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Face to Face:
Sanat Kumar Basnet

Budget: Development Delayed

Encounter: Badri Bahadur Karki

New Spotlight's Investigation: Banepa Municipality

Interview:
Narayan Man Bijukchhe

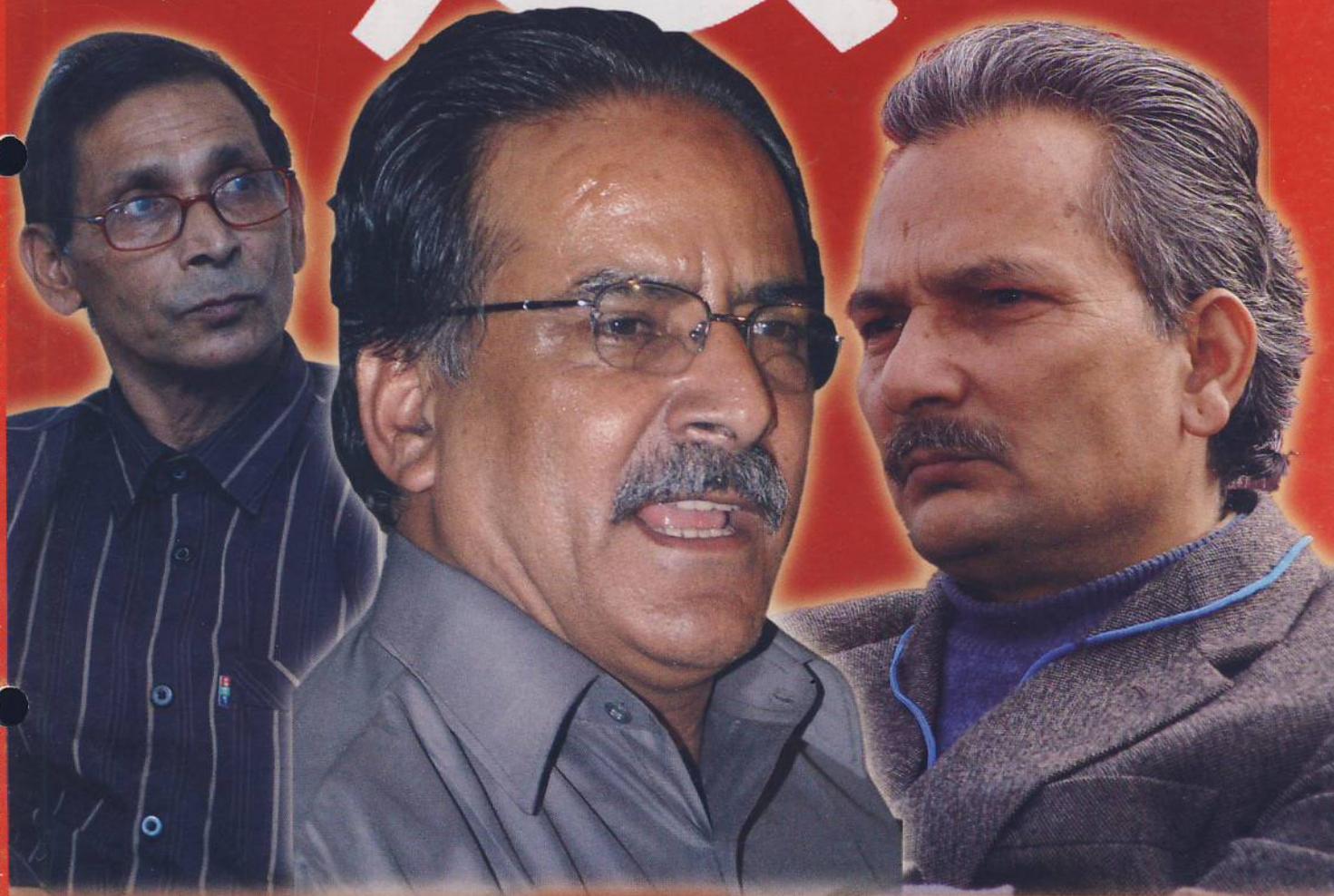


NEW SPOTLIGHT

Nov. 19, Dec. 02, 2010

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FORTNIGHTLY



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From The Editor

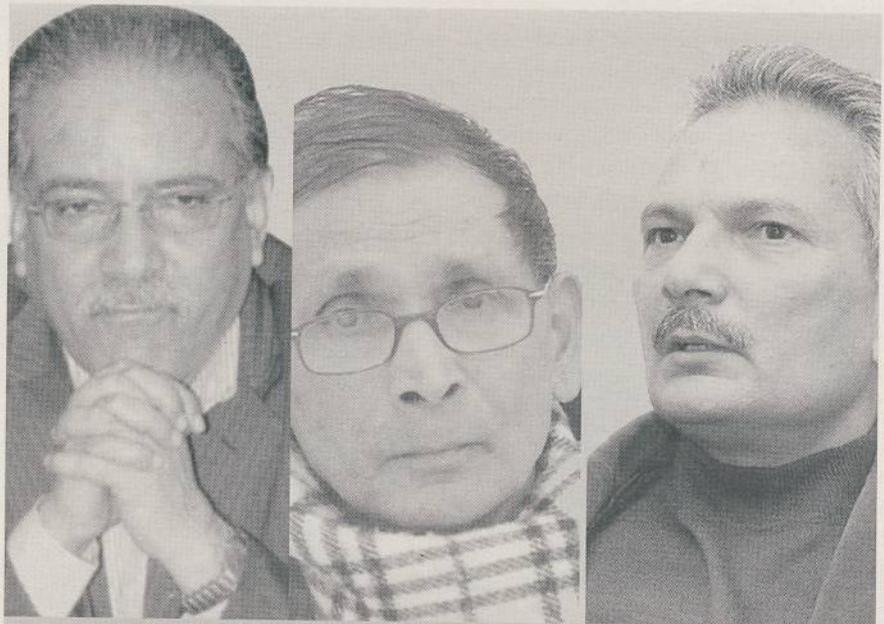
The political transition is taking a long time to complete. There is no sign yet of when it will end. Instead, it is becoming more critical. And increasingly dangerous as well. Amidst such a scary political environment the country's largest party is holding a crucial plenum. It is taking place at a time when the top three leaders are looking at three different directions. Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal and vice chairmen, Mohan Baidya and Baburam Bhattarai, are hell bent on taking control of the party - and lead it in the direction they believe is the right one. The battle within is even threatening to tear apart the former rebel outfit. If that happened it will have a deep impact on the course of the Nepali politics in the days to come. The peace process, the constituion-making and the institutionalisation of the republic and, above all, the external interest and concern are sure to feel the heat. As all eyes are on the battle royale in the Maoist leadership we have decided to take a look, in the cover story this time, at how serious is the matter.

Keshab Poudel

Keshab Poudel
Editor

NEW SPOTLIGHT FORTNIGHTLY

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Cover Story: Battle Of The Top Guns

7



INTERVIEW: Narayan Man Bijukchhe 12



BANEPA MUNICIPALITY: Unhelpful Nexus 23

NEWSNOTES	2
ECONOMIC BRIEFS	3
NEWS CLIP	4
ENCOUNTER: Badri Bahadur Karki	5
VIEWPOINT: Dr. Shekhar Koirala	6
COMMENTARY: Yubaraj Ghimire	10
DELHI DIARY: Abijit Sharma	11
UK SPENDING CUTS: Impact Nepal	15
BUDGET: Development Delayed	16
ASSAM VIOLENCE: Nepali Speakers Hit	18
ARTICLE: Umesh Lama	19
FACE TO FACE: Sanat Kumar Basnet	20
FORUM : Dr. Aruna Uprety	22
PROFILE: Anuradha Koirala	27
Health: Dr. Sunil Badye	28

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Mishra's Book Launched

Book with inspiring content about the different issues of the country has been added to the collection of Nepali literature. The book *Bhumadhyarekha: Arthahinta Bhitra Artha* by Rabindra Mishra was launched on November 14 at Moksh, Jhamsikhel. It is the compilation of his work as a column writer.



The book launch was attended by prominent figures of Nepal and people from different media. Dr Baburam Bhattarai, vice chairman of UCPN-Maoist and Dr Upendra Mahato who were among the guests launched the

book together. Dr Mahato and Dr Bhattarai shared their views on the book and the writer in appreciation and for motivation.

Media person Bijay Kumar Pandey, and Sudheer Sharma, editor of *Kanitpur* spoke about the writer and his write ups.

Sharma said, "Different and new concepts can be found and be learned from the collection. The content is worth

giving a thought to." He also remarked on his writing. He said he had open approach and his writings were well expressed, to the point and sharp.

Lastly the event got over with a very few lines from the writer who is a Nepali journalist and is associated with BBC World Service (Nepal). He is well known as a column writer who writes about current and critical issues of the country.

the project implementation program which will be based on multi-phased models focusing on CBHI.

Search For Collaboration On Children

Senior government ministers and officials from 28 countries across Asia and the Pacific gathered in Beijing last week for the High Level Meeting on Co-operation for Child Rights in the Asia-Pacific Region.

The meeting, held from 4-6 November, was hosted by the All China Women's Federation, the National Working Committee for Children and Women under the State Council, the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China with support from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Senior delegates from a number of Chinese government ministries as well as regional representatives from UNICEF also attended.

NAPA Launched

NAPA document was launched on November 4th by Prime Minister and Chairperson of the Climate Change Council Madhav Kumar Nepal. The Government of Nepal approved the NAPA document on September 28, 2010. The document may be accessed from the NAPA Project website.

The Prime Minister also launched the Climate Change and Development Portal (www.climatenepal.org.np) – a single place where researchers, policymakers, NGO professionals and the general public can find all the latest climate change information.

"Whether you're seeking information to stay current on climate change and development in Nepal, want to link with people, projects, and organizations working on climate change, share your new research findings, or looking for a new job, www.climatenepal.org.np is the site to visit. We invite you to visit and explore the features of the portal," the site reads.

Students Visits

Some 57 students from Karunanidhi Education Foundation, Pokhara, one of the member schools of British Council's Global Partnerships project, visited the Constituent Assembly on 3rd November and met with President Dr Ram Baran Yadav on 4th November. They briefed about their school activities under Global School Partnerships and handed over their project proposal to Dr Yadav. ■

Indian Aid To School In Surkhet

During his visit to District Surkhet on 10th November 2010, Indian Ambassador Rakesh Sood laid the foundation stone for Nepal Rastriya Secondary School, Surkhet District. The school will be constructed with the Indian government's grant assistance of NRs. 1.98 crores under the Nepal-India Economic Cooperation Programme. This is the second development project in Surkhet being undertaken with the assistance of Government of India.

In his address, Indian Ambassador Sood underlined the importance of educational infrastructure in Nepal's overall national development and expressed the hope that the various development projects being implemented under the India-Nepal Economic Cooperation Programme would make a significant contribution in that direction.

Changes For British Passport Applicants

The British Embassy in Kathmandu announces that with effect from 15 November 2010, applications for British passports received in Nepal will be

processed and printed in Hong Kong. Applications should still be submitted at the Consular Section of the British Embassy in Kathmandu.

Commenting on the change, British Ambassador John Tucknott said, "This is part of a global initiative to streamline the overseas passport operation – increasing efficiency to keep costs down while improving security and maintaining a high and consistent quality of customer service. This change comes about as we work towards improving the global consistency of service and decision-making."

MOU On Community Health Insurance

Government of the Republic of Korea and Nepal signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the project 'Development of Community Based Health Insurance in Nepal' on November 4, 2010. The MOU was signed by HONG Sung-mog, Korean Ambassador to Nepal and Rameshore Prasad Khanal, Secretary of the Ministry of Finance.

KOICA shall provide MOHP with a report of the baseline survey. Following the base line survey, KOICA shall design



ADB Will Continue In Nepal: Official

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) will continue to work closely with the Government of Nepal and stakeholders in helping to reduce poverty and promote inclusive growth for all Nepalis, said Sultan H. Rahman, Director General of ADB's South Asia department.

ADB's commitment to assist Nepal is in line with its Country Partnership Strategy 2010 - 2012 for the country, which is anchored in the four strategic pillars of broad-based inclusive growth, social development, governance and capacity building and climate change.

"We will continue to focus on these core areas in our efforts to help alleviate poverty and uplift the standard of living of Nepalis, the majority of whom still have to make ends meet," said Rahman, at the end of a three-day official visit to the country.

Rahman added that ADB has been closely following the developments in Nepal with keen interest and appreciates the challenging and complex political transition the country is undergoing.

During his visit, Rahman met with Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Physical Planning and Works, Finance Minister, Governor of the Central Bank of Nepal, and other senior Government officials. He also met with development partners, media and leaders of major political parties.

During his meetings with development partners, Rahman discussed the current situation in Nepal and how best development partners can work together for Nepal's development. He also highlighted the importance of a closer collaboration among development partners and the Government in strengthening the capacity of public institutions, especially at the local level, in the key areas of public financial management, public procurement and governance risk management.

Hotels Fully Booked

Two months before the official start of the Nepal Tourism Year 2011, all the star hotels in the Kathmandu have been fully booked. According to Madhav Om Shrestha, executive director of Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN), this year the tourists have started booking early. Hoteliers have said that hotels have been booked as daily over 2000 foreigners are now entering

Nepal. "If there are no strikes, the number of tourists will further increase. This is a good news for tourism entrepreneurs," he said. Meanwhile, the popular trekking routes such as Annapurna, Everest and Dhorpatan, too, are packed this season.

Khetan Group To Invest Rs 20 Billion In Service Sector

Khetan Group, a leading business house which recently sold Rs 3 billion worth of its shares in Gorkha Brewery to Carlsberg Singapore, is now considering investing in service sector. "We want to be the biggest company in the service sector in the country in the next three years," said Rajendra Khetan, chairman of the Group. "We intend to take our market capitalization to Rs 20 billion after three years," he said. The Group plans to invest in education and health sectors. Khetan says that there is a big opportunity in service sector in the country. "We have not even tapped 10 percent of the market potential till now," he said.

Saudi Prince In Nepal

One of the richest men in the world, Saudi Arabia's Prince Al Waleed bin Talal, arrived in Kathmandu on November 13 for a three-day visit. This is the first time a member of Saudi



royal family is visiting Nepal. Listed as 19th richest person in the world by Forbes magazine, Al-Waleed, the nephew of Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah, came with a 34-member delegation on a private jet. During his stay, the Saudi prince met with the president, prime minister and ministers. He was briefed about the investment environment in the country. He is the chairman of Kingdom Holdings Company (KHC), one of the world's largest and most diverse private investment companies with holdings in the world's leading companies like Citigroup, News Corporation, Time Warner Inc, eBay Inc.

NEW SPOTLIGHT

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Time to be a better neighbor, India. If you don't, China will.

MAHARAFIATAL

President Obama's trip to India underscored India's importance in global security and global finances - a democratic counter to an aggressive China. But India's poor foreign policy and botched regional relations have been holding it back.

From the outset, India's promise as a rival to China has been that it is a power apart. It could not beat Beijing in a race for pure growth or military might. But in a contest over principles, India's democratic progress offers the region a model that China cannot match. India should be a partner for countries seeking a fair alternative to alliance with its authoritarian neighbor.

But India is losing this contest, and it is losing it close to home. Now, as President Obama leaves India, it is worth asking: Why isn't South Asia's richest country leading more effectively in South Asia?

China is flexing its muscle

China is certainly flexing its muscle. Last month, it sought to restrict exports

Beijing without providing them with positive incentives to do so. That is the case in Bangladesh, a desperately poor country created with the assistance of Indian forces, whose multiple requests for economic aid and greater bilateral trade India has rebuffed. While Bangladeshis wonder why India does not do more, India wonders why Bangladesh is not more appreciative.

Beijing capitalizes on the gap between them.

Interfering and overbearing

Second, India has been overbearing, giving selective support to political movements inside neighboring states.

In Nepal, India backed a feudal aristocracy for four decades, reinstating the monarchy by force after repeated popular revolts. It trained the Nepalese military, and orchestrated political marriages between Nepalese aristocrats and wealthy Indian families. Pushing India out became the top priority of the Maoist guerilla movement that has majority support and an informal alliance with

China. As the UN peace mission holding Nepal together prepares to close in

January, India is pitted against China to control the postwar settlement, with Nepal's critical water resources (about 83,000 megawatts of hydropower) at stake. The confrontation is reminiscent of the situation in Burma (Myanmar), where China and India spent \$10 billion last year to secure the support of a military junta guilty of abusing its own subjects.

As the weaker power, India has more to fear from these confrontations.

Shutting out the region

Third, India has been suspicious, choosing to shut out the region when relations go sour rather than addressing underlying tensions.

Earlier this year, the government announced an immigration regime that will restrict multiple entry visas. Multinationals have protested the move as a blow to business travelers from the West and the Persian Gulf, but its greatest victims are migrant laborers from Bangladesh and Nepal. Many will turn to China for employment instead; others

will enter illegally, bringing crime with them.

Nowhere has suspicion been more crippling to Indian policy than in the case of Pakistan. So long as Kashmiri militants - with historic ties to Pakistan - continue to operate inside India, India maintains it cannot meet with Pakistan over the disputed border, or over critical resources like water and gas. But it is the ongoing dispute that creates the very basis for this militancy. In a country with porous mountain borders, such threats are virtually impossible to block out by force. **Yet New Delhi means to try.**

Unfortunately, the United States has been an accomplice to India's regional isolationism. In 2008, pressure from Washington shut down a natural gas project involving India, Pakistan, and Iran. Last year, Present Obama briefly considered appointing Amb. Richard Holbrooke as a regional envoy, with the authority to conduct dialogue between India and Pakistan, but narrowed his brief to Afghanistan and Pakistan over Indian opposition.

The trappings of global status, without the substance

The West has lavished India with the trappings of global status: a seat at the G20, a temporary seat at the UN Security Council that may open the door to a permanent one, a controversial US-India nuclear deal, and two pending defense trades worth more than \$15 billion dollars.

To read Indian newspapers or speak to diplomats is to believe that these gestures represent global influence. But in fact, they signal the rise of a Potemkin hegemon. If India is encircled by China's string of pearls, and if migrants and militants compromise its borders, then it will be forced to waste its economic resources putting out local fires, unable to project power further afield.

To be sure there are steps India can take to reverse this course. If it accepts international mediation in Kashmir, if it becomes a neutral partner for peace in Burma and Nepal, and if it opens its markets to greater regional trade, it may yet salvage its position as the democratic counter-power to China. But these are long-term solutions, and the window to pursue them is shrinking. (*Christian Science Monitor*)

Maha Rafi Atal is a journalist based in New York,

Nowhere has China been more assertive than in South Asia. In a strategy it calls the "string of pearls," China is building ports and infrastructure in Bangladesh and Pakistan;

of rare earth minerals to Japan, made overtures to a secession movement in southern Sudan, and wrestled with the G20 over its currency and trade imbalance.

Nowhere has China been more assertive than in South Asia. In a strategy it calls the 'string of pearls,' China is building ports and infrastructure in Bangladesh and Pakistan; digging up minerals in Pakistan and Afghanistan; and refining hydropower in Nepal and Afghanistan.

According to the International Monetary Fund, China's trade with India's neighbors totaled \$16 billion in 2008, growing at 14 percent annually. India's regional trade was barely holding steady at \$11 billion.

India's overconfidence

Yet China's success in the Subcontinent reflects India's own foreign policy blunders. First, India has been overconfident, assuming that regional neighbors would naturally choose it over

"Supreme Court's Decision Checks Absurdity"

BADRI BAHADUR KARKI

Following the verdict of the Supreme Court, the political course has taken a new turn. Senior advocate and eminent constitutional lawyer BADRI BAHADUR KARKI, who was also a former attorney general, spoke on the legal and constitutional implications of the Court's order on the ongoing elections of Prime Minister to KESHAB POUDEL. Excerpts:

How do you look at the Supreme Court verdict?

There are two parts. Politically, they need to give a solution and it should be done in a constitutional manner. Ignoring, avoiding or violating rules, the Legislature Parliament and members cannot give any solution. If they want to give any decision on contravention of the constitution, they cannot give the solution. There is the need to establish constitutional norms.

Why it needs interpretation?

Elections of Prime Minister and formation of the government are the constitutional obligation of Legislature Parliament. Therefore, the court has tried to interpret the terms 'election.' In the name of election, the Legislature Parliament and the Speaker cannot continue the process unyielding and unending. So the court has declared the exercise of interpretation of rule 7(8) by the speaker indirectly unconstitutional and of no consequences.

Can a court direct speaker in its internal matter?

It can. There are several instances. Even the Supreme Court in Iraq recently issued similar order to the speaker of Iraq's parliament regarding the formation of the government.

Some are suggesting that the court should have avoided the decision? How do you look at it?

Interpretation of rule is the primary function of the court which again has been mandated by the very interim constitution which was promulgated by these very politicians. How they could blame the court for performing its constitutional duty? And it is not the court but CA (political leadership) which promulgated the constitution. The speaker/chairman, CA and legislature were the parties in the dispute. It was their duty to make appropriate representation when the case was heard. Nobody did care to make representation though a qualified lawyer.

Now what is the choice before the Legislature Parliament and political leadership?

Players cannot interpret the rule. If CA was acting well within the rules, then speaker or the Legislature Parliament could interpret it. If the issue is something above the rule or related to constitutional provisions, then certainly it is the court of law (Supreme Court), which, in exercise of its power has to interpret it. What were they doing up to 16 rounds? What was

the speaker doing up to then? How could they justify it now?

Some are suggesting that the Legislature Parliament can ignore the verdict. What do you say?

The verdict has come. It is there and they are bound to respect and abide by the verdict. If they have any reservation against the verdict, then the proper course will be to file the review petition before the court to reverse the verdict. Without taking proper constitutional course, they cannot show disrespect and dishonor the verdict. Personally, speaker or chairman or any other leader may not like the verdict but the right honorable chairman of the CA which is an institution cannot show any disrespect to the court.

What is the court verdict essentially?

The court interpreted the implementation of provision of rule 7 particularly 7.1, 7.5 and 7(8). The court has tried to correct the absurd and futile exercise of sub-clause 7 (8) which sufficiently proved that rerun or reelection of a single candidate

Ram Chandra Poudel without any logical conclusion being enacted for so long. The court has tried to stop and correct the absurdity by drawing the attention of right honorable speaker and legislature parliament.

What is the solution?

Solution has to be found out not ignoring the parliamentary conventions, proceedings and practices. It is not one time exercise and it has to be in conformity with the established parliamentary norms.

When there is only one motion for the election of a prime minister what will be the fate of that motion now in view of the court's verdict?

The choice before political leadership, speaker and legislature parliament is i) either Ram Chandra Poudel's proposer has to withdraw the motion as was done in case of Mr Pushpa Kamal Dahal or Jhalnath Khanal. It has to be voluntary and it cannot be coerced or forced. 2) The speaker and legislature parliament declare and approve the election of Mr. Poudel as prime minister.

What speaker needs to do now?

For instance, supposed a team gives walkover in football match in half time, what umpire supported to do? Definitely, the umpire cannot continue the game and he definitely has to declare remaining team winner. This is the same in the present situation in the Legislature Parliament.

Can't they amend the regulations?

They can amend the rule for future cases. Speaker cannot veto and make the motion void which was approved and allowed by himself. The speaker cannot make the motion void in exercise of his so called special power of interpretation. In preliminary stages, he approved the motion and allowed it to move on. ■



Deadlock Thanks To Maoists



Dr. SHEKHAR KOIRALA

The UCPN-Maoist is responsible for the present state of politics. Had the party honestly fulfilled its commitments, the situation would have changed a long time before.

On the part of Nepali Congress, we have taken a clear stand regarding the formation of the government under the leadership of UCPN-Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda. If Maoists want to form the government, they need to fulfill the commitments they publicly made four years ago during the signing of the comprehensive peace agreement and in the 12 points agreement earlier. From writing the new constitution to forming the new government, everything is delayed due to Maoist non-compliance to their agreements and commitments. Unlike in the past, Nepali Congress will continue to stand on its own to strengthen loktantra and republic.

We have made a number of sacrifices and compromises to bring Maoists into the mainstream politics. However, Maoists have done nothing as if they don't want to join the mainstream. Last time we even accepted the Maoist leadership in the government, making Maoist leader Prachanda as the prime minister. However, they did nothing to integrate their combatants.

Nepali Congress leadership is clear now that there cannot be a compromise on anything until actions replace sweet words. As long as Maoists keep their army, there is no political solution. I have been repeatedly saying this. Maoist leaders seem to have a strategy to keep their combatants intact. It is not acceptable for us. If Maoists want to be a civilian party, they must give up their lust for combatants. No political party can keep an army on its own. From the 12 point agreement till now, Nepali Congress has fulfilled all the demands raised by the Maoists, hoping that they will join the mainstream politics. Given the past tack record, that is not happening.

The time has come for actions not reactions. Maoists must show that they are really sincere to the peace process. Once they abandon the army, we don't hesitate to accept their government and their leadership in the government. CPN-Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda must show his guts to prove that he is really sincere to the cause of loktantra and republic.

I have credible reports that CPN-Maoist leader is now-a-days increasing his frequency of meeting with former King Gyanendra and royalists. Prachanda wants to balance us by playing former King's card. I don't think king is any longer a power in this country and no one can revive the monarchy as it is overthrown by the people.

There is no question about withdrawing our candidate from the prime ministerial race. Nepali Congress will back its candidate until Maoists agree to abandon their combatants. No country in the world has two armies. How can a party contest the elections having their own combatants?

We have done nothing wrong by bringing the Maoists in the mainstream politics. I don't have any regret for this. Had

not we done this, the country would have bled a lot. One thing Nepali people have now is peace and it is a fact. I don't think anybody can change the present state; Nepal will now remain as a federal democratic republic. This is going to be our destiny now. I don't think there is any probability of revival of monarchy. It is part of history now. Nepal needs to be more inclusive in terms of ethnicity and geography. Mere wishes of some individuals or persons cannot make any differences. Nepali people have already decided to go for republic by dumping the monarchy. It is not the decision of some political parties but the decision of the people.

Maoist leader Prachanda is now playing in the hands of regressive forces in the name of nationalism. Like in the Panchayat days, they are harping on anti-India slogans to prove themselves nationalists. Some Maoist friends even are saying that Prachanda is making efforts to forge alliance with former King Gyanendra, who is very active in recent days.

We have to promulgate the constitution in time. Whether

one likes it or not, Maoists too have no alternative other than to support the peace process and constitution making process. As all

other political parties have made a number of compromises and sacrifices, it is now turn of Maoists to give up something. If they agree to give up arm, most of the problems will be solved. I don't think any party believes in the words of Maoists. They have cheated us several times in the past just verbally assuring us.

UCPN-Maoists are trying to play the game by throwing new ideas and concept like forming the government under a high level political committee. That is unacceptable to us. As a democratic party, Nepali Congress cannot give up democratic principles and values. It seems that Maoists want power at any cost. This is the reason they are throwing various kinds of political ideas.

UCPN-Maoists think that they are clever persons and they can fool us all the time. They cannot fool us any more. We are in a historical stage of writing the new constitution through the Constituent Assembly. Our new constitution will be inclusive as well as progressive which will guarantee individual freedom, multi-party democracy and human rights.

Despite all disputes, all 10 thematic committees have already handed over their reports to the CA and we are finalizing the new constitution. What I can say for sure now is, it all depends upon UCPN-Maoist and their commitments to see the new constitution in time. Out of extended tenure of 12 months, six months have passed. If we continue to debate on non-issues and fail to agree on the basis of constitution, it is impossible to write the new constitution. People are watching us and time has come for us to show our sincerity.

(Dr. Koirala is an elected member of CA and Nepali Congress Central Committee. These are views he shared with New Spotlight)

The time has come for actions not reactions. Maoists must show that they are really sincere to the peace process. Once they abandon the army, we don't hesitate to accept their government and their leadership in the government.

THE MAOIST PLENUM

Battle Of The Top Guns

As his two deputies, Mohan Baidya 'Kiran' and Baburam Bhattarai 'Laldhoj', dare to challenge him in the much-publicised central extended plenum of the former armed rebels in Gorkha later this month to take control of the party, chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' fears that the country's largest party will have a hard time averting a vertical split.

By SAROJ DAHAL

The Chunwang meeting (five years ago) anticipated an imminent impending political storm. It did indeed come. But we have not fully overcome it. Since it has not gone away yet, our future course has not become clear.

True to Maoist chairman Prachanda's remarks in his report to be presented at the party's extended plenum next week,

the Nepali politics is also shrouded in uncertainty.

There has been neither a consensus nor a clear polarization of the parties.

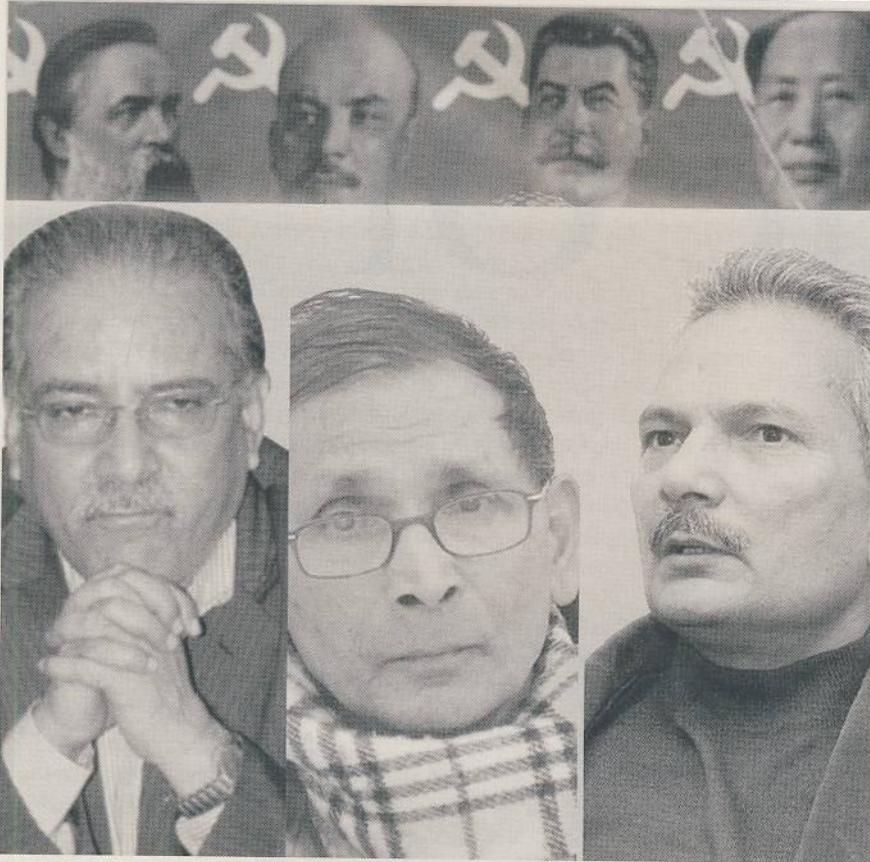
This has been attributed mainly to the three-faction struggle in the Maoist party.

Prachanda and the two vice chairmen, Mohan Baidya and Baburam Bhattarai

head the warring *factions*.

Their make-believe unity is now in danger. The three are clearly heading into three different directions. They may not even be prepared to see each other's face.

In separate reports to be presented at the plenum, the three have come down heavily on each other, while defending their own lines.



Prachanda (Left) Vaidya and Dr. Bhattarai

The differences have run so deep that they have even made up mind to part the ways, if need be.

Prachanda admits it, 'there is ample room for question on party's unity. Though differences were there even during the people's war when the party was small, but they have reached to the brink, so has the enemy's games (to split us).'

His rivals agree. But they see Prachanda as the problem and the correction of Prachanda himself as a remedy.

A pro-Baidya politburo member, Khadga Bahadur Biswokarma says, 'the ideological, economic and organizational distortions in the leadership led to the party's current mess. If he (Prachanda) did correct, everything will fall in line.'

Biswokarma's mentor, Baidya, advocates people's revolt based on people's war to establish a people's federal republic. He wants the revolt to come either through a civil war or a national war.

Bhattarai disagrees. He stresses on the making of a maximum progressive

constitution through the peaceful and constitutional means for social and economic transformation of the country.

The Maoist document adopted two years ago at the Kharipati meet is closer to Baidya who wants its immediate implementation in contrast to Bhattarai who wants it changed in favour of peace and constitution.

Prachanda has attempted to stand in the middle. So, he has been accused of being a centrist with no clear stand at all. He is also charged with opportunism and double standard.

Prachanda admits such impression about him. He defends himself, but he is not sure of how to go about after the 12 point accord.

'It was inevitable for us to come to the present stage after the 12-point accord. As mentioned in our Chunwang document, whether we will pass the fire test and complete the revolution or burn our fingers is yet to be decided. The test is still on.'

Baidya not only sees the current peace process as wrong but faults the entire peace accord and the agreement to end the people's war and the

army integration.

He writes, 'The peace accord abandons the sovereign rule of the use of force in a revolution, hence the peaceful transition is right wing revisionist in its nature.'

He questions the wisdom of agreeing to dismantle the YCL, return the seized properties and form government on majority basis after the CA elections.

Prachanda disagrees, 'to come to this point through peace process is correct. We have fought hard to save the people's army from being dissolved and formed an interim parliament at the centre. But there had been some weaknesses in not being able to give continuity to the local government in some form'

Although seemingly closer to Bhattarai on thought and action, Prachanda, critics say, is trying to seem closer to Baidya.

Prachanda is closer to Baidya on alliance with the monarchists and declaring India the number one enemy, but he does not want any compromise on Chunwang decision.

So, Prachanda has not mentioned the Kharipati decision on people's revolt while Baidya is silent on constitution and parliament.

If non-Maoist parties accuse Prachanda of not keeping his words and of a double standard on words and deeds, his critics - Baidya and Bhattarai - within the party echo. Prachanda dubs them extremists.

Coming down to personal attack, Baidya even writes, 'Prachanda has resorted to false propaganda'.

He accused Prachanda of spreading lies and listed them thus: the so-called new ideological equation in the central committee; about being encircled by the enemies from within the party; about promoting factionalism in the name of defending headquarters from the so-called extremist left and right alliance.

Baidya goes on, 'corruption, smuggling, illegal trade and corruption have mushroomed under the protection of the leadership. Even own comrades have been physically attacked.'

Bhattarai has also come down heavily on Prachanda and referred to 'corruption and MP's buying to form the government'.

He said, "The party has turned in an outfit dependent on parasites which are cut off from the party. This must end and the party's financial transaction must be transparent."

"Millions was spent on buying the MPs but the whole-timers of the party are starving.

Bhattarai went on: "the aimless 6-day general strike and its withdrawal, the repeated defeat of the top leadership in the PM's elections, closeness with the defeated feudal and monarchist elements, emphasis on other parties' leadership instead of an alternative leadership from within the party have sent negative wrong messages across the party, the revolution and the people."

Prachanda angrily feels that he has been blocked from following new ways either from Bhattarai group of the Baidya group.

He boasts of taking many risks for the party, including the meeting with the monarchists.

It is amidst such deep differences and rivalry that the Maoist central plenum is meeting in Gorkha.

Clearly, it will be venue for a showdown and muscle-flexing that could even lead to a vertical split.

Bhattarai and Baidya camps believe that Prachanda is not confident of facing the 6000 delegates at the plenum.

They suspect that the chairman does not even want to see it taking place.

They allege that Prachanda has even threatened to take actions against them.

But pro-Bhattarai leader Devendra

Poudel warns, that will not work. "We will not bow down".

According to him the Prachanda camp is giving the impression that there is no broader worker support behind the other two, especially Bhattarai.

The fact is: all the three leaders are working hard to get the cadres on their side in the conclave.

Prachanda who has a clear majority in the valley and the combatants claims he has majority all over the country.

Bhattarai and Baidya say, there is a three-faction race in all fronts.

Prachanda however is said to have a decisive edge among the all-important combatants.

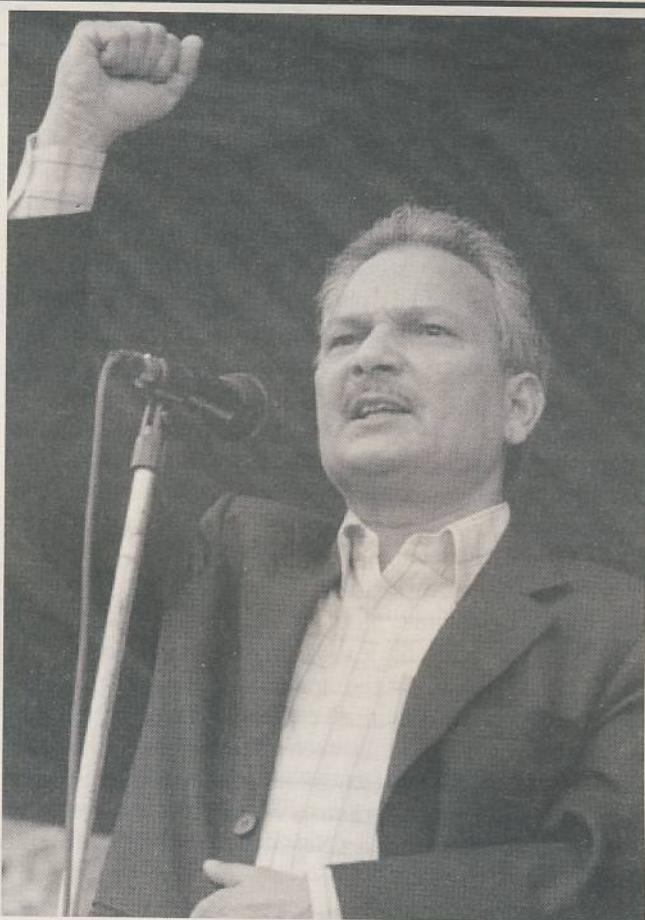
According to a pro-Bhattarai central member, Prachanda has taken the anti-Bhattarai tirade to the grassroots level. Prachanda backers make the same allegation against Bhattarai.

The three factions who have sent politburo members to the grass root level to lobby in own support have chalked out separate plans at the central level also.

Prachanda wants to defer the plenum for as longer time as possible and buy time to create a positive atmosphere for his camp.

"He wants to reach to the power by hook or by crook, be it licking the foot of the enemy India also" said a Bhattarai supporter.

"He wants to use the state power to keep the large section of the party on his side in the event of the split of the party, so as



Dr. Baburam Bhattarai

to ensure a safe future."

If he failed to bring the external atmosphere on his side and also to defer the extended plenum he will try to present only one report at the plenum, denying the two others the opportunity, according to the critics.

Said pro-Prachanda politburo member, Haribol Gajurel lends credence to it somewhat, "it is in accordance with the communist party's code of conduct and the earlier agreement that there will be only one report - that of the chairman. Others can register their note of differences, if any.

But pro-Baidya Bisowkarma disagrees: all the three reports will go to the plenum for debate and discussion.

Bhattarai too is hell bent on taking the present line of peace process forward because he says, this was his line.

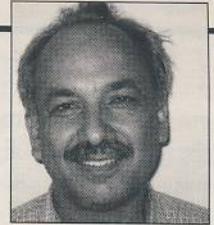
He is readying to take the cudgel separately if the others in the party did not follow him.

The battle lines have been drawn. A bitter war within the former warriors' party is increasingly looking imminent. ■



Maoist Combatants

Prachanda: Lost Hope



YUBARAJ GHIMIRE

Exactly four years ago, India's former Prime Minister I. K. Gujaral quite generously showered praises on Prachanda, Chairman of the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (UCPN-M), during a social occasion in Delhi (Nov 20, 2006).

"I had read about revolutions only in history, but you actually led one successfully," he said of Prachanda.

Gujaral was quite optimistic about Nepal's future being safe in the hands of Prachanda who had emerged overground ending a 10-year long armed insurgency, and promising that his party would adopt democracy and peaceful means for socio-political transformation of the country.

Four years down the line, the hope a large spectrum of international community, like Gujaral, as well as a large section of Nepalis, pinned on his leadership has evaporated.

Prachanda's image at the moment is no different from any other leader's in the country, especially the one tainted by corruption, inefficiency, too much talk and poor delivery.

Recently, he sent out a dangerously ambiguous message to all Nepalis and the international community keenly watching and working for the success of Nepal's peace process and future of democracy.

Upon his return from China, Prachanda gave an interview to *The Kantipur* and *The Kathmandu Post* national dailies, with a clear message that the 12-point agreement signed in Delhi in November 2005 should be substituted with a new and relevant one, mainly taking into account the political reality post-2008 Constituent Assembly election in which the UCPN-M became the largest party in the hung legislature. The 12-point agreement, that is considered as the basis of joint political movement in April 2006, its success and subsequent removal of the monarchy, had been facilitated by India following commitment by Prachanda that his party would renounce violence and adhere to democratic principles in the future. His willingness to transform UCPN-M into a democratic party was taken in its face value. That is at least Delhi's excuse or justification for what it did. Gujaral's praise was a case in point.

But Prachanda's latest statement advocating the need to bury the 12-point agreement without a forthright reiteration of his party's commitment to peace and democratic principle and process are seen as unilateral withdrawal from the political transformation that began five years ago. The Maoist Party was then a 'terrorist outfit' in the eyes of the government of India, a tag the US government is yet to withdraw.

Yet, countries from India to US, European Union and radical Maoist supporters like Norway went all the way to work for the success of the peace process--individually or collectively--with Prachanda as the indispensable Hero for the cause. His latest statement therefore not only sends a chill down the spines of Nepalis who were happy over the silence of guns post 12-point agreement's birth, but for the larger international crowd as well.

Close on the heel of Prachanda's statement, the government of India has officially lodged protest with Nepal about, what it says is, continued training given to Indian left extremists by the Nepali Maoists on ideology and arms. Nepali Maoists have denied this although they have publicly supported the Indian Maoist movement that basically aims at subverting the Indian state violently, a threat that Manmohan Singh says is the biggest to India's internal security. No doubt, opinions about the Maoist leaders among Nepal's international friends vary, but India's latest hard line may have a much larger implication, for Maoists and Nepal's fragile peace process. This also could be way of India trying to conveying message to the international community that it was not patronizing the Nepali Maoists at any point, but brought them together with other political parties for peace and democracy genuinely.

Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair had set aside an objection raised by Nepal's visiting Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba that the presence of the headquarters of the Revolutionary International Movement (RIM)-an umbrella organisation of ultra left movement globally--in London needed to be taken seriously. His answer was simple: so long as they were not posing threat to UK's security, RIM's presence would not cause any headache to the British government.

Rather shockingly, Nepal Army now believes that a serving General of the British Army who used to frequently visit Nepal was not only in touch with the Maoist leaders right from the beginning, but he was also supplying some equipment to the insurgents. The US, on the other hand, had been consistently pursuing its anti-Maoist policy.

President George Bush is believed to have advised a Nepali Prime Minister that the government must 'find, fix and finish Maoists'.

Interestingly, China, which Prachanda has been trying to project as the solid backer of his policy and politics, was the only country that supplied arms to the Nepal Army during King Gyanendra's direct regime that was keen to go militarily against the Maoists. China, of course, has been asking Maoists and every other political party in Nepal to sort out their differences without outside interference, international community may not remain unaffected in the context of India's hardened response to Prachanda's political missive.

In China, which is generally perceived as a neighbour that rarely interferes in Nepal's internal affairs and one that pursues a pragmatic diplomacy, Maoists may be left with little, or no friends if their rift with India gets wider and more intense.

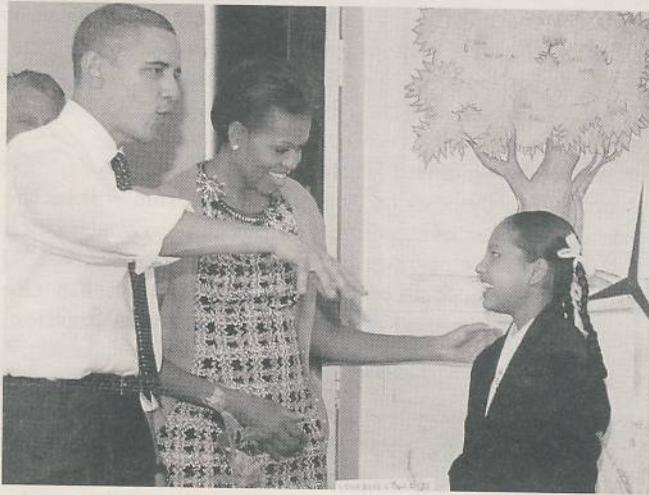
But the current exclusive players, mainly the Congress, UML and Maoists must realize that they have failed the people, and they stand discredited. Nepal will not be able to achieve peace and stability without all political and traditional or conventional forces including the former king sitting together and deciding what they can do for their nation. ■

The Obamas' Young India Talks

By ABIJIT SHARMA



President Obama's visit to India understandably made big headlines all over. The most powerful man on earth was in the second most populous country. The head of the government of the world's only superpower was on his first tour of a superpower-in-the-making.



Even as the meeting between the leaders of the two largest democracies hogged the headlines, the engagements of the first American couple Barack Obama and Michelle Obama with students and underprivileged children did carry no less importance.

The remarks they made and the advice they offered were well taken notice of by the younger Indian lot.

Soon after landing at the Mumbai airport for a three-day India tour, Obama had a question and answer session with Obama said addressing some 300 curious and inquisitive students at the financial centre's prestigious St.Xavier's College.

He took the opportunity to speak up his mind and said he drew a lot of inspiration from India's freedom struggle, thriving economy and its democracy. 'What kind of India you want in 20 years depends totally on you' the President gave encouraging remarks to the attentive students.

'You can improve democracy and help your country grow even more' he told adding, 'Together with the US, you can seize opportunities offered'.

On a question on 'Jihad', Obama described Islam as a religion that reaffirms peace, fairness and tolerance, violence and hatred. He expected the young people to help shatter the myth. On a student's question regarding the relation between Pakistan and the US, the President said that Pakistan was strategically very important to the US and the whole world. According to him, India has a great stake in the success of Pakistan.

Even as the president was busy interacting with students, the first lady, Michelle, was checking dance steps with a group of underprivileged children, and giving them tips on how one can shape a better future. Narrating her own story to the kids, she told how education and values taught to her helped her become smart and confident.

Political analysts may continue debating on how fruitful the visit had been, but there were little doubts that the Obamas had clicked with the Indian young lot - the future of the rising power. ■



पढ्ने, पढाउने
र पढ्न पठाउने
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“President Rule Is Inevitable To Avert Crisis”

NARYAN MAN BIJUKCCHE ROHIT

Leader of Nepal Majdoor Kisan Party NARAYAN MAN BIJUKCCHE ROHIT is a very well known politician. As the leader of a radical communist outfit, Rohit has been able to save his party's base in Bhaktapur in all political upheavals. At a time when the political crisis is getting protracted, Bijukchhe spoke to KESHAB POUDEL at his residence in Bhaktapur on a wide range of issues. Excerpts:

The basis for the presidential rule will be the request of all political parties and recommendation of the current prime minister.

What other considerations prompted you to float the idea of presidential rule?

My aim is to give three messages. First, it will send a message to the political parties that if they are unable to rule the country, the president will take over. Secondly, the move will help to give some sort of assurance to the people who are fed up with the present non-functional part of political parties. Third, the criminal elements who have been taking all advantages will be alert.

Do you mean an all party government?

It is not going to be an all party government. Once parties request the president, he will impose emergency and impose the presidential rule. And, it is the prerogative of the president to form the government.

As the political instability was growing, you floated the idea of the president rule to avert a major political crisis. It is reported that even our southern neighbor prefers such a rule for some sort of stability. What do you comment?

I don't think Nepal's southern neighbor likes the president rule to provide stability in Nepal. India always fishes in Nepal's troubled water. It thinks that it will gain more from unstable and chaotic political situation here than from stability. The present political instability is in its interest. India does not only want security in Nepal but also wants to maximize other interests. It even supported to uproot monarchy from Nepal. India wants continuation of present instability. I am concerned about stability.

Don't you think it is a violation of the constitution?

If the president acts under such conditions, it will be in accordance with the constitution. Since there is no possibility for this Legislature Parliament to bring the budget, our financial situation would be the worst. To prevent this, political parties have no option better than to request the president take over the power for the time being.

When there is no such provision, how can the president act?

There is a provision to impose the emergency. The president can exercise this article but there is the need of an all party written agreement.

How practical is this?

My approach is practical and applicable to settle the present crisis. We have been telling the political parties that if they cannot run the government they have to request the president to do so. The country cannot go for a long without a government.

When you talk about the presidential rule, how is

it possible for an institution which was set up just two years ago to establish legitimacy? We have seen crumbling of the direct rule of the King, which had centuries-old tradition and legitimacy.

The president is not an individual but an institution. Whatever we can say about it, it is a continuation of the previous institution of head of the state. The president can run the government through his own helping hands. I have been proposing all these because of failure of CA to elect the new government.

What will be the basis?

The basis for the presidential rule will be the request of all political parties and recommendation of the current prime minister.

Since there is no institution within the presidential secretariat to take such a function, who will look at this?

The present bureaucracy, police and army will support the president and act in accordance with his order. I don't think the president's secretariat needs to do something.

Do you mean India will support the president's rule?

If the president's rule serves its interest, India will support it saying that it is an internal affairs of Nepal. In case, the presidential rule undermines India's interest, it will oppose it. Had Nepalese leaders stood on their own and not signed the 12-point agreement in New Delhi under India's presence, Nepal's situation would not have been like this. Our party opposed this all the time.

But, political leaders are saying that they will compromise soon?

If that comes true, it is good. I also see such possibility after the recent visit of US president Barak Obama to India. I can assume that there is certain understanding between India and US on Nepal.

Don't you think your suggestions will be counterproductive or like the steps taken by King Gyanendra on February 2, 2005?

The stature of King and the President is different. We must not forget that the present President is not King Gyanendra as he was elected by us. King Gyanendra was not elected by political parties. Sometimes it depends on personality factor. Had there been Girija Prasad Koirala as a president, your concern would have held more validity.

How much valid are the present comments by various forces that Chinese are more active in Nepal?

Chinese presence has been there in Nepal for a long time and they are looking at their interests. This is a hue and cry of Indians who want to intervene

by showing the world that Chinese are active in Nepal. India is provoking China also.

Don't you think the number of Chinese delegations coming to Nepal and Maoist leaders' frequent visit to China prove India's accusations?

The visit has been there all the time. Indians know this well. What Indians want to show is that Chinese activities compelled them to intervene. So far as visit by Maoists is concerned, other leaders are also visiting China.

Are Chinese treating Maoists differently?

China treats all Nepalese political parties equally. UCPN-Maoist is not an exception. China has never exported Maoist ideology in Nepal as they see Maoism as a Chinese perspective for the implementation of Marxism and Leninism. It is an American scholar Maoist or Maoism.

How do you see China's relations with Nepal?

China has cultural and political relations with Nepal. But, it does not have social relations with Nepal like that of India.

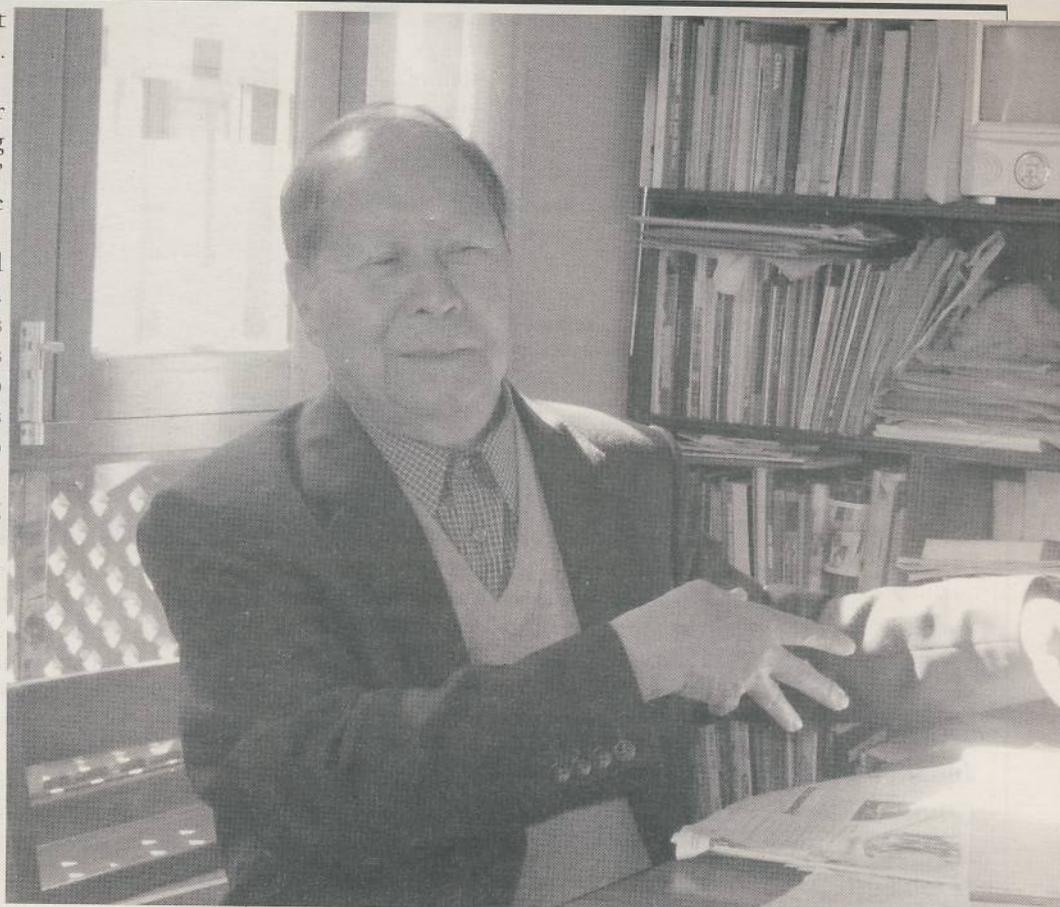
How much logic do you see in a statement that Chinese are searching for reliable partners after the removal of monarchy?

It is a fabrication. China sees all political forces in Nepal are reliable partners. So far as monarchy is concerned, China never accepted monarchy as a reliable partner. What I can say is that China did not confront with the monarchy as it perceived monarchy as a factor of stability. China's policy has been that it always backs forces that give stability in Nepal. You may remember a high level Chinese delegation visited Nepal just a few weeks before Janandolan II, meeting the leaders of seven political parties and the King. The message of Chinese leaders was the same: unity of all political parties for stability and progress of Nepal.

Then why are Maoists trying to portray that their China visit was important?

It is the Maoist strategy to show that they are closer to China. Of course, the Chinese cannot ignore Maoists since it is the largest party with a capacity to lead the government. Maoists too need to woo the Chinese support. It does not mean that China ignores other parties. Delegations of other parties have also been visiting China. As there is open border with India, a lot of Nepalese delegations visit India and nobody notices them.

How do you view the state of relations between Maoists and India?



India wants Maoists in opposition. That is all. India helped to popularize communist movement in Nepal as it backed Maoists. Had India any ideological inspiration, it would have popularized it within their country.

Why did India support Maoist or communist movement in Nepal?

Indians supported Nepalese Maoists because they want to impose their own terms though Maoists. Indians are worried now that if Maoists turned into real communists, that will have a long run effect in India. India has brought devils from the box but now they want to put Maoists back in the same box. Indians are trying to downsize Maoists at any cost.

Are Maoists now more patriotic than NC and CPN-UML?

I am not saying who is patriotic or not. But, Maoist leaders cannot fulfill all the demands. If Maoists had given what India wanted, they would have formed the government a long time back.

You seem to suggest Maoists are created by India. If that is so why are not they reliable?

Of course, Maoists are created by India but there is no guarantee that they will always abide by Indians. For instance, a capitalist invests in factory employing a lot of workers. Finally, it is the workers who create trouble to capitalists who employed them.

You are also saying that Maoists are no more a communist and revolutionary. If that is so why does one need to worry with them?

Maoists too need to woo the Chinese support. It does not mean that China ignores other parties.

There is no doubt that Maoists are neither communists nor revolutionaries. Indians are worried on the expansion of their party bases. After opening, various elements have already entered in the Maoist ranks and files and they can create troubles. There are forces like monarchists who held the view that monarchy was removed because of Indian pressure.

What options do we have for the nation other than the presidential rule?

The best option for all political parties will be to work together. This will avoid the presidential rule. If the situation goes out of control, presidential rule is inevitable.

If Nepal's political instability prolongs, India and China will be the first countries to face the consequences.

As the number of activities of westerners grows, it will create problems for both. In that context, don't you think they will back the factor of stability?



By criticizing India, one cannot be a patriot. Don't go with the name but follow his actions. UCPN-Maoist is a capitalist party. Its actions are directed by capitalists.

Diplomatically, they wish for it, but their national interests guide them. National interest is based on reality. Naturally, India has larger stakes in Nepal. China and India will see their own interests but it is the Nepalis who need to protect our interests. China has its own capability and strength to check its interests in Nepal and India too has its own strength.

Countries have their divergent interests. China and India too are not exceptional. In this context, my question is, don't you think there is a possibility to arrive at some sort of understanding for stability in Nepal?

Recent suggestions given by Chinese leaders to Maoist leader Prachanda that Nepal needs to have good relations with India indicated that they can agree on the factor of stability.

How do you view Maoist leader Prachanda who claims that he is patriotic and always criticized India for its intervention?

You need to see actions rather than words. Do you know how many patriotic steps Prachanda has taken during his tenure? By criticizing India, one cannot be a patriot. Don't go with the name but follow his actions. UCPN-Maoist is a capitalist party. Its actions are directed by capitalists.

Congress leaders are saying that Maoists are building new relations with former King Gyanendra. How possible do you see will be the comeback of monarchy in Nepal?

I don't think there is a possibility of revival of monarchy. The present act of former King will not bring monarchy back. If we see the case of Afghanistan, the King declined to be in throne again. One of the global trends is that every force which is out of power makes efforts to come back.

Do you think the new constitution will be promulgated by May?

There will be constitution but it will not be written

to bring political stability. Federal structure, on the basis of ethnicity, the new constitution will invite more instability and chaos. We must take note that the scholars who are encouraging ethnic based federal structures are those who either get degrees from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi or American Universities. If federal constitution is written, the forces which don't want stability in Nepal will prevail.

Some liken Nepal's situation to that of Lebanon. How do you see this?

Nepal's geography and ethnicity is different than Lebanon. Lebanon is basically a Muslim dominated country but Nepal is a multi-cultural, religious and multi-linguistic country. Along with this, Nepal is between two big powers, India and China.

How much is China concerned about Nepal's independence?

If Nepalese are unable to protect their own interest and sovereignty, I don't think Chinese will come to protect us. We have to protect our own interests. I don't believe that China will get involved in internal politics of Nepal.

Then why are Chinese so concerned about Tibet and anti-Tibet activities in Nepal?

Tibet is an integral part of China and they will never tolerate any hostile act against it from any part of the world including Nepal.

Where do you see the presence of China in Nepal?

Chinese presence has been there in Nepal but they will not get involved in internal conflicts and politics in Nepal. Chinese will give a long rope to other forces. Of course, India and other western powers want to indulge the country like in China in small country like Nepal. So far as their national behavior is concerned, Chinese are very pragmatic. If China indulges in Nepal's internal matter and politics, Indians and Americans will be happier.

Do you mean China has defensive position in Nepal?

China does not have any aggressive design against Nepal, what it wants is a stable, strong and prosperous Nepal. China believes that stable and prosperous Nepal can safe guard its interest. ■



British Students In Violence

UK SPENDING CUTS

Impact Nepal

The British government's unprecedented measures to reduce deficits hit almost all sectors of national economy

By BHAGIRATH YOGI in London

In the last week of October, workers of the London Underground went on 24-hour strike in protest of proposed job cuts in their organisation. On November 5 and 6, thousands of BBC journalists followed suit protesting against proposed changes in their pension scheme. Welcome to the season of industrial action in the United Kingdom!

Like most European countries, UK is still trying to recover from the impact of global financial crisis. In a bid to balance its books, Chancellor of Exchequer of the new coalition government, George Osborne, announced last month that there will be 81 billion pound cut in the public expenditure. Officials say up to half a million government workers could lose their jobs over the next four years with spending cuts affecting almost all areas of the national socio-economic life.

Nitya Shrestha, a Nepali student, arrived in London in September last year to study hotel management, at a private college in North London. "The whole year has been a nightmare for me," he said. "My college has been downgraded, I

haven't been able to find a part-time job regularly to support myself and my parents are already in huge debt trying to send me money every two months."

Not only students like Shrestha, fresh graduates from the British universities are also finding it hard to get full-time jobs. British graduates are facing the most intense scramble in a decade to get a job this summer, as a poll of employers reveals the number of applications for each vacancy has surged to nearly 70 while the number of available positions is predicted to fall by nearly 7%, reported *The Guardian* daily. "The graduate salaries are frozen, though a revival in banking, the insurance sector and accountancy where vacancies were predicted to rise this year," the news report said.

For many students difficult days are still ahead. In the first week of November, Universities Minister David Willetts announced that basic threshold of students fee would go from £3,290 to £6,000 per year. He, however, allowed institutions to charge anything up to a £9,000 limit. He described these measures as "progressive" and stated that

under the new system one quarter of graduates 'will pay less than they do at present'.

On November 10, an estimated 50,000 students marched through the streets of London protesting against the fee hike. Some of them even clashed with police and vandalised the headquarters of the Conservative Party—that leads the coalition.

Experts say as the government has slashed its grants to institutions of higher education significantly, British universities are likely to hike fee for overseas students. As of now, foreign students pay almost three times higher fee than the domestic students.

The only positive news for countries like Nepal is that the new coalition government has decided to raise overseas aid from 7 billion pounds to 11.5 billion pounds over the next four years. UK would, thus, become the first major industrial power to meet its UN obligation to spend 0.7 percent of national income on overseas development assistance, reports said. Britain is the largest bilateral donor to Nepal.

British armed forces, too, faced cut in their expenditure. Officials, however, denied reports that the Gurkha recruitment was likely to be curtailed over the next few years.

While making public the new British national security strategy and a strategic defence and security review, the British embassy in Kathmandu said, "The (British) government has no plans to disband Gurkha units."

Daily Express, a British, newspaper, however speculated that if not axed completely, the 3,400-strong Brigade of Gurkhas could be slashed to 2,500 'as planned under the previous defence review. ■

Write Better

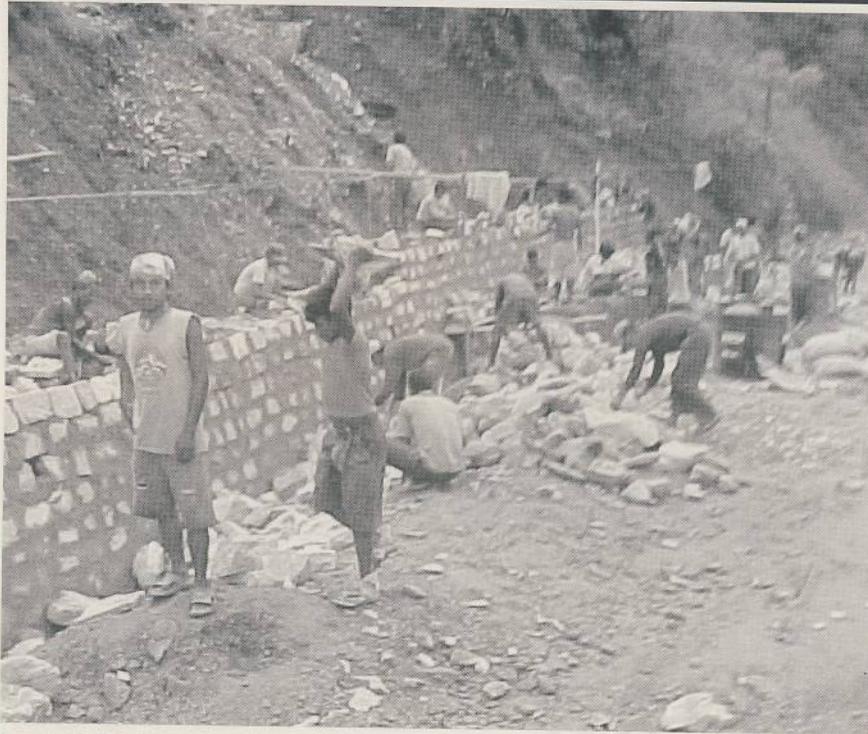
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Road Under Construction

BUDGET

Development Delayed

The delayed budget for the fiscal year 2010/11 is set to hit Nepal where it hurts the most. This loss of precious time has already upset the development plans and growth aspirations – a sure way to worsen the poverty situation. Some key donors had already threatened to withhold their aid if the government did not come up with budget soon.

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

Following the eleventh hour political deal, the government will present the budget for fiscal year 2010/11 at the parliament on November 19.

That will be good four months later than the start of the fiscal year.

The delay caused by political wrangling is feared to cast a long-term shadow on the country's efforts to develop and alleviate poverty.

Worse, the political deal – read from the opposition Maoist angle – could just allow the passage of bland budget without any new programs or plans.

A few weeks ago, Finance Minister Surendra Pandey had rued that of the Rs 125 billion he planned to spend on development this year, less than one percent could actually be spent for the

first few months due to the delay in budget.

That is what has become the most worrying aspect of the delay.

Since the late-1990s, the economic growth rate of Nepal has not been able to pick up the pace.

Despite the cessation of conflict, there has been no peace-dividend.

Rather, in the last three years, the country could not even get a budget on decent time. First there was delay because of the time taken for the Maoists to form the government after the Constituent Assembly (CA) election. On second year, disruption by then opposition Maoists upset the budget timetable. And on the third year, this time, the government is unable to present budget even after four months passed since the start of the new fiscal.

As is apparent by the remarks of

Finance Minister Surendra Pandey, this year's delay is sure to cause incalculable loss on development.

That, in turn, will hold back the economic growth.

"This will impact the efforts to alleviate poverty. In fact, there is a danger that the achievements we made in certain Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) could slide back," said Dr. Jagadish Chandra Pokharel, vice chairperson at the National Planning Commission (NPC). (See box)

He also regretted that due to lack of timely budget, donors like Asian Development Bank (ADB) and World Bank (WB) have hinted they could withhold their assistance.

What is in store?

If the budget was not delayed, this year the government was mulling to present the budget totaling around Rs 347 billion.

Due to the delay, the total outlay is expected to be brought down a little.

The government had also planned to review the custom rates, particularly of luxury items like expensive vehicles and jewelry. Alarmed by the huge import growth, the government was also considering to put a cap on such imports.

But recent reports suggesting a dip in import could hold back the government's hand a little. In the past three months, the government's revenue collection growth is only 11 percent compared to around 50 percent last year.

Return of BoP Ghost

Amid the delay in the presentation of budget and the apparent neglect on the economy, the ghost of Balance of Payment (BoP) deficit has returned after a brief respite.

The whole of last year, the economy suffered from the spiraling BoP deficit.

At its height, the loss soared to over Rs 20 billion before it finally cooled and was brought to near zero around June.

But the recent report by the central bank based on the economic performance of the first two months of the current fiscal showed that the BoP crisis has returned.

The overall BOP recorded a deficit of Rs. 4.36 billion in the two months of 2010/11, according to the report. The current account also registered a deficit of Rs. 3.26 billion.

Experts have said that the BoP crisis cannot be sustainably addressed till the issue of huge trade deficit is not resolved.

The NRB report showed that during this period, Nepal's merchandise exports declined by 3.8 percent to Rs. 10.68 billion.

On the other hand, the merchandise

imports during the same period grew by 5.2 percent to Rs. 61.07 billion. The trade gap in this period was over Rs 50 billion.

Trade deficit had risen by 34.5 percent to Rs. 46.9 billion in the same period last year.

"As a result of the slowdown in exports and accelerated import growth, the ratio of export to import dropped to 17.5 percent in the two months of 2010/11 from 19.1 percent a year ago," the report states.

Another serious indicator has been the poor revenue mobilization.

The report stated that the revenue mobilization, in this period, grew by 11.2 percent to Rs. 25.1 billion compared to an increase of 54.5 percent to Rs. 22.55 billion in the corresponding period of the previous year.

In fact, the senior economic advisor at the Ministry of Finance (MoF), recently revealed that due to the delay in budget, the government was unable to implement some changes in revenue rates for the last four months resulting in 'losses amounting to Rs 7 billion.'

These are some of the most pressing problems faced by the economy due to the delay. In short, most experts agree, this year could end up a lost year, at least, in terms of economic growth and development. ■

"New Programs Will Be Affected Most"

Dr. JAGADISH CHANDRA POKHAREL, vice chairperson of National Planning Commission (NPC), spoke about the anomalies triggered by the delayed budget. Excerpts:

How has the delay in budget affected planning process?

We are certainly feeling big difficulties due to the delay in the budget. The new programs and projects have been affected the most.

How will the development works proceed when budget is already delayed by four months?

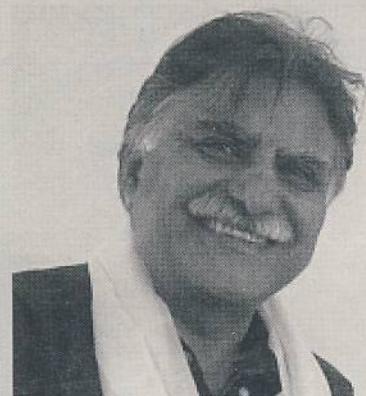
The development expenditure has picked up in recent days. We will expedite the programs once the budget comes.

What are the complications you have faced due to delay in budget?

It has been painful. Recently, donors such as Asian Development Bank (ADB) and World Bank (WB) expressed serious concerns over the lack of budget. They did not want to provide donor aid at a time when the government did not have budget of its own.

How do you think the lack of development expenditure will hit our growth aspirations?

Last year, the growth projected was 5.5



percent but we could manage only 3.5 percent. This year, certainly the growth projection will be hit by this delay and lack of adequate development expenditures. Worse, this will impact the efforts to alleviate poverty. In fact, there is a danger that the achievements we made in certain Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) could slide back.

What else will happen due to the delayed budget?

Since there will be less time available to put the plan into operation, people will tend to work in easier areas where spending can be faster. As such, rural and remote areas could suffer.

Nepal's HDI Gains

At a time when Nepal's politics presents a grim picture, there is a reason to rejoice in the overall development indicators. The recently published Human Development Report and a study on Child Poverty Disparities in Nepal showed some positive signs.

The Human Development Report highlights that Nepal is one of the fastest movers in the Human Development Report Index since 1970 and is the 3rd among the Top Ten Movers list in terms of progress in health and education. Between 1970 and 2010, Nepal's HDI value increased from 0.210 to 0.428, an average increase of 104 percent, while Nepal's Gross National Income per capita increased by 94 percent during the same period. The gap between Nepal's life expectancy and the global average has narrowed down by 87 percent over the past 40 years.

Launched by the vice chairman of National Planning Commission Dr. Jagadish Chandra Pokharel, the report says Nepal's impressive progress in health and education can be traced to major public policy efforts such as the free primary education for all children, legislation

as far as back 1971 and the extension of primary health care through community participation, local mobilization of resources and decentralization.

The report also reveals that the economic growth has been modest and a lack of employment opportunities had led many Nepalese to seek opportunities abroad. Nepal is still a poor country with an HDI value for 2010 of 0.428- keeping the country in the Low Human Development Category- ranking 138 out of 169 countries and territories listed.

"Nepal needs to learn from its own success in health and education and apply the same determination to tackle the areas in which it is still lagging behind," said UNDP country director Ms. Anne-Isabelle Degryse-Blateau. Addressing inequalities across gender, regions, and groups remains a priority to ensure that no Nepali child, women, youth or persons living in remote areas or from any particular groups is left behind, and also to ensure every Nepali can enjoy his or her fundamental rights and can actively participate in moving Nepal out of Low Human Development Category."

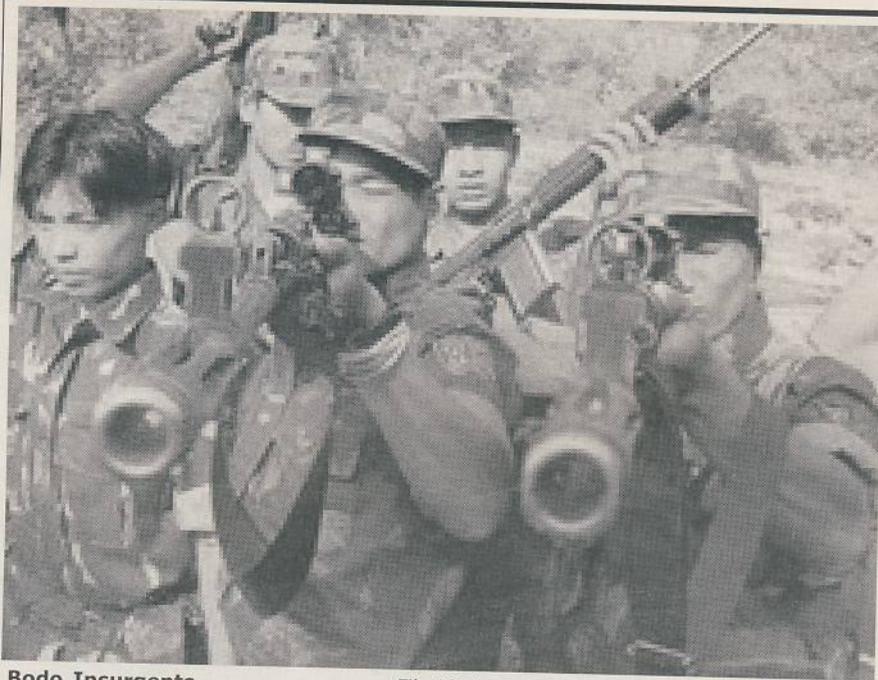
But, children are seen to be the most affected by poverty and inequality and remain



disproportionately poor according to the NPC/UNICEF report on Child Poverty and Disparities. Indicators on malnutrition and sanitation are particularly noticeable.

"Malnutrition is a real obstacle to the survival, growth and development of children," said Gillian Mellsop, UNICEF Representative, "and the serious effects of under-nutrition at a young age can be irreversible, and can ultimately hinder the development status of the whole nation."

According to the report, over half of Nepal's children (55.7 percent) defecate in open spaces. Recent calculations by WHO estimates, that about 13,000 children aged less than five years die each year in Nepal from diarrheal diseases and further 13,000 from Acute Respiratory Infection.



Bodo Insurgents

File Photo

ASSAM VIOLENCE

Nepali Speakers Hit

Two Nepalese speaking Indian citizens were killed in the recent violence in the north Indian state of Assam although they did not seem to be the target

By UMA KANTA KHANAL in Jhapa

In 2009 and 2010, a dozen Nepali speaking Assam gorkhas were killed in different armed attacks in eastern state of India, Assam.

The latest killing of two Nepali speaking people occurred in Udalguri and Tejpur districts of Assam. They were killed by the armed separatist National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB).

According to a Nepali speaking journalist, editor of Sapariwar monthly magazine Rohit Gautam, in 2009, ten Assam gorkhas were killed, including in Sonitpur, Kokrajhar, Karbi Anglong and in 2010, one in Udalguri and the other in Tejpur.

"But this is not a targeted killing,"

Gautam said, "The Nepali speaking people have been hit in random attacks by different underground organisations which want their separate lands."

Now an underground separatist organisation National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) has targeted Hindi speaking people because security forces have continued attacking and killing the members of the front. A member of the front was killed on 8 November and the front has threatened to kill 20 civilians for losing its single member.

"There were different attacks in Bodo Territorial Autonomous Council and they killed more than two dozen people in which two were from Nepali Speaking community," Gautam said over the phone.

Although the killings of Nepali speaking people were not actually targeted at the Nepali community but their insecurity has increased. Gautam said, "We are supporting each other and try to relax ourselves."

Assam IGP in charge of law and order Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta said that the operation against the NDFB would continue despite the warning of the front. Talking to the media persons, Mahanta said that full scale operation is on against NDFB. Counter insurgency operations against anti-talks NDFB militants with the help of army and paramilitary forces jointly in the state will continue.

He said, "Their main cause of concern is in minority pocket areas in Kokrajhar and police is alert, defensive in minority pockets areas. The most remote and vulnerable pockets were being identified and steps in right direction to protect lives and property of the people and these needs to be fortified. It needs to be done."

The security forces in the past three months have killed at least 20 NDFB cadres, besides arresting more than 15 militants in separate raids even as the tribal separatist group continues with a series of kidnappings for money.

The Union Home Minister, P. Chidambaram, visited Assam after the different attacks of NDFB and directed the state government to take serious action against NDFB. But the civilians are not convinced that the security forces would go in front of them to fight with them. Bhaskar Dahal, an advisor of All Assam Gorkha Student Association, said, "They take action against them if they find them walking and roaming on the way."

He says that the rebel groups reside in those areas where no one can reach, even the security forces.

Among the north eastern states of India, Assam has more than 15 lakh gorkhali population. Half a dozen Nepali speaking people are reported to have been abducted by the rebel groups in the last two years. But they are reported to have been released. ■



Why Organic Certification

UMESH LAMA

Organic certification is a written assurance given by an independent third party about the production methodology and quality of products to conform to special requirements. In other words, it is a written guarantee issued by independent certifying body (CB) and it officially states that the production process or product complies with certain standards. Certification has been a powerful tool for creating trust, and, thereby, markets for organic products. The main purpose of certification is to give the consumers confidence that the products they buy as organic, actually are organically produced. But there are also other benefits of certification.

1. Certification brings opportunities for protection of local resources, improvement of producers and consumers' health and eventually raising living condition of people.
2. Production planning: Certification requires the producers to have documentation and production planning. This can make the production more efficient and profitable.
3. Facilitation of marketing and extension: The data collected in the process of certification can be very useful for market planning as well as for extension and research.
4. Certification creates transparency: There is a basic principle of transparency that requires certification programs to make public who is certified and what products are certified. This transparency facilitates direct contacts between producers and consumers/buyers, and unnecessary middlemen lose power they have had based on access to information.
5. Certification improves the "image" of organic agriculture in the society as a whole and increases the credibility and the visibility of the organic movement.
6. Certification can also facilitate the introduction of special support schemes for organic agriculture, since it defines a group of producers to support. Without certification it is difficult to implement special support for organic farms.

However in some situations, certification is an unnecessary,

complicated and costly system. In the end, what matters is the consumers' trust on the product that they buy, and if they can do it without certification that may be as good. There are also alternative forms for verification, often based on the active participation of consumers and producers, e.g. participatory guarantee systems (PGS) and Internal Control System (ICS).

It is important to understand why and when does organic agriculture production need certification. Certification is a market instrument. It enables the producers to access a special market, often with a premium price. In many cases, the only way to create or maintain a separate 'Organic market' is through certification. However all early markets in industrial countries developed without formal certification (Grolink 2009).

The certification is not free from threats and challenges. Organic production takes place under different conditions and norms.

In general one could say that the need of certification develops under conditions where there is a 'distance' between producers and consumers. The closer they are to each other, the less need is there for certification. This 'distance' need not necessarily be geographic. It can be due to ways of distribution, economical realities or even cultural conditions.

The certification is not free from threats and challenges. Organic production takes place under different conditions and norms. The demanding nature of regulatory requirements makes certification more difficult as well as expensive especially in developing market and export certification. Due to the lack of recognition and common understanding on standards/regulations among GOs and NGOs and markets, certification of international product chain has become a complicated and cost burdensome service to operators and consumers (B.Rana Bhat).

However in recent days key stakeholders of the respective regions have been involved in developing a plan

for harmonization and equivalence of the standard, so for 12 Asian countries. It is envisioned that by doing so the above issues can be addressed to a great extent and that the Asia regional standard will function as a basis for equivalence among standards in the region, and could be adopted as a local standard where none currently exists.

From the available data, in Nepal, approximately 28000 hectares of land is certified organic which includes cultivated crop land plus wild collection area. In most of the mountain regions of Nepal, farmers have been practicing traditional farming systems, and thus there has never been any use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides nor the application of conventional method of agriculture. In other words, the farms in such areas are naturally organic, the size covered by such land is in addition to the above.

In the Nepalese context, broadly in order to employ long term ecological systems based organic management, there exists a National Technical Standards and Guidelines for Organic Production and Processing System which was approved by the Government of Nepal in March 2009. Currently the private certifying bodies such as Organic Certification Nepal (OCN) are executing this standard in the certification process of the farms that follow a set of procedures. OCN is the first Nepalese private initiative that has the objective of certifying organic products, processes and inputs with international standards. It is important that the government promote strengthening of such private CB rather than setting up its own, by providing enabling environment as required.

It is also encouraging that positive development is taking place, particularly the establishment of Certification Alliance where OCN is also one of the members out of 9 CBs. There is a greater need of such partnership between local and international certification bodies, inspectors, and supporting development organizations, with the aim to offer a low cost one stop service for organic producers seeking local and international certification for organic products.

The author is the chairman of Organic World and Fair Future (OWF) Pvt. Ltd. Katmandu

“Armed Police Force Has Capability To Cope With Disasters”

SANAT KUMAR BASNET

When SANAT KUMAR BASNET was promoted to the post of Inspector General of Armed Police Force one and a half years ago, the law and order situation was out of control. Thanks to the efforts made by all security agencies, including the Armed Police Force, the situation, except some sporadic incidents of violence, has improved a lot now. The Armed Police Force was established twelve years ago in the context of growing Maoist insurgency. It has seen many ups and downs since its inception. Lately, as Nepal is regarded as one of the most vulnerable countries in case of an earthquake, which is said to be overdue, the Armed Police Force is preparing to work as a frontline agency. IGP Basnet spoke to KESHAB POUDEL on various issues regarding the overall scenario. Excerpts:

As incidents of kidnapping, extortion and killing increased in the Terai, how did you handle this?

There was a rise in conflicts of certain kinds. In the context of this new security environment, particularly the growing internal dissension between various groups within the nation, Nepal required a new force. As is common in several parts of the world, the conflict was growing between the rich and the poor, the Madhesis and the Pahadis, the ethnic and the non-ethnic groups as well as between ideologies in Nepal, a new force was required to deal with the situation. Nepal's two traditional forces, Nepal Army and Nepal Police, alone would not meet the new requirement as Nepal had been passing through a new phase. Thus, the Armed Police Force was born to address these emerging trends.

How do you describe the new security scenario?

The security scenario changes from time to time in the world. The world was divided into three blocks during the cold war, namely Warsaw, NATO and other countries. During that time there was a possibility of conflicts and wars with obvious reasons between powerful nations. Thus all powerful countries focused their attention to strengthening the military and enhancing their technical capability. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990, the situation has changed.

How do you describe the role of APF in maintaining law and order?

Along with Nepal Police, the APF has put in all its efforts to maintain the law and order situation in the country. Thanks to this, the situation has improved a lot. During the period of Dashain and Tihar festivals, you did not hear about major robberies and crimes in the country. The Armed Police put all its professional efforts to contain the situation. Due to heavy patrolling in the highways, there was no incident of night bus robbery. We are working under a motto of service to the people. You can see our personnel taking care of highways, roads and other main installations. Nobody feels any threat. We have made the highways safer to travel. Unlike in the past, the highway is now predictable and safe. Our personnel waste no time in providing complete security. Last year, there were 19 incidents of bus robberies. There was no single incident this year. You need to relate our role in this present context.

But news reports indicate a deteriorating law and order situation. How do you explain that?

Instead of going to newspaper reports, you need to go to officials records. I don't want to comment on the basis of hearsay. What I am saying is on the basis of our records. Facts

speak volumes. Now, one can travel by bus safely and reach the destination accordingly. You can see for yourself whether the situation has improved or deteriorated.

There were reports of kidnapping and extortion. Are not they a fact?

No country can guarantee hundred percent security to all. The fact is that Armed Police was able to release people from kidnappers and protect people's lives.

It is often reported that there is a rampant politicization in the police force. What do you say?

I don't agree with this. There is no politicization at all. We're running our organization on the basis of institutional rules and regulations and politicians have been doing their work. So far as the Armed Police Force is concerned, it is running as it needs to run. I don't want to comment on such biased remarks.

One of the major jobs of APF is to work in the time of major disasters like earthquakes. Tell me how long will it take for your organization to start the rescue work if there is a major earthquake like that of Haiti?

One of the mandates of APF is to carry out disaster management work. So far as rescue operation at the time of a major earthquake in Kathmandu is concerned, APF has already done homework and we have a plan to move and start the rescue operation as soon as possible. Given the present capability we will reach the spot very soon.

How vulnerable is Kathmandu?

Kathmandu has 5 million people in a number of houses that are constructed without being seismic proof. Given the number of people, houses and road standards, the devastation will be unimaginable. A major quake will ruin electricity, water, roads, and bridges. The situation will be horrifying. Nobody can predict what will happen to our only one international airport and only one road that links the valley to outside world and the rest of the country. The life will be miserable.

What capability does APF have in such a situation?

Nepal lies between Indian and European plates. This is a meeting point since these two plates are in the process of merging. Nepal completely lies in that belt and it will take time to cope with any kind of disasters. Looking at all these scenarios, APF has already started preliminary work. Recently, I presented a paper showing this scenario when I was in Hawaii along with the US ambassador to Nepal. The US ambassador also agreed on the need to uplift and enhance our capability. Recently a team of US Pacific Command visited Nepal to see the situation. They were highly impressed by our performance. We are overstretched due to the number of police but we have been doing the best to put our force in alert all the time.

What are other preparations?

We organized a demonstration in Kurintar in August. We have already established a Disaster Management Training Center. We have 32,000 forces. We are now concentrating on how to make our force strong and capable to perform all the duties. We are in the process. We will effectively reach the places when there are disasters or quakes. Our force is ready and alert.

How do you rate the state of equipment?



Frankly speaking, we have traditional equipment. We have some boats for rivers, and gloves. We have ladders to face quakes. We have already asked for a cannon fodder and fire brigade. The Ministry of Home also allocated Rs. 5 million each to Armed Police Force and Nepal Police to purchase the equipment. This is not enough. Huge resources are required to purchase the equipment. The world is now interested in the welfare of human beings. The thrust of the world is how to save human beings. APF has been doing its best. The disaster cell which is under the ministry is also supporting us.

How do you plan to start rescue in a situation when you don't have basic equipment?

I have told you that we have just started to equip ourselves. In the last two or three years, we have made a tremendous progress to enhance our capacity and capability. If this process continues, APF will be much capable in coming two to three years.

The number of tall buildings is rising. How will you launch the rescue operation in a situation where a fire blazes at the tenth floor when you have fire brigades capable to lift the water up to just the fourth floor?

There is no doubt that our fire brigades are old. In the past, the fire brigade used to be with municipalities. This traditional approach has changed now and the government is considering providing fire brigades to institutions like APF. There is a shift in the approach. This is a good sign. Our donor countries have also shown interest to equip our institutions. This is a good beginning. What we need to be proud of is that we will have a well equipped institution and force to launch the rescue in case of major disasters.

How much does your organization share in the expertise of NSET?

We have very good relations with organizations like NSET. We organize programs jointly. They provide us with skills and knowledge. APF has more than 50 tasks. We are getting a lot of support from them.

How is your organization doing overall?

It is up to you to evaluate the situation. I cannot claim that we are capable. The people will need to see if we have done good work. We are committed to enhance our capacity in times of disasters and earth quakes. We have been doing our best to be more efficient with existing resources and manpower. Frankly speaking, we will be more capable within a year but I cannot claim that we are capable right now.

Do you have any capability to fight terrorist acts?

Yes, we have a special battalion in Kathmandu and there is a battalion in each district headquarters. The name of special battalion is the Special Task Force. The manpower is well trained to deal with plane hijacking, embassy seize and trouble in other VIP and VVIP areas. Looking at various scenarios, we have prepared our forces. We have also strengthened our intelligence system to preempt such incidents.

How do you find the coordination among various security agencies?

Under the Central Security Committee, which is headed by the Home Minister there was a good coordination among Armed Police Force, Nepal Police, National Investigation Department and Nepal Army. We discuss matters related to security under this committee. Security is a common job of all of us including the people. I can say that we have the best coordination among us. We have a very cordial relation. ■

Tale Of Two 'Women'

Dr. ARUNA UPRETY



One of the great regrets in my life always will be with me and may be it will go with my last breath: I was not able donate blood for a woman in Birunj. In 1999, I was in Birjung hospital conducting a research on abortion to raise policy level awareness so that abortion would be legalized. I was in the hospital and one woman was brought by her family in a cart from a village. Urmila Devi (name changed) was a mother of five at 35 years. I was with gynecologist Dr. Pradeep Sharma (name changed) of the hospital who examined the case and told the patient party that her uterus had been perforated and she needed immediate operation.

"Please make sure some of you can give blood to the blood bank, so the bank will give us the blood needed during the operation," the doctor told her family members.

The doctor, who was working in a war footing, told me "the patient's hemoglobin is very very low" and he was "taking a risk because if I will not operate on her in a few hours, she will die anyway."

The report showed hemoglobin at 2 for a normal range of 12 to 16. "It was a miracle that the woman survived so far with her pregnancy," we discussed. But after half an hour, when the patient was not brought in the operation theater, the doctor asked the staff: "Why are you not bringing the patient? It is an emergency." The staff looked at one other and said, "the family members declined to donate the blood saying that they were too weak to do this."

The doctor did not say another word. By ten at night the patient died and the doctor signed the death certificate in which the cause of death was mentioned as 'perforated uterus'.

Dr. Pradeep and I talked for a long time about this case. "I am so sorry that the patient died for lack of blood," I said. "I should have given my blood and you could have operated on her."

He looked at me and said it was not the only case. "Everyday we get similar cases, how much can you personally give?" The doctor was right but if I had donated my blood, may be that particular woman would have survived.

The patient did not die because of lack of medicine, or lack of doctors. She died because as a woman she was not valued. The fate of the mother of five children was in the hands of her family members who, however, decided that if she died "it was her own fate."

Working in many parts of Tarai and in hill areas, I have found that though the geography and culture are different in two places, the suffering of women, the health of women, and the value of women are the same in both places. In Tarai areas, women have to confine themselves in their households and suffer as they cannot to go anywhere and in hilly areas women

have to do the entire household chores and fieldwork and suffer because she cannot rest.

I remember another incident while discussing with women of both Tarai and hill areas, where women from both places share their lives and related to their health. Hearing the life of hill women, Madeshi women took a deep breath and remarked "how lucky you are, you can go outside of house to work and enjoy talking to other people, we are confined to our house and even for our natural call we have to wait till night so that no one would be able to see us. We eat less so that we do not have to go to toilet all the time and we drink less as well."

But women from hilly areas had different opinion. "You are happy that you do not have to work like an ass since morning to evening and you are given food without working hard and we have to eat less because we have to eat at last. We even have a saying in hilly areas 'do not be a bull in Tarai and do not be a woman in hilly areas.'"



Women from both places are suffering from weak health and lack of nutrition because of taboos attached to her and less values given to her. On top of that some cultural practices make things worse. Women in Tarai, when pregnant, mostly suffer from night blindness (vitamin A deficiencies) and if you look at the food that grows in Tarai there is no reason that she should. But papaya is not given to the pregnant women with a thought that it may cause 'abortion', banana is restricted as it 'causes placenta attached to the womb not to come out.'

The health status of women of untouchable communities in Tarai (Dom, chamar, mushahar) is so miserable that as a health personnel, I always wonder how they are able to survive. Severe malnutrition, because of lack of food and taboos, lack of resources for health care and not having ideas about family planning and vaccination, ply out in a vicious circle of pregnancy, high maternal and neonatal death and poverty. If only among them the data are gathered for maternal death and neonatal death, it will come out much more than national average. But as the women of Tarai and women of lower caste they are invisible and do not come under our statistics.

Will women from Tarai and hilly areas understand that they have right to their health? Will the political parties make sure that plight of those voiceless women are heard and will they ever go to see the places where those women live in conditions that are subhuman. ■

BANEPA MUNICIPALITY

Unhelpful Nexus

Nominees of political parties and local employees are mobilizing resources of Banepa Municipality in the interest of a handful few. In the absence of legitimate elected representatives, nobody seems accountable. The municipality offers an example of the extent to which things can go wrong when an institution created to deliver services to the people by way of elected representatives ends up in the hands of political nominees. Here the nexus among local employees, members of political mechanism and contractors is so strong that they rule the municipality by the thumb

By SAROJ DAHAL, in Banepa

What does it show when blacktopped roads fall apart in less than a year after construction? And, pavements alongside the highway turn bumpy in six months?

Something seriously wrong, right?

As construction works under several projects continue in different places, nobody knows how long the infrastructure built by them lasts.

In terms of the volume of construction, Banepa Municipality does not lag far behind others. The municipal council, which is composed of nominees of local bodies, annually approves a number of projects and allocates budgets to them.

The Local Self-Governance Act 1998 and Regulation 1998 have set up various measures to check the quality of works before making the final payment to the contractors. Yet municipal officials are paying contractors by undermining the law.

In the absence of proper supervision, the quality of construction is often low. This means the municipality will have to spend additional resources annually for maintenance of infrastructure.

'Have a look here, this pavement was handed over by a project just a month ago,' said a resident of Banepa, showing

a tattered and broken pavement in the main market. 'We don't know where to complain and with whom to discuss this matter.'

Rabin Shakya, a local businessman, said, 'This kind of thing has been happening here regularly for the last many years.'

Executive officer and secretary of Banepa Municipality Mahesh Baral is fed up.

'I am helpless. I cannot do anything to bring changes as long as politicians, contractors and local employees combine their strengths and stand together,' said Baral, 'I have already requested the ministry for my transfer from here.'

The people have no option but to watch helplessly in the absence of any organized body to protest against such irregularities.

According to clause 117 (2), projects which are directly concerned with the people at the municipal level shall be operated through consumer committees. In keeping with this provision, the municipality set up 22 CCs in Banepa. Clause 117 (4) says CCs may collect service charges from the consumers who receive services from such projects but

they have little role in financial and quality control matters.

One recent instance, out of several, showed the nature of municipal irregularities in which employees cheated the consumer groups.

In March 2010, Banepa Municipality announced a grant of Rs. 9650.00 (US\$ 120) to purchase certain construction material and equipment to each consumer committee on condition that it would need to contribute 10 percent or an equivalent, that is, Rs.965.000 (US\$12).

In line with this, 22 consumer committees deposited Rs.965.00 each to the municipality. They expected to receive the material and equipment within a month. But then, it took five months for the municipality to deliver on it.

Worse still, the municipality handed over six bags of limestone powder, each worth Rs.240.00 (US\$ 3.5). As per the understanding, the municipality had to offer limestone powder used against insect and bacteria, not the limestone powder used in agriculture lands.

The price of toxic limestone powder was Rs. 800.00 (12 dollars), four times higher than the agricultural one. They



Cleaning Garbage

also handed over 6 pieces of shovel each costing Rs. 250.00 (US\$ 3.6). The cost of all these materials was Rs. 4900.00 (US\$ 71). Including the Value Added Tax, the price would be around Rs.6500.00 (US\$ 90).

With all the pluses and minuses done, municipal employees got Rs. 3100.00 (43 US dollars) from each consumer committee.

"What can we expect from municipal employees who openly took Rs. 3100.00 from each of our committees by giving us agricultural limestone powder instead of the toxic powder to kill insects," said chairman of Karuna Tole Improvement Consumer Committee Ratna Bhakta Pote.

He indicated that there was rampant corruption in the municipality but no one to challenge it.

Many employees are involved in irregularities and corruption but nobody dares to speak against them because they are local residents. Out of 116 employees in the municipality, only 8 employees are from outside.

Construction Controversy

The construction of a pavement in Banepa generated a major controversy. The 1.6 kilometer long pavement cost a lot of money and much of it was said to have gone into the pockets of contractors and politicians. The Rs. 14.2 million project landed in controversy following the protest of local people about the quality of cement-blocks used in the pavement. Although the cement blocks were sent for quality test and the institution involved in the test said the quality was substandard, the municipality released the full payment to the contractor.

People pointed out unholy relations

between contractors, politicians and technical staffs of the municipality -- without whose recommendation, the payment cannot be released. However, concerned politicians and municipal employees blamed the lab for deliberately giving false reports.

The municipality is required to follow the Public Procurement Act (PPA)-2007,

and Public Procurement Regulations (PPR), which have established a new framework for regulating, managing, executing, and overseeing procurement in Nepal. The rules, however, are rarely followed.

The 290-meter blacktopped Karuna road in Banepa, which came in for controversy following the protests by the local population, was constructed with the cost of 4.3 million rupees promising a 10-year guarantee. The road was ruined within a year and the contractor, in this case, was paid even before carrying out the quality check.

"The contractor did not listen to our complaints and used low quality materials," said Pote, "Even then, the municipal employees paid the contractor."

Lapses of Municipal Council

Although an elected Municipal Council is responsible to plan and monitor projects and coordinate with the consumer committee, such a body does not exist now. The power and authority of Municipal Council are now exercised by a Political Mechanism composed of a few nominated leaders of main political parties.

According to clause 94 (a) of Local Self Governance Act,

the council passes the budget on plans and programs submitted by the municipality. The clause 94 (d) says the council will discuss on the irregularities determined by the audit report of the municipality and direct the municipality to take necessary action for the clearance of the irregularities in respect of those irregularities which cannot be checked under the prevailing law.

In absence of such a body, nobody is there to check irregular activities. Local people are scared that employees may create troubles and hurdles for them in the future.

Executive officer Baral also agreed that nobody dares to speak against local employees.

"Since a large number of staff working in the municipality are locals, I too cannot defy their suggestions and pressures. I have already lost the interest to work as an executive secretary here because of the pressure I have to face from local politicians as well as local employees," said Baral.

Clause 100 of Local Governance Act 1998 says the function and power of executive secretary will be to perform all administrative works of the municipality under the direction of the mayor. His duty also includes keeping accurate records of the projects completed by consumer groups and by others, maintaining the accounts of expenses incurred on the construction works performed within the municipality and submitting the accounts of such construction clearance.

Scandal after Scandal

Banepa Municipality has been



The Construction Materials

implementing several local level development projects in its areas. However, municipal officials and the political mechanism, composed of members nominated by political parties, misuse their position and clout to get some sort of lucrative business rather than showing concern about the quality of work. So there is a scandal all the time.

"There are certain vested interest groups which are against us. Political mechanism has been perfectly working. As political leaders, we are more concerned about the need of the people," said a Nepali Congress leader.

The chapter 6 of Local Self Governance Act 1998 directs the municipality to formulate plans and the process of implementation. A series of process is passed before formalization of a development project planned in the area. The issue of quality and longevity is confined to just the bookkeeping part.

Along with other scandals, petty corruption practices are also flourishing in the municipality. Local employees seek favors in various forms such as in mobile charges, or petrol for their motor bikes. "I have heard it is only here the people have to pay additional money to employees for performing their duties," said Baral.

Fruits of Development to Whom?

The preamble of Local Self Governance Act 1998 says, "whereas, it is expedient to: Make Provisions conducive to the enjoyment of the fruits of democracy through the utmost participation of the sovereign people into the process of governance by way of decentralization."

Following the expiry of tenure of local bodies in 2002, municipalities like Banepa are now under the nominees of political parties and local employees who don't care about the needs of the people. They, instead, are misusing the power for personal gains.

Executive officer Baral observed, "due to politics in contracts and contracts in politics, the municipality failed to work in favor of the people. In the absence of elected representatives, the local bodies are now under all party nominated committees. Even municipal employees complain that they are compelled to work under the political influence of particular political parties."

According to a study report of Asian Development Bank, one of the biggest

'Matter Of Local Capacity'

At a time when there is a growing controversy over the implementation of projects, chief executive officer of Banepa Municipality MAHESH BARAL shares his views on various issues. Excerpts:

There is a rumor that only certain employees are given work responsibility. Is this because of pressures or employees' interests?

Some works done in the municipality may fulfill somebody's interest. However, there are few instances where there may have been pressure and influence.

Even if few, these are irregularities. What is the reason behind this?

One of the things we have to go through is the capacity of local bodies. There is no competition among the employees. This situation arises because the local bodies are left on the responsibility of employees.

Some say this is happening because an overwhelming number of staff are locals. What do you say?

Sometimes, it is impossible to take executive decision from the municipal office and I have to go to the CDO office. This situation is there. The time has come to appoint the municipal employees on the basis of competition.

How do you find the support of political parties?

Political mechanism is the most active in other areas. I have not seen much here. My experience is that when I talked about making a new planning, such as, handing over the landfill site to the private sector, there comes an objection. However, when I propose for travel and celebration, many agree. You must decide how much support I am getting from where.

challenges for municipalities is upgrading staff capacity. The report says accountability of the staff is more process oriented than results-oriented. There is a lack of linkage between work performance and staff performance and periodical performance evaluation system is not practiced.

Story of Municipal Employees

"Of course, there are some irregularities among employees. But, it is politics which local political leaders

Is not this a result of corrupt mentality of employees?

It is not a question of corrupt mentality but willingness to seek individual benefit. The issues are not development or planning but mobile bill, and money for petrol. This is a very bad practice. Along with criminalization of politics, the politicization of contractors and contract of politics are increasing. This is the problem of the country and Banepa Municipality is not an exception.

What actions have you taken to minimize them?

I don't have any hesitation to accept the fact that I have not done anything but I am proud to say that I am able to prevent further damage. The situation is very difficult. From politics to other environment, I have to be careful.

Again, is this the result of an overwhelming domination by local employees?

I don't want to blame the local employees for this. I have to accept the fact that one of the problems with municipalities is the local employees. All others get transfers but municipal employees remain in the same position. My experience of various districts is that there is the need to open competition in the selection process of local employees. Another important aspect is the elected representatives.

By SAROJ DAHAL



are promoting. We cannot do anything to prevent local political leaders in manipulating the decisions in their favor. Even the contracts are awarded to the favorites of local politicians," said a local municipal official on condition of anonymity. We know what is happening but nobody wants to take risk of life by disclosing or revealing what is happening."

Municipal officials cite several stories of how members of political mechanism

misused the resources for their personal purposes. A year ago a delegation of political mechanism led by then executive officer went to an observation tour of a modern slaughter house in Hetauda. The team returned by completing a trip to Nainital, India. The municipality paid all their expenses, amounting to about half a million rupees.

According to the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) - Urban Development through Local Efforts (UDLE), there is the need for more reforms in the accounting system of municipality to make it more transparent and accountable to the people.

Recommendation of Politicians
In awarding contracts of development projects as well as disbursement of social security funds, recommendations of members of political mechanism and political leaders prevail. 'How can we defy decisions which are taken by politicians?' asked a municipal official on condition of anonymity.

The Asian Development Bank's report also pointed out that governance issues have been a major factor undermining the effectiveness of

municipality spending. One of the problems is the excessive involvement of political parties during selection and implementation of projects; and increasing level of corruption.

Though the municipal officials stressed that need based, bottom up approach is followed through consultation with community leaders in the presence of local political leaders at the ward level during the program planning stage, in reality, it is the representatives of political parties, who constitute an all party advisory body, that advises and supports the Executive Officer, who is currently vested with the authority of the municipal council.

Sanitation Project
In another instance, with an objective to improve the sanitation situation, Banepa Municipality is constructing a sewerage system. Supported by Asian Development Bank, the Rs.120 million sewerage construction project will be completed by December.

For the completion of the project, local population has to pay Rs.1000.00 each. 'People need to pay service and

operational charge once this project will start. If we fail to mobilise the consumer group, the sewerage system cannot function properly. For better sanitation, people living in the municipal area will have to pay. There is the need to secure contribution of local population.'

As the possibility of holding elections to local bodies and provinces is far away, the people of Banepa Municipality have no option other than to live with the hard reality.

Banepa Municipality covers 828 ha and consists of 11 wards. It is one of the smallest municipalities of Nepal. According to the census of 2001, the population of the municipality is 15882 with 3015 households. Now it is estimated to be around 100,000.

Despite all the systems in place, Banepa Municipality's experiences have shown how the absence of elected representatives renders a municipality non-functional and corrupt.

This is the fourth of nine investigative stories on politics of local bodies supported by The Asia Foundation. The views expressed by the author do not necessarily reflect those of The Foundation or Founder

Summit Tackles Climate Change, Resources Problems

KOH YOUNG-AAH

Group of 20 leaders agreed to support green growth policies and pledged to spare no effort to reach a balanced and successful outcome in the upcoming U.N. climate change in Mexico.

The summit in Seoul showed some progress on climate change and energy resources problems.

The leaders agreed to continue promoting sustainable, green growth by lowering the amount of their countries greenhouse gas emissions to confront climate change.

We are committed to support country-led green growth policies that promote environmentally sustainable global growth along with employment creation while ensuring energy access for the poor, the statement said.

They said the world needed to boost cooperation to maximize the outcome of the upcoming United Nations Framework on Climate Change which

will be held in Cancun, Mexico later this month.

Addressing the threat of global climate change is an urgent priority for all nations, the G20 statement said.

We reiterate our commitment to take strong and action-oriented measures and remain fully dedicated to U.N. climate



change negotiations.

A total of 194 countries are expected to attend the meeting to forge a new climate arrangement to replace the Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012.

Last Decembers meeting in

Copenhagen ended in failure due to differences among rich and developing countries.

The leaders also decided to monitor and assess progress toward the commitment of reducing fossil fuel subsidies and promote energy and resources market transparency and stability.

We recognize the importance of a well-functioning and transparent market in oil for world economic growth, the statement said.

The group meanwhile also showed their dedication to bridging the gap between advanced and developing economies.

Members promised to reinforce their efforts to meet the U.N. Millennium Development Goals by 2015 through development aid, as well supporting the scale up of agriculture assistance in several developing countries.

In the communique, the group agreed to enhance food security policy coherence and coordination and increase agricultural productivity and food availability. *(The Korea Herald)*

ANURADHA KOIRALA

A Voice Recognized

Anuradha Koirala has made immense contributions to the Nepalese society by rescuing and rehabilitating girls sold to brothels

By YOGESH GYAWALI

The girls of Maiti Nepal were busy cooking *sel-roti*, the doughnut shaped, deep-fried bread, quintessential for the Nepalese during the festival of Tihar. It was 11 in a sunny morning. The girls showed largely an upbeat mood in the rehabilitation center as their beloved *Diju*, Ms. Anuradha Koirala, was selected by CNN as one of the 10 Heroes of 2010. The ubiquitous smell of the delicacy permeated through the reception and went upstairs, all the way to the meeting hall, where the interview took place. Ms. Koirala sported the unmistakable round *tika* between her eye-brows.

Ms. Koirala, who was born in Shillong, the capital of North-Eastern state of Assam, has shown a lot of audacity and altruism since her naïve and, by her own accounts, privileged childhood. But the roots to her feistiness and inspirational work can be traced back to the early days. While a student at St. Joseph's Convent, Kalimpong, it was a common practice for teachers to kick the students during physical exercise drills. Everyone, including the nuns and the seniors, took note of the fact that she and her four friends openly confronted the kicking teachers to stop their physical harassment. It was also in her schooldays when she heard about Mother Teresa and her work with the lepers. Inspired by the nun's social work, Ms. Koirala often prayed to the almighty to bestow her with generous thoughts so that she too could help the needy. When the school was in recess, she often accompanied her mother to help the lepers.

Don't be fooled by her humble mannerism and tepid smile for her work with the victims of women trafficking and children are the true reflections of her towering personality. Under her guidance, Maiti Nepal has rescued and rehabilitated over 12,000 girls/women, who were trafficked into the sex trade industry, mostly in India. Numbers aside, Maiti Nepal complex today can

boast of an administrative building, a school, a clinic, a women's rehabilitation center, and a child protection center.

Ms. Koirala, a daughter of an Indian Army Officer, singles out gender disparity as the main cause for trafficking. Unlike boys, daughters are seen as someone who will be married off to another family. So, investing in a girl's future is not a common practice. Government's pseudo free-education programs costs 3500 rupees per student at the time of admission. Its lack of willingness to make education compulsory and levy fines for non-compliance add as further barriers. The lack of job opportunities and poverty all contribute towards trafficking of women/

girls but even among these factors one finds gender disparity as an underlying cause. Girls are lured away from their parents in the villages with promises of jobs in the cities. The parents are made to believe that the income generated would be essential to cover the cost of their daughter's wedding. The first year's advance is paid up front with assurances of future earnings. It is portrayed as if only the girls need the money for marriage, although it's a well known fact that one needs money to finance any wedding, including that of a boy.

On a lighter side of things, Ms. Koirala lists music and dance as hobbies. She likes to listen to any soothing music, albeit in late night hours due to her day's workload. The night before, she confessed, she was checking songs that she intends on teaching the children living inside Maiti Nepal. As a big admirer of Ambar Gurung, Tara Devi and Gopal Yonjon, she is drawn towards Nepalese songs that reflect the true sentiments and ethos of Nepal. Amongst the young musical talents, she enjoys Anju Panta, Yam Baral and Ram Krishna Dhakal amongst others.

'Values Are The Biggest Assets'

ANURADHA KOIRALA spoke about various issues related to girl trafficking.

How do you feel on being nominated by CNN as one of the 10 Heroes of 2010?

I feel a sense of added responsibility because of the recognition. The selection as CNN's one of the top 10 Heroes means that I should strive harder in the field of Human Trafficking.

How has the tactics been over the years?

At first, we were only dealing with girls being trafficked to India. But now, we receive cases from overseas, in the gulf countries. Plus there are dance bars and massage parlors in Kathmandu.

What made you leave the classroom and campaign against women trafficking?

Since there were so many of our girls being trafficked, the whole of Nepal was being viewed in a vulgar manner. When I visited India, I noticed that many men gave us the lewd look and accused that Nepalese sell their



daughters and sisters. I was affected by all these.

Besides hard work, what other values are essential in a good human being?

Values are the biggest assets that a person carries. I view honesty and discipline as the most important values. Also, I also find dedication towards one's work is a highly desirable value.

Food For Thought

Dr. SUNIL BADYE

In August 1996, I joined Lokmanya Tilak Municipal General Hospital (LTMGH) in Mumbai, India, as an internist-house officer. The LTMGH is well-known for handling medical crises, because it is the largest public hospital in Mumbai Suburban District and is located near Asia's largest slum, Dharavi. Initially, I had a difficult time managing the huge workload. One of the central tasks of the housestaff was to discharge as many patients as possible on preemergency days to make room for the many anticipated admissions on call days. The housestaff who kept their ward census in single digits were most valued.

Those who failed to do this invited reproach from the registrars.

One day, the hospital admitted a middle-aged worker with fever, who responded to antimalarial treatment and was soon fit to go home. In the morning of the preemergency day, I filled out his discharge forms and instructed the nurse to discharge him. However, during my evening rounds, I found him still sitting on the hospital bed. He said he was waiting for his ride. I was annoyed, especially because of the anticipated reaction from my registrar. I told the

patient that he had been discharged and should leave. I admit I was quite rude to him. The poor man did not argue. I left to attend to other patients, completed my evening rounds, and began to see the new admissions.

Then I witnessed something unforgettable. While the discharged patient sat on his hospital bed, his two small children quietly hid beneath the bed and shared a lipsmacking meal—the hospital food meant for their father.

It was obvious from their faces that these children seldom enjoyed such nutritious food. Soon after, the gentleman went home with a satisfied heart and his children with full stomachs.

My heart sank. I was stunned to see that this poor man had overstayed his visit just to feed his children on a day that he could not earn his daily wages because of hospitalization.

Had he done this throughout his hospital stay? I wondered.

That day I learned a lesson not found in *Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine*—that I was fighting not malaria or any other disease, but the deadliest affliction known to humankind: poverty.

Now, years later, I walk the well-appointed, air-conditioned corridors of P.D. Hinduja National Hospital in Mumbai, India—a privately run, state-of-the-art facility located just 3 miles from LTMGH. But I am reminded still of poverty—for example, when our kidney transplant recipients stop taking immunosuppression or when patients with end-stage renal disease stop dialysis because of exhausted financial resources. It is a bitter fact that many patients in India prefer to receive inadequate treatment or even stop treatment and die rather than sell their property and burden their family, even when they have a treatable disease.

Now I understand the meaning of the words of wisdom told by my mentor, Dr. Bharat Shah: "What is adequate [treatment] is not practical, so what is practical has to be adequate." As I think back to 1996 and remember the poor man and his two hungry children, I wonder: Do the best practice guidelines and treatment recommendations published in renowned journals really apply to our poor patients?

This appeared in a medical journal, Annals of Internal Medicine in 2005.

Jumla Gains Snail's Pace

By RADHA PAUDEL

As soon as you touch down the Jumla Airport, you can see a lot of things happening around. There are hoarding boards of many non-governmental organizations hanging in front of hotels, and shops. Vans, motorcycles and a few buses are running on the roads. Most visible is the mobile phone: street vendors, loaders and porters are talking.

Five years ago, only a few hotels offered attached bathrooms. There are now many big hotels where running hot water is common. Foods come in a variety in service of foreign and domestic tourists. New houses constructed along roadsides are at least three stories, mostly, and they look big. The volume of international tourists can be gauged from the rush to get air tickets. Most of them travel to and from Dolpa, Mugu. Likewise, many private banks such as Investment Bank, and Kathmandu Development Bank are operating.

During the peak of Maoist insurgency between 2001-2004, the situation of Jumla was awesome as the standoff between security forces and insurgents prevented all development activities. The few telephone lines available were cut off and electricity was in short supply.

Since the inauguration of Jumla-Surkhet Road four years ago, Jumla now has access to Nepal's road network.

But more changes are needed. Although many non-governmental organizations have been working in Jumla and the government has been spending a huge amount of money for development, they are yet to make a difference in the life of common people.

According to Human Development Index, Jumla is still poor in terms of education, employment and health. The level of poverty is still higher in national average. There is a big gap between haves and have nots. Most of the kids from

headquarters are studying in very expensive and reputed schools in Kathmandu who neither know about the context of Jumla nor have emotional attachment beyond the place being their parent's residence.

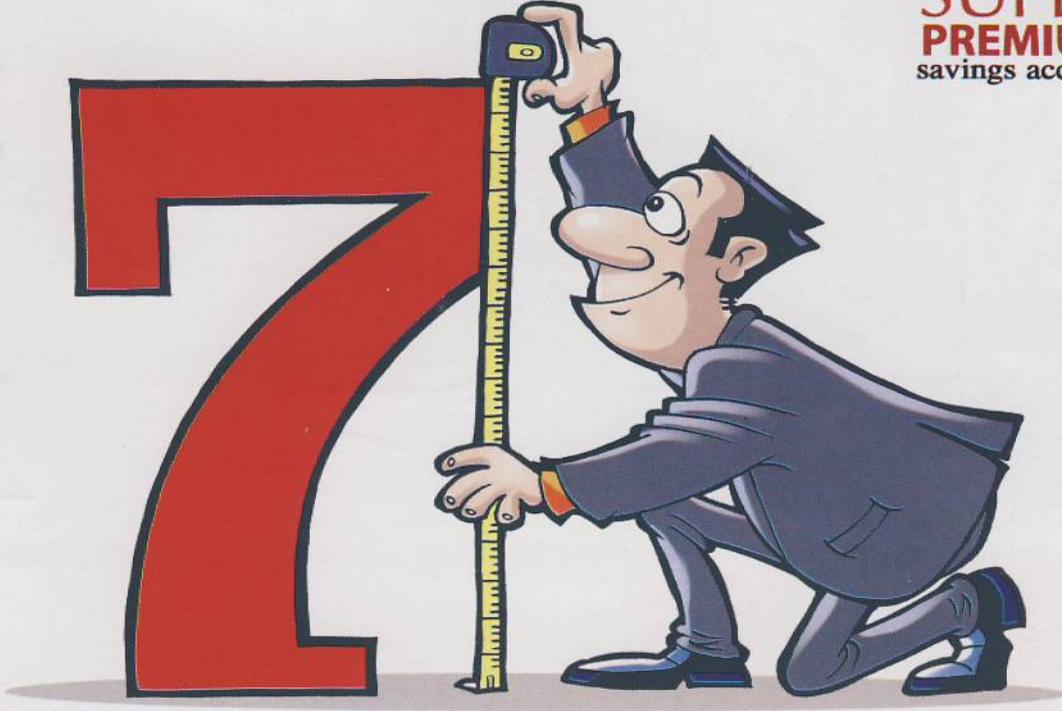


The life of women is still miserable as the village women do not know about their rights, not having space or opportunities to know that. Men consider that women are born for the assistance to them and have to please them in every aspect of their life. Currently, girls are enrolled in school but the drop out rate is high.

Early marriage is rampant. As there is a lack of drinking water, women are spending more time in collecting water for drinking and firewood for fuel. One of the major problems in Jumla is starvation due to decreasing agricultural production and work overload due to migration. According an estimate, food security is threatening the district.



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