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The National Newsmagazine

# SPOTLIGHT

April 21 - 27, 2006



# Dispute On Modality

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**Health** : Distribution of  
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SPOTLIGHT/APRIL 21, 2006



## COVER STORY : Dispute On Modality

In words and spirits both the King and the leaders of the political parties have similar commitments and the difference between them is now just a modality of how to translate this concept in reality.

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## SPECIAL REPORT : Survival Of The Screen

Despite facing many hardships like economic recession, growing insecurity, restrictions on movement and overall gloomy atmosphere, Nepali cinema industry is holding on.

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## ARTISTES ON THE STREET: Show For Democracy

Photo: Himat

Artistes of various genres have started to raise voice for democracy.

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**SPOTLIGHT**

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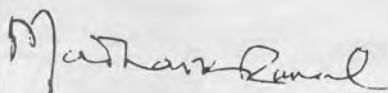
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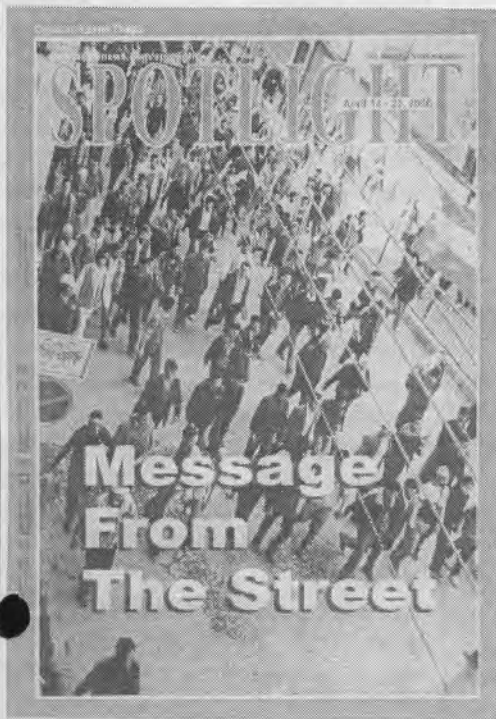
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**I**t seems time is running out for King Gyanendra. Opposition to his government is mounting every passing day engulfing all sections of the society. Even the civil servants inside the official bastion – Singh Darbar – have gone on strike. It is rumored the whole bureaucracy might join the opposition if the repression continues and innocent people are subjected to mal-treatment and brutal behavior. There is no place in the kingdom where people are not agitating against the government. The capital Kathmandu, supposed to be the safest place, has been under virtual siege for the last two weeks. Daily necessities have become not only scarce but their prices are getting beyond the means of the common man forcing him even to go hungry. The daily wage earners are finding it difficult to survive in the absence of work due to strikes and bandhs. Consequently public resentment is rising against the government every minute. Stopping workings by banks and financial institutions are causing great difficulties for all. In such a situation how long are the people expected to be patient? The King can no longer stay complacent. He has to find immediate solutions to all the problems. But he must find advisers who can give him wise and timely advice. We have always suggested to him not to surround himself with sycophants. That sycophants do only lead him astray needs no more proofs. It is heartening to see that he has started meeting people seeking their advice. This must not be limited to ex-prime ministers and ex-panchas. They have, time and again, proved their incompetency. If the King really means business, he must find honest and patriotic people who can render him useful and objective advice. He must not ignore that there is no dearth of men and women in Nepal who are more dependable, trust worthy and honest than these people. Since they have no other interest except the good of the monarchy and the country, they too must be given the opportunity of rendering their service. This is not a time to nurse prejudices. Every piece of wise counsel must be sought and taken.

That India is deeply concerned at the situation in Nepal and has sent experienced statesmen to meet the King and make some suggestions is a welcome news. We had always emphasized that Nepal cannot find solutions to her problems without India's goodwill and sincere cooperation. Now, India seems willing to extend her hand of help. We must take it but the question is at what cost? ■



**Madhav Kumar Rimal**  
Chief Editor & Publisher



## In Search Of A Leader

The course of events in the past few days has shown that there is dire need of a leader to drive the energetic youth forces in the country to drive the country towards a destination "SEVEN-PARTY AGITATION: Message From The Street" (SPOTLIGHT April 14). The masses of youths seen here and there in the streets were seen confused because of the lack of leadership. If there had been an influential leader guiding the agitation like in the 1990 people's movement, the agitation would have reached a greater height by now. It is equally obscure why the leaders of the seven parties have not come out in the streets to lead the masses.

*Pratima Kandel*  
Bharatpur

## Let's Rise

The way people are rising shows that everyone is frustrated with the Royal regime "SEVEN-PARTY AGITATION: Message From The Street" (SPOTLIGHT April 14). But, the king does not seem to understand the people's aspirations. So, it is time all of us come out to the street selflessly for a decisive denouement to the country's crisis.

*Sabita Shrestha*  
Kalimati

## State Of Confusion

Apropos your cover story I have a few comments to make "SEVEN-PARTY AGITATION: Message From The Street" (SPOTLIGHT April 14). First, is it only seven-party agitation, the parties agitation backed up by the Maoists or a purely people's agitation? My observation is that the present mass uprising is a blend of the people's agitation that is provoked by the Maoists. There is certainly utter frustration, particularly among the youths and the educated group, against the King's government. People have got

nothing promised in the Royal Declaration of February 1, 2005. Instead, they have only felt hurdles in exercising their fundamental rights, anarchy from the side of the government and sheer rhetorics to protect and praise the royal government from the ministers and other aides of the King. So, people have spontaneously expressed their frustration through this agitation. However, there neither a leader (or leaders) to lead the mass nor an agenda to guide it. People are, therefore, in a state of great confusion. It is not true that the agitation has reached this height because of the seven parties.

*Kumar Shrestha*  
Ghattekulo

## We Need New Leadership

I highly appreciate and thank you for your timely and courageous editorial "Editor's Note" (SPOTLIGHT April 14, 2006). Sixteen years back, people thought these political leaders possessed a clean image and patriotic character and they got the spontaneous public support. After having seen their

performance, till today our people are finding it very difficult to trust these outdated leaders whom you have only said "corrupt". But one should go one step further and say that they are not true patriots. If they claim they are, then I will ask them, "Why have they united with the force that they themselves declared 'Terrorist' when they were in the government and issued a 'Red corner notice' against them? At this critical juncture, when our sovereignty and the nation's independent existence is at stake, why are they ignoring this simple facts, all the way with foreign hands and money that is so visible today everywhere in Nepal? Why are they not telling their foreign 'Masters' to stay away from our internal affairs?" If they do so now all other things can come later and our sovereignty and "Nepalese Pride" will remain intact for which our founding fathers have shed blood. Can they give convincing replies of these questions to the people from an open platform? No body in the world disagrees that 'Americans ignore all their commitments when their own interests come in the way' is not a new phenomenon. But what is most surprising to us today is that our British friends, for whom our brave forefathers have shed blood in order to protect their empire where the sun never used to set, are also in line with Americans and our so called friend, India. They should be ashamed for this. We must agree that India is our next door neighbour because we can not change the geography but we must understand that India is not our friend, if I may say so after looking at their attitude towards Nepal since 1950. When King Gyanendra has unequivocally committed himself to abide by the constitution and remain a constitutional monarch, where is the difficulty? Why don't our leaders open a dialogue with the King? The big question before us today is how can we trust this gang of corrupt leaders? Therefore I agree with you, and I am sure every sane person will agree that we certainly NEED NEW LEADERSHIP.

*Hikmat B. Bisht*  
Mahendranagar, Kanchanpur



## Demonstrations Continues

The agitating seven political parties have continued holding demonstrations in various towns across the country including the capital. Demonstrations are taking places in the inner parts of the city and the ring road area. Demonstrations are witnessed at Naya Baneshwore, Gongabu, Gausala, Maitidevi, and Sitapaila in then capital. Likewise, demonstrations are also held at Naya bazaar of Kirtipur, Mangal Bazaar, Tyaagal and sundhara of Lalitpur. Similarly demonstrations are also held at Bhaktapur. Clashes are reported between the demonstrators and the police at a number of places. Police have fired rubber bullets in demonstrations at various places like Teku, Gongabu, Balkhu, in the valley and various towns outside the valley. Police has also opened fire at peaceful demonstrations of various professional organizations injuring dozens. Hundreds have bullet injuries and thousands are injured with baton charging by the security forces. Police has taken under control more than 3,000 demonstrators out of which about two thousand demonstrators have been released after initial investigations. Likewise, demonstrations were held in various towns including Pokhara, Hetauda, Bioratnagar and Dhangadhi Saturday as well. Demonstrations were also held at Palpa, Chiwan, Kavre, Bara, Sindhuli districts and in Nepalgunj in western Nepal. Police have taken into custody hundreds of protestors from various demonstrations. *Compiled from reports.*

## King Meets Cabinet Vice-Chairmen; Envoys

His Majesty King Gyanendra discussed the current situation with vice-chairmen of the Council of Ministers Dr Tulsi Giri and Kirti Nidhi Bista and ambassadors of the United States, India and China to Nepal on Sunday. The King held the discussion as the seven opposition political parties stepped up what they call final push against 'royal autocracy' —with substantial moral backing from the international community. Indian ambassador to Nepal Shiv Shankar Mukherjee, US ambassador James F Moriarty and Chinese ambassador Sun Heping received audience with the King in

the evening. The envoys interacted with the King for about one hour each. India and the US have described the royal takeover of February 1, 2005, a setback to democracy and have constantly been urging the King to reach out to the parties and return to democratic process while China maintains a neutral position over the royal move. Both India and US have criticised the government crackdown on the pro-democracy movement of the opposition parties. Immediately after the royal audience, the vice-chairmen duo called a meeting of the cabinet in Singh Durbar. *Compiled from reports.*

## Fund Set Up To Support Victims Of 'Jana Andolan'

At least Rs 10 million has been raised as of Saturday evening in the public fund for the treatment of demonstrators injured in the ongoing pro-democracy movement. The amount touched Rs 5.2 million at Kathmandu Model Hospital alone by Saturday. Likewise, separate funds have been raised at TU Teaching Hospital, Om Hospital, Nepal Medical College and Nepal Medical Association. Altogether, the amount is estimated to have crossed 10 million as of Saturday. As part of the ongoing voluntary contribution to treatment funds, tourism entrepreneurs in the Thamel area have collected Rs 132,665 as of Saturday. Likewise, Nepal Medical Association has opened a bank account, No. 21228-11, at Nepal Bank Limited, Dharmapath for providing treatment to those injured in the pro-democracy movement. In a similar move, Supporters of Democratic Movement at KMC-9, Sinamangal collected Rs 27,783. At least Rs 400,000 has been collected for a treatment fund in Pokhara. Likewise in Damouli, the Rotary Club and the Joint Movement Committee have collected Rs 22,000 and Rs 20,000 respectively for the same purpose. A fund was been set up to support victims of pro-democracy movement who are injured while protesting against the royal regime, by top comedy artistes, Madan Krishna Shrestha and Haribansha Acharya by donating a total of Rs 100,000 to the fund set up by the Public Health Concern Trust (PHECT)—that runs the Kathmandu Model hospital. *Compiled from reports.*

## Direct Rule Of The King Has Failed: US

The government of the United States has said King Gyanendra's decision fourteen months ago to impose direct palace rule in Nepal has failed in every regard. In a statement issued on Monday, spokesman of the US Department of State, Seam Mc Cormack, said, "The demonstrations, deaths, arrests, and Maoist attacks in the past few days have shown there is more insecurity, not less." The US has also renewed its call upon the Nepali monarch to restore democracy immediately and to begin a dialogue with the country's constitutional political parties. "It is time the King recognizes that this is the best way to deal with the Maoist insurgency and to return peace and prosperity to Nepal," the spokesperson said. He further said that the King's continuing failure to bring the parties back into a process to restore democracy has compounded the problem. *Compiled from reports.*

## OHCHR-Nepal Deplores Excessive Use Of Force, Arbitrary Detention

The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)-Nepal has said the recent level of violence against civilians is against the obligations of the State. In a statement issued on Tuesday, head of the OHCHR in Nepal, Ian Martin, said, "OHCHR-Nepal does not condone in any way acts of violence committed by so-called demonstrators. However, it is time for the government, and for all commanders of police and other security forces involved in policing demonstrations, to recognize that this level of violence against civilians is not acceptable and is against the obligations of the State." He urged the government to reconsider its position on the right to peaceful assembly, and to give the security forces the clearest instructions to act only with the minimum necessary force in policing demonstrations. He urged demonstrators and demonstration leaders to only use peaceful means of protest. The OHCHR-Nepal also deplored what it called the excessive use of force by security forces during the pro-democracy protest

demonstrations in the country. "In recent days in Kathmandu OHCHR-Nepal monitoring teams have increasingly observed members of the police and Armed Police Force using excessive force against demonstrators as well as others not involved in demonstrations," the statement added. Reminding that police have been seen attacking bystanders, charging into houses, engaging in indiscriminate beatings and causing some gratuitous damage to property, the OHCHR renewed its appeal to both demonstrators and security forces. OHCHR-Nepal reiterated that international standards require that law enforcement officials, in carrying out their duty, shall as far as possible, apply non-violent means before resorting to the use of force and firearms; and that whenever the lawful use of force and firearms is unavoidable, law enforcement officials shall exercise restraint in such use and minimize damage and injury, and respect and preserve human life. *Compiled from reports.*

## NHRC summons SSP Thapa, Thapa ignores

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) of Armed Police Force Madhav Thapa has failed to respond to the National Human Rights Commission's summons and the NHRC may ask the government to take action against Thapa if he fails to respond to the commission's calls. "The commission is likely to recommend to the government to take action against Thapa if he does not show up at the commission office," report quoted a NHRC source as saying. NHRC had sent a letter to Thapa on April 13, summoning him before the commission for interrogation about the excessive use of force by security forces in Gongabu, Kathmandu, on last Tuesday. The excessive use of force including opening fire at the protestors had caused injuries to hundreds of demonstrators in Gongabu. The forces there were under Thapa's command. Meanwhile, talking to Kantipur Television on Sunday, Home Minister Kamal Thapa alleged that the NHRC can not summon security commanders in the field. *Compiled from reports.*

## Dev Plans In Rasuwa

The Rasuwa District Development Committee has been running development

programmes based on the participation of the people. According to the DDC, some 66 out of 91 development programmes have local people's participation. They include school building construction, irrigation, health, drinking water supply, culvert construction and repairing, and landslide controlling. A budget of Rs 12.7 million has been allocated to complete the development projects being run in some 18 village development committees of the district. *Compiled from reports.*

## ANNISU-R Accepts Participation In The Ongoing Movement

The student wing of Maoists All Nepal National Independent Students Union -Revolutionary (ANNISU-R) has said that it has been participating in the ongoing general strike called by both the "seven party alliance and the Maoists" that started from April 7. The Maoist-affiliated student union has also said that its presence in the movement would increase. The union also said that it would begin changing the names of the educational institutions named after past kings and take action against security officials involved in suppressing demonstrations. The statement further said that many cadres of the union were injured and arrested in course of the agitation. The statement came at a time when leaders of seven political parties are ruling out the Maoists' infiltration in general strike and claiming that the general strike is solely their programme. *Compiled from reports.*

## India, Canada Concerned At Nepal Situation

The Indian government has expressed serious concerns over repressive measures being adopted by the royal regime against the pro-democracy demonstrators across the country. A spokesperson at the Indian Foreign Ministry said on Wednesday, "The resort to repressive measures by the government in Nepal can only undermine prospects for the process (of dialogue and reconciliation)." Similarly, the Canadian government said on Wednesday that it was concerned by continuing indiscriminate

arrests and detention of political party leaders and human rights activists in Nepal. *Compiled from reports.*

## Development Workers Stage Sit-In Calling For Peace And Democracy

Expressing solidarity with the on-going pro-democracy movement in Nepal, some 200 development workers based in Nepal took part in a demonstration at Jawalakhel on Wednesday. Police intervened in the peaceful sit-in and rounded up around 20 people. They also seized placards being displayed by the participants, who read: Respect rights of people, among others. The Kathmandu Post daily quoted Eiichi Sadamastu, resident representative of Save the Children, Japan, as saying that all the development workers wanted all the parties to the conflict in Nepal to initiate the peace process. "We want to see peace and development in Nepal," she said. *Compiled from reports.*

## Private Sector Extend Support To The Pro-Democracy Movement

A number of organizations involved with business, economy, travel and trade have expressed their solidarity and support to the on-going pro-democracy movement in the country. In a statement issued on Wednesday, Nepal Chamber of Commerce called on all to work towards restoration of peace and congenial environment for doing business in the country. The Trekking Agents Association of Nepal (TAAN) called upon tourism entrepreneurs and professionals to actively take part in the pro-democracy movement. Similarly, the Federation of Nepal Cottage and Small Industries (FNCSI) demanded action against those responsible for using excessive force against peaceful demonstrators. In a joint statement, Nepal Independent Hotel Employees Association, Nepal Tourism and Hotel Labor Association and Nepal Hotel Labor Association have announced their support to the on-going pro-democracy movement. In a statement, Airlines Operators Association of Nepal said there was no alternative to multi-party democracy in Nepal. *Leading dailies report.*





His Majesty King Gyanendra and Queen Komal receiving royal salute at a function organized by the Royal Nepalese Army on the occasion of New year 2063.

Photo: RNA

**DOZENS OF PEOPLE WERE INJURED, SOME OF THEM** critically, when security personnel opened fire at a group of pro-democracy demonstrators at Gongabu in Kathmandu on Tuesday. Security personnel guarding the residence of Additional Inspector General of Police Rup Sagar Moktan opened fire without any provocation at the demonstrators without any warning. Dozens were injured. The Armed Police Force deployed to control the crowd also opened fire after one of the policemen shouted that his colleagues had been targeted by the Maoists. Gongabu turned into a battlefield in no time with security personnel even beating health personnel and Red Cross staff who were providing primary health care to the victims. Rights groups, professional bodies and political parties have condemned the police brutality at Gongabu. In Pokhara, two women were injured when security personnel opened fire at a huge mass of demonstrators. Police also opened fire in Dhankuta. Tens of thousands of people took part in pro-democracy rallies in the western town of Butwal. Employees of the HMG and state-owned corporations have also announced that they will not return to work unless democracy is restored in the country.

**ISOLATED COMPLETELY WITHIN THE COUNTRY AND** internationally, the royal regime has been using brute force to suppress peaceful demonstrations in the capital, Kathmandu and around the country. According to reports, police opened fire, fired tear gas shells and resorted to baton charging to disperse a peaceful protest rally being organized by the Nepal Bar Association (NBA) in Kathmandu on Thursday morning. According to rights activists monitoring the rally, police used excessive force as soon as the rally – being participated in by over 400 lawyers—reached Babarmahal. Over a dozen lawyers including NBA president Shambhu Thapa have been seriously injured in police action. Over four dozen lawyers have been arrested.

**ECONOMISTS HAVE SAID THAT THE INFLATION RATE** of the country will touch the double digit (around ten per cent) if the

political crisis remained unresolved. They fear that the current inflation (i.e. eight per cent) will scale up to ten per cent owing to the unexpected rise in the price of commodities in recent days due to curfew and general strikes. Report quoted Dr. Surendra Bhakta Pradhanga, chairman of the Kathmandu Research Centre as saying that the nation is bearing the loss (direct loss) of 1.1 billion rupees everyday due to the closure. He however said that the multiplier effect of closure would be around 3.85 billion rupees each day. However, officials at Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) do not agree with the findings of the Kathmandu Research Centre (KRC). They say that sudden rise in the price of commodity will not have much pressured in the inflation rate. "It is just a short-term phenomenon. Such a phenomenon will not have significant impact," they added.

**THESEVEN-PARTY ALLIANCE(SPA) HAS ASKED THE** people not to pay taxes, VAT and customs duties until the restoration of total democracy. It directed another appeal to the security forces: disobey any government order to them to shoot at the people. Sunday's meeting of the seven-party alliance's central people's movement coordination committee announced further programmes to intensify the peaceful movement countrywide. It also asked the Maoists to cooperate with the peaceful programmes of the alliance and abide by the understandings they had reached with the alliance on November 22 last year and on March 19. According to a press statement issued by the alliance, the alliance, with the active participation of people from various walks of life, will hold a massive march through the 27-km long Ring Road in the capital on April 20. The alliance appealed to people of different social strata to take part in the march on the Ring Road and make the continued general strike a success by defying the curfew and prohibitory orders of the government. It also appealed to Nepalis working in foreign countries not to send any remittance until autocracy is brought to an end and to boycott products of all those industries where members of the royal family have invested. The call came at a time when people from all walks of life expressing solidarity to the ongoing general strike of seven political parties.

**IN A BID TO THWART DEMONSTRATIONS OF SEVEN** political parties the government has banned any kind of protest activities like gathering, procession and sit-in that could disturb the law and order situation has been prohibited in all the areas within the Ring Road and 200 metres from the Ring Road of Kathmandu Metropolis and Lalitpur Sub-Metropolis, with effect from Sunday. Prohibition will remain effective until further notice. The District Administration Office of Kathmandu and Lalitpur have, in separate notices issued on Sunday, said that the prohibition has been enforced as per the Local Administration Act 2028 B.S. so as to maintain law and order and security, taking into consideration the possibility of such activities leading to riots and disturbance in law and order, obstruction to non-participants and negative impact on public health. The government issued the order at a time when the seven political parties are planning to hold a major demonstration in ring road area on April 20. The government had imposed prohibitory order within ring road area from April 4 ahead of four-day general strike of seven political parties beginning April 6.



“We believe that there is no alternative to multiparty democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the verdict of the ballot alone is legitimate.”

*King Gyanendra, in his message to the nation on the occasion of Nepali new year 2063.*

\* \* \*

“The King’s address has neglected the people’s aspirations as well as the appeal of the international community.”

*Amrit Kumar Bohara, officiating general secretary of the Unified Marxist-Leninist (UML), in Annapurna Post.*

\* \* \*

Currently, two streams- one of democracy and the other of a republican state are flowing in parallel. If the situation persists the two rivers will converge and flow as one.”

*Girija Prasad Koirala, president of Nepali Congress (NC) and former prime minister, in an interview with Kantipur.*

\* \* \*

“I have nothing to say if you are keeping away from the street agitation fearing that your shoes will be dusty, otherwise you should come to the streets from today for the end of autocracy and establishment of democracy.”

*Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli, leader of the Unified Marxist-Leninist (UML), speaking at an interaction program at the Reporters’ Club.*

\* \* \*



Jana Bhawana

“I remind the government of its international obligation to respect the right to peaceful assembly, and I remind its security forces of their obligation to use only minimum necessary force even when faced with demonstrators throwing rocks and other projectiles.”

*Ms. Louise Arbour, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, issuing a press statement.*

\* \* \*

“The process of dialogue has started. Democracy will certainly return in the country.”

*Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, founding leader of Nepali Congress and former prime minister, talking to reporters after a royal audience.*

\* \* \*

“Monarchy has failed in every country where the king aspires to become both a ruler and a leader.”

*Prakash Chandra Lohani, co-chairman of Rastriya Jana Shakti Party, speaking at a face to face program at the Reporters’ Club.*

\* \* \*

“The current situation of the country has forced us to become agitators from cine workers.”

*Nikhil Uprety, popular feature film actor, speaking at a function at Gurukul.*

\* \* \*

“Businesspersons never become engaged in a political agitation.”

*Surendra Bir Malakar, president of Nepal Chamber of Commerce, in Jana Bhawana.*

\* \* \*

## TRANSITION

**AWARDED:** **Bal Sahitya Samaj**, with Dev Kumari Thapa Child Literary Banita Award 2062; academician **Dadhi Raj Subedi**, with Dr. Narendra Chapagain Memorial Banita Literary Honor; and music director **Bulu Mukarung**, with Banit Music Honor; by Banita Award Committee.

**BEREAVED:** **Nayan Bahadur Khatri**, chairman of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), by his son Madan Bahadur Khatri, at the age of 66.

**CLOSED:** The American Center and the consular section of the US Embassy in Kathmandu, for an indefinite period, citing unstable political situation in Nepal.

**POSTPONED:** The visit of former US President **Jimmy Carter**, scheduled to take place from May 4, citing unstable political situation in Nepal.

**NOMINATED:** **Baikuntha Manandhar**, as the goodwill Ambassador of by Nepal Chess Association, by the Association.

# Glacier Lake Outbursts Danger To Nepal

By DR AB THAPA

Nepal has already started to launch plans to develop water resources projects at locations in the vicinity of the glacierized areas in the Himalayan regions. As a result, water resources planners in Nepal have started to encounter the problems arising from the glacier lakes outbursts floods (GLOF).

Sudden outbursts of water from glaciers are also termed as "Jukulhlaup" or glacier floods. These sporadic outbreaks take a heavy toll of human lives and properties. The discharge hydrographs from glacier floods resemble normal storm hydrographs except that the flood rise is slow but fall is abrupt.

A glacier lake is formed by glacier activities and is closely related to the present glacier state. We need to know about the relation of the glacier lake with the glacier to enable us to understand about the glacier lakes and how they burst.

The dam materials of a glacier are unconsolidated moraine or glacier ice. The glacier lakes usually outburst under two conditions in Himalayan region. A glacier dam would collapse due to external factors when a big mass of lake water overtops it consequent upon the wave motion triggered by falling rocks or avalanches. Earthquakes can also result to glacier dam failure. Glacier dam could collapse if the dam slopes are weathered. It could also collapse if the seepage from the dam body significantly rises.

## Glacier Formation

Glaciers are formed by accumulation of ice and snow on lands over a long period as a result of solid precipitation exceeding melting and evaporation. Glaciers differ from other bodies of land borne ice in their ability to flow. Deformation of mass of ice crystals can take place in three different ways; intergranular adjustment, recrystallization and intragranular gliding. Intragranular adjustment is significant only in surface snow layers because grains in the ice portion of the glacier are generally of irregular shape and are tightly interlocked. Ice streams form in mountain valleys and move downstream under the effect of gravity. Ice caps cover large land masses and spread out radially because of the great pressure built up by their weight.

Initially the snow deposits have density of about 0.1 and gradually change into a coarse crystalline structure with density of about 0.5. This formation is known as "neve or firn". As new snow is deposited on the firn, it is further compacted and much of the air is expelled. Over a period of

several years, the density increases and nears 0.90 under strain imposed by glacier movement. A realignment of the crystal structure occurs. The final transformation converts the firn into glacier ice, a tightly fitting crystal structure with density of 0.9 or slightly higher.

A glacier moves down its valley in nearly the same manner as a stream. Velocity surveys across glaciers show that there is a definite central current i.e. velocities near the valley walls are much lower than in the center of the glacier. On nearly horizontal or adverse slopes the greatest velocities is near the bottom of the ice mass, while on steep slopes the maximum velocity is near the surface. Ice is plastic under stress. Cracks and shear planes develop in glaciers because ice is relatively weak in tension.

A glacier carries large quantities of rock waste which is called moraine. Some of this is torn from the valley bottom by the glacier and is embedded in its bottom and sides. The moraine along the sides of the glacier is called lateral moraine; that along the front of the glacier is called terminal moraine

and that at the bottom of the glacier is called ground moraine.

In temperate regions the minimum thickness of ice required to induce flow in glaciers is between 30 to 45m. The glaciers are extremely sensitive to climatic change. Prolonged changes in the mean annual or mean summer temperature of less than one degree may instigate glacier advances or retreats amounting to hundreds of meters.

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## Glaciological Studies

Need for the glaciological studies of the Himalayas has been felt since a long time. In 1973, in cooperation with the International Hydrological Decade (IHD) 1965-1974, which was promoted by the UNESCO, observation studies of the glaciers in the Himalayan mountains within the Nepal territory were initiated by the Japanese Society of Snow and Ice. The studies were rewarded with good results. In 1980s, Royal Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (RONAST) was striving to set up an international center for the study of snow and ice primarily concerned with the glaciological studies in the Himalayas to promote sustainable economic and social development in Nepal and in adjacent countries.

The Joint Sino-Nepalese GLOF study expedition to the upper reaches of the Arun and Sun-Kosi region of China took place during 14 April to 21 June 1987. Canadian advisors also participated in the expedition and report preparation.



In 1990s Dr. Tomomi Yamada of Japan and Dr. B.P. Upadhyay, Professor of TU were involved in the study of glacier lakes within Nepal. The study was conducted under the Water and Energy Commission.

**Glacier Lakes at Head Reach of Nepalese Rivers**

At present glaciers are retreating in the Himalayan region, as a result, glacier lakes are being formed. Such ephemeral lakes disrupt communication systems and various infrastructures like hydropower directly, or indirectly subjecting the mainstream to periodic catastrophic floods. Glacier lake outburst floods also produce peaks in sediment transfer

In 1990s Dr. Tomomi Yamada of Japan and Dr. B.P. Upadhyay, Professor of TU were involved in the study of glacier lakes within Nepal. The study was conducted under the Water and Energy Commission. Their study covered Lower Barun, Chamlang Tsho, Naulekh, Sabai Tsho, Dudh Kund, Mojang, Tsho Rolpa, Duwo, Thulagi, Khyimjung and Kang Guru glacier lakes.

In 1988 a joint team of Sino-Nepalese conducted the studies of the glaciers and glacier lakes in the Arun and the Sun-Kosi basins primarily in the Tibetan region of China. The Lanzhou Institute of Glaciology and Geocryology took part in the study from the Chinese side, similarly the Water and Energy Commission

took part from the Nepalese side. The field investigation team used satellite imagery data to locate the lakes and to estimate their dimensions as well as their morphological characteristics. In Arun basin there are 737 glaciers in Tibet, whose total water storage is estimated to be 121 billion cu. m. It was found that there are 229 glacier lakes with an area of 46,746 sq. km. and a total storage volume of 1.23 billion

cu. m out such glacier lakes 24 are potentially dangerous. Similarly there are 45 glacier lakes in the Sun-Kosi basin with an area of 12,312 sq. km. and a total storage volume of 388 million cu. m out of them 10 are potentially dangerous.

**Glacier Lakes Outburst History**

On August 4<sup>th</sup> 1985 the nearly completed Namche hydropower plant was completely destroyed by the Dig Tsho glacier lake outburst flood (GLOF). The Dig Tsho glacier was on the terminus of the Langmoche Glacier. The GLOF damaged not only the entire Namche Hydropower station but also all the bridges, trails, cultivation fields, houses, livestock along its path to the confluence of the Dudh-Kosi and the Sun-Kosi rivers at a distance of 90 km from the Dig Tsho glacier.

Since the nineteen forties, according to Sino-Nepal study, there have been at least 10 cases of glacier lake outbursts within the basins investigated. Among them there have been

five bursts in three glacier lakes of the Arun River Basin, and four in three glacier lakes of the Sunkosi River Basin.

In Arun Basin the most common are the end moraine-dammed lakes. Because the end moraine-dammed lakes mostly consist of end moraines formed in the Little Ice Age and are closer to their source glaciers, or connect directly with the glaciers, changes in the glaciers directly influence the water level of the glacier lake and the stability of the dam. At the same time, owing to the fact that the end moraine dams are composed of new and loose till, they are uncompacted and therefore unstable. This type of glacier lakes are easy to burst and cause floods and debris flows. The end moraine-dammed lakes are distributed most at the source of several short and small tributaries in the left side of the Arun River. They are distributed over a transitional zone from maritime to continental glaciers.

Gelhaipuco is an end moraine dammed lake located in the headwaters of Gelhaipu Gully (Natangqu River Basin, east of Riwo, Dinggye County). At 14.00 on Sept. 21, 1964, the lake burst abruptly. According to the study of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, there was a heavy precipitation in the Nantangqu River Basin, which caused the glacier of the Nantangqu River to slide. Huge amount of ice slid into the lake. The generated shock waves triggered the lake water to overflow the moraine

dam causing the burst. There was a breach across the dam which was 30 m deep. The debris flow rushed down to the lower reaches of the Arun River in Nepal, and caused heavy economic losses

At mid-night, July 11, 1981, an end moraine dammed lake located at the headwater of the Sunkosi River suddenly burst. A breach of 50m deep and 40-60m of bottom width was formed at the moraine dam. The highest burst discharge was

about 1600 cu. m./s, which was observed 23 minutes after the burst. The high flood lasted about 60 minutes and the burst water amount was estimated at 19 million cu. m. The debris flow damaged the Kodari Highway and the Sun-Kosi Power Station in Nepal. The flood destroyed the Friendship Bridge at Kodari. According to the investigation of 1984, there had been a similar burst in 1964 from that same lake, but the burst discharge and damage caused was smaller.

**In Conclusion**

Need for the glaciological studies of the Himalayas had been felt since a long time. Few such studies were made in the past. Nepal, however, must put more efforts into the studies of snow and ice primarily concerned with the glaciological problems arising in the Himalayas to promote sustainable economic and social development in Nepal. ■

(Dr. Thapa writes on water resources.)

## TOURISM

# Struggling For Survival

Tourism industry in Nepal is struggling for survival following the intensification of insurgency

By A CORRESPONDENT

**W**ith the intensification of Maoist insurgency and political conflict, tourism, like all other industrial sector, is also badly affected. About half a dozen star hotels have already closed and rest are in the verge of closure in the last five years, resulting in a large scale unemployment.

When the country's tourism industry had once again shown a possibility of resurgence, latest indefinite strikes called by seven-party-alliance has pushed it to the point of collapse.

Although the number of tourists who visited Nepal in the month of March has increased by 27 percent compared to the same month a year ago, the month of April – which is under the shadow of indefinite strike – will definitely damage the recovery process.

According to Nepal Tourism Board, compared to 20,137 tourists who came to Nepal by air in March, 2005, the number increased to 25,553 in March this year. The number is compiled by the Immigration Department at the Tribhuvan International Airport.

The overall tourism industry had shown significant growth after the number of flights linking Kathmandu with various cities of India increased in the recent months. Significantly, the number of Indian tourists increased by 77 percent during this period while the number of third-country tourists increased by 14 percent. Around 7,165 Indian tourists visited the country in March. In the first three months of this year, the number of tourists visiting the country has increased by 18 percent compared to the same period previous year.

“All our hope of recovery of the tourism industry has shattered after the recent trends of agitation and disruptions in transport. It might now take decades for the recovery of tourism industry again,” said a tourism entrepreneur. If the current situation persists, many more hotels and travel trade companies will be forced to close rendering thousands of youths unemployed and decreasing the acquisition of foreign currency.

After the intensification of Maoist insurgency in the last few years, country's tourism industry has badly suffered as more than couple of star hotels were closed down and many other are on the process of closure.

Thanks to indefinite general strike called by seven political parties and growing incidents of violence in the city,

the travel and hotel industry continue to receive the conciliation reports.

Like the star hotels, non-star and budget hotels in the valley are badly affected. Kathmandu's tourist hub, Thamel – which is used to be packed with tourists during these seasons in the 1990s and early 2000s – looks totally deserted these days. “Many tourists who came here with a program to stay for weeks left for India after knowing about the indefinite general strike called by the seven-party-alliance,” said a hotel entrepreneur. “We don't know how we will manage pay monthly rents in the coming days.”

Nepalese tourism sector was showing a robust growth till the late 1990s. The number of tourists visiting Nepal crossed the mark of 0.5 million in 1999, the year after the Visit Nepal year 1998 – when an extensive campaign to visit Nepal was launched worldwide.

However, the downfall of the industry began after the hijack of an Indian Airline's airplane in 2001. Indian airline companies had suspended all flights to Nepal for months following the incident. The number of Indian tourists visiting Nepal sharply plummeted.

The tragic incident was followed by Royal Palace massacre the same year that resulted in negative publicity of Nepal throughout the world. The intensification of the Maoist insurgency and the state of emergencies declared at different times added pain to injury.

The latest scenario of political clash started after the dismissal of an elected government by King Gyanendra in October 4, 2002. As tourism industry thrives only in peaceful and risk free environment, the present on-going double edge crisis will not permit it to revive.

“Unless political stability is achieved, the country's tourism industry will not see any revival. For this, there is required a political consensus among the country's major political forces regarding tourism industry,” said a senior tourism entrepreneur. “The parties concerned must realize that the tourism industry is important for them irrespective of political their ideology.”



Tourists on a 'bandh' day: Annoyed



## NURSES

## Eighteen years without promotion

While the nurses work as hard as the doctors, they seldom the credit for successful treatment of the patients

By DURGA BHANDARI

**N**ursing profession is generating attraction these days. This is largely due to the fact that this profession offers employment opportunities. Not only in domestic markets, the demand for nurses is growing abroad as well.

Nepalese nurses have gone to various countries for employment, more so in the Gulf countries. Along with attractions and opportunities, this occupation brings forth plenty of challenges. Although on the surface it looks promising, this profession is not that easy. The job of a nurse is sensitive and demands unlimited working hours. The nurses, who lend their shoulders in times of trouble and emergency, are themselves sad. Even if they fall sick, they have to be on duty. Such is the nature and seriousness of their profession. But there is no one to console them. Sometimes they have to leave their sick children at home and report to work. Clarifying the seriousness of her profession, a nurse of the Western Regional Hospital Indu Basnet says: "Apart from professional difficulty, there are also practical problems."

Having entered the profession five years ago, Basnet is finding difficulty in balancing her home and job responsibilities. Irregular working hour has affected her home duty, which includes taking care of her child. "However, my family has only three members. I am not chained by any social values, norms and tradition. I have managed anyhow and have given priority to my office work." In a similar vein, her husband Suryachandra adds: "It could have been easier to strike the balance, if there were an extended family. Take these factors into consideration: our social structure, household responsibilities and nursing profession. It's extremely challenging."

Nursing is not easy, compared to administrative works, as this profession entails looking after patients. Moreover, without family support, it will be terribly difficult to function. Radha Poudel, a nursing supervisor, says: "I could not have achieved this much, if there were no family support." Radha completed a three-year nursing course

from Shantabhawan (Kathmandu) in the mid-1970s. "Our society did not look at nursing with respect." Only a few people turned to this profession. Even fewer were those who studied nursing.

She remembers an incident when she happened to reach an operation theatre before the doctor and saw a patient running away in fear, unable to come to terms with the possibility of a woman undertaking abdomen surgery. "The society of that period did not have confidence in women," Radha says.

She was attracted to this profession when she saw a nurse in white dress dedicated to taking care of a patient. She narrates the good and sad stories she had come across over the years. She says she has taken these stories as education. She has received death and professional threats by telephone many times. "Nevertheless, I did not panic. I am working relentlessly," she says.

Time and situation have changed. Yet the perception towards nurse is no different. This profession is full of challenges and difficulties. Sometimes they do not receive credit for their hard work. Patients and their families always think that nurses are hardhearted. They do not realize that the nurse is an important member of a medical team. In case of successful treatment, they thank doctors to heavens, and in case of complications the blame goes to the nurse, says Haridevi Joshi, an eighth grader nurse of the Western Regional Hospital.

"While the nurse works hard, the doctor takes the advantage." She is dissatisfied over the pay and privilege a nurse receives despite working round-the-clock. "We receive Rs 30 for night duty. Not only is it insufficient to buy a decent meal, it cannot even meet our tea expenses." Haridevi says: "Security arrangement for those doing night duty is not good. A nurse looks after many patients. A nurse on night duty must take care of the whole ward of patients, numbering up to 60. Sometimes in a drunken stupor, personal attendants of patients try to harass nurses sexually."

"Sometimes in fits of anger, they throw oxygen cylinders at nurses. If something

happens, nurses are the soft targets upon whom they vent their anger," says Haridevi. A doctor travels in a car within a month whereas a nurse of even 20 years of experience has to depend solely on her meager salary.

"Now there has been some changes in the role of nurses. Previously, nurses were just attendants. Now they are also generating awareness about health. They have become the assistant of doctors," she adds.

One should think wisely before marrying a nurse. Madan Kumar Ranjit, husband of Ganga Shakya, who is a nurse, says: "A nurse needs family support. One should marry a nurse only after understanding the nature of her work." Madan works with the statistics department of a hospital. His wife's income is supplementary to running the household. In case of some not-so-serious sickness, there is no need to rush to the doctor. That is why Madan is happy.

Nurses have professional problems, too. Medical Superintendent Dr Kalu Sharma is worried that he has not been able to upgrade the nurses of the Western Regional Hospital for a long time, despite his wish to do so. He acknowledges that there has been no internal promotion of nurses in the hospital. Altogether 86 nurses are working in the hospital. Of them, 21 are working with the Hospital Development Committee on temporary work contract. They have not been upgraded for the past 18 years. Dr Sharma says lack of regulations that govern the committee is the reason why they have not been hired as permanent staff. In the regulations, the hospital's right and working scope have been specified. This hospital was established 21 years ago. But it has not been able to exercise its rights. For every small work, it has to follow the instructions of the Ministry of Health. He says this mechanism has led to red tape.

This hospital, which is well within the reach of ordinary civilians, has well-trained staff and high-quality medical equipment. Despite this, the hospital is not up to the mark, he says. There are 50 medical facilities in Pokhara, including government hospital, and teaching, private and community hospitals and nursing homes.

Given the country's unemployment status, which is largely attributed to internal conflict and violence, nursing is indeed an attractive and secure profession, amid challenges aplenty. ■

*Courtesy By Saucharika Samuha*

## POLITICS

# Dispute On Modality

With a message to the nation, King Gyanendra has expressed his commitment towards the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990 – which proclaims that the sovereignty of the nation lies in the people - and faith upon people's right to vote. Leaders of seven agitating political parties –which have been launching nation wide general strikes - also want to make people as the sovereign and supreme power of the country. In words and spirits both of them have similar commitments and the difference between them is now just a modality of how to translate this concept in reality. If seven parties and King start dialogue, they will find out a modality acceptable to both. The King expresses his commitments to transfer power to the people through elections and political parties want transfer of power to the people through the revival of parliament. As democracy is a system to settle differences through the process of dialogue and negotiations, there is required a reconciliation between them to translate their commitment

By KESHAB POUDEL

**A**s perhaps both King Gyanendra and the leaders of political parties have preconceived prejudice against each other, they are unable to distinguish right and wrong stopping them from reaching out to the compromise.

Thanks to the widening distrust and mistrust between them, the political crisis is prolonging forcing the common people

of Nepal to suffer. With a call to sacrifice personal comfort for broader interest of the democracy and country, the indefinite general strike called by seven-party-alliance has already pushed the country into a brink.

Although King Gyanendra, too, shows positive indication for dialogue in his recent message to the nation, he, too, has failed to convince how his statement will translate into action. More the interim arrangements like the present situation

continues, the tenure of unelected and unaccountable persons will prolong resulting in greater conflict between the King and the organized political forces for a long period of time.

Although King Gyanendra also shows complete awareness that all forms of extremism are incompatible with democracy, he is -like other political leaders- trapped in extremists design. Just a few hours after New Year's message of King



Gyanendra on April 14, his own spokesperson has created confusion when he explained the underlying contents of the King's message. Without analyzing and reading the positive parts of the King's message, the leaders of seven political parties, too, decided to continue indefinite strike more effectively terming King Gyanendra's call for a dialogue as a ploy to pacify the on-going agitation.

There is very little difference between statements of political parties and the King in essence. If they sit together and care to work out a workable modality, they would find an appropriate modality to meet their demands and commitment. Leader of political parties want to correct the King's extra-constitutional act of October 4, 2002 and February 1, 2005 through the revival of parliament and the King wants to correct mistakes through the elections.

#### Reaction to Message

"After listening to the King's message, there is no way out left for us other than to continue our agitation more effectively. King's message has nothing new as it is continuation of his own road map. As long as the king does not handover his authority to the people, there is no possibility to start negotiations," said Nepali Congress leader and supremo of the agitation Girija Prasad Koirala, who is, too, surrounded by extremists.

Although King Gyanendra's message basically elaborates his own road map, it also has some flexible words. But the leaders of political parties have termed it as too little and too late. "The King has openly called the political parties for dialogue. This is a good opportunity to start dialogue to end the current political stalemate. We can

find out every solution through dialogue," said Home minister Kamal Thapa. "Leaders of political parties should realize the need to hold elections."

In his message to the Nepalese people on the occasion of Nepalese new year, King Gyanendra has expressed his commitment to his own road map to hold the elections for the parliament as a precondition to hand over power to the people. King Gyanendra has said that it is his desire to initiate meaningful exercises of multi-party democracy through exemplary democratic exercises like general elections with the active participation of all political parties committed to peace and democracy.

This is what he can offer as a constitutional monarch as he chooses election as a medium to hand over power he secured following the dismissal of elected government in October 4, 2002. If

King Gyanendra's message translates into action, people will again rule the country. He wants to roll back. If that is the case, why do the leaders of political parties not sit for negotiations?

Expressing commitment to the present constitution, the King has shown that he has no other alternative and ulterior motives and design against the present parliamentary system. Thus, election is the opportunity to express sovereign right and the King has expressed to hold the elections. The question of date and modality of elections is open for negotiations.

His statement clearly draws a line between pro-constitutional and anti-constitutional forces. He addresses the problems of pro-constitutional forces. If Maoists come to participate in the elections, there is no hurdle for them. King's message for dialogue is directed to pro-constitutional forces only.

"According to the present constitution, the King does not have mandate to go into negotiations with extra constitutional forces. Perhaps,



**King Gyanendra:** Calling for dialogues

the King thinks that he does not have mandate to negotiate with Maoists and that requires mandate of the parliament. Can the King alone decide to hold the elections for constituent assembly? As a constitutional monarch, he does not have that authority," said a former attorney general and a lawyer. He seems to be convinced that only elected parliament has mandate to address the Maoists problem. King cannot go beyond the boundary defined by the constitution.

If political forces want to survive, they must show the sign of reconciliation. If they want to survive together, it is not possible to have King in Palace and party leaders in prison. If they are sincere towards a solution, they can find it. As the communists are also real forces reckon to Nepal, one cannot ignore the institution of monarchy, which has such a long history. If internal forces do not respond the call for negotiation, third party will step in. In that case, the country will have to suffer.

Problem with King is that he does not have a spokesperson to advocate his roadmap. In that sense he is handicap. Similarly, political leaders too don't have spokesperson to explain what could be the political significance of the revival of parliament. Therefore, there is a need for



**Party Leaders:** Negotiations bring solution



Angry Mob: pacification required

both parties to involve themselves in the process of dialogue.

"If they hold dialogue with unconstitutional forces in India, why can't they hold dialogue with the King in Nepal? Let the political parties have their say in the government formation. In his recent article in *Himalkhabar Patrika*, renowned tourism entrepreneur Karna Shakya proposed a practical way out for formation of government to hold the elections. Shakya proposed the formation of all party interim government in accordance to the proportionate of representatives in the previous parliament. "If it is necessary, the parliament should be revived to make necessary arrangement for holding elections," wrote Shakya.

Whatever others say, political leaders have termed King's call for dialogue as too little and too late. The agitating political parties have announced new course for fresh agitations. "It (the royal address) failed to address the agenda of seven political parties," said Minendra Rijal, leader of Nepali Congress Democratic. "It is too little and too late."

In his message the King said that the democratic norms and values demand the commitment that the goals set forth by the 1990 constitution can be achieved through constitutional means.

As King is not a party to election, persuasive and positive effort for a meaningful dialogue is essential now from the side of the parties. It is up-to the political

parties now whether to prolong this interim arrangement to continue the tenure of Dr. Tulsi Giri, Shrish Sumsher Rana or to replace them by the representatives of popular mandate.

"I have told you that King Gyanendra will never handover power to the people on his wish. There is no alternative to the agitation," said former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba. "If he was really sincere, the King would have addressed the issues raised by seven agitating political parties."

#### Question of Intention

Other opposition leaders, too, have similar reactions. "Through the message King has made another ploy to prolong his direct rule. The King's intention is bad. If he is really honest to solve the present political impasse, he will have to act in accordance to the demand of the political parties," said Nepali Congress leader Arjun Narshing K.C.

Intention is a subjective matter and it is immaterial in politics. What counts most is one's limitations, compulsions and his capacity as an individual or an organization. "Each of the political parties in Nepal has its own limitations and compulsions," said a political analyst. "Even if one suspects the mind of the other, he should be given the benefit of doubt."

"Political decisions cannot be made on the subjective assessment of the intention of a person. Even if a person has an ill motive, that does not count much in case the person does not have the capacity

to enforce it. Methodology followed by B.P. Koirala is still exemplary to his followers. He noticed and said why talk about the intention of monarchy at a time when he is telling that it is not the intention but the vested interest of monarchy to have the stability of his throne. For that he needs peace and stability in the country," said a political analyst. "Following that methodology one can reach into the conclusion that the King needs peace and stability in the country which is the first and foremost desire of the common people of the country. At present, the constitution is one of the stabilizing factors for both the crown as well as the democratic process."

The process which was derailed by postponement of the elections has not been in the interest of the crown. Therefore, in the present message also the King has pronounced that the election is final. No democratic party can convince the people that the election is anti-democratic.

#### Modality for Dialogue

Dialogue has many ways and it may go into different phases. The present message of the King is also a dialogue in response to personal or organized opinions of the political forces in different ways. Now the much awaited thing is genuine responses from persons concerned. Points of agreement or disagreement again can be expressed by different means of dialogue. An environment to sit together and finalize the negotiations will be slowly and gradually created.

The dialogue is not a one day or one act deal but it goes through several ways and phases. What the country needs a present is dialogue with a purpose to reach meaningful conclusions. Negotiations must be done with a motive to establish peace stability and for survival of parliamentary system. In the process of dialogue, extremist forces on both sides might not continue to exist for long. It depends upon the public opinion.

After all a real and capable leadership on both the sides must have guts and capability to tackle the extremist pressures from each of their sides. Sandwiched between two big powers with a very limited capacity, the country does not have any alternatives other than to start the process of reconciliation. ■



# King And Parties Should Work Together

By KEITH GEORGE BLOOMFIELD

Winston Churchill once said that the definition of success is that, despite repeated failures, one still manages to remain optimistic. Nepal has certainly had its repeated failures. Whether one remains optimistic or not depends on whether the political forces in Nepal now act to correct those failures and enter into genuine dialogue about the country's problems, or instead choose to continue on their present path of confrontation.

Since the London Conference four years ago the international community has consistently argued that the King and the parties should work together to agree a strategy for handling the Maoist threat and bring peace to this tragically war-torn country through negotiations and reintegration of the Maoists into the mainstream. Our advice has not been acted upon. We have even been told to mind our own business.

Increasingly, we feel like the man with the TV remote control watching a bad movie, pressing harder and harder on the buttons even though we know the batteries have gone flat. The bad movie just goes on getting worse. The country faces a prolonged war of attrition which neither side can win and which will cost the people of Nepal dearly - not only in lives, economic misery and international isolation, but also in terms of democracy, basic civil liberties and human development.

How can Nepal avoid this catastrophe? Not by words alone, that is clear. There has to be genuine willingness by all the political forces to compromise, to abandon long-held positions, and to act on their fine-sounding public declarations. As things stand today, the gulfs of confidence are such that it will take a major effort of imagination and flexibility by all sides to restore peace, and I just do not see that effort being made. The people of Nepal deserve better.

## Twin crises need twin solutions

Nepal faces simultaneously a constitutional and a security crisis. These two crises are inter-linked. As His Majesty put it last month, peace and democracy are "two sides of the same coin". He also re-affirmed his commitment to a general election by April 2007.

No democratic party or country can of course be against elections in principle. But this is not the first Nepalese government in recent years that has proclaimed its intention to work for elections. They have all failed because of two major obstacles. The first is the lack of any genuine collaboration between the constitutional forces, and the absence of conditions - political and security - for free and fair competition in a multi-party democratic context. The second, which in part stems from the first, is the failure of those forces to agree on a credible "consensus road map" (His Majesty's words again) to reintegrate the Maoists into a democratic system and bring peace.

I think it is clear to all observers of the Nepalese scene that these key obstacles have not yet been overcome. It is now up to those who advocate elections as a solution to Nepal's crises to explain how exactly they plan to overcome these obstacles, and then to take the initiative to ensure, through meaningful dialogue between all those concerned within the country, that a consensus road map becomes a reality. Without this, no election plan will be credible.

## No elections without democracy

The issue of democratic competition is a key one. It is simplistic to equate meaningful democracy with the mere mechanics of an election process. First, there has to be a democratic environment for an election to work. Locking up senior political leaders arbitrarily and without trial, using intimidation to force people to vote, and banning peaceful demonstrations will not contribute to such an environment.

Second, an election has to involve credible political parties. It is not the number of parties that counts here, but their ability to mobilise the people as demonstrated by their track record in previous elections. Elections which were boycotted by nearly all the parties represented in the last parliament would not be an exercise in meaningful democracy and would do little to solve the constitutional crisis. Democratic governments govern by authority not power, and that authority can only be derived from the consent of the majority of the people.

Finally, there has to be a conducive security environment. While armed rebels should not be given a veto over the holding of elections, and

in some circumstances "conflict elections" can contribute to a political solution, it is clearly much better to hold elections in a calm and peaceful atmosphere free of intimidation, threats and violence.

## Reintegration of Maoists into multi-party democracy

The election security issue is thus intimately linked to the wider search for peace - the obstacle here being the absence of a consensus road map for dealing with the Maoist threat and reintegrating the rebels into a multi-party democratic political mainstream.

No sustainable peace process is possible without a democratic environment and democratic intentions. All experience suggests that what is required is widespread consultations among the different interest groups, including the political parties and civil society, in a way which ensures their buy-in. One would need to look very hard indeed to find a single armed conflict anywhere in the world that has been successfully resolved by negotiation and where these conditions have been absent. By contrast, attempts by one or other political force to impose their preferred solution on a whole country are quite simply not going to lead to a successful negotiated outcome.

The Maoist leaders themselves have been publicly arguing since last year that they cannot win militarily and that a political strategy offers the best way forward. They have expressed a commitment to a multi-party democracy. This change in mind-set, if it is one, is what the security forces have been fighting to achieve, because they too recognise that there is no military solution available and that democracy has to be the basis of peace.

Many would contend that the resumption of Maoist violence following the end of their earlier cease-fire in January proves that this mind-set change has not yet occurred, and that the Maoists have not yet abandoned either their obsolete political ideology or their unacceptable pursuit of political ends by violent means - both of which the international community has rightly and soundly condemned. There are also profound differences within the country over the Maoist demand for radical constitutional change and the mechanism - the Constituent Assembly - for achieving such change. But this does not mean that the Maoists can never by definition be sincere about a political solution.

The efforts of the political parties to draw the Maoists into peaceful resistance in the latest Memorandum of Understanding between them is therefore a welcome development. However, it is not nearly enough. Ongoing Maoist violence continues to undermine the cause of peaceful resistance and to make it easier for opponents of political engagement to justify their refusal to engage. We therefore urge the Maoists to resume a ceasefire, and to renounce violence permanently. We also urge both the Government and Maoists to work sincerely towards a properly monitored cease-fire agreement, followed by a well-structured peace process. This is the real test of their good faith. Simply blaming each other for their failure to work for peace is no substitute for action.

The Maoists also need to demonstrate, in a far more convincing way than they have hitherto, that they recognise that their arms have to be put permanently beyond use if a political settlement is to be achieved. Without such a demonstration nobody in the country or in the international community will give their claimed conversion to democracy any credibility whatsoever. And of course if it becomes clear that the Maoists are in fact only playing tactical games and are unwilling to move forward into a meaningful peace process and an outcome based on multi-party democracy, all of us will have to draw the appropriate conclusions.

Simply setting out what needs to be done, as I have tried to do, underlines the magnitude of the challenge facing all the political forces in Nepal. Only history will tell whether they can rise to the challenge. But to quote Winston Churchill again - "jaw-jaw is better than war-war" - dialogue is better than conflict. Without such dialogue success, even on Churchill's definition, will remain elusive and the optimists will once again be confounded.

*(Excerpts of the speech made BY British Ambassador to Nepal H.E. Keith George Bloomfield during the visit of British MPs)*

## CINEMA INDUSTRY

# Survival Of The Screen

Despite facing many hardships like economic recession, growing insecurity, restrictions on movement and overall gloomy atmosphere, Nepali cinema industry is holding on. Although it could not register a definitive improvement in the last one year, the industry also did not collapse as was predicted by many doomsayers. In the face of onslaught of rapid expansion of television industry and the bombardment of films from Bollywood and Hollywood, the Nepali cine sector has managed to trail along. In fact, the April of this year – which marks a new Nepali year – has appeared the actual ‘springtime’ for Nepali cine industry with new films being announced practically every new week. However, the cine industry needs to grow and expand in the months ahead to tap the potential of entertainment industry in the country

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

**N**ikhil Upreti has been arguably the busiest artiste in Nepali cinema industry in the year 2062. “Around 8 to 10 films were released in the year in which I had the good fortune to play the lead role,” said Upreti, the latest hunk in the town who has shown every potential of dislodging Rajesh Hamal as the number one actor.

“The last one year (2062) was good not only for me personally but also for the whole industry. A lot of films are being made,” said Upreti, who was recently in news for not being able to manage ‘dates’ with film-makers. Although he is an exception in an industry where many artistes are not finding enough work, the fact that for successful artiste there is no dearth of films points to growing confidence of the makers. “I did face few hassles due to dates problem but they are settled now. Right now, my two films Nikhil Dai and Krishna Arjun are under production,” said Upreti.

Apart from Upreti, for most other artistes and makers, the year 2062 was an average one. “Compared to previous year, the year 2062 was a little better because of the number of films that were made and the increase of trade,” said

Naresh Poudel, a leading director and producer. Poudel’s film ‘Dhadkan’ was a hit of the year. He has directed ‘Abhmanyu’ that is set for release soon. Poudel has also announced a new film ‘Giraftar’ that he will make soon.



Ascene from a Nepali movie: Struggling to attract audience



“It was a good year. Particularly in the recent months, one can see that a new film is being announced every week,” added Nirmal Sharma, another leading producer.

The slight increase in the interest of producers has come as a welcome development. If sustained, this could herald a rebirth of Nepalese film industry. After years of wallowing in recession, the reels could finally spring to life.

**Expansion of Trade**

For the beleaguered film-makers of the country, the recent months have come as a sweet surprise. In what could be the start of a turnaround from years of recession, the films are actually doing brisk business not only in Kathmandu but also elsewhere.

“Earlier, Kathmandu valley was considered a market of 4 to 6 lakh rupees. But now the valley alone can contribute Rs 10-12 lakh of business to film makers,” said Sharma.

The valley alone contributes to over 20 percent of turnover. The big population in the capital city including educated as well as uneducated worker masses represent the bulk of Nepali audience who can make or break a film-makers’ career.

In addition to the huge market in the capital, there are several other pockets that present lucrative market. The small urban and semi-urban settlements that have sprouted along the big highways have helped in expanding the trade of entertainment industry. In fact, these settlements – with as low as few thousand population – boast of one or more film theaters and most of them show Nepali films unlike the big theaters in Kathmandu Valley that show Hindi or even English films.

The growth of these urban and semi-urban settlements across the country from east to west indicates a promising future for Nepalese films. They constitute a bulk of audience that have grown up liking Nepali movies.

In the previous couple of years, the number of films being made had dwindled drastically leading to the exodus of prominent actors to overseas. Saroj Khanal, Karishma Manandhar, Raja Ram Poudel and many other actors, directors



**A scene of tradition dance:** Depicting originality

and film-makers have gone to the United States in search of lucrative jobs indicating the pathetic situation of Nepali cinema industry. While four years ago over 50 films were being made every year, the number came down to just over half a dozen in 2061. With the crash in the numbers, the business of entertainment industry - which supports the livelihoods of tens of thousands of people including artistes, technicians, helpers, theater managers and their families – also crashed.

Due to the conflict and insecurity, entertainment industry was not exactly a priority sector of anybody including the government, policy-makers and the masses. Unlike in countries like India or USA, the film industry here do not enjoy much political clout and their issues are, most of the time, brushed aside.

Despite the bleak scenario, the film industry has survived and is poised to make a turnaround even. “Now there is an encouraging sign of turnaround of the situation. In the month of April alone, 8-10 new films are going to be announced,” said Sharma. This is, indeed, an encouraging sign for an industry suffering from losses and setbacks.

In its four-decades-long history, Nepalese cine industry has traversed a tumultuous path. From making one film every four to five years in the early 1980s to four to five films every year in 1990s

to over 50 films in late 1990s and early 2000s, the industry was picking up pace before the insurgency and insecurity came as a bolt from blue.

Most Nepalese films are being made with the average investment of anything between Rs 2 to 5 million. Four years ago films like “Darpan Chhaya” and “Tan Ta Sarai Bigris Ni Badri” had collected around Rs 10 million – setting a record for Nepali films.

In the last few years, the theaters have suffered a setback due to insecurity in the country. Out of around 430 theaters, more than fifty percent have already closed down in the last three years. Naturally, the entertainment has become a least priority for the people as theaters are running empty and avoiding night shows.

**Vanishing Masses**

One of the principle reasons for the drastic fall of film business has been the exodus of primary viewers. Unable to bear the growing violence and insecurity, hundreds of thousands of rural and semi-urban Nepalese youths have left for work overseas. These were the very youths who were the cream masses for Nepali films.

And along with them went the business of films. “This is one reason why Nepali film-makers now need to pay serious attention to winning new audience among urban and educated

masses," said Poudel. He added that his film 'Dhadkan' was able to become a hit because it 'touched upon an entirely different and urbane life story.'

The two films that were hit this year also showed the growing appeal of newer storylines. The "Papi Manchhe" had monkeys and dogs playing cute roles while "Dhadkan" was all about glamour and love.

"No more will the story about village, tradition and culture be appealing. Common people want to watch and immerse themselves in glamour and dream during the three hours they spend watching movies," added Poudel.

Whether the newer storylines, as Poudel claims, would be adequate enough to lure the audiences back to theater, however, remains to be seen. What is clear, however, is that the makers of Nepali film need to produce quality movies that appeals to all classes of people and in all regions.

Perhaps, it was for the same reason that Sharma had produced what he likes to call a different sort of movie' this year called "Nepal – the Himalayan Kingdom" that deals with contemporary issue of social conflict.

With the objective of cashing the market of Nepali diaspora spread across the globe, particularly the United States, 'Nepal' focuses on a story of US-returned Nepali youth who becomes concerned with the situation in his home country.

Even some portion of the shooting of the film has been done in the US. "We have been very meticulous in choosing the script. Our only intention is to provide a movie with a social message – that we all must work together for the peace and prosperity of our nation," said Nirmal Sharma, who has produced a number of films like Angarakshak in the past.

**Rise of Television**

Big screen's loss has been the small screen's gain. In recent years, a number of private television stations have started airing different kinds of programs. And most popular among them have been the tele-serials.

Nepal Television alone airs a number of family dramas like Parichaya, Mod and Janaki along with comedy serials like Tito Satya, Meri Bassai and Jire Khursani. Kantipur Television has Nalekhiyeko Saino while Nepal One airs Timi Purush. All of them have become quite popular with many of them showcasing leading stars of big screens.

"Television has become a lucrative market for film makers. The growing professionalism and expanding audience base have been favorable to many makers who have switched from big screen to small ones," said Sharma.

her, one of the reasons for drastic fall in the business of movies is the poor quality of films that are not in tune with the changing tastes of audience.

Lamsal herself feels that she is not getting enough number of films. "Although I am busy in some ventures, it is not as many as I would have liked," she added.

"Definitely, after holding on and surviving for the last couple of difficult years, it is now time for Nepalese cine industry to move on with renewed vigor," said Poudel. "It is clear that audience is not going to accept any trash. We must



Actor and actresses: Suffering the brunt of recession

Sharma also produces "Tito Satya" – a popular comedy serial that airs every Thursday evening from NTV. "We have had a very fruitful experience in producing this serial," Sharma said. Along with him noted directors like Ramesh Budhathoki, Shambhu Pradhan, Laxmi Nath Sharma and Yadav Kharel, among others, have also jumped from big to small screen.

**Road Ahead**

"Nepalese film-makers and artiste must adapt with the changing times to survive and prosper," said Arunima Lamsal, a leading actress. According to

focus on quality and even technical aspect to win their trust."

At a time when Indian Bollywood movies are easily available not only in theaters but also in CDs, Nepalese audience has become choosy. They are acquainted with the best quality movies in flamboyant colorful settings and superior technology. And they demand no less in Nepali films. What the Nepali makers lack in the technology and setting, they must compensate with magnificent storylines and acting. Otherwise, the Nepalese films will be forced to languish in stagnancy. ■



## VITAMIN A DISTRIBUTION

# Capsules for All

With the call of UNICEF and other international humanitarian committees, millions of children are given Vitamin A capsules

By A CORESSPONDENT

For weeks of uncertainty and chaos, bringing children in nearby schools or health posts was not easy task. Despite the country's deteriorated situation, Female Community Health Volunteers commissioned Vitamin A Capsules to more than 3 million children below the age of five.

Despite general strikes and curfew, the nation wide campaign is widely successful. Thanks to the support from all political parties, the program passes on peacefully in most of the rural parts of the country.

UNICEF has urged all parties to the conflict to agree on one thing next week: children.

"Two things happen next week that are of vital importance to the children of Nepal," UNICEF's Representative, Dr Suomi Sakai, said today.

"Baishak 3 (Sunday, April 15), is the start of the new school year. And Baishak 6 and 7 (April 19 and 20) are the days scheduled for the national distribution of Vitamin A capsules and deworming tablets.

Every six months in Nepal, Vitamin A capsules are distributed to some 3.3 million children aged between 6 months and five years. A further 3.1 million children aged between one and five years will be receiving deworming capsules that greatly reduce rates of anemia. Some 48,000 female community health volunteers will mobilize in each of the wards in all 75 districts for the distribution, one of the largest child-survival exercises in Nepal.

"The capsules and tablets have been transported to the DHO offices in the districts already," said Dr Sakai. "What the children need now is for the

FCHVs to be able to distribute the capsules and tablets.

"Half of Nepal's children are malnourished. Many also do not have enough Vitamin A in their own bodies. This essential vitamin helps boost their immune system.

"The Vitamin A distribution is estimated to save the lives of some 12,000 children each year. This number is about the same as the number of people estimated to have been killed since the conflict began in 1996. Vitamin A also

ensure that children do receive their Vitamin A capsules and deworming tablets on Baishak 6 and 7, including the children in the urban areas affected by strikes, demonstrations and curfews.

"UNICEF is also deeply concerned that the current situation is going to impact on the start of the school year in four days' time on Baishak 3. It understands that many schools are still uncertain about whether or not it will be possible to open. Further, there has been a suggestion that teachers should strike and that the schools should remain closed.

"Children have the right to go to school, and they have the right to go to school without fear of violence.

"UNICEF is increasingly concerned about the damage the conflict is doing to the education of Nepal's children.

"Adults fighting this conflict need to ask themselves what sort of



Rural children: Vulnerable group

prevents some 2,000 children each year from going blind.

"Whatever the issues between adults, one thing that they have agreed on in the past is that the children of Nepal have the right to live and be protected from disease.

"Even during difficult times in past years, Vitamin A campaigns have still reached more than 90 per cent of Nepal's children. We urge all adults to help

Nepal do they want to have once the conflict is over. Do they want a Nepal with healthy children who can read, write and count, or with children and young adults who are weak, sick and illiterate?

"Let all adults agree next week on one thing: put children first. Help the children of Nepal get their Vitamin A capsules and deworming tablets, and help them get to school in peace." ■

## BOOK

# On Water and Culture

In his recently published book, renowned archeologist Shaphalya Amatya discusses how water and culture is interlinked in Nepalese society

Like in all other cultures, water has played very important role to shape Nepalese culture and religion. Different sources of water have contributed to evolve almost all cultural practices in one or other way. Whether it is onset of monsoon or water lakes and small pond or stone spouts, they have religious and cultural significance in Nepal. Followers of Hindus and Buddhist religious sects take mountain pick as well as glacier lakes as a sources of salvation.

From birth to death, water is regarded as ingredients to purify new babies and dead body. Although the water and culture has such a close link to each other, only a few people have made to explain the relations. Thanks to Amatya, many Nepalese will learn importance of water in our culture.

“Water is life for people and for the planet and one cannot imagine colorful and diverse Nepali culture without water. In Kathmandu valley, religious monuments are found virtually all along the three major rivers as well as water sources like stone spouts, wells, springs and others,” writes Amatya in his preface. I attempt to explain the causes of depletion of traditional water sources and its implications to Nepali culture. Water and culture are two inseparable factor of Nepalese culture. The importance and role of water in Nepalese culture is infinite. My small attempt is just to persuade Nepalese scholars and researchers to do more work and research on this important theme.”

Whether stone spouts of valley or river bank or wells, all of them have many religious significant. Some water spouts were built to provide necessary water to the gods and goddesses other are for purification process.

According to Encyclopedia Britannica, Water is an extraordinary substance, anomalous in nearly all of its physical-chemical properties and easily the most complex of all the familiar substances that are single chemical compounds.

“Think of human body, newt to oxygen, water is the most important natural resources to keep up alive. In an adult human body, water content is around 65 percent and human babies in their bodes have up-to 90 percent liquid. Water constitutes 70 percent of human body weight. Our blood has 83 percent water and our muscle has 75 percent,” writes Bhuvaneshwor P. Daibagya, secretary general of JVS. “About this book, it would speak volumes on the relations between water and culture in Nepalese context – on the role of water in Nepalese culture: at every state and walk of Nepalese life—from birth to death, on merit making through water related constructions.”

At a time when Nepal’s major cities like Kathmandu valley is facing water crisis and the country is no position to invest huge money to construct the project, Nepal’s traditional systems of water harnessing –which is at the verge of extinction – needs to revive.

As most of the water sources have religious importance in the Nepalese culture, people can easily be motivated to conserve and protect them. Interestingly, many religious and cultural functions are now gradually disappearing along with the pollution in the river sources as well as dried up the water spouts. “I believe that one or two books cannot cover the total facets of interfaces between Nepalese culture and water as water has importance contribution in Nepalese cultural life,” writes Amatya.

The book consists of ten different chapters related to water and culture. The first chapter is about water and culture and next discusses rivers and Nepalese culture. There are also chapters related to festivals, fair, custom and water. The book deals with folk culture and water, Royal Institution and Water and traditional water resource management and its uses. ■



Shaphalya Amatya

JALSROT VIKAS SANSTHA (JVS), NEPAL

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By Shaphalya Amatya

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# Bush's Iraq War

By MADHAV KUMAR RIMAL

"Iraq is the major victim of Soviet disintegration. Bush could invade Iraq as there was no other power to challenge him. Even the United Nations could not restrict him." Said an old friend who had spent quite a long time in the U.S. diplomatic service.

"Do you justify?"

"Who am I? And who would Bush be accountable to?" This is just a part of the discussions I held with some American friends during my stay in the U.S. recently. Why did Bush attack Iraq is still a very good question because there is nobody who can even partially justify it. Bush's hard line supporters might have stood by him on this issue, but they have not been able to put forward even one plausible reason in its defence. Majority of Americans think invasion of Iraq has been a greater mistake than Vietnam. "There could be some justification for attack on Vietnam but Iraq has no justification whatsoever." "We have attacked a country which never did anything to us," said a prominent political analyst in Washington D.C. Whatever other hidden reasons Bush might produce, but the two most obvious 1. the presence of WMD (Weapons of Mass Destruction) and 2. Saddam's links with Osama Bin Laden – have proved to be utterly baseless and consequently have put Bush in an extremely embarrassing situation. Though there is no dearth of people imputing Bush with various kinds of motives, personal, partisan or even national, but no body can put the finger on the button that would open up showing the one reason that impelled the U.S. president to attack Iraq. More than three years after Bush attacked Iraq he must be finding it difficult to convince even himself that he made the right use of his country's might. Because he is still trying to rally American public opinion to support the costly venture getting out of hand and no end in sight.

The miscalculations that the Americans would be welcomed as liberators and Iraq war would be over in a few weeks and the puppet Iraqi government would be cleaning the war rubbles making way for a stabler democratic government have only contributed to a headlong fall which seems to have convulsed the Bush government's thinking. Instead the long drawn out struggle has taken the shape of a never-ending guerilla war with dedicated Islamic insurgents and suicide bombers that keep on mushrooming in an ever growing number. The inner circle of the President who rule in the name of their boss were equally wrong and miles away from their target of the expenses. They had tossed out estimates of 50 or 60 billions. And they were suffering under their fantasy that the Iraqi oil revenues would pay for the war as well as the reconstructions besides huge amounts of invisible expenditures. They were as wrong about the money as they were about WMD, link with Bin Laden or suicide bombers. The treasury has already borne the brunt of more than 400 billion pushing the budget deficit to figure unimagined. Since no body can predict correctly when the U.S. will be able to pull out of Iraq completely, the over all expenses are supposed to mount to near two trillion dollars in a conservative estimate by renowned American

economists. These kinds of estimates are causing heartburns amongst the poorer Americans and spreading wrath and resentment against the Bush government. The poorer people in the U.S. cannot swallow that when their social security benefits and medicare are being cut, the government is most callously spending billions in a war which has neither benefited their country nor enhanced their country's image.

George W. Bush is noted for relying on his lieutenants and advisers so much that, at times, he has to face embarrassments. His vice President Dick Cheney has made history as the most powerful vice President ever. He and Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld have occupied enviable places in George W's administration. Apart from his close advisers at home, the one and only dependable international ally George could command has been the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair. All of them have whetted his ego to take decisions that have proved rather precipitous. Even the Iraq war, it is said, was ordered without a detail home work and smacked of Bush's arrogance. Ann Duindlen, the noted Newsweek columnist writes, "The most unattractive trait of the American empire is American arrogance, which the President embodies and which this war (Iraq) elevated." Needless to say that this has not contributed to enhance Bush's popularity neither at home nor abroad.

Apart from generating global uproar about the mistreatments of the Iraqi prisoners, the anti-American sentiments that have gripped not only the Iraqis but the whole muslim world are sure to give the American peoples and their establishments many severe anxious moments for a long time to come.

Since American forces have failed to subdue the Iraqi dissidents, insurgents and suicide bombers, violence continues unabated taking big toll of both Iraqi and American lives almost daily, the occupying forces seem to be in a fix. The country is at the verge of a vicious civil war. And most peoples of the world including the majority of Americans hold President Bush responsible for bringing Iraq to such an uncertain situation. Whatever valid or invalid reasons Bush might put forward for invading Iraq overwhelming Americans, including those with loyalties to Bush's Republican Party believe "Iraq war was the wrong war at the wrong time against the wrong people." And they are very sore at the non-chalant behavior of the President over the deaths of Americans in Iraq. They say "President Johnson had the good sense to be heartbroken by the body bags. Bush appears merely peevish when criticized. Some one with a trumpet should play taps outside the White House for the edification of a president who has not attended a single funeral for the Iraqi war dead." They even ask, "Why are America's sons and daughters being sacrificed to protect the egos of those whose own children are safe at home." And now, as a lame duck President Bush does not bat his eyelid to say "he cannot withdraw from Iraq. It is for the future Presidents to decide."

## ARTISTES ON THE STREET

# Show For Democracy

Artistes of various genres have started to raise voice for democracy

By THAKUR AMGAI

April 12, 2006, became a historic day for writers, painters and actors – who by nature love tranquility and solitude. The unreasonable police atrocities and curtailing of freedom of expression evoked more hatred against the present rulers and compelled more artistes to raise voice against the present regime.

“Artistes can create independently only in an environment of tranquility and freedom of expression.”

Kiran Manandhar, a renowned painter was speaking in front over 300 artistes-writers, actors, painters etc at the historic Sama Theatre in Gurukul premises.

Minutes later, the group marched towards Purano Baneshwor to perform songs, skits and other programs in the streets. As the group was chanting anti-monarchy and pro-democracy slogans, police stopped the group from marching ahead. The starts staged a peaceful sit-in protest on the street and began reciting poems. Dr. Benju Sharma had hardly finished reciting her poem ‘Curfew’ when police manhandled the demonstrators and started charging batons on them. Police then, without any warning, opened fire at the demonstrators who were backing up.

The group including popular comedy artistes Madan Krishna Shrestha and Hari Bansh Acharya, senior actors Ashok Sharma and Deshbhakta Khanal, senior writers like D. P. Bhandari, among others. The security personnel, who would resort to comedy shows and

serials during their free time to forget their woes and pacify their exhaustions were charging batons and firing bullets (obviously with the command of their seniors) at the same people who produced and acted on those shows.

Ending the normal trend of the artistes being naïve to the political situation of the country, few aware artistes have begun to show concern about the deteriorating situation of the country. Challenging the artistes who



**Top Cine Artistes:** Advocating for liberty

Photo: Himat Khabarpatrika

refrained from such activities saying ‘politics is a dirty game’ or ‘politics is for politicians only’, artistes of old and new generation have begun to raise voice for democracy.

“We artists who would otherwise prefer to lock ourselves within the four walls and engage in creations are disturbed these days,” said artist Manandhar. “Time has come now for us to leave aside the brushes and palettes and fight for democracy. We should continue until we achieve our goal, so that the future generation will not have to agitate for their fundamental rights.”

Popular actor of Nepali feature film Nikhil Upreti has a similar view. “Today

we have become agitators from cine workers,” he said. “It is not wise for cine workers-who take a lead role in shaping the mentality and life style of the youths-to remain naïve on the political situation.”

After manhandling and firing bullets, police arrested over a dozen artistes including Dr. Tulsi Bhattarai, Hari Govind Luintel, Ghimire Yuv Raj, Manoj Nyaupane, Thakur Belbase, Deshbhakta Khanal, Kusum Gyawali, Bhola Nath Sapkota and R M Dongol, among others from Gurukul premises.

Before this, police intervention had foiled an attempt to hold a face-to-face program on the streets in Putalisadak. After this, popular artistes Madan Krishna Shrestha and Hari Bansa Acharya performed a skit ‘Panchayatko Shraddha’ along with Narendra Kansakar at the Sama Theater.

The program was organized to initiate a drive to collect funds for the treatment of the people injured during the agitation. Madan Krishna Shrestha and Hari Bansa Acharya had started the drive by donating Rs 100,000. The drive has spread widely by now. So, far almost Rs 10 million has been collected in the fund.

The popular 1990 movement had gained momentum after artistes took to the streets with black bands on Chaitra 12, 2046. The artistes started showing concern after the formation of Democratic Creators Forum

and Democratic Cine-Workers Society last year. So, far more than three-dozen different organizations have shown solidarity to the movement and formed a network of democratic artistes.

Meanwhile, the police manhandling on April 12 has evoked lot of criticisms against the present regime from all sectors. “I felt the soldiers are not to be blamed for scolding and charging batons on us. The boots that kicked me are not those of the soldiers, but those of King Gyanendra. The voice that derogatorily scolded us is also that of King Gyanendra,” writes King Dr. Sanjeev Upreti, a popular newspaper columnist and a writer. Dr. Upreti was also arrested from Gurukul premises. ■



# NEEDING HIGH ECONOMIC GROWTH

## Peace First!

By PRAHLAD GIRI

The recent hullabaloo over the serious economic crisis of Nepal went on big media hype, specially remarked by Dr. Ragavdhvaj Pant, the former member of National Planning Commission. His warning of being bankrupt of Nepalese economy made a serious fear all of sudden amongst those inquisitive individual who takes a great concern over the economy. Pant's remarks warned that serious political crisis and that even a single Nepali will have a burden of heavy outstanding loan of government was not understood what he wanted to make clear. The government then, hastened to react assuring all civil society, journalists and common people that the economy is in good condition and there is nothing fear about what Pant had quoted.

The International Monetary Fund has quoted Nepal's condition as low economic growth rate, growing unemployment, and intensifying poverty culminating into the vicious cycle of low income, low saving, low investment and low growth have led the country to low level of equilibrium. The macroeconomic stability observed in the recent years is the virtual outcome of such a low level of economic activities. Not surprisingly, low saving resulting in over dependence on foreign capital for investment has in fact been a limitation for our sustainable development process. Inefficiencies in resource management resulting in high capital-output ratio have led to a high cost economy and retarded country's relative market competitiveness. Since our agriculture is not commercialized and based only on subsistence farming, this sector shows deteriorating performance in spite of highest priority laid on it has been the major factor hindering economic growth and well being.

Near about 3 weeks ago, since the central bank disseminated its 4 months data of current macroeconomic situation of the country, the unexpected inflation got a special room in all media. The overall inflation, here mentioned as headline inflation by central bank showed how badly represents the outcomes of government's inefficiency of poor fiscal policy. It was nothing but a high price growth in food items made a high level of inflation. The economists quoted it just because of low level of production of rice this year due to the unfavourable monsoon and a series of price hike in petroleum products in recent months. Besides this, increment in Value Added Tax by 3 per cent is another responsible factor they mentioned. However, the economists omitted the discontinuation of highly subsidized grain products from India, led to a major reason of price growth.

A debate ensued within the country and on the world stage whether Nepalese economy is moving towards a severe disaster? Business reporters and other free media person didn't budge from their stand calling it a frail economy. Paradoxically, what would bring a drastic change to this politically-disturbed country's tiny economy where its geo-strategic location, sandwiched as it is between China and India. We can not deny the low agricultural productivity growth combined with a high population growth rate and high illiteracy has perpetuated widespread poverty in

the nook and corner of the country. The recovery of any economy expects an essential condition of sound political and peaceful environment. Every businessman needs a hassle-free and fearless environment in carrying out his dealings independently. Not surprisingly, latest development on huge political turmoil and disturbed law and order situation suspends all possible way to do so, hence how would we imagine that our economy is not in horrible. The consequences of disagreement with the seven political parties along with the rebels brought a series of nation-wide strikes in Nepal, which paralysed the activation of all economic units inside the country. The people could know the repercussion of one-day nation-wide strike would cause a net loss of almost 10 billion to the nation through different roundtable discussion and face-to-face programs. Since the political landscape of Nepal looks extremely bleak these days, it impedes in fetching a high economic growth.

When it was a notice for all countrymen a day before February 1, an expectation was rested in the heart of all Nepali people along with international community that the king would bring a proper way out in ending the current crisis. But there was no such any remedy brought, and the political crisis went on with its most waving motion. Since the business communities are still frightened over the deteriorating condition of the country, in the mean time, the Maoist Supremo Prachanda's statement has evoked sharp reactions from different sections of the polity. On the other hand, all the major political parties in Nepal are positive about what Prachanda has said, but have expressed doubt if the Maoists would practice what they say.

With unending spate of violence and killing, abducting business person is signifying the country has gone from bad to worse. In the over ten years of the insurgency, Nepal's economy has been in dreadful condition as nobody would thought of present situation as the country is on the verge of turning into a failed state. It is an undeniable fact that for sound economic movement and active mobilization of resources with all economic activities, peace is an important condition. Therefore, it is high time for the government to move decisively and announce immediately whether it would negotiate with the insurgents bilaterally or through international mediation. The government need not put in a dilemma to its people regarding peace talks. As people know that the government's peace efforts had failed twice. But, given the stalemate and the difficult situation the country is in, the government should not shy away from talking to the rebels. After all, a sustained high growth of the economy is quite unexpected without a strong turnaround in sound political environment and effective law and order situation along with agriculture, continued surge in exports, large foreign direct investment, and effective policy interventions of the government. ■



RUBY JOSHI

# Singing With New Energy

After making an identity in the modern Nepali music in the 1960s, Joshi has enthusiastically resumed singing

By THAKUR AMGAI

In the 1950s, a student of Tri-Chandra college- classmate of veterans of Nepali music like Naticaji, Narayan Gopal, Shiv Shankar, among others, highly aspired to become popular amongst a larger group. Endowed with a melodious voice and a flair in singing, he had the potential to become one. However, stage fright always was a big hurdle.

However, in the first year of his Masters' degree program, Joshi bravely made an attempt to sing at the annual function of Tribhuvan University. The instant popularity he gained after singing 'Balaju Mathi Baisai Dhara' on stage encouraged him to sing again on the stage the next year. By then, all the college students knew him as the singer Ruby Joshi.

A year later he participated in the annual modern songs contest of Radio Nepal with song 'Ekanta Rat Bichma Hansera Pas Aai' composed by his uncle Pushpa Nepali. "Although I had not prepared much for the contest I won the third prize," said Joshi. "Shortly afterwards Laxman Lohani called me to Radio Nepal and asked me to sing two songs live from Radio Nepal every year."

Joshi was born in a family with musical ambience. His father Bishnu Lal Joshi was a classical singer. His uncle Pushpa Nepali, who is an established singer of Nepali modern music, has played an important role in grooming Ruby Joshi as a singer.

Classical singers used to jam up at his home and practise music. Since tender age he was familiar with musical instruments like the Harmonium, Tabala etc. He used to merrily sing the popular Hindi songs of those days and play Tabala when his seniors asked him to

do so. "My father, uncle and their friends Nepali all had noticed a singing flair in me and they used to say that I would become a good singer one day," said Joshi. "But my father did not want me to take music as a profession. He wanted me to complete my studies first."

So did Joshi. He fully concentrated in academics till his postgraduate degree. After passing high school, he joined Tri Chandra College to study commerce. Hardly after finishing his certificate level studies he was offered a job at Rastra Bank. The job was to shape his future career. He retired as a special class officer of Rastra Bank in 2049 after serving for thirty years. After that he continued working as consultants with various organizations at various capacities. For the last few years



Joshi: Endowed with melodious voice

he was affiliated with Lumbini Bank until he retired recently.

While he was busy with his banking profession, he continued singing all these years.

In 2024, Joshi was offered an opportunity to record eight songs at the His Master Voice (HMV) Calcutta. He recorded eight old and new songs in the disc record including 'Ekanta Rat Bichma'. "This was the happiest moment in my life," recalls Joshi. "It was a great thing in those days for a growing singer to have his songs recorded from an esteemed company like HMV." Songs like 'Kanchhi Matyang Tyang' got wide popularity after the disc was released.

His singing momentum retarded after his job demanded more time and he got married. He did record a few songs with Ratna recording, but the frequency got largely reduced. It gained pace only after he retired from Rastra Bank. Lured by the improvised technology, he decided to bring out cassette albums and CDs with remixed old songs and new songs.

He got inspired to do so after such a long period of recession because of the encouragement he got after he recorded a song 'Kati Yasta Kura Hunchhan' in the music composition of Shakti Ballav and lyrics of Yadav Kharel.

Over the years, Joshi has over 150 songs in record, and brought out six albums. "I plan to release one album a year in the coming years," he said. He expresses his discontent over the over liberalization of music in the recent years. "Evergreen songs are being displaced by songs without melody and lyrics these days," he said. "This is not a good trend. Such practice does not contribute good songs to Nepalese music industry."

Last year, the government has nominated him as one of the board members of Radio Nepal board of directors. With this capacity he has recently concluded a survey about the audience of Radio Nepal. "I have furnished suggestions to the board about the ways to improve the Radio Nepal and cover wider audience," Joshi said. ■



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