

The National Newsmagazine

SPOTLIGHT

8-14, June, 2001



King Gyanendra The New Monarch

- Supreme Court's Decision
- Air Pollution

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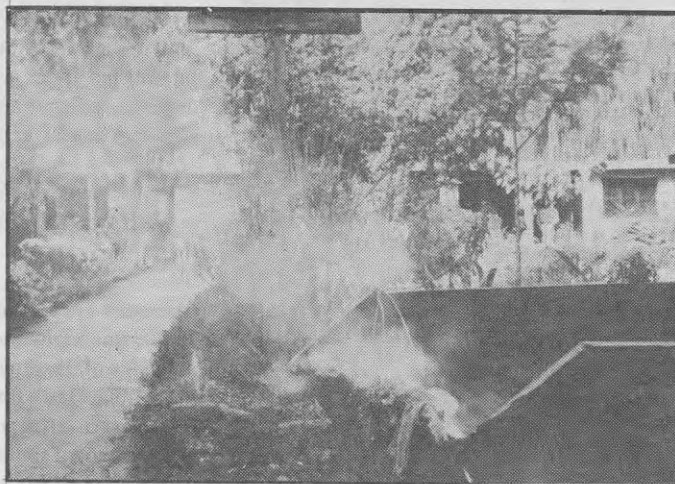
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After the tragic palace killings Prince Gyanendra is crowned the new monarch

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Air Pollution : Unmet Challenges

Kathmandu valley still has to do a lot to improve the condition of its environment.

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Bangladeshi Ambassador to Nepal Sikder talks about bilateral relations.

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SPOTLIGHT

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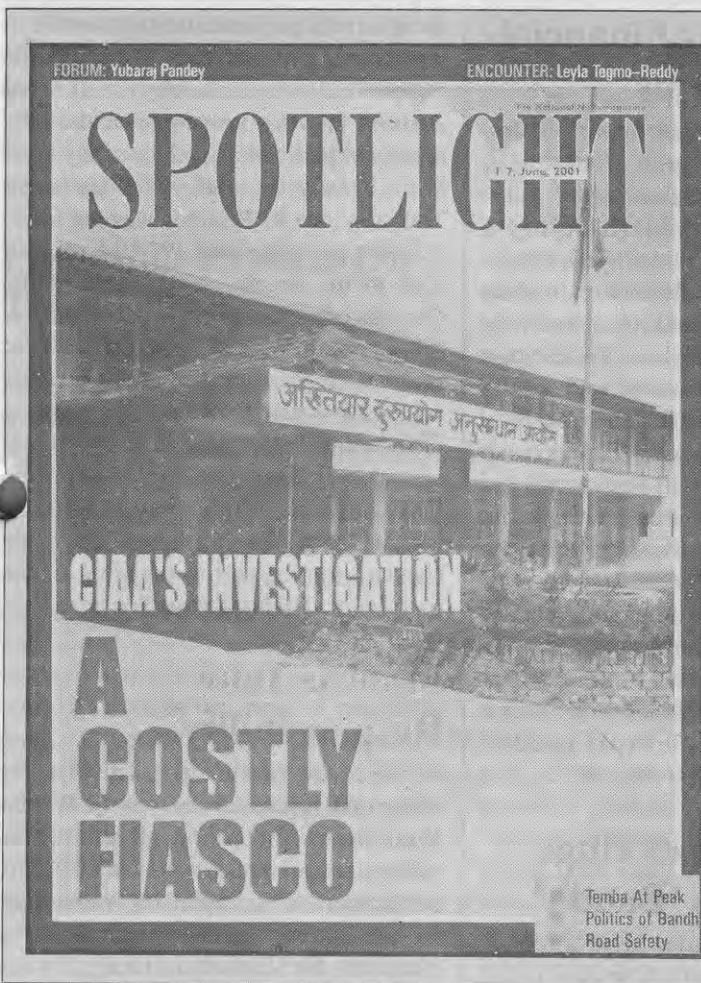
EDITOR'S NOTE

That unprecedented tragedy should strike Nepal is indeed very unfortunate. What happened at the Royal Palace in Kathmandu on that fateful evening of Friday last week can seldom find a parallel in the annals of the world. The whole family of the ruling monarch was totally wiped out. Such horrendous events always generate lots of contradictory and controversial opinions, rumors, views and conjectures. Interested peoples, parties and forces would callously try to exploit the tragic situation to further their own nefarious interest. Anti-national and inimical forces would gleefully fish in the troubled waters. As such, it becomes the duty of all patriotic forces to sink in their differences and unite unconditionally to safeguard the integrity of the country. All our personal likes and dislikes, prides and prejudices and constraints and compulsions must be brushed aside and all our endeavors must be focussed on tiding over this national catastrophe. There will be enough time to nurse our personal or partisan interests once general normalcy restored and confidence regained.

We do mourn the irreparable loss of our dear King — the late Birendra and all other members of the royal family. The cruel fate has snatched our king away from us in the most ignominious way. His concern for his poor peoples, his resolute pursuance of the democratic process and his unshakable faith in his constitutional role has given him the image of an ideal democratic monarch. In his sudden death, the democratic forces of the country have lost their beloved monarch whose untiring efforts had given strong roots to the nascent democracy in the country. At this critical time facing the nation, we shall be paying the most precious memorial to our late king if we could all unite and save the country from sliding into political and economic chaos. Internecine fights at this stage will not only jeopardize the stabilization of the hard won democracy but push the country towards disintegration which is sure to imperil the very existence of Nepal as a sovereign nation.

Recent events in Kathmandu have, once again, proved the old adage that no one is more powerful than "Destiny". Crowned King when a toddler, by the beleaguered Rana regime more than fifty years ago for about four months, King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev has now inherited the throne in a most bizarre and difficult situation. With inimical and anti-national forces always plotting to destabilize the situation King Gyanendra is facing grave challenges. Those who know him well do believe that he is fully equipped to rise up to occasion. But the exigency of the situation demands that he must win the unstinted cooperation of all sections of the people. One wrong advice or one wrong step is apt to worsen the already volatile situation. In these trying times what the king needs is wise counsel. Happenings in the last few days have already shown some chinks in the armor. These have not only to be plugged but should in no way reappear. Since the new king is fully alive to the dangers inherent in the unprecedented situation in the country as evinced in the royal proclamation, the nation can rest assured that King Gyanendra will leave no stone un-turned to defend the country and work for the welfare of the people. Since, it is the foremost duty of the king to keep his people happy and satisfied and the nation is eager to know the truth about the sad killings of the king, the queen and other members of the royal family, an early probe into the matter seems urgent. It has become the prime duty of every Nepali, irrespective of his standing in the society, to render utmost cooperation to the new monarch. We all, in the SPOTLIGHT hail King Gyanendra and assure him of our sincere loyalty. We do pray to Lord Pashupati Nath to grant him long life, good health and wisdom to guide our nation.

Madhav Kumar Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher



Weak Case

Apropos your cover story "A Costly Fiasco" (SPOTLIGHT, June 1), it appears that the cases filed by the CIAA against the accused in the Lauda Air scam stand on weak legal ground. Whether this weakness is deliberate or not, the people will definitely lose confidence in the anti-corruption body if it fails to put the offenders behind bars for good. The CIAA has a poor track record proving its cases in court. The commission must take the services of top legal brains of the country while framing charges so that corrupt officials will start fearing the organization.

Kamal Bista
Sanepa

This is ridiculous.

Chandra Man Shrestha
Mangal Bazar

Expedite The Construction

Being the shortest route that could link Kathmandu with Hetauda, Kanti Rajpath deserves topmost priority ("Slow Start", SPOTLIGHT, May 25). The government should take firm measures to expedite construction. This will provide a viable alternative to existing highways plagued with traffic congestion and landslides.

Besides, this would also save time and energy. The remote villages of Lalitpur district could get a special chance to develop if this highway materializes in time.

Suman Amatya
Satdobato

Alternative A Must

The alternative to the existing Prithvi highway has become extremely necessary ("Slow Start", SPOTLIGHT, May 25). From landslides at Krishnabhir to traffic congestion and frequent strikes at places, Prithvi Highway has been unable to cater to growing volume of highway passengers.

Besides, it is not rational for a capital city to have limited road links with other parts of the country. More the highways, better the infrastructure. Kanti Rajpath seems to be a very suitable alternative that can be constructed in few years. If the authorities show keen interest, the Rajpath could be built in less than five years.

Prakash Basnet
Koteshwor

Why Not The PM?

The CIAA has lost a unique opportunity by failing to formally implicate a sitting prime minister on charges of corruption ("A Costly Fiasco", SPOTLIGHT, June 1). The text of the CIAA's charge-sheet has warned Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala to remain alert to prevent corruption in the future. These words lead one to believe that the commission, indeed, had sensed that the irregularities in the Lauda Air deal took place with the connivance of the prime minister. If that was so, it is tragic that the CIAA could not bolster enough strength to dig up the issue further and come up with evidence against Koirala.

Jeebesh KC
Sinamangal

Ironic Decision

In its charge-sheet, the top anti-corruption body has filed cases against 10 people, including two foreign executives of Lauda Air, but failed to do so against the local commission agent Dinesh Lal Shrestha ("A Costly Fiasco", SPOTLIGHT, June 1). This is an ironic decision. If the commission wants to do away with corruption, it has to act against such unscrupulous agents. By letting the big fish off the hook, the CIAA will not be able to establish its credibility in front of the public.

Nabin Tuladhar
New Road

Mere Balance Sheet

Apropos the cover story

"A Costly Affair" (SPOTLIGHT, June 1), the charge-sheet of the CIAA against the Lauda accused are based merely on the balance sheet of the RNAC. If cases of corruption can be filed based on profit and losses of particular organization, chief executives of 90 percent of public enterprises could end up in jail.

In the last six months or so, Nepalese media have been flooded with stories of irregularities on the Lauda Air deal. Most of the ordinary people were led to believe that corruption had indeed taken place while leasing the aircraft. Now it seems that the corruption has been established only because the national flag-carrier was making huge losses.

King Dipendra's Last Rites Performed

The last rites of King Dipendra were performed with full state honor at Pashupati, Aryaghat late Monday. The



Late King Dipendra

funeral procession started from Birendra Military Hospital in Chhauni and reached Aryaghat via the Ring Road. Only top government officials and military and police personnel took part in the procession, as people could not come out because of curfew orders. *Compiled from reports.*

'Drinking Water And Milk Is Safe'

Authorities have refuted rumors doing the rounds in Kathmandu that drinking water reservoirs in the capital had been poisoned since late Monday. Speaking over state-owned Radio Nepal Tuesday morning, general manager of Nepal Drinking Water Supply Corporation Kaushal Nath Bhattarai said these rumors were baseless. He said the technicians of the corporation conducted tests of water samples in all the reservoirs in the capital and found no contamination. Similarly, general manager of the Dairy Development Corporation Krishna Prasad Sharma refuted rumors that milk supplies were contaminated. *Compiled from reports.*

Info-tech For Financial-Sector Reforms

The financial-sector reforms undertaken by Nepal could gain a lot by using information and communication technologies (ICT), officials said. Addressing a workshop jointly organized by the Ministry for Science and Technology and an Asian Development Bank-funded project, Minister for Science and Technology Surendra Prasad Chaudhari said ICT is the only sector in which the country's geography poses no barrier. Failure to tap the potential of ICT will push nation decades back in terms of development, he added. Resident Representative of the ADB Dr. Richard Vokes said Nepal's financial sector has information and transaction costs. The 'marriage' of corporate financial governance and ICT is essential if the full potential of financial sector reform is to be realized in Nepal, he added. *Compiled from reports May 30.*

Industry Faces Huge Loss Due To 'Bandh'

Nepalese industries faced a loss of more than Rs 2.25 billion because of the three-day general strike called by the Communist groups, business leaders said. According to Ravi Bhakta Shrestha, first vice chairman of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), the industrial sector alone faced a loss of up to Rs 750 million a day to the strike. "At a time when industries in general are facing different problems, such 'bandhs' have caused a huge loss," he said. Nearly 50,000 workers remained idle in the capital alone. Similarly, chairman of the Makwanpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Hitler Biset, said 9,000 days' worth labor were wasted in the Hetauda industrial estate. The tourism sector alone suffered a loss of more than Rs 34 million per day, reports said. *Kantipur May 30.*

RPP Criticizes UML

The Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) has maintained that the views expressed by the main opposition, CPN-UML on the

decision of a parliamentary committee in connection with the leasing of a China South West Airlines plane by Royal Nepal Airlines late last year were against the dignity of parliamentary democracy, RSS news agency reported. In a statement Thursday, the RPP said it was not befitting for a party like the CPN-UML, which took to the streets on the basis of the decision of the Public Accounts Committee regarding the Lauda Air lease deal, to issue statements attacking the committee at an institutional level with the intention of spreading hatred against it, now that it has taken a decision against one of the UML's leaders. "This kind of behavior and viewpoint has demonstrated the double standard (on the part of the UML)," the party said. *Compiled from reports.*

Maoists Take Responsibility

Secretary of Kathmandu district unit of the underground Maoist party, Prabha Kiran, has owned up the responsibility for 'taking action' against the Chandeswori Publications in the capital on Wednesday for publishing obscene materials. In a statement, the Maoists said their party did not have any policy of attacking the press or newspapers right now and that the rebels had set on fire only the obscene materials and did not take any cash from the office of the press. Chairman of the Publications, Krishna Gautam accused the Maoists of looting nearly Rs 280,000 in cash and causing a damage of nearly Rs 1 million in property. *Compiled from reports June 1.*

Budget Cut Affects Projects

A number of development projects in the western district of Tanahun have been affected because of a 40 percent cut in the budget, a leading daily reported. According to the news report, out of Rs 15.6 million allocated for programs like construction of suspension bridges, rural roads and rural agricultural roads, the Asian Development Bank funds nearly 60 percent under the Agricultural Program Loan. Local Development Officer of Tanahun,

Purna Chandra Bhattarai, said due to the sudden budget cut, construction of six out of 18 planned suspension bridges have been affected. Bhattarai said the Ministry of Local Development, in a letter, notified him of the budget cut without giving any reason. *Kantipur May 31.*

Pashmina Exports On The Decline

The pashmina industry seems to be losing its glamour because of some malpractices employed by entrepreneurs, reports said. According to Kantipur daily, the widespread use of low-quality imported pashmina yarn is the main cause of the plunge in demand for Nepali pashmina in the international market. Managing director of Nepal Pashmina Industry Pushpa Shrestha alleged that some exporters were engaged in exporting various products of ordinary wool in the name of pashmina products, thereby giving a bad name to the entire Nepali pashmina industry. Nepal exported pashmina shawls and other products worth Rs 6.21 billion in the year 1999/2000, 21 times more compared to the previous year. The export of pashmina, however, has registered a downward trend over the last few months, entrepreneurs said. *Compiled from reports June 1.*

Tourism Sector Feeling The Heat

As it was trying to overcome shocks of the hijacking of Indian Airlines plane on the Christmas eve in 1999 and bad publicity in the aftermath of the 'Hrithik Roshan episode' late last year, the prolonged three-day general strike has damaged whatever reputation Nepalese hospitality industry had. Industry leaders told an interaction program here Monday that the 'bandhs' have devastating effects on the nation's economy including the tourism sector. President of Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN) Narendra Bajracharya said there has been a loss of about Rs 50.5 million rupees in a single day of nationwide strike. Within the last year, the number of Indian tourists visiting Nepal has declined by 42 percent and visitors from third countries has declined by 13 percent.

Compiled from reports.

AI Blames Govt., Maoists

The London-based human rights watchdog, Amnesty International, has criticized both the Nepalese government and Maoist rebels for "grave human rights violations" and "widespread abuses" in the country. In its annual report entitled "Amnesty International Report 2001," launched here Wednesday, the AI said the police, in connection with the Maoist 'people's war' between November 1999 and October 2000, killed an estimated 221 people. During the same period, Maoist rebels killed 82 civilians, the report said. "We are deeply concerned over the announcement of death sentences by the Maoist 'people's court' on seven people in Rolpa district," said Krishna Kandel, chairman of AI Nepal chapter. The report blames the Maoists for widespread abuses of human rights including deliberate killings, hostage taking and torturing. The report said whereabouts of people arrested by Police during 2000 and more than 50 other disappearances reported in 1998 and 1999 remain unknown. The report said an estimated 1,600 people were serving in prison or awaiting trial in relation to crimes allegedly committed during the 'people's war.' *Compiled from reports.*

Rebels Abduct Former MP

A group of armed Maoist rebels abducted former Nepali Congress legisla-

tor and president of the party's Pyuthan district unit, Mukti Prasad Sharma, last fortnight from his house in the mid-western district, reports said. Kantipur daily quoted a Maoist source as saying that the rebels would release Sharma only if the government made public the whereabouts of five Maoist leaders and activists, and released them within the next three days. The party has demanded release of Dandapani Neupane, Milan Nepali, Iswori Dahal, Matrika Yadav and Lokendra Bista in exchange of release of Sharma. "If the government did not release them within three days, the consequences could be very grave," the source warned. Reports say whereabouts of some of the Maoist activists in the list, including Milan Nepali, are still unknown. Meanwhile, Nepali Congress central office has condemned the abduction and has demanded that the government take strong steps to ensure the release of Sharma. *Compiled from reports.* ■

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King Gyanendra moving towards Narayanhity Palace after the crowning ceremony

A TOTAL OF 37 CLIMBERS SUCCEEDED TO SCALE the world's highest peak in the last week of May, officials said. Among them, 34 climbers including 15 Nepali Sherpa guides, reached the summit on Wednesday. According to the Ministry of Culture, Civil Aviation and Tourism, two American climbers and one climber each from Canada and Turkey, along with Sherpa guides, reached atop the Sagarmatha Wednesday. On Tuesday, a Spanish expedition of three climbers reached the summit by another route. All these climbers were the first climbers of the highest peak in this season.

THE JOB OF DISTRIBUTING LAND TO FORMER 'kamaiyas' (bonded laborers) has been completed in the mid-western districts of Dang and Banke while the process is underway in Bardiya, Kailali and Kanchanpur districts. The Ministry of Land Reforms and Management said that 100 percent work of land distribution is over in the two districts. Similarly, 1,123 families in Bardiya, 870 families in Kailili and 1304 families in Kanchanpur have been resettled so far, the ministry said. The government had declared 'kamaiyas' free from debt bondage in July last year but as facing criticism for its dilly-dallying in rehabilitating the former bonded laborers.

HEALTH MINISTRY HAS BANNED SMOKING AND use of tobacco in all the offices under it, including hospitals, with immediate effect. The decision was taken on the occasion of the World No Tobacco Day Thursday. According to the World Health Organization, annual tobacco output in Nepal is 6,000 metric tonnes of which 40 percent is used in cigarettes, 30 percent in 'bidi' and the rest in 'sulpha' and hukka' (traditional methods of smoking). The annual production of cigarettes in Nepal is 6.6 billion sticks. Nepali women are among the top smokers of in the world. According to another WHO report, male smokers account for 60 to 80 percent and female smokers account for 62 percent of the total population in Nepal.

THREE POLICEMEN WERE KILLED AND TWO OTHERS injured when hundreds of Maoist rebels stormed a police post at Prithvipur in far-western district of Kailali Tuesday night, reports said. According to police, two more policemen were injured and at least two Maoist rebels were believed to have died during a nearly hour-long gunbattle. The rebels looted eight pieces of rifles, three pistols and a communication set after the attacks. One more policeman was injured when they ambushed a police reinforcement team by exploding landmines, reports said. This is the first time that the rebels have attacked a police post near Nepal-India border.

A GROUP OF SUSPECTED MAOIST REBELS HAVE damaged property worth Rs 7 million at the Non-formal Education Project at Dullu in mid-western district of Dailekh Sunday night. The group also set fire on the project office, being run by the United Mission to Nepal, after vandalizing it, reports said. According to RSS news agency, Deputy Prime Minister Ram Chandra Poudel condemned the incident terming it as "a criminal act of disrupting social development activities" and said the government was committed to taking action against those involved in such activities and providing security for development projects. He also urged the development agencies not to be perturbed from such unwanted activities and give continuity to such development programs.

THE 20 MW CHILIME HYDRO POWER PROJECT IS preparing to issue public shares worth Rs 470 million during July-August this year, Kantipur daily reported quoting officials with the company. "In the first phase the shares would be open to the staff of the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) and then we would go to the general public," said Dr. Dambar Bahadur Nepali, chief of the project. The NEA is developing the Rs 2.2 billion project by mobilizing local resources. Upon its completion, Chilime will be the first power project in Nepal developed completely by mobilizing Nepalese technicians and without borrowing foreign capital. It would also be one of the cheapest projects in the country compared to foreign financed projects.

THE YOUNGEST BROTHER OF LATE KING BIRENDRA and newly appointed King Gyanendra, Dhirendra Shah, died at the Birendra Military hospital at Chhauni Monday evening, an official announcement said. Shah was also among them seriously injured during the Friday's shoot-out at the Narayanhity palace. With Shah's death, the number of people dying in the Friday's fateful incident has reached ten. Doctors attending on the injured royal family members said health conditions of Komal Rajya Laxmi, wife of King Gyanendra, and Princess Shobha Rajya Laxmi are satisfactory. Similarly, there have been some improvements in the conditions of Kumar Gorakh Shumsher, son-in-law of late King Birendra, and Ketaki Chester, a royal family member, doctors said. ■

“The wish of our august brother His Late Majesty King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev of guiding the Nepali people towards a prosperous future through constitutional monarchy and multiparty democratic exercises will always remain a source of inspiration for all of us.”

King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, in his royal address to the countrymen as the new monarch.

* * *

“The process of investigating all aspects of the tragic event to find the truths and facts is already underway. I want to reiterate government's commitment to this.”

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, in a statement over radio.

* * *

“Our party requests all Nepalis as well as political parties to cooperate with the government at this time of grave crisis.”

Gajendra Narayan Singh, President of Nepal Sadbhavana Party, in a statement over radio.

* * *

“Our disagreement (to the commission) is only because of some procedural and legal matters.”

Madhav Kumar Nepal, leader of the main opposition, clarifying why his party disagreed over the high level commission formed by King Gyanendra to probe the palace killings of Friday, in BBC Nepali service.

* * *



Nepali Patra

“We are going through uncommon times and we have to take everything according to the principle of fairness rather than looking at minor legal technicalities.”

Daman Nath Dhungana, former Speaker and a renowned senior advocate, in The Kathmandu Post.

* * *

“This incident is unimaginable and unbelievable. Naturally, Nepalese people are sensitive to that. But the people should not lose their patience. Now, that King Gyanendra has been made a new monarch as per the constitution, there is no question of not supporting him.”

Bam Dev Gautam, General Secretary of Marxist Leninist, in a statement over radio.

* * *

“I ask all Nepalis to apply restraint and express balanced opinion to sail Nepal over this period.”

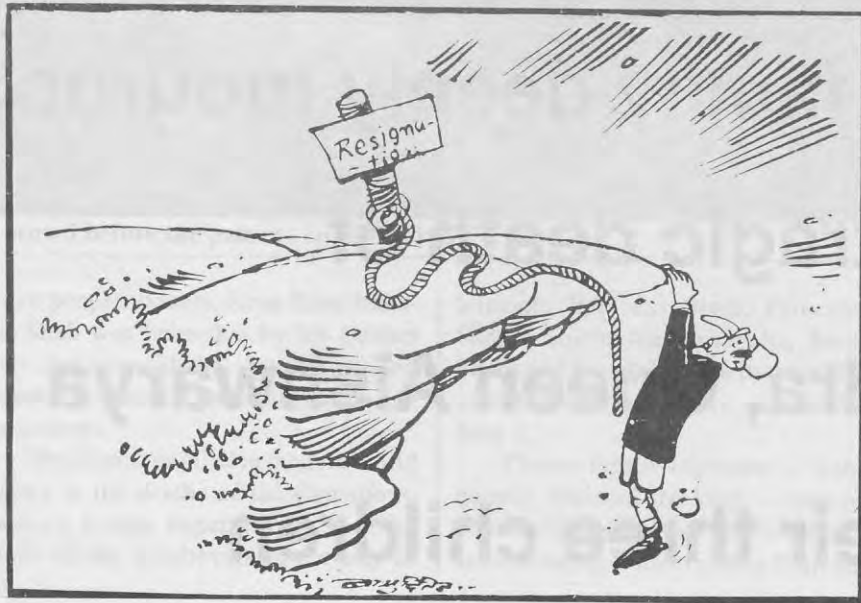
Surya Bahadur Thapa, former Prime Minister and leader of Rastriya Prajatantra Party, in a statement over radio.

* * *

“The lack of credible information naturally has provided a fertile ground for all sorts of rumors and theories on what had actually happened.”

Khadga Prasad Oli, senior leader of Unified Marxist Leninist, in The Kathmandu Post.

* * *



Buddhatkar



**SPOTLIGHT family deeply mourns
the tragic death of
King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya
and their three children**

ROYAL DEATHS

Tremors Of Tragedy

No royal family in the world has faced such a tragic situation

By KESHAB POUDEL

When the bodies of eight family members of late King Birendra were cremated at Pashupati Nath Temple on June 2, shock and panic gripped the air. After the last rites were performed, the curtain fell on a chapter of history.

The sight of the five bodies that were laid on the pyres at Pashupati Aryaghat

Yekaterinburg on July 16, 1918. Those killings occurred several months after Tsar Nicholas II was forced to abdicate in favor of a provisional government that the Bolsheviks overthrew.

According to an official statement, a shootout broke out unexpectedly on Friday, June 1 at 9:15pm. Until the time of writing this story, 10 royal family members were already cremated. King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya, Prince

the youngest brother of King Birendra, too, was declared dead on June 4.

Newly declared queen Komal Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah and Princess Shobha, King Birendra's youngest sister, who were injured in the incident, are said to be out of danger.

The condition of Kumar Gorakh, husband of Princess Sruti, has stabilized and royal relative Kartike is said to be in similar condition.

King Gyanendra has already constituted a three-member high-level commission to investigate the incident that took place on the night of June 1, 2001. Nevertheless, the country has been gripped by a series of speculations.

Although reports that Crown Prince Dipendra opened fire on his family members over a dispute concerning his wedding plans remain in the realm of specu-

lation, Western and Indian media are still making efforts to present this make-believe story as reality.

First reports about the incident came out quoting an unidentified "source" of the royal palace. At a time when no one in the room was in a condition to disclose what had happened, the decision by responsible media organizations to go ahead with unidentified sources was itself mysterious.

Media coverage is so overloaded with this speculation that people around the world are starting to believe it. Even the local media have been making efforts to prove

that Crown Prince Dipendra's affair with a woman belonging to the Rana family was responsible for the shootout.

Whatever the circumstances surrounding the deaths at the royal palace on the night of June 1, 2001, the chilling incident will remain etched in memory as one of the most tragic moments of Nepalese history. ■



A crowd before the palace : Grief-stricken

drove people to tears. King Rana Bahadur Shah was beheaded by his brother Sher Bahadur Shaha. Since then, no Nepalese monarch had died in such circumstances.

The closest parallel in modern world history is the deaths of the Romanovs, Russia's former imperial family, at the hands of the Bolsheviks in the city of

Nirajan, Princess Sruti, Princesses Shanti Singh, Sarada Shaha, Jayanti Shaha and Kumar Khadga Bikram Shaha died instantly and were cremated on June 2.

Crown Prince Dipendra — subsequently declared the king — was pronounced dead on June 4 and cremated the same evening. Former prince Dhirendra,

RUMORS

A Dangerous Pastime

Nepalis have regularly demonstrated their skill in spreading the word of mouth without bothering to verify

By A CORRESPONDENT

It seems Nepalis suffer from a profound character flaw: we easily believe rumors and often become their primary messengers.

The way wild speculations and panic stories have spread in the aftermath of the tragic deaths of King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya, King Dipendra and other royal family members testifies to the momentum rumors can almost immediately acquire.

One evening saw entire neighborhoods alarmed by reports that somebody for some reason had poisoned the city's water supply reservoirs and milk supplies. By the time the government came out to contradict these reports in the official media, they had acquired enough power to have forced many people to refuse to consume milk and water supplied by the state.

Rumors have regularly paralyzed city life. Twelve years ago, the people of Kathmandu were fed with a heavy dose of falsities and innuendo against the royal family amid the clamour for political change. If politicians wanted to show their strength on the streets of the capital, all they had to do was talk of a royal conspiracy at every turn. Matters took such a turn that a car in which Queen Aishwarya was traveling to Pashupatinath Temple was stoned by leftist students.

Late last year, Nepalis were told that Indian film star Hrithik Roshan had said something nasty about their country. Roshan repeatedly denied he had ever uttered any word of disrespect to Nepal. Nobody seemed to have actually seen Roshan making those alleged remarks during an interview on an Indian TV program. But the rumor spread like wildfire, leaving a trail of death and destruction in Kathmandu and other parts of the

country. The so-called 'Hrithik episode' claimed four lives and went on to spark a level of regional discord Nepalis had rarely experienced before.

Rumors ruined the panchas and their polity. In the absence of free flow of information in the media during the partyless days, rumors often filled the gap. The BBC once reported how "Pipal Bot" rumors — in the absence of other means of feeling the pulse of the people — would sometimes provide the basis for officials to frame policy.

Speculation has not lost its strength even during these transparent times. Rumors are pushing the country toward further uncertainty at a time when the constitution has enshrined the people's right to information. The character of public figures are built and destroyed instantly not on the basis of their actual deeds but on public perceptions based on unverified information.

The Nepali mind has been so conditioned by the power of rumors that the reality of a situation often becomes secondary. The Indian media, which of late tend to see in Nepal and Nepalis key ingredients of sensational stories, are only fueling the national pastime.

In terms of injecting uncertainty and confusion in common people, the national media are not above reproach, either. The same story gets spinned in different yarns depending on the political or commercial affiliations of the publication concerned.

Instead of trying to reason and refute, Nepalis, especially the fast-growing breed of pseudo-intellectuals, have become addicted to spreading rumors. The late poet Bhupi Sherchan has perfectly depicted this typical Nepalese mentality. According to Sherchan, Nepal is a country full of rumors and it stands on rumors. From the walls of the house to its foundation, rumors are found everywhere.

Brian Hodgson, who served as British resident in the 1900s, pointed out how Nepalese politics were guided by rumors. Nepalis often realize after it is too late how our blind faith in rumors impairs our judgment and clouds our collective national vision. ■



Unruly crowd : Still shocked

SUPREME COURT DECISION

Stricture To The CIAA

The Supreme Court dismisses the attorney-general's petition on technical grounds but accepts his core arguments

By KESHAB POUDEL

Although a special bench of the Supreme Court dismissed a petition filed by Attorney-General Badri Bahadur Karki on technical grounds, the court accepted most of his arguments on the finality of his decisions.

Along with clearing so many constitutional issues, the bench also directed the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) to uphold the dignity of other constitutional bodies before conducting inquiries. Legal experts see this decision as a firm reaffirmation of one of the primary tenets of investigation: maintaining secrecy.

In its decision, the Supreme Court also maintained that the CIAA and attorney-general are constitutionally independent in their areas of work. Articles 97 and 98 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990 define the role and duties of the CIAA, while Articles 109, 110 and 111 spell out the role of the attorney-general.

It took just over two months for the Supreme Court to settle the dispute between the country's two main constitutional bodies primarily concerning their areas of jurisdiction. The case was filed by the attorney-general after the CIAA questioned his decision not to prosecute Sunil Maskey, who was arrested at the airport with a suitcase of Indian banknotes of Rs 500 denomination, which are not legal tender in Nepal. However, the court decision doesn't seem to have fully settled the jurisdiction issue.

On behalf of the attorney-general, eminent constitutional lawyer Ganesh Raj

Sharma, senior advocate and former attorney-general Moti Kaji Sthaphit, Attorney-General Badri Bahadur Karki and advocate Harihar Dahal pleaded in the court. Advocates Bal Ram K.C., Prakash Wasti, Anup Raj Sharma and Suhil Panta pleaded on behalf of the CIAA.

Attorney-General Karki filed a case in the Supreme Court demanding a restraint order against the CIAA not to question the merit and wisdom of his prosecutorial decisions. The court categorically disapproved the manner the



Supreme Court : Far-reaching decision

CIAA used to conduct its investigative work through publishing its procedures.

The court also went on to say that when a case or complaint is under investigation, it should be done in keeping with the maintaining minimum norms of maintaining secrecy, not indulging in publicity. The lawyers representing the CIAA's main demand for protection of its rights to look into the merit and wisdom of the attorney-general's decision has been categorically rejected by the court.

One other important issue raised by the attorney-general — the CIAA's appointing private lawyers without obtain-

ing the permission of the attorney-general — has been left undecided.

Although the court says government lawyers, including the attorney-general, are not immune from criminal liability in case of corruption, interestingly, this was not an issue raised by the attorney-general in his petition. In some respects, the court's verdict remained contradictory, in view of the fact that the content of the controversial questions sought to question the merit of attorney-general's decision.

Probably, the court thought it fit to make some popular remarks to satisfy the CIAA and the others. It also declared the controversial letter issued by CIAA's investigation officer as not related to and containing any accusation against the attorney-general. In the court's view, the letter was nothing more than a request for information from the Attorney-General's Office.

A five-member bench comprising Chief Justice Keshav Prasad Upadhyaya, Justices Laxman Aryal, Kedar Nath Upadhyaya, Krishna Jung Rayamajhi and Govinda Bahadur Shrestha delivered the verdict.

In another petition filed under public litigation demanding the voiding of Clause 34.1 of CIAA Act 2048, which designated the case filed by the CIAA as state case, a seven-member special bench of the apex court rejected the demand, finding it not inconsistent with the constitutional provisions.

The natural and logical consequence of this verdict is that the attorney-general's right to appeal the CIAA's case has remained intact. The seven-member bench consisted of chief Justice Keshav Prasad Upadhyaya, justices Kedarnath Upadhyaya, Krishna Jung Rayamajhi, Govinda Bahadur Shrestha, Hari Prasad Sharma, Krishna Kumar Verma and Kedar Prasad Giri.

At a time when constitutional challenges are coming up one after another, the country's apex court seems to have become used to interpreting major portions of the supreme law of the land. ■

SHAH DYNASTY

Changing Of The Guards

A vital lesson from history: whenever the monarchy is weakened, the nation pays a heavy price

BY AKSHAY SHARMA

The monarchy existed in Nepal over 2,000 years ago as the Asoka pillar on the Lumbini gardens testifies. "King Priyadasī the beloved of Gods — a personal formula generally used by Asoka in his inscriptions — having been anointed twenty years ... came into existence, came into person and worshipped here. King Priyadasī exempted Lumbini villagers from taxes, and bestowed wealth upon it," writes Percival Landon in his book "Nepal".

"The people in the Land of the Buddha woke up to hear the incredible story that the Crown Prince had made a big move at the palace over a dispute with his liberal father (late King Birendra) on his marriage plans," a dazed Mahesh Aryal said. "The shock and horror fed by the media frenzy has certainly left the country paralyzed."

Kapilvastu lies west of the capital and is the place where Lord Buddha left to find Nirvana, leaving behind his son as his successor. "Hsuan Tsang, De-tsuno of China in 650 AD wrote about the marriage of the Licchavi King Ashuvarma and emperor Asoka of India had happened to erect a pillar inscribed — the Sakyamuni was born here — which Fuher happened to come upon," says Kamallesh Sharma of Kapilvastu.

Therefore, the monarchy happens to be 2,175 years old, according to the information Fuher put out on the spot Prince Siddhartha Gautam was believed to have been born.

The tradition of writing history can be traced to the medieval period. People preserved their past through the chronicles (Vamsavali). "The oldest is the Gopalraj Bassavali compiled during the last decades of the 14 century," writes Percival Landon.

"These chronicles provide us with the genealogy of kings, duration of rule, and some of the important events that took place during the concerned era. People began to preserve the significant events

through the Theyasaphus (folded books) written in a diary style. These are more authentic than the Vansavalis, as they cover important events that took place during the time of the author that kept them," the late Khadga Bikram Shaha wrote.

The story of the Shah dynasty begins with Prithvi Narayan Shah, who started from Gorkha and went on to create modern Nepal. He was 20 when crowned the king of Gorkha and was a strong monarch.

His successor and the second ruler of the Shah dynasty, Pratap Singh Shah, ascended the throne in 1774 and ruled for three years. The king could not fill the shoes of his father and the monarchy gradually became weak. In 1774, Rana Bahadur Shah, barely a child of two and half years, was caught between the devil and the deep blue sea, as Bahadur Shah (son of Prithvi Narayan Shah) and his mother (Rajendra Laxmi Shah) clamored for power against each other. "Due to the infighting among courtiers the monarchy suffered for 173 years," says a historian.

Following prolonged internal fighting among the courtiers, King Rana Bahadur abdicated in favor of his son, Girvanyudha Bir Bikram Shah in 1799. Rana Bahadur Shah was murdered seven years later. This is the first recorded murder of a king in the history of Nepal.

Girvanyudha, who was only two years old when he sat on the throne, ruled for 17 years. The fighting between the Thapa and Pandey courtiers intensified amid an external war as the expansion of Nepal was picking speed. He died when he was only 19 years old.

Rajendra Bikram Shah, the fifth ruler of the Shah dynasty, ascended the throne in 1816 at the age of three. The struggle among power-hungry courtiers furthered weakened the monarchy. Rajendra



Great King Prithvi Narayan's statue : Symbol of unity



Late King Birendra with leaders : Tearful adieu

Bikram abdicated the throne in 1846 and went to seek solace in the Indian holy city of Banaras.

Surendra Bikram Shah's accession saw the dawn of a new era in Nepal's history. Soon came the Rana rule under which Surendra served as the monarch for 35 years. Surendra's son, Trailokya, died as crown prince.

Trailokya's son, Prithvi Bir Bikram Shah, became the seventh king and the eighth descendant of the Shah dynasty.

Prithvi Bir Bikram Shah, who was only six years old when he sat on the throne, ruled for 30 years. Under the weak umbrella of the monarchy, the Rana regime continued to flourish.

King Tribhuvan ascended the throne 1911 at the age of 5 years. He became the liberator of the people from 104 years of Rana rule and introduced democratic norms to the country in 1950. He is heralded as the father of democracy and the public reveres him as the father of the nation.

Crown Prince Mahendra became king in 1954. In 1960, he introduced a non-party system in the country.

King Birendra ascended the throne in 1972, becoming the 10th king and the 11th descendent of the Shah dynasty. His coronation took place on the February 24, 1975. He declared free and compulsory primary education throughout the kingdom. He put forward the proposal that Nepal be declared a Zone of Peace on his

coronation speech, which had received the endorsement of 116 countries by 1990.

King Birendra promulgated the second amendment to the Constitution of Nepal in 1962 on December 12, 1975. He constituted the Royal Higher level Educa-

tion Commission on August 17, 1982. He announced Nepal's first-ever national referendum on May 24, 1979 to find out whether the people wanted to continue with the panchayat system or adopt a multi-party system. Some 54.7 percent of the people chose to retain the partyless panchayat system.

King Birendra died at 9:15pm on June 1 at the Narayanhity Palace. Crown Prince Dipendra, born on June 27, 1971, was named king on June 2. King Dipendra, in a coma in hospital, became monarch for two days before he died at the age of 31 on June 4.

The brother of the late King Birendra, Prince Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah — who sat on the throne for a brief period in 1950 — was crowned king on June 4.

"I feel as if the whole world has gone down. I don't believe the stories in the media. I know that the history of Nepal is harsh. And above all, I believe in monarchy," said Prakash Koirala, voicing a view widely expressed during these tumultuous days.

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KING GYANENDRA

A Model Monarch

King Gyanendra seems to have been born to protect the institution of monarchy. For the second time in a little over half a century, King Gyanendra has been placed in a position to give continuity and restore the total faith of the people in the monarchy. In 1950 when royal family members sought asylum in India, it was King Gyanendra who kept the monarchy intact when he was just three years old. In the latest role destiny has imposed upon him, King Gyanendra could prove to be the savior of this vital national institution.

By KESHAB POUDEL

After 50 years, King Gyanendra ascended the throne once again when the chief priest crowned him at 11:30am on Monday at the Hanuman Dhoka Palace following the announcement of the death of King Dipendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev at the Birendra Military Hospital on 3:45am.

Twenty-nine years ago, King Birendra ascended the throne, at the same Nasal Chowk of Hanuman Dhoka Durbar following the death of King Mahendra after a heart attack. The circumstances surrounding King Gyanendra's accession, however,

were gripped by unusual tragedy.

The Raj Parishad declared King Gyanendra the new monarch following the deaths of King Birendra and King Dipendra within a span of 48 hours. Under Article 34 (5) of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990, a meeting of the Raj Parishad was convened and the council confirmed the demise of the King Dipendra. Prince Gyanendra, who was appointed as regent during King Dipendra's brief reign, was declared the new monarch.

Since King Dipendra was unmarried and had no offspring (sons or grandson), as per the Section 5.6 of the Succession to the Throne Act 2044, Prince Gyanendra — the second brother of late King Birendra and

uncle of late King Dipendra — was declared the successor to the throne.

History has thrust upon King Gyanendra a role similar to the one he discharged in 1950. But the challenges ahead are more difficult for him this time. In his first four-month reign in 1950, he protected the monarchy from abolition by Rana prime minister Mohan Sumsher. This time, too, he is entrusted with the task of maintaining the continuity of the monarchy and upholding public faith in the institution.

Although a section of the people sees him as an illiberal member of the royal family, the time has come for King Gyanendra to prove them wrong. As chair-



KANTIPUR

King Gyanendra : At the helms

man of King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation, King Gyanendra has already showed his effectiveness and efficiency in the area of natural conservation. "King Gyanendra is an efficient and knowledgeable man, as I had an opportunity to work with him in the area of conservation," said a western diplomat on condition of anonymity.

The nation hopes King Gyanendra succeeds in filling the vacuum generated in the country following the tragedy in the royal palace. That would be one of his greatest contributions to the nation and institution of monarchy.

In an address to the nation after his accession, King Gyanendra clearly reaffirmed his commitment to investigate the incidents that took place on the night of June 1 in which eight royal family members — including King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya, Prince Nirajan and Princess Shruti — were killed.

"In a strange twist of history, King Gyanendra seems to have been destined to

save the crown of the Kingdom of Nepal for a second time when there seems to be a real threat and a near breakdown of the institution of monarchy. In 1950 he was crowned as king when his grandfather King Tribhuvan, his father Crown Prince Mahendra and his brother Prince Birendra and other family members sought asylum to India. King Gyanendra finds himself shouldering similar responsibilities after his brother, King Birendra and nephew King Dipendra, along with most of their family members, met with a tragic end on Friday June 1, 2001," said political analysisist. King Gyanendra's immediate response to calls for an investigation into the palace killings showed how eager he is to tackle issues raised by the people. The new king has a tough time ahead as public sentiments sparked by rumors have sent tremors of panic across the city. In the name of expressing grief, some individuals are making efforts to destabilize the country, something the people will have to vigilant against.

Nepal has seen a series of political

instability and anarchy in the last five years. The Nepalese people are knowingly or unknowingly playing a part in creating this instability. Whether through constitutional or unconstitutional processes, the country has seen a prolonged phase of political volatility.

The country can expect to overcome this critical situation, including the six-year-old violent insurgency, since the nation has a new monarch who has a long experience in matters of governance. King Gyanendra has witnessed the vicissitudes of Nepalese society and shared views with late King Birendra.

He has committed himself to the values nurtured by his late brother, particularly those of strengthening constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy and attaining the all-round development of the country. The promptness with which he has constituted a high-level commission of inquiry, headed by the chief justice and including the speaker of the House of Representatives and the leader of the opposi-

tion, to probe the cause and circumstances leading to the deaths of King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya, Crown Prince Dipendra and most of the royal family members and seeking a report within three days proves he is a man of action.

Of course, the task before him is not at all easy because the country is facing very serious problems: a Maoist insurgency, disarray within political parties and frustration and chaos in society. King Gyanendra must heal the tragic family wound and act as a bridge among political institutions through the delicate mechanism spelled out in the constitution. King Gyanendra, like his elder brother, is well aware of the precariousness of national situation and the volatility of the political process. If things stabilize soon, the country can gain much-needed strength for political rejuvenation.

Political leaders have already expressed support to new king. "We are confident King Gyanendra will support the constitutional process initiated by late King Birendra," said Madhav Kumar Nepal, leader of the main opposition CPN-UML. "We urge all Nepalis to support the new king in his efforts to consolidate multiparty democracy and constitutional monarchy."

Rastriya Prajatantra Party president Surya Bahadur Thapa has issued a similar plea. CPN-ML leader Bam Dev Gautam and Nepal Sadbhavana Party leader Gajendra Narayan Singh, too, have urged party workers and the people to support King Gyanendra in his efforts to consolidate the democratic process.

"Nepal is facing a very crucial time in its history. We will support the new king's efforts to consolidate the constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy," said Gautam said.

As all the major political leaders have expressed their commitment to supporting the institution of constitutional monarchy, the people now expect firm steps aimed at stabilizing the democratic process.

With the nation passing through a very crucial time in its history, public attention is sharply focused on King Gyanendra's efforts to pull the nation out of its current despair. ■

DEATH OF KING BIRENDRA

End Of An Era

A monarch who ascended the throne at the age of 28, King Birendra's reign came to an end at the age of 56, having established a reputation well beyond his country as a mature leader. He ruled Nepal as an absolute monarch for 18 years and 12 as a constitutional monarch. During both roles, King Birendra successfully won the hearts of his people.

By KESHAB POUDEL

After King Birendra and his entire family members died in mysterious circumstances at the Royal Palace on Friday, June 1, the question remains: how will Nepal achieve much-needed political stability at this crucial juncture of history.

Although he was a constitutional monarch for the last 12 years, King Birendra played a very important role in ensuring a smooth transition to democracy. Many Nepalis are concerned whether the absence of King Birendra's dynamism and maturity would mean a new phase of instability.

If Nepal faced a series of political instability, this Himalayan buffer state between two big regional powers, India and China, may have to pass through a very critical situation. During his 30 years on the throne, King Birendra maintained a well-balanced relationship with both neighbors.

Whatever the circumstances surrounding Friday night's deaths in the palace, the primary challenge now is to unite the country under the new king. "Nepal has lost one of its greatest kings who always sided with the people whenever there was a crisis," said prominent historian Rishikesh Shaha. "This is a very crucial phase in the history of Nepal and the death of King Birendra is



Late King Birendra : People's monarch

a major loss to the country."

Foreign leaders and major political parties hailed the role of King Birendra in nation building and democratization. Nepal's leaders need to work toward maintaining political stability at a time when the country has lost a statesman who was always concerned about national well-being and democracy.

As a large number of youths converged on the streets of Kathmandu demanding a probe into what actually happened at the royal palace on that fateful night, the risk of violence continued. Groups of youth were already marching in the city, demanding punishment for the culprits. The local administrations of Kathmandu and Lalitpur districts imposed a curfew after violent clashes.

Violence and demonstrations will further worsen the situation, especially at a time when the country needs patience and courage. "In the name of seeking punishment, the situation may turn worse," said a political analyst. This is a time to show

patriotism and loyalty to the institution of monarchy and the nation."

When news of the deaths of King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya and other royal family members first spread on the night of June 1-2, few took it more seriously than a crude rumor. The country went into shock after the Raj Parishad made an official announcement on the afternoon of June 2. People thronged the Birendra Army Hospital in Chhauni to seek information. According to the official announcement, which the people received at 1:30pm, King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya, Prince Nirajan, Princess Shruti and four other members of the royal family were declared dead at 9:15pm at Narayanhity Royal Palace the previous night. People learned that Crown Prince Dipendra, who the Raj Parishad had declared the new king, was in a coma at the hospital.

Although King Birendra and his family members died in an accident at the Narayanhity palace, nobody knows the exact cause of the deaths that took place

during a family dinner or who killed them. Rumors spread that Crown Prince Dipendra shot his family members with an automatic rifle following a dispute over his marriage plans.

Nobody knows how and when the incident took place as almost all the eyewitnesses were either killed or seriously injured as this story was being written. If nobody was available to describe what had happened, how did the news that Crown Prince Dipendra had opened fire on his family members before shooting himself spread like wildfire?

"It is really strange to see news pointing a finger to the Crown Prince Dipendra, quoting Royal Palace sources, spread. When no person who attended the dinner was in a position to tell the facts, how could someone simply spread the news accusing a seriously injured Crown Prince?" asked a political analyst.

It appeared the incident was used to encourage political instability in the country and create panic among the people. Virtually no one was willing to believe that Crown Prince Dipendra could have taken such an extreme action.

"Crown Prince Dipendra was an intelligent and very kind person. I never saw a trace of bad temperament in him. As his teacher, I was well treated and respected," said Dr. Mangal Siddhi Manandhar, professor of geography and member of the parliament.

The common people voiced similar views. When this scribe interviewed 100 youths, 95 percent did not believe the story was credible. "We do not believe that Crown Prince Dipendra could have taken such an extreme step. No son can kill his father, mother and his whole family for the sake of a girl. I don't know why the media are playing up such unsubstantiated stories," said Shree Prasad Pandit, registrar at the Supreme Court, who came to the Narayanhity palace to pay his respects to the departed king. "The event did not take place as reported. An automatic weapon exploded accidentally," said Chiran S. Thapa, the royal palace master of ceremonies, talking to the BBC World Service Television. "I don't know the details, but I do believe that it was an accident." ■

ROYAL PALACE KILLINGS

Desperate For The Truth

People within Nepal and abroad are impatient to know the truth. But politicking by the main opposition party has not helped the matter

By BHAGIRATH YOGI

Time: 10:50 a. m., Wednesday
Place: Chhauni

Scene: Local people are offering their condolence to late King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya and other members of the slain royal family at a public place decorated by Help Line Club. Suddenly, two or three youths, with their heads shaved off, find two tyres and try to burn it in the middle of the roads. People are panicked. All the shutters are pulled down and people run toward their houses. Within a couple of minutes, a patrolling van of police arrives. Policemen put out the fire and start guarding the area.

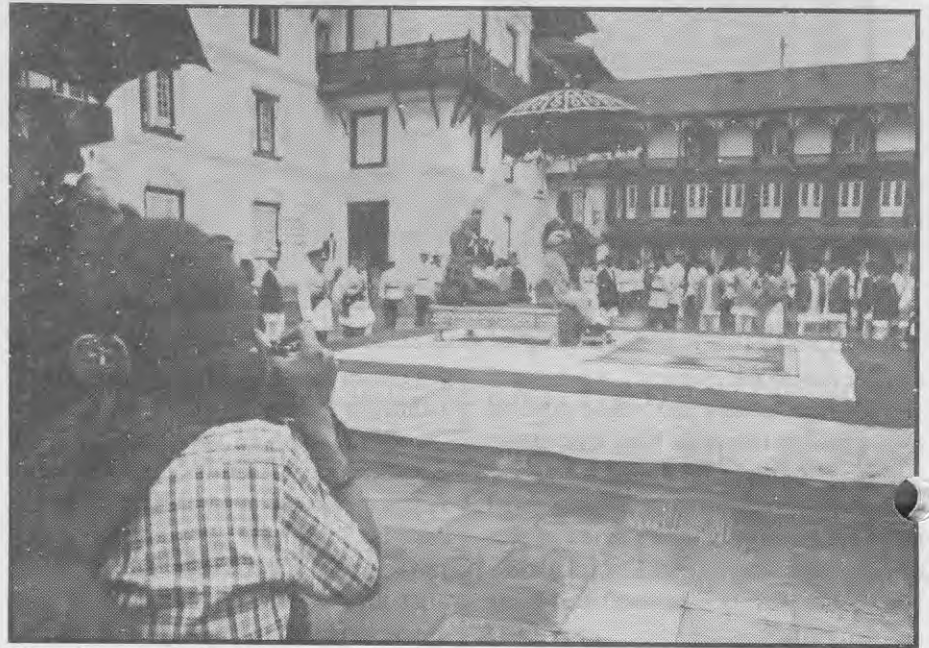
Time: 11:50 a. m., Wednesday
Place: Southern gate of Royal Palace

Scene: After two days long curfew and amid rumors of curfew being imposed upon in the city any time, hundreds of people— with flowers in their hand— tolerate the mid-day sun and queue up in a disciplined way along the pavement. They are there to pay their homage to the late royal family and put their signatures on the memorial book.

Even after six days of the fateful Friday event that claimed lives of ten royal family members of Nepal — including King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya (See: a separate story) Nepalese people are finding it hard to swallow the bitter truth that their beloved royal family members were killed in cold blood within the royal palace at a family dinner. "We want to know the truth, nothing else," said Binod Maharjan, a young man in his early twenties Wednesday morning. "We will call 'Nepal bandh' (the nationwide shutdown strike)

if there will be any attempt to cover up."

Perhaps, this is the first time that young people, not the cynical political parties, are talking about 'Nepal bandh.' "All we want is the revelation of truth as soon as possible," said Sharmila Ghimire, a housewife from Baneswore, with tears in her eyes.



King Gyanendra being crowned : Model monarch

With the announcement by newly sworn-in King Gyanendra Monday that a three-member committee has been constituted headed by Chief Justice Keshav Prasad Upadhyaya and Speaker Taranath Ranabhat and leader of the main opposition Madhav Kumar Nepal as its members, people were optimistic that truth will ultimately come out. By opening up the unfortunate incident within the royal palace for the purview of people's scrutiny and asking the high-level committee submit the report within three days, the new monarch had received applause.

But thanks to typical Nepali political style, the main opposition Unified Marxist-Leninist decided not to send its top leader to the inquiry committee. "We are ready to cooperate the committee and depute some other senior leaders of the party but not myself," said Madhav Kumar Nepal. But why? According to sources, the main opposition leader received a big rebuke by his arch rival within the party, K. P. Sharma Oli, for accepting to be part of the committee without consulting the party. Only a few days back, Madhav Nepal had allegedly put the Oli in the tight spot by asking his party to refuse the Public Account Committee's decision saying that one of the former UML ministers was involved

in the China South West Airlines scam.

Moreover, the UML that has hardly managed to five other left parties to pull together— and also succeeded in getting support of four other left parties— except splinter Marxist-Leninists— to rally around it during the three-day long nationwide general strike called by it last month, many not have wanted to look pro-monarchy, analysts say. Keeping in tradition of the Nepali politicians, the UML seemed to enjoy all the privilege offered by the state but would not come forward to discharge its responsibility at

an hour of crisis, critics said.

By Wednesday afternoon, the two-member committee was considering starting work even if the UML did not join. At the same time, there were efforts to accommodate more people in the committee so as to make it broad-based. Given the nature of the committee, it will have to chart out courses for detailed investigation. But as things stand, its job will be anything but easy.

As a common Nepali doesn't want to believe that Crown Prince Dipendra may have shot his parents and decimated his entire family before committing 'suicide' on the issue of choosing a bride for him, conspiracy theories are doing rounds round the clock. The angry people fought with the police throughout Monday pelting stones at them. The authorities then clamped curfew on Monday and Tuesday to prevent any outbreak of violence. Security officials suspected that Maoist cadres— with their heads shaven— had infiltrated the angry crowd and were responsible for arousing tension in the city.

By issuing a statement that King Birendra was a liberal monarch and that the royal palace killings was a handiwork of domestic and foreign reactionary forces, the Maoists— that are waging a violent 'people's war' for the last five years to make Nepal a people's republic— seemed to be trying to gain maximum mileage by posing Nepali people against the institution of monarchy. But the latest episode has proved once again that monarchy is a must to protect Nepal's independence and sovereignty.

The instability in Nepal was a matter of concern for both her southern and northern neighbor. Top Indian officials kept a close watch at the incidents in Nepal. The Prime Minister's office in India, in an unusual event, summoned bosses of big media houses in India and advised them to maintain restraint while covering Nepal's national tragedy. The Indian establishment is especially conscious not to arouse emotions against the new monarch— lest he would turn more closer to China, sources said.

For a common man in the road back home, loss of king was like loss of his own family member. "I was mourning the death of Their Majesties and hoping that King Dipendra would survive and tell us the truth," said a local woman, weeping profusely in front of Birendra Military hospital at Chhauni Monday morning. "We will not allow last rites of late King Dipendra performs unless we know the truth."

Looking at the popular anger and desperation, last rites of late King Dipendra were performed with state honor late Monday but without the participation of the public as a curfew had already been imposed. It was an added shock for the Nepalese, whether within

the country or abroad. Thanks to the emergence of new media like Internet and priority coverage given by media like BBC and CNN, they were tracking developments back home round the clock.

Not only in Kathmandu, emotional outbursts of people could be seen from all over the country. Even bordering Indian towns were closed after the news spread. Telephones kept on ringing all through the fateful night on Friday. It will take quite long for the people to accept the truth that their beloved royal family is no more them. And, they remain desperate and worried to know the truth— an unparalleled incident in the world history. ■

CHRONOLOGY OF PALACE DEATHS

9:15 p.m. Friday, June 1, 2001: A terrible shooting takes place in Tribhuvan Sadan of Narayanhity Royal Palace at a family gathering.

9:30 pm June 1, 2001 : Top officials including Dr. Keshar Jung Rayamajhi, the Chairman of the Royal Council, receive the news of the incident and rush to the Birendra Military Hospital in Chhauni.

That night the capital residents begin receiving calls from their relatives about the palace shooting. Foreign media begin to give the news before dawn.

Afternoon June 2, 2001 : Chairman of the Royal Council Dr. Rayamajhi proclaims Crown Prince Dipendra as the new monarch. He announces the sad demise of King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya, Prince Nirajan and Princess Sruti. Prince Gyanendra, brother of King Birendra, is proclaimed the Regent as King Dipendra remains incapacitated due to health conditions at the military hospital.

The funeral procession of King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya, Prince Nirajan, Princess Sruti and other members of royal family takes place in the evening on June 2, 2001. Hundreds of thousands of people come out to streets to bid a tearful goodbye to their beloved King and Queen, who are cremated at Aryaghat in Pashupatinath.

Monday, June 4, 2001: Chairman of the Royal Council Dr. Rayamajhi proclaims Prince Gyanendra as the new King. He announces the passing away of King Dipendra the same morning at 3:45 at the military hospital.

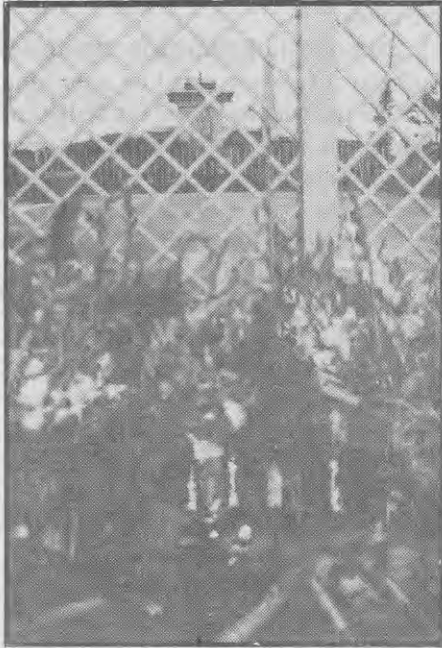
11:00 a.m., June 4, 2001 : New monarch Gyanendra is crowned amidst a traditional ceremony at the Hanumandhoka Palace.

Protests break out in different parts of the city demanding investigation to the palace killing incidents the same day. Curfew is imposed from 4 p.m. till 5 a.m. The funeral procession of King Dipendra is also taken out.

9:00 p.m. June 4, 2001 : King Gyanendra delivers a royal address to the nation. He forms a high-level committee headed by Chief Justice Keshav Prasad Upadhyaya to investigate the whole event. Speaker Taranath Ranabhat and leader of the main opposition Madhav Kumar Nepal are other members of the committee. The king directs the committee to present its findings within three days. ■

The morning of Saturday June 2, 2001 brought horrible news to the Nepalese people. The death of their beloved King, Queen and other members of royal family led to a gloomy environment in the country.

— By NISCHAL CHAPAGAIN





'We Need To Take More Concrete Steps To Strengthen Ties'

—CYRIL SIKDER

CYRIL SIKDER, Bangladesh's ambassador to Nepal, is a well-known social worker of his country, associated with various social and religious organizations. Sikder, who was also an active member of the Awami League Party, spoke to 'SPOTLIGHT'

at his office on Thursday. Excerpts:

What is the state of Nepal-Bangladesh relations?

From the very beginning, relations between Bangladesh and Nepal have been excellent and cordial. At this moment, our friendship is growing stronger. People-to-people relations, too, are cordial. In Nepal, I find everyone is motivated to consolidate the existing relationship between the two countries.

What should be done to further strengthen our ties?

On the part of Bangladesh, we have been making great efforts. Of course, Nepal is also making similar efforts. We need to take more concrete steps to strengthen and develop ties as rapidly as possible.

How do you see Bangladesh's relations with other neighboring countries?

Our relations with India have not moved ahead as in the past because of certain reasons. Because of our border skirmish with India, there are certain misunderstandings. Talks will take place between the two countries this month after which we hope things will pick up again. This is also a very important matter for Nepal. If our relations with India are sour, India will not allow Nepal and Bangladesh to use the transit point.

Why has not surface trade between Nepal and Bangladesh picked up? Do you think the infrastructure is not adequate?

The infrastructure is adequate in Bangladesh. The highways are very smooth. As you know, there is a transit point, railway road for export and import. Nepal and Bangladesh can start joint-venture industries. A five-star hotel is being established. There are other joint venture projects between the two countries. Bangladesh and Nepal are yet to sign transport modalities. A committee was constituted during the visit of Nepalese Foreign Minister Chakra Prasad Banstola to Bangladesh. After the visit, both countries issued a joint statement emphasizing the need

for enhanced trade and commerce. Bangladesh is trying to exploit the available transit facility. The Nepalese government has invited a Bangladeshi delegation to 'sort out obstacles. It would not be correct to say that infrastructure is lacking. On our side, we have the best infrastructure. When the number of Nepalese lorries and containers start to grow, we will definitely do something to upgrade the roads. The infrastructure currently available on the Bangladesh side is more than sufficient. India is very much involved in ensuring transit between Bangladesh and Nepal. If Nepal uses our Mangla port, you could reduce cost and time substantially. This is a great opportunity for Nepalese businessmen. We are much interested to welcome Nepal's business community to fully use this opportunity.

What is the trade volume between Bangladesh and Nepal?

The volume of trade between the two countries has increased quite substantially. Our exports to Nepal have now reached US\$37 million. Nepal exports to Bangladesh more than a \$1 million worth of products.

Despite the vast potential to expand bilateral trade, why haven't we been able to do so?

Nepal has vast natural resources like boulders and water. Nepal has abundant water resources to produce hydro-electricity. We have an abundance of natural gas, an estimated reserve of about 1 trillion cubic feet. These things are supplementary and complementary. If Nepal wants energy at a lower cost, it could import it from Bangladesh. Along with water, Nepal can also channelize other resources like stones, boulders and fish. Bangladesh is going to be one of the major markets for Nepalese products. Boulder and stones are exported directly to Bangladesh. In cooperation and collaboration with India, everything can be possible. Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan and India are very close neighbors. We can change the overall economic situation.

Although Nepal and Bangladesh already have a transit point, why hasn't the trade volume increased?

The trade volume between the two countries continues to increase. Of course, the pace of bilateral trade is very slow. If Nepalese businessmen take more initiative, the situation can be further im-

"The infrastructure is adequate in Bangladesh. The highways are very smooth. As you know, there is a transit point, railway road for export and import. Nepal and Bangladesh can start joint-venture industries. A five-star hotel is being established"

proved. To increase the volume of trade, it is in the hands of Nepal how to use Kakarbhitta-Phulbari road. India specifically gave this transit road to Nepal. There is an agreement between Nepal and India. We do not have any such agreements with India so our transport cannot cross the border. We have already allocated the areas in the port and it is now up to the Nepalese to decide. Your transport loaded with goods goes up to our border.

It is said that Bangladesh faces floods during the monsoon because of deforestation in Nepal. How do you look at it?

Bangladesh has not had severe floods for the last five years. Although Bangladesh had major floods in 1998, we were able to handle it very successfully. Even the international community aided our efforts. Ever since Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed came to power, our government has developed very effective mechanism to control floods. Nepal and Bangladesh have many similarities in various areas. If we have any development-oriented programs to use the natural resources, Nepal will benefit more. Nepal has many more natural resources than Bangladesh.

How do you think Bangladesh is going to be affected by the World Trade Organization?

As far as Bangladesh is concerned, we are a member of the WTO. My government's view is that we want more benefits for the developing countries. Nepal will soon become a member of the WTO. Mobility of labor, capital and joint ventures are required as in the case of the European Union and Southeast Asian countries.

Bangladesh and Nepal had taken the initiative in the establishment of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The setback it has received in the last two years has been very detrimental to the whole region. How in your opinion can such unhappy trends be averted in the future?

As an ambassador of Bangladesh, I can say economic diplomacy is very much part of the SAARC process. International diplomacy is also involved. Therefore, they have to go together. SAARC countries cannot forget their international connections. As for the two-year gap in the summit, the two big countries of the region, India and Pakistan, have some problems. Initially, it is a political problem. The SAARC process is not progressing because of political complications. There are conflicts between India and Pakistan on many political issues.

Bangladesh and Nepal are facing similar problems of cross-border infringements from India. What steps is Bangladesh taking to safeguard its international border?



My host country does not have border infringements, but for Bangladesh, there may be border skirmishes. It naturally happens as Bangladesh and India was part of the one country. Since partition when we were part of Pakistan, the border problem was there. Bangladesh was born on March 25, 1971. After the independence of Bangladesh, this thing is happening often. The border was not demarcated properly. Our father of the nation Sheikh Mujibur Rehman and Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi signed an agreement in 1974 and most of the things were buried in the past. Only a small portion of the border is demarcated. Border problems are being solved at high-level meetings between the two countries. In order to solve the border problems, we will have another meeting this month. After the meeting, we would be able to sort out our problems.

The nuclear arms race in South Asia has become a cause of great concern for smaller nations of the region. What do you think the smaller nations of South Asia should do to minimize the danger?

It is a very sensitive matter. Bangladesh has been carefully observing this matter. Bangladesh is not in favor of increasing nuclear armaments. We have also signed nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Bangladesh is committed to disarmament and world peace.

India's endorsement of National Missile Defence system advocated by US President George W. Bush is very ominous for South Asia. What should the smaller nations do to counteract such developments?

We are watching the situation and we have not decided on a course of action yet. We are always for world peace.

Do you think the SAARC summit will take place this year?

The SAARC summit will take place in 2001. I am very optimistic about this. Things are moving in that direction. ■

"Border problems are being solved at high-level meetings between the two countries. In order to solve the border problems, we will have another meeting this month. After the meeting, we would be able to sort out our problems."

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

Unmet Challenges

Even after making many efforts, the environment of the Kathmandu valley is yet to improve

By A CORRESPONDENT

Despite the banning of smoke-belching Vikram tempos and setting strict emission standards, the air quality of Kathmandu valley is yet to improve.

According to a recent study, the level of air pollution rises above the standard set by the World Health Organization. Carbon dioxide and the level of particles in the air is much higher in Kathmandu. In certain areas like Chabahil, Putalisadak and Kalimati, it is significantly beyond acceptable levels.

Over the last five years, the government has introduced many mechanisms to contain the level of pollution. The government also restricted vehicles without green stickers — which certify compliance with emission standards — from entering key city areas.

As the level of air pollution increases, the number of people suffering from pneumonia and other respiratory diseases in the Kathmandu has grown. Studies conducted by various organizations also show that the number of patients visiting hospitals continue to rise, particularly children who are prone to pneumonia.

A study conducted by the Save the Environment Foundation a few years ago deteriorating situation in Kathmandu.

Although smoke-belching vehicles were thrown out of Kathmandu valley, air pollution continues to rise.

As other polluting vehicles were thrown out of Kathmandu valley, the government has allowed the import of vehicles that run on gas, which continues to pollute the street of Kathmandu valley.

“The government will set certain standards to control air pollution in Kathmandu valley,” said a senior official at the Ministry of Population and Environment.

In the last two years, the number of

vehicles continue to increase in the valley, reaching more than 200,000. The congested roads of the valley are not able to cope increasing number of vehicles.

Environmentalists and other non-governmental organizations lodged a strong protest demanding restrictions on importing vehicles in Kathmandu, but no one has paid any attention to it.

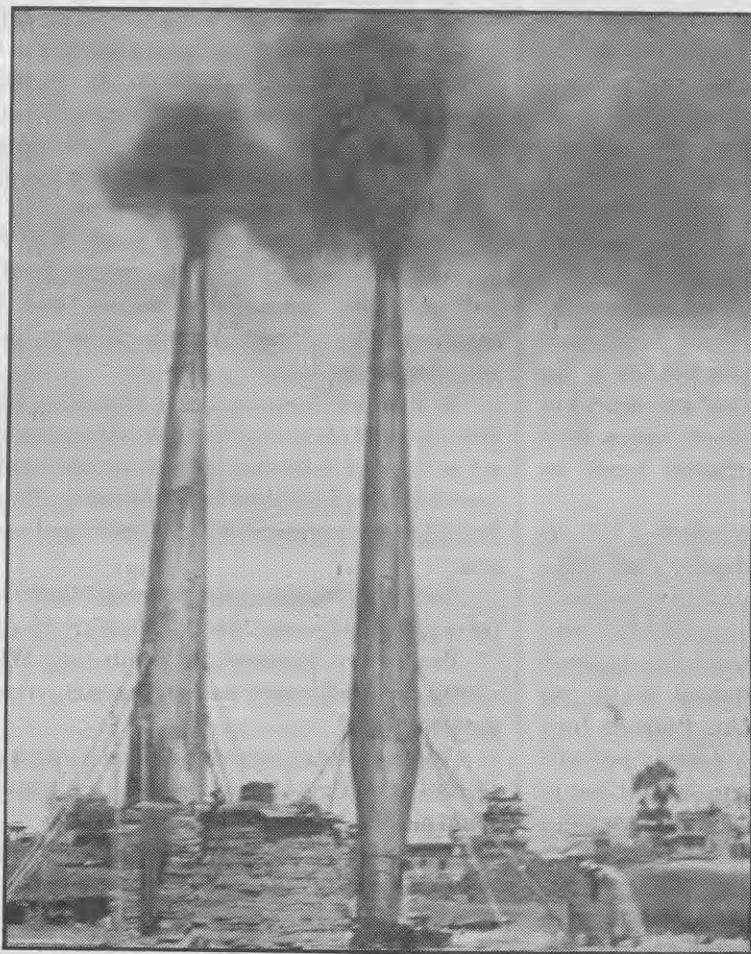
The pressure against growing pollution problems continue to rise as citizens groups along with other organizations have been launching various kinds of programs to reduce the pollution.

Kathmandu is facing number of pollution problems, including garbage accumulation and decline in the quality of air. The rivers of Kathmandu have now turned into a sewer. Garbage collection and composting is major problem faced by the Kathmandu valley.

Because of lack of permanent landfill site, garbage crisis continues to appear in the valley. Lack of awareness and execution of environment laws are another problems facing the country.

“We can reduce the level of air pollution in Kathmandu valley if we taken certain actions,” said Chanda Rana, president of Save the Environment Foundation. “Our organization has been making every efforts to take initiative.”

Other non-governmental organizations are also busy to launch the programs to generate awareness among the population. There are more than 100 organizations have been working in the areas of environment. As Kathmandu valley needs a certain programs to reduce the level of air pollution, sooner it comes down better for the future of the valley. What the government has to do is to initiate tangible work to control it. ■



Brick-kilns : Smoke in the air

NATION IN MOURNING

People At Loss

Hundreds of thousands of Nepalese males shave their head to show their deep respect to late king

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

The terrible tragedy that hit the royal family on June 1, 2001, has left the Nepalese people in a state of deep mourning.

None of the 22 million Nepalese might have thought in their wildest nightmares that a tragedy of such calamatic proportions could hit their beloved monarch and the country.

people have been involved in a mass shaving of their head to show their deep respect to the late king.

In Hindu tradition, close male relatives, including the sons, have to shave their head if a father dies in a family.

"The king was the father of our nation. He was the symbol of national unity," said Prabha Poudel, a 26-year-old man from Imadole, giving reasons why he shaved his head.

"This is our duty. Since he was our

death." "Our King and Our Nation are Dearer To Us Than Our Lives" read most of the placards.

Cutting across ethnic and political lines, thousands of youths showed their respect to the king in unison. Whether they be Brahmin or Newar, Congress or communists, all have expressed their agony in true spirit of their nationalism. There is a popular saying "Raja Sabka Sajha" which means king is for everyone.

A government notice has asked all the male government employees to undergo mundan (shaving of head) to mourn the king's death. Including the personnel from military and police, there would be at least 200,000 male employees.

Apart from the government employees, many more general public have tonsured their heads. "Though it is a sad moment, it is our duty to shave the heads of mourning people," said Shiva Ratna Thakur, a 16-year-old barber from Janakpur, who was busy cutting hair at the sidewalk of Chabahil in the aftermath of the Friday's tragedy.

Dozens of clubs at different parts of the country organized a free shaving programs to help the people. Not only the elderly people, even the youth have tonsured their heads. "This is a time of great loss. The Nepalese youth revered their king and now they are in the forefront in paying respect to him," said Poudel.

"King Birendra was not merely a king. He was the people's king. He was the symbol of national unity and identity. Nepalese have to bear terrible loss by his

death," said Keshar Jung Rayamajhi.

According to Hindu tradition, the king is regarded as the incarnation of Lord Vishnu. He is considered to be living God. "The king is the father of the country. He is the guardian of the people," said Narayan Bahadur Shrestha, a 49-year-old man from Mahankal. ■



Shaving the head : Heart-felt respect

"After an urgent call came to my residence at around 9:30 pm, I went to the military hospital at Chhauni. I wept bitterly when I saw King and Queen lying dead," said Keshar Jung Rayamajhi, chairman of the Raj Parishad. "This is the greatest tragedy in the history of Nepal."

Shocked, dazed and confused, the

king, we must respect him," said Subash Bhandari, another young man with his head shaven.

Thousands of people thronged at different barber shops ever since the terrible news broke out. Mostly the people shaved on Sunday and Monday. The youth even came out on streets spontaneously to mourn their beloved monarch's

INTERNET

Ugly Face

Nepali beauties are victims of on-line exploitation

BY AKSHAY SHARMA

Much of Nepalese society may still regard discussions on sex and related topics in public as taboo. With access to the Internet growing in Kathmandu and other urban centers, however, the walls are gradually coming down. In the process, unfortunately, some people — such as the participants of a recent beauty contest — are becoming victims of on-line sexual exploitation. What makes matters worse is that this is often happening without their knowledge.

A publication recently carried an article on Nepali pornography available on the Internet. "The article was on the last page of the weekly tabloid, which is an established and responsible source of news on Nepal," says Dinesh Shrestha of Gangabu. "It featured news about a girl I know very well," he adds.

One particular feature of the story disturbed many people. "It is disgusting that the publication decided to publish the URL of the Internet site along with the story," says Bipin Jangam, an Internet whiz. Sudarshan, a net "junkie" — an active member of the emerging tribe that is addicted to the World Wide Web — says: "The way in which these women were

presented was highly deplorable. I tried tracing that site but was unable to locate the designer."

This case contains enough material to trigger a vigorous debate on the larger issue of beauty contests, pitting proponents and opponents in a culture war. "Beauty contests are still presented in a

way which puts a question mark on the contests as well as the newspaper that flashed its URL suddenly to the public. The photographs of the models were published in the same publication earlier this



Youth using internet : For info-tainment

year," says one Internet enthusiast.

Organizers, on the other hand, strenuously reject efforts to undermine beauty contests just because of the foul actions of a third party. So who bears the responsibility for this demeaning form of exploitation? Obviously whoever owns the site. But people who run such sites are likened to "chameleons", who rapidly change col-

ors in order to evade detection.

This particular site, which is under the control of Indian webmasters, recorded fewer than 1,000 visitors in October. That number crossed 9,000 in three months and reached about 10,000 within two days after the story appeared, according to the publishers.

The Internet site's main page suggests that if there is any problem with anyone's photo on the site, it would be removed as soon as possible. But you have to send them an e-mail first.

"The responsible editorial team of the publication has done a serious mistake

by publishing the URL of such a site. The photographs of the models posted on the site seem to be cut out from the magazines," says another Internet whiz, requesting anonymity.

This episode raises other serious questions. Are our models sufficiently aware of their rights? Admittedly, these contestants did not take part in the contest to be cheated and misrepresented. Moreover, are beauty pageants actually conducted in the unclothed setting some of these pictures seem to suggest?

"They were cheated badly because they are being misrepresented. They may have their own opinions about the site and they have the right to seek punishment for those responsible for exploiting them," says Bipin.

"Nobody should feel a sense of achievement in having found such a site," says another concerned individual. "Such acts degrade our whole society," he adds.

Some steps were taken to delete the photographs from the site after complaints of misrepresentation.

The enduring question raised by this episode remains: was the publication justified in giving publicity to the site by publishing the URL.

It would have been a different matter if they had not published the URL, argues a lawyer. Media-ethics experts might want to answer the question from a community-standards yardstick. ■

By M.S.KHOKNA



TRANSITION

APPOINTED: Ministers **Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat, Chakra Bastola**, former ministers **Dr. Ram Baran Yadav, K.B. Gurung, Laxman Ghimire, Mrs. Leela Koirala, Binay Dhoj Chand** and **Gopal Raj Pahadi** as central working committee members of the Nepali Congress, by Prime Minister and party president **Girija Prasad Koirala**. He has re-appointed **Sushil Koirala** as general secretary and **Narahari**

Acharya as spokesperson.

BEREAVED: Finance Secretary **Dr. Bimal Koirala**, of his father **Thir Prasad Koirala**. The senior Koirala died of cancer at the age of 73 in **Biratnagar**.

CONSTITUTED: A high level committee headed by Chief Justice **Keshav Prasad Upadhyaya** and with Speaker **Taranath Ranabhat** and leader of the main opposition **Madhav Kumar Nepal** as members, by **His Majesty King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah**

Dev, to investigate the killings at the palace on June 1, 2001, which left **His Majesty King Birendra, Her Majesty Queen Aishwarya, Crown Prince Dipendra, Prince Nirajan, Princess Sruti** and other members of the royal family dead.

ANNOUNCED: The 13-day state mourning by the Home Ministry, on the sad demise of **His Majesty King Birendra** on June 1.

The 13-day state mourning by the Home Ministry, on the sad demise of **His Majesty King**

Dipendra on June 5.

CLOSURE ANNOUNCED: The 5-day closing down of all government offices and Nepalese diplomatic missions abroad, by the Home Ministry, on the sad demise of **His Majesty King Birendra** on June 1.

The 5-day closing down of all government offices and Nepalese diplomatic missions abroad, by the Home Ministry, on the sad demise of **His Majesty King Dipendra** on June 5. ■

BOOK

Transformation Tool

Small and medium enterprises can play a very important role in Nepal's development process

By A CORRESPONDENT

The history of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) is very old in Nepal.

They have been considered the backbone of the country's economy. In the cities of Kathmandu valley, such enterprises have played a dominant role in the context of the local economy. In the 1960s, the state, donors and planners provided greater focus to the large business houses, including conglomerates and state-owned enterprises as the engine of growth.

For decades, SMEs were seen as a vital part of the traditional economy, with low levels of investment and labor productivity, giving policy makers little reason to worry about how the advantages prefaced to large firms might actually serve to the disadvantage of everybody else.

Although the role of small- and medium-scale industry was ignored for many years, there is a new focus on their role in the broader process of economic development. Once considered a relatively unimportant sector of the economy, government policy makers and international donors increasingly view SMEs as a critical sector for generating economic growth.

At a time when there is considerable emphasis on uplifting the national economy, planners and policy makers are making efforts to revitalize the small and medium enterprises in the context of development in Nepal.

A small and least developed country like Nepal needs a long-term strategy and planning to develop SMEs. While the government has always stressed the need for developing such enterprises, very little effort has been made.

"In Nepal, most observers describe the policies and regulations on the books as

generally very good and very business friendly. The implementation of those laws and rules, however, is uneven and unpredictable," says Dr. Franck S. Wiebe, chief

Small and Medium Enterprise Development in Nepal

Edited by Dr. Bishwa Keshar Maskey

*Published by Center for Development
and Governance*

*Price: Rs.600 (hard cover),
Rs.400 (soft cover)*

economist at the Asia Foundation.

There is little dispute on the vital role SMEs play in the context of national development. "In many developing countries, SMEs have been playing a crucial role in social and economic transformation.

"Because of labor intensification, ecological sensitivity, relative low cost and local adaptability, SMEs have been serving as a transit point for industrialization and modernization of the society. In that sense, SMEs have also helped in making a paradigm shift from traditional, archaic and feudal economy to a modernized one."

SMEs are one of the major employers outside agriculture and serve as the prime mover of economic dynamism. Ironically, this sector has not attracted much policy priority from the government. Despite its importance in the national

economy, SMEs have not received a reasonable level of investment from the Nepalese financial institutions nor from foreign direct investors. They have not received encouragement to increase efficiency and competitiveness. As a consequence, the SMEs have become very vulnerable to foreign competition in terms of goods and services.

This book compiles articles of leading Nepalese economists, including Dr. Bishwa Maskey's "Introduction of Small and medium Enterprise in Nepal Retrospection and Prospective. Dr. Yuba Raj Khatiwada's "Small and Medium Enterprises Development In Nepal" is another interesting article. Dr. Bishwambher Pyakuryal's "Strategy for SME Development Policy and Legal Reforms" and Dr. Bhuwan Bajra Bajracharya's "Poverty Alleviation through SME Development" are other important articles.

The book includes 19 articles related to SMEs. As all the articles have been written by prominent economists and experts, they help to explore the possibilities of SMES and identify the challenges Nepal faces in harnessing them for development. ■

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Now In Town

BOOK

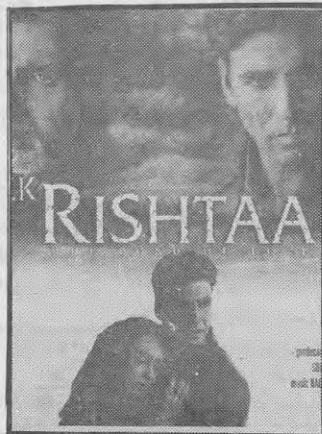
- The Anthropology of Buddhist and Hinduism Webexian Themes**
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S.K. Shrestha/2001 Rs. 475.00

(Source : Himalayan Book Center, Bagh Bazar, Kathmandu, Ph : 242085)

Video (English)

- Mummy Return
- One Night MC. Cool's
- Replicant
- Bridget Jone's Diary
- Driven
- Secret
- It Isn't So
- Tom Cats
- Cast Away
- Freddy Got Fingered



Hindi

- Ek Rishtaa
- Albela
- Jodi No. 1
- Pyar Tune Kya Kiya
- Rahul
- Kasoor
- Daman
- Chori Chori Chupke Chupke
- Jlghan
- One 2 Ka 4

(Source : Super Star Video, New Road)



"Do not yearn for physical joy and, by so doing, discard the more permanent joy of inner calm and contentment."

- SATHYA SAI BABA



GARFIELD



MOMMA



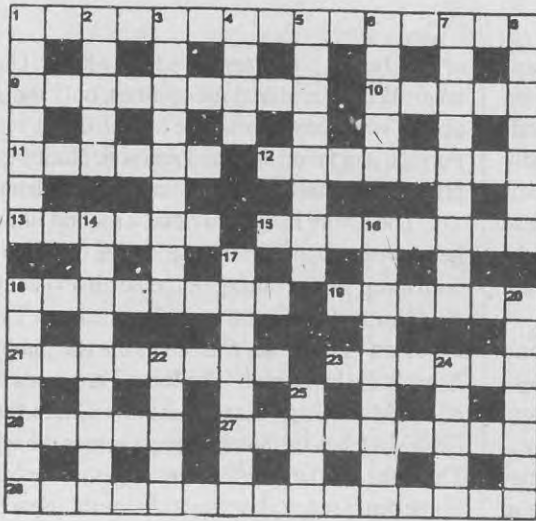
MIXED MEDIA



ERNIE



CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1. Setting of limits by Conservative stirred minor critics up (15)
9. Translation of right version of text about Newton (9)
10. A state in America rebuffed one in India (5)
11. Of variable quality — isn't that odd? (6)
12. Showed embarrassment when put in the shade (8)
13. The party to beat? (6)
15. Delightful quarter in port, extremely lively (8)
18. Daughter, fishing, is kept in suspense (8)
19. Unduly long exposition of singular doctrine (6)
21. Disinclination to maintain off-spring one accepted (8)
23. Fare from Venezuela's capital is also included (6)
26. For part of flight, a plane taking off, for example? (5)
27. Send abroad for trial run-with new diet (9)
28. Devilish mate — one with help assembled to seize stricken ship (15)

DOWN

1. Type of training electrician puts in (7)
2. Called direction shown by compass (5)
3. Runs a live broadcast worldwide (9)
4. Cutting a garment (4)
5. Rehearses extras? (4,4)
6. Leading artist goes to party in foreign gallery (5)
7. Precaution-taken in case run goes badly (9)
8. Arrange when to marry — beginning of March for David, say (4,3)
14. They may hoist the flag, though not the winenrs (7-2)
16. Insure against illness in short holiday at Nice, perhaps (9)
17. Lazy daughter giving way to son that's cheeky (8)
18. Plan to set up assistance having little weight (7)
20. Record tailless bird in spot (7)
22. Raise moveable shelter for travellers out East (5)
24. Racket created by hotter going about one (5)
25. Knock out plug (4)

Down: 1. Circuit 2. Range 3. Universal 4. Slip 5. Runs over 6. Prado 7. Insurance 8. Name day 14. Runners-up 16. Vaccinate 17. Insolent 18. Diagram 20. Discern 22. Scrat 24. Noise 25. Stop 28. Mephistophelean

Across: 1. Circumscription 9. Rendition 10. Assam 11. Uneven 12. Coloured 13. Thrash 15. Heavenly 18. Dangling 19. Screed 21. Aversion 23. Vands 26. Riser 27. Extradite

SOLUTION

BRIDGE

3-17

NORTH

♠ Q 8 7 2
♥ Q J 7 6
♦ K 7
♣ Q 6 3

WEST **EAST**

♠ 4 ♠ J 5
♥ 5 4 ♥ A K 10 9 8
♦ A Q J 10 9 6 ♦ 8 5 4 2
♣ J 10 9 2 ♣ 7 4

SOUTH

♠ A K 10 9 6 3
♥ 3 2
♦ 3
♣ A K 8 5

Vulnerable: North-South
Dealer: South

The bidding:

South	West	North	East
1 ♠	3 ♦*	3 ♠	5 ♦
5 ♠	All pass		

*Pre-emptive

Opening lead: Diamond ace

"I wonder that a soothsayer doesn't laugh whenever he sees another soothsayer."

— Cicero

"I pushed them high enough," claimed East. "Too bad we didn't beat them. I get two heart tricks if you shift to hearts at trick two."

"Good analysis," replied West. Unfortunately, since I didn't have my crystal ball with me, I could have used some help from you."

In a duplicate game, South correctly reasoned he would earn a poor score if he doubled five diamonds. So he took the push and bid five spades, hoping he could make it.

West led his diamond ace and shifted to his club jack after East followed with a tepid diamond four. South won gratefully, drew trumps, and discarded a heart on dummy's king. Then he claimed his game, conceding only one heart trick.

East's diamond four at trick one was a nothing-play, since his jump to five diamonds strongly suggested he had four diamonds, East had an unambiguous suit-preference signal available.

East should have dropped his diamond eight under West's ace. With the diamond king in dummy, it would be clear that East's eight did not ask for a diamond continuation. Therefore, East's highest diamond could only be an unmistakable request for a shift to the higher-ranking side suit — hearts.

How else might have East helped West? Over three spades, East could have bid four hearts. He had nothing to lose by telling West of his side strength on the way to five diamonds.

Nepal: Birth Against Improbable Odds

The Nepalese nation was born against improbable odds. In the most difficult terrain imaginable, the Nepalese achieved unity and then withstood the British threat to rule all South Asia. Today, landlocked and hedged in by great powers, the Nepalese still proudly assert their independence in the family of nations. At home, their chief concern is development. Internationally, though Nepalese troops are everywhere respected, the Nepalese stand for nonalignment and peace. In fact, few have attained the peace the Nepalese enjoy.

[Visitors to Nepal sometime interpret this to mean there is no violence in Nepal and are shocked to find that individual Nepalese can be quite aggressive. As a nation, however, the Nepalese are peaceful, their respect for human life and values deep and abiding. There is violence in Nepal today, concentrated mostly in the cities or near them. Political instability has allowed young Nepalese to vent their resentment against a social system that seems to exclude them from the benefits they see as their right and their frustration at the slow pace of development. It is worrying because the level of violence has escalated over the last thirty years. Despite this violence, the statement stands. Few countries enjoy the level of peace that Nepalese enjoy.]

The story of Nepal's growth as a nation spans the years from 1744 to 1951. The locale is a giant slice of the Himalayas measuring five hundred miles from east to west and ranging from 100 to 150 miles north to south. This land in which the Nepalese have built their nation is a rugged rectangle, tip-tilted slightly to the northwest and balanced precariously between the great plateau of Central Asian and the Indian subcontinent.

Beautiful beyond belief, Nepal is the joy of mountaineer, wanderer and trekker alike. The land enfolds almost every type of terrain and climate known to man. It sweeps up in great natural steps from the subtropical lowlands to icy peaks that crown the roof of the world. Yet all is not scenic beauty. The mountains and hills that make up eighty-four percent of Nepal's surface area almost defy unity, and their stony soils yield crops grudgingly. The story of the Nepal's growth as a nation describes the Nepalese struggle to overcome the burdens the mountains have placed on them. Since the sweep and shape of the land have molded Nepal and the Nepalese we must consider these mountains carefully.

The mountains of Nepal are the youngest of the earth's great fold mountains. They were formed by the steady northward pressure of the Indian subcontinent against the central Asian plateau. Viewed from the air they seem an endless maze of ridges and peaks, without any discernible pattern other than the steady build-up from the lower ridges in the south to the high Himalaya in the north. There is a pattern, however, and that pattern is the beginning of our story.

Moving northward from the Nepal-India border, we see first a continuation of the Gangetic plain, called the Nepal Tarai. The Tarai is twenty to thirty miles in width and stretches east to west along most of Nepal's southern border.

In times past, the Tarai was heavily forested and known to local people as the home of a virulent strain of malaria, called Aul fever,

or simply Aul. Villagers feared it as a killer. Until modern pesticides controlled the malarial mosquitoes, only the Tharus, an aboriginal people who seemed immune to Aul, dwelt year-round in the Tarai. Forests, Aul fever, and the Tarai soil, glutinous during the monsoon protected the hills against encroachment from the south.

The Chure range provided a second line of defense. Rising to heights of two to four thousand feet, the Chure are hogback ridges with steep slopes falling to the north and south.

North of the Chure range lies the Inner Tarai. This strip of land, about ten miles wide, resembles the flat plains of the Tarai proper. Its soils are less fertile. The Inner Tarai ends with the steep ascents of the Mahabharat Lekh. Like the Chure range, the Mahabharat Lekh stretches from east to west across the whole length of Nepal. There the similarity ends. The ridges of the Mahabharat are higher. Some peaks reach elevations of nine thousand feet, but, as a rule, the general elevation along the main axis is lower and remarkably regular. North of the Mahabharat Lekh lies a topographic depression stretching perhaps fifty miles north to south. To the Nepalese and to trekkers, the ridges that divide this depression are the Hills, the heartland of Nepal. The density of population is high and farming is the way of life. Not all the hills can be cultivated, but the broader river valleys called chahar, are intensively farmed and the hillsides are terraced higher than one would believe possible or practical. The fertility of the valleys and the scarcity of good farm land dictated living pattern. The valleys were farmed. Homes were on the ridge.

The villages we see sitting astride the ridges, with terraced fields reaching down the slope to the valley below, tell a story. As the population grew, the valley bottoms no longer produced enough food. Terraces were cut into the hillsides to create new fields. Then more terraces, and more, until irrigation was no longer possible. On these higher, drier terraces, millet and eventually maize became major crops, both coarser than rice and harder to digest, but still foods to feed a family to survive.

The constant search for farmland has led Nepal to near disaster. When Nepal's population was five million, the pressure on the land was not serious. Traditional ways were adequate. The annual cycle of religious festivals and Jatras, marriages and even death brought people together to eat and drink, to sing and dance, and to enjoy the fruits of their labors. They had little, but it was enough. As the population grew, the pressure on the land intensified. New fields had to be found, and forests were steadily cut back to secure them.

The population is now over 18 million. In many places, water can hardly be found in the dry months of February and March. In these months, women and girls make the long trek down the mountain to a stream and climb slowly back, water-jars on hip or carried on their backs, up and up and up, day in day out. Always there has been a struggle to survive on the land, and always the land dictated the terms of survival. ■

(Excerpts from the book "Nepal: Growth of a Nation" by Ludwig F. Stiller, S.J.)

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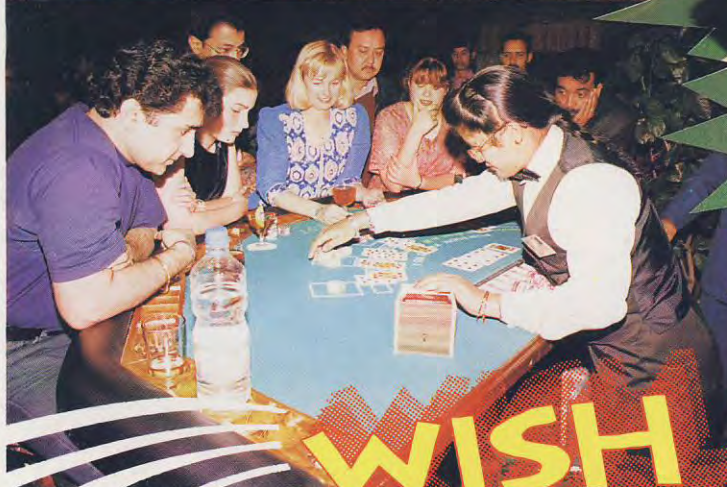
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