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The National Newsmagazine

SPOTLIGHT

Jan. 27 - Feb 02, 2006



The Question of

Political Commitment

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COVER STORY : Politics of Contradictions

Political forces have still not been able to reconcile and find a meeting point to end the deadlock

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GARMENT: Dream Weavers

After the phase out of quota, Nepal was hardest hit as its garment exports plummeted, but the entrepreneurs still have hopes to revive

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INTERVIEW: Rabindra Nath Sharma

The shrewd political analyst and senior leader of RPP (Thapa), Sharma calls on the King and NC president to find a way out of the political crisis through talks

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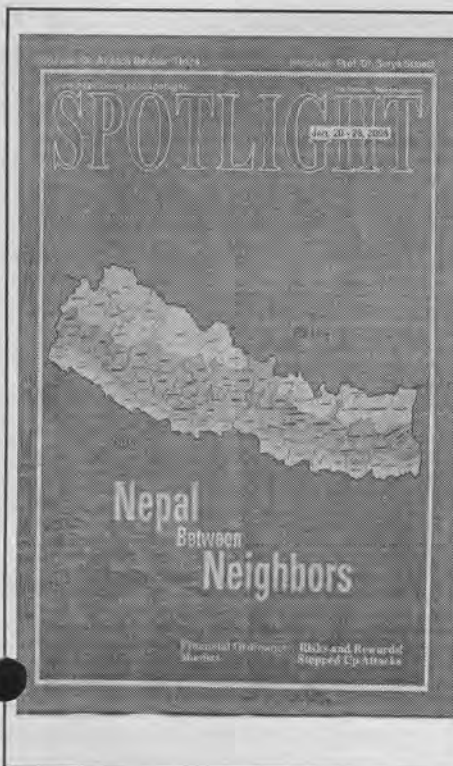
Political deadlock in Nepal is a tragic-comedy as political actors leading different organizations are issuing ridiculous statements diluting their own agenda. At a time when all are concerned about how to get rid of current political quagmire, the leaders' statements further complicate the situation. In two recent statements, Nepali Congress leader Girija Prasad Koirala declared that there will be no deal with the King and another leader of Unified Marxists and Leninists Madhav Kumar Nepal announced that he would not conduct any dialogue with the King. Personally, they may have ego issues with the King, but the King is a major political force of Nepal. If they don't want any dialogue with the King, what other role do they expect the King to play to get rid of political quagmire? Only a meaningful dialogue with the King could initiate the process of bringing the constitution back to right track, and empowering sovereign people to elect their representatives. If these prominent parties are in no mood for dialogue and compromise with the King, how will they fulfill these basic needs of people?

Among many players active in politics of Nepal today, there are two major political parties - which have emerged as prominent forces - Nepali Congress, a liberal democratic party and the Unified Marxist and Leninist. If these parties completely ignore any deal with the King, who is going to solve the problem? When these parties can agree to involve foreign elements like the United Nations in Nepal's affair, what hinders them from opening negotiations with the King? The nation has the potentiality to survive yet but the process of democracy needs all round support and cooperation. Unfortunately, that is what we are missing. With utmost seriousness and without smile, whenever Madhav Kumar Nepal speaks to the press about his agenda, he ridicules his own stand. He urges the King to revive the parliament through which they can establish republican state. One is in a dilemma. These kinds of statements are warning to the King not to revive parliament. Had these come just as hearsays, it could have been cast aside lightly. Unfortunately, people are listening to such statements from the leaders of major political parties. Whether political debate in Nepal is issue-based or ego-based? Everybody says that Nepal is in great political crisis and a lot of matters come out everyday through the political platforms or through media or through vocal citizenry. But they lack in figuring out the issues involved. What comes out in the prominence is the ego and eccentricity of persons involved in the debate.

Such egoist persons are not only on the opposition side but also on the side of the King. These persons find themselves safe and secure in their position of power as long as they can keep the political forces away from the politics of dialogue and compromise. Nobody may be happier than the first vice chairman Dr. Tulsi Giri, Home Minister Kamal Thapa and other ministers as long as Koirala and Nepal continue to speak in such language. First vice chairman Dr. Giri has the genesis of paraphrasing political jargons and rhetoric to justify his presence forever. One of such recent paraphrase is that there could not be duality in sovereignty- either the power should be with the King or the people. He has left that matter for the King to choose. Yes, liberal democratic party Nepali Congress has entered into an alliance with the Communists but there is unseen alliance of hardliners in power also. This is how both are work to bring the same result - making the regime tough and unpopular even as the political forces capable of leading the nation through ballot are sidelined. A wise man has said once that "God save me from my friends, I am capable of dealing with my enemies." Now Nepalese people have to ask the God to save them from their own mischievous politicians. We are capable of dealing with the rest of the world. If Nepalese are left alone to decide their own fate, they can do it. In a normal circumstance, politicians of Nepal are as capable as politicians of neighboring countries in South Asia.

Nepal's two past leaders B. P. Koirala and late King Birendra had shown the way out on how to get rid of political crisis and save the nation. They first identified patriotism as a common meeting point and solved the political crisis. Fourteen years after the return of B.P. Koirala from exile, late King Birendra, in 1990, had made a great decision and saved the nation. This can still be done - not through hatred and political rhetoric but through genuine commitments towards the nation.

Keshab
Keshab Poudel
Managing Editor



Analytical Story

I read the article about Nepal's foreign policy and found it very analytical "NEPAL: Between Two Neighbors" (SPOTLIGHT January 20). I agree with your arguments that geographically Nepal is placed at a very odd position. You have convincingly described its compulsion to maintain harmonious, but balanced relations with both its neighbors China and India. I hope the foreign policy makers and implementers as well as the rulers are well aware of this fact. As the prosperity and tranquility of Nepal depends on its ability to maintain proper relations with these two military powers, the concerned agencies and people, I hope, will pay heed to these arguments.

Fanindra Dhungana
Nepaltar

Learn From Previous Rulers

The cover story about Nepal's relations with its neighbor was well written "NEPAL: Between Two Neighbors" (SPOTLIGHT January 20). It aptly pointed out the need for Nepal to maintain a balanced relation between the two giant countries bordering it. Nepal has survived as an independent country since the past centuries only because the rulers of the past were clever enough to judge the geo-political location of the country and act accordingly. Whether it may be King Anshu Verma who married off his daughter Bhrikuti the erstwhile Tibetan King Tshrong Chang Gampo while maintaining a cordial relation with the erstwhile Indian King Harsha Bardan, or King Prithvi Narayan Shah who could see Nepal as a yam between two boulders, the rulers have been very careful not to ignore one side while developing relations with the other. The present rulers should learn from their predecessors and maintain cordial but balanced relations with both the countries in order to save the sovereignty of Nepalese people.

Gokarna Bhatta
Lainchaur

Maintain Balanced Relations

You have rightly pointed out that Nepal's prosperity and tranquility lies in its ability to maintain proper relations with its two neighbors – China and India "NEPAL: Between Two Neighbors" (SPOTLIGHT January 20). As these are the only countries that share border with Nepal, Nepal has no options than to maintain harmonious relations with them. Since, China and India, too, share a long borderline and have a couple of unsettled differences, both the countries have special interest in the political and security situation. Either they want to use Nepal to their benefit or they are alert not to let the other country take advantage from Nepal against itself. So, they are keeping a close watch on the political scenario of Nepal. At this situation, Nepal should also be alert so as to maintain a very balanced relation with both the countries. A closer relation with one can result in a rift with the other, thereby inviting possible risks of intervention in our internal affairs. The most potent tool for defense as well as prosperity is to use proper foreign policy that so that we can take advantage from both the countries.

Netra Khanal
Dallu

Insightful Interview

The interview with Dr. Surya Subedi was very insightful "Peaceful Political Coexistence Is The Bedrock Of Nation" (SPOTLIGHT January 20). As he said, at times when there is a crisis in the country, all the political forces should agree on matters of national interest. But in Nepal the situation is quite to the contrary. Instead of coming to a common point, the political forces show conspicuous difference even in the fundamental issues. At these hours of crisis, the political leaders, Maoists, and the monarch all should keep national interest above their own agendas. Their identity survives only if the nation's sovereignty survives.

Kiran Shrestha
Shova Bhagawati

Praiseworthy Coverage

I read the interview with Dr. Surya Subedi and learned many things about the current political situation of the country. "Peaceful Political Coexistence Is The Bedrock Of Nation" (SPOTLIGHT January 20). The interview was very analytical and provided an overview of Nepal's current situation. Interviews with such scholars who keep a close watch on the developments of the country and speak from their hearts without inclining towards any group is helpful for students and professional like us who stay abroad. I hope to see similar coverage in Spotlight in the coming days, too.

Bidhan Jha
Sydney, Australia (Via Email)

Treat The Maoists Politically

Apropos your story on security I would like to express my opinion "MAOIST ATTACK: Deepening Turmoil" (SPOTLIGHT January 20). The government should understand that the Maoist is a political force and only a political negotiation can resolve the problem. No matter how tight the security situation may be, the insurgency will not end unless the roots of the problem are addressed. And the roots of the insurgency are of political nature.

Gopal Shrestha
Ason

Koirala Released From House Arrest

The government has released three leaders including Nepali Congress (NC) president Girija Prasad Koirala, Nepal Workers and Peasants Party (NWPP) president Narayan Man Bijukchhe and Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) leader K.P. Sharma Oli from house arrest on Sunday (Jan 22) evening. They had been put under house arrest ahead of planned demonstration by the seven party alliance in Kathmandu on January 20. Likewise, Pradeep Nepal, spokesperson of the UML, too, has been released from government custody. Rights activists had called for his early release due to his poor health. National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has asked for full medical service and proper care for all those arrested by the government. *Leading dailies report.*

Clash In Faparbari

A major clash ensued between the Maoists and the security forces at Faparbari near the Makwanpur-Sindhuli border on Saturday (Jan 21) night. Dozens have been reported killed. According to state-owned Nepal Television, security forces recovered 17 dead bodies of the Maoists near the attack site. Forces have claimed that the clash occurred after the Maoists tried to attack a patrolling unit of security forces in Jhurjhure area of Faparbari VDC of Makwanpur district-located some 60 km east of Hetauda. The security sources have said that six Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) soldiers, too, died in the incident. Two civilians were also killed in the clash, according to central division headquarters of RNA. Eighteen security personnel were injured in the clash. Security sources have also claimed that there could be much more casualties on the part of the Maoists. They claimed they have recovered arms and explosives from the site. Likewise, clash has been reported also in Syangja district, - details of which are yet to emerge. *Compiled from reports.*

Lohani Urges For Postponement Of Polls

Senior politician and vice president of Rastriya Janashakti Party (RJP) Dr. Prakash Chandra Lohani has called on the government to announce the postponement of the civic polls and create atmosphere for talks with

the political parties, a process, which he termed as 'most necessary.' Dr. Lohani, speaking at an interaction at the Reporters' Club, said time was running late for such reconciliation. He said the advisors who are telling the King not to opt for reconciliation with the parties are the ones set to 'destroy monarchy.' Speaking at the same program, senior leader of Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) - Kamal Thapa faction - said it was now up to two persons to resolve the current impasse - the King and Nepali Congress (NC) president Girija Prasad Koirala. "Girijababu must show courage to tell the countrymen that he will now work to resolve the crisis by holding talks with the King. He must show the statesmanship," Sharma said. *Compiled from reports.*

Candidate Killed In Janakpur

Bijaya Lal Das, district president of Dhanusha Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP-Mandal), has been shot to death by the Maoists near his party office in Gangasagar, Janakpur on Sunday (Jan 22). Das had announced his candidature for the post of mayor of Janakpur city. Maoists have owned up responsibility for his killing. A month ago, the Maoists had assured the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) that they would not kill or abduct the candidates for civic polls. But in recent days, they have started threatening the candidates. After his killing, the seven parties suspended their planned protest rally on Monday in Janakpur. *Kantipur daily reports.*

OHCHR Accused Of Breaching Jurisdiction

Serious questions have been raised at government level accusing the UN OHCHR of breaching its jurisdiction. Officials raised such questions at the meeting of High Level Committee on Human Rights, which was chaired by Foreign Minister Ramesh Nath Pandey, on Sunday (Jan 22). Sources said the meeting was participated by officials from Home, Defense, Women and Children Ministries as well as senior officers from army and police. The meeting was held in preparation for the forthcoming 62nd meeting of UN Human Rights Commission, which will begin in Geneva from March 15. "The OHCHR has no business in telling the government to declare

ceasefire. But that is happening here. Its job is to point out to the government which international human rights laws it has breached," said a government secretary who participated at the meeting. Another participant complained that the OHCHR makes hue and cry over petty violations by the security forces but remains silent when the Maoists commit the same. As the Geneva meeting is approaching, OHCHR's Nepal office chief Ian Martin had written a letter to the government requesting for the latter's viewpoint. Martin needs to prepare his report and submit it to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour for presentation at Geneva. *Nepal Samacharpatra daily reports.*

Fast Track Road Project Hits Dead End Of Sorts

The government had, in 1999, announced its willingness to go for a fast track road between Hetauda and the capital. Ten years on, the project is still on paper and nowhere near the detailed feasibility study, leave aside kicking off. Considering the delay in chasing every aspect of the project before it is implemented on what was supposed to be a Build Operate and Transfer (BOT) basis, the project is an example of how things take too long before their actual implementation. The inordinate delay in the detailed feasibility study is attributed to lack of donors to fund the \$1.5 million project. A pre-feasibility study was conducted by Fin Consult, a Finnish government agency. The government was expecting cooperation from the Japanese government in this context, but it appears that the nod from the Japanese side may take ages. This has left the government with no option but to try knocking the doors of the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). "We forwarded the proposal to the Japanese side following initial assurance in this connection. While we are positive that Japan will come to our rescue, it is taking too long. Even so, no one can say that the project has met a dead end," said Madan Gopal Maleku, joint secretary at the Ministry of Works and Physical Planning. *The Himalayan Times daily reports.*

Parties Demonstrate On Saturday, Hundreds Arrested

Following the disruption of their scheduled demonstration in Basantapur,

Kathmandu on Friday (Jan 20) due to the government-imposed curfew as well as arrest of top leaders, the workers and leaders of the seven agitating parties held protest rallies in the same area on Saturday. Over 300 workers and leaders including Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat of Nepali Congress (NC) and Yubaraj Gyawali of Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) were arrested from New Road, according to the political parties. The Home Ministry, later, said it took around 236 demonstrators in its control and released most of them by evening. Sporadic protest rallies were held at various corners of the capital. Police intervened even at the street poetry symposium by progressive literateurs and arrested them. Reports say police used lathicharge to chase away the crowds of party cadres at different points. Biratnagar, Pokhara, Nepalgunj and other cities across the country also witnessed similar protest demonstrations by the parties. Earlier, on Friday, even amid curfew there were few cases of party cadres trying to break it and hold demonstrations in and around areas like Naya Baneshwore, Maitidevi, Kalanki, Galkopakha, Kapurdhara and so on. But they were overpowered by the police who resorted to lathicharge to disperse them. Protesting the government crackdown, bandh was imposed in Biratnagar, Surkhet and Palpa on Saturday. Meanwhile, the parties have announced Nepal Bandh on January 26 in order to protest government crackdown against democratic forces. *Compiled from reports.*

Rana Urges Govt. To Suspend Polls To Improve Environment

Condemning the brutal police intervention, arrest of leaders and imposition of prohibition against peaceful protests, president of Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) Pashupati SJB Rana has urged the government to take some 'dramatic' steps like 'suspension of municipal poll' in order to create environment conducive for talks with political parties. "The recent events have dimmed chances of reconciliation. It will take a dramatic decision by the government to create the environment for talks," Rana told reporters. He urged the government to release all leaders and respect human rights. *Compiled from reports.*

Six Policemen Killed In Nepalgunj

Six policemen were killed and three other injured when Maoists attacked two police beats in Nepalgunj city. They were killed on Friday (Jan 20) evening when the Maoists opened fire at police beats in B.P. Chowk and Jamunaha, near Indo-Nepal border. A number of policemen who were missing after the attack, later came into contact with policemen in Rupaidiha, India. Meanwhile, Maoists have stepped up their explosions at different cities. In Bara, three civilians were injured when the Maoists exploded bomb at the office of Land Reforms Office. Simultaneous bomb explosions occurred at the Chhoti Customs Office at Mechinagar municipality, Kakadvitta on Friday. No one was injured in the incident. Likewise, the Maoists detonated a bomb outside the premises of Birgunj-based regional office of Nepal Rastra Bank on Friday, damaging the building. In Rautahat, a peon was seriously injured when the Maoists detonated bomb at Land Revenue office at Gaur. In Dailekh, Maoists abducted and shot to death Deviram Khadka, 42. He had been abducted on Thursday. Khadka had been tortured and forced to flee after he had joined in a local resistance against the Maoists last year. He had returned to Dailekh along with other displaced persons two months ago. Likewise, in Biratnagar, the Maoists bombed the office of municipality on Saturday damaging properties worth millions of rupees. *Kantipur daily reports.*

Armed Maoists In Kathmandu: Home Minister

Home Minister Kamal Thapa has urged the seven political parties to come for talks with the government. "If you are sincere about the multiparty democracy, constitutional monarchy and the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990, then all other differences can be resolved through talks," Thapa said. Speaking at a program organized by his party, Thapa accused the parties of falling under the trap laid by the Maoists. "I appeal the parties not to fall under the trap laid by the extreme leftists," Thapa said. He added that Maoists armed with modern weapons have entered into the capital valley on the basis of the Maoist-parties understanding. "The future of democrats and parliamentarians will end if they cooperate the Maoists attempts," he said. "If the parties fail to see this danger on time, the

government will be bound to take stern but legal action to maintain law and order and peace in the country. The legal action of the government can have more serious consequences," he said. *Leading dailies report.*

Koirala Reiterates His Roadmap

A day after senior government minister appealed for reconciliation with the parties and asked for their stance, Nepali Congress (NC) president Girija Prasad Koirala issued a statement reiterating his roadmap. Koirala has stated that the restoration of parliament followed by the formation of all party government, the dialogue with Maoists by such government and the formation of an interim government with participation of Maoists and then holding election to constituent assembly would provide the only solution to the present crisis. He further stated that this time round, political leaders would not be prepared to sacrifice the interests of people and democracy for any other cause. He also urged all people to take part in parties' joint agitation. He also urged them to boycott the municipal polls announced by the government. Koirala has also appealed to the United Nations and other well-wisher friendly nations not to give recognition to the election. *Compiled from reports.*

Bhattarai Asks King To Suspend Polls And Talk With Parties

Senior leader of NC Krishna Prasad Bhattarai issued a statement on Tuesday asking the King to suspend the forthcoming municipal polls and instead hold talks with the parties to resolve the crises haunting the nation. Bhattarai has unveiled five points in his statement. First point urges the King to issue another proclamation declaring the end of his direct rule. Second point includes releasing all those arrested in illegal and undemocratic manner. Third point relates to lifting of curfew within and outside valley. Fourth point asks the King to suspend the municipal polls and the fifth point advises him to call the parties for talks in order to form democratic government, which could hold talks with the Maoists and conduct parliamentary polls. In the statement, Bhattarai has also called on NC leaders and cadres to unite under a single party. He expressed sadness over the division of NC. *Compiled from reports.*



Crown Princess Himani inaugurates Sonja Kill Memorial Hospice

Gorkhapatra

COMPLETING THEIR THREE-WEEKS-LONG VISIT TO various districts of eastern region, King Gyanendra and Queen Komal returned to Kathmandu on Sunday (Jan 22). During their visit to the eastern region, the royal couple traveled to Okhaldhunga, Solukhumbu, Saptari, Taplejung, Sankhuwasabha and so on.

THE UNITED NATIONS, THE US, THE UK AND international rights bodies have expressed their concern over the turn of events here. Expressing concern in a statement, spokesperson of the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in New York, called on all sides here to return to negotiating table and halt violence. UN human rights officers had visited 97 of the more than 120 persons detained. "The Secretary General appeals to all sides for calm, the suspension of fighting and the urgent initiation of an inclusive national dialogue," the statement adds. A statement issued by Sean McCormack, spokesperson of the US Department of State said: "These arrests and harassment of peaceful democratic forces is a violation of their rights. The US calls on the King to release these activists." In New Delhi, US Under Secretary of State Nicholas Burns said, on January 20, the US is very concerned over the turn of events in Nepal. "We have issued a statement very critical of that. We are equally critical, of course, of the Maoists. What India and the US can do is to try to assert a joint appeal for peace and democratic reconciliation in Nepal, (which) is very important," he told a press meet at the Indian External Affairs Ministry. The UK also expressed its concern over the recent turn of events. "The UK is extremely concerned by the King's actions, and we can see no grounds for these anti-democratic measures," said a statement issued by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. "I call on the King to release those arrested and to find ways to resume dialogue with the political parties," the statement quoted British MP Dr Howells as saying. "We will be making our profound concern known to the government of Nepal at the highest level." Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the International Commission of Jurists said they are "alarmed" by the recent turn of events in the country.

NEPAL ELECTRICITY AUTHORITY (NEA) HAS NOTIFIED of further hours of load shedding beginning from Sunday. From now onwards, each customer will face 17 hours of power shortage every week. Till now, they only suffered from three and a half hours of such power outage. According to NEA, the load shedding has been expanded to cover morning as well as afternoon hours. Each household will be subjected to three hours of morning power outage twice every week, two hours of morning outage twice every week, two hours of afternoon outage twice every week and three hours of evening outage once every week. The morning load shedding hours have been fixed as between 5:30 am to 8:30 am; 6 am to 9 am; 8:30 am to 10:30 am and 9 am to 11 am. The NEA has said that load shedding hours could be further crippling next month. Due to prolonged dry winter season, the generation capacity of many hydropower projects has come down by up to 60 percent. Even the only reservoir-type project of Kulekhani (92 MW) is staring at trouble since its water level is reducing sharply.

IN THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL REACTION TO THE crackdown on opposition leaders and rights activists by the government, the European Union (EU) said on Thursday that it is 'extremely concerned' about the recent developments in the country. A brief statement issued by the Finnish Embassy said, "The EU Heads of Mission in Kathmandu are extremely concerned about the recent developments in Nepal, in particular about the arrests of democratic party leaders, members of civil society and human rights activists. The EU is urgently considering implications of these developments." Likewise, India termed "regrettable" the arrests of political leaders and human rights activists. "These actions are regrettable and a matter of grave concern to all those who wish to see the constitutional forces in Nepal working together to achieve peace and stability in the country," Indian external affairs ministry spokesperson Navtej Sarna said. Furthermore, Japan also has expressed concern over the arrest of leaders. It has urged the government to immediately release the leaders.

THE SONJA KILL FOUNDATION (SKF) OF GERMANY provided Rs 4.1 million assistance and helped build Sonja Kill Memorial Hospice at Gokarna, Kathmandu in cooperation with Maiti Nepal. The SKF and Children Missionary Germany provided Rs 30 million for the hospice, according to a statement issued. Dr. Winfred Kill of the foundation had also helped in constructing the building of Maiti Nepal – the leading NGO fighting against child and women trafficking – in Gaushala. Crown Princess Himani inaugurated the Hospice at Gokarna on Thursday. The 43-bed rehabilitation center aims to provide residential service, regular counseling and treatment facilities to people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). The statement said that the hospice also has separate units to provide services to tuberculosis patients, multi-drug resistant TB and hepatitis patients. The center will also provide Anti Retro Viral drugs to PLWHA, which was provided earlier from Maiti Nepal.

“The government imposed strict restrictions after getting information of a plan to create anarchy like that of September.”

Kamal Thapa, Home Minister, talking to journalists at a press meet.

* * *

“They even looked under the bed. Is Bamdev a person who will hide under a bed?”

Madhav Kumar Nepal, General Secretary of the Unified Marxist-Leninist, telling journalists how the police searched for UML leader Bamdev Gautam at his house.

* * *

“We challenge the government to show a single instance of infiltration in our rallies. Rather, there are several examples of infiltration by government-sponsored men.”

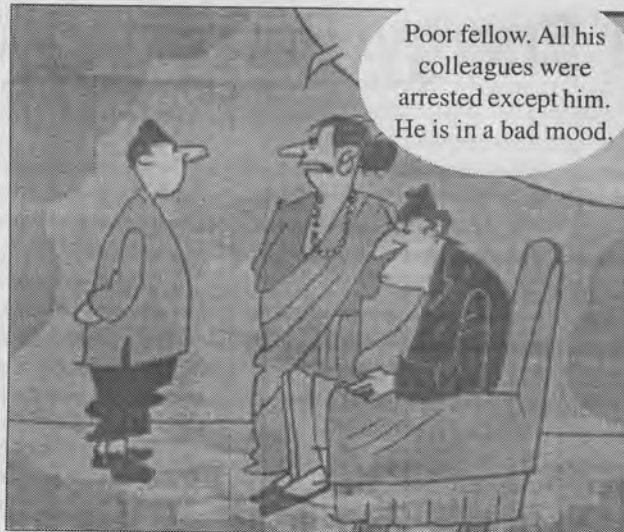
Arjun Narsingh K.C., leader of Nepali Congress, talking to reporters after a meeting of the leaders of the seven-party alliance, in The Kathmandu Post.

* * *

“Polls have been declared even as political leaders and cadres are being arrested and gatherings are banned. This is against human rights.”

Pashupati SJB Rana, president of Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), talking to a team of National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), at his residence.

* * *



Bimarsha

Dr. Roop Jyoti, state minister for finance, speaking at an interaction in Kathmandu.

* * *

“The government is spineless as is shown by its declaration of prohibition against peaceful gathering. This is a symptom that the people are winning and the government losing.”

Krishna Sitaula, spokesperson of the Nepali Congress,

speaking at a face-to-face program, at the Reporters' Club.

* * *

“The government's claim that there would be violence in our agitation is misplaced. We organized huge demonstration in Janakpur recently. Was there any violence there?”

Hom Nath Dahal, leader of Nepali Congress (Democratic), speaking at an interaction program in Kathmandu.

* * *

“It is contradictory that the government, on the one hand, is saying that it will conduct polls and, on the other hand, announces curfew. This is an expression of coward mentality of the government.”

Ram Chandra Poudel, General Secretary of Nepali Congress, in Rajdhani

* * *

“Some one can be 'black-listed' on the basis of evidence, but not blackmailed.”

“It is not appropriate to say that there is democracy when situation is favorable to you and there is no democracy when it is not. Is the demand to appoint someone who chants slogan with a flag also human rights.”

Srish SJB Rana, state minister for Information and Communication, in Rajdhani.

* * *

“I urge the leadership of the CPN (Maoist) to state publicly and to all its cadres that it is against the policy of the Party for any unarmed civilian to be killed, including candidates and officials in the municipal elections.”

Ian Martin, the Representative in Nepal of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

* * *

TRANSITION

RETURNED: King Gyanendra and Queen Komal, to the capital, after completing three-weeks-long tour to different districts of eastern region.

DIED: Beda Nanda Jha, member of the Royal Council (Raj Parishad) and former

chairman of the erstwhile Royal Assembly (Raj Sabha), at the age of 94.

Mahesh Mani Dixit, member of National Assembly and central advisor of the Unified Marxist – Leninist (UML), at the age of 76.

Tara Devi, senior Nepali singer, at the age of 61.

KILLED: Bijaya Lal Das, 47, president of Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP-

Mandal) Dhanusha district committee, by the Maoists.

RELEASED: Girija Prasad Koirala, president of Nepali Congress (NC), K.P. Oli, standing committee member of Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) and Narayan Man Bijukchhe, president of Nepal Workers and Peasants Party (NWPP), from house arrest. Pradip Nepal, spokesperson of the UML, from detention. ■

World Energy Resources And Nepal

By DR. A. B. THAPA

Nepal is one of the few richest countries in the world in hydropower resources. Naturally all of us would consider that somebody must be having very poor understanding about our hydropower resources if he lays emphasis on the study of some other form of energy resources also such as the coal, gas, oil, nuclear power for the generation of electricity in the context of Nepal. However, such understanding is completely misplaced. Apart from the fact that such view is harmful to better understanding of energy related problems, it would also deprive our country of the opportunities to benefit the most from the use of our vast hydropower resources. In future Nepal will have to compete on price in Indian power market predominantly based on thermal generation if we hope to export our surplus hydroelectric power to that country. We also should not forget the fact that the energy price in India would be determined to a great extent by the global demand and supply of energy resources. Thus, it is essential that we pay adequate attention to study India's energy development programs and also the present status of the global energy resources.

Growing Use of Energy

Our world's present civilization significantly differs from all earlier civilization in the degree of its dependence on energy. The role energy plays is characterized by the fact that it is interlinked with everything that occurs on the earth everything that moves. In essence, the advancement of the human society and the progress in civilization are directly associated with increasing the efficiency of labor and raising the standard of living for which greater usage of energy is required.

Nowadays modern machinery consumes very big quantity of energy every year. It is said that if the able bodied population of the entire world worked sparing no effort eight hours a day during a year, they would fail to produce one-hundredth the energy generated now by burning fuel and harnessing rivers.

Source of Energy

The principal energy inputs into the earth surface are as follow: (1) 174,000 billion thermal watts from the solar radiation intercepted by the earth with a surface area of 500 million square kilometers; (2) 32 billion thermal watts conducted and convected to the earth's surface from inside the earth; (3) 3 billion thermal watts of tidal power from the combined kinetic and potential energy of earth-moon- sun system.

Of the total solar energy about 42 percent is directly reflected and scattered into the outer space, leaving the earth as short wavelength radiation. About 48 percent is directly absorbed and converted into heat; and about 10 percent is dissipated in circulation through the atmosphere and the oceans, and in the evaporation, precipitation, and circulation of water in the hydrologic cycle. A small fraction just about 40 billion watts is absorbed by the leaves of plants and stored chemically by the process of photosynthesis.

Since the last 600 million years of geologic history of our planet, a minute fraction of the earth's organism have been deposited in swamps and other oxygen deficient environments under the conditions of incomplete decay, and eventually buried under great thickness of sedimentary mud and sands. By subsequent transformations, these have become the earth's present supply of fossil fuels. They are coal, oil and other related products.

World Energy Reserve

The present day world demand for energy is so large that the fossil fuels, the present sources of energy for industrial uses, will be depleted in not very distant future. Mankind has been using from old

days other type of energy which can not be depleted. This renewable source of power is derived from the potential energy of water. There has been unimaginable breakthrough in the technology of obtaining nuclear fission and fusion energy in recent time. World is assured of any quantity of energy that will be needed for use in even very distant future if we tapped the nuclear fission and fusion energy.

Solar Power is 28,000 million MW (Photosynthesis fuel -13 million MW, Hydropower -3 million MW, and Wind power- 0.1 million MW); Gravitational (tidal) is 1.0 million MW; Geothermal is 0.6 MW. World annual demand by year 2000 is 15 million MW. Slow neutron fission reactor power is 3,000 million MW; Fast breeder reactor power is 300,000; Fusion power is more than 5, 000 trillion MW. It can be said that the deuterium- deuterium reaction in a fusion reactor could, due to the vast amounts of deuterium in the ocean, give an essentially infinite source of energy. Fusion reactors offer substantial reduction in the radioactive waste problem. It is believed that the fusion type reactors could be free from the threat of accidents.

Natural Gas

Natural Gas, flammable gaseous mixture consists mostly of hydrocarbons (chemical compounds that contain carbon and hydrogen). Along with coal and petroleum, natural gas is a fossil fuel. Natural gas may contain as much as 85 percent methane (CH₄) and about 10 percent ethane (C₂H₆), and it also contains smaller amounts of propane (C₃H₈), butane (C₄H₁₀), pentane (C₅H₁₂), and other hydrocarbons. Natural gas, which is usually found together with petroleum deposits in Earth's crust, is extracted and refined into fuels that provide approximately 25 percent of the world energy supply.

Natural gas has been discovered on all continents except Antarctica. World natural gas reserves total approximately 140 trillion cu m. The world's largest natural gas reserves, totaling 48 trillion cu m. are located in Russia. The second-largest reserves, 47.4 trillion cu m are found in the Middle East. Vast deposits are also located in other parts of Asia, Africa, and Australia.

Natural gas reserves in the United States total 4.7 trillion cu m. Large natural gas fields have been discovered in Texas, Gulf of Mexico off the coast of Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Wyoming, and in the Prudhoe Bay field of the North Slope of Alaska. In Canada, natural gas reserves total 1.9 trillion cu m. Most of Canada's natural gas is in Alberta.

After being processed, natural gas is transported through pipelines. As gas moves through a pipeline, the friction of the gas on the pipe walls slows the gas flow. As a result, compression stations placed along the route maintain the pipeline sufficiently pressurized to keep the gas moving.

Once natural gas reaches its destination, it is often stored so that enough remains available for peak demand. During cold weather, for example, the amount of natural gas used for heating often exceeds the amount of gas that can be piped from processing plants. As a result, natural gas is stored in large storage tanks (each with a capacity of up to 50,000 cu m.) or underground. In many cases the underground storage areas are abandoned coal mines or empty oil wells. When gas stored underground is needed, it is pumped back to the surface.

Natural gas can also be shipped and stored as a liquid. It turns into a liquid at -160° C Natural gas occupies 600 times less volume as a liquid than as a gas. Liquefied natural gas is transported primarily by ship.

Coal

Although coal deposits exist in nearly every region of the world, commercially significant coal resources occur only in Europe, Asia, Australia, and North America. Commercially significant coal deposits occur in sedimentary rock basins, typically sandwiched as layers called beds or seams between layers of sandstone and shale.

When experts develop estimates of the world's coal supply, they distinguish between coal reserves and resources. Reserves are coal deposits that can be mined profitably with existing technology, or current equipment and methods. Resources are an estimate of the world's total coal deposits, regardless of whether the deposits are commercially accessible. Exploration geologists have found and mapped the world's most extensive coal beds. In 1997 world coal reserves were estimated to be 1.04 trillion metric tons, and world coal resources were estimated to be 9.98 trillion metric tons. These coal reserves are geographically distributed as follows: Europe, including all of Russia and the other countries that made up the Soviet Union - 44 percent; North America - 28 percent; Asia - 17 percent; Australia - 5 percent; Africa - 5 percent; and South America - 1 percent.

Coal deposits in the United Kingdom, which led the world in coal production until the 20th century, extend throughout parts of England, Wales, and southern Scotland. Coalfields in western Europe underlie the Saar and Ruhr valleys in Germany, the Alsace region of France, and areas of Belgium. Coalfields in central Europe extend through parts of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. The most extensive and valuable coalfield in eastern Europe is the Donets Basin, between the Dnieper and Don rivers (in parts of Russia and Ukraine). Large coal deposits in Russia are being mined in the Kuznetsk Basin in southern Siberia. Coalfields underlying northwestern China are among the largest in the world. Mining of these fields began in the 20th century.

United States coal reserves are located in six major regions, three of which produce the majority of domestically mined coal. The most productive region in the United States is the Appalachian Basin, covering parts of Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, and Alabama. Large quantities of coal have also been produced by both the Illinois Basin—extending through Illinois, Indiana, and Kentucky—and the Western Interior Region—extending through Missouri, Kansas, and Oklahoma. Other commercially important U.S. coal regions include the Powder River Basin, underlying parts of Montana and Wyoming; the Green River Basin in Wyoming; the Uinta Basin, covering areas of Utah and Colorado; and the San Juan Basin, underlying parts of Utah, New Mexico and Colorado.

Petroleum

The world's technically recoverable reserves of crude oil—the amount of oil that experts are certain of being able to extract without regard to cost from Earth—add up to about 1,000 billion barrels, of which some 73 billion barrels are in North America. However, only a small fraction of this can be extracted at current prices. Of the known oil reserves that can be profitably extracted at current prices, more than half are in the Middle East; only a small fraction are in North America.

Due to rapidly growing rate of consumption, the estimation of the world's oil reserve is of paramount interest. In many countries oil has taken the place of coal and other renewable sources of energy in electric energy production, though recently this process has been considerably slowed down due to high cost of petroleum products and due to imminent fear of depletion of such resources.

As stated earlier the estimated world geological oil reserve is about 1000 billion barrels out of it the proven reserve is about 300 billion barrels. The estimates of such reserves are changing to a certain extent as new deposits are found by prospectors.

Nuclear Energy

In 1998 a total of 437 nuclear plants operated worldwide. Another 35 reactors were under construction. Eighteen countries generate at

least 20 percent of their electricity from nuclear power. The largest nuclear power industries are located in the United States (107 reactors), France (59), Japan (54), Britain (35), Russia (29), and Germany (20). In the United States, no new reactors have been ordered for more than 20 years. In many developed countries public opposition, strict building and operating regulations, and high costs for waste disposal have made nuclear power plants much more expensive to build and operate than plants that burn fossil fuels.

There were more than 100 nuclear power plants operating or being built in the United States at the beginning of 1980s. In 1996 about 22 percent of the electric power generated in the United States came from nuclear power plants. In the aftermath of the Three Mile Island accident in Pennsylvania in 1979 safety concerns and various economic factors led to suspension of additional growth of nuclear power plants in the United States. No orders for nuclear plants have been placed in the United States since 1978, and even some of those plants that had been completed have not been allowed to operate.

France occupies the topmost position in use of nuclear energy. At present France generates 80 percent of its electricity from nuclear power. However, it has recently canceled several planned reactors and may replace some of her aging nuclear plants with fossil-fuel plants for environmental reasons. As a result, the government-owned electricity utility, Electricité de France, plans to diversify the country's electricity-generating sources.

Very recently world's attention is again gradually drawn to greater use of nuclear power as substitution of the fossil fuel based power. It is now feared that the growing use of fossil fuels would result in serious threat to environment.

Threat to Environment

Since the advent of the Industrial Revolution in the 1700s, many inventions have been devised that burn fossil fuels such as the coal, oil, and natural gas. Burning fossil fuels releases some of the gases that trap heat in the atmosphere, including carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide. These atmospheric gases have risen to levels higher than at any time in the last 420,000 years. As these gases are building up in the atmosphere, they now trap more heat near the Earth's surface causing the climate to become warmer than it would naturally be. The rapid increase in demand for electric energy all over the world has forced many countries to use all kinds of primary sources of energy irrespective of their environmental hazards so long the cost of such energy generated is low.

Scientists call this unnatural heating effect global warming and blame it for an increase in the Earth's surface temperature of about 0.6 Celsius degrees over the last nearly 100 years. Without remedial measures, many scientists fear that global temperatures will significantly rise by 2100. These warmer temperatures could melt parts of polar ice caps and most mountain glaciers, causing a rise in sea level of up to 1 m within a century, which would flood coastal regions. Global warming could also affect weather patterns.

It is feared that the growing use of fossil fuel will decrease the level of the atmospheric oxygen below the required level. Dr. Venekov V.A. in the book "Introduction to Energy Technology" writes that the burning of fuels involves the use of free atmospheric oxygen at an annual rate of 10; to 13 milliard tons. Only one aero plane of the Boeing type uses 35 tons of oxygen during its flight from Paris to New York.

It is believed that if the burning of the fossil fuel is continued with an annual increase of 5% then in some 50 to 100 years the concentration of free oxygen may lower from 23.3 to 17 weight units, the level critical for man. The pollution of air by sulfur dioxide can be very harmful to plant and animal life. If sulfur dioxide is present in amounts of 29 mg/cu. m in the air then it can cause respiratory ailments. A concentration of 400 to 500 mg per cubic meter can be dangerous to life. ■

(Dr. Thapa writes on water resources)

NEPAL

Trapped Between Two Boulders

Nepal's instability and chaos is a matter of concern to Nepal's both neighbors - India and China

By KESHAB POUDEL

With the intensification of insurgency and political instability, Nepal's neighbors keep very close eyes on Nepal.

Officials of India, which shares open border with Nepal, have disclosed that they are closely observing Nepal's situation.

Nearly after seven months of silence, spokesman of Chinese foreign ministry Kong Quan, too, spoke this week expressing concern over Nepal's internal problems urging all political forces to work together to find out solution.

Although Nepal's northern neighbor rarely comments about Nepal's internal problem, they have made it known that deteriorating situation in Nepal could affect their own security in Tibetan Autonomous Region - which shares more than 1,400 kilometers border with Nepal. Chinese often acknowledge Nepal's importance in their own internal security in Tibet.

It is pertinent here to quote Chinese ambassador to Nepal Sun Heping who had stated at a seminar in Kathmandu in August, 2005 - quote "Many Nepali friends often appreciate both political and economic helps given by China, but China is much grateful to Nepal for firm and strong support in the issues of Taiwan, Tibet and human rights. Nepal's help to China can be traced back centuries ago. Mr. Madan Regmi said once, "Nepal's success in preventing the advancing imperial British from reaching the Himalayas in 1814-16 Anglo-Nepal war, though it was costly for Kathmandu, it provided a strong crest to China's South-western region. This is one of the glowing illustrations of how Nepal contributed to China's security." He asked, "Have the Chinese historians and military strategists

ever acknowledged this part of the history?" Yes, I have, as a Chinese Ambassador to the Kingdom of Nepal in the early 21st century" unquote.

Nepal's two neighbors often pull and press the ruling classes. Unlike India, mandarins of Chinese often work in sophistications. Whether it was during the construction of Kodari High Way or mobilization of Royal Nepalese Army against Khampas, Chinese did put quite a bit of pressure on the Nepal government.

"The situation was made all the worse following a visit to Peking by the Nepalese monarch, King Birendra, who was threatened by Mao Zedong with military action unless he closed down the Mustang base. Faced with such threat, the Nepalese were compelled and in early 1974 a 10,000-strong force of police and troops was dispatched to Mustang," writes Peter Haclerod in his book "Fighting Dirty: The inside story of covert operations from Ho Chi Minh to Osama Bin Laden."

Nepal's two neighbors have their own security perceptions regarding Nepal. India often sees open border with Nepal as a gesture of special relations and Chinese sees the open border as threat to its own security in Tibet. In this situation, whoever may come to power, Nepal's rulers have no space to play against two neighbors. The geography has limited Nepal's position.

"As long as the Himalayas do not get flattened, India has an advantage over China in the subcontinent. We should; of course, militarily be vigilant but we should also be diplomatically sensitive and dynamic. Nepal has relished treating India/China relations as a nervous zero-sum triangular strategic and political game. Geography, shared faith, culture and ethnicity are in India's favor," writes Jagat S. Mehata, former Indian foreign secretary

in his article India and Nepal Relations: A Victim of Politics.

India and China closely monitor Nepal's situation because Nepal's security is related to them. "India-Nepal relations have the strongest complementarity, which also includes security complementarity. When security is part of such a close "relative-like" relationship, it implies a higher degree of trust, confidence, transparency and coordination," writes former chief of Indian Armed force Ved Prakash Malik in his article India-Nepal Security Relations. "The other issue concerns internationalization of the Maoist problem. Personally, I feel that internationalization of this issue is neither good for Nepal nor for India. Increased foreign presence, particularly the US military presence, could cause the concern and even involvement. As far as US-Nepal cooperation is concerned, a joint US-Nepal military counter-insurgency exercise was conducted in January-February 2003, this was followed by another exercise. Earlier, the US Defense Attaché in New Delhi looked after military relations with Nepal. Now a separate military attaché has been posted in Kathmandu. U.K has given two helicopters, thirty-five land rovers and some other logistic." These views certainly point to the anxiety of Indian officialdom regarding Nepal situation.

Chinese scholars firmly hold the view that Nepal's independence guarantees the stability of Tibetan Autonomous Region of China. "Nepal's independence is prerequisite for Chinese security," said Wang Xuing, in his book, Nepal's Defense Strategy and Nepal-China Relations.

Three architects of Nepal's foreign policy Badamahraj Prithivi Naryan Shaha, Late King Birendra and B. P. Koirala have shown the way to formulate Nepal's foreign policy defending independence and sovereignty of Nepal.

Experiences of the past five decades have shown that relations between two big neighbors India and China shape Nepal's prosperity and tranquility. Geography has limited Nepal's position but it has geo-strategic importance in their security policy. ■

INFLATION

Spiraling Danger

In the last one year, inflation has surged substantially threatening to disturb the fragile macroeconomic stability

By A CORRESPONDENT

At a time when Nepal is struggling with an intensive conflict, the news of spiraling inflation has come as another bombshell that could shake the national economy enough to thoroughly disturb the fragile macroeconomic stability. Despite prolonged insurgency and political conflict, macroeconomic indicators were still healthy – but this could change if the inflation rate is allowed to head further north towards double-digit.

During the current fiscal year, the rate of inflation has increased eerily. According



Economic activity: On the wane

to the Nepal Rastra Bank, the inflation rate has touched 8.5 percent in the first four months of the current fiscal year because of decrease in the production of major agricultural products like rice coupled with increase in the prices of petroleum products.

This rate of inflation is substantial compared with the last year when it had stood at 2.7 percent during the same period.

During the review period, the prices of rice and rice-based products have risen by 18 percent, prices of food stuff and liquor have risen by 8.6 percent and prices

of non-food stuffs and services have risen by 8.3 percent.

A number of reasons had combined to fuel the rise in inflation. The frequent upward revision of the prices of petroleum products and the increase of Value Added Tax (VAT) rate from 10 to 13 percent triggered the surge in inflation. Analysts predict that the rate could rise further and attain double-digit shape, which could spell a disaster for the already ailing economy.

Even as the inflation is growing, the government is struggling to collect revenue as per its target. The recent statistics revealed by the Ministry of Finance showed that during the first six months of the current fiscal year, revenue collection grew merely by six percent compared with the government target of registering 14 percent growth.

According to the Ministry, till mid-January, Rs 31.58 billion was collected as revenue – Rs 26.43 billion as tax revenue and Rs 5.14 billion as non-tax revenue. The government aims to collect Rs 81.81 billion this fiscal year. Last fiscal year, the government had collected Rs 70 billion as revenue.

Adding to the gloomy news, the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) came with new figures last week showing Nepal's GDP growth rate in the fiscal year 2004/05 was 2.33 – less by 1.21 percent compared to 3.54 percent growth rate in the previous fiscal year because of 'weak agricultural growth rate, low capital formation and dismal performance of non-agricultural sectors.'

Number Of Overseas Workers Increase Sharply

The number of Nepalese youths going overseas for work has increased sharply in the first six months of the current fiscal year 2005/06. Compared to the same period last fiscal year, the number of workers leaving for overseas increased by 50.45 percent.

According to the Department of Labor and Employment Promotion, 93,948 workers left for overseas this year in the first six months alone – up from 62,441 who left for overseas during the same period last year. According to statistics, Malaysia is the top favorite destination.

The number of workers going to Malaysia increased by 56 percent reaching 47,776. Those leaving for Qatar also increased by 61 percent to reach 28,176. Saudi Arabia was the third favorite destination attracting 8320 workers followed by the United Arab Emirates where 8294 workers went during the period.

Likewise, the number of women workers increased by 149 percent during the period reaching 638 – Israel alone attracted 336 Nepalese women workers.

The department has added that compared to growth in numbers of workers leaving for overseas, the number of complaints against individuals and institutions (manpower agencies) on fraud charges has declined sharply. Compared to 165 and 509 numbers of complaints against individuals and institutions last year, the number has fallen to 301 and 197 this year.

The department has facilitated in the recovery of Rs 13.7 million as compensation to victimized workers during the period. The victims have demanded for Rs 40.4 million as compensation in total. During this period, two manpower companies were de-registered on the basis of complaints. A year ago, 17 such companies had to be de-registered. ■

In the fiscal year 2004/05, the agricultural growth rate stood at only 2.97 percent compared to 3.86 previous year. Likewise, non-agricultural sector grew by 2.07 percent during the period compared to 3.42 percent last year. Economists fear worsening situation given the inadequate rainfall during this year's monsoon and also due to prolonged dry weather in the current winter – which could hurt the productivity of winter crops. ■

Question of Political Commitment

The country has been passing through a severe political crisis. From common people in the street to the suave friends of Nepal and impatient diplomats have been suggesting leaders of all political forces to come closer and cooperate with each other to solve the problems the country is currently facing. In one way or the other, the King and the political parties are talking similar things but they are yet to show the sincerity to the common cause they have been preaching. Two leaders have shown in the past that there is a way out of any crisis. But, at present, Nepal does not have statesman leader like B.P. Koirala and the monarch like late King Birendra who could understand and comprehend the interest of the country and give up their personal grievances and ego for the sake of nation by showing that patriotism can be the common meeting point of all

By KESHV POUDEL

In the history of every nation, there comes such moment when its people have to risk their lives to safeguard the national identity. We think such moment has come in Nepal today. Our well-wishers had advised us not to return Nepal seeing the dangers involved in it. We would like to tell them that we have taken this historical decision because the likely danger to our lives is nothing as compared to the dangers to the nation, "said

B. P. Koirala in his statement delivered after returning from his exile in December 30, 1976.

"In this hour of national crisis, all of us should need to get united by forgetting and ending the past unhealthy debates, experiences and differences. Our programs should be directed by the feeling that we will no more exist in absence of our nation," said B.P. Koirala - who faced many cases in the country with the possibility of death sentence.

Fourteen years later, King Birendra, too, had shown similar courage and greatest statesmanship in April 1990 movement by

inviting leaders of agitating political parties in Royal Palace and fulfilling almost every demand put by them including the restoration of multiparty democracy, human rights and free press.

Despite the advices of people with vested interests surrounding him, late King Birendra took a bold decision in inviting the leaders of then agitating parties to the palace to discuss the country's crisis with an open mind. He, subsequently, demonstrated his readiness to hand over power to the people.

"Are they enough for you or still you have some more demands?" was what late



G.P. Koirala (center) with other leaders: Testing times

King Birendra asked the five leaders of agitating political parties including Ganeshman Singh, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, Girija Prasad Koirala, Shahana Pradhan and Radha Krishna Mainali who had gone to the Royal Palace in April 1990. When King Birendra was fulfilling demands of Nepali Congress and United Left Front inside Naryanhiti Royal Palace, the country was burning with extreme slogans of abolition of monarchy.

Instead of bowing down to foreign power, late King Birendra, who sacrificed all his family members for noble cause, bowed down to Nepalese people for the greater interest of nation - just like B.P. Koirala had done one and half decades earlier. Both of these leaders had shown genuinely that patriotism is a common meeting point. King Birendra's decision saved the nation one more time.

Fourteen years ago, Koirala - even risking his personal life along with political power - returned to Nepal with a mission of reconciliation with the monarch. That bold move, too, had saved the nation.

Nepal is facing more severe political crisis today than it was facing back in 1976 and 1990. Although one of the major world powers of that period Soviet Union was dissolved and cold war came to an end in the global level, the regional cold war continues in this region between two major military powers.

Way Out

The country seems to be at the politically deadlock situation. It is not that there is no way out but the question is of genuine commitment of politicians who are in the lead positions of their respective organizations.

It is not that politicians do not know what are the reasons behind the crisis and what are their common meeting points but what is lacking is sincere commitment to the cause. King Gyanendra, who has experience of just little more than three years as a monarch, has reiterated patriotism as a common meeting point. He, however, ignores the importance of broader participation of the people through democratic process.

Similarly, leaders of organized political parties including Nepali Congress president Girija Prasad Koirala, who knows the importance of national reconciliation, too, is unable to demonstrate statesmanship like his brother fearing the possibility of isolation within his party and country's politics.

There is a distrust and mistrust between King Gyanendra and Koirala. Just few weeks after ascending to the throne, King Gyanendra, knowingly or unknowingly, pushed Koirala - who is much concerned about political dignity in the last leg of his political career - to a corner pressing for his resignation.

The actions of the Commission of Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA)

and formation of the Royal Commission for Corruption Control (RCCC), an all powerful body, with power to investigate, prosecute and trial, widened the gap in such a way that the personal distrust prevailed over common meeting point of patriotism.

Prominence is given to mass meeting and political vendettas rather than skillful negotiations. All the political leaders are now in a race to bring larger number masses to demonstrate their popularity. Whether the King or the leaders of political parties, everyone seems more concerned about the size of crowd they are pulling.

Involving masses in their program alone does not depict the political directions they set. Contradictions in interest keep the political position accordingly and homogeneity of interest keeps them closer despite being in different organizations. Nepal had experiences of experimenting with several political models at different times. During the party-less system also, there were groups led by different persons having conflicts of the same nature as the political parties have this time. Whether it is organized or based upon individuals, conflicting interests are reflected in the political crisis.

Contradictions and Confrontations

Despite the call from people at the street to foreign diplomats to end the political crisis, there is no sign of such negotiations any time soon. Contradictory to that, they invent some new slogans and demands with irrelevant jargons and contribute their part to aggravate the situations more and more critical - as those were almost the same during the last moment of parliamentary politics when parliament was blocked for 60 days by opposition parties led by Madhav Kumar Nepal and all party consensus against prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's proposal to hold the general elections.

After the termination of that period in October 2, 2002, a new era of controversy and conflict had opened. Till the parliament was functioning, the street was full of slogans against 'corrupt leaders'. Now the street is fully occupied by the same politicians shouting the slogans against the 'autocratic monarch'.

"Persons are almost the same but their roles have changed. Had there been a sensible political dialogue and amity, the parliament would not have collapsed forever. The country is now on the verge of collapse but it is not difficult to find out solutions of the problems - which appear on the surface. But the currents and under current of political

conflicts have rendered all sensible appeals futile," said an analyst.

Apparently, political organizations are built on the basis of the character of the mass of the people but that does not apply in a smaller country living in a peculiar geo-political situation like Nepal. For a society - which is in transformation from tradition to modernity, too - it is a vulnerable period. In such a situation, the organized forces of the people are often times used and misused by unseen machinations directing them against their own people and against their own country.

The statesman like B.P. Koirala had enough of wisdom and alertness, which he shared with his people and has left enough of warnings but that kind of commitment to the noble ideals and the nation has become a rare thing of politics in Nepal where leaders always engage in instigating the mass to intensify conflict and find themselves helpless to overcome the very destructive trend they have unleashed.

"Today, our country is in a national crisis. All have realized that this crisis is getting heightened since the last few years. As a result, the very national identity has been endangered. All including the King have from, time to time, referred to the danger posed to national identity... We think that the lack of national unity is a major factor for such a national crisis as a result of which foreign elements have started to become successful in playing their dirty games and

making Nepal a center of international conspiracy," said B.P. Koirala in his statement delivered on Dec 30, 1976 returning from foreign exile. "National unity can be achieved only through a collective campaign and efforts of all Nepali people." Though it was issued tree decade ago, it is relevant in the Nepalese context as Nepal's geo-political position remains unchanged just as the country's political problems.

Congress Deviation

Deviating from its earlier stand, Nepali Congress (NC) recent policy to align with extremist communists - who enjoy political life always amid fragile political crisis- is costing it dear. This alliance is already under debate within a rational section of Congress. This new alliance, some genuine Congressmen complain, has already tarnished peculiar identity of Nepali Congress. "Our party doesn't have any distinct identity to prove that we are different than all other communist parties including Maoists. We have been doing what other communists are competing for. Our student and party workers enjoy what is known as work of communists," said a senior Congress leader who is now in prison.

"Nepali Congress has lost its identity by giving up its century-old stand on constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy. Following the amendment statue, our position now looks like that of other communist parties," said speaker of House of Representatives Taranath Ranabhat.

In the process, Girija Prasad Koirala, who allied with communists to save his own political dignity at his last leg of political carrier, is trapped and is now struggling to protect his own stand.

Some committed liberal democrats are afraid of the communists who are leading them to the dead-end of politics. CPN-UML leader Bamdev Gautam once said that we will bury all the regressive forces - the King, Nepali Congress and RPP - in the same pit. To survive from autocratic rule of monarch, liberal democrats have been trapped under the communist strategy including that of the Maoists. The million rupees question is who prevents them to come out of this trap?

Problem Solvable

There is unanimity in the country and outside that the present political problem is solvable. Politics is not to create the problems but it is a way to find out solution of different interests. As Nepal's political conflict is trapped in such a way that, there is no other way out except the moral courage of leaders and their commitment for the nation and ideal which they uphold. Unfortunately, it seems impossible to find such a leader now.

Although Congress leader Koirala is the only remaining leader with inner conviction to the national reconciliation, his recent statement showed otherwise. "There is no question for negotiation as long as the King does not restore absolute democracy," he said. Koirala, who relies more on his irrational advisors, is yet to define absolute democracy.

In accordance with his conflicting nature, communist leader Madhav Kumar Nepal issued another extreme and impossible call from his house arrest. Nepal in his article published in a populist vernacular daily says the King needs to exercise his Royal prerogative to announce constituent assembly. His hidden agenda is that his party will use the parliament to abolish monarchy.

Instead of proposing a common meeting point, Koirala and Nepal issued statements with so many new political jargons invented by so-called members of civil society and populist press, for whom the very word crisis sells newspapers because it grabs attention. Absolute rights multiply conflicts and every new right gives rise to new troubles where they can invent another new political jargon.

Every new political jargon and demand further dilutes even the demand of Nepali Congress leader Koirala to activate the constitution through the restoration of House of Representatives. Can somebody be



Party workers: Moving towards extremism

expected to be foolish enough to exercise the state prerogative to abolish his or her own institution?

First and foremost, there is a need to agree honestly and sincerely on common meeting point. That point should be nation and patriotism without which monarchy and political parties do not matter. The gut interest of monarchy is that it needs an independent soil to rule and political parties need that land to exercise democratic system.

Two Parties and Two Demands

Now let's examine basic demands of two major political forces Nepali Congress and CPN-UML. The NC led by Koirala was against the dissolution of the parliament by prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba in June 2002. Since then, Koirala has been consistently demanding the restoration of dissolved parliament. After a long hearing – nine judges of Supreme Court found the dissolution in accordance with the constitution.

Even after that, Koirala and his party has all the time demanded its restoration, though the party has, in its resolution, threatened to go for republic as well. The NC's official stand is still constitutional monarchy.

So far as other party CPN-UML led by Madhav Kumar Nepal is concerned, it was against the restoration of the parliament till his party was in a coalition government after Royal takeover of October 2, 2002. In a changed situation, that government was toppled down with a charge that it could not fulfill holding of general elections of parliament. Then afterwards, CPN-UML party aligned with Congress demanding the restoration of parliament. As the King has not conceded to that demand, now CPN-UML has declared its program is in favor of republic.

Both the party signed 12-points memorandum understanding in New Delhi with the Maoists agreeing to launch the joint agitation against autocratic monarchy. Although the activities of the Maoists are solely responsible to derail plural political system and present constitution, on behalf of seven parties, Koirala and Nepal signed memorandum of understanding with the Maoists - who have been honestly saying that they do not have any faith in the present constitution. Nobody understands how Koirala can so firmly believe that the Maoists will abide by their commitment to plural democracy.

It is inconceivable that in a monarchical state, one party adheres to the constitutional

monarchy and other republic within the same alliance. The stand of UML, like the Maoist insurgents, is to use the restoration of parliament as a stepping-stone for a republic. CPN-UML, except people, believes that the King will gracefully accept their demand for restoration of parliament only to enable them to remove the monarchy.

"The King has to revive the dissolved house to pave the way for constituent assembly in which people will choose the representatives to make republican constitution," said senior CPN-UML leader Bharat Mohan Adhikary.

What appears inconceivable to a man of ordinary prudence is their main thrust in politics. Surprisingly, they have impressive mass demonstrations where UML leaders open the chapter for republican. It is amazing how the masses were mobilized even for a cause, which is not clear to their own leadership.

"Supposing that the King exercises his inherent Royal prerogative to grant what they are demanding. Will that not be an acceptance of the prerogative - which has ceased to exist under the present constitution?" asked the analyst.

Looking at all the contradictions, the restoration of parliament - with an amicable settlement of all pressing problems of the people - can be a sensible alternative to find solution but a prominent ally of the alliance, UML, seems to stand in a way against the restoration of the parliament. As long as they stand for the abolition of the monarchy as their prime agenda and the restoration of parliament as a stepping stone that does not mean anything than an impediment for any amicable adjustment of the major political forces of the country.

If the UML sincerely and seriously reach to this conclusion, what about the Nepali Congress? The statement of Nepali Congress or CPN-UML - which are yet to become underground as violent insurgent - shows that King has a role but not to settle the problems but to create another problem.

Late King Birendra had taken a drastic step by giving politicians a way out. How King Gyanendra will finally react remains to be seen.

As Nepal's political instability and deadlock continues, its internal problem is becoming an agenda between two neighbors. Several news reports say that Nepal's internal problem was an agenda between

India and China during their recent bilateral talks. In such a situation, parties and armed insurgents, one can very well guess, may have minimum role to change the affairs. But it does not mean that Nepalese do not have any role in overcoming internal problems.

For the upliftment of poor people of Nepal and betterment of the nation, all forces combined together can contribute for the re-emergence of united and democratic Nepal. If Nepalese are left alone to decide their fate, they can do so by accepting the patriotism as the common agenda.

After the termination of the cold war in 1990s, a new crisis loomed large in Nepalese political horizon. It had a regional dynamic and Nepal was going to be one of the victims of that. Till 1980s, Kashmir and many other places in south Asia were in complete peace but now many places are burning. One could not have even imagined a situation like that in Kashmir and other regions of South Asia till few decades ago but a visionary leader like B.P. Koirala had that kind of awareness. He changed his call of revolution with more dedication and sincerity into call of national reconciliation taking the King as the main force to respond with all his ingenuity and sincerity till his last breath and forgetting all the past bitterness. What he contributed to the cause of peace, stability and democracy in Nepal has yet not fully come to the public knowledge.

They contested three consecutive parliamentary elections and ran the parliament without any difficulties. The elections, which our political parties contested, were more peaceful and orderly than those conducted in Nepal's bordering areas of India. As parliamentarians, their performance were not inferior. Their internal indicators were not disappointing. However, nobody expected that the politics of parliament would come to such an abrupt end.

Historians may in future reveal many other unseen factors leading towards the collapse of parliament. Slowly and gradually, enlightened citizens of Nepal have come to understand that there was certain extraneous factor, which led to its demise. Whenever the clash of national interest comes over a democratic government, it does not tolerate democratic process of its immediate neighbors. This has sufficient illustrations in America, Europe and other Asian states. One can draw the conclusion that a fragile democracy in Nepal did not receive sympathetic deal from its nearest democracy. ■

“If The King And Koirala Discuss Face To Face, They Will Find Out Broader Agreement”

—RABINDRA NATH SHARMA

RABINDRA NATH SHARMA, former minister and leader of breakaway faction of Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), is a well known person in Nepali politics. Known as a moderate democrat, Sharma always appears in the thick of the things whenever there is a political crisis. One of the founders of RPP, Sharma has witnessed all kinds of divisions and factionalism in the RPP. After the fifth split in the party – which was founded fifteen years ago at Sharma's own residence - Sharma spoke with KESHAB POUDEL on various issues. Excerpts:

How do you see the present political situation?

Political situation is in a very crucial phase. The time has come to take some initiative to end the present deadlock so that normal political process begins again. There is a need to work for confidence-building among country's major political forces.

Who needs to take the initiative?

King Gyanendra needs to take first step by postponing forthcoming polls for municipality. As the tall figure in the agitation side, Nepali Congress leader Girija Prasad Koirala, too, needs to negotiate with the King regarding their demands. If King Gyanendra and Congress leader Koirala discuss face to face, I am sure that they will find out broader agreement to end current political stalemate.

Don't you think the extremists in both the sides will prevent them from initiating dialogue?

If the negotiation is for restoring constitutional monarchy and multi-party democracy, people will discard extremists of both the sides. What is required now is the genuine sincerity from both the sides to prevent major crisis. After all, these issues are not issue of personal but a broader national interest.

Even if the King and Girijababu agree on certain political term, don't you think communist parties will revolt since they have already demanded the abolition of monarchy?

(Laughs) This is no more than political stunt by communists. Once the King and Congress leader agree to activate the present constitution, all political forces will come together. Communists are provoked by the slogans of active monarchists. I think there is still a time to initiate dialogue. Prolonging political crisis is not in the interest of anybody. If it continues, Nepal's own existence will be under threat.

As a founder member of RPP who has seen all ups and downs, splits and conflicts, how do you see the recent fifth time split of the party?

Basically, this is a great tragedy for this party. However, RPP was born just after the restoration of multi-party democracy in 1990. Our party did not have any role in the movement for restoration of multiparty

democracy. I don't hesitate in accepting this reality. This is the fact that ninety-nine percent members of this party were followers of party-less Panchayat system who had worked as political workers under the patronage of the King. This is the reason their style of politics is distinct from the workers of other political parties. Panchas had never made people as their focal point of politics, Crown was their only focal point of politics. They worked under the guidance of King's leaders in the thirty years and have followed similar course even after the restoration of democracy. You have to keep in mind that Panchayat politics is based on individualism - and not a group but individual had to play politics. The present division is also not an ideological nor is it based on the principle. This is just a result of personal clash to fulfill political ambition of individual. This is representation of inner hatred and individual orientation.

From establishing the party to breaking it, you have played crucial roles in the crucial phase of political history of RPP. Interestingly, you were never made party president including this time. What is the reason behind it?

Our party leaders and colleagues used me as a ladder to occupy the leadership position. Whenever our senior colleagues were elected to the top position, their tendency was to keep it for as long as possible. They all love positions. If I take any step to pull them down, that will pave the way for splitting the party again. Thus, I have made all kinds of efforts to unite the party and to prevent it from splitting. I don't want to be a factional leader. Had I shown the interest, I would have done it a long time back. This time majority of our party workers backed me and I was also nominated for the party's top position but I had certain disagreements over the political proposal presented by new leaders. My only aim was to release the party from Pashupati's grip and to save it from dissolution. In this ground, I had to compete for the leadership to show that I had certain differences over issues raised by new leadership. The election means competition and opposing the view of others. I filed nomination as a symbolic opposition. I wanted to show that I have different opinion in the party. I was in the position to win the election overwhelmingly as large numbers of party workers were with me. Frankly speaking, it is a very difficult thing to handle the party at this juncture. It is easy for political party to ask party workers to contest the elections. However, as a president I have to guarantee the security of our colleagues contesting the elections. I was not in a position to tell my party workers to sacrifice his or her life for the sake of party. I don't have the courage to do so. Had I won the election, my dependency would have been on others. I have to think about all. I cannot agree hundred

“King Gyanendra needs to take first step by postponing forthcoming polls for municipality. As the tall figure in the agitation side, Nepali Congress leader Girija Prasad Koirala, too, needs to negotiate with the King regarding their demands.”

percent on the way and ideology, which the party has chosen for future direction. Had I been the president, I would have to implement all these policies despite disagreements over them. That would be politically immoral thing to do. I cannot play a double standard role. I don't want to betray myself. I don't want to give message that I joined this camp to become the party president. I have my personal problem also.

What are the major differences your party has with Pashupati Shumsher Rana?

Actually, the differences are very marginal. I have already mentioned that we don't have solid ideological base. Both of us claim to be the followers of constitutional monarchy and multi-party democracy. This has more to do with personal ego clashes.

It is reported that your party leaders have differences over the interpretation of King Gyanendra's February 1, 2005 actions. How do you personally see his action?

If you want to comment something on February 1, 2005 action, you must first go to actions of October 4, 2002 when the King dismissed the elected government led by prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba. The first action of October 4 was itself against the spirit of constitution. If we term February 1 action is unconstitutional, we must also condemn October 4 action in a similar manner. The February 1 action was the culmination of October 4. Some of our party leaders and leaders of other parties, who welcomed the dismissal of the elected government in 2002, have no moral authority to criticize the February 1 action. Was it not CPN-UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal, whose party joined Deuba's government in 2004 termed the new appointment as a correction in the earlier step? My point is that the constitution was derailed in 2002 and all the government formed after that action are no different than the present government formed after February 1, 2005. Those who joined the government after October 4 do not have any political moral authority to criticize King's February 1, actions.

Do you mean the constitutional process was derailed in October 4, 2002?

Yes, the constitution was derailed in October 4, 2002. This constitution permits only House of representatives to dismiss and appoint the prime minister.

As differences are widening between the King and the leaders of political parties, do you see any possibility to narrow them down?

There is a need to find out the meeting point between the King and the leaders of organized political parties. Sooner they agree upon, better for the future of the country. If conflict prolongs and differences further widen, it will not help monarchy as well as political parties. In the impending political crisis, the parties will also be wiped out. Somebody else will benefit from this conflict.

As an individual politician having good relations with all top political leaders, don't you think you should play some kind of role?

I have a very cordial personal relation with all political leaders. I respect Girjababu and I have good personal



relations with Madhavji, Bamdevji, and Narayanman Bijukche and others. Of course, I have political differences with them but I maintain my personal relations with them. I have always maintain constant relations with all of them. As an individual, it is not for me to say what kind of role I can play but it is for other people to judge it. My wishful thinking is that we must find a meeting point. If all of them want to find out the meeting point to diffuse the tension, there are way outs. And they are not too difficult, either.

At a time when the King is meeting tens of thousand of people and political parties are also luring similar number of people, how do you assess the actual mood of Nepalese people?

I don't see all of them are genuine people as most of the crowd were brought through manipulations. So far as people are concerned, people are not with the King or the parties. People want peace but both of them are unable to restore peace. You have seen the situation after the end of ceasefire. The country is demoralized, and the people are suffering both politically and economically. If we continue to lead the country in this manner, the situation will only worsen. Once the country is demoralized, others will get involved in it.

How do you see the state of Nepal India relations?

Nepal has a very close relation with India in terms of geography, culture, religion and linguistic. We can change other things but we cannot change our geography. We have to live together. We must understand and respect each other's difficulties and sensibilities. Nepal has to understand and respect India's sensibilities. If we undermine and ignore India's sensibilities, the relation will be sour. As a big country with close relations, India also has to understand Nepal's sentiments and emotions. Nepal has many dependencies on India. It is a reality that the small country also has to understand its own strength and weakness. Being a close neighbor with so many similarities, Nepal's relations with India is unique. One cannot change this historical and geographical reality. ■

"So far as people are concerned, people are not with the King or the parties. People want peace but both of them are unable to restore peace. You have seen the situation after the end of ceasefire. The country is demoralized, and the people are suffering both politically and economically."

GARMENT EXPORTS

Dream Weavers

Nepal was hardest hit by the phase out of Multi Fiber Agreement, but still the entrepreneurs hope to rebound given new assurances by developed countries

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

In one year since the Multi Fiber Agreement (MFA) expired in January 2005, Nepal's apparel exports dropped overwhelmingly by 40 percent. Only 20 percent of the major industries remain in operation while over 50,000 workers have been laid off. The impact has been nearly total.

In fact, Nepal's garment sector's decline started not only after MFA expired but even before that when the United States – which consumes over 80 percent of total apparels exports from Nepal – granted special preferential access to African countries through African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and to Caribbean nations through similar legislative initiative. Consequently, these countries became not only competitive but also favored destinations for US importers thanks to built-in conditionalities like yarn-forward rule based on which they must use American yarns and fabrics in order to be able to export them to the US.

"In 2004 and 2005, our garment exports declined by 30 percent and 40 percent respectively compared with the figures of respective preceding years," said Kiran Sakha, president of Garment Association of Nepal (GAN).

Nepal: The Hardest Hit LDC

Nepal was the only Asian LDC to suffer such an overwhelming loss after the expiry of MFA and end of quota-based and duty free access to the US market. Garments amounting \$ 50.7 million were exported in 2005 compared to \$ 85.7 million in 2004.

According to Ratnakar Adhikari, program specialist at the UNDP Regional Center, Colombo, Nepal was among the worst performers after the phase out of Textile and Clothing Quotas. In a Textile Tracking report prepared by the Center by studying the situation in 12 Asian countries, it was found that China and India gained substantially whereas Pakistan,

Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Cambodia performed moderately well despite the absence of quota. Unfortunately, Nepal along with Laos, Philippines and Vietnam were not so lucky. Even among the LDCs, Bangladesh and Cambodia have done remarkably well. "In Bangladesh the earnings from garment exports increased by 11 percent in 2005," said Adhikari.

Adds Bijendra Man Shakya, chief, WTO Cell at the GAN, "Less than 20 percent of the registered garment factories



Garment workers: Hardest hit

are now in operation." Three leading garment manufacturers – Shangri la Apparels (Biratnagar), Prabha Apparels (Kathmandu) and Bikas Apparels (Kathmandu) - which in 2003 and 2004 had bagged the GAN Excellence award have already closed down. According to him, Nepal's exports to US dropped by 26.3 percent in Textile and Clothing sector and by 38.2 percent in apparel sector. "Export share of every other LDC in US market is rising except that of Nepal," he said.

Shakya said that the reasons for the marginalization of Nepal include absence

of consolidated output and supply capacity; exclusion from buyer's list of sources; absence of level playing field in US due to discriminatory preferential treatment, among others.

The drop in garment exports has not only directly hurt the economy but has also cast a wide net of adverse impact of human development. "Most of the workers employed in garment sector are unskilled and illiterate. Once they are laid off, they have very limited option for alternative employment. They do not have any social security and the loss of their jobs leads to losses in remittance to rural areas, accentuating rural poverty," said Adhikari.

In Nepal's case, the loss of jobs at this crucial time when the economy is in recession could also spell another ominous trouble. More number of people remaining unemployed could mean more fodder to fuel the fire of insurgency. The

vicious circle could, therefore, stifle the growth and development of the whole country.

Gagging The Garb

The garment industry generates 12 percent of the total industrial employment and earns 40 percent of foreign exchange of overseas export earnings. Since last three/four years, the industry has fallen from one low to another. The erosion of its preferential access to the US market and inability to enhance its trade competitiveness has resulted in a severe situation.

"It is time now for the private sector to ponder why they are unable to benefit. Traditionally, it has been seen that our garment sector flourishes only when others become uncompetitive or weak," said Bharat Bahadur Thapa, Secretary at the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies. "There is no doubt that garment is a priority industry for Nepal but we must first prepare ourselves," he added.

As far as Nepal's garment industry is concerned there are four main export destinations existing currently. The first and foremost is the United States, which provides access to Nepalese apparels as per MFN rules. The second is Canada, which has given preferential market access initiative for LDCs since 2003 through its Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). The third is the European Union (EU), which gives highly preferential access coupled with loose Rules of Origin on the basis of Everything But Arms (EBA) initiative. The fourth is Japan, which also gives LDC status facility through its GSP.

"Interestingly, our export has been maximum in the US, which does not give any preferential treatment when compared with other three markets that provide some sort of preferences," said Shakya.

In the last five years since the EU provided Nepal with the EBA facility along with derogation on Rules of Origin, Nepal's garment exports there grew from US\$ 15 million to US\$ 25 million – an impressive growth at first sight but the one that pales when compared to the growth from US\$ 50 million to US\$ 400 million achieved by Cambodia during the same period.

New Opportunities

Even as the huge decline in the garment exports has pushed the entire garment business towards the brink of collapse, Nepalese entrepreneurs are still full of dreams of rebounding – banking on the dream generated by some recent developments in international trading system.

In the WTO Hong Kong Ministerial last month, the developed countries agreed to provide duty free and quota free access to 97 percent of products from LDCs by 2008. "If we can ensure that our garments are not included in the 3 percent, we can get the preferential

access," hoped Udaya Raj Pandey, general secretary of GAN.

However, there are mixed signals from the US. Its trade representative Rob Portman has already expressed reservations on granting duty free access to apparels from countries like Bangladesh and Cambodia, which export over one billion dollar worth of apparels a year. "And it is still not clear how the developed countries will define the 3 percent and which products they will include in it. Likewise, it is still not clear whether the 3 percent of products will be universal for all the LDCs or be different for different countries. These questions must be answered before we can say anything for sure," added Pandey.

In fact, there are few products of export interest to Nepal even within Textile and Clothing sector. The top five apparel items Nepal exports to the US include cotton trousers/shorts for women/girl; trousers for men/boys; pullovers; t-shirts; and blouse for women/girls. The US charges custom tariff of 8.15 percent, 8.96 percent, 10.5 percent, 16.5 percent and 3.5 percent respectively for these items, according to Shakya.

"If only these products are included in the 97 percent of preferential product list, we will have reasons to rejoice," said another garment entrepreneur. Unfortunately, in recent months due to fierce competition from Chinese manufacturers, in some apparels of Nepal's export interest, prices have dropped by as much as 50 percent rendering Nepalese industries uncompetitive.

However, the decision by Bush administration to re-impose quotas on Chinese-made cotton trousers, cotton knit shirts and underwear could provide a relief to countries like India, Bangladesh and even Nepal. "The quota re-imposition on cotton trousers are of particular interest to us because this is what we have been exporting a lot in the past," said Udaya Raj Pandey. The Bush administration was compelled to take this decision as the Chinese exports surged by as much as 1505 percent on this product.

As per the Chinese protocol of accession to WTO, other countries can slap anti-dumping duties on its good till 2008 by invoking Trade Remedy Measures. In fact, the US had already in the past taken safeguard measures to curb import of Chinese knitted fabrics, dressing gowns, bras and socks.

GAN president Sakha believes that although India has taken immediate place due to restrictions on China, its problems related to labor and capacity could lead to spillover effects of benefit to countries like Nepal in the coming months.

"However, we must set our house in order first. The government must immediately set up Garment Processing Zone near the Birgunj Inland Container Depot and also continue to effectively lobby with the US government for preferential access," said Sakha. Otherwise, the garment industry, which has Rs 6 billion of investment, and provides jobs to tens of thousands of illiterate and unskilled persons, could actually collapse. ■

SAWTEE Bags UNDP Project

The UNDP Regional Center, Colombo, has awarded a project to study the impact of the quota phase out on Nepalese garment exports to South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE). The center is conducting such study on four Asian Least Developed Countries (LDCs) including Nepal. Since the expiry of Multi Fiber Agreement (MFA) in January 2005, Nepal's garment export plummeted by 40 percent. Dr. Manuel Montes, regional program coordinator, UNDP regional center, said that he was excited about the prospects of this project and was looking forward to work with various stakeholders in Nepal. According to Navin Dahal, Executive Director of SAWTEE -the study will include two components – research and advocacy. The research will take 18 months to complete. "We will study where the workers who have lost their jobs gone and what could be the alternatives for them. Our focus will be on the assessment of human development aspect of the impact," said Dahal. "Our objective will be to assist the government in creating enabling environment for sustainable growth of the industry and to identify problems and suggest solutions to the private sector." ■

TARA DEVI

Melody Queen

The demise of the melody queen is an end to a chapter of history in Nepali music

By THAKUR AMGAI

As the city was gripped with the night curfew ordered by the government in order to control what they called the Maoist infiltration in the capital, Tara Devi the top female vocalist in Nepali music for half a century passed away on January 21, marking an end to a chapter of history of Nepali music.

She was 61 and suffering from Parkinson's disease. Earlier on that fateful day, Tara Devi had spent afternoon together with her family and dined together in the evening. After nine she complained of chest pains and was rushed to the Norvic Hospital where the doctors declared her dead.

On hearing the news, singers, musicians and lyricists thronged at her residence at Baneshwore to pay last homage to the melody queen. She was cremated at Pashupati Aryaghat after a squad of music band paid tribute with national anthem in the presence of her relatives, friends and renowned personalities of the music fraternity. The crowd chanted slogans for the immortality of Tara Devi.

The turnout of audience, however, was disappointing. While popular media disseminated news that thousands of music lovers thronged at Pashupati Aryaghat and lined along the road to pay homage to their revered singer, in fact there were hardly three dozen men during the funeral procession. Many people did not know about her demise. The Radio stations barely disseminated the news and devoted programs to her.

Having recorded almost 4,000 songs in her five-decade-long music career, she

not only shaped but ruled the female singing discipline. She became the role model of emerging Nepali singers. Senior singer Meera Rana gives the entire credit to Tara Devi. "I had gone to Radio Nepal forty years to become face-to-face with Tara Devi. She was such a role model," Rana had told this scribe when asked how she had entered the music industry.

Dozens of her songs have become popular among the Nepali audience. To name a few "E Kanchha Thattaima Yo Bainsh Jana Lagyo" a duet with Narayan



Tara Devi: End of an era

Rajdhani

Gopal written by Ratna Shumsher Thapa, "Nau Saya Khola Tarera Jane" written by Yadav Kharel, "Ukali Oraliharuma, Bhanjyang Ani Chautariharuma" written by Chandani Shah are some of her evergreen hits.

Tara Devi was depressed in the latter part of her life after a tragic end to her career at Radio Nepal, family problems and ill health. She ended her thirty-years-long career at Radio Nepal in 2051. Tara Devi was mistreated at Radio Nepal. She was limited to non-gazetted class for most of her career. King Birendra had promoted her to an officer by a decree.

Before retirement she was the chief of music division.

When Ghana Nath Ojha was the executive director of Radio Nepal and Bijaya Kumar Gachchadar the state minister for Information and communication, she was forced to hire a musician. Firm on her stance, Tara Devi's dissidence cost her a humiliating end to her career.

One fine morning, when she went to her office, the attendance book was snatched away, supposedly under orders from higher officials. Shocked Tara Devi quietly came out of her office and sat on the "drops of tears dripping from her eyes."

She quietly walked out of the premise of the organization she had devoted her entire life for. And Radio Nepal, which gave a forum to the singer and acquired much from her, bade farewell to a chapter of Nepali music humiliatingly.

Shortly, after her forced retirement from Radio Nepal, her elder son died of blood cancer adding pain to her injuries.

She attempted to sing a few songs in 1998, with urge from music lovers and coordination of Music Nepal, but was unable to accomplish because of her deteriorating voice. When even sexagenarian singers in Nepal and India are actively singing, this was not the time for her retirement.

The tragedy did not end there. Her husband Shiva Bahadur Shrestha died in a plane crash when he was flying from Jomsom to Pokhara in 2056. Hit by tragic events one after another, Tara Devi, preferred to spend her times in solitude.

Born in January 15, 1946, in Kathmadu in a Karki family, she fell in love with a pilot of Shrestha family. At that time the Nepalese society was very conservative. She married Shiva Bahadur Shrestha, but the families of both the sides did not accept the inter-caste marriage for a long time. She is survived by a daughter and a son.

BOOK

On Personal Employment

Former senior bureaucrat Radharaman Upadhyaya narrates his journey of more than three decades as a civil servant

Nepalese civil service has a long recorded history. In many cases, the history comes from persons' written record of their working. Particularly, foreign writers, British resident representatives to court of Nepal, have made great contributions to collect the record of civil service in Nepal.

For the last five or six decades, only a few senior bureaucrats have written book highlighting their experiences in the book form. Sardar Late Bhim Bahadur Pandey's *Tyas Bhakhat Ko Nepal* (Nepal of that period) was the first-of-its-kind book revealing the bureaucratic system of the Rana period and post Rana period.

Following the restoration of democracy, series of books have been published by different senior bureaucrats collecting the experiences encountered by them.

Entered as a Gazetted third class officer and retired after serving as a chief of Commission of Investigation of Abuse Authority (CIAA), a head of constitutional body, Upadhyaya, who pays high regard to late King Birendra, has seen many ups and downs in his career serving different positions.

Upadhyaya - a graduate of Benaras Hindu University who completed his Master's degree from Tribhuvan University- saw all major scandals and reforms in his civil service in the last 32 years. When he joined civil service, there was Panchayat system in place. Interestingly, he retired working in full-fledged multi-party democracy.

Upadhyaya - who remained unaffected during all the bureaucratic shake-ups in his political career- is

an eye witness of modern history of civil service. From infamous carpet scandal to the civil service shake-up of 1991, Upadhyaya served and survived through tumultuous times.

He discloses many interesting and important things about how civil service functioned in Nepal and how decisions are taken. Working in two different systems, Upadhyaya has enriched his knowledge. Unlike other writers, his style of writing is simple and positive and he tries to avoid harsh words against any politician and/or senior.

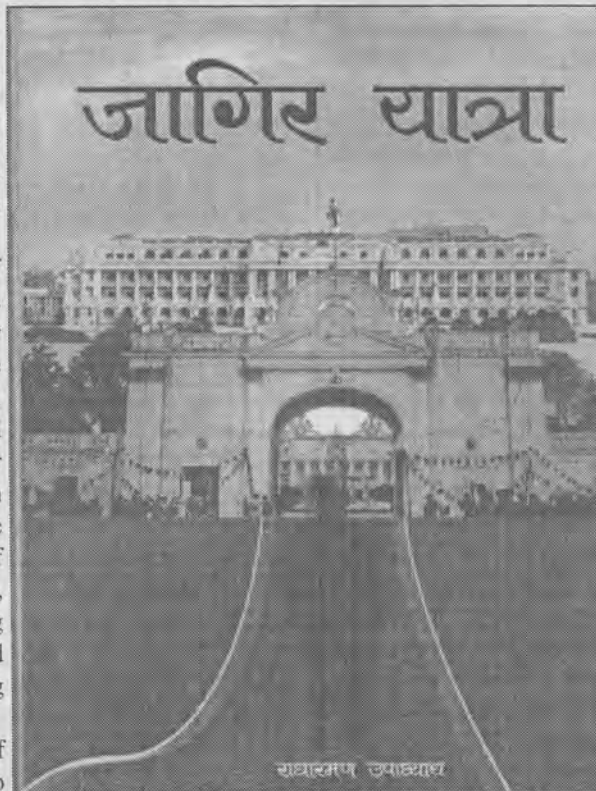
He gives full compliment to late King Birendra as a good King. Most interesting parts of the book are about his experiences of working in various parts of the country. From social to other changes in the civil service, Upadhyaya has rich recollection of the civil service in Nepal but he has just put a small portion of his experiences in the book. There are many areas where one can agree and disagree with Upadhyaya on his narration but he has contributed to history of Nepalese civil service. This is a commendable work.

Had other senior civil servants with such experience followed him, Nepalese civil servants, too, could be enriched with the experiences of their colleagues.

Upadhyaya also shows that one does not necessarily have to be negative and irresponsible to gain market.

Highlights

I have high regards to late King Birendra. He was simple and friendly. When I was working in Home Ministry in 1979 during National Referendum, one day I received a phone call from King Birendra's secretary asking me to come to receive the Royal audience. King's secretary also informed me to maintain secrecy regarding my proposed audience. He asked me to come in informal dress at 8.50 in the morning in front of Royal Palace. I reached there on time and I was taken to meeting room. The King granted me audience for about two and a half hours. The King asked me several questions on how to make laws paving the way for free and fair referendum. King Birendra ordered me to take all necessary arrangements to amend the laws in accordance with the democratic aspiration of people. He even suggested me to come to his office if necessary. Whatever the intention the King has, people with vested interests took every step to defeat multi-party democracy and election result came out in favor of party-less system.



Mero Jagir Yatra (My Journey of Employment)

By Radharaman Upadhyaya

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Pakistan's War On Terrorism

By SHAHID SALEEM AFZAL

Terrorism is a serious issue, which has plagued many nations around the world. These nations are gripped with fear as the most deadly weapon of the terrorist is surprise. A terrorist strikes without warning when people are busy in day to day activities as usual, thereby, causing maximum loss to life. In order to arrive at the roots of terrorism, we may go through Amnesty International Report of November 1995. The report outlines international responsibility for the birth of terrorism and describes how playing politics at times can backfire. Excerpts of the report are as under :

The Afghan crisis began in December 1979 when Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan. Mujahedin and tribal groups responded by mounting armed opposition to the Soviet presence and the world eagerly lined up to offer political and military support to the various factions.

For over a decade vast quantities of arms and ammunition poured into a country that was shattered by conflict. The states primarily responsible were the former Soviet Union (including its successor states of the Commonwealth of Independent States), the United States of America (USA) and its West European allies, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Iran. All, either sold arms directly to Afghan groups, financed arms purchases or facilitated transfers through their territory. The Soviet Union's aim after its invasion of Afghanistan was to install a pro-Soviet government. The USA's aim was to secure Soviet withdrawal. Countries in the area close to Afghanistan hoped to increase their influence in the region.

After the Afghan war, OBL (Osama bin Laden, heading the Al Qaida network) focused on and opposed US military presence on Saudi soil. Obsessed with the notion that Western governments were treating Muslims unfairly, he turned against the US and the Saudi government and masterminded the 9/11 attacks.

Fighting terrorism is not easy. The situation has been complicated by inordinate handling by the West. Terrorism cannot be eradicated by military solution alone. The most trumpeted propaganda by the US and the UK about presence of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Iraq and subsequent invasion of Iraq has made things worse. The statement by President Bush, comparing the war on terrorism with the crusades has given the problem a religious dimension. Terrorism may be countered militarily but it is also necessary to win the hearts and minds. Pakistan has taken bold steps to counter terrorism. Agreements have been concluded with a host of countries around the world, pledging cooperation in counter terrorism. The latest joint declaration was made on 29 July 2005 with a 10-member Association of Southeast Asia Nations (Asean).

Laws have also been enacted to curb terrorism. In January 2004, the Federal Cabinet approved amendments in the Anti-Terrorist Act 1997. It was decided to amend the Act in light of UN Security Council Resolutions, raising the minimum and maximum punishment for offences relating to financing of terrorism and making it a non-bailable offence. The minimum punishment for this offence has been raised to four years and maximum punishment to ten years. Any individual or entity, involved in

financing of terrorism shall now be punished with rigorous imprisonment for a term of four to ten years in place of the original punishment of six months to five years as provided in Section 11 (N) of the Act. All societies and other institutions which have a potential to act as conduits for financing terrorism are obliged to establish bank accounts and maintain information about their employees and clients, failing which they will face fine and revocation of license.

Pakistan has also pledged to ensure that no terrorist activity takes place from its soil. It has, therefore, instituted several measures to curb such activity in all forms. The Pak-Afghan border remains a sensitive area where terrorist elements are believed to be present. Pakistan's security forces conducted their first operation against the Al Qaida in the tribal areas bordering Afghanistan in June 2002. Since then such operations have continued off and on gaining momentum with time. The toll on security forces has been very high but the government is determined to ensure no terrorism takes place from Pakistani soil at all costs. More than 300 Pakistani soldiers have died in counter terrorism operations in these areas, though the military has treaded very cautiously and has engaged the locals politically as well. Operations in the area still continue.

Al Qaida has sympathizers worldwide and there is no dearth of volunteers. During Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, most of these volunteers came from madrassa in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Madrassa are Islamic religious schools, whose traditions date back almost a thousand years. During the 1980s, the Madrassah system underwent a complete change. The war in Afghanistan brought from across the border millions of refugees and the radicalism of a jihad movement. Thousands of new Madrassahs were formed, supported by foreign donations and the US Government. The schools also acted as orphanages for the many parentless victims of the war. Students from these madrassa were used as mercenaries to rout the Soviets from Afghanistan.

After the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the madrassa still continued to flourish. Today, there are thousands of such schools within Pakistan. Some teach a distorted view of Islam with the exclusion of basic skills such as simple math, science, or geography. They have skills only to be imams or assistants at mosques, despite the fact that there are not enough jobs in these areas for them. Either more schools must open, thus expanding the problem, or the young men are sentenced to perpetual unemployment.

To overcome the political, religious and economic problems originating from madrassas, it has become imperative for the government to reform them. The government's new scheme requires that the schools' curriculum include modern disciplines and they disclose sources of funding. Though the reform process is a gigantic task, but the government is determined to ensure that madrassa do not produce extremists. President Pervez Mushrraf announced on 29 July 2005 that foreign students attending seminaries in the country would be ordered to leave as part of a crackdown on militant groups. All seminaries will be

required to register with the government by the end of the year. The ban will also apply to holders of dual nationality.

Pakistan is doing its utmost to curb terrorism at international and domestic level. President Pervez Musharraf has adopted a strategy of social reforms popularly known as 'Enlightened Moderation'. An article published in the Washington Post on June 1, 2004, gives details of his strategy to remedy the situation and ensure lasting peace worldwide. An excerpt of his writing which is crucial to peace is as follows.

My idea for untangling this knot is Enlightened Moderation, which I think is a win for all, for both the Muslim and non-Muslim worlds. It is a two pronged strategy. The first part is for the Muslim world to shun militancy and extremism and adopt the path of socioeconomic uplift. The second is for the West, and the United States in particular, to seek to resolve all political disputes with justice and to aid in the socioeconomic betterment of the deprived Muslim world.

We need to understand that the root cause of extremism and militancy lies in political injustice, denial and deprivation. Political injustice to a nation or a people, when combined with stark poverty and illiteracy, makes for an explosive mix. It produces an acute sense of hopelessness and powerlessness. A nation suffering from these lethal ills is easily available for the propagation of militancy and the perpetration of extremist, terrorist acts. It is cannon fodder in a war of terrorism.

I would be remiss if, in defense of the people of my faith, I did not trace the genesis of the Muslims being labeled as extremists or terrorists. Before the anti-Soviet Afghan war, the sole cause of unrest and concern in the Muslim world was the Palestine dispute. It was this issue that led to a unity of Muslims, in favor of Palestinians and against Israel. The Afghan war of the 1980s, supported and facilitated by the West as a proxy war against the Soviet Union, saw the emergence and nurturing of pan-Islamic militancy. Islam as a religion was used to harness worldwide Muslim support. Subsequently, the atrocities and ethnic cleansing against Muslims in Bosnia, the Chechen uprising, the Kashmir freedom struggle and the invigorated Palestinian intifada all erupted in the '90s after the Soviet disintegration. To make matters worse, the militancy that was sparked in Afghanistan – which should have been defused after the Cold War – was instead allowed to fester for a decade.

During this time, hostility among fighters from the Muslim world turned multidirectional, seeking new conflict zones in places where Muslims were suffering. Enter the birth of al Qaeda. Meanwhile, the Palestinian intifada kept gathering momentum, uniting and angering Muslims across the globe. And then came the bombshell of Sept. 11, 2001, and the angry reaction of the United States against Taliban and al Qaeda in Afghanistan. All subsequent reactions of the United States, its domestic responses against Muslims, its attitude toward Palestine and the operation in Iraq, led to total polarization of the Muslim masses against the United States. It is not Islam as a religion that has created militancy and extremism but rather political disputes that have led to antagonism among the Muslim masses.

This is all history now. What has been done cannot be undone. But this situation cannot be allowed to fester, a remedy must be found. I call on the West to help resolve these political

disputes with justice, as part of a commitment to a strategy of Enlightened Moderation.

Recently, talking about Islamabad's successes in the war on terror, President Musharraf said Pakistan had "broken the vertical and horizontal command and communication links of Al Qaeda, which means that they have ceased to exist as a homogenous, well-controlled, centralized force." The President further said that Pakistan's strategic assets were secure and in safe hands and there was no possibility that they would fall into the wrong hands.

The command structure of Al Qaeda has broken, but terrorism rages on. Al Qaeda no longer exists as an organization but is globally present as a concept. Isolated independent terrorist groups around the world are carrying out ruthless attacks in the name of Al Qaeda. Counter terrorism operations at the international level must continue with full force. But we must also pay heed to Musharraf's concept of enlightened moderation and two pronged strategy, so that the sacrifices made by the Pakistani nation and other countries do not go waste. It has become more of a political problem and cannot be solved through military means alone. ■

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SUNITA SUBBA

Singing For Self-Satisfaction

Sunita remains firm on her distinct taste of evergreen modern songs

By THAKUR AMGAI

'Thamera Kina Chhodyau Hatharu'
'Hatma Chura, Nidharma Tika, Na Pote Galama'

'Ma Ta Tare Bhir, Timi Lahara'

Having sung dozens of songs that have become evergreen hits like the ones mentioned above, Sunita Subba has established herself as a popular singer in the domain of Nepali music.

Merely in her late thirties, Subba has got such wide popularity and the maturity of her voice makes one hard to believe that Sunita is only in her mid-career. However, considering the time she started to sing it's been a long walk.

Born in 2024 B.S. in Kathmandu, Subba started singing at contests hardly when she was nine. In 2033, she won the second prize by singing Narayan Gopal's 'Ishwar Tainle Racher Pheri Kasari Bigaris' at the children song contest organized at Bal Mandir on the occasion of Children's day and the birthday of queen mother Ratna Rajya Laxmi Shah. After some years, she topped the contest with a patriotic song 'Himalle Bhanchha Nepallai' written by Gyan Bahadur Shrestha and won the opportunity to go to the erstwhile USSR for a one-month-long international children's camp.

Since early childhood, Sunita showed special inclination towards music. As she listened to popular songs sung by Narayan Gopal, Aruna Lama,

among others, she started mimicking them unknowingly before she was grown up enough to understand music and decide about her career. On noticing her talent to sing, teachers at AVM placed her in the 'music group' during extra curricular activities. This led her to participate in Radio Programs and contests.

Before she could understand anything, she was mingling well with the personalities of the music fraternity. Amid

First and foremost I sing for self satisfaction,"
says Subba. "I think the audience
will enjoy the song only
if the singer enjoys singing it."
This is probably one reason that
Sunita Subba is least moved by the trend of
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Despite all possibilities, she remains
firm on her distinct taste of evergreen
modern songs that survive for ages rather
than appear as a flash in the pan.

this, veteran musician Ram Thapa offered her a modern song. After passing the voice test, she recorded 'Thamera Kina Chhodyau Hatharu' in 2040 - the first modern song in her voice. The very first song became very popular among the audience. Today, even after Sunita Subba has given dozens of hits to the audience, many people still know her by this song.

After passing High School, Sunita joined Padma Kanya College with a major in music where she got the opportunity to hone her musical talent with veteran teachers like Gopal Yonjan, Deepak

Jangam, Rang Rao Kadambari, Padhma Kadambari, Nhoochche Dangol and Shree Ram Acharya. She also learned classical music in private with Guruji Krishna Narayan Shrestha.

With evergreen hits like 'Timi Tare Bhir, Ma Ta Lahara' and 'Nirdosh Mera Khusi', Sunita Subba's songs give a distinct flavor of folk tunes amalgamated with the disciplines of classical music. She says, she is careful in selecting wordings of the song before singing and the style of presentation moves her more than the content.

"First and foremost I sing for self satisfaction," says Subba. "I think the audience will enjoy the song only if the singer enjoys singing it."

This is probably one reason that Sunita Subba is least moved by the trend of commercialization in Nepali music.

Despite all possibilities, she remains firm on her distinct taste of evergreen modern songs that survive for ages rather than appear as a flash in the pan.

Subba has five albums to her credit. After releasing a collection of old songs through album 'Sangitanjali' in 2052, she released 'Aalap', 'Triveni', 'Sparsha' and 'Antaranga'. In addition, her songs are collected in dozens of other collection albums. She has over 300 songs including folk and modern. She is now preparing for her sixth album with songs

slightly different from the previous ones.

In recognition to her contribution to Nepali music, she has been felicitated by several organizations and won awards like 'Koili Devi Sangeet Samman' and 'Narayan Gopal Youth Outstanding Music Award'. But more than awards, Sunita says she values, love and reverence of the audience. "Wherever I go for stage shows whether in Nepal or abroad, I feel overwhelmed by the respect the audience show," Subba says. "And this fame is what I have achieved by singing."

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