

Sushil-led Government-61: Policies and Programs Of GON For FY 2015
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President Dr Ram Baran Yadav rode on his presidential limousine more majestically than the former rulers in the past causing tremendous inconvenience to the regular commuters on the section of the road he had traveled back and forth between his presidential residence in Maharajgunj and the Constituent assembly hall in Nayabaneswore on July 8, 2015. His job was just to read out the ritualistic document called Policies and Programs for FY 2015 prepared by the Koirala administration. The traffic police closed the road for two hours diverting every vehicles coming in and going out of the section of the road causing the demonic traffic jam. It had been the tradition of the police to show how much faithful they were to the state high officials anticipating favors disregarding the comfort of the common folks, and the tradition obviously has even continued today. Did the president enjoy the majestic-limousine ride causing so much troubles to the common folks he was supposed to serve?

In the beginning of the presidential readout was "1. I feel honoured to present the Policies and Programmes of the Government of Nepal for the Fiscal Year 2072/73 at the Constituent Assembly/Legislature-Parliament." The document did not spell out when the fiscal year starts and ends, and what calendar it was using, too. In fact, the fiscal year mentioned in the document was in the Vikram Calendar if it were converted into the Gregorian calendar it would be the fiscal year 2015/2016. The Nepalese fiscal year starts on July 16 of any year and ends on July 15 of the next year. So, the FY 2015/2016 must be the FY 2015 that starts on July 16, 2015, and ends on July 15, 2016. It would be very simple to state FY 2015, and avoid confusion to anybody reading this document. Elsewhere in this document the years in the Gregorian calendar were mentioned adding another confusion. Why could not the Koirala administration state all the years following one calendar? It was not only the Koirala administration did such thing but also every State official did the same for the convenient of the officials that made reports or any other document disregarding the troubles to the readers.

The document said, "5. Short-term, medium-term and long-term work plans for rehabilitation and reconstruction will be formulated and implemented by assessing the damages." Apparently, the government was going to reassess the damages done by the recent quakes even after the Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) was done with the assistant of the Asian Development Bank, European Union, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), United Nations, and the World Bank. PDNA was done for the donors participating in the International Conference on Nepal's Reconstruction (ICNR) held on June 25, 2015. Why did the government needed to redo the damage assessment when it was already done and clearly stated in the PDNA?

"5. Since we live in high-risk seismic zone, required policy, institutional arrangements for reduction of such disasters and programmes based on them will be formulated and implemented nationwide in coming days." Did these document writers think they could reduce the disasters by the projects and activities formulated following the policies? Impact of disasters could be minimized but not the disasters like quakes.

"6. Service delivery will be made smooth by completing repair and reconstruction of government buildings and residences..." Everybody had seen the delivery of the relief supplies by the State agencies. Would service-delivery be little difference from the delivery of the relief supplies? It was very doubtful given the commitment of 'zero tolerance of corruption' made by the prime minister but not keeping it disregarding his own dignity.

"6. Plans for integrating settlements will be implemented in areas highly affected by earthquake..." Was it for creating market towns or service towns or satellite towns rather than scattered settlements? If it were so why integrating settlements in only the quake-affected areas. It should be done across the country. Take this opportunity of doing so elsewhere if you are planning for five years or more.

"8. Public and private investments will jointly be advanced to complete reconstruction works." The document needed to clearly state how the private investment would be mobilized.

"10. Zero tolerance policy will be adopted against corruption." What a nice statement the document had included in. Prime Minister Koirala, it was time to stop talking about the zero tolerance of corruption rather immediately act against his ministers openly directly or indirectly involved in the irregularities in purchasing and delivering the relief supplies to the quake victims. However, the sad story had been that Prime Minister Koirala had been the mute witness of such open corruption under his nose. It had led us to think that either he was reluctant to keep his commitment or he must have some shares in such irregularities in the state businesses.

"11. Required infrastructure and institutional arrangements will be made to enhance the reliability of public auditing and to adopt accounting system based on information technology." What was the use of such provision if the government were to ignore the report of the auditor general; and if irregularities in purchasing and distributing relief supplies were to go without the notice of the prime minister or the prime minister deliberately pretended not to know those irregularities even though widely deliberated over in the parliamentary public account committee.

"13. While reviewing the policies and programmes with the goal of graduating Nepal from the status of a least developed country to that of a developing country by 2022, Vision 2030 will be formulated and implemented to bring Nepal to the standard of a middle income state by 2030." These two years mentioned in the document were certainly of the Gregorian calendar. Obviously, the government was using two different calendars. It was simply causing confusion to the common folks and the international community.

"14... energy, development of physical infrastructure, commercialization of agriculture, industrial development, tourism promotion, employment generation and social development while contributing to the economic growth." These are all old stories told every year without paying much attention to them.

"14. Discouraging the tendency of appropriation of budget without detailed feasibility study, policy will be adopted appropriating budget only for projects that have completed pre-construction phases." Obviously, the government continued to allocate the budgets to the projects without doing the detailed feasibility studies. I had had the experience in asking the man of the stature of the vice-chairman of NPC rebuffing me inauspiciously when I asked how the government could allocate budgets without feasibility studies during the Panchayat regime. It was something like the "zero tolerance of corruption" repeatedly said but never acted on.

"14. Emphasis will be laid on timely completion of the past projects that are yet to be completed." The people's faith in the government completing the large project such as the Melamchi Drinking Water Project had been fast eroding. So, if the government were only to repeat the commitment without really acting on it would lead the common folks soon to lose the tolerance of the government not keeping its commitments.

"16. Laws related to money laundering will be effectively implemented." Is it not similar to the repetition of the 'zero tolerance' of the prime minister? Everybody knew it that the government had been telling so but actually not happening since a long time ago. The government is to strictly enforce this law then politicians will be exposed to the highly profitable money laundering they have involved in.

"17. While reforming the performance of public enterprises, enterprises of similar nature will be merged." Why doesn't the government sell the beneficial state-owned enterprises to run efficiently and effectively, as the government and the bureaucrats have been using those commercial and other state-run enterprises for their advantages causing the tremendous disadvantage to the public?

"18. The households having houses damaged by earthquake will be provided with loan for reconstruction at concessional interest rate." What would be the size of loans and interest on them? Interest free loans are the most needed ones, as the common folks have lost everything to the quakes. Whether the destitute people would work for the livelihood or for paying off the interest and loans?

"20. The procurement process for reconstruction will be made easier, transparent and reliable in the special circumstances after earthquake and other disasters." The procurement of the tarpaulins and tents done by the Ministry of Urban Development for the quake victims had been as transparent as possible. Why do we need more transparency?

"22. ... contribution-based pension system will be implemented this year itself for newly appointed civil servants, Nepali army, Nepal police, armed police, teachers as well as all other public personnel." With the implementation of this policy, State employees would need to earn the pensions rather than the gratitude the retirees have been receiving today. The State employment would be less attractive for the sincere people but the corrupt would continue to enjoy it.

"23. Nepal Electricity Authority will be restructured." Do it for the better performance not for the bad one. NEA had been the service center for the politicians and bureaucrats that have misused the agency openly. Restructuring of the NEA should be done in such a way that none of the politicians, ministers and bureaucrats would be able to take advantage of it.

"25. The construction work of Budhigandaki Hydropower Project with the reservoir-based capacity of 1200 megawatt will be initiated. Similarly, a detailed project report will be prepared for Nalsinghgad Hydropower Project with reservoir-based 400 megawatt capacity." I hope the Koirala government knows the size of capital investment required for such large projects.

"26. ... the load-shedding in the coming dry season will be reduced to maximum eight hours a day." So load shedding or power outage would continue for eight hours a day? It has been the horrible consequence of the previous government not doing anything to develop the power projects either at the State level or at the private sector during the 20-year intermittent administration of Girija Prasad Koirala in the past. Would current Prime Minister Sushil Koirala be serious to the past blunder of the Koirala brother?

"30. To substitute fruits and vegetables imports, emphasis will be laid on increasing production and installing cold stores." Don't think of substitute; think of efficiency and competitive advantage of producing the crops.

"30. A base for self-reliance in rice will be prepared by declaring 12 paddy farming districts of Terai region as special pocket zone." Why do we need to be self-reliance in rice or any crop for that matter when it could not happen unless we force it at a high cost? Again try for the competitive advantage of producing rice or any other crops.

"30. An arrangement of subsidies and grants in agriculture will be made to attract youths to commercial farming." These had been the tools for the corrupt politicians and their cadres to make money. These economic evils had been removed in the past but Madhav Nepal reintroduced it in 2010. That was one of his greatest bad deeds in the history of the Nepalese prime ministers. For that bad deed, Mr. Nepal would be remembered for a long time to come.

"31. The soil acidity will be improved by providing grants to the companies wishing to establish agricultural lime factories." Mr. Prime Minister even though might not be an agricultural expert needed to know that the soil acidity would not improve simply providing grants to the lime companies but using the lime in the field would do.

"32. Legislation on land will be introduced." What is that? Is it ending the dual ownership of the land? Put an end to the ceiling of land holding; so that commercial farmers could have the land required for the profitable farming.

"33. Detailed study and project proposals of Sunkoshi-Kamala, Sunkoshi-Marin, Kali Gandaki-Tinau, Thuligad-Kailali and Kankai high-dam projects will be prepared. Medium, lift and tube-well irrigation projects, Karlani and Seti Irrigation Development Programme, the third phase of the Mahakali Irrigation Project will be carried forward. Similarly, Sikta, Rani Jamara Kulariya and Babai Irrigation Projects will be continued with a view to completing them as soon as possible. The construction work of the Bheri Corridor Multipurpose Development Programme and Bheri-Babai Diversion Project will be moved forward." All these projects had been on the list of development projects for quite a long time. Judging from the irregularities in the project implementation, one of the most corrupt institutions had been the irrigation department, and the concerned ministry.

"40. One point service center will be established to provide national and foreign investors with a facility of all services from one point." It had been a never-ending commitment. When would the government enforce this one-window policy? The government had demonstrated its capacity of doing such things forcing the donors to funnel all donations to the quake victims through the Prime Minister's Disaster Relief Fund. The government closed the distribution of relief supplies to the quake victims saying the government had reached all the quake victims even though the statement of the chief district officers had proved it otherwise. Then, the government transferred the remaining balance of Rs 5.5 billions from the Prime Minister's Relief Fund to the Reconstruction Fund.

"42. Priority will be given to the use of national goods in the public offices." The practice had been ministers and bureaucrats would buy the goods and services required for the running the state agencies following the maximum possible commissions for themselves.

"47. Special programmes on promoting the production of traditional food items in remote areas will be launched." High-value-cash crops would be preferable to the food crops that would not be able to sustain the livelihood of the common folks living in the remote areas.

"47. Arrangements will be made for the smooth supply of food grains in the remote and mountain districts." The state agency called National Food Corporation had been providing the food grains just sufficient to the state employees working in the remote areas but

binding the hands of the private companies or individuals to do the business in the food grains. So, the government needed not worry about it but let the people do it.

"48. Private sector will also be involved in the supply of petroleum products." It had been a wishful thinking only for quite some time. So, the government would be better off stopping to talk about it without doing anything to this end.

"49. 'Cooperative Saving Safety Fund' and 'Cooperative Loan Investment Safety Fund' will be established." The government would do a better job not increasing the number of the state-owned enterprises but encouraging the private insurance companies to do the job rightly and properly for the benefits of all the actors.

"53. Construction of Kathmandu-Terai/Madhes Expressway will be initiated." What is it? Girija had started off talking about it in 1990s. Sushil has not stopped it, too doing so but nothing has happened to it so far. Only the name has slightly changed from the fast track to the expressway.

"53. A detailed project proposal of the Thankot-Nagdhunga tunnel way and a comprehensive project report of the tunnel way of Butwal-Dobhan part of Sidhartha highway will be prepared." Doing project reports but not implementing them has been the regular practice of the government.

"58. Construction process of earthquake resistant green cities will be started. Damak (Eastern Region) and Kohalpur (Mid-Western Region) will be developed as green municipalities." What was about the building of the market towns or satellite towns primarily for the poverty reduction? The poverty had been endemic in the subsistent agriculture.

"59. Drinking water and sanitation programmes will be launched with a view to providing the citizenry with basic drinking water and sanitation facilities by 2017." The policy statement was good but implementing and completing drinking water projects particularly the Melamchi project and other projects had been still outstanding. Don't make them never-ending projects.

"60. Construction works will be carried forward to complete Melamchi Drinking Water Project within 2016." Ultimately, the government has come to the point. Prime Minister Sushil Koirala's name would be written in the golden letters in the history of Nepal if he really were to complete this never-ending project.

"61. Construction of suspension bridges at the most essential areas will be expedited." The government needed to build suspension bridges as part of the rural infrastructures development on the priority basis. Anybody could see in the following picture how the Nepalese children had risked their lives crossing on the dilapidated suspension bridge.



(Source: Facebook)

"66. Senior citizens' social security allowance will be increased." After the prolonged fighting of the senior citizens for the larger amount of social security, finally finance minister dr ram sharan mahat gave in. Tens of senior citizens had lost their lives during the long peaceful sit-in done demanding a larger amount of social security for the senior citizens. How much the larger amount would be we did not know, yet. Currently, they have been receiving Rs 500 per month.

"68. Pashupati Area will be made more attractive and convenient for tourists by conserving its religious and cultural significance." Tourists if the government meant other than Hindus would be reluctant to visit as long as the government would keep the Pashupati off-limits to them.

"70. A campaign will be conducted, through diplomatic missions and non-resident Nepalese, to disseminate information about the actual situation in the aftermath of the earthquake that most of the heritage sites are safe and that it is safe to visit Nepal." The government needed to make a request through the Nepalese diplomatic missions abroad to other governments to revoke their travel warnings issued to their respective citizens on the travel to Nepal in the aftermath of the quakes.

"71. Services and facilities at Tribhuvan International Airport will be improved as per the international standards." Improve the runway to the international standard so that large aircrafts could land safely.

"76. Network of optical fibre will be extended nationwide through Rural Telecom Development Fund." How many funds the government had set up so far? Could anybody tell me? Setting up a large number of funds would surely create some jobs but the government

needed to make such funds work for the target folks rather than entirely for the people working at the State agencies and the concerned minister.

"77. Legal provision will be made to regularize the operation of online media." The government had been interested in regularizing everything rather than making efficient and accountable media. Regularizing as an instrument would provide the ministers and the staffers working at the different levels of the State-regularizing agencies with enough incentives directly or indirectly to corrupt the media. Regularizing needed to be at the minimum to avoid the corruption and to make the media efficient.

"78. National News Agency and Gorkhapatra Corporation will be developed as self-reliant media by enhancing capacity." Make them profitable.

"81. 'One School One Library', and 'One Secondary School One Laboratory Programme' will be given continuity." They are the fourth and fifth slogans the Koirala government has inherited.

"83. From this fiscal year itself, free education at post graduate level at public institutes will be arranged." Why free? Free at whose cost? Surely, at the taxpayers' cost.

"84. An access to basic and quality health services for all will be provided through effective implementation of National Health Policy, 2071." Use a single calendar everywhere. Don't confuse the common folks using the two different calendars arbitrarily.

"92. Works will be undertaken for the establishment of Labor Bank." What is it, and what for? I have never heard of it anywhere in the world in the past.

"93. The government is committed to protecting human rights of citizens." Is it how the government is safeguarding the human rights closing the roads for the comfort of the president? Yeah, very interesting part, let us see how the government is safeguarding the fundamental human rights.

"94. National Identity Card distribution work will be started and information of all the identity cards distributed by different government agencies will be integrated into this." The government has not been even able to force the municipalities to put up the names of roads, and streets, and certainly the house numbers in every municipality. Then, how could anybody believe in the government issuing such identity cards to every citizen?

"98. Integrated Service Centers will be established in order to deliver effective services to the citizens." It was what Nepalese needed. However, it is highly unlikely that the government will be able to meet the commitment.

"103. Electronic governance system will be utilized and extended to make public service delivery more effective, credible and reliable." Well, let us hope for it.

"104. The knowledge, skills and competence of the retired civil servants will be utilized in formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of government policies and plans and in enhancing public service effectiveness for nation building." Only the retirees with the political connections could have the opportunity of using their skills and knowledge for the benefits of the country.

The policies and programs of the government for the FY 2015 as delivered by the president have 112 paragraphs.

July 11, 2015