

**Water Resources Cooperation between India and Nepal**  
**Concept note**  
**International Seminar**  
**Organised by**  
**Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies**  
**&**  
**B P Koirala India-Nepal Foundation**

A number of rivers originate in the Nepal Himalaya and flow through the valleys and plains of Nepal to India and ultimately to the Bay of Bengal. These rivers have also been very useful in irrigating the low-lying parts of Nepal as well as the fertile Indo-Gangetic plains in India. A major part of the downstream discharge of the Ganga is contributed by flows either originating in Nepal or transiting Nepal from sources in Tibet, most notably the Kosi, Gandak, Karnali and Mahakali river systems. Because of the terrain, Nepal also provides the best, if not the only, option for downstream flood control and dry season augmentation. This is one of the reasons why India became interested from as early as the 1950s in utilizing the Nepalese rivers in the interests of both India and Nepal. It is evident that South Asia will face growing water scarcity. India and Nepal among other four neighbouring states generate the bulk of surface discharge and underground water reserves. Owing to increasing water stress with mounting development needs and the rising population pressure, regional cooperation on water related issues are the need of the time. India and Nepal are actually capable of cooperating for better outcomes of their common waters if integrated development is considered as basis of basin planning.

Nepal and India have been engaged in cross- border power exchange/trade for nearly decades. India's ever-increasing energy requirements speak to its potentially most important interest in Nepal — the latter's largely untapped hydro-power capacity. There is vast potential for cooperation between India and Nepal in the field of water resources. Mono-sectorial use of water in Nepal for generating hydro-power for exporting needs to be oriented for multi-sectorial use of water for irrigation as well in the low elevated uplands bordering Mahabharata Lekh and southern region below 150m contour should be actively considered for boosting Nepal's agriculture for year round. This would considerably smooth the fabrics of integrated basin wise water management for trans-national rivers of India and Nepal.

Nepal, with her more than 6,000 rivers, having a combined run-off of more than 200 billion cubic meters and contributing 46% (as high as 71% during the lean season) of the flow in the Ganges, has immense potential for the development of hydropower, which, if developed to the maximum possible extent, would not only fulfil the total demand of the country but also some requirements of India. The theoretical hydropower potential of Nepal's rivers is estimated to be about 83,000 megawatts (MW), of which about 43,000 MW is considered to be financially and technically feasible for exploitation. But as of March 2008, the country has been able to exploit only 556.4 MW of hydropower (public sector: 408.1 MW and private sector: 148.3 MW). The exchange of power between Nepal and India is about 80 MW from different points.

In this light, the reform measures initiated by the government of Nepal (GoN) in the power sector, especially hydropower and problems and prospects of power exchange and trade between Nepal and India on the basis of the existing arrangements are discussed here. The purpose of this seminar is to examine several challenges of bilateral hydropower development. Although multipurpose projects promise an array of benefits, the prospect of hydropower is what attracts these two countries to engage in bilateral water agreements. Given these multiple trajectories, the following aspects pertaining to India-Nepal need greater reflection:

- The first recorded water resource negotiations between Nepal and India occurred between 1910 and 1920 when British India needed to harness the Sarda (Mahakali) river, which formed the western boundary between Nepal and British India, to develop irrigation in the United Province (now Uttar Pradesh). Nepal agreed to the 1920 Sarda treaty, involving an exchange of territory, but not an advantageous one for Nepal.
- Many Nepalese took the view that India was keen to exploit Nepal's hydropower potential to its advantage. This opinion was based on Nepal's experience with the Koshi and Gandak agreements in the 1950s under which India secured disproportionate benefits to Nepal's detriment.
- In 1991 an agreement with immediate effect with India to allow it to build a 577 metre long bond on Nepalese territory to ensure the success of an Indian hydroelectric power project being at Tanakpur, located on the Indian side of the Indo-Nepal border river using the waters of this river.
- The most recent treaty dealing with water resources cooperation between Nepal and India is the 1996 Mahakali River Treaty. It is a major water cooperation treaty concerning the integrated development of the Mahakali River including Sharada Barrage, Tanakpur Barrage, and Pancheswar Project.

In this context a comprehensive analysis of Water Resources Cooperation between India and Nepal with their domestic determinants is of immense importance.

**MAKAIAS & B. P Koirala India Nepal Foundation, Kathmandu** proposes to organize a two day seminar in Kathmandu to debate as the following specific agenda.

- (i) Hydro Power Generation;
- (ii) Irrigation Development;
- (iii) Flood Control/ management;
- (iv) Navigation;
- (v) Industrial use
- (vi) Environmental concerns

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies (MAKAIAS) invites papers on the above mentioned themes with reference to Indo-Nepal Relations.

**Date : 17<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> June 2014**

**Venue : Himalaya Horizon Resort at Dhullikhel, Nepal**