali and English), June 2004
- Future Peace Negotiation: Opportunities and Challenges, July 2004
- Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Nepal: A Discussion (in Nepali), November 2004
- Geopolitics of Nepal and International Responses to Conflict Transformation, January 2005
- Security Sector Reform in Nepal: Challenges and Opportunities, June 2005
- Nepal's Discourse on Constituent Assembly: An Analysis, June 2005
- Interactions on Conflict Transformation and Peace Process: Conclusions and Recommendations, September 2005
- The Maoist Insurgency and Nepal-India Relations, March 2006
- Countries in Conflict and Processing of Peace: Lessons for Nepal, May 2006
- Local Business, Local Peace: Peacebuilding Potential of the Domestic Private Sector, Executive Summary (in Nepali) (Joint-IA-FFP-NBI), September 2006
- Nepalese Private Sector: Responding to Conflict (in Nepali) (Joint-IA-FFP-NBI), September 2006
- Nepal at a Crossroads: The Nexus between Human Security and Renewed Conflict in Rural Nepal (Joint -FFP-IA, October 2007)
- Voices from the Villages: Peoples' Agendas for Peace (Joint -FFP-IA), November 2007)
- Nepal: Transitional Politics and Constituent Assembly Election, January 2008
- Youth Perspectives on Community Security in the Eastern Terai, (Joint IA- FFP), 2008
- A Manual for Modular Training Course on Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding, February 2008

## Forthcoming Publications

- Inclusive Nepal: Restructuring the State
- Towards a Federalized Democratic Nepal
- Federalism and Human Rights: A Nepali Perspective
- Countries in Conflict and Processing of Peace: Lessons for Nepal (Revised Edition)

## Appointment

FFP appointed Mr. Khagendra Neupane as its Communications Officer with effect from 11 July 2008. It also approved the resignation of Ms. Sagun Basnet from the post of Communications Office effective from 7 July 2008.

Similarly, FFP hired six researchers to undertake research in three Terai districts (Morang, Dhanusa and Banke), carried out from 4 to 19 August 2008. The research was led by Mr. Tula Narayan Shah who was appointed as research coordinator for three months starting from 4 August 2008.

## Resignation

Dr. Bishnu Raj Upreti resigned from the post of treasurer effective from 11 May 2008. FFP would like to thank him for his invaluable contributions in enhancing its capacity in the field of conflict transformation and peacebuilding. FFP Executive Board nominated Mr. Padma Jyoti, Executive Board Member of FFP, to take up the responsibility as a new treasurer on 29 May 2008.

## An Overview of FFP Website Visits

Friends for Peace has maintained a website, which incorporates a variety of information about the resource available at its resource centre. According to our webmaster's survey, 304 visitors from 43 different countries are found to have visited different pages of our website. The survey shows total number of page views to be 1647. The growth in the number of new visitors is estimated to be 88.82 percent in the future. The following graph provides a glimpse of how its visitors are making use of its resources currently.



## Library

The library of Friends for Peace (FFP) has been successfully providing its resources on conflict transformation and peacebuilding to its reader since 2004. It particularly caters to researchers, academics, constituent assembly members, students and human right activists, seeking information on conflict transformation, peacebuilding and other related issues.



The library is rich in its resources with more than 5,600 different books, documents, journals, reports and other materials. They revolve around conflict transformation, peacebuilding, strategic studies, war studies, terrorism, international relations, political science, Nepal studies, history, gender studies, biographies of world leaders, Nepalese law, world constitutions, human rights and other relevant subjects. Additionally, the library also subscribes major daily and some weekly newspapers as well as national and international magazines. Recently, it has new addition of nearly 300 books on peace studies, conflict transformation, terrorism, human rights, political science, civil society, gender, law, Nepal, media, federalism and research, including audiovisual materials like television, DVD player of worth 625 thousand with the assistance of London based peacebuilding NGO, Saferworld.

The library has been providing additional online services through Program Enhancement of Research Information (PERI) since last year. This online resource can directly access more than 25,000 scholarly journals to the library patrons. A regular collection of newspaper clipping related to peace, conflict, constituent assembly, and interim constitution from major newspapers and also collection of relevant newsletter published from different organizations are its additional features.

Its resources are technically processed with the help of Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) 21st Edition and Computerised Documentation Service / Integrated Set of Information Systems (CDS/ISIS) database. So, readers can easily reach to specific resource by title, author, subject or keywords. Its information is disseminated through various extension materials such as pamphlet, brochure, email, telephone and internet. The library is open to all users from Monday to Friday, 9:30 am through 4:30pm except on national holidays. It is planning to set up a Constituent Assembly (CA) corner in the near future. For further information, please visit us hitting the following URL: [www.friendsforpeace.org.np/library.htm](http://www.friendsforpeace.org.np/library.htm)

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**Friends for Peace**

117/36, Puja Pratisthan Marg, Purano Baneshwor

GPO Box No. 11033, Kathmandu, Nepal

Tel: +977-1-4480406; Fax: +977-1-4472798

E-mail: [info@ffp.org.np](mailto:info@ffp.org.np)

Website: [www.friendsforpeace.org.np](http://www.friendsforpeace.org.np)