

# Building resiliency is a must to overcome crisis

The Nepalese society that has been reeling under a severe crisis of essential supplies including the petroleum products, cooking gas and medicines following the undeclared blockade by India has been in dire need of resiliency to tackle the situation that the country is facing.

The country that was rattled by the devastating earthquake of April 25 and series of landslides in the monsoon has been bearing brunt of blockade along the Nepal-India borders is at the crossroads, said economists, sociologists and stakeholders. This blockade is a gross violation of any international laws and treaties that Nepal should not delay in internationalizing the issue and put pressure on India, they reiterated.

Dwelling upon various facets of current crisis triggered by the blockade, they underlined the need for immediate measures to tackle the problem, they said adding "change in policy" to provide relief to the common people is a must without delay. Speaking at a seminar on "*Building a Resilient Society through Civic education*" organized by the Nepal Foundation for Advanced Studies (NEFAS), they spoke about building resiliency through social harmony, cooperation and creativity. This is the time crisis. We were hit hard by the earthquake and mudslides and furthermore we are being gagged by the blockade. This is the time that we have to work in tandem to prevent our society from the effect of blockade. We have to learn from Japan and Korea to develop a kind of resiliency and move towards the path of development, they said adding that kind of resistivity, strength could be developed only through civic education.

Prof. Ananda P Shrestha, executive chairman of the NEFAS highlighting the objectives of the seminar said that the views expressed by the intellectuals, researchers and stakeholders would definitely help in policy formation. This is the most difficult time in the country's history. We have to appeal to international communities for help, he said adding "and simultaneously the problems with India should be ironed out." Prof. Shrestha while speaking at the programme also questioned about the existence of South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and said that the institution can no longer function properly amidst turbidity and differences between the members.

Dev Raj Dahal, Head of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) spoke about various facets of the Nepalese society and pointed out where the gaps have occurred. Dahal who has been advocating for building a strong civic society for many years pointed out the need for civic education so as to strengthen social fabrics in the changed political context. He however blamed the political actors for creating fissures in the society. Community resilience is an inclusive concept which deals with the supply of food, shelter, education, health, production, business and security. The society which is diverse has a greater degree of resiliency. People help each other and come with diverse views to tackle the problem. Hence, we should be cautious about preserving our value based society.

**CIVIC EDUCATION FOR RESILIENT SOCIETY**

Former vice chairman of the National Planning Commission (NPC) Prof. Gunanidhi Sharma said that unbridled liberalization and privatization in the aftermath of reinstatement democracy in 1990 have made our economy more dependent on India. Prof. Sharma said that there were severe flaws in policy level. The role of the state was gradually weakened by deregulation, denationalization, demonetization and downsizing the role of the state. He said that the crisis that the country was facing is the consequence of our policy and interfering attitude of the South. He also underlined the need to build resiliency through civic education. However, he said that the youths who have been source of remittance should be provided with better opportunity within the country. Youths are the future. They should not be encouraged to go abroad to earn remittance. We have to create job ourselves so that the economy becomes sustainable, he said.

Earlier presenting a working paper on "*Building a Resilient Society through Civic Education*" Pranav Kharel, an assistant professor at Kathmandu School of Law spoke about various facets of the society and pointed out how the Nepalese society has been experiencing changes. He said "our education is not context-bound hence losing our values and social identity." He also spoke about the social changes in the aftermath of April 25 earthquake and India's economic blockade.

Santosh Pariyar, a peace and conflict expert while presenting a working paper on the topic said that the concept of new development brought forth a huge change in the society. Our society has been disintegrated, which has led to the fragmentation. This fragmentation and de-traditionisation has virtually weakened the resiliency of our society, he added.

### **FLOOR DISCUSSION**

Participants from different social groups and institutions had commented and discussed on the topic. While floating the views Member of Parliament Lal Babu Yadav admitted the lacunas of political parties for failing to educate people about the new constitution. We have done a great mistake on our part, he said. Yadav further said that there has been a serious misunderstanding about the constitution.

Another participant Dr. Mohan Lohani speaking about the issue of resiliency said that Nepalese society has had a great degree of resiliency which was proved during the devastating earthquake.

Prof. Dr. Ram Kumar Dahal spoke about the need for reintroducing civic education in school and college curriculum. Similarly Dr. Prem Sharma expressed his concern over donor-driven attitude of people. He said that the people were found reluctant to build their houses and preserve their heritage on their own. Instead they were found to be indulging in card playing.

Bishnu Belbase, a development worker said that the crisis has generated a kind of cooperative spirit among the people in the society. Citing an example of people in Sindhupalchowk he said that the victims were helping one another in building their houses.

Former secretary of Nepal Government Bidyanath Nepal urged the NEFAS to be more focused on the issue of Indian blockade and its effect on the economy and the society as well.

Mausham Shakya, a scholar of Buddhist Philosophy asked whether Nepalese society could easily get along with China if Nepal expedites relations. Efforts should be made to open up borders with India.

Apar Hang Limbu, an engineer underlined the need for developing resiliency for peaceful coexistence. Laxman Basyal said that the society which is more market-driven should be linked through economic activities. He expressed his grudges over double-standard attitude of so-called intellectuals.

Narendra Upadhyay, a journalist also spoke about making the society resilient. Chunda Bahadur Shrestha, a former bureaucrat citing an example of Japan and Korea said that Nepalese society should also learn from them. In this context civic education also plays a vital role to develop resiliency to go along with the change. We should learn to struggle amidst turbidity, he said.

Samira Luintel, an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Tribbhuvan University underlined the need for macro-study of the society. She said that macro-study of the society particularly after 1990 should be taken into account.

Sushma Sharma, said that the civic education should be given due importance in the school and college curriculum. First of all we should know about the Bed.

Prof. Shree Prasad Dhaubadel spoke about the need for imparting civic education to the leaders to make the society more cohesively resilient. Resiliency should not be understood as the rubber resiliency.

Prof. Sushil Pandey said that the Indian blockade has overshadowed the main issue of Madesh. He said that the governments in the past have made mistakes in promoting the interest of the nation. Parties and their leaders failed to come over the partisan and individual interests.

Prof. Ananda Shrestha spoke about the 'threat perception' in the preamble of the new constitution.

Birendra Shrestha, an intellectual blamed the political parties and their leaders for failing to serve the national interests.

Responding the queries raised by the participants in the programme Santosh Pariyar spoke about the common efforts to make the society resilient and progressive. Similarly Pranav Kharel said that resiliency could be built through effective civic education.

From the chair Prof. Gunanidhi Sharma said that the degree of dependency on India rapidly increased after 1990. The role of government was significantly weakened owing to the wrong perception of development; he said adding that mistakes at policy level should be gradually corrected. Over 72 individuals from various institutions were taking part in the programme. The programme was organised with the assistance of FES- Nepal.

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