

Review Report: Role of the Opposition in a Parliamentary Democracy
Review of the parliamentary activities
From April to July 2020



Reviewed By:

Election Observation Committee Nepal (EOC-Nepal)
Buddhanagar-10 Kathmandu Nepal

www.eocnepal.org.np
eocnepal123@gmail.com

August 10, 2020

As a part of the study on the Role of the opposition in the House of Representation and National Assembly, the following activities in the House has also formed a basis to complement for the study. It is published with the intention of further continuation of debate and interactions from the conscious public domain.

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Background

During the period of this report on the role of the opposition, both the Houses of the Parliament was in sitting for the monsoon session, which was abruptly prorogued due to the emerging political developments within the ruling party itself, lasted for 58 days. Probably it may be the shortest monsoon session in the parliamentary history of Nepal, which usually continues until September. Because of the prorogation of the House, the bills, about in 40 in numbers, and several resolutions proposals with regard to public importance and attentions registered by the members including members of the opposition remained idle without any chance for their considerations and discussions. The opposition parties also missed opportunities to play their constructive roles over the proposed legislative bills.

Whatever the issues surfaced during this period of report, drew the attention of the public and had an impact in the governance has been enumerated as follows.

A. The opposition parties in the House of Representatives register private bill on Constitution amendment:

Samajbadi Party Nepal and Rastriya Janata Party Nepal have jointly registered a private amendment bill of their own at the Parliament Secretariat. The private bill has proposed amendment on 23 different issues of the constitution. While the proposed amendment are mostly in line with their previous demands with some additional issues are also being raised to be addressed through the amendment.

It was their second attempt as their first attempt was not successful due to procedural lapses. The Secretariat had returned it with the remark that it was not submitted in a required prescribed format. The Rastriya Janata Party Nepal had attempted to register a constitution amendment bill as a private bill in the Parliament Secretariat on Friday 16th Jestha 2077. However the Samajwadi Party had backtracked itself from supporting RJP to register a private bill. Although both the parties have consulted each other to register a private bill on their part including the issues they have been raising since but while the bill was brought in for its registration, the Samajwadi party backtracked. Both the parties RJP and Samajwadi parties have been insisting to include their demand in a package deal along with ruling party's proposed amendment on scheduled 3 of the constitution.

The proposed private bill had the provision suggested for amendment include language, citizenship, representation in the National Assembly, and delineation of the Provinces. The party has identified 23 points to be amended. The proposed private bill has sought amendment in the Articles 6, 7, 11, 14, 38, 56, 58, 70, 86, 91, 137, 215, 274, 282, 283, 287 and 306 of the Constitution.

A major of the proposed amendment contains the provisions related to languages, citizenship, and proportional representation, formation of autonomous regions, protected regions, and non-geographical special regions, and expanded role for the Speaker as well as a change in the governance system with directly elected President, among others.

B. The Primary Opposition lends support to the Government in favour of the Constitution amendment:

Nepali Congress's Central Working Committee has directed its party lawmakers to vote in favour of the proposal to amend the constitution to change the country's map in the national emblem. The government on 22nd May 2020 had registered a bill seeking to amend Schedule 3 of the constitution-related to Article 9 (2)-to revise the coat-of-arms of Nepal as per the new political and administrative map released by the government. The map includes the territories of Kalapani, Lipulekh and Limpiyadhura, also claimed by India, within Nepal's borders.

The bill needs to secure at least two-third of the votes in both Houses of Parliament for the constitution to be amended. The ruling Nepal Communist Party lacks the numbers in the House of Representatives for it to get the bill endorsed single-handedly. But, in the Upper house it can do so as it holds 70 percent of seats. With the main opposition deciding to support the bill, the government has enough numbers for the proposal to sail through Parliament.

C. The opposition presents a separate amendment bill to address the demand of the Madhesh based parties:

The primary opposition Nepali Congress according to the decision of its Central Working Committee meeting tabled a separate amendment bill by reviving the three year old proposal filed by the party in 2017. The proposal had failed to garner a two-thirds majority, which was opposed primarily by the CPN-UNL. Congress' three point amendment proposal aims to address the demands of the two regional parties and widen acceptance of the 2015 constitution.

Eight lawmakers representing Madhesh constituencies from the Congress registered the bill at the Parliament Secretariat. The proposed amendments seeks to include all languages spoken in Nepal in the schedule of the constitution, accord equal citizenship rights to foreign women married to Nepali men and delineate electoral constituencies on the basis of population. Likewise the bill also seeks proportional representation in major appointments in state entities including ambassadorial postings, and amending the electoral process for the National Assembly on the basis of population.

Opposition Parties fail to form Unity: The Nepali Congress and Rastriya Janata Party and Samajbadi Party Nepal have separately registered Constitution amendment bill in spite of their understanding to jointly register a constitution amendment bill to address the demands of the Madheshi people. The two parties RJP and Samajbadi parties filed their own bill a day after the government presented the bill on amend Schedule 3 of the constitution to update the map in the national emblem.

Although the opposition parties have decided to support each other's bill, there is least chance to be passed without the support of the ruling party given the numerical strength of representation in the Parliament.

D. Millennium Challenge Corporation or Millennium Challenge Compact (MCC), a bone of contention for the ruling party:

Under the MCC deal signed by the US and Nepal in September 2017, the US government agreed to provide \$500 million in grants—the largest Nepal has ever received—while Nepal would put in \$130 million for projects that prioritise energy and roadways.

As per the deal, the funds will be spent on setting up a 400KV transmission line running 400 kilometres on the Lapsiphedhi-Galchhi-Damauli-Sunawal power corridor. The funds will also be used to set up three substations en route to infrastructure that will connect to the cross-border transmission line with India in Rupandehi. Some \$130 million under the MCC compact will go towards the maintenance of around 300 kilometres of roads on the East-West Highway.

The compact is yet to be ratified by Nepal's Parliament. But the government's policy and programmes for 2020/21 includes Lapsiphedhi-Ratamate-Hetauda and Lapsiphedhi-Ratamate-Damauli-Butwal 400kV transmission lines, projects chosen for the compact.

The MCC is still under consideration in Parliament and it would only be implemented after Parliament's ratification. However, the federal parliament has already endorsed the policy and programmes, which included MCC projects.

Within the ruling party there has been difference over the MCC. A section of NCP members including its influential leaders is diehard against the MCC and putting pressure on the government not to pass the pact in its present form without amending some clauses, which, according to their opinion, are detrimental to the sovereignty of the nation. The taskforce NCP had constituted has made its recommendation to the party after its thorough study. The task force is of the view that MCC should not be ratified in its present form.

E. The Budget fails to get acclaimed from its own ruling party:

The government of Nepal presented its annual budget of NPR 1.4 trillion in a joint session of the Federal Parliament on 15 Jestha 2077. The estimated budget has allocated 64.4 percent of its total budget on current expenditure and 23.9 percent on capital expenditure. With the budget it aims to attain 7 percent economic growth in the fiscal year 2077/78 (2020/2021AD).

Annual Budget for the Fiscal Year 2077/78	
Total Budget:	Rs 14.74 Kharba
Breakdown of the budget:	
Current expenditure:	Rs 9.48 Kharba (64.4%)
Capital expenditure:	Rs 3.52 Kharba (23.9%)
Financial Management:	Rs 1.72 Kharba (11.7%)
Tax Revenue collection:	Rs 8.89 Kharba
Foreign aid:	Rs 60.52 Arba
Foreign loan:	Rs 2.99 Kharba
Internal Debt:	Rs 2.25 Kharba
Economic growth:	7%
Inflation:	7%

As both the Houses of the Parliament begin deliberations over the government's budget for 2077/78, even the leaders from the ruling party expressed their dissatisfaction over the proposed

budget, its policy and programmes. They not only questioned the principles and ideologies behind the budget but also asked why it failed to break the tradition in the midst of global pandemic. The law makers also criticised the government's imposition of additional taxes on electric vehicles, insufficient budget allocation for health related human resources and the procurement of medical supplies and equipment. They also felt that the budget failed to accord utmost priority to agriculture as well. Some of the ruling party members also criticised for retaining the controversial Constituency Infrastructure Development Fund.

Role of the opposition on budgetary issues: However the main opposition called the budget an unrealistic and conservative, it has seriously failed to raise the critical issues faced by the country in handling the pandemic and managing the scarce resources to address public health with priority. The opposition blamed the government for its failure to convert crisis into an opportunity. The opposition also expressed their views that the budget was over ambitious, and given the past experience on pace of capital expenditure, it would not be able to meet the target of 7 percent economic growth.

F. Opposition fails to raise issues of transparency, accountability and social discrimination (Cast based discrimination):

The Government has failed to make public the decisions of the Council of Ministers since the declaration of a lockdown in an attempt to contain the spread of Covid-19. Since the announcement of a lockdown, the Government also restricted to hold press meeting with a fear of contagion in a mass gathering. However the clarification could be justified in a state of pandemic but disseminating selected decisions through government controlled communication channels may fuel to instigate anger of the private media, civil society and social media.

Against the years-long practice, the government after assuming office after an election victory stopped sharing Cabinet decisions the same day since November 11, 2018 and started meeting press in a weekly basis making public the major (selected) decisions, which is also stopped since mid-May 2020.

Amidst the lockdown, the announcement of Government expenditure of Rs. 9.87 billion on combating the pandemic has created the ripple of criticism of the government in the public space and raising the voice to make public the expenditure detail. The Government is said to have spent Rs 6.03 billion while the provincial and local governments spent Rs 1.08 billion and Rs 2.76 billion, respectively. Many see foul smell on the expenditure amidst the poor handling of the government in managing quarantine facilities, test, distribution of relief materials and hospital care.

Information rights activists have the opinion that the pandemic and the never-ending lockdown have provided a shield for the government for opaque transaction and hide the information from the public domain to cover malpractices of the government.

The United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, issuing a statement, said that the Asia Pacific countries including Nepal were targeting the media against the principle of freedom of expression. Further added that cases of journalists facing obstruction from the authorities in accessing information and disseminating it were increasing in Nepal." At a time of crisis, many believe that the Government must be even more transparent and handle the situation

gaining public trust and confidence. However, the present government has poorly failed maintaining transparency. The role of the opposition, with regard to raising concern on accountability and transparency of the government's dealing has also been acutely failed.

Cast based discrimination: The cast based discrimination in the society has been rising in the country unabated even though the constitution has made it illegal and punishable act. A recent incident in Soti, west of Rukum district has brought in surface the discriminatory practice, which not only turn into a scuffle between the upper cast Thakuris and lower cast Dalits (Untouchables) but instigated a criminal action with the loss of six precious lives of Dalits and non-Dalits. However the accused are taken into custody and an official investigation going on, the opposition should have condemned it univocally as a violation of human rights and raise the issues seriously in the House of Representatives and National Assembly calling for justice for caste-based killings.

The incident has drawn international attention with the United Nations, Human Rights Watch and European Union Delegation to Nepal condemning the incident and calling for a fair probe.

Role of the Opposition in the House:

The leaders of the opposition parties including the Nepali Congress, the primary opposition in the House, raised the issue firmly and insisted to form a Parliamentary Committee to probe into the Soti incident. Upon the insistence of the opposition parties, the Speaker of the House agreed and formed a nine-member special parliamentary committee led by MP Devendra Poudel to investigate the incident.

(The incident: On May 23, 2020 locals from Soti in Chaurjahari Municipality in Rukum (west) had chased away Nabaraj BK of Jajarkot and 18 of his friends who had accompanied him to the village to help him elope with his girlfriend from an upper cast. Six of them allegedly killed and dumped into the Bheri River.)

G. Amendment in Procurement Act leaves space for Policy corruption:

The government has registered a bill in the Parliament Secretariat to amend the Public Procurement Act 2063. According to expert, the proposed amendment, if passed without changes, would give ample space for policy corruption. The proposed clause allows the government to procure goods and services from the government controlled entity, be that of a corporation under government control, partially controlled, autonomous or semi-autonomous entity with an equity of the government, without competitive bidding at the quoted price of such an entity. It allows to procure goods and services directly at a price fixed by any international intergovernmental organization or public entity of the foreign government without competitive bidding through government to government process.

However the proposed amendment also purposes action against officials responsible for delay in public works, but the bill remains silent on the nature of such an action. The new law also purposes disqualifying all companies owned by blacklisted individuals from participating in public bids, but it does not prevent any company already registered in the name of the blacklisted individual's family members from participating.

Within last one year (2018/2019), the procurement regulation has been amended five times, and it is the sixth attempt to amend in the Act. This has raised serious concerns not only over the policy inconsistency of the government but also exposes the capacity, influence and power of the contractors to turn government's policy on its favour.

H. Lawmaker raise issues of Inclusiveness and Equality amidst the Government's insistence to amend the existing Citizenship Act 2063:

While taking note of the proposed amendment bill on Citizenship Act and position of the ruling party, the lawmakers particularly of women lawmakers and social activists raised voices against the discriminatory provisions of the proposed law and proposition made by the ruling party to support such practices and blamed that male dominated party secretariat decision ignoring the interests and concerns of women referring to a meeting of ruling party's secretariat which had decided for incorporation of a provision in the Citizenship Act that would make foreign married women to Nepali man eligible for naturalised citizenship after seven years of their marriage and producing prove of renouncing their earlier citizenship. Women's right activists perceive that the existing provisions on the Citizenship Act, basically with regard to foreign man, are discriminatory. The ruling party's women leaders have taken an exception to the fact that the decision was taken by an all-male coterie of rulers, especially when the decision directly affects women. In their opinion that the party is not following the national and international commitments. Advising to undertake more efforts to make decision making process more inclusive, when it comes to issues that directly affect certain communities, they further emphasised that Women-free zones were not acceptable to Nepali society anymore.

(The nine-member Secretariat has no women while the 45-member Standing Committee has just two women. Most committees are largely made up of Khas-Arya Brahmin men with little representation of women, Madhesis, Dalits and indigenous groups.)

The existing provision of the Act allows foreign women married to a Nepali man make eligible immediately after the marriage, while a foreign man married to a Nepali women requires to spend a minimum of 15 years in Nepal before being eligible to apply for naturalised citizenship.

The ruling party's decision on naturalised citizenship is in sharp contrast to the stance of the main opposition Nepali Congress, which is in favour of allowing naturalised citizenship for foreign women married to Nepali men almost immediately. The Madhes-based parties—Samajbadi and Rastriya Janata Party—have both supported the Congress.

I. Proposed Amendment on Citizenship Act, 2063 and Naturalized Citizenship:

The provision of naturalised citizenship to foreign women married to Nepali men has been a bone of contention among the parties for the last two years since the amendment bill on Citizenship Act has been under consideration in the Federal Parliament for around two years.

According to the proposed amendment draft bill a foreign woman married to a Nepali national require to wait seven years for naturalised citizenship on the basis of matrimonial relations only. Nepal's main opposition parties decried the move, saying it would inconvenience people living in Madhes as cross-border marriage is prevalent there. Both the Nepali Congress (NC) and the Janata Samajbadi Party (SJP) have said that such a provision could also affect the 'bread and

bride relations' that Nepal has had with India for ages. The main opposition parties the NC and the JSP have written notes of dissent against the amendment bill. The Samajbadi Party Nepal and Rastriya Janata Party have also supported the Nepali Congress' stance on naturalised citizenship for foreign women. Contrary to the primary opposition, the Nepal Majdoor Kisan Party, which has one member, called for an even stricter provision of 15 years.

It includes seven rights that a foreign woman married to a Nepali national can exercise till she acquires citizenship certificates. The amendment bill proposes changes to Clause 4.1(b) of the Citizenship Act paving the way for women receiving residence permits to exercise economic, social and cultural rights and provide seven different economic, social and cultural rights to such women.

The proposal has been criticised not only by women groups but also by civic organizations and social and political scientists, since it is lopsided looking after the single aspect of women only and leaving the space about foreign men who are married to Nepali women.

Presently, a foreign man married to a Nepali woman must wait 14 years for citizenship. The Right Advocacy groups including the conscious mass are calling for equality in the law.

(State of confused of the Government in adopting the basic principle with regard to citizenship. There are two principles in practice in the world with regard to granting citizenship: one is Jus Sanguine, which is based on descent, and the other is Jus soli, which means the right of soil. The dualism in accepting a single principle or the both is apparent in dealing with the citizenship act by the government of Nepal. It is by far gives impetus to the Jus Sanguine principle, while it also accepts the Jus soli by accepting its citizen by descent if they are born in Nepal and whereabouts of his/her father is unknown. When the citizenship is passed on the Jus Sanguine principle, an impromptu grant of citizenship after a while solemnizing the matrimonial ties could not be justified.)

J. The Government introduces a draft bill with an amendment to the CIAA Act:

The Government has introduced a third amendment bill to the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority, which is also being endorsed by the parliamentary affairs committee of the Parliament. The proposed amendment bill created controversy after the members of the opposition and private sectors opposed the provision that has direct bearing to the private sectors since the proposed draft bill has sought to an expansion of CIAA's ambit to the public companies as well. The existing act has barred the commission to look into the private sectors. While the authority argue that the proposed amendment is in line with the Government's commitment with the United Nations Convention against Corruption as a signatory, the private sectors view it that allowing the anti-graft agency to investigate the private sector could invite other complications, including overlaps between the jurisdictions of existing bodies. According to some legal experts bringing the private sector under the purview of the commission is against the constitution that only those holding public positions can be investigated by the anti-graft body. They further argue that the proposed amendment also seeks to allow the commission to look into 'improper conduct', despite the constitution removing this jurisdiction from the commission.

Because of lack of trust and ever declining perception over the good governance, many have raised eyebrows and put doubt on the ruling elites that the proposed bill might be misused and used as an instrument to witch-hunts against private individuals and institutions.

If endorsed by the House as it is proposed, the CIAA will have the expanded jurisdiction under its purview to look into the cases of corruption of insurance companies, medical colleges and related hospitals, universities and colleges, public limited companies and projects run by domestic and foreign institutions that receive funding from any of the three layers of government. The CIAA can currently investigate officials from government banks like the Rastriya Banijya Bank, Nepal Bank Limited and Agriculture Development Banks, and state insurers like the Rastriya Beema Sansthan. But the new bill will also allow the commission to investigate other private sector banks, which are currently regulated by the Nepal Rastra Bank.

The private sector has expressed their concern through a statement calling for the government to give proper thought and consideration over the proposed draft bill. In a press statement issued jointly by the Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and industries and Confederation of Nepalese Industries states that the proposed amendment on CIAA Act worsened the investment climate and the bill gave the commission jurisdiction to look into the private sector at a time when there were many regulatory agencies under the government which themselves were under the jurisdiction of the commission. The two private sector bodies said that the provisions in the bill could also spoil the professional freedom of private sector institutions.

Role of the opposition:

The members of the opposition parties have sought more time for discussion and clarification on the controversial issues from the ruling since they fear of the misuse of the provision, which could be directed towards the certain individuals and institutions. They keep doubt that the provision may afford a leeway for the commission officials to misuse their power for personal gains. The primary opposition Nepali Congress is raising the constitutional provisions as hurdle that contradict the proposed amendment, since the constitution has not allowed jurisdiction of CIAA to investigate the cases of private institutions.

K. An Apprehension on Creating a Surveillance State:

After near to prorogation of the ongoing Summer Session of the Federal Parliament, while the amendment to the Citizenship Act and the updating of Nepal's political map dominated public discourse, initiating quietly for the Nepal Special Service Bill is unfolding a sinister plan to curb individual freedom of citizen. The bill at its introduction had created controversy because of its proposed provision that that allows intelligence officials to intrude into the privacy of any individual in the country without seeking permission from the court. According to the provision of the bill, 'audio or audio-visual conversations at the individual or institutional level that are suspicious can be kept under surveillance, monitored or intercepted'. The government deems it necessary to control acts of 'secession, espionage, sabotage and subversion' and to 'protect national sovereignty, national integrity and communal harmony'. In principle, the government's logic does not sound that bad. But in reality, the provision may end up creating a surveillance state. Rather than curbing crimes, a surveillance state is more interested in putting political dissidents and rights activists under constant watch. This means the curtailing of political rights and freedoms of individuals. A surveillance state puts equipment such as CCTV cameras, phone

tapping devices to monitor the movements and conversations of individuals that citizen's actions and movements are being recorded and analysed which may be intruded into the privacy effectively breaching the constitutional rights to privacy.

Opposition oppose the provision

Thirty-one lawmakers from the opposition parties, including the Nepali Congress, Samajwadi Party and Rastriya Janata Party, have filed a plea to amend the bill, terming it a violation of the constitutional provision of individual rights to privacy. Its provisions need a sustained critique so that lawmakers realise that the attack on individual rights to privacy is unacceptable and that the provisions in their current form have no place in a democratic republic.

L. The Sixth Session of the House Fails to Elect Deputy Speaker of the HOR:

The sixth session of the House, which is also a monsoon session, failed to elect the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, the position is vacant after the resignation of the then Deputy Speaker Shiva Maya Tumbahamhe in a bitter contest within the ruling party denying for her elevation to the post of House Speaker. After the resignation of Hon. Krishna Bahadur Mahara from the House of Speaker in an allegation scandal of rape case, Hon. Agni Prasad Sapkota was elected to the post in fifth session of the House. The House is without the Deputy Speaker for about six months indicates an apathy of the ruling party to fill the position due to the constitutional arrangement that at the existing context the Deputy Speaker should come from the opposition parties and that too a women. The opposition parties also seemed less inclined to raise the issue with priority compelling the House to hold election to the post of Deputy Speaker.

M. Opposition fails to strongly raise and oppose the mismanagement of the Government on handling to contain Covid-19 Pandemic:

Ever since the cases of Nobel Coronavirus appeared as a pandemic, the formation of a high level epidemic handling committee along with the line ministries and departments have failed to address the pandemic with proper preparedness and management. The government in every dealings dismayed general people with regards to handing the pandemic surrounded by mismanagement and mired with corruption cases.

The opposition raised the issue, however in a thinner voices in the House, was not enough to force government to be accountable and take appropriate measures with promptness in dealing with the cases alarmingly rising every day and spreading throughout the country. The failings of the rulings to take appropriate measures to address the pandemic as well as the opposition parties to make government accountable and transparent in handling the cases, the general mass particularly the youths were more worried and exasperated towards such carelessness and mismanagement.

Disheartened, dismayed and outraged people by the actions of the Government, took to the street the youths protesting against the inactions of the Government with a slogan "Enough is Enough" as an apolitical movement. Since the protest was peaceful and disciplined, the use of police force by the government to vacate them from the street and crush them as an anti-government force, ignited them to resort for hunger strike. Their demand was simple, legitimate and pandemic centric, which include wide use of polymerase chain reaction test over rapid diagnostic tests, improvements to quarantine conditions and protections for frontline health workers.

N. The abrupt Prorogation of the House raises concern on dealings of the Government:

The monsoon session (or the budget session) of the Federal Parliament, which was summoned for May 8, 2020 by the President in accordance to the Article 93 (1) of the constitution, lasted for 58 days, prorogued on July 3 at the recommended of the Government given the ruling party's internal political wrangling made the Prime Minister insecure of surviving the Government. Due to internal power politics of the ruling party, despite having almost two-thirds of majority in the Government, the Oli led Government has arrived at a situation where he might have to resign or split the party to lead a faction with the support of the opposition parties.

The common practice was that the session last until September or concluded before the Dashain festival. There are rare instances that the House is ended in the first week of July. The sixth session of the Parliament, which lasted 58 days, endorsed just six bills in addition to the budget and second amendment to the constitution. The reason as stated by the government for the House prorogation was the lack of business. However, there are 40 bills in the parliamentary process among them 19 are under consideration and 20 bills are pending at the Parliamentary Committees. Similarly, there are piles of proposals registered at the Parliament Secretariat. According to the Secretariat, 9 resolutions proposals, 2 proposals of Public Importance and 2 Attention Proposals are pending without discussion over them.

The prorogation of the House immediately after receiving the recommendation of the government without giving a second thought or taking time to getting advices from the advisers, the President has invited herself once again the controversy about her role as a guardian of the constitution and impartiality in dealing with them. The recommendation to close the running session of the House was taken without the consultation of the Speaker and Chairman of the House at a time the House was to pass important bills, which were in the process to be tabled. The prorogation was conducted so hurriedly that the members of the House had no time to table "no confidence motion" at the Parliament.

The government comes with the argument that it is its prerogative and prorogued the House due to lack of business to the House. However it is the government that should provide business for the House and that the government must make sure that crucial bills have gone through the House before a session. The House has come to an end while the draft of the crucial bills like Citizenship Act and Federal Civil Service Act, being in the process, which were cleared from the respective committees, to be tabled at the full House for its endorsement. It is the implicit intent of the abrogation of the House is, therefore, not as explained by the government, but a political move. The prorogation of the House without consultation of the Speaker and Chairman of the House as well as the Business Advisory Committee is an unconstitutional and democratic practice. In parliamentary democracy, the government must be under the constitution and Parliament. On the contrary, the government treated Parliament like one of its arms.

O. Opposition as a mute spectator on government's foreign policy dealings:

The government's handlings of foreign policy at present, especially after the release of a new political and administrative map of Nepal, which helped to deteriorate the existing relation with India complemented and harboured by the NCP's internal party power tussle, is being observed as disoriented, lopsided, and inconsistent and disarrayed. The government's failure to conduct foreign relations in a balanced manner has exhibited its immaturity. Some of the activities and

approaches pursued by the government in the issues like the government's failure to initiate talks with India to resolve the boundary dispute, the discord over the \$500 million US-led Millennium Challenge Corporation grant to Nepal and recent virtual meeting between senior Nepal Communist Party (NCP) leaders and Communist Party of China (CPC) are considered as double standard of the government, which is leading to the deterioration of Nepal's standing in the international sphere. Some also blame the irresponsible statement of the Prime Minister making light of the Indian national emblem and more recently accusing India for fomenting a plot to unseat him through its embassy in Kathmandu. The political analysts and observers believe that tilting towards one side or siding with one power in this multi-polar world would discredit us in the long run. Nepal for centuries has been pursuing a policy of maintaining "equidistance" between its neighbours, in line with the principle of non-alignment, international peace, and cooperation based on the principle and values as enshrined in the UN Charter. Given the geographical location and sensitivity for country like Nepal trust, credibility and coherence are of utmost importance, which we have been lacking for some time due to the immaturity of the government in properly handling foreign policy issues.