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The National Newsmagazine

SPOTLIGHT

Mar 17- 23, 2006

Community Mediation



Justice In The Neighborhood

Politics : Handicapped Leaders
 Chinese Leader's Visit : Message From North

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SPOTLIGHT

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The ongoing political turmoil is not an entirely new phenomenon in Nepalese society as five decade long history of the country is replete with incidents of political instabilities. One can find the continuity of destabilization, in one way or other, since the revolution of 1951. That revolution was itself a result of change of power balance around Nepal. Despite many changes in international environment following the end of cold war, Nepal continues to struggle to survive as an independent nation and deliver goods to the people. Between two major military powers India and China, Nepal needs not a military build up but the institutional guarantees. Nepal's survival as a peaceful, viable economic state requires, first of all, the congenial atmosphere to accomplish institutional building process. For this, the country needs to hold a free and fair election through credible arrangements accommodating all political players.

Experiences have shown that Nepal can evolve and strengthen its democratic institutions from top to bottom only through elections. Nepal does have an experience of parliamentary democracy as the country has already held three subsequent parliamentary elections and two elections for the local bodies. One can very well compare the consequences of these two situations having or not having the institution of parliament and elected local bodies. In the past, elected institutions helped to improve the situation. Even in the background of a great popular political upheaval of 1990s- when all its supporting institutions faced challenge including the traditionally respected institution of monarchy - the election of the House of Representatives in 1991 completely changed the mood of people. The agenda were completely different as voters at the grass root were put into the focal point and all development programs were framed enjoying the motivation of popular support at the grass root. Though there was a deliberate design to omit the role of grass root self governance, democratization at the top compelled the parliament and the government to build up democratic institutions at the grass root. Having got no modern infrastructures like the colonized countries, Nepal had to develop everything from scratch. Despite lack of experience the performance of local self-governance had been noticed as an exemplary compared with other countries of the region. In consonance with that, various professional and interest groups started articulating their interest through associations, consumers or user groups. Since the last few years, Nepal has neither the elected parliament nor it has village self governance but the functioning of the user and consumer groups is quite visible and the interests articulated by various self governing user groups have compensated the loss of elected bodies to a certain extent.

The recent predicament has left a great lesion to the country considering its size of geography and population. Nepal has a distinct task to accomplish as the political and economic developments follow their own unique modality in Nepal. A small development at the grass root can bring about a sea change in the quality of life of the people. Nobody can understand better about the effect of democratic institutions than Nepal's friends from the western democratic countries. Some of them have come forward to tell this truth to our narrow minded political persons. It sounds harsh and bitter to listen to but such suggestions provide a time-tested solution for a country like Nepal. Thanks to the strong presence of functional grass root user organizations and community groups, Nepal has not reached to the level of devastation as many countries of Asia and Africa that are hit by similar conflict. Compared with Afghanistan, where the western countries have made Herculean efforts, Nepal is still a very peaceful and organized society with popularly promulgated and practiced democratic constitution. The country has all necessary institutions of democratic governance and its Supreme Court has come out, from time to time, with a landmark judgment remaining a highly respected institution. The only lacking bodies are the elected bodies at the center as well as in the villages.

Thus, the most important task in Nepal is to conduct elections for the Parliament as well as the village governance. These two events would roll the ball of democracy back. Naturally, there is no alternative way to integrate and involve the multi-ethnic, multi-racial and multi-lingual nation between the two powerful neighbors and to ensure its survival in unity and prosperity. Some even blame lack of visionary leaders for present crisis. This kind of statement is common in a country where democratic institutions are completely lacking. Nobody talks about the need of a prophetic or visionary leader for a country like Switzerland, Sweden, Britain and America. It is the democratic institutions, which propel the representative of the people to fulfill the will. The dedicated and determined leaders like late B.P. Koirala can emerge through democratic institutions. Along with prosperity and peace, the elections will bring about dedicated leadership. The question is how to hold it in a credible manner by accommodating all political players. The elections would not have any meaning if it were held in a manner similar to the recently held controversial municipal elections.

Keshab
Keshab Poudel
Managing Editor



Implement In More Districts

The cover story this issue about rural tourism provided very detailed and analytical information about how rural tourism programs were changing the lives of local population and helping to reduce poverty "TRPAP: Generating A New Hope" (SPOTLIGHT March 10). The implementation of the tourism for rural poverty alleviation program (TRPAP) has benefited some villages of districts like Chitwan, Rasuwa, Taplejung, Dolpa, Rupandehi, Solukhumbu and Taplejung. Such a program should be replicated and implemented in other needy districts that are feasible for tourism promotion. The implementation of such a program would also be very effective in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDG)s.

Kedar Nyaupane
Lagankhel

Efficient Tool

The implementation of rural tourism program has been seen as an efficient tool to reduce poverty and for social economic transformation of the benefiting communities "TRPAP: Generating A New Hope" (SPOTLIGHT March 10). Places like Ghandruk of Annapurna region, where tourism began with the concept of developing home-stay facilities, have seen great transformations in terms of development. The economic status and the lifestyle of the people of that area has taken a turn after tourists started visiting their places. Likewise, many other places of Annapurna, Langtang and Everest region have benefited in a similar manner. However, the tragedy is that such programs were limited to those few areas. Hundreds of other places that could attract tourists are lying unexploited because of the lack of awareness among the local people. As the rural population of Nepal is unaware of their resources and lacks technical know how to start and operate enterprises. So, it is important to create awareness among them and train them to use their natural resources for tourism. When rural tourism has already been seen as an efficient tool for poverty reduction, the planers and the implementing government and non-governmental agencies should take

proactive roles in taking programs similar to the TRPAP in as many as possible districts.

Kiran Aryal
Samakhushi

Generating Little Hopes

While you have written that the implementation of Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation (TRPAP) has changed the lives of local population and generated a new hope, my observation is quite different "TRPAP: Generating A New Hope" (SPOTLIGHT March 10). TRPAP is a project in which hefty dollars is poured from international donors like UNDP and SNV. TRPAP, too, has been spending lavishly in publicity, trainings and preparing and disseminating promotional materials such as CDs, brochures, posters and booklets. It may be too early to evaluate and criticize on the outcome of the program. But the success of the rural tourism program is certainly highly inflated and fabricated in the media. We visited one of the areas promoted by TRPAP Autumn, last year. The local people were not convinced that we were purely tourist who visited the place for holidaying. Talking to them, we found that there had been no 'tourists' like us so far in the area. We were highly shocked as we had been convinced

by the promotional materials launched by TRPAP. The materials provided by TRPAP were deceptive in themselves because, on visiting the place we found very little of what was informed there. Despite this fact, the programs of TRPAP have got been projected as highly successful and operating by the media. We also found the answer to that projection after visiting there. TRPAP and other professional organizations like Trekking Agents Association of Nepal (TAAN) and Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN) spent a lot of money in sponsoring journalists to visit their project areas and write about them. So, I found it quite deceptive on parts of both the TRPAP as well as the journalists to project real ground issues in a fabricated way. After all that will impart negative impression on prospective tourists who believe on the write ups of the journalists and the promotional materials of TRPAP. What I found after trekking in the area for about a week was that the natural beauty of the areas is certainly wonderful and cannot be exaggerated but the services and the facilities en route were a let down.

Dinesh Khadka
Chabahil

Focus On Educational Demands

The recently held elections of Free Students Union has given a new leadership to the students "FSU POLLS: Students At Center-stage" (SPOTLIGHT March 10). The teaching-learning activities at the colleges, which had been largely disrupted before the polls, have started to run smoothly after the completion of the polls. However, the recently elected student leaders continue to focus on the political issues rather and educational issues. At present, the need of the students is a conducive environment regular studies in colleges. There are many other issues such as the exam system, physical infrastructure of colleges and admissions. However, the student leaders keep mum on this vital student issues and create a hues and cries over political issues. If they are the leaders of students, they should have raised the voice and needs of the students.

Bishnu Prasad Regmi
Tri-Chandra College, Ghantaghar

Maoists Put Forth Three Options Before The Parties

An influential leader of the Maoists has revealed that they have put forth three options before the party leaders in the ongoing talks with the seven party leaders in New Delhi, India. According to a news report of Nepal Samacharpatra daily, Dev Gurung, a central leader and a member of Maoist negotiating team in the past, said that the Maoists have urged the parties to agree upon common slogan, single front, parallel government and constituent assembly elections. In all of their three options, the Maoists have underscored elections to constituent assembly. According to the news report, the Maoists have put forth the first option urging the broader political conference among democratic forces that would lead to an interim government, which, in turn, would hold constituent assembly elections within six months. "During our talks, the parties have stressed on restoration of parliament," Gurung said referring to ongoing talks in New Delhi. "But the parliament that can be dissolved or restored as per the wishes of the King is not a parliament in a real sense," Gurung said, while addressing a gathering of principals of 150 schools of Rapti zone in Ghartigaon, Rolpa. "Even if the restoration of parliament is essential, we have urged the parties to do so at their own initiative," Gurung added. The second option, thus, is to restore the parliament at "people's level", after which the parties need to seek international and UN recognition. The third option is to hold broader roundtable conference among political and civil society forces leading up to a formation of an interim government of general consensus, which will hold the constituent assembly elections. Gurung further revealed that the parties had not yet accepted any of the three demands. "The parties are not coming at the pace that was required," he said, adding, "Perhaps out of fear of Moriarty's remarks." Likewise, the news report adds that, during the ongoing talks, the parties have been demanding the Maoists to withdraw bandh, cease violent activities and dissolve "people's

army" and "people's government." *Nepal Samacharpatra daily reports.*

Civilians Injured In Blasts

At least 12 persons including two kids have been injured in separate bomb blasts by the Maoists in Mahottari, Bara and Rolpa districts. In Mahottari, six persons were injured in a blast in jungle area near Tuteshwore by the side of Mahendra highway. The passengers had been forced to walk along the highway due to Maoist-called bandh in the area. In Bara district, two security personnel and two civilians were injured when the Maoists hurled bomb in Kalaiya. Likewise, in Rolpa, two kids were injured when they played with a bomb left behind by the Maoists in Rangsi of western Rolpa. *Kantipur daily reports.*

Bista And Thapa Differ With Dr. Giri

Incumbent senior ministers have differed with a remark made by vice chairman of the Council of Ministers Dr. Tulsi Giri. Responding to queries by journalists on how they took Giri's remarks that "unity among constitutional forces would not resolve the problem of terrorism," Kirti Nidhi Bista, another vice chairman of the Council of Ministers said, "It is not that the problems can be resolved without the involvement of political parties. Parties are essential pillar of democracy. Parties and government must go together," Bista said, adding, "I don't know in what context Dr. Giri made the remark. You (journalists) better ask him to clarify." Likewise, Home Minister Kamal Thapa said that he believed there ought to be cooperation and understanding among parliamentary forces. "I do not want to comment on Dr. Giri's remarks. But what I just said is the official view of the government," Thapa said. He, however, added that the parties-Maoist dialogue is not a "good sign." *Kantipur daily reports.*

Rights Council Set To Replace UN Commission

The United Nations Human Rights Commission is expected to be replaced by the new United Nations Human Rights Council soon. The meeting for the purpose

has been postponed to early next week with an aim to secure the "widest possible consensus." The United States is learnt to have reservations concerning the formation of the new Human Rights Council. UN General Assembly president Jan Eliasson postponed the meeting to Monday, according to the UN website. "The US feels that as proposed the Council, which would replace the much-criticized Human Rights Commission, does not go far enough and has called for re-negotiation," said the website. Such a move of the US has reportedly "chagrined" the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. European Union countries and associated countries have reportedly assured the US that they would not elect rights violators to the council. "As proposed, the council would have a higher status and greater accountability than the commission that meets yearly in Geneva. It would be a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, meet year-round as opposed to the six-week annual session of the commission, and its members would be elected by a majority of all 191 UN members," the UN said. The council members, elected by the assembly, would be judged on their human rights records. However, they can be "suspended" from the council if they themselves commit gross and systematic violation. Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Ramesh Nath Pandey has stalled his plan to attend the 62nd session of the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva following the ongoing debate concerning the transition of the Commission to the Council. However, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal will continue to work in Nepal under its mandate even if the commission is replaced by the council. Likewise, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva will continue its office. *The Himalayan Times daily reports.*

Thapa Asks India To Become Vigilant Against Smuggling Of Explosives

Home Minister Kamal Thapa has drawn the attention of Indian government to become vigilant and control the smuggling of explosives (into Nepal). Talking to reporters after returning from inspecting Ilam, Thapa said, "I want to

draw the attention of Indian government to become vigilant and control the smuggling of explosives by the Maoists." A week ago, police had seized a huge cache of explosives that was being smuggled into Nepal from Sunauli point. Minister Thapa said that the nature and quantity of the explosives indicated that they were bought from industry not open market. Likewise, Thapa added that the media reports that leaders of seven parties are meeting Maoist leaders in New Delhi are not "good signs." Thapa said, "They ignore the call of the state but rush to Delhi durbar to hold dialogue with a group that wants to destroy democracy and constitutional monarchy through violence and killing. This is not a good sign." *Kantipur daily reports.*

NOC Not Getting Custom Refund From IOC

Three years after an agreement was reached to refund custom collected by Indian Oil Corporation on fuel it sells to Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC), the latter is yet to receive any money. As the price in which IOC sells petroleum products to NOC includes local Indian taxes, Nepalese consumers have to pay double tax. The custom refund that IOC owes NOC has reached the total of Rs 1.12 billion. In India, diesel draws 5 percent and petrol draws 10 percent custom duty. Since 2002, Nepal started to buy refined petroleum products from India instead of buying the fuel directly from international market. Currently, NOC buys fuel from IOC at Refinery Terminal

Pricing (RTP), which includes import price plus transport cost, insurance premium and custom duty. These apart, IOC also charges NOC railway transport cost, marketing and storing costs as well as profit. Since NOC is currently in a situation of financial bankruptcy, the custom refund amount can become a huge relief if IOC pays its dues. Officials say efforts should be made at diplomatic level to resolve this issue. *Kantipur daily reports.*

New Dispute Surfaces In Maoists

Within months of the patch-up between two seniormost leaders of the CPN (Maoist), two central committee members of the underground outfit have publicly criticized party supremo Prachanda, and no. 2 in the party, Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, alleging that their acts showcase what they called "non-proletarian tendencies." In a joint statement issued on Monday, central committee members of the CPN (Maoist) Rabindra Shrestha and comrade Anukul have leveled personal and ideological allegations against party chairman Prachanda alias Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Dr. Bhattarai. In their statement issued on behalf of the little known "New Cultural Revolutionary Group," Shrestha and Anukul (believed to be central committee member Mani Thapa) narrated how ideological, political, organizational, military and cultural deflections had taken place among two top leaders of the party. Referring to the public war of words

between Prachanda and Bhattarai, the two central committee members said both of them had nearly pushed the party on the verge of vertical split. They also criticized party supremo, Prachanda's statement in an exclusive interview with Kantipur daily. In his interview, Prachanda had said that his party would accept the outcome of the constituent assembly elections even if the majority of the people delivered their verdict in favor of monarchy or active monarchy. They have also alleged both Prachanda and Bhattarai of living in the safety of "foreign land" for eight out of ten years of the Maoist 'people's war.' The unusual public criticism of the two top leaders from within the Maoist party has come just within weeks of the completion of ten years of the Maoist "people's war." Shrestha and Thapa have also alleged Prachanda and Dr. Bhattarai of not sending their children in the frontline of the rebellion. They have also called upon what they called "new generation" within the party to carry out "revolution within revolution" in a new way. There has been no official reaction to the latest statement by the two dissident leaders from the CPN (Maoist) leadership as yet. Meanwhile, a day after Shrestha and Thapa issued the statement challenging the top Maoist leadership, the Maoist chairman Prachanda reacted with a statement announcing the expulsion of the two from the party. Prachanda has termed them 'counter-revolutionary.' *Compiled from reports.* ■



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Gorkhapatra

UNABLE TO MEET THE GROWING EXPENDITURES, THE government is set to draw the overdraft of Rs 3.5 billion from the Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB). Last year, too, the government had drawn the overdraft of Rs 2.5 billion. According to NRB Act, the government can draw overdraft of about 5 percent of previous year's revenue collection. Last year, the government had collected the revenue of Rs 70 billion. According to Finance Ministry, unavailability of foreign assistance in budgetary programs and poverty alleviation programs has forced the government to draw overdraft. This year the government had aimed to raise Rs 11.85 billion as internal loan – of which the government has already raised Rs 3.13 billion. Likewise, since the government had to invest Rs 1 billion in Nepal Oil Corporation as non-budgetary expenditure, the pressure on the spending has increased. Although the government aims to collect Rs 81 billion revenue this year, experts say only Rs 75-77 billion can be collected.

THE UNITED STATES HAS SAID THE HUMAN RIGHTS situation in Nepal has further deteriorated over the last few years and that both the Maoist rebels and security forces have committed numerous human rights abuses last year. The 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2005' released by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in Washington on Wednesday (March 8) said, "The (Nepal) government's poor human rights record worsened and the government continued to commit many serious abuses, both during and after the state of emergency that suspended all fundamental rights except for habeas corpus." The report further said, "During the year, Maoists continued their campaign of torturing, killing, bombing, conscripting children, kidnapping, extorting, forcing closures of schools and businesses, and committing other serious and gross human rights abuses." The report quoted INSEC, a Kathmandu-based human rights group, as saying that security forces killed 964 suspected Maoists while the insurgents killed 276 civilians during the year. A total of 1,305 persons remained disappeared since the beginning of insurgency in 1996 and government is yet to confirm the custody of 901 people. Similarly, the Maoists were responsible for the abduction of 46,794 persons, and the disappearance of 8,715 persons during the year, the report added.

TALKING TO REPORTERS VIA VIDEO CONFERENCING, another senior US official said that the US "is firm in its stance that the King should reach out to the political parties to restore democratic process in Nepal and address the Maoist insurgency." Elizabeth Millard, senior director at the National Security Council for Central

and South Asia, said, "It's very critical for the Maoists to give up violence and the King to reach out to the political parties." Millard, who until recently was the Deputy Chief of Mission at US Embassy in Kathmandu, said, "Dialogue does not mean fighting. It means talking. We are not looking at the words but the actions." Saying that the US was worried that the "deteriorating situation could lead to chaos", she made it known that the US would continue to send its emissaries to Nepal to discuss with different sides about the current situation. Millard also informed that US President George W Bush during his recent visit to South Asia had extensive discussion with Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh on Nepal and added that the Maoists should give up violence. The US official, who accompanied President Bush during his South Asian tour, said that though she was unable to divulge the details of what transpired between Bush and the Indian PM over the Nepal situation, the US believed that the February 1, 2005, royal step was a step backward. "February 1 was very troubling for us," she said, adding, "It was unhelpful also in terms of addressing the Maoist insurgency and the situation [since February 1] has deteriorated." Even as the US and India have common view on Nepal, the US however, "does not see Nepal from India's eye", she clarified. Citing strategic location of Nepal – between two regional superpowers, China and India - she said the US would also be discussing the Nepal situation with Chinese officials. US has "deep concern" over the human rights abuses by the Maoists and the state, she said, informing that the US military assistance to Nepal remains under constant review. "I think we have to continue to look at the developments. Arms assistance [to Nepal] is constantly under review," said she. On a question about former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's upcoming visit to the US, Millard said it was "good news" but she had no information about the visit. "I am very, very pleased to learn about Deuba's release [from custody] and the Supreme Court's decision to dissolve the RCCC (Royal Commission for Control of Corruption). But I am unaware about the tour."

THE GOVERNMENT HAS REVISED ITS EARLIER estimation of economic growth rate in the current fiscal year. Based on the economic performance of the six months of the fiscal year, the government has reduced its growth estimates from 4.5 percent to 3.5 percent. Last year, the economy had grown only by 2.33 percent. This year, agriculture production has decreased while the growth of non-agriculture sector, too, is not encouraging. Inflation is surging while foreign assistance have nose-dived. Last year, agreements for foreign assistance of Rs 23.12 billion had been signed while the same has come down to Rs 14.28 billion in the review period. In the midterm review, the government has also estimated that inflation would reach 7 percent. The revenue collection, too, has increased only by 5.9 percent to reach Rs 31.58 billion. The government had expected to see revenue grow by 14 percent.

THE UNITED NATIONS IN NEPAL MARKED THIS YEAR'S International Women's Day with a reminder of the plight of Nepalese women caught up in the decade-long conflict. UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Matthew Kahane, expressed deep concern over the deteriorating condition of women nationwide. "War is mostly driven by men, yet too often women are the primary victims, not because women are vulnerable per se but because the circumstances of conflict make them vulnerable." Kahane said. "Sparing women and girls from rape and sexual slavery is not just about human rights, but also about human decency and dignity. The targeting of women and girls destroys peoples' capacities to create communal life," he said.

“It is not that the problems can be resolved without the involvement of political parties. Parties are essential pillar of democracy. Parties and government must go together.”

Kirti Nidhi Bista, vice chairman of the council of ministers, responding to queries by journalists on how he views his colleague Dr. Tulsi Giri's recent remarks that unity among constitutional forces would not resolve the problem of terrorism.

* * *

“I am not ready to accept the argument that the entire problem will be resolved once the King and the parties join hands. If that was the case, why did the terrorist problem intensify when the King and the parties were together between 1996-2005?”

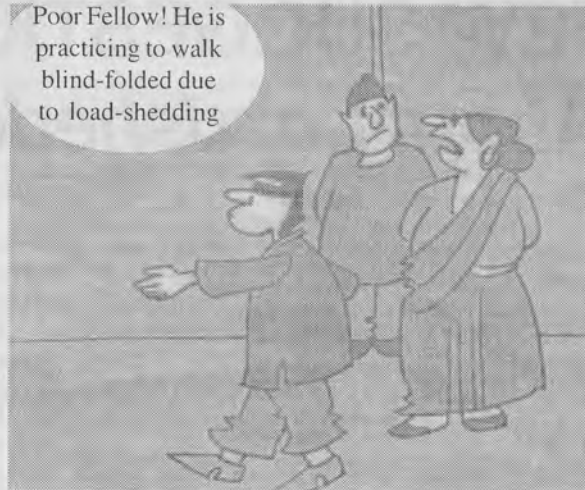
Dr. Tulsi Giri, vice chairman of council of ministers, addressing a program in Kathmandu.

* * *

“Though we have no assurance that there would be a breakthrough, I wish I could say I am optimistic; but, let me say we are certainly hopeful.”

Donald Camp, United States Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, addressing a press conference after his visit to Nepal.

* * *



“To allow the RNA to run FM station in contravention of RNA Act is to politicize the army.”

Dipta Prakash Shah, former Brigadier General of RNA and former member of National Assembly, speaking at a function in Kathmandu.

* * *

“The parties ‘handed over democracy’ at the suitable place.”

Rajeshwar Devkota, president of Rastriya Prajatantra Party (Rastrabadi), in Agenda.

* * *

“This constitution is not a barrier to go for Constituent Assembly and so, the constituent assembly would not be

unconstitutional. Constituent Assembly is the best solution to the present crisis.”

Laxman Prasad Aryal, former judge of the Supreme Court and one of the draftsmen of the 1990 constitution, in Rajdhani.

* * *

“A number of UML leaders have harassed me.”

Kunta Sharma, former member of parliament (MP) from Sunsari, in Jana Astha.

* * *

“The parties and the King are holding telephone sets. But, the line between them remains disconnected.”

Ravindra Nath Sharma, leader of Rastriya Prajatantra Party, in Jana Bhawana

* * *

TRANSITION

FORMED: A five-member committee chaired by **Sudip Pathak**, a member of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), to immediately locate the whereabouts of the disappeared persons, NHRC.

PROMULGATED: Labor Ordinance (second amendment) 2006 and Special

Court Ordinance (first amendment) 2006, by the King, in accordance with the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal, 1990.

ARRIVED: **Sang Jung**, newly appointed Korean Ambassador to Nepal, to bear office.

ACCREDITED: **Hiranya Lal Shrestha**, Royal Nepalese Ambassador to the Russian Federation, also as the ambassador to Tazikistan, by the King

in accordance with the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal, 1990.

ANNOUNCED: **Poet Shashi Bhandari**, as the winner of the ‘Hari Har Shashtri Literary Award’ of this year, by Literary Journalist Association.

Litterateur **Krishna Chandra Singh Pradhan**, as the winner of the ‘Shankar Lamichhane Essay Award’ of this year, by Shankar Lamichhane Essay Trust. ■

FEW SUGGESTIONS TO NEA: *About Loadshedding Problem*

By DR. AB THAPA

For many of us closely following the activities related to Nepal's water resources development in general and the hydropower generation expansion in particular, the present severe power shortage crisis has not come as a complete surprise. Everybody knew that the NEA would be forced in very near future to resort to load shedding. The nature of present load shedding does indicate that the NEA is now experiencing shortage of both capacity (KW) as well as energy (KWh).

The power shortage crisis is going to deepen further in the years to come because the demand for electricity in our national grid with a total firm capacity of about 500 MW is expected to grow steadily at an annual rate of about 5 to 7 percent. Except for the 70 MW Middle Marshyangdi Project, other major new power projects are nowhere near which would have come into operation within the next 5 to 7 years. Thus we are now being dragged into a whirlpool of deep power shortage crisis.

Power Supply from India

At present the NEA appears to be pinning its hope on import of electricity from India to meet our demand for electricity in dry seasons. It might not be a good solution because India itself is experiencing power shortage. Moreover, if we look into the Power System Study Report of the Karnali (Chisapani) Project, it is found that there is a big variation in seasonal demand pattern in Northern India. By comparison with the monsoon season period the demand for both capacity as well as energy exceeds by about 25% and 10% respectively during the winter months of the dry season. Thus, it clearly shows that India could not be a reliable supplier of electricity particularly during the winter dry seasons when we experience an acute power shortage.

Natural Gas from Bangladesh

It is also said in some quarters that the NEA should import natural gas from Bangladesh to generate electricity to meet the growing demand for power in our country in the near future. Such proposition could be considered outright unfeasible due to the following reasons.

Natural gas occupies 600 times more volume as a gas than as a liquid, as a result, it is not feasible to transport natural gas in a container. Natural gas turns into a liquid at -160°C . It can be stored and shipped as a liquid at that temperature. Liquefied natural gas is transported primarily by ship. Despite the fact that the natural gas can be transported by ships in liquefied form, it is far more economical to transport the natural gas through pipeline. Thus the possibility of using the natural gas to generate electricity in our country to meet our growing power demand is virtually ruled out. We can neither think of using ships to transport liquefied natural gas from Bangladesh to Nepal nor to use pipeline for this purpose in near future.

A New Solution

Needless to explain that we should give the topmost priority to works to expedite the completion of the construction works of the 70 MW Middle Marshyangdi Project to shorten the period of the present acute power shortage. Perhaps a special panel composed of the representatives from the relevant ministries, National Planning Commission and the NEA should be constituted to resolve all

outstanding issues that could delay the completion of the project. We should try, if possible, to bring into operation at least one generating unit well ahead of the final commissioning of the project.

There is an easy way to soften the impact of the present power shortage crisis if we launched the program on a war footing to utilize the full potential of the existing Kulekhani storage reservoir and hydropower stations (Kulekhani 1 & 2 hydropower) to generate extra power by diverting from Kathmandu valley the surplus flow of the Bagmati river into the Kulekhani storage reservoir. Initially it would be only the Bagmati flow but later on after the diversion into the Kathmandu valley the Melamchi water could also be added into the Kulekhani reservoir.

The Kulekhani Reservoir and Power Stations

It is reported almost every year in local newspapers that the electricity generation of the Kulekhani hydropower stations is going to be reduced by a substantial margin because the Kulekhani storage reservoir is half-empty at the end of the monsoon season, with the result that the NEA would be forced to resort to load shedding in the coming dry season. This problem would certainly be solved if the surplus water from the rivers in the Kathmandu valley is pumped into the Kulekhani reservoir to be stored for the supply to the Kulekhani hydropower stations in the dry season.

The Kulekhani reservoir operation rule for the Kulekhani-1 with an installed capacity of 60MW is framed by a basic discharge pattern of 6.2 cum./sec. in the dry season from December to March and 2.1 cum./sec. in the wet season from April to November. The former is designed to generate four-hour peak power using the maximum discharge of 13.1 cum./sec. and 20-hour base load using 4.8 cum./sec. The latter is to utilize 6.55 cum./sec. for the peak power and 1.21 cum./sec. for the base load respectively.

Available water for the Kulekhani-2 power station with an installed capacity of 32 MW is comprised of the outflow from the Kulekhani-1 and the runoff of the Mandu river. The firm discharge of the latter with 90% dependability at the intake is estimated to be 0.2 cum./sec. both in winter and summer. Thus the maximum Kulekhani-2 discharge is designed to be 13.3 cum./sec.

Diversion from Kathmandu to Kulekhani

The Bagmati river water in surplus to the need in the Kathmandu valley could be diverted into the Kulekhani reservoir from a place near Chobhar gorge. Mean flow of the Bagmati river at Chobhar is quite abundant during the monsoon seasons. Even in the winter months of the dry season starting from December to the end of March when the demand for the electricity in Nepal is very high the average flow of the Bagmati is expected to be about 2 cum./sec. The half empty space of the Kulekhani storage reservoir (with an effective storage capacity of 73.3 million cubic meters) could be utilized to accommodate about 20 million cubic meters monsoon season flow of the Bagmati river. Thus the Kulekhani hydropower could be provided throughout the 4 winter months additional 4 cum./sec. flow. Out of this total flow, the water drawn directly from the Bagmati would be about 2 cum./sec. and the stored Bagmati water would provide the remaining 2 cum./sec.

The diversion of the surplus Bagmati water from Kathmandu valley to the Kulekhani reservoir could be a very simple and at

the same time the most cost effective proposition despite the fact that at first glance it might appear to be a somewhat complicated engineering task. Let us consider that we are going to draw about 4 cum./sec. Bagmati water from somewhere near Chobar. The total power generation of the Kulekhani 1&2 hydropower plants would almost be doubled by investing only about US \$20 million in the construction of the proposed diversion structures including the provision of a pumping station.

The Proposed Plan

We might have to build a 15 MW pump station at Chobar to lift 4 cum./sec water to a height of about 300 meters which might be equivalent in height to the full supply level (FSL) of the Kulekhani storage reservoir. It is equally possible that instead of one big pump station we might need two or more small pump stations with a total capacity of about 15 MW if the topography does not allow to provide a single stage pumping. A 15 km long waterway might be needed to carry the water into the Kulekhani storage reservoir out of it the length of the tunnel could be about 9 kilometers. The total cost of such diversion is estimated to be roughly about US \$ 20 million.

The construction of the proposed Bagmati diversion works could be completed within 2 years with one additional year for the preparatory works. The NEA might not require external investment. It could mobilize its own resources to finance this project.

Melamchi Water into Kulekhani Reservoir

After the completion of the proposed Melamchi river diversion into the Kathmandu valley there would be a substantial increase in flow of the Bagmati river at Chobar. As a result, the electricity generation of the Kulekhani 1&2 hydropower stations would be further increased.

The cost of the delivery tunnel from Melamchi to Kathmandu valley according to the Bankable Feasibility Report prepared by the British firm *Binnie&Partners* under the UNDP assistance is only about US \$ 50 million at 1995 price level. The design of the proposed Kulekhani 3 Hydropower should also be reviewed and perhaps its capacity might have to be raised to about 150 MW to meet the steadily growing peak load demand if it is decided to divert the surplus Bagmati water into the Kulekhani reservoir. There is also a possibility of diverting the regulated flow of the Langtang river into the Kulekhani reservoir if such regulated flow is utilized to generate electricity by using the high elevation difference between the Langtang river and the Melamchi. The diversion of the Langtang into the Kulekhani reservoir could provide more than enough electricity to meet our country's growing demand for power over the coming decade.

Langtang-Melamchi-Bagmati-Kulekhani Interconnection

The proposed Langtang-Melamchi-Bagmati-Kulekhani interconnection would help to unfold the prospect for developing hydropower stations in a cascade with a total hydraulic head of over three kilometers that would allow to generate electricity at a cost perhaps the lowest in our region. The proposed interconnection plan comprising of several virtually independent projects can be developed at several stages, as a result, the full implementation of the entire scheme could be spread over a long period.

The hydropower generation potential of the Langtang river is quite high because it is possible to provide a fairly large storage reservoir at a very high elevation in the upper reach of this river. The Langtang storage reservoir can be operated to provide all through the year an uniform flow of about 15 cumecs in the middle and lower reaches of Langtang-Melamchi-Bagmati- Kulekhani grid. A total head of about 3500 meters

could be utilized for power generation by 5 hydropower stations to be built in a cascade and out of them three power stations would be operating at an exceptionally high head of about 1000 meters or more.

Why is Langtang Power Very Cheap?

Of all the site characteristics, head is the most important. *Design guidelines, 1989 approved by the American Society of Civil Engineers* has given some simple reasoning that would help to explain why the super high head Langtang power stations operating at many times greater head by comparison with other hydropower plants could be built at very low cost. "Very simply if one doubles the head the quantity of water needed to produce a certain amount of energy is halved. Thus, for like site energy development the penstock area and reservoir volume are halved and further large cost reductions occur for powerhouse and machinery costs. This fundamental consideration is at the root of the large cost reductions that occur at higher heads."

In Conclusion

The proposed Bagmati diversion could be implemented within a very short period to meet the growing demand for power in our national grid. The proposed diversion is going to be perhaps the most economic project because we do not need to invest on construction of the reservoir, power stations and transmission lines. We are going to utilize the existing power stations, reservoir and other structures. For pumping surplus monsoon period water from the Bagmati river into the Kulekhani reservoir we can use the seasonal energy generated by our run-of-the-river hydropower projects. At present such seasonal energy is almost entirely wasted.

The proposed Bagmati diversion could be looked upon as a part of the big plan to utilize the full potential of the Langtang- Melamchi-Bagmati-Kulekhani interconnection to generate cheap power on a scale sufficient to meet our country's need for power for over the next decade. ■

(Dr. Thapa writes on water resources)

Women For Peace

At a time when the whole country is yearning for peace, people from various walks of lives have been showing their commitment and desire for peace through various exercises. With the objective of lending strength to exercises aimed at restoring peace and promoting equitable society, women leaders representing different shades of society have come together to form a separate network. Shanti Malika, a network of women for peace, has been working actively to promote women participation in all policy-making levels including in peace-building and negotiation exercises. The network had held a first national women peace conference a few months ago in the capital. The conference adopted a 10-point resolution calling on the protection and promotion of human rights of women; involvement of women in peace-building; establishment of equitable society by ending the conflict and so on. Shanti Malika has demanded that women involvement in preliminary negotiation aimed at ending the conflict; in dialogue among conflicting parties; in signing of understanding; and in post-conflict reconstruction is essential if the country is to see a lasting peace.

POLITICS

Handicapped Players

All the players in politics seem handicapped to overcome the crisis

By KESHAB POUDEL

“**T**he constitution will not be a barrier if there is an understanding between the King and the democratic forces,” said B.P. Koirala, in the hardest period of party less Panchayat system when he was pursuing for negotiation with the King. “The constitution is merely a scrap of paper.”

His thrust was that political understanding between the King and democratic forces was important than the modalities of constitution. When B.P. Koirala was pursuing his argument, there was a constitution that barred to hold any party activity. The Constitution was authoritarian and committed to party-less political system whereas the present constitution has all basic ingredients of democratic system which was drafted under the popular uprising of 1990.

However, the present political leadership including Congress leader and brother of B.P. Koirala, Girija Prasad Koirala who has been working under a liberal democratic constitution which guarantees multi-party democracy, independent judiciary, individual rights and press freedom- is ignoring this.

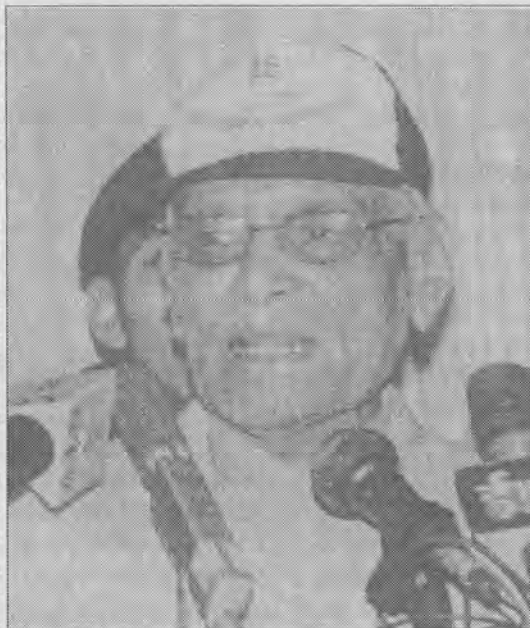
Instead of showing willingness to reactivate the constitution building through understanding, what political leaders are demanding with the King is to initiate a process paving the way to go for Constituent Assembly. The King, too, is half-heartedly inviting political leaders for dialogue aiming to activate the constitution.

Although the country has been passing through very critical phase, there is a vacuum of a political leadership that can speak and take decisions like B.P. Koirala to overcome the political impasse. Nepal's western friends including the United States have been making every effort to pursue the King and political parties to reach out to each other for certain understanding but Nepalese leaders are showing their handicap.

In his message on Democracy Day, King Gyanendra called for a dialogue but used

word like “willing”, which is politically unnecessary. “I call upon all willing political parties to come forward to speedily activate the derailed political process in the broader interest of the country,” said King Gyanendra.

Through this statement, King Gyanendra has shown his handicap to overcome the political process. In his recent remarks, first vice chairman Dr. Tulsi Giri, who is known for his provocative remarks and is reportedly projected as a person who is barring reconciliation between the King and political parties, used all kinds of words to destroy conducive environment created by



Dr. Giri: Acts of provocation

Gorkhapatra

Nepal's friends. Interestingly, Dr. Giri's remarks came just a few hours after the meeting between King Gyanendra and US principal deputy assistant secretary of state Donald Camp in Pokhara.

“Having appointed him at the highest position after two decade long self-exile to India, the King is not in a position to ignore first vice chairman Dr. Giri's constant personal association with India's top strategists in offering any political concessions to political leaders. Dr.Giri's

statements show that he was assigned a role to widen political polarization between the King and the organized political parties to the extent of point of no return,” said a political observer.

Similarly, there are also numbers of communist extremists in seven parties political alliance who have many commonalities with Dr. Giri so far as creating the rift is concerned. The right and left extremists - who hold completely different political ideology - are serving similar interest making the King and leaders of liberal democratic parties handicapped in taking independent decision.

“There will be no dialogue with the King as long as he does not agree to hold the elections for Constituent Assembly,” said senior leader of CPN-UML Bharat Mohan Adhikary, who was also a member of the Constitution Drafting Commission, which drafted the present constitution. These statements will benefit the extremists siding with the King.

The invisible alliance of extremists have rendered the leaders handicapped. “I will abide by the decision of seven parties. What seven parties agree is my own decision,” said former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba.

At a time when seven parties alliance is dominated by extremist communist parties, leaders of liberal democratic parties have nominal influence in its decision-making. Following the 12 point understanding with the Maoists, leaders like Koirala and Deuba have no option other than to defend them.

Handicapped by their own closer alliances with rightists and communist extremists, the King and leaders of liberal democrats, who have many commonalities of interest and who are close ally, are not in a position to unite for the greater interest of the country.

This is the reason political leaders representing liberal democratic political parties - who had forced King Birendra to sign the document as agreed by them - are unable to defend the same document as a meeting point to build further understanding.

“If there is a will and understanding, the constitution is not a barrier to find out ways to accommodate major political forces,” said the political analyst.

As all political leaders are handicapped and unable to exhibit courage and will as was shown by charismatic statesman late B.P. Koirala, it is going to be very difficult to overcome the current political stalemate. ■

VISIT OF CHINESE STATE COUNCILOR Message From North

The visit of Tang Jiaxuan, State Councilor of the People's Republic of China, holds a great significance

By KESHAB POUDEL

As Nepal's violence insurgency intensifies and political instability deepens, State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan, who is also a former foreign minister of China, is visiting Nepal from March 16-18. Importantly, he will start his visit after praying for peace in Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha.

Chinese leader is coming to Nepal when even the envoys of western powers are alarmed over the possibility of escalating Nepal's internal conflict into the regional level. "Obviously right now, the main concern is that the state would fail, the Maoist would take over and Nepal would end up destabilizing the entire region. Our interest is to prevent that," said the US ambassador to Nepal James Moriarty. (See Spotlight February 24 March 2).

For the past 12 years, China - which shares more than 1500 kilometers border with Nepal - has followed a constant policy condemning violent insurgency terming them as anti government forces. By visiting the birthplace of Buddha, Chinese leader is showing his country's priority in Nepal is peace and tranquility, not hostility.

"Nepal is one of China's friendly neighboring countries, and China is concerned about the current insurgency in Nepal," said Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Kong Qiang a month back in Beijing. Kong expressed his hope that all parties involved in Nepal will resolve their differences through dialogue so as to contribute to the country's development and prosperity. "We hope that Nepal can be stabilized as soon as possible," he had said.

Nepal's Maoist insurgency is now an issue of international concern but there seem to be no immediate sign of reduction in violence as the Maoists have already called three weeks long blockade of district headquarters and have announced indefinite strikes from April 8.

Just a week before the visit by Chinese leader Tang, a group of senior Nepalese politicians consisting of seven parties have been reportedly negotiating with the Maoists in New Delhi, the capital of India from where the US president George W. Bush and Indian prime minister Dr. Manmohan Singh had just recently issued a joint declaration calling on the King to

reach out to the political parties and Maoists to abandon violence.

This visit is going to be packed with schedules. Along with the King and government officials, Chinese leader will also meet with senior leaders of main political parties including Nepali Congress leader Girija Prasad Koirala pursuing the need of reconciliation and national unity. "Tang will also sign some agreements giving duty free access to Nepalese products in China. This will help to reduce the growing trade imbalance between Nepal and China. He will express the need for speedy implementation of numbers of projects including Rasuwa-Syaphrubeshi Road, Civil Servant Hospital and construction of Polytechnic Institute, which were agreed in 2001," said a diplomat on condition of anonymity.

The Chinese guest will also attend a dinner hosted by Vice Chairman of Council of Minister Kirtinidhi Bista on March 16 and a reception-luncheon organized by China Study Center-Nepal and the Embassy of People's Republic of China on 17.

Although mandarins of Nepal's northern neighbor rarely speak about internal affairs of its neighbors and always avoid embarrassment of any kinds, China always genuinely backs the idea of national unity and support Nepal's independence and sovereignty pursuing the peaceful and friendly policy towards Nepal and encourages it to be economically assertive. Its policy towards its neighbor is guided by not as a hegemonic power but on the basis of sovereign equality.

"Bordering with the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China, Nepal holds a high stake in Chinese government endeavor on national integration and domestic stability," writes Hua Han, professor at School of International Studies in her article The Strategic Dimension in Sino-Nepalese Relations. "For Nepalese, the policy priority might include the restoration of internal stability. Nepal still stakes high in China's South Asia Policy and the stability of Tibet."

Following February 1 step of King Gyanendra, Chinese foreign minister Li Zhaoxing visited Nepal last March. As usual, the visit of high officials from Nepal's northern neighbor naturally generates curiosity in South. Though China agreed to offer a small amount

of money to buy weapons to Royal Nepalese Army, it has not yet supplied any weapons to Nepal after February 1.

"Nepal's independence is most essential element for Chinese security. Thus, Nepal going under Indian security umbrella will be constant threat to Chinese security," writes Wang Zong, in his recently published book Nepal's Defensive Strategy and Nepal China Relations. Published by China Study Center, this is the first book written in Nepali language by a Chinese scholar.

"Nepal is located in strategic position between India and China. We will be consulting all our friends including China," said Elisabeth Millard, senior director for South Asia in White House's National Security Council in video conferencing with Nepalese journalists last week. Her remarks underscore the importance of China's position in Nepal affairs.

"Visit of Tang should be viewed in a broader outlook while continuing maintaining engagement with government and talking on various issues of bilateral and international importance," said Madan Regmi, chairman of China Study Center Nepal. "His efforts will be to help establish national reconciliation and promote the national unity stressing the need for dialogue between various political factions and work together for the well being of Nepal. He will also reiterate Chinese stand, which call to realize peace, stability, national development for the national independence of Nepal."

Indian strategists, too, are carefully watching the outcome of the visit of Chinese vice premier Tang. "India will be watching with interest the forthcoming visit of the highest ranking Chinese official to Nepal this month. From India's perspective, the trip is significant because of the so-called China card in Nepali political scenario, which the Royal government has been very actively playing up," writes India's leading daily newspaper The Statesman from New Delhi.

When asked about accusations by some external elements on possibility of playing China Card by Nepal, Madan Regmi, chairman of China Study Center, Nepal, said, "As far as playing 'China Card' of which King's government is repeatedly accused by some foreign elements hostile to China, what I have to say is that China is not a card to be played by any power. China has a principled stand on every foreign policy issue and acts accordingly."

After observing the role of the USA in India in the South Asian context in the recently concluded visit by President Bush, Chinese state Councilor Tang is coming to Nepal for a three-day trip. Through the visit - which was postponed last month - China will show its strong commitments towards peaceful, prosperous, sovereign and independent Nepal.

COMMUNITY MEDIATION

Justice

In The

Neighborhood

Community mediation is gradually evolving as an appropriate method of increasing not only the access to justice to the rural people but also that of empowering women, Dalits; infusing human rights culture and ensuring good governance. At a time when the administrative service remains dislocated due to conflict, the mediation programs in some districts implemented by civil society has proved a viable model that can adapt with the local conditions and ensure that people continue to receive justice that is not only appropriate but also justiciable. Although, at present, donors are supporting the mediation programs, their utility - particularly when the local villages are devoid of any government service - appears to be growing. The need of the hour is to ensure the long-term sustainability and extension of such services in the rural hinterlands across the country

By SANJAYA DHAKAL in Shantinagar VDC, Jhapa

Meena Khati, a Dalit woman in her mid-twenties, appears a lot older than her natural age. A mother of three small sons, she suffered a terrible jolt when in October, 2005, her husband Dhan Bahadur Khati – the sole breadwinner of the family – suddenly died leaving her with the

daunting task of taking care of three children and elderly mother-in-law.

As if the challenge was not enough, the fate delivered another blow. It appeared that her husband had just recently sold the entire 4 kattha land including the only house they were staying in to another villager Ambar Bahadur Mijar. Without telling his family, Dhan Bahadur Khati had sold the land in order to pay off his mounting debts.

“He (Khati) told me he had no money to pay debts to me. He requested that I buy his land. But all of a sudden he died leaving me in a cold,” said Mijar who himself is a poor Dalit villager. Mijar had been giving loans on and off to Khati since a long time. “I, myself, am staying in a land contracted from school. My house had recently been hit by marauding wild elephants,” Mijar said pointing to his dilapidated hut.



Mijar and his wife: Justice by community

Photos by: Sanjaya Dhakal

The case of Khati and Mijar presented a serious predicament to the entire village of Shantinagar VDC-2. On the one hand, you had a family of Khati who just lost their sole breadwinner and were under threat of being displaced from their only staying place. On the other hand, you had another poor family that had invested its entire savings to buy a land that they simply could not own. Either way, whether Khati lost or Mijar lost, justice would not have been delivered in a true sense. The case that would have baffled even the best of legal minds, was not serviceable by the traditional adversarial system of justice delivery that Nepalese judiciary abides by in which a party wins and another party loses. Furthermore, for Khati and Mijar, the formal justice system is almost inaccessible from physical distance as well as cost standpoint.

Cut off from the highways and cities by Timai khola – that regularly floods the region in monsoon – the Shantinagar VDC, with its 30,000 population dominated by Janajatis, is far away from the eyes of central or district government. A self-proclaimed ‘base area’ of the Maoists where the armed cadres regularly roam, the village is devoid of any government institution barring schools and health post. The

VDC building lies destroyed – a powerful symbol of insecurity that grips the entire village.

Fortunately, for Khati and Mijar, just a few months after their disputes, a community mediation committee was formed in the village by the initiative of the local people. “When we saw similar committees working effectively in other VDCs, we called a village gathering and decided to form the committee,” said Nilmani Neupane, the office secretary of Shantinagar Human Rights and Community Mediation Committee – an active social mobilizer. “We were surprised when donors provided us with stationery and furniture,” he said.

Weeks after its formation, the Shantinagar CMC had to deal with the case of Khati and Mijar. “It was, indeed, a very difficult case. Nobody would have won had they approached formal courts and it would have taken years before any decision would have been given,” said Neupane.

Pursuing the principle of human rights and justice by consensus, the CMC urged Mijar and Khati to reach settlement on their own. After Mijar formally registered a case at CMC, the committee organized mediation session by inviting all section of the village community. After hours of prodding the

two sides, Mijar and Khati reached an understanding to divide the land into two halves. While Khati would get to keep the house and small portion of the land, Mijar would get the other half. Both were satisfied.

“I am happy,” was the short reply by Meena Khati. On the other hand, Mijar who still has not been able to get over the loss he had to incur, is, nonetheless, satisfied with the initiative taken by the CMC. “They did not pressure me. I am satisfied with their work,” he said.

A difficult case was thus settled in a cordial and convenient manner. Not a dime had to be spent by either of the disputants. But the CMC did not have an easy sail throughout. “At first, we had no idea how we would be working. Even the local Maoists viewed us suspiciously. They thought CMC was a new way of state’s encroachment to their area. Later on, even they started to refer the cases that go to their ‘people’s court’ to our committee,” said Neupane.

In the absence of functional local bodies and other government administration in villages, the local people are looking up to the CMCs as feasible institutions.

Currently, CMC are active in 30 VDCs each in Jhapa, Ilam and Saptari districts. Under the support of DfID-ESP, the Center for Victims of Torture (CVICT) is implementing these programs through local partner NGO called Nepal Community Development Center (NCDC) since the year 2001.

Attracted by the exemplary work they are doing in those VDCs, many other VDCs have started demanding for the same. “We are flooded with demands for extending the committees in more and more villages. But we have not been able to meet those demands yet,” said Mahendra Karki, program officer at NCDC in Bhadrapur, Jhapa.

Feasible Alternative

Community mediation is a practice of dispute management in which as a neutral third party, the trained mediators of the same community provide volunteer mediation services to the disputing parties.

The CMCs have a number of advantages. “Apart from providing legal services to the people within their

community, it helps to eradicate the culture of torture, inject culture of human rights, empower Dalit, women and marginalized persons and ensure good governance," Shambhu Kattel, an anthropologist, who is associated with the CVICT.

Traditionally, even minor cases/disputes in villages are referred to police and/or courts. Normally, the police arrests the offenders after complaints from the victims and in most of the cases they are subjected to torture in the custody in order to make them 'spill beans.' "On this backdrop and since the ultimate objective of the CVICT is to reduce and ultimately eradicate torture from society, it designed and implemented community mediation program," said Kattel. Since the CMC manages and resolves dispute in a cordial atmosphere with firm adherence to human rights values, it has helped in reducing torture and conflict.

Under the CMC, in each VDC and ward, mediation committees have been formed. Members of the committee have been trained and provided with stationary and reading materials. The members are provided six days of intensive training on law, mediation and human rights. The trained mediators are involved in dispute resolution. Around 30 percent of the CMC members have to be women with sizeable representation also drawn from Dalit, Janajatis and other marginalized community.

The CMCs, which are referred to as non-formal justice system, have also developed as a supporting unit for the formal courts. The courts across the



A household in Shantinagar VDC: Rural interaction

country and at all tiers are over-burdened by the huge number of cases. The long list of pending cases has resulted in severe delay in justice dispensation. As such, the CMCs, which can deal with minor cases excepting the cases in which state is a party and in which criminal offense is involved, can work to ease their workload. "Besides, a report by Supreme Court had recently stated that over 50 percent of the decisions by the court are not implemented at local level. This problem can be effectively addressed by CMCs as they work in the community and monitor the implementation of agreements," said Hemang Sharma, a legal officer at CVICT.

The court officials, district-based lawyers and administrators have gradually started lending support to the CMC after gauging their effectiveness. Laxman Aryal, former judge of Supreme Court, states, "I definitely appreciate the efforts made by the Community Mediation Program. From my visits, I am very confident that no other tools of justice delivery can be more

effective than community mediation. It is like a Ram Ban (medicine) to provide real justice to the disputants. Courts can give justice to one party - whether the party is genuine or not on the basis of the witnesses provided - but community mediation justice dispensation is so different that no party feels that they have lost the case against the other."

These apart, the cost and time saved in settling disputes from CMC are huge. On average, one party has to spend around Rs 20,000 if he/she approaches formal courts. Besides, it takes more than year, even several years, to settle the dispute. The cost involved in frequent travel from villages to district headquarters where the courts are located is huge. Justice, thus, becomes unaffordable to a majority of rural Nepalese. In contrast, justice through CMC doesn't cost a dime and it takes only few days, if not hours, to settle the dispute.

Human Empowerment

One of the most noticeable features of community mediation is the wide involvement of women, Dalit and persons from marginalized community. Typically, a CMC at the VDC level has 9 to 11 members while those at ward level have 5-7 members. One-third of them are women along with sizeable participation of Dalit and Janajatis.

"In the last few years of our experience, we have seen that by getting



Neupane at CMC office: Basic infrastructure

involved in CMC, the stature of women and marginalized persons have increased. In Saptari, many women there have now started to face their community confidently. The Muslim women there have even started to shed burqa when sitting on the mediation session," said Kattel.

An episode that occurred in Ilam can also be a case in point. In Barbote VDC of Ilam, Dalits were earlier barred from selling their milk to a local private dairy collection center. After the case was referred to CMC, both the sides resolved the dispute amicably and now Dalits not only sell their milk but are also included in the board of the dairy. "From anthropological viewpoint, the growing interaction among Dalits and non-Dalits within the CMC has started to unleash a positive social transformation that is going to have a far-reaching consequences in our society," added Kattel.

The ownership of CMC by people from different caste and ethnic divide has ensured that the mediation is acting also as a force for good.

In the VDCs that have CMCs, the people now realize the importance of non-discrimination. Wives are complaining against husbands for domestic violence and Dalits are filing cases against people from so-called higher castes. "In fact, there are many cases related with marital disputes that come to our committee," said Kamala Sharma, a woman member of Shantinagar CMC.

Sustainability

When it was started, the donors and NGOs had planned to make the CMCs sustainable by linking them with the existing elected local bodies. "They were tied with the VDCs and there were understandings how VDCs would financially and technically support them. But in subsequent years, the VDCs were left without elected representatives and the escalation of conflict pushed them out from the villages," said Mahendra Karki of NCDC, Bhadrapur.

Currently, the Community Mediation Program run by NCDC and CVICT with the funding from DfID is time-bound. "It is to make the program sustainable that we have not provided salaries to the CMC members. They all work voluntarily.

We only provide them with periodic trainings, technical inputs, stationery items and so on. Ultimately, the community will have to take up their responsibility," said Karki.

According to Karki, VDCs have shown eagerness to support the CMCs. But since they have been displaced from the villages, it is difficult to materialize the support.

Because of the growing popularity of community-mediated solution of

Nilmani Neupane, secretary of Shantinagar CMC, adding, "On the other hand, even the VDC staffs who are located in Charali request us to collect the taxes and provide certain portion to them. But we have not done this sort of service because it would anger (the Maoists)."

Neupane believes that in his village there would be no problem of sustainability. "The community forests in the village earn a sizeable income. We



Khati: Satisfied

disputes – in Jhapa district alone CMCs have settled 1534 out of 1964 cases filed till now with none of them returning for appeal – the program needs to be expanded across the country.

The fact that CMCs are sometimes the only feasible institution that provides services to local people, underscores its importance in this period of vacuum. Take the case of Shantinagar VDC; apart from schools and health post, there is no presence of any institution providing services to the people living there. The VDC has been displaced to Charali – a nearby township in East-west highway.

"The expectation of people is so high that they want us to act as VDC. They regularly request us to service their land tax, house tax, recommend for citizenship certificate and so on," said

plan to involve them and seek their support in the coming years," he said.

As such, for rural people, CMCs have become a symbol of hope. "They are really doing a good job. None of the villagers have any complaint against their function," said Tara Silwal, a girl from Charpane VDC-6 of Jhapa.

As Khati and Mijar have experienced, having justice delivered in the neighborhood is a big progress. And the forces for good that the community mediation has unleashed will continue to transform the socio-cultural conditions of people living in those 90 VDCs of three districts for a long time to come. At a time when rural people are reeling under the situation of insecurity and frustration, it would make a big sense in replicating and expanding such programs that can have visible impact across the country. ■

“Nepalese Need To Work Out Timetable For Reconciliation”

—DONALD CAMP

Just a week after the visit of US president George W. Bush to South Asia, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs DONALD CAMP visited Nepal. Since October 4, 2002, Camp has already visited Nepal several times pursuing the process of reconciliation between the King and the political parties. Like in the past, this time, too, Camp had similar message to Nepal. Excerpts of his press meet compiled by KESHAB POUDEL:

On His Visit

I have been in Nepal since yesterday (March 8) to consult with our embassy, government officials and political party and civil society leaders. I also had an audience with King Gyanendra. It has been a constructive visit. As you know, president Bush and prime minister Dr. Manmohan Singh discussed Nepal during the president's visit to India last week. As the President noted, the two statesmen agreed that “the Maoists should abandon violence, and that the King should reach out to the political parties to restore democratic institutions.” The succinct statement is the policy of the United States toward Nepal. Ambassador Moriarty has said this publicly in recent weeks. I have reiterated my president's message in all my meetings here in Nepal. We firmly believe that the Maoists must abandon violence and the King must reach out and reconcile with the parties if we are to see a peaceful, prosperous, and democratic Nepal. I have brought the President's message to the King. I have not been asked to deliver any sort of message from the King. I am not aware how the King will act. I would be glad to describe the American policy towards Nepal. It is not appropriate and I don't want to characterize what the King said in our conversation.

On Maoists Giving Up Violence

I think we have to be realist about this. Certainly, that is our concern and I also mentioned that all the friends of Nepal want this. If Maoists want to do so, it will be a big step. It will also give them an opportunity to play role as a constitutional force in elections. The president Bush has made it very clear that the Maoist responsibility is to end their violence if they want to be accepted as a

legitimate political party in Nepal. I don't have any inside information about the Maoist intention. They should come into the political engine. To that they need not only forsake violence in words but also be prepared to do so through actions. Maoists deserve to be termed as terrorists as long as they behave like in the past. We don't have any hesitation labeling them terrorists because of their actions like killing, maiming, destroying public property. Frankly speaking, they are working against the Maoists and I hope Maoists can change their ways. As far as our part is concerned, we will certainly support anything to end the violence.

Ambassador Moriarty's Stand

Ambassador Moriarty speaks as a representative of the United States here in Nepal.

On Role of US and International Community

The pressure of international community is jerking well. The message is; the international community is united and the friends of Nepal around the world firmly believe that the democracy needs to be restored in Nepal, and this is very critical requirement. For the United States specifically, president Bush speaking publicly on this subject is indication of the importance he attaches in this issue and shows the importance that the United States government attaches to this issue. First of all, I would say that President Bush's visit to India was successful as the talks were held in wide range of issues including Nepal. In this case, we share the quick restoration of democracy.

On Political Detainees

I think we have been very clear on view that all political detainees should be released. I requested very much but the government did not allow me and ambassador to visit UML leader Madhav Kumar Nepal. On the question of pressurizing the political leaders, I certainly did not really do anything. Certainly, as ambassador Moriarty said in the past that political parties need to play constructive role in this country. They are important components of the democracy. I repeatedly told that the King, as President told in New Delhi; needed to reach out to political parties. Nepalese need to work out the timetable for reconciliation. I say simply that Nepal needs to

“The message is; the international community is united and the friends of Nepal around the world firmly believe that the democracy needs to be restored in Nepal, and this is very critical requirement”

return to democracy and democracy should be restored as soon as possible. We don't have timeline.

Dynamics of Political Situation

I would say that the situation dynamic has not changed dramatically in the last one year in my perception as an occasional visitor to Nepal. The basic things are there. The King has proposed a roadmap with an ambition to take back Nepal into democracy and parties have fall back. That basic dynamics and the public position of the players have not changed. I must say that the dynamic of Maoist aspect of the situation changed in the last few months after signing the 12 points understanding. That is something that has changed dynamic of Nepalese politics. But it does not change our views that democracy needs to be restored and the King needs to reach out to political parties. The parties are hopeful that the pact helps Maoists to abandon violence and return to peaceful political process. Should that work out, and then I would have to say that is something to be applauded. We excuse for being skeptical to respond.

On Restoration of Democracy

We believe that the restoration of democracy is important aspects to confront the insurgency. I didn't say that I am highly optimistic about quick return to democracy in Nepal. We are hopeful that democracy will be restored. We have no ground on public commitment on the parties. We are optimistic.

On Municipal Elections

We express our views on recently concluded municipal elections, which was just as a hollow framework. Without the participation of the parties, one cannot really expect that they can be free and fair. If the next general elections is held without the participation and support of the political parties, it is hard to see how it can restore democracy in the country.

Hopeful Sign

After meeting with the King and the political parties, I am not sure whether to express optimism or pessimism. I think we are hopeful. We have no assurance that there will be a breakthrough. I wish I could say more and I could say I am optimistic but what I can say is I am extremely hopeful. I met with the leaders of several of Nepal's major political parties. I wanted very much to meet with the leader of UML. It is well known that he is in house arrest. We requested the opportunity to call upon him and the government denied our request. We are certainly continuing to hope that Nepal and all of political detainees will be released.



On China

I am not expert on Nepal but I am interested observer. Ambassador Moriarty and staffs give frequent advice on situation. Yes, we have regular consultations with the government of People's Republic of China on full range of issues. It is natural that the situation of Nepal is an issue for further dialogue. We have consultation in before and we expect to hold such dialogue in the future with China. The supply of arms by Chinese is widely rumored. The question regarding the arms supply by China should be directed to Beijing rather than us.

On Human Rights

It is too early to say what stand US will take in Geneva. Our report shows deteriorating human rights situation in Nepal. The February 1 actions contributed to deteriorate the human rights situation here. With the support from Nepal last year, it helped to create UN Human Rights High Commissioner's Office in Nepal.

On Reconciliation

We are in no position to impose a dateline for reconciliation between the King and the political parties. Certainly our position has always been democracy restored in Nepal as soon as possible. It is urgent need of the country to confront the Maoist insurgency and back for peaceful, prosperous and democratic Nepal. Any group, whatever their political alignments and whatever their connections to palace and other actors in this country, they are committed to constitutional process and peaceful cooperation should be allowed to participate. This is certain basic essence of democracy. This is obviously a question for Nepal.

Constructive Discussions

I was able to talk to with number of people including the King in certain political issues in this country. They clearly appraised the views from Washington DC on the situation in Nepal. We hope for the improvement of the situation. We are reiterating the President's message.

On Resumption of Arms Supply

I consider there are two policy and legal aspects. From the policy point of view, we have made a decision that we cannot have a kind of cooperation with Nepal since February 1 last year. We would like to the return of the situation of pre February 1 where we were contributors to the security assistance. We were providing security assistance in the past and that is something we are not prepared to do this time. The second legal aspect is that the Leahy amendment prohibits to finance security assistance to Nepal until Nepal has returned to democracy and certain conditions on human rights have been fulfilled. ■

“If the next general elections is held without the participation and support of the political parties, it is hard to see how it can restore democracy in the country.”

WOMEN IN MEDIA

Fair Communication

A leading NGO conducts a survey to assess the state of women in Nepalese media

By A CORRESPONDENT

In an attempt to promote gender sensitivity in media, Sancharika Samuha has been organizing various programs. From lobbying and advocating for gender-sensitive news to promoting the issues related with gender mainstreaming, the NGO has spearheaded a campaign aimed at triggering a social transformation.

Recently, Sancharika Samuha completed a survey assessing the state of women in Nepalese media – both print and electronic. The survey results have been published in a book format.

According to the survey, the trend of women involvement in media is increasing, particularly after the restoration of democracy in 1990. The establishment and growth of private media houses and FM stations led to

recruitment of considerable number of women journalists.

“The survey was conducted between December 2004 and December 2005. Around 224 women journalists from 48 districts covering all the five development regions of the country were included in the survey,” said Bandana Rana, president of Sancharika Samuha.

Set questionnaires, interview, workplace environment inspection and interaction were conducted in course of the survey. The questionnaire included 121 questions aimed at uncovering facts relating to their family and professional background, working environment, problems they face, perks and benefits, gender sensitivity and so on.

Of the 224 respondent women journalists, 54 percent were involved in

print media – mostly the broadsheet dailies. Among those involved in electronic media, 65 percent were working in FM radio stations followed by television. Although majority of the women hailed from rural region, their work was based in urban areas.

Brahmin and chhetri girls dominated their numbers followed by Janajati (14.7 percent). Their academic qualifications were satisfactory. More than half of them were graduates. Most of them come from educated families.

“The survey showed that women journalists are forced to work in a workplace environment that is friendly to males. Discriminations in recruitment, promotion, salary and perks, training opportunities and other facilities were also apparent,” said Gyanu Pandey, one of the researchers of the survey. “Even the physical structures of the office are not friendly to women. For instance, most offices do not have separate toilets for women,” she added.

Addressing the program organized to make the survey results public senior journalists like Kapil Kafle, Durga Nath Sharma, Prateek Pradhan and Yubaraj Ghimire underscored the need to promote gender sensitivity in all sectors including media. ■

The advertisement for Nepal Telecom features a central graphic of two mobile phones, one on the left and one on the right, connected by a series of overlapping, semi-transparent circles that create a tunnel-like effect. The background is dark with a subtle pattern. In the top left corner, the Nepal Telecom logo is visible, consisting of a stylized figure holding hands in a circle above the text 'NEPAL TELECOM'. The top right corner features the slogan 'WIDE REACH' in large, bold, white capital letters. At the bottom, there is a white banner with the Nepali text 'नेपालीको मोबाइल. नमस्ते मोबाइल' and the English slogan 'UNMATCHED SERVICE UNMATCHED PRICE UNMATCHED COVERAGE'.

KIDNEY DISEASES

Growing Risk

Experts have expressed concern over the rising incidences of chronic kidney diseases

By THAKUR AMGAI

Even as kidney transplant surgery in Bir Hospital is yet to resume since its false start one and a half years ago, nephrologists have expressed concern over the rising incidences of Kidney failure.

Nephrologists from government hospitals and private hospitals alike expressed the view that chronic kidney diseases is coming up as a major threat to public health. Doctors agreed that the problem was caused by lack of public awareness and a trend to visit the health facilities at the last stage of the disease.

Stressing that most of the severe cases could be easily avoided if timely treatment is done, Dr. Rishi Kumar Kafle, executive director of National Kidney Center said, "Ninety percent of the severe cases could be avoided if treatments are done in the preliminary stage of kidney problem."

Citing the World Health Organization (WHO) data that one in ten individuals in the world have some or other problems related to kidney, Dr. Kafle, said that some 25,00,000 to 30,00,000 people in the country could be suffering from some kind of kidney ment.

With a view to increase public awareness among the public about chronic kidney diseases, International Federation of Kidney Foundation and International Society of Nephrology celebrated the first 'World Kidney Day' on March 9 worldwide. National Kidney Center (NKC) and Nepal Society of Nephrology celebrated it with various programs in Nepal. NKC offered a free urine check up at the center on the occasion for one day.

Doctors informed that the pressure of chronic diseases is on the rise worldwide. "It is estimated that the deaths due to chronic diseases will increase by 17 percent worldwide in the next one decade, while the deaths due to the contagious diseases

is estimated to decrease by 3 per cent," said Dr. Sudha Khakurel, the chief of Nephrology unit at Bir Hospital. "By 2030, 360 million people could die due to chronic kidney diseases only."

Chronic Kidney diseases have become one of the major challenges not only in developing countries like Nepal, but throughout the globe. The cost of haemo-dialysis, kidney transplant and its post-medication, required for chronic kidney patients is too high to afford even for the affluent.

According to doctors, there are about 8,000 to 10,000 chronic kidney patients reporting in health facilities regularly. About 2,500 to 3,000 add to the list every year. Out of that about 500 people have

undergone kidney transplant from Indian and other international hospitals.

Meanwhile, kidney transplant surgery started by Bir Hospital one and a half years ago had to be suspended immediately and it has not resumed yet. Bir Hospital had conducted such a surgery on one Pradeep Chaudhary in November, 2004, but could not succeed.

The Ministry of Health permitted Bir Hospital to conduct such surgery four years ago. Dr. Khakurel informed that they would resume the surgery service as soon as possible.

Of late, private hospitals have also started to show interest towards Kidney transplant surgery. However, they have not gotten a green signal from the Organ Transplant Steering Committee, the monitoring agency for all organ transplant surgeries.

"It has been six months since we have submitted a letter to the committee, but the committee is turning a deaf ear," said Dr. Kafle of National Kidney Center. "We have all the requisites for the transplant in place and we can begin as soon as the committee permits us." ■

राष्ट्र विनाश कसो समय

बजेट कल

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(स्वाक राष्ट्रहरुमा बाहेक)

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Load Shedding Once More Again Need to Sit around a Round Table

By SB PUN

Load Shedding, Back to "Mangalman":

That the Nepal power sector would be heading for the vicious cycle of load shedding once more again is inevitable. The winter of 2005 may see a peak load of 600 Mw when the total installed capacity, to date of the Nepal power system, is about 612 Mw, comprising of NEA's 459 Mw (*hydro plus thermal*) and the IPPs' (*big and small*) 153 Mw. NEA has been desperately struggling with the construction of the one and only on-going 70 Mw Middle Marsyangdi project. If all goes well, this is, hopefully, expected to come on stream in 2007 end. But with the historic peak load growth of 10% per annum, Middle Marsyangdi would give relief for a mere one year only. HMGN's 2005/06 budget has finally unveiled the 257 Mw Upper Tamakoshi/Dolakha and the 42 Mw Upper Modi/Kaski as the next two medium sized hydropower projects. Even if the mode of project financing is concretized within this fiscal year, power from these projects, with the normal 5/6 years for construction, to the Nepal grid can, at best, be expected only around FY 2011/012. This means we are back to "Mangal Man"; that is, another serious bout of load shedding when drinking water can not be pumped up; rice cookers are inevitably switched on earlier; most medium and all small industries grind to a halt; hospitals, small hotels/restaurants and computer stall services would suffer the most and above all there would be a flurry of diesel/petrol generator imports but only by those who can afford.

Ordinance for the High Rs. 1,280/ Crores Stakes:

Now whose head should really roll for this state of affairs in the Nepal power sector? The lackadaisical, not-so-commercial, about to be guillotined NEA? The private-sector-promoter and multipurpose-projects-builder, Department of Electricity Development (DOED)? The Ministry of Water Resources (MOWR) in its new role of the Referee bent on promulgating the harmlessly worded "Development and Management of Electricity Sector" ordinance? Or is it the omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient multilateral donors that are responsible for leaving us in such a lurch? The Nepalese public knows there would be no answers from them. So, instead, let us try to analyze the existing scenario and attempt to find some available options. That NEA is in the red financially, no one disputes. One school of thought puts this blame squarely on the high priced, gold plated power purchase agreements (PPAs) of the independent power producers (IPPs). The other school lays the blame on the inefficient NEA management in an NEA monopolized power sector environment. This group is, hence, baying for an Ordinance that would immediately enact new NEA "avatars" through total unbundling, particularly the creation of the Nepal Power Grid. The referee/MOWR also appears to be bent on decapitating two previous Acts (1992 Electricity Act and 1985 NEA Act) through one single 2005 Ordinance stroke. Analysts believe that additions/subtractions to the existing Acts through ordinances are not sins but abolishing two existing Acts without the Parliament's concurrence smacks of the-hidden-agenda flavour. NEA's gross revenue intake this year would be about Rs 1,280 Crores which corresponds to a tenth of our recently announced 2062/063 national budget. This speaks by itself about the size of the "pie" involved. The IPPs take home a tidy sum of Rs. 466 Crores that is 36% of NEA's gross revenue. Please note that this is through

the single one-point "whole sale" metering process and not the messy 1.1 million "retail" metering involved in distribution. One can, thus, see the high 1,280 crores rupees stake involved in the Nepal power sector market which, despite our tragic ongoing conflict, is still growing at a confident 7/8% per annum.

Lobbying, Not a Sin:

Fundamentally, the IPPs' intense behind-the-scene lobby for NEA unbundling, modeled after the much harped westernized concept of "free market and level playing field", is for this larger chunk of the country's enlarging pie. This is not a sin at all in the present day liberalized and globalized environment. In USA, millions of dollars are spent by various power sector groups lobbying their interests in the Senate/Congress. Interestingly, this free market concept was recently severely tested in the very country of its origin, America. The cash-strapped ninth largest American owned oil and gas giant, Unocal, was on sale. The purchase bid of US\$ 16 billion, later upped to US\$ 17.1 billion, by the third largest American firm, Chevron, was challenged through the US\$ 18.5 billion bid by the Chinese firm, China National Offshore Oil Company (CNOOC). This caused consternation and intense soul-searching among the American Senators/Congressmen. The lobby, in the name of "threat to US national security", to prevent the Chinese takeover of Unocal appeared to have the upper hand. After watching how the lawmakers of the one and only Superpower would interpret this "free market and level playing field" concept in their own backyard, the Chinese CNOOC, to the great relief of many Americans, just withdrew their Unocal bid.

Nepal Power Picture:

Unfortunately, here in Nepal, this intense lobbying to get the larger chunk of the growing power sector market has diverted the State's focus from generation addition to restructuring NEA. Now, let us take a peek at some of the existing salient features of NEA:

i. NEA Power Purchase Picture 2061/062:

a. Units in Gwh:

Khimti	BKPC	BPC	Indrawati	Chilime	Piluwa	Syange	Sanima	Total India	Total
60	36	17	7.5	20	3	0.18	2.6	146	50M 196Mw
368	236	84	43	135	18	1	4	889	228 1,117

b. Revenue in Rs. Crores:

Khimti	BKPC	BPC	Indrawati	Chilime	Piluwa	Syange	Sanima	Total India	Total
209.5	128.8	29.0	20.2	69.3	7.1	0.4	1.7	466	117 583

c. Average Power Purchase Rate in Rs. Per Kwh:

Khimti	BKPC	BPC	Indrawati	Chilime	Piluwa	Syange	Sanima	Total India	Total
5.69	5.46	3.45	4.70	5.13	3.94	4.46	4.43	5.24	5.15 5.22

Note: Khimti is the more familiar name for Himal Power Limited (HPL), BKPC is Bhotekosi Power Company and BPC, Butwal Power Company. The writer wishes to acknowledge with thanks NEA's Finance & Administration and Load Despatch Center for the above data. However, the writer only is responsible for any discrepancies in the data. The purchases for the month of Asadh/2062 are estimated



and Sanima's data are only for three months. A further 5 IPPs, not indicated in this chart, have added about 7.2 Mw of generation. India import is based on the NEA/LDC Report.

The above figures warrant some explanations and comments. Khimti is the largest IPP and also has the dubious record of having the most expensive power rate. With a 14.9% BPC share where HMGN has a 9% stake, the Norwegian Khimti keeps a low profile. On the other hand, it is the smaller but more aggressive American brother, Bhotekoshi, that has been hogging the media limelight not only because of its "claims" but by the American garment quota association. Along with Khimti and Bhotekoshi, it is only the tiny Indrawati that has successfully embedded some US dollar content in its PPA. Though some eyebrows were raised at this, Indrawati has now gone on to lay another egg, the 4.5 Mw Lower Indrawati. Piluwa, Syange and Sanima have all come through the under 5 Mw flat buy-back NEA rate announced in 2055/'056 through the initiative of the then DPM Shailja Acharya at MOWR. The cheapest rate of Rs 3.45 per unit is that of the Butwal Power Company, the "Jersey cow" that the government sold off retaining a mere 9% share. Even at such rates, BPC confirmed that it is a "cash cow" when it distributed in fiscal year 2060/'061 a very high dividend of 40% to its shareholders. Of course, BPC is fortunate that it does not have the debt burden that other IPPs carry. However, there is no doubt that other "IPP cows" are not far behind in distributing the not-so-modest dividends. The 228 Gwh of power import from India is also high priced, having by now escalated to the Chilime price. While the average NEA power purchases work out to Rs. 5.22 per unit, these are all at the IPPs' generator terminals or near about, meaning the transmission/distribution losses are all shouldered by NEA. A 20% T&D losses raises the IPPs' average price to Rs. 6.26 per unit. NEA has been collecting revenue at an average of about Rs. 6.69 per unit.

ii. NEA Revenue Picture 2061/'062:

In order to get the macro-picture of where the above IPPs exactly stand, let us again take a look at the following NEA figures:

a. NEA Total Sales 2061/062: 1,913 Gwh with Asadh 2062 estimated

b. NEA Total Revenue 2061/062: Rs 1,280 Crores with Asadh 2062 estimated

c. NEA Average Revenue Rate: Rs. 6.69 per Kwh

Energy-wise because of the take-or-pay contracts, the IPPs contribute a high 46% of the total NEA energy sales. The India-import in the eastern region has become a necessity for NEA due to voltage drops. This 12% India import together with the IPP purchases adds up to 58% of the total NEA sales limiting NEA generation to only 42% of the sales. This means NEA would have to "back-down/spill" its hydro-generation, which this year amounted to about 500 Gwh. In terms of revenue, the 146 Mw-worth IPPs in a system peak demand of 515 Mw romped home with 36% of the total NEA revenue. Now lumping this with the 9% India-import purchase, NEA thus has to part away with 45% of its total revenue collection on purchases. Last year, in terms of interest, loans, royalty and corporate tax, NEA also serviced the government's treasury with Rs. 374 crores. This servicing with the power purchases (Rs. 374 crores plus Rs. 583 crores) alone total to Rs. 957 crores which is 75% of the total NEA sales. With the remaining 25% of the revenue (Rs 323 crores), NEA would have to service its over 1.1 million consumers through its huge 9,700 employees and carry out necessary system reinforcement and rural extension works. There is little wonder as to why NEA has been in the red during the last couple of years.

Generation Addition: The "Shudras" and the PDF

The small hydro, for long considered the "outcaste/shudras" in power sector by the government of the day, has begun to make a perceptible movement upward to the "vaishya" class. The "shudras" do admit that it has been very difficult to make this upward movement, as the promised promotional incentives of the hydropower development policy were not translated into deeds. One can hear these "shudras/vaishyas" seminars/workshops frequently at expensive five star hotels these days. The 2001 hydropower development policy does stress on the need "...to utilize labor and skills of Nepal..." and mobilize "internal capital market for investment in power sector." Like many of the other plans and policies of Nepal, these are sadly in the paper only. However, as indicated by the flurry of under-10 Mw hydropower plants under construction/commissioned, the Nepalese entrepreneurs have demonstrated that they can mobilize the internal capital market and that they can implement smaller projects using local labor and skills. This needs to be appreciated very much particularly because of the prevailing difficult environment that our country is undergoing.

Besides the above indicated IPPs, the following five small IPPs, totaling 7.2 Mw have already been connected to the grid:

i. Rairang Khola	500 Kw	Rairang Hydro Power
ii. Chaku Khola	1,500 Kw	Alliance Power Nepal
iii. Khudi Khola	3,450 Kw	Khudi Hydro Power
iv. Baramchi Khola	999 Kw	Unique Hydro Power
v. Sisne Khola	750 Kw	Gautam Buddha Hydropower

After concluding the PPAs with NEA, a further 12 numbers of the following IPPs, totaling 62.4 Mw, are also in various stages of construction (EIA, access road construction, land acquisition, financial closure etc.):

i. Tadi Khola	970 Kw	Adishakti Hydropower
ii. Pheme Khola	995 Kw	Khoranga Khola Hydro Power
iii. Thoppal Khola	1,400 Kw	Thoppal Khola Hydro Power
iv. Upper Mai Khola	3,000 Kw	East Nepal Develop. Endeavor
v. Mardi Khola	3,100 Kw	Gandaki Hydro Power
vi. Lower Nyadi	4,500 Kw	Bavarian Hydropower
vii. Lower Indrawati Khola	4,500 Kw	Sunkoshi Hydro Power
viii. Mailung Khola	5,000 Kw	Molnia Power
ix. Daram Khola	5,000 Kw	Gurkha Hydro Power
x. Langtang Khola	10,000 Kw	Kantipur Hydro Power
xi. Madi-I Khola	10,000 Kw	Annapurma Group
xii. Upper Modi Khola	14,000 Kw	Gitec Nepal

Total: 62,365 Kw

There are definitely a thousand and one reasons as to why this motley crowd of developers has not been able to achieve commercial generation. Some are believed to have had the survey licenses for over ten years. But we all must bear in mind that this 62 Mw of PPAs is worth a year's annual load growth. That is why we all need to look at these "shudras and vaishyas" in a positive manner! Their Nepali-Rupees-denominated PPAs with the capital of our own Nepalese banks financing Nepalese labour and skills would help to drive our economy in a sustainable manner.

The other complementary mode with the "shudras and vaishyas" is the World Bank's Power Development Fund (PDF). The PDF concept originated with the Arun III demise in 1995 where its own planned contribution was a whopping US\$ 175 million. Ten years down the road, this whittle-downed US\$ 35 million PDF is still in the process of financing just one 35 Mw, 76 Gwh firm energy Kabeli A in the eastern district of Panchthar. Yes, we do need this generation very badly particularly in the east. But this does not go to relieve even a year's load growth. Along with Kabeli A, the 24 Mw, 89 Gwh firm energy Rahughat/Myagdi had been planned under the PDF. But for some reasons Rahughat, whose site is now smack on

the recently constructed road, was dropped. The impending load shedding demands that this 24 Mw Rahughat be now clubbed together with the 35 Mw Kabeli A for PDF implementation for a year's relief. The PDF Board should ensure that the PDF Administrator, Nepal-Bangladesh Bank, does more than merely advertise its own name in the front pages of the leading dailies.

Conclusion: The Need to Sit around a Round Table!

It is certain that in the coming years we will have to face load shedding as in the past. It is also certain that the State/NEA promoted 257 Mw Upper Tamakoshi would take a minimum of another six years. The above data indicate that foreign invested medium sized hydropower projects of the likes of Khimti/Bhotekosi come at a dear price. The price that the consumers have to pay for the Chilime/Indrawati power is equally dear. And equally dear is the price that NEA pays for the huge power import to the tune of about Rs. 117 crores from India. So if the "Shudras and Vaishyas" at about Rs. 3.50 per unit are truly promoted, in the real sense of the term, then they can come to some partial rescue from the impending load shedding. That BPC distributed 40% dividends at Rs. 3.45 per unit is before us all.

There is the general public euphoria that the local banks are awash with funds at low interest rates and that institutions like the Karmachari Sanchay Kosh/Army Welfare Fund etc. are all straining at the leash to invest in hydropower projects. But knowledgeable finance executives have gone on record to state that with the prevailing laws and regulations, it is extremely difficult to finance even a 20 Mw hydropower project here in Nepal. Our financial sector regulator, Nepal Rastra Bank, would need to hear this loud and clear. They must have also taken note that none of the smaller IPPs, that are now on commercial operation, has come through the real "project financing" mode. Hence, it is very crucial that we all (government, donors, banks, developers, utility etc.) sit around a table and find out with "due diligence" who has to do what under the present circumstances in our power sector. Otherwise, the nation's already stunted economic growth would be further stunted by the impending load shedding. ■

Editor's Note: Mr. Pun's above article had appeared in NEA's bi-annual Vidyut Magazine on Bhadra 1, 2062. Though already six months old, SPOTLIGHT has reprinted that article because of its relevance to the present heavy load shedding.

BOOK

Snapshots Of History

Journalist Kishore Shrestha's book on royal takeover of February 1 reveals many unpublished and hidden aspects behind it

In the course of Nepal's political modernization process since the fall of Rana regime in 1951, Nepal has seen many ups and downs. The country has seen three different political systems with five constitutions. Despite all these difficulties



*Magha Unnaish Ko Mahabharat
(Dairyka Panaharu)*

*February 19 Upheavals (Notes of
Diary)*

Written by: Kishore Shrestha
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and political upheavals, Nepal has made certain achievements in institution building.

In the last five decades, Nepalese media has evolved as a strong eye-opener even though it had to pass through difficult phases. At a time when no political scientists and historians have made any efforts to publish a book, journalist Kishore Shrestha, who is known as a 'scoop journalist' - as his Jana Astha weekly is popular among the masses for its scoop news

regarding the royalty and other interesting political matters - has come up with a book.

In the last twelve years, Nepalese have seen a period of state of emergency during the time when elected parliament was functional. The first state of emergency was under the scrutiny of elected parliament but the second state of emergency imposed under the Royal proclamation was different and harsh as there was complete control of media by security personnel and private radio stations were barred from broadcasting news.

Shrestha reveals that no political leaders including senior ministers had any idea about what was going to happen the next day on February 1, 2005 as he accounts what happened in a party attended by three former home ministers just a day before the royal takeover. According to Shrestha, the incumbent home minister Purna Bahadur Khadka, however, did hint that it was the last night of their rule.

After meeting prime minister Deuba on January 31 in Royal Palace, King Gyanendra called a meeting of security officials and asked them to follow army chief to prepare a plan for state of emergency.

After Royal proclamation of February 1, 2005, the country has seen a new political situation. The telephone lines were disconnected and Nepal was completely isolated from the rest of the world. Security personnel were sent to censor newspapers and FM radio stations were closed under a government decree.

Under his royal proclamation, the King dismissed the government led by prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and the state of emergency was imposed forming the cabinet under the chairmanship of King Gyanendra. Analyzing the events and consequences behind the context of Nepal's one of the tragic political situations is not an easy work but journalist Kishore Shrestha with all his remarkable sources discusses the events that led up to the February 1 and the players involved behind the scene.

From his own story of censorship, army deployment in his office and difficulties of bringing out the newspapers, Shrestha describes the events and incidents very interestingly. As his newspaper was also under the harsh censorship, the book is full of interesting inside story about February 1. He cites how a senior army colonel pressured him.

Though it is a small book, it is interesting to read to understand how hear-says and rumors of royal takeover suddenly turned into a reality.

Applied Maoism: *Prachanda Path*

By SHRISHTI R.L RANA

The incongruence between the Chinese revolutionary legacy and attempted revolution in Nepal.

In a recent interview to *Kantipur* daily, Chairman Prachanda reiterated his demand for a Constituent Assembly. Curiously, he vowed to respect the verdict of the people even if they go in for an active monarchy, vehemently opposed by the Maoists in the past. That the Maoist supremo sounded like one of the most compromising revolutionaries of the world is surprising. In order to understand the wider implications of his words, it may be useful to look afresh into Maoism both in theory and practice. *Prachanda Path*, in theory, is supposedly a fusion of the Chinese model of protracted war and the Russian model of general armed insurrection. No examination of *Prachanda Path* can be complete without comparing it with the Chinese experience. This is because *Prachanda Path* emanates from the application of the Maoist principles to other, especially South Asian, countries. A closer scrutiny shows that *Prachanda Path* is inter-woven in the baffling interplay of historico-geopolitical, socio-economic and cultural factors.

Ideologically, the Maoist revolt in Nepal is said to be based on the experience of the Chinese revolution. The Nepalese Maoist leaders see striking similarities in the agricultural backwardness, exploitation of the peasants, and rampant corruption between pre-revolutionary China and present-day Nepal. Accordingly, they have accepted Mao Tse Tung's principle that the party, the people's army, and a united front as the three weapons for a people's revolution. Particularly, they strictly pursue the military strategies of Mao. In effect, this has led to their phenomenal success strategically, yet their goal to establish a people's republic is still a far cry from the actual political scenario in the Royal Kingdom of Nepal. The Maoist leaders make us believe that the prevalent turmoil and destruction in Nepal is only transitory as it was in China before an era of progress set in. Sadly, though a decade of intense and committed effort has gone by, the Maoists' minimum demands of socio-economic reforms and even their frequent revision of ideology for a political change in Nepal have failed to unfold any expected outcome. Hence, their contemplated transformation of Nepalese society is still a long way off. Perhaps, the reason behind the gap between promise and achievement is rooted in the fundamental differences between China and Nepal. Nepal's Maoists have overlooked the fact that *Han* and *Khas* societies are not the same despite an apparent similarity in their over all conditions.

The main difference lies in the historico-geopolitical reality of Nepal. In spite of international hostility, China could gracefully survive sans subsidies, grants, or foreign aid. On the contrary, the price that a landlocked country like Nepal has to pay in return for self-reliance does not make it worthwhile. The Maoist leaders appear to be aware that even if their revolution succeeds internally, it cannot continue without the support of India, and, for that matter, China. Nonetheless, it is not in the interest of India, or any international power, to support the communist revolution of any country in the present international order. Hence, even if the said revolution succeeds in Nepal, that too at the cost of millions of lives, it may bring in more internal chaos and isolate Nepal globally.

The socio-economic conditions of pre-revolutionary China and Nepal differ significantly too. The vast size of China and its abundant resources cannot be compared to those of a tiny state like Nepal. The seemingly 'disastrous' revolution paradoxically spelt a new socio-economic order in China by destroying all the obstacles to

development. If Nepal had at least a basic infra-structure for development as in China, it might have been possible for a similar revolution to take place in Nepal. Additionally, in China, the revolution had succeeded mainly due to their leaders who had a finer understanding of socio-economic problems. The Maoist leaders of Nepal do not seem to possess similar vision and dynamism. Thus, the revolutionary model that opened a series of developments in China may not usher in a similar process of change in Nepal.

The cultural factor is yet another important dissimilarity that we all seem to ignore. The sense of collective responsibility that is implicit in the Confucian ethic played a largely positive role in the Chinese revolution. For example, it was estimated that till 1978, an average urban Chinese family lived in only 4.2 square meters of housing space without a murmur because the emphasis was on building factories rather than apartments. With the marked influence of globalization on Nepalese culture, the sense of collective responsibility has dwindled. Belligerent nationalism is fast on the wane and even patriotism fails to inspire most Nepalese any more. Possibly, this disappearance could be because they have a choice of working in and migrating to other countries rather than going through the entire struggle and the pain to develop Nepal itself. Their culture of identifying with the community even in the worst period of suffering provided bedrock for the dramatic development in China thereafter. Moreover, in Nepal despite the murder of thousands of people often innocent, by the Maoists there has been no convincing explanation or justification for these atrocities. In China, after killing the exploitative landlords and other feudal elements, there was a concurrent cultural revolution that won the moral support of the masses. A revolution, albeit an attempted one, entails simultaneous efforts for a cultural revolution or else it would turn into sheer terrorism with neither peace nor development. Therefore, in the absence of these factors, ironically, we might get mired perpetually in this destructive phase of the Maoist endeavor for a revolution.

Summing up, China's paradigm inspires some other countries as, today, this powerful nation is an epitome of prosperity and progress. Likewise, Nepalese Maoists have followed the Chinese model without realizing the limitations they face. Perhaps, this insensibility is what is making the success of the Nepalese Maoists exceedingly elusive. The Maoist violence is almost wholly unwarranted because there are other non-violent means that can lead to the same goal of growth and progress. Besides, justice and equality cannot be guaranteed even if the Maoist revolution succeeds in Nepal. The ideals of a revolution

are exotic but forcing others to be a part of the suffering implicit in a revolution is also an injustice against which revolutionaries vow to fight. All told, there is a paramount difference between the appealing idealism of the Chinese revolutionary legacy and the objective historico-geopolitical conditions of Nepal. Now, since Maoists are all set to intensify their activities and further target Kathmandu, we only hope their leaders come to terms with this obvious incongruence. Is it that the Maoists have unthinkingly or ineluctably embraced a shifting ideology which swings between blatant adhocism and tactical unscrupulousness? ■

(Rana has done an MA in International Relations from Jawaharlal Nehru University with a specialization in China - Mao's era)

SUBI SHAH

A Living Heritage

Sexagenarian Shah has an unmatched expertise in the ancient Nepali dances and music that are on the verge of extinction.

By THAKUR AMGAI

At the age of 78, when people leisurely spend a retired life, Surendra Bikram Shah, popularly known as SuBi Shah is actively involved in investigating, teaching and preserving traditional Nepali dances and folk music.

"These days, I am involved in the research of folk music, and dances. I teach ancient dances to students in Galaxy Public School, Kathmandu Dance Center, Madhurima cultural center, and oversee the folk melodies in Rima recording studio. I also train dances and music at the Army headquarters and the battalions at the Royal Palace," narrated Shah.

In addition to these regular activities, Shah is involved in recording songs and folk music with assistance of new generation artistes. He has prepared twenty different melodies playing five different instruments 'Murali', 'Madal', 'Khajjadi', 'Jhyali' and 'Murchunga'. Likewise, he has prepared more than 100 songs of 'Sorathi' with singer Narayan Rayamajhi. Shah informed that the cassettes and CDs with these creations will be released soon.

Shah was born in 1985 B.S. in Jyamrung village of Dhading district. Nepalese villages were rich in cultural heritage in those days. Shah showed avid interest in cultural rituals popular in the village, from dances like 'Maruni' to 'Sorathi' and folk songs of different genres. He used to actively participate in the village fairs and ritual gatherings and keenly learnt dances and tunes of the songs. "I used to carefully observe senior dancers or singers in the village and try to mimic them on my own," said Shah.

When he was about five he followed his father Chandra Bikram Shah to

Nuwakot, where the latter was deployed as a 'Bada Hakim'. In Nuwakot, Shah was impressed by and learnt the famous 'lakhe dance'. After two years they moved to Gorkha. There, Shah participated in theatres.

After he came back to his village, he started dancing as a 'Maruni' first and then a 'Madale'. He was equally adept at playing 'Basuri' and 'Madal'. After mastering all three arts of singing, playing music and dancing, he became a 'guru' in the village. He would teach



Shah: Steps of life

singing, dancing and music to enthusiasts and lead his group in social cultural functions like 'Rodhi' and 'Jatras.'

In 2011 B. S. Shah joined the armed forces as typist clerk. In the armed forces, too, Shah's aptitude in singing, dancing and music was easily noticed. Initially, he would sing and dance with his friends during free time as a means of entertainment. Later, he began to be asked to teach singing and dancing to his peers and lead them during ceremonial functions of the Armed forces

by senior officials, in addition to his main job of typing official documents and handling other clerical works.

In the meantime, Shah continued investigating, learning and enriching himself with improved knowledge and skills about folk dance and music. The words of his expertise and skills spread soon beyond his battalion in the Armed forces. Officials from the Army headquarter called him to teach folk dance and music for special ceremonies. Shah himself would participate in many of the functions dancing, singing or playing 'basuri', 'madal' or 'sahnai'. He was equally active in playing games like football and volleyball.

After he got transferred to the Royal Palace in the ADC section, he stopped playing games, but continued singing and dancing. He used to teach dancing and singing in the Army functions with the palace and went to the Army Headquarter, when requested, to oversee the preparation of cultural programs for ceremonies.

Compiling his experiences and the findings of his research, Shah published a book 'Madal' in 2039 B. S., with all details of the typical Nepali folk musical instrument 'Madal'. The second book 'Balan', written with details of 'balan' a typical religious genre followed in 2045.

Shah got to devote full time and effort in the field of his choice after he retired from the Army from the post of Colonel in 2048 B.S. He started researching further and focused on teaching ancient dances at different places.

Today, Shah has been established as a living heritage on folk melodies and dances. He has an unmatched expertise in the ancient dances and melodies that are on the verge of extinction. At the age of 78, Shah shows a passion for learning more and preserving the antique dances and music, as an enthusiast youth. Probably because of his immense passion in preserving the fading away Nepali culture, Shah is actively involved in teaching ancient dances and music even today.

Likewise, an articulate and easy going Shah, still sings and dances in cultural functions when requested. ■

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