



Public Open Debate
at Basantapur



Kathmandu demands REFERENDUM ON MONARCHY AND SECULARISM

The public thronged to the interaction program organized by MIREST NEPAL at Basantapur, Kathmandu on 9th July, 2010 to voice their opinions and put forward their questions to Nepali Congress CA member Nabindra Raj Joshi, CPN-UML CA member Pradip Gyawali, former Deputy Prime Minister and UCPN-M CA member Amik Sherchan, President of Rashtriya Prajatratrik Party-Nepal Kamal Thapa and civil society member Malla K Sundar. At the beginning of the program Suresh Acharya, President of MIREST, Nepal welcomed the audience and participants and briefed them about the organization's activities. Acharya said that, 'as per the mandate of the people either CA was able to draft the new constitution nor the peace process was completed'. Thus, all policy-makers and stakeholders should work towards fulfilling people's mandate. Approximately 1500 representatives from civil societies, non-governmental organizations, academi-

cians, students, journalists, political parties and ethnicities participated in the open debate. The program was moderated by Swagat Nepal of MIREST Nepal. The local, Martyr Gangalal Shrestha Club helped MIREST Nepal to organize the program. The major issues that were raised during the interaction program were:

Major Issues:

There was a heated debate regarding monarchy and secularism of Nepal and the locals demanded that there should be a provision of referendum regarding such sensitive issues.

Along with debates and demands put forward, there was an unusual suggestion from a local saying that as the interim constitution changes time to time, no one is entitled to follow what is written in the interim constitution. Followed by several suggestions to the panelists on the program, a participant suggested that no one should have extreme political viewpoints as it always leads to violence.

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Public Open Debate at Basantapur, Kathmandu

LOCALS OF MUSTANG DEMAND TO BE IN JADAN PROVINCE

Another interaction program was conducted at Jomsom, Mustang district on 21st May, 2010 by Media Initiative for Rights, Equality and Social Transformation (MIREST Nepal). The general public debated with the CA members and experts on the aspects of the constitution making process which lasted for about four hours. At the beginning of the program, Gaurab Pudasaini, Executive Director of MIREST Nepal shed light on the importance of such interactive dialogues in mainstreaming people of Mustang in the national democratization process. The panelists in the program were CPN-UML CA member Mr. Tashi Syangbo Gurungseni, Nepali Congress CA member Ms. Laxmi Pariyar, expert Mr. Suresh Kumar Pudasaini, Ex-minister and social worker Mr. Nara Bahadur Hirachan and civil society leader Mr. Chandra Bahadur Thakali. Some of the major issues raised during the program were:

Major issues:

The people of Jomsom demanded that the backward places should be given more importance in the new constitution in terms of development.

The public also demanded that the royalty collected in the region should be spent for the development of the region and should

not be spent somewhere else by the government. There was a huge debate on which province should Mustang be kept in. The Committee on State Restructuring and Distribution of State Power has proposed Tamuwan province for Mustang but the locals of Mustang demanded to be kept in the Jadan province.



Public Open Debate at Mustang



ENVIRONMENT CONSERVATION DEMANDED IN LUKLA

An interaction program was conducted in Lukla, Solukhumbu district on 14th May, 2010. The panelists were UCPM-M CA member Ms. Aang Dawa Sherpa, CPN-UML CA member Mr. Pasang Sherpa, Nepali Congress CA member Ms. Sita Gurung, Ex-minister and women leader Ms. Yangkila Sherpa and social worker Mr. Ang Dawa Sherpa. Approximately 700 representatives from civil societies, non-governmental organizations, academicians, students, journalists, political parties and ethnicities participated in the open debate. At the beginning of the program, Executive Director of MIREST Nepal Gaurab Pudasaini welcomed the guests and the participants of the public TV interaction held for the first time in Lukla. The program was moderated by Swagat Nepal of MIREST Nepal. The public participated in a heated discussion which included the following major issues.

Major issues:

- The locals of Lukla demanded the CA members that the local resources should be used locally and not be used by the state.
- There was a strong demand for the betterment of the educational system in Nepal. They demanded that the education



Public Open Debate at Lukla, Solukhumbu

given by government and private schools should not vary and the difference in quality should be minimal.

- The locals were concerned about the increasing global warming and therefore there was an overwhelming demand to mention environment conservation in the new constitution. Environment conservation should be mentioned in the new constitution due to global warming.



Public Open Debate at Lukla, Solukhumbu





Public Open Debate at Chautara, Sindhupalchowk

Support to the 2nd Generation leaders in Chautara

Hundreds of local people attended the open debate conducted by MIREST Nepal in Chautara, Sindhupalchowk on 19th April, 2010. They were there to provide suggestions to and question CA members and experts who included Nepali Congress CA member Mrs. Mahalaxmi Aryal Upadhaya (Dina Upadhaya), UCPN-M CA member Keshab Nepal, Rashtriya Prajatantrik Party CA member Chalan Bdr. Tamang, leader CPN-UML Ex-member of parliament Subash Karmacharya and ex minister-coordinator Aadhibashi Janajati Adhikar Manch Mani Lama. The program started with the welcome of Executive Director of MIREST Nepal, Gaurab Pudasaini. Approximately 1500 representatives from civil societies, non-governmental organizations, academicians, students, journalists, political parties and ethnicities participated in the open debate. The program was moderated by Swagat Nepal of MIREST Nepal. The major issues that were raised during the interaction program were:

Major Issues:

- The locals of Chautara demanded that the new constitution should be drafted soon even if it had to extend its tenure of drafting the new constitution.
- The 2nd generation political leaders should pressurize the senior leaders in order to bring new ideas into practice.
- The public, whether they are party members or supporters of a certain political party, should pressure the political parties with their independent opinions.

Pokhara disagrees with the proposed 14 provinces

Another interaction program was held at Pokhara, Kaski on 28th April, 2010 which had attracted diverse groups of the society. Approximately 2500 were present at the open debate eager to raise their voices. In the beginning, President of MIREST Nepal, Suresh Acharya spoke about critical issues in the constitution making process. The panelists in the program were UCPN-M CA member Khimlal Devkota, CPN-UML CA member Prithvi Subba Gurung, Nepali Congress CA member Mohan Prasad Pandey, senior advocate /expert Dr. Bipin Adhikari and social worker/ ex president FNCCI Ananda Raj Mulmi. The program was conducted by Swagat Nepal of MIREST Nepal. The major issues that were raised in the open debate were:

Major Issues:

The public of Pokhara stated that dividing the country into 14 provinces proposed by the Committee on State Restructuring and Distribution of State Power was not practical as it would be more expensive to establish provincial governments in each province. The public demanded to decrease the number of provinces to less than 14. Debating on the issue, UCPN-M CA member Khimlal Devkota supported the proposed 14 provinces whereas CPN-UML CA member Prithvi Subba Gurung stated that more discussions were needed to finalize the proposal. With the ongoing strikes every now and then, the students, teachers and businessmen of Pokhara demanded to ban strikes in the new constitution.



Orientation at Pokhara

Orientation (reflection session) held

Media Initiative for Rights, Equity and Social Transformation, (MIREST Nepal) organized an orientation program (reflection sessions) on participatory constitution making process on 17-18 June, 2010. The two day orientation program was held for the journalists and communicators from 35 districts of Eastern and Central Regions. The panelists in the program were communication expert Suresh Kumar Pudasaini, academic Prajwol Chapagain, civil society member Sagun Lawoti, President of MIREST Nepal Suresh Acharya and Executive Director of MIREST Nepal Gaurab Pudasaini. The program began with a welcome speech by the President of MIREST Nepal Suresh Acharya. Gaurab Pudasaini, Executive Director of MIREST Nepal also underlined the need of the orientation program and highlighted on the importance of sharing knowledge amongst the participants.

Communication expert Suresh Kumar Pudasaini shed light on the importance of mass communication to the participating journalists. He also shared his knowledge on yellow journalism and the importance of responsible journalism. Similarly, Prajwol Chapagain spoke on how important media persons are in the constitution making process.

General Secretary of MIREST Nepal, Kumar Yatru presented a paper on the process of writing the new constitution. He also

informed the participants about the elements that influence the constitution making process. At the end of the program the participants expressed their opinions and shared their experiences as a social mobilizer. They also informed that feature writing and conducting oral testimonies has made it easier to collect voices from the grassroots level and suggested that oral testimonies should be conducted in more remote areas as well.

Similarly, another session of the orientation (reflection session) for the Western, Mid-western and Far-western region was organized at Pokhara on the 25th and 26th of April 2010. Communication expert Suresh Kumar Pudasaini, constitution experts Dr. Surya Dhungel and Dr. Bipin Adhikari, President of MIREST Nepal Suresh Acharya, Executive Director of MIREST Nepal Gaurab Pudasaini, Communication and Outreach Director Siddhartha Narsingh Sharma and General Secretary of MIREST Nepal were present at the program. Communication and outreach director Siddhartha Narsingh Sharma informed the participants about the activists of MIREST Nepal and its role in the constitution making process. At the end of the program, awards for the best feature writing were also given to the social mobilizers. Kalendra Sejuwal of Surkhet won the best feature writing award and Parbati Pandey of Kapilbastu and Jagat Lama of Kavre were runners up.



Launching of the Book- Nepal: Options for the new constitution by MIREST Nepal/ Nepal Constitution Foundation

June 9, 2010, Kathmandu: Constitution Assembly Chair Person and Speaker of the house, Honorable Subash Chandra Newang launched the Book entitled book Nepal: Options for the New Constitution edited by Dr. Bipin Adhikari, President NCF, amidst a special function jointly organized by MIREST Nepal and Nepal Constitution Foundation in Kathmandu. The book has been jointly published by Nepal Constitution Foundation, Faculty of Law, Tribhuwan University and Bar Association, Supreme Court.

The book contains a review of papers based on preliminary draft presented by respective thematic committees of the Constitution Assembly presented at the international conference on January 15-17 in Kathmandu by various national and international experts, constitution experts, law makers, academicians and the dignitaries in the respected field on various modalities and options that can be the bed rock for new constitution of Nepal.

During the special session of the program, Mr. Suresh

Acharya President, MIREST Nepal in his welcome speech highlighted the need of the book and its relevance in making new constitution at the prime hour that the nation is passing through.

Similarly, Honorable Nilambar Acharya, Chairperson of the Constituent Assembly Constitution Committee, Dr. Jyoti Sangera from Office of Human Rights Commission Nepal, Dr. Marks Braund from United Nations Development Program, Nepal, commented on the book in line with its content and significance.

Prof. Dr. Ambar Pant, Dean of Law, TU, Advocate Indra Kharel, President of Bar Association Supreme Court, were also present as the special guest of the program.

The program was witnessed by a huge mass gathering comprising constitution assembly members, politicians, academicians, members of civil society, foreign diplomats and the students from faculty of law, Tribhuwan University.

The program was chaired and presided by Dr. Surya Dhungel, co-ordinator, Nepal Constitution Foundation.



Book Released Programme Organized by MIREST Nepal and NCF at Hotel Everest, Kathmandu





TV Screening at Patan Dhoka

'JANAKPUR' Open Debate Episode Screened

LALITPUR, 13 JUNE 2010

MIREST Nepal organized one of its series of television screening at its head office at Lalitpur. The Jankapur episode which comprised discussion between CA members experts and the local people was screened amidst journalists, experts, lecturer and students. The program was officially chaired by Mr. Suresh Acharya, President MIREST Nepal with Aswasthama Bhakta Kharel, Lecturer, political science Tribhuvan Univesity as the main guest.

After the screening, Mr. Kharel opined that such program by MREST Nepal is admirable and it should continue to make politicians aware in drafting the constitution in time with in consistent people voices and thoughts. Commenting on the TV presentation, Kumar Yatru, senior journalist expressed that the concept of Federalism with regards to Nepal is not the outcome of "Madesh Andolan" but pre-conceptualized by Historian Baburam Acharya along with Kaji Man Kandangwa and Dhudirajraj Shastri during 2045/46.

Some of the participants suggested that the provision for credit title should be made avail to differently able people as per their capacity and accessibility. Many of the participants thanked MIREST Nepal for taking initiative to empower people from diverse walks of life through bottom-up approach.

The program concluded with a vote of thanks by the President to all guests and participants for their valuable presence and suggestions stating that voices of youth group present in the program should be incorporated by Constituent Assembly.

"Janata Ko Icchya Patra" Released

MIREST Nepal organized a program at Hotel Everest to release the 27th publication of the organization which were booklets titled "Janta Ko Ekshya Patra" and which will be handed over to the respective Presidents of the Constituent Assembly thematic committees. The first booklet, which dealt with the voices collected from all over Nepal pertaining to the terms of reference of

the CA Committee on Natural Resources, Financial Rights and Revenue Sharing was released amidst a special function, which after will be handed over to Ambika Thapa Magar Shakya, the president of the respected thematic committee. An interaction program was followed by after the handing over ceremony and the panelists were, Dr. Tilak Rawal ,CA member (MJF-L) Dr. Som Pudasaini (noted Peace Expert) and Mr. Suresh Acharya. The participants in the floor were people from various ethnic communities, journalists and scholars. The program was conducted a s part of " Samayojan" a television program on open debate.

Dr. Tilak Rawal as member of the above mentioned thematic committee briefed about the draft prepared by the respected Committee and discussed about the procedures and laws to be prepared on the ground of Nepal as a federal state and inter connected issues on Natural Resources, Financial Rights and Revenue Sharing among central government and the federal states. He mentioned that the fixed structure of the government is necessary in order to prepare specific laws and clauses with regards to natural resources and revenue sharing.

Similary, Panelist Dr. Som Pudasaini expert on Peace in line with the "Voices of Citizens" collected by MIREST Nepal shared his experience on international arena where he was involved in international peace making processes and treaties where the



Janatako Icchya Patra Released at Hotel Everest

inter connection issues on shring of Natural resources by centre and the peripherals. He illustrated the various examples South African and Asian countries in line with failure and success of the states on the issues of natural resources its revenue sharing by the common people of those countries.

Similarly, Panelist, Mr Suresh Acharya, President MIREST Nepal stressed on the need of the clear provision and mechanism in the new constitution in consistent with the peoples voice as raised so that a harmonic relation is maintained in the society through meaningful sharing of the natural resource and its revenue sharing. The other members in the interaction program were prominent lawyers and scholars, members of civil society and raised various questions to the panelists who tried their level best to answer the queries regarding above mentioned thematic subject.

The program was chaired by Mr. Suresh Acharya, President MIREST Nepal.

Release of the "Will of the People"

MIREST Nepal organized a program at Hotel Himalaya to release the 25th and 26th publications of the organization which were booklets titled "Will of the people" and handed it over to the respective Presidents of the Constituent Assembly thematic committees. The first booklet, which dealt with the voices collected from all over Nepal pertaining to the terms of reference of the CA Committee for Determination of bases of Cultural and Social solidarity was released in the morning session. After the release of the booklet it was handed over to Ms Navodita Chawdhary the president of the thematic committee. An interaction program was followed by after the handing over ceremony and the panelists were, Mr. Krishna Bhattachan (noted sociologist,) Mr. Gopal Thakur (CA member and member of the CA Committee for Determination of bases of Cultural and Social solidarity,) Ms. Navodita Chawdhary, and Mr. Suresh Acharya. The participants in the floor were people from various ethnic communities, journalists and scholars.

Mr. Krishna Bhattachan talked about the draft prepared by the CA Committee for Determination of bases of Cultural and Social solidarity. He said that the committee had prepared a document which was incompatible with the various international agreements and treatise that Nepal had been a signatory to. He felt that the aadivasis and janajatis would not really be able to benefit much from the new constitution if the draft prepared by the CA thematic committee is not rectified. He spoke about the need to identify the causes that disrupt the fabric of cultural and social solidarity and then it would be easier to solve the problem. Ms Navodita Chawdhary spoke about the process in which the thematic committee had been divided into 2 sub committees one focusing on culture and social solidarity and the other one focusing purely on language so as to fond the bases for linguistic growth and tolerance. She said that the draft reflected the views of people of all nationalities and gender as

the committee had representatives of all nationalities and gender. Mr. Suresh Acharya highlighted the need to practice restraint while talking against other communities as was the prevalent custom to speak harshly about the so called upper castes and nationalities. "That would create a bigger problem than solving one" he said.

The afternoon session dealt with the CA Judicial system committee. "Voices of Citizens" dealing with the voices collected by MIREST Nepal regarding the existing judicial system and what people want to see changed in the new constitution was released. It was handed over to Mr. Prabhu Shah, President of the CA Judicial system committee. The panelists for the session were Mr. Dinesh Tripathy (Advocate,) Mr Chandrakanta Gyawali (Advocate,) Mr. Surendra Kumar Mahato (Vice president, Nepal BAR Association) and Mr. Radheshyam Adhikary CA member and member of Constitutional Committee.

The other members in the interaction program were prominent lawyers and scholars. Mr. Bishnu Bhattarai pointed out that the draft constitution has only used the word "legislative" and not parliament. He said that non-democratic countries can also have legislative but only democracies have parliament. He also said that it would be immoral to extend the tenure of the CA as the people had voted for a two year period only. He added that the rights of the 10-15 lakhs population who had become 18 years old in the past two years would be infringed as they would not have the right to choose their representatives. Mr. Radhedshyam Adhikary spoke about the awkward situation of the CA and the nation. He said that even though it was immoral to extend the term of the CA not extending would mean that there would be no elected representatives in the nation till the next elections and also that it would be wiser to let this team of people continue their work as they had already contributed significantly in writing the new constitution. He explained the situation as being that of having to choose between the fire or the frying pan.



"Will of the People's" at Himalaya Hotel, Lalitpur

MY 19 MONTHS WITH MIREST NEPAL



RADHA POKHAREL

Media Initiative for Rights Equity and Social Transformation is an organization that has been created by people who have been involved in media. MIREST Nepal has been playing a crucial role in Nepal's in participatory constitution making and peace process. It has been working towards public awareness about contemporary democratic issues.

I joined MIREST Nepal in February, 2008. As a staff of MIREST, I had the opportunity to learn about the financial and accounting management as well as understand the contemporary issues. Besides these areas I also had the opportunity to participate in some of MIREST's communication outreach programs, which gave me a glimpse about the actual work being done by MIREST Nepal. I had initially thought that I would only focus on financial and accounting fields but now I feel that I could also learn about other fields as well.

My involvement in MIREST Nepal's programs has boosted my confidence

which has helped me become an independent career woman.

I went to Pokhara with MIREST team on the 24th of April 2010 to organize the Open Public Debate. While preparing for the public debate I, along with some of my lady colleagues, participated in public announcement service in order to invite the locals of Pokhara to the open debate. This was my first experience in public speaking. I was a bit nervous at the beginning but I was relieved when everyone congratulated me on my success. The program was organized at Siddhartha Chowk, Pokhara for about four long hours. The program concluded successfully with honorable CA delegates and representatives of major political parties acting as panelists. I also had the opportunity to participate in an orientation program for the social communicators of the Western, Mid-Western and Far Western regions. In the orientation session, discussions took place about the way that people's aspirations could be included in the new constitution and the journalists from the aforementioned regions had given their views.

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