

# Banko Janakari

A journal of forestry information for Nepal

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## Saving Nepal's forest

There was a time when forest was viewed as the wealth of Nepal. In recent decades, the national forest resource is increasingly being looked upon as a means of enriching a small number of people who are involved in various stage of formulating forestry policy, implementing forestry related programmes, managing forest resources or having access to those in powerful position who can sanction the selective exploitation of choice forest plots. In recent years such powerful groups have unleashed relentless attack on the Nepal's forest which has proved like a goldmine to them. The unbridled greed of such powerful groups has caused serious damages to the government managed forests known as national forests, especially in the Terai region. Effective measures are urgently required if the national wealth is not to be lost forever.

The destruction of forest cover is a serious problem. But even more pernicious issue is the lack of punishment or threat of effective action against those who engage in the willful plunder of the national wealth. Over the last 50 years, not a single case has been reported on the large-scale plunder of precious forest resources, no matter who was in charge of the central leadership of the government. There have been several plans and projects launched by HMG-Nepal in cooperation with bilateral and multi-lateral donors to safeguard the forestry sector; in the mean time, the forest of Nepal continue to degrade both in area under forest cover and its productivity. Consequently, the biomass is in increasingly short supply with serious implications for our future.

Such scenario points to the need for doing something urgently to preserve the country's forestry sector. This could be done only when there is coordination between various institutions directly or indirectly related to this sector. It demands an environment of mutual cooperation and trust, but not bickering.

These days the national media are full of forestry issues. Amongst many districts, affairs in Morang, Sunsari, Dang, Banke, Bardia, Kailali, Kanchanpur and Dadeldhura - the important districts in terms of timber production have drawn considerable attention of the public, and the authorities concerned. The intensity of these issues have overshadowed all

other matters of importance such as ripping-off valuable species in other parts of the country. The illicit logging right in the forests for months, has also not been a matter of surprise. Such state-of-affairs perhaps, gave away ample reasons to make a unanimous deliberations in a seminar held in last April at Dhangadhi, which was attended also by District Forest Officers passing a resolution that political parties, peoples' representatives, and forestry staff had direct and indirect involvement in forest destruction.

Given such predicament, ideally the managers should sit together to work out sincerely the ways to solve the problems, instead of indulging in counter allegation. Even, the Timber Corporation of Nepal (TCN), an institution which has so far earned a reputation not much liked by Nepali as well as foreigners involved in forest management, is also accusing Forest Ministry for being irresponsible towards proper management of forestry resources. A 14-point demand submitted by the staff union of TCN explains it in full. And, in this context, the commitment shown by the Ministry to dig up the fact and prosecute the guilt whosoever they may be, is indeed a welcome step. But as it often happens in Nepal, the more one has the authority, there is an equal chance of abusing it. As such some one should come forward to clearing up such apprehension. Should it happen, it would be an exemplary contribution for reinforcing sincerity - a matter which is so much lacking in Nepal.

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