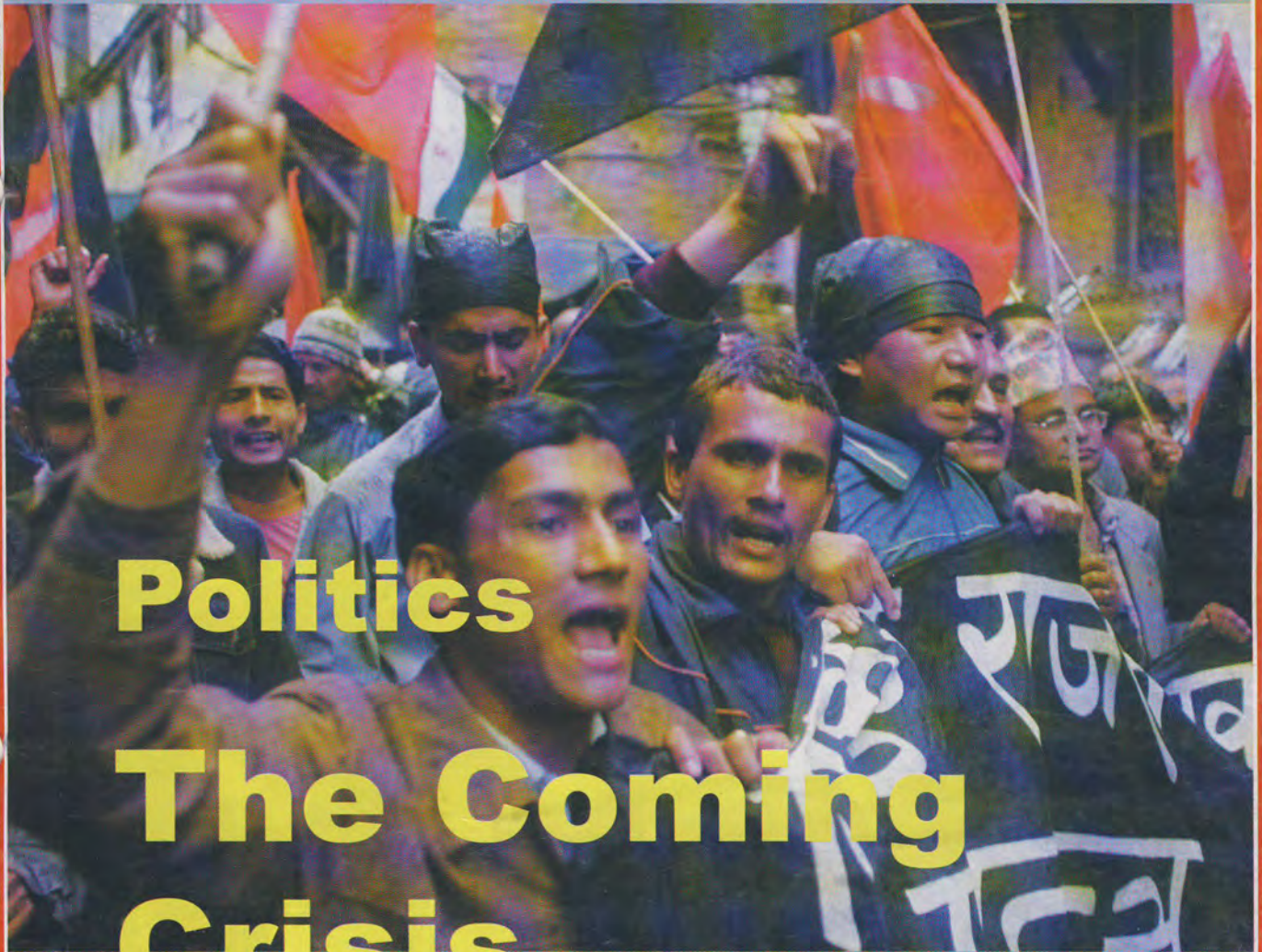


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The National Newsmagazine

# SPOTLIGHT

June 02-08, 2006



## Politics The Coming Crisis

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## COVER STORY : The Coming Crisis

While the people believe that the peace has come, there are many thorny issues still left to be resolved

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## PEACE TALKS : Laying The Ground

Photo : Gorkhapatra

Despite endorsing code of conduct, the peace talks could still get derailed if the two sides do not reach agreement on the issue of maintaining parliament and managing Maoist militia

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## INDIA : Opportunities Ahead

Scholars of India and Nepal discuss how the commonalities of interest can be exploited for mutual benefit

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**SPOTLIGHT**

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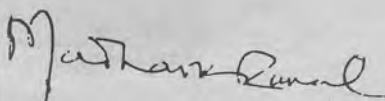
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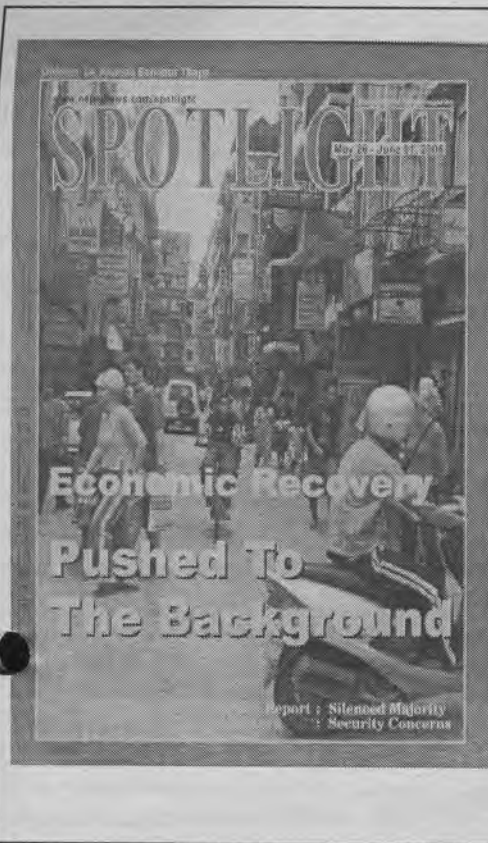
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The Maoists have held the first talks with the Seven Party Alliance government at Gokarna a few days ago, and both have agreed to a 25-point Code of Conduct. Even though this cannot be denied to be a good augury towards reaching a more lasting understanding, a large section of knowledgeable people seem greatly concerned about uncertainties in coming days. The country is in transition, the existing constitution is non-functional and is being twisted to suit the convenience of the ruling parties and could be called almost illegitimate, the parliament is spooky, the SPA government is bent to hang on to power as long as it can, the general mass is not fully cognizant of the intricacies of the situation and, consequently, complacent, the Palace stripped of all authority is licking its wounds and Nepal's so-called friends are lolling in euphoria at their success in devastating the small poor country. Nobody seems genuinely concerned at the gravity of the situation. The Maoists are in a hurry to come to power through an election conducted under a new constitution framed by the constituent assembly. They only seem to be the well-organized force. But, there, too, chinks have started to appear generating misgivings whether the leaders is in full control. As such, our dear poor country is passing through not the best of times, nor the worst of times but a most uncertain time. And, if all the nationalistic and patriotic forces fail to come together and gird up their loins to face the grim situation and take the country out of the fire, our days of pride and honor could be numbered. We are still quite fortunate to have an army that is loyal to the country and the people. As such, all the patriotic forces and the Nepal Army must join hands to defend the nation's sovereignty. It is no time for the Maoists to harbor inimical feelings towards the Nepal Army. They did their job by carrying out the orders of the government of the day. It is not the army but the government that must bear the brunt and pay for their misdeeds. Since Nepal Army is the only organ that can be trusted to rise to the occasion, it is our utmost duty to boost the morale of the Nepal Army. Our pliant politicians are too self-oriented even to think of dear motherland's interest and they have proved it time and again. Consequently, we cannot trust the destiny of the nation in their tainted hands. The one and only way to save our country, at the moment, is for Nepal Army, the Maoists and the patriotic forces to unite and form an impregnable force. If we can do that we can face any challenge from any quarter, however big and mighty. Otherwise, God only can save us. ■



**Madhav Kumar Rimal**  
Chief Editor & Publisher



## Genuine Issue

The cover story this issue portrayed a very genuine issue that has been overlooked by the mainstream media "ECONOMIC RECOVERY: Pushed To The Background" (May 26, 2006). As you have written, it is not a very good symptom. Without economic recovery political stability is unlikely to be achieved. Moreover, what is more ominous is the change in the issues raised lately. Looking at the global influence and lessons of the past, I do not think there is a better alternative to liberalization of economy. So, you have done a laudable job by highlighting the overlooked issues very analytically.

*Sabin Tamang*  
Balaju

## Where Are You Heading?

Lately, the economic sector of the country seems to be going in a regressive direction "ECONOMIC RECOVERY: Pushed To The Background" (May 26, 2006). At a time when there is a influence of globalization, economic liberalization and privatization, the pro-Maoist professional and student fronts are not only advocating but pressurizing for centralization and nationalization of economy. Whether it may be the demand to nationalize private schools or stop privatization of state-owned industries, their demands are aimed towards centralization of the national economy. It is a time tested fact that economy thrives through decentralization and privatization or at least public-private partnership and not through centralization. While there is a large number of people who advocate for liberal economy, they are keeping mum at the moment, perhaps distracted by the center-stage politics. It is imperative at this moment for the intellectuals, economists and civil society to scrutinize the demands of pro-

Maoist fronts and counter balance their extreme views on nationalization. If we opt to wait till the nation gets a political outlet, it might be too late to reorganize things.

*Pushpa Rai*  
Satdobato

## Eye Opening Article

I would like to thank you for the analytical and well written article on economy "ECONOMIC RECOVERY: Pushed To The Background" (May 26, 2006). While everyone is talking about mainstream politics including how the Maoists will come to the mainstream and how the major issues like monarchy and army be addressed, the debates on the economic section is easily avoided. The extremists get opportunities to expedite their economic agendas at such times. That is what is happening at the present moment. Interestingly even the economists and the media seem to be ignoring the economic issues at present. At such times, your article on the economy analyzing the present situation and warning the concerned people of the

possible dangers of the omission is sure to be an eye opener to many.

*Prativa Shrestha*  
Thamel

## Voice Of Voiceless

The special report about the lack of representation of the opinions of silent majority is very convincing "POLITICS: Silent Majority In Turmoil" (May 26, 2006). There is a saying one person shouting is heard more than a dozen keeping mum. That is exactly what is happening in the country at present. As the extreme voices are shouting at the top of their voices, the opinions of a large mass is being dominated. This is a very dangerous trend to the future of the country. If the silent majority is suppressed for a long time, it can submit the country to the hands of the extremists without the real support of the majority. Holding elections is the best and the only way to know what the people actually are for. It is essential to hold elections at the earliest possible to acquire the opinions of the silent majority. Therefore, it is essential for the government and the leaders of the SPA and the Maoists to go to the people as soon as possible before taking any major decision regarding national policies on various issues.

*Kiran Khanal*  
Battisputali

## Informative Article

I read the article about Nepalese living in US and found it very informative about the various aspects of living in US "NEPALESE IN US: Home Away From Home" (May 26, 2006). The article provides an insight for people like me who are planning to go to US for work and study. The information and anecdotes you provided helps people to decide whether or not to go to US or what kind of preparations to make before leaving for US. After reading the article I am quite clear about what to expect in US. Likewise, I think the article should also have been helpful to the parents and relatives back in Nepal to understand the kind of life their kith and kins are living in US. Thank you again for the article.

*Rabindra Pradhan*  
Samakhushi

## KC Leads Dissident Faction Of PF

The People's Front (PF) has formally split after a Butwal conference organized by its dissident faction formed a 39-member central ad hoc committee. The committee is led by Chitra Bahadur KC. The gathering participated by 217 representatives has termed the split as 'reorganization.' *Leading dailies report.*

## India To Withdraw Additional Tax

Indian ambassador to Nepal, Shiv Shankar Mukherjee, said that the additional tax imposed on goods exported by Nepal to India would be withdrawn. Talking to local industrialists and businessmen in Birgunj, he said, "A decision to withdraw the tax will be taken soon. It will help upgrade competition among Nepali industries." Going against an Indo-Nepal trade treaty, India has imposed 4 percent additional tax on such goods from March 1. Meanwhile, the envoy said that India is not bringing up any special economic package for Nepal. "India is not bringing in special economic package, but will simply increase the previous assistance." India is expected to announce concessions to Nepal during Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala's proposed visit to India. According to Mukherjee, India emphasizes on the building of infrastructure – including four world-class custom offices along the Indo-Nepal border, roads spanning 1450 km in Terai districts and upgrading the railways. On the industrialists' query on the possibility of Indian investment in Nepal, he said a tough competition on the state level is on in India itself and suggested Nepal extend a special concession to draw the investment. *The Himalayan Times daily reports.*

## Nepse Plunges By 13.76 Points

Dragged by poor performance of the commercial banks, the Nepal Stock Exchange (Nepse) index dropped by 13.76 points this week. The Nepse opened at 382.65 points on the opening day and plummeted to close at 368.89 on the closing

day. This is one of the sharpest falls recorded in Nepse index in recent months. *Leading dailies report.*

## PM Meets With The King

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala is reported to have expressed concern with the King over the 'direct and indirect involvement of pro-King groups in the anarchic demonstrations taking place in capital and elsewhere.' According to sources close to Baluwatar, PM gave example of the involvement of member of now-dissolved Raj Parishad Nanda Kishore Ghiraiya in the violent protest against the declaration of secular state. Koirala is reported to have told the King that the government would be compelled to take stringent action against such elements. He also is reported to have told the King that the direct or indirect involvement of pro-King elements in such activities could further enrage the public against the King. During the meeting held on Thursday evening, Koirala also briefed the King about the formation of talks team by the government. *Kantipur daily reports.*

## Hospitals Shut Down

In order to protest a series of mob attack against hospitals in Butwal and Kathmandu, all the hospitals across the country remained closed on Thursday (May 25). Emergency services, however, were opened. Dr. Sudha Sharma, president of Nepal Medical Association, said that the Out Patient services will be closed in the hospitals till Saturday. Meanwhile, management of Everest Nursing Home has said that the patient Tulsi Ram Gautam did not die due to its negligence. Addressing a press conference, chairman of the board of the Nursing Home Dr. Ram Prasad Pokharel said that the patient did not die due to lack of oxygen. On Wednesday, an enraged mob had vandalized Everest Nursing Home claiming the death of Gautam due to negligence. *Leading dailies report.*

## Mobs Attack Another Nursing Home In Kathmandu

A day after an angry mob vandalized Lumbini Hospital in Butwal, another mob

attacked Everest Nursing Home in Baneswhore, Kathmandu. An angry mob gathered in front of the nursing home since morning after a patient reportedly died of negligence. The patient who was suffering from asthma died reportedly because the doctors there failed to provide him with oxygen soon. The patient's son was then beaten by a security guard of the nursing home for protesting the negligence. This led to hours of vandalism by the mob. Street in front of the nursing home was a scene of frenzied protests and burning of tyres. Although the police tried to control the crowd, it failed to do so. Traffic was obstructed till afternoon. Later, the nursing home management tendered apology for the negligence and agreed to pay compensation to the victim's family. The repeated attacks against medical facilities has led the Nepal Medical Association (NMA) to declare strike in all the medical institutions – both public and private – across the country on Thursday. All medical services except emergency ones will be closed down in protest of the attacks. The NMA delegation met with Home Minister Krishna Sitaula on Wednesday to express their concern. The NMA has requested all concerned including the Maoists and civil society to help them at this juncture. The government has formed a committee to probe the incident at Lumbini hospital. The hospital and clinics in Butwal remained closed on Wednesday following Tuesday's attack. Meanwhile, in a continuing spate of violence in the capital, irate crowd disrupted traffic at different places of ring road such as Chabahil and Swayambhu after the fracas erupted between police and drivers following an accident involving micro buses in Swayambhu area. Later, the police and drivers reached an understanding to calm the situation. *Leading dailies report.*

## Lawmakers Criticize PM For Breaching House Declaration

Parliamentarians have criticized Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala for 'breaching the House declaration in expanding the cabinet.' They were angry that the decision of expansion of the cabinet was sent by the royal palace. "It was decided that the government would amend the work procedure

regulations and present it to the parliament for approval. But this did not happen," said UML MP Iswor Pokharel. "As a result, instead of PM announcing the cabinet expansion, the announcement came from the palace," he added. The House declaration mentions that the government would amend those regulations and present it to the parliament. "The Prime Minister must inform the parliament and the people why he breached the declaration that he himself had presented," asked another UML MP Jagannath Khatiwada. MP of People's Front Lilamani Pokharel asked the PM to inform the House what transpired in his recent meeting with the King. He urged the Speaker to issue a 'ruling' to the PM asking him to brief the House about the meeting with the King. *Kantipur daily reports.*

### Palace And Defense Expenditure To Be Cut Down": FM

Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat has said that the government would cut down the expenditure of royal palace and army. Speaking at the parliament in response to queries by the MPs, Dr. Mahat said that the government has already issued a circular asking Nepalese Army to stop new recruitment. "We will not create new liabilities in the palace and the army," he said. Dr. Mahat conceded that the White Paper was not able to include all sorts of irregularities. "Financial irregularities in the name of felicitating the King and the expenses by zonal chiefs have not been brought out in the White Paper," he said, adding that the government is investigating these irregularities and would clarify them in the forthcoming budget. Dr. Mahat also informed the parliament that the government is in talks with the donor community to introduce 'interim investment plan.' He was responding to a proposal of public importance tabled by UML MP and former finance minister Bharat Mohan Adhikari. In his proposal, Adhikari has alleged that the White Paper did not provide actual picture of financial problems and livelihood concerns. *Leading dailies report.*

### Maoists Accused Of Lynching NC Leader's Sons

Maoists may have killed the sons of Nepali Congress (NC) Rautahat district

leader Jogendra Sahani whom they had abducted on Monday, locals said on Tuesday. Armed Maoists, on Monday, had bombed the house of Sahani, also the former chairperson of Basantapatti VDC and abducted the two, Shambhu (35) and Shyam Sundar (32). The locals said the Maoists may have lynched them at Inarwa VDC on Tuesday. However, the incident could not be confirmed. Though the Maoists decided to release the duo following pressure from the district leadership and had called journalists and human rights activists in Inarwa for the same, the brothers did not walk free and pools of blood were seen at the site. A group of about 3000 people had surrounded the brothers when INSEC representative Bipin Gautam and journalist Pharindra Mahat reached the spot. "The group tried to attack me," Gautam said. A student claimed he saw the bodies of the two brothers on the spot. However, police did not find them, SP Keshav Adhikari said. In a press meet, Maoist district secretary Lalji regretted the incident. He said they were planning the duo's release when the group of people from three VDCs intervened. "Thousands of people took away the duo from the Maoist cadres and what happened after that is unclear," Lalji said. *The Himalayan Times daily reports.*

### Syndicate Row, Custom Agents In Strike

Opposing the imposition of syndicate system by truckers, the Custom Agents Association of Belhiya, Bhairahawa have announced indefinite strike. The meeting chaired by Prachin Thaiba, president of the association, decided to go for strike stating that the decision by Nepal National Transport Entrepreneurs Committee and Western Regional Truck Entrepreneurs Association to impose syndicated system and hike the transport fare were going to affect the entire entrepreneurs. "We have decided not to process custom for any items transported through syndicated system," said Thaiba. They have also accused the truckers and transporters of taking undue advantage of the fluid political situation to impose syndicated system. Meanwhile, truck entrepreneurs have claimed that the system they have

imposed in the transport between Bhairahawa and Kathmandu is not a syndicate. They have said that they decided to bar the private trucks from transporting in order to increase professionalism and protect the livelihood of truckers. *Nepal Samacharpatra daily reports.*

### Donors May Meet Maoist Army Expenses: Nepal

The Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal said he discussed with foreign aid agencies the expenses required to keep the Maoist army. "The discussions on the expenses of the Maoist army were positive. However, a proper method must be adopted to receive the aid from the donor agencies," he said addressing a mass meeting in Biratnagar. "Until and unless the Maoist army is managed, all national activities will hit a dead end and elections to a constituent assembly cannot be held," he said, adding, "The Maoist army must be managed properly if we are to free the general public of the rebels' donation collection drive." *The Himalayan Times daily reports.*

### Dolphins Vanishing Due To Pollution

The endangered species of dolphin are fast vanishing from Nepalese rivers due to increased pollution. According to a study conducted by World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in Geruwa and Mohana – tributaries of Karnali river – the number of dolphins have sharply fallen. According to the report, in 1986 there were 26 dolphins in the area, which has now come down to 15. "This species is facing all round threat," said Nira Shrestha, fresh water officer at WWF Nepal. Increased trend of fishing, operation of steamers, Rajapur irrigation project and use of pesticides have threatened the existence of dolphins. "To prevent fishing, programs to upgrade livelihood of local people must be stressed," she said. She also urged cooperation among Nepalese and Indian officials of concerned departments to help conserve this species. Dolphins are also found in Kosi and Narayani rivers of Nepal. They are regarded as symbols of clean water and environment. *Kantipur daily reports.*



**The chariot festival of Rato Machhindranath in Lalitpur**

Photo: Annapurna Post

**THE INDUSTRIAL SECURITY GROUP – A NETWORK OF** influential diplomatic missions and bi-national chambers – has asked the Maoists to stop extortion. Expressing deep concern over the incidents of extortion across the country, the group has called upon the Maoists to cease all extortion. “We call upon the Maoists to cease all extortion and violent intimidation, to denounce these activities, and to fully implement their public commitments to avoid such criminal behaviors. The business community looks forward to contributing to creating employment and prosperity for Nepal,” the statement released by US Embassy on behalf of the ISG and Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) states. The ISG comprises representatives of the Embassies of France, Germany, India, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and the Delegation of the European Commission, along with their bilateral Chambers of Commerce.

**A DELEGATION OF FEDERATION OF NEPALESE** Journalists (FNJ) met with newly appointed State Minister for Information and Communication Dilendra Prasad Badu in order to apprise him about the problems faced by independent media. The delegation led by FNJ president Bishnu Nisthuri presented 26-point demands to the minister. The demands include immediate enforcement of Working Journalists Act and restoration of journalists who were sacked following February 1, 2005. Likewise, the demands include granting autonomy to Radio Nepal and Nepal Television, re-classification of newspapers and formation of media commission. In reply, Badu agreed to help the media as much as possible. He said that the controversial ‘one window advertisement policy’ will be revoked. Leading dailies report

**THE AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL (AI) HAS RELEASED A** report assessing the situation of human rights in 2005 in the world. Its report on Nepal states that the situation worsened in almost every sphere during the royal regime. The AI 2006 report states that except for the use of death penalty, all other forms of human rights were violated in Nepal. “Civil liberties were undermined, with thousands of politically motivated arrests, strict media censorship and harassment of human rights defenders,” states the report. The report was released worldwide including Nepal on Tuesday.

**IAN MARTIN, CHIEF OF THE OFFICE OF HIGH** Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Kathmandu, has asked the authorities to suspend and take action against army officers guilty of detaining and disappearing suspected Maoists from Bhairabnath battalion in Maharajgunj. Addressing a press conference on Friday, Martin said that at least 49 such persons ‘disappeared’ from the battalion sometime after December 20 of 2003. The report prepared to this effect by the OHCHR has been submitted to the Prime Minister who also holds Defense portfolio and chief of Nepalese Army. Martin stated that most of the detainees were subjected to extreme torture. The report on arbitrary detention, torture and disappearances mentions that Bhairabnath battalion now acknowledges the detention of 137 people in 2003 and claims that these individuals were released or transferred after short period. However, these don’t include at least 49 individuals OHCHR believes were in custody and who remain missing. “According to consistent, credible and corroborated testimony of victims and witnesses these people were last seen in custody in Maharajgunj. Most former detainees interviewed by OHCHR believed that these detainees were executed,” Martin said.

**THE MEMBERS OF DISSOLVED RAJ PARISHAD ARE** preparing to knock the doors of the Supreme Court (SC) against the charter declaration by the parliament. Claiming that the declaration was unconstitutional and against the rule of law, Raj Parishad chairman Parshu Narayan Chaudhary and his team would file a writ petition next week. On May 18, the parliament had dissolved Raj Parishad through its declaration. “We have consulted with lawyers regarding the writ petition,” said a member of Raj Parishad Yagya Prasad Acharya. He said that they are not concerned about actions against them for making such move. Earlier, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala had warned of action against anyone trying to go against the declaration. “Girijababu has made a mockery of rule of law by stating that no question can be raised (against the declaration),” said Acharya, adding, “He has started the tyranny of democracy.”

**THE CHIEF OF THE ARMY STAFF, NEPALESE ARMY (NA)** General Pyara Jung Thapa has stated that the NA is ready to abide by the orders of the Nepal government. Addressing a function at Command and Staff Training at Shivapuri, General Thapa said that the NA is committed to take orders from the government as it is moving ahead to strengthen the multiparty democratic system. “The Nepalese Army is always ready to take any kind of security challenges in the days ahead in the context of restoring sustainable peace because it respects the sentiment of the people,” he said.

**AN UNIDENTIFIED GANG OF ARMED LOOTERS HAVE** robbed a branch office of Nepal Bank Limited (NBL) in Chhetrapati in broad daylight on Sunday. They made off with Rs 1.1 million. The five robbers came on motorbikes, overpowered the security guard and looted the money from the bank counter. The branch office is located about 500 m away from District Police Office, Kathmandu. No one has been arrested yet in connection with this robbery.



**T**he Nepalese Army is always ready to take any kind of security challenges in the days ahead in the context of restoring sustainable peace because it respects the sentiment of the people."

*General Pyara Jung Thapa, Chief of the Army Staff (CoAS), Nepalese Army addressing a function at Command and Staff Training at Shivapuri.*

\* \* \*

**E**ven if the Constituent Assembly decides to topple the king, we will not forget our religion at that time. We will be big-hearted to let the King stay in the country as an ordinary citizen."

*Madhav Kumar Nepal, general secretary of the Unified Marxist-Leninist (UML), addressing a party function in Biratnagar.*

\* \* \*

**W**e have already said that we will comply with the verdict of the people, but the royalists should also say whether they will comply or not if the popular mandate goes for republican set up."

*Krishna Bahadur Mahara, convener of the Maoists talk team, in response to the question what would the Maoists do if the popular verdict goes for ceremonial monarchy, at a television program 'Bahas.'*

\* \* \*



**I**t is clear that when UML asks for the votes it will be to topple the king."

*Bharat Mohan Adhikary, leader of the Unified Marxist-Leninist (UML), in Jana Astha.*

\* \* \*

**(T**he Army) might not obey the direct orders from the King, but nobody can remove army's reverence from the bottom of the heart towards the king."

*Dr. Indra Jeet Rai, conflict-resolution expert, in Jana Bhawana.*

\* \* \*

**G**irijababu has made a mockery of rule of law by stating that no question can be raised (against the declaration). He has started the tyranny of democracy."

*Yagya Prasad Acharya, a member of dissolved Raj Parishad, in Kantipur.*

\* \* \*

**W**e are ready to accept the leadership of the interim government if this is the wish of the people."

*Dina Nath Sharma, member of the Maoists talk team, in Jana Bhawana.*

\* \* \*

## TRANSITION

**LEFT:** Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli, deputy prime minister and foreign minister, for Putrajaya, Malaysia, to participate in the 15<sup>th</sup> ministerial meeting of the coordinating bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) on May 29 and 30.

**RETURNED:** Ram Raja Prasad Singh, leftist leader who was staying underground in India, to Nepal after about 11 years.

**RESIGNED:** Prof. Govinda Sharma, vice chancellor of Tribhuvan University, from his post.

**Geeta Bhakta Joshi**, registrar of Tribhuvan University, from his post

**AWARDED:** Journalists **Sangeeta Rijal** and **Bikash Rauniar**, with 'Child Rights Journalist Award 2005', for their reporting on promotion of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Children (UNCRC) and fight against exploitation of working children in Nepal.

Carlsberg, with the Superior Taste Award 2006, for its Elephant Beer with three stars, by the International Taste Quality Institute (iTQi).

**SIGNED:** An agreement to carry out maternal and neonatal and post abortion care programs in various districts of Nepal, by Social Welfare Council (SWC) and JHPIEGO Cooperation, USA.

**FELICITATED:** Professor **Dr. Brian Cobb**, a doctor who had actively contributed in the treatment of the injured during the people's movement, by the civic society.

# Irrawaddy Waterway Of Myanmar

By DR. AB THAPA

Few years back Nepal and India had signed an agreement to conduct a detailed feasibility study to develop Kosi Canal Waterway linking Nepal with the seaport. Soon after that another agreement had also been signed to carry out joint studies to develop Karnali and Gandak navigation. A special joint committee composed of nine members of each country has already been constituted to conduct the Gandak and Karnali navigation studies.

In Myanmar, the Irrawaddy River is being extensively used for navigation. The experience in dealing with the problems of maintenance and operation of the Irrawaddy water transport could be very useful particularly to develop Karnali waterway linking Nepal with the Ganges.

## Status of the Karnali Navigation

The Karnali known as the Gogra in India is the best river among the three major rivers originating from Nepal from the view point of navigation. This river was extensively used for navigation in the past.

The length of the Karnali River in Indian territory is about 580 km. The Karnali River is suitable for navigation right up to the Indo-Nepal border near Katarnia Ghat. Country boats with drafts from 0.75 to 1 metre used to ply up to Indo-Nepal border. There was a daily steamer service operating between the Burhaj and the confluence with the Ganges, a distance of about 150 km. The steamers used to ply as far as Audhya which is about 340 km upstream of the Karnali confluence with the Ganges.

Partition of India after its independence temporarily brought to an end the Ganges navigation. Since then the Karnali (Gogra) navigation has also been suspended.

## Inland Waterway of Myanmar

Irrawaddy River is the main artery of waterway transport in Myanmar. It is the longest among other three major rivers viz Chindwin River, Sittaung River and Thanlywin River. More than 90% length of the Irrawaddy river is navigable, although there are some constraints on certain stretches of this river due to insufficient water depth for a limited period.

Irrawaddy and other major rivers traverse the country from north to south in between the mountain ranges. At locations, where the river passes through the mountain range, the river course is east-west in direction.

The Irrawaddy River is formed where its two tributaries, the 'Nmai Hka and the 'Mali Hka' meet some 45 kilometers upstream from Myitkyina. The length of the Irrawaddy from

the meeting point of two of its tributaries to Yangon, the capital of Myanmar, is about 1600 km, and out of it a 1534 km long stretch is navigable. Total area of the drainage basin of the Irrawaddy is about 415,000 sq. km, which is about 55% of the whole country.

The course of the Irrawaddy can be divided into three sections, in order of ages. The Upper Irrawaddy is the oldest. The middle reach, or the Lower Irrawaddy even did not exist in the early tertiary period. The lowermost is the Delta region which is the most recent.

## The Upper Irrawaddy River

Section of the Irrawaddy from the confluence of 'Nmai Hka' and 'Mali Hka' to the point where the Chindwin River empties into it can be denoted as the Upper Irrawaddy. The Chindwin River is the largest tributary of the Irrawaddy. The length of the Chindwin river is approximately 800 kilometers.

There are three important defiles along the Irrawaddy river. The first defile between Myinths and Myazedi, about 52 km in length, is formed by the rock-bund gorge. The width of the river suddenly changes from 800 meters at the upstream of defile to 45 m.

The second defile is situated on the downstream of Bhamo. It is 23 km in length and approximately 300 meters in

width and stretches from Sinken to Thinbawin. Despite the presence of several eddies and whirlpools, the current is not as strong as in the first defile. The IWT service is operated across the second defile.

The third defile is about 60 km in length. It starts at Male village and runs until Shwedaik. The river banks are about 600 meters in width.

The river has a strongly braided pattern in between the defiles and even after leaving the third defile. The river course abruptly changes at Sagaing into east-west direction, until it joins with the Chindwin river.

## The Lower Irrawaddy

This stretch starts from the confluence of the Irrawaddy and Chindwin river. From this point onward it flows through the arid zone of the middle part of the Myanmar. In this section, there are two more defiles namely the fourth defile (from Minhla to Migya which is 34 km in length). The fifth defile from Kama to Sitsayan is 12 km in length.

## The Delta

Entrance of the Irrawaddy Delta is near Hintharta (218 km from Yangon). Apex of the delta is 225 kilometers away from the

*The Karnali known as the Gogra in India is the best river among the three major rivers originating from Nepal from the view point of navigation. This river was extensively used for navigation in the past. The length of the Karnali River in Indian territory is about 580 km. The Karnali River is suitable for navigation right up to the Indo-Nepal border near Katarnia Ghat.*

sea. The easternmost stream of the delta is Hlaing river which is one of the access waterway to Yangon port from the inland region. Myitmakha river flows into Hlaing river. The westernmost river of the delta is the Ngawun or the Patheingyi river, which flows into the sea.

**The Chindwin River**

It is the main tributary of the Irrawaddy river, joining the latter near Pakkoku, which is one of the important inland ports in the middle part of the Myanmar. The Chindwin river in its upper reach is known as the Tanai Hka, and rises near the Irrawaddy watershed in the Kachin hills. Its total length is approximately 840 km. Except for the lower part near the confluence, the Chindwin river is tightly confined between the mountain ranges. Below Monywa (87 km from the confluence); the river pattern abruptly changes to a braided type.

**Hydrologic Characteristics**

Daily water level data of 18 stations along the Irrawaddy and Chindwin Rivers are recorded. At some selected stations, discharge measurements are carried out

**Water Level Slope Sediments**

Estimates of the water level slopes for high water and low water season are available. Generally, the estimated water level slope of the Irrawaddy from Bhamo to Yangon is about 8 cm/ km during the high water period and 10 to 12 cm/km for the low water season. The total sediment load was estimated at 260 million ton/year at Pye.

**Channel pattern and classification**

River channel pattern are usually classified as straight, meandering, braided and mixed types. At different stretches of the Irrawaddy River, there are differing types of channel form. Various stretches of the Irrawaddy river are classified into meandering and intermediate categories by applying the Lane's method.

**Limitation to Navigation**

Limitation to navigation in terms of width have been observed at seven places. Among them the four places are on the Irrawaddy and the remaining three on the Chinwin River.

There are sharp bends at 13 locations of which 10 are on the Irrawaddy and the rest on the Chindwin River. Both these types are not considered to be a major constraint neither due to the limited width nor due to sharp bends, because it would be possible to safely overcome these limitations by maneuvering with due care and attention.

Two places, one in the second defile of the Irrawaddy and the other in the gorge near Shwesayee on the Chindwin river, are well known for the swift current during the monsoon. Maximum current velocities range from 3.5 to 4.5 m/sec. It occurs only during a limited period ( in the order of 4 days or one week) and at specific point. Maximum flow velocity of about 3 m/sec occurs in the Twante canal during the ebb tide. This is not considered a serious constraint to navigation as the Kanaungdo creek can be used as an alternative bypass channel during the swift current period.

**Operational Constraints**

There are causes for the concern about the operational problems related to river port facilities. Large differences exist

between the high and low average seasonal water levels of the Irrawaddy which is in the range from 8 to 13 meter. Deterioration of access channels are observed due to the migration of sand bars. Erosion of river bank takes place due to the impingement of the main current and instability of the slopes.

It has been identified that the most pronounced constraint on the Irrawaddy river for the navigation is the insufficient least available depth (LAD) on certain stretches of the waterways.

**Traffic Density**

The traffic density on the Irrawaddy river in early 1990s was about 800 million ton km per year.

**Inland Water Transportation Operators**

Inland Water Transport (IWT) is a successor of the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company of the British ruling era. At that time the Company had managed over 600 vessels. At present, the IWT is a state owned organization under the Ministry of Transport and Communication, and it has some 670 vessels of assorted type.

Myanmar Petro-chemical Enterprise (MPE) owns 185 vessels of different types, of which 58 are powered vessels including 28 push tugs and the others being barges for transportation of crude oil, refined oil and LPG to different riverine ports between Yangon and Mandalay.

Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE) owns a total of 41 vessels out of which 25 are powered vessels including 12 loading crafts and 16 non-powered barges

Myanmar Ceramic Industries (MCI) owned 6 self-propelled 300 ton barges with the dimensions of 50 m in length, 9.1 m in beam width and 1.5 m of maximum loaded draught. They are mounted with 2x260 HP diesel engines. There is considerable number of vessels owned by the private operators. ■

*(Dr. Thapa writes on water resources)*

**Japan Hands Over Rice to Nepal**

Japanese ambassador Tsutomu Hiraoka handed over to the Government of Nepal the rice provided under Japan's Food Aid (KR) to Nepal in Japan's Fiscal Year 2004. The Government of Japan extended a grant assistance of Rs 233.1 million to procure rice in Japan's Fiscal Year 2004. The assistance was provided with a basic objective of enabling the Government of Nepal to procure rice and supply it to the needy population living in food deficit districts of Nepal. A total of approximately 8,300 metric tons (MT) of rice procured under the said aid, safely arrived from Japan and has already been transported to the food storage centers of Nepal Food Corporation located in Nepalgunj, Surkhet, Birgunj and Kathmandu. Nepal Food Corporation will be responsible for the transportation of rice from these places to the food deficit areas in the hilly and mountainous regions of Nepal. As a dedicated development partner and close friend, Japan has been providing Food Aid to Nepal since 1970. As of Japan's Fiscal Year 2004, the Government of Japan has extended its Food Aid to Nepal 17 times, which means more than 73,800 MT of rice and more than 24,000 MT of wheat, according to a press release by the Japanese Embassy.

## PEACE TALKS

## Laying The Groundwork

The Maoist demand for dissolving the parliament and opting for broader political conference could prove a stumbling block

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

After the failed round of talks in Hapure, Dang in 2003, the representatives of the government and the Maoists once again sat for negotiations last week in Gokarna Golf Resort. But the context and the environment are vastly different. Whereas the Maoists had talked with representatives of the King's government in 2003, they are now face to face with the government of political parties that has been restored following historic people's movement.

More importantly, the major demand of the Maoists – to go for election of constituent assembly to write a new constitution – has already been met by the restored parliament. The issue for negotiation this time is to agree upon the political process that will lead to the CA.

And this process is getting more and more complicated. The Maoists have started demanding that this parliament be dissolved. Claiming that their contribution was instrumental in making the recent people's movement successful, the Maoist spokesperson and its chief negotiator Krishna Bahadur Mahara asked, "Tell me, where do we fit in this parliament. We have no place there. This parliament must be dissolved and a broad national political conference involving all the stakeholders of the country should be organized. This conference can act as the supreme parliament." He added that the Maoists would join the interim government formed by the conference, which would also write interim statute.

But there is no buyer among the seven parties about the Maoist demand for the dissolution of the House. "This

House must not be dissolved at any cost. This parliament is the only legitimate place that can reflect people's opinion," said Sushil Koirala, vice president of Nepali Congress (NC).

The Unified Marxist Leninist (UML), another key partner of Seven Party Alliance (SPA), has also rejected this demand outright. "In the absence of alternative, this parliament cannot be replaced," said Madhav Kumar Nepal, general secretary of the UML.

Since the parliament was restored after a long struggle, the seven parties are not going to give in to the demands for its dissolution so easily. On the other hand, the Maoists seem to suspect that by declaring the parliament as sovereign and supreme, the seven parties may be trying to steal all the credit for the political change. The fact that the Maoists have no representation in the current parliament and the fact that the political parties have declared this parliament as the supreme body has not gone down well with them.

The parties fear that if the parliament is dissolved at this juncture, there would be a political vacuum, which could work in favor of the Maoists.

This apart, the issue of disarming the Maoist militia has also generated

heated debates.

While the political parties, civil society and the international community believe that the Maoist militia must lay down arms before election for CA is held, the Maoists contend that both their militia and Nepalese Army (NA) be put under UN supervision till then.

These two issues are likely to be the major stumbling blocks as the peace talks proceed in the coming days.



Peace talks begin: High hopes

Photo: Gorkhapatra

### First Talks

The first peace talks between this government and the Maoists was, indeed, able to finalize a widely appreciated ceasefire code of conduct that has ascertained points that would be abided by both the sides to maintain peace and security across the country.

The talks team, which was led by Home Minister Krishna Sitaula on the government side and by Krishna Mahara on the Maoist side, endorsed 25-point code of conduct following five and a half hour long meeting at the Gokarna resort located some 10 kilometers to the northeast of capital.

One of the major breakthroughs of the dialogue was the acceptance by both sides to go for the election of CA. This was the very issue that led to breakdown of talks twice in the past – in 2001 and 2003. In 2001, then government headed by Sher Bahadur Deuba had invited Maoists for peace talks for the first time. Three rounds of talks held in Kathmandu and Bardiya broke down after the government did not agree to CA resulting in the Maoists walking out and attacking security installations.

In 2003, in a dramatic fashion, then government and the Maoists announced mutual ceasefire and entered into talks. This, too, failed after the government could not meet the demand of CA.

Every breakdown of talks was followed by intensification of violence. This time, however, there is a genuine belief among large sections of people that the peace talks would succeed. The reason is the 12-point understanding between the Maoists and the political parties. The understanding was reached in November, 2005. And in this understanding the parties have accepted, in principle, the demand for CA. "In fact, this time our peace talks is just about upgrading the 12-point pact," said Mahara.

### Code of Conduct

The first talks was held less than 24 hours after the cabinet formed its negotiating team. Headed by Sitaula, the



**Enraged mob torches police vehicle in Kathmandu: Volatile state**

Photo : Gorkhapatra

government team includes a UML ideologue Pradip Gyawali and NC (Democratic) leader Ramesh Lekhak as two members. The Maoist team is headed by Mahara and included members Dinanath Sharma and Dev Gurung.

The 25-point ceasefire code of conduct the two sides signed have been widely appreciated. The code of conduct includes points asking both sides to stop from engaging in provocative activities; stopping the mobilization of arms; refraining from attacking security bases of the other side or use landmine or ambush against each other; stopping fresh recruitment; stopping men or women in uniform from attending any gathering or political meeting; holding talks for managing arms and armed forces; ending mental or physical torture to political cadres, social workers and individuals while disseminating ideology; and refraining from calling bandh or strike.

Furthermore, the code of conduct also includes commitment from both sides to allow unhindered operation of basic services to the people; to allow development works; to create favorable environment for operation of schools, colleges, hospitals and medical facilities; to stop the collection of donation in cash or kind against anyone's will; to release detainees; to return properties of displaced persons and other individuals; and to invite national and international

teams to monitor the truce. The code also has the provision allowing it to be reviewed or amended if both sides agree.

It is likely that the government and the Maoists could invite the UN Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to monitor the ceasefire code of conduct reached between the two sides. This was hinted by Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation and a member of negotiating team Pradip Gyawali. He said that the government and the Maoists are also considering signing a Human Rights Accord, a major demand of civil society and rights organizations.

The latest round of peace talks has generated hopes among the people. But the issues are far from resolved. The understanding is still wafer-thin as was demonstrated by critical remarks made by Home Minister Sitaula over the continuation of breach of code by the Maoists and the subsequent sharp reaction by Mahara. While Sitaula and some other MPs raised the issue of killing of two persons in Rautahat and lack of environment favorable to return of displaced persons, Mahara retorted stating that the parliament was engaging in unnecessary debate. He stated that the "conflict is growing with the seven parties," probably referring to the differences over the issue of dissolving parliament and also over the issue of reinstatement of local bodies – which the parties want but is vehemently opposed by the Maoists. ■

## POLITICS

# Beginning of New Crisis

People are disillusioned that peace has come and everything from now onwards will go smoothly following the government-Maoist ceasefire and announcement of several proclamations including holding the elections to Constituent Assembly by the House of Representatives. However, the threat and pressure coming from different sides frustrate many as it shows that restoration of peace and stability is going to be a difficult and complicated process. From managing the Maoist militia to setting up consensus agenda for Constituent Assembly and adjustments of all political forces, the phase ahead is strewn with difficulties. Recent incidents indicate that the conflict was not by people and for people only. There are many forces, including within the country and outside that have vital interests to promote or safeguard. There are symptoms in the political atmosphere of the country today that suggest a prolonged conflict involving costly consequences could be looming large. The forthcoming crises maybe most dangerous and devastating if the leadership fails to manage them

By KESHAB POUDEL

**A**fter the reinstatement of parliament, and after passing a unanimous proposal for Constituent Assembly, announcement of Charter Declaration, and beginning of peace talks, people are under the illusion that everything would be alright now.

Whether they are members of civil society, political leaders or common

citizens, all have similar kind of feeling that following the charter declaration and announcement for holding the elections for constituent assembly, present political crisis is nearing its end.

However, more the new events unfold, more it is generating worries about the consequences. The recent developments indicate that the crisis may not be solved so easily as believed by ordinary Nepalese. Maoist leaders have already issued threat that they will not

hesitate to return to civil war if political parties reject their demands. "Revival of local bodies would force Maoists to return to war," warned Maoist leader Dev Gurung. Revival of local bodies is one of the contentious issues now among seven parties alliance.

Maoists' demands include dissolution of present House of Representatives and transfer of power to political conference, and formation of interim government. "The government



**Torch-lit procession:** Many issues, many protests

should work to fulfill the issues raised by our party to pave the way for free and fair elections for Constituent Assembly," said Gurung.

Leaders of seven parties don't want to dissolve the parliament as demanded by Maoists. "There is no question of dissolving the House of Representatives till formation of reliable and legitimate body," said CPN-UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal.

Nepali Congress leader Ram Chandra Poudel, too, holds similar views. "Who will call the national convention of all political forces and who will decide the number of participants and what will be the basis for that?" asked Poudel.

Slowly and gradually the euphoria generated a month ago is fading away. Nobody knows how to manage the present crisis. Majority of the people do not know what the Constituent Assembly is all about, how would they participate in the elections, how would it formulate the constitution, and what would be the role of parliament.

#### **Process of Adjustments And Readjustments**

The new phase of political crisis in Nepal seems to be very complicated involving inside and outside forces working overtly and covertly. One of the major conflicts is going to be the

accommodation and adjustment of concern of outside forces including India - Nepal's immediate neighbor and largest democratic country in the world - and the western democracies including the USA. Although India and the western countries are firmly committed to similar democratic ideals, they have different priorities and models for Nepal.

For the cause of democracy, the western countries, Japan and the USA are on one side and the Indian leaders and parties on other side. "Experiences have shown that Indian leaders and political parties appear only at the time of agitation but they have hardly taken any initiative to stabilize the situation in Nepal. West has sympathy and resources to promote democracy but that has often been stopped by another democratic country," said a political analyst.

India - a close neighbor with highest stakes including the security in Nepal - does not want to see growing western influence in Nepal. The recent expression of Sashanka - the former foreign secretary, an experienced person in India's foreign policy matter, revealed this difference. In the recent issue of India Today, a leading Indian magazine, the former Indian foreign secretary had come out with a blunt statement that the US and European countries wanted to

play a pro-active role in Nepal - which India blocked.

Will the western countries pack up and quietly back out from Nepal's present politics? Or will they find new ways to deal with it is a matter for anybody's guess. The US assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asia, Richard Boucher, termed as progress the formation of cabinet and some fundamental decisions by political parties and said the US has an assistance team talking to the government of Nepal. "We are closely coordinating with other governments including India."

Similarly, other western countries too have shown interest to support Nepal in the process of democratization. Norway had already sent a senior minister and other western democratic countries are also backing Nepal. In 1990, western

democracies spent a lot of resources to formulate the new constitution for Nepal. So far as formulation of new constitution through the CA is concerned, they are yet to come out with a proposal.

"In Nepal's new atmosphere of democratic adjustments, there are two different democratic approaches. One, is backed by immediate neighbor India and other is backed by rest of the democratic countries of the world," added the political analyst. "The strategic interest and security perceptions are there to create this difference between two different fronts. China, Nepal's northern neighbor, is another factor which has a separate and distinct role to play."

"The real challenge for India in Nepal has only just begun, with the restoration of parliament. It can be met only if India sheds off its inherent preference for the status quo and relates itself to the popular forces in Nepal today," writes S.D Muni, prominent Indian writer and Nepal expert in his recent article "A Policy of Deception on Nepal."

#### **Managing the Transition**

In the last five decades of political change, Nepalese political leaders led successful agitations but they failed while managing transition and transfer of power smoothly and peacefully. People took part in the street agitation supporting leaders

who had no idea about what their role was going to demand from them. Like in the past, the crisis of Nepal is not going to be short and easy this time also.

In 1990's change, there was a definite goal like constitutional monarchy and restoration of multiparty democracy. Now nobody is sure whether Nepal will be a republic or ceremonial monarchy. The 1990 constitution had turned the monarchy into completely ceremonial. King Birendra fully abided by it. Thus, he was out of controversy in his later phase.

The present King aspired to play a pro-active role in an unruly and arrogant manner, too. Result is even this ceremonial role of monarchy is in danger. The majority of the people might still have emotional attachment to this institution but they are silent and without an articulated leadership.

From framework and conditions for CA to other crisis of political management, seven political parties are yet to come out with a common agenda. They have major differences over revival of local bodies to expansion of cabinet, mobilization of internal security and maintenance of law and order.

#### **Inclusive Democracy**

Political agenda is more complicated. Everyone is talking about the inclusive democracy but nobody cares about the consequences of such populist jargons. Nobody realizes how people in Nepal's neighboring big democracy have started struggling due to inclusive democracy.

One of the major crises of India now is the emergence of differences based on caste, creed and race - because of the reservation of these aspects in the

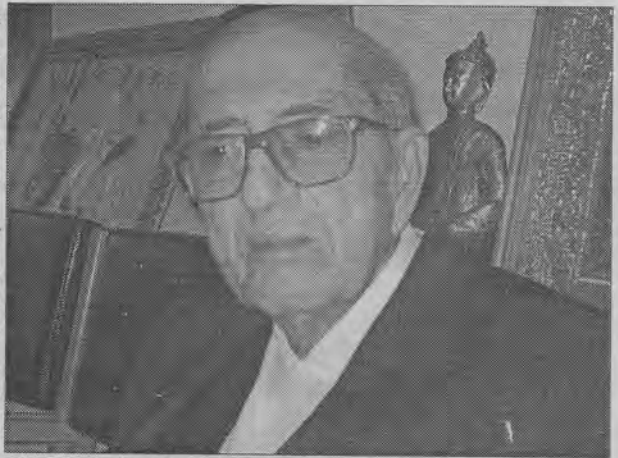
legislation for jobs in government services and educational institutions. What appears to be a great controversy in India, is being considered as a model for future in Nepal.

In the name of inclusive democracy, various groups have already demanded their role in constitution making. From the dalits and other ethnic groups to geographical regions and genderwise, wide range of growing demand for participation in the constitution making process is being heard every day.

Another contentious issue is whether Nepal should have a unitary or federal structure or be given ethnic autonomy - that again could prove to be never-ending debate. Some want federalism on the basis of geographical region and others want it on ethnic or linguistic basis.

#### **Question of Security**

The question of management of army and consideration of security issues is another important issue. Following the declaration of parliament, the army has come under the control of the parliament. "The third and most serious matter within the security system of Nepal is if it will have its own independent security perception or would be an appendage to a neighbor's perception? The loyalty of armed forces in Nepal has sufficiently been tested by the resolution of the parliament. Maintaining its traditional discipline and



**PM Koirala:** Rough waters ahead

loyalty to the state, the army has adjusted itself to the new situation. As an oldest institutionalized army of this region, it has behaved with dignity and maturity," said an analyst.

"Elite class of the army demonstrated that their loyalty to the state is beyond doubt but that is not seen to be enough at present situation." Chief of Army Staff General Pyar Jung Thapa said that the army would carry out the directives of the government. "Nepal Army is unwaveringly committed to its primary responsibility of protecting the sovereignty, nationalism and nation's interests," said General Thapa, addressing the army officers. "In keeping with this tradition, Nepali Army is committed to following the directives of Nepal government which is moving ahead with the objective of creating a prosperous Nepal by strengthening multi-party democracy and lasting peace."

Spokesman of Nepal Army further clarified its stand. "Our main responsibility is to protect the national sovereignty and national integrity," said Nepal Army spokesman Nepal Bhushan Chand to BBC.

#### **New Aspirants**

Although the agitation was led by octogenarian leader Girija Prasad Koirala, whose commitments towards democracy and patriotism is unquestionable, new aspirants are emerging in a political environment that is bubbling with initial euphoria. "There is a long way to go for them to be acquainted with the hard realities of the country and needs of the people," said the analyst.

"The old generation politicians of 1950s like B.P. Koirala, Subarna Sumsher,



**Burning of tyres:** Increasing intolerance



Surya Prasad Upadhyaya and several others had high academic background, were voracious readers and very articulate. PM Koirala, who is a seasoned politician, however, lacks such a background," said an analyst.

"Persons who have a name in Nepalese politics have no such academic background and habit of studying subjects like that. Their caliber cannot match the average standard of South Asian politicians. Thus, they always play a reactive than pro-active role in politics," said the analyst. In this whirlwind of political crisis, the present leaders are, therefore, easily carried away by make-believe formulas and deceptive manipulation. The King and his whole

edifices of monarchy have been suddenly blocked of its role. The King now has to go through a role of "proactive monarch" to a symbolic one – without any authority and without any say."

A small country - which has gone through several serious convulsions in the past - fortunately survived as a stable and mature nation. But the present convulsions seem to be more serious than any such in the past. It will be a long story to deal with all previous turmoils of 1950, 1960, 1979 and 1990.

"The present crisis is much more serious in dimension. What was not possible in the previous designs seem to have been planned to achieve by a prolonged crisis of management. There are

very few people who have concentrated upon the task of managing the crisis," the analyst added.

### Reconciliation

These apart, the majority of people have an attitude to accept the *fait accompli* and adjust with a new situation whatever emerges in peace and reconciliation. Forget and forgive has been a healthy attitude of the vast majority who need a courageous leadership to complete the transition at the earliest with highest skills, dedications and management. In earlier three political crises, there were leaders likes B.P. Koirala whose unflinching commitment towards national reconciliation had averted a major crisis.

Now Nepalese are even talking about South African leaders like Nelson Mandela for the successful political transition in drafting the constitution through the constituent assembly. While South African model of Constituent Assembly is usually mentioned by elites, they forget to mention that South Africa had Nelson Mandela as a role model to accomplish the transformation to a new democratic environment accommodating the commonalities of interests of all.

Mere wishes do not make any country fortunate like South Africa where Nelson Mandela is still a living legend. He was able to lead the black community and also able to win the trust and loyalty of the whites.

At a time when the country's political leaders are launching tirade against the persons and officials in previous regime at the extent of engaging in vendetta, imagining South African model of reconciliation is far from reality. Unlike Nelson Mandela who bore no grudge whatsoever against the white officials in judiciary and security organs and who had worked under apartheid regime exercising discriminatory laws, almost all leaders in Nepal are now speaking the language of vengeance and vendetta.

The way politics of Nepal was derailed from the constitutional track and put into perpetual uncertainty in the present geo-political situation, it would be testing time for politicians to do justice and maintain a proper balance treating the interest of the nation as supreme. In days to come, politicians of Nepal are definitely going to have to pass through a great trial in history. ■



**Security personnel:** Shouldering the responsibility

## NEPAL-INDIA BORDER INTERACTION

# Opportunities Ahead

Participated by scholars and civil society members from Nepal and India, the two-day interaction program discusses common binding factors between the two countries

By KESHAB POUDEL

**A**t a time when economic activities across the border area in Nepal and India are increasing, the people living in both the sides have got new opportunities to improve their livelihood. If people utilize open border between the two countries properly, people living on both the sides can reap a lot of benefits.

"In this age of globalization, border ties between two countries must be associated with every aspect of life and not only economic sector," said Indian envoy to Nepal Shiv Shankar Mukherjee inaugurating the seminar. "Both the countries should utilize the open border for mutual benefit by removing disadvantages."

From improvement of border infrastructures to process of industrialization, many border points have offered hopes for the people. After the completion of roads along the border areas, interactions at the people-to-people level would intensify.

Whether it is religion, culture, ethnicity, language or geography, there are so many factors which bring the people living across the border closer. Sharing more than 1,600 kilometers open border, the relations between Nepal-India is multi-faceted in every sense.

Although it consists of less than 20 percent of total areas of Nepal, the southern plains of Nepal – which share border with three Indian states Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal – hold a major share in Nepal's Gross Domestic Product.

Since the lands of Nepal and India are geographically linked in such a manner that many people living across the border in both the side need to cross each other's borders to reach their homes every day, there is unhindered movement of tens of thousands of people everyday. Along with

economic relations, there also exist matrimonial relations between people living in both the sides for centuries.

At the seminar organized by the Consulate General of India, Birgunj with support from B.P. Koirala India-Nepal Foundation, Nepalese and Indian participants of India-Nepal civil society interaction on cross border issues discussed all important issues related to people living across the border. Inaugurating the seminar "Bonds Beyond Borders", Indian envoy Mukherjee

linking bordering Indian cities and railway stations increased the access to reach all the cities in India and Nepal.

In the last few decades, because of access to quality educational institutions, industrialization and other facilities have drastically improved the livelihood of people living in both the sides of border opening new opportunities. As there have been increase in the area of irrigated land, improvement of health facilities, education institutions and road access, the movement of people, too, has seen significant changes.

People of both the sides are commonly sharing health and educational infrastructures for the benefit to them. Many Nepalese and Indians living in many districts of bordering areas of Nepal and India visit hospitals in border town of respective countries and depend upon the facilities and access to transportation taking advantages of open borders.



**Field in Birgunj:** Improved yield due to Gandak irrigation

stressed the need to utilize the open border as an opportunity.

For thousands of years, the dense forest in the plain areas and existence of Malaria hindered the movement of people. The situation has changed following political change of 1950 followed by eradication of Malaria, clearance of forest in terai and construction of basic infrastructures like road. The construction of East-west high way and other roads

"This kind of seminar will help to identify the problems and challenges of people living in two sides of border," said Gopal Baglay, Counselor, India Embassy and secretary of BP Koirala India-Nepal foundation.

Whether it is in the completion of East-West highway, building feeder roads, irrigation canals, or schools, Indian government has already invested billions of rupees in terai region. These



**Tribhuvan Rajpath:** Transport infrastructure

infrastructures are still elementary. "Improvement of infrastructures in either side will help to meet the economic challenges of both the countries," said Dr. R.D. Singh, professor (Retd) Tribhuvan University.

People living in Terai region of Nepal and bordering Indian cities have common tradition, culture and have family relations. "The religion, culture and other social bindings are there to strengthen the relations existing between the people living across the border," said Dr. Ram Dayal Rakesh, a member of National Human Right Commission. "The people-to-people relations are much more intensive."

Along with enormous economic opportunities, natural

investments help to uplift the life of rural population. "We can see a lot of improvement in the social and economic sector through the projects completed under the Indo-Nepal economic cooperation in Terai," said professor Haribansha Jha, Center for Economics and Technical Studies, presenting his paper.

Following the intensification of insurgency and frequent disturbance of education sector, many people living in border areas are sending their children to nearby Indian schools. Because of open border, people on both sides have been sharing and exploiting tremendous opportunities exploit.

"There are many similarities in livelihood across the border in terms of economy as people of both the sides face similar kinds of problems in agriculture and other sectors," said Dr. Rajendra Ram, professor (Retd), Patna University.

Population living across Nepal-India border has common economic challenge as the social indicator is still lower and the

disasters like-floods are also creating a lot of problems. The growing human disturbance and destruction of environment is also causing threat to these areas. Thanks to the growing deforestation in the upper side of Nepal, the rivers and streams - which carry large volume of sand stone - are wreaking havoc in the lower bordering parts of Nepal and India.

"There is a need to conserve the biodiversity to improve the environment in the region," said Professor Ram Prasad Chaudhary. "Conservation of bio-diversity in the Nepal's terai region would provide better safety to the people across Indian border."

In many areas, the unique kind of border divided by rivers - more than 3000 rivers and streams - which originate from Himalayas, Mahabharat mountains and Chure mountains flow to India through the Terai region.

Whenever there is a rain in mountain and hills, there occurs flood in Nepalese Terai as well as bordering towns of India.

From major rivers like Kosi, Bagmati, Karnali and Mechi to other small streams, they have been wrecking havoc not only in Nepal but also in India.

As such, in addition to building infrastructures and triggering growth in the border areas, ample attention must also be paid to cause minimum disturbance to the environment for the sake of sustainable development. ■

## ADB Awards Outstanding Projects

Three project teams were awarded by Asian Development Bank (ADB's) field office in Nepal for Outstanding Project Management Performance this year, according to a press release by the ADB Nepal Resident Mission office in Kathmandu. Nepal's Finance Secretary Bhoj Raj Ghimire presented the awards to representatives of teams from ADB's Small Town Water Supply and Sanitation Project, Teachers Education Project, and Rural Microfinance Project. A special appreciation award was presented to the team working on the Road Network Development Project for its contribution in the 2005 overall contract award performance. The Small Town Water Supply and Sanitation Project is improving water supply and sanitation conditions in 31 new small towns with average population of about 18,000. As a follow up to ADB's Primary Education Development Project, the Teachers Education Project is assisting the Government in improving the quality and efficiency of basic education through better qualified teachers. The Rural Microfinance Project, receiving its fourth NRM award, is improving the socio-economic status of women by building skills, providing credit for income generating activities, and strengthening microfinance institutions. The Road Network Development Project aims to improve transport efficiency in order to promote economic growth and job creation. NRM instituted the award scheme in 1996 to encourage project staff of ADB-assisted projects to improve portfolio performance in support of its overarching goal - poverty reduction. "ADB's assistance is focused on results on the ground," says ADB's Nepal Country Director Sultan Hafeez Rahman. "So we appreciate the efforts made by project teams and the government agencies involved in reducing poverty and enhancing development results." The press statement adds that after a continuous deterioration since 2001, Nepal's portfolio performance improved markedly in 2005 when resource transfer to Nepal turned positive for the first time in 4 years.

## NEPAL CHINA TRADE

# Reaching New Height

Improved infrastructures in Tibetan Autonomous region helps enhance the volume of trade between Nepal and China

By KESHAB POUDEL

Although Nepal's border with her northern neighbor China is closed and composed of difficult mountainous terrain, the Trans-Himalayan Trade remains a lucrative business for centuries for the business communities in Kathmandu Valley.

Following years of slowdown due to breaking up of traditional model of barter trade practiced between the people living across the border in north, the trade between the two countries has suddenly jumped.

According to government statistics, the trade volume between the two countries has increased by 14 percent last year reaching the amount of 196 million dollar in the year 2005. Like its southern neighbor, Nepal's trade deficit is also growing with China, another neighbor.

As the trade volume between the two countries has been growing, old Kodari road has become congested. The Government of Nepal and China have agreed to start construction of Rasuwa-Syaphrubeshi road from coming fiscal year. Although the agreement to build the Rasuwa-Syaphrubeshi road was signed in May 13, 2001 between then Chinese premier Zhu Rongji and then Nepalese prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala, the construction of road was delayed following the dissolution of elected government in October 2002.

Along with improvement of the existing Kodari highway, people living along the border areas are also demanding the new road link to get benefit from the growing economic activities in China.

China has already signed agreement with Nepal to give duty

free entry to Nepalese products in Chinese market. Till few decades ago, Nepal China trade was in favor of Nepal as Nepal exported many products to Tibet. The situation has changed now and Nepal's export to China and Tibet has declined.

The growing trade deficit is a matter of concern for Nepalese authorities. "We need support of business communities to increase the trade volume between the two countries," said Finance minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat, inaugurating sixth general assembly of the association. "Along with surface trade, we are considering to expand air trade with China."

In his last visit to Nepal by Chinese leader Tang Jiaxuan, an important

agreement that will have a far-reaching impact on Nepal's economic development in the years to come was signed regarding the Chinese decision to grant zero custom entry for 1550 Nepalese products.

For the past many centuries, the business communities of Kathmandu valley reaped enough benefits from the Trans Himalayan Trade.

"Nepal- China economic cooperation has increased substantially in the recent years," said Chinese Ambassador Sun Heping. "Despite different social structures, Nepal-China friendly relations remain unique in international sector," he added while addressing a sixth general assembly of Nepal Trans Himalayan Trade and Business Association.

Despite growing trade between the two countries, infrastructures in the borders areas are yet to improve. Along with construction of new road, the government is also planning to improve the infrastructures in Tatopani region and Arniko Highway.

"Trans-Himalayan Trade is an integral part of Nepalese economy. Tatopani Custom Office is a major source for revenue as it generates billions of rupees of revenue to the country," said Durga Bahadur Shrestha, president of Nepal Trans Himalayan Trade Business Association.

"Expanding areas of linkage including building infrastructures like highways and rail link for mutual national and economic interest between friendly neighbors is a natural phenomenon. These kind of natural process should take its own normal course and should not be stalled," said Madan Regmi, chairman of China Study Center Nepal.

For centuries, Trans Himalayan Trade remained a lucrative business for Nepalese. As Nepal and China share more than 1400 kilometers border, people living across the border will also get benefit, particularly, at this period of history when China has been renowned all over the world for its astounding economic growth and development. ■



**Syaphrubeshi region:** Promising alternative route

MEDIA IN US

# News For Use

Media scholars in US express concern over the decreasing interest in serious news and growing trend of dumbing them down

By SANJAYA DHAKAL in New York

“**Y**oung people in America no more read newspapers. They prefer to get news and information from late night comic news shows – which are not exactly the correct media for serious news,” said Neil Hickey, Editor at Large, Columbia Journalism Review (CJR).

Hickey, a seasoned media scholar, is concerned that the youngsters are obsessed with news about only entertainment and sports. “They are up to date about Britney Spears and rock stars,” he said. CJR is globally recognized as America’s premier media monitor – a watchdog of the press in all its forms, from newspapers and magazines to radio, television and cable to the wire services and the Web.

“And whatever little they know about serious news, they get it from late night shows (like Jay Leno’s Tonight

Show or Late Night with David Letterman),” he said. In the late night shows, serious stuffs are often dumbed down and presented in a humorous and light manner.

Agrees Sreenath Srinivasan, Dean of Students, at the Columbia University, School of Journalism. “There is a lack of interest in serious journalism. Everybody, particularly the youngsters, are interested more in rock stars and movie stars,” he said.

Because of this decreasing lack of interest and the growing expansion of electronic and web-based news services – like internet news portals, blogging and so on – the print media is undergoing a gradual transformation in content.

“We are now focusing on news that people can use,” said Tim Poor, Editor for National and Foreign News, at the St. Louis Post Dispatch based in St. Louis, Missouri. He added that increasingly the

media is shifting away from its role as a watchdog and focusing on ‘news that you can use.’

“That is why you will find American audience know really well about weather and traffic,” added Srinivasan. The newspapers and televisions often concentrate on issues like weather, traffic, crime and other local stuffs. “People want to know what kind of weather it is going to be today. They want to know if they should take umbrellas. They want to know which route they should take today to avoid traffic jam. And that is what the media is providing them often,” he added.

The print media was also forced to cater to the demands of the public as the circulation of newspapers were declining rapidly. According to Hickey, in a matter of few years, the number of daily newspapers in the US has decreased from 1700 to 1400 – with most cities having only one major daily paper. The circulation figures came down by 2.6 percent in the last one year alone, added Srinivasan.

At a time when the interest on serious news – even including US domestic politics and business issues – is low, it is anybody’s guess how the interest would be regarding the international news. Only few major newspapers like The New York Times and The Washington Post and few cable television news channels like CNN are providing adequate news on foreign issues. Most other localized newspapers and television channels concentrate on local issues.

“After 9/11 there was a big increase in interest on foreign news. But that is rapidly decreasing now,” said Tim Poor. “The interest on international news has gone back to the same pre-9/11 level,” agreed Srinivasan.

Their viewpoint is also shared by Raman Narayanan, Editor for World News section at the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. “In order to increase the interest of our local readers on the foreign news, we are trying new strategies of framing stories in a manner that the people here can relate with,” he said, adding, “We need to present foreign news as dessert and not as broccoli in order to increase the interest of US people on the world news.” ■



Hickey: Concerned with the current media trend

# The Indo-US Nuclear Deal

By MADHAV K. RIMAL

The nuclear deal signed between the United States and India during President Bush's India visit a few months ago is sure to have very far-reaching global repercussions. The disintegration of the Soviet Union nearly two decades back had left the whole world to the United States as the lone super power. The total absence of any check and balance, no wonder, was bound to generate hubris in the US that led to the uncalled for invasion of Iraq. But the unimaginable growth of China into a super economic power has all the potentials of turning it into a global rival of the United States replacing her old rival – the Soviet Union. As such, the United States had to start planning how to contain the emerging giant. India's inherent apprehensions and the tragic experiences of the early 1960s and her inexorable ambition to surge ahead of China mixed with her inborn hatred and unending animosity against Pakistan did provide the US with a more than a willing partner to enter into this kind of covert military alliance. George W's fiasco in Iraq quashed their hopes of establishing a

strong base in the heart of Middle-east and must have impelled the neo-conservatives in his administration who influence his foreign policy to find a new, more stable ally who would also play game to build a ring of alliances around China. And who could have filled in this position better than India? Even discarding the decades-long commitment of not selling any civilian nuclear technology to a country that has not signed the NPT, the US was forced by its

*Even discarding the decades-long commitment of not selling any civilian nuclear technology to a country that has not signed the NPT, the US was forced by its obsessive but unfounded apprehensions to develop India into an economic and geo-strategic counterweight to China*

obsessive but unfounded apprehensions to develop India into an economic and geo-strategic counterweight to China. Moreover, India's contention that it needs to keep producing nuclear material to have a more credible deterrent did come as sweet music to American ears. However, American pretensions that this deal will open the door to the IAEA inspections of Indian reactors which will reaffirm international control of her bomb grade plutonium production does not sound very convincing. Indeed, India has designated only 14 of its 22 nuclear reactors to IAEA inspections. And who would stop India from producing as much bomb grade plutonium as she likes from the rest? As a matter of fact, both India and US cannot do without coming together and consequently, they can afford to ignore the eye-brow raising their nuclear deal is bound to generate. Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf and China both have not reacted wildly. Of course, both cannot fail to see that the deal is directly directed against them. As far as

that they harbor any aggressive intentions or designs against India nor they want to dominate Asia or the world. As such, this deal demonstrates more of US petulance than Indian. Indeed, there could be a much greater cause for Pakistan to be anxious. However, Pakistani President's short and succinct comment that, "America has signed a civil nuclear agreement with India on the basis of what it sees to be its interests. My recent trip to China was part of my effort to keep Pakistan's strategic options open," could be interpreted the way one would like to do.

Like the invasion of Iraq, a great majority in the US are seriously opposed to the idea of a military alliance to contain China. And many do hope like the Dubai takeover of operations at six US ports, this deal might also be aborted by the Congress. As such, India is not relying on diplomacy only to win the US Congress approval. She is playing the Washington game like the locals do – with lobbyists. She is spending huge sums in buying the services of lobbyists like Barbour, Griffith and Rogers and firms like Venable who not only buttonhole senior Bush officials but also have firm grip on key figures in House International Relations Committee. But, the arms control groups and some former Bush aides who oppose the deal warn that India might use US nuclear technology intended for its civilian nuclear facilities to expand its weapons program. Some high US officials even complain they have been

"out-negotiated." They still believe, there are too many slivers between the cup and the lips. There are other groups, too, who believe Bush will face a tough fight over approval for the deal in the Congress, and also with the international Nuclear Suppliers Group, which controls uranium exports. Opponents on the Capitol Hill from both parties believe Bush caved to Delhi. Said a Democrat senator, "You can't break the rules for India and expect Iran to play by them, or Pakistan, or North Korea." As such, if the proliferation of nuclear weapons is to be stopped effectively in the world, the Bush administration has to give second thoughts on its deal with India. Because, nothing in the India deal will prevent it from developing new warheads, thus creating more serious headaches for future US governments which are sure to spill over to her allies in Europe. And despite all promises and assertions, it will surely fuel an arms race in Asia, which will adversely affect the fight against acute poverty in the region and plunge not only Asia but the whole world into a cold war situation once again. ■

## BOOK

# Story of Janakpur

Dr. Ram Dayal Rakesh's new book highlights religious and cultural importance of Janakpur

Although it occupies a very small space in South Asia, Nepal is endowed with diverse cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious groups. Known as a country of temples, Nepal has cities like Janakpur that have rich historic traditions. Janakpur is regarded as a holy city by Hindus.

Having long experiences in writing about the importance of Mithila culture and arts, Dr. Ram Dayal Rakesh has made tremendous contribution in the areas of overall development of Mithila culture, language and art.

From birthplace of Buddha to important pilgrimage of Shiva and from Muktinath to Ram Janaki temple of Janakpur, there are numerous important temples in Nepal. Different books have already been published highlighting the importance of different religious sites but only a few of them have been written specifically mentioning the importance of particular temple.

From writing on various implications of Mithila culture to its contribution to overall development of Nepalese culture, Dr. Rakesh has made efforts to educate the general Nepalese populace about their rich cultural heritage.

In Mithila culture, Janakpur, Kingdom of King Janak, father of Goddess Sita, remains as a heart. "The present work is the manifestation of my long

cherished desire for writing a book on Janakpur," writes Dr. Ram Dayal Rakesh in his acknowledgement.

There are only a few books that have been written highlighting religious, cultural and other importance of Janakpur. In the last few decades,

Dr. Ram Dayal Rakesh, who is currently a member of National Human Rights Commission, is the only one who has published a number of books dealing specifically with Mithila culture, language and its importance. Janakpur is the heart of Mithila culture.

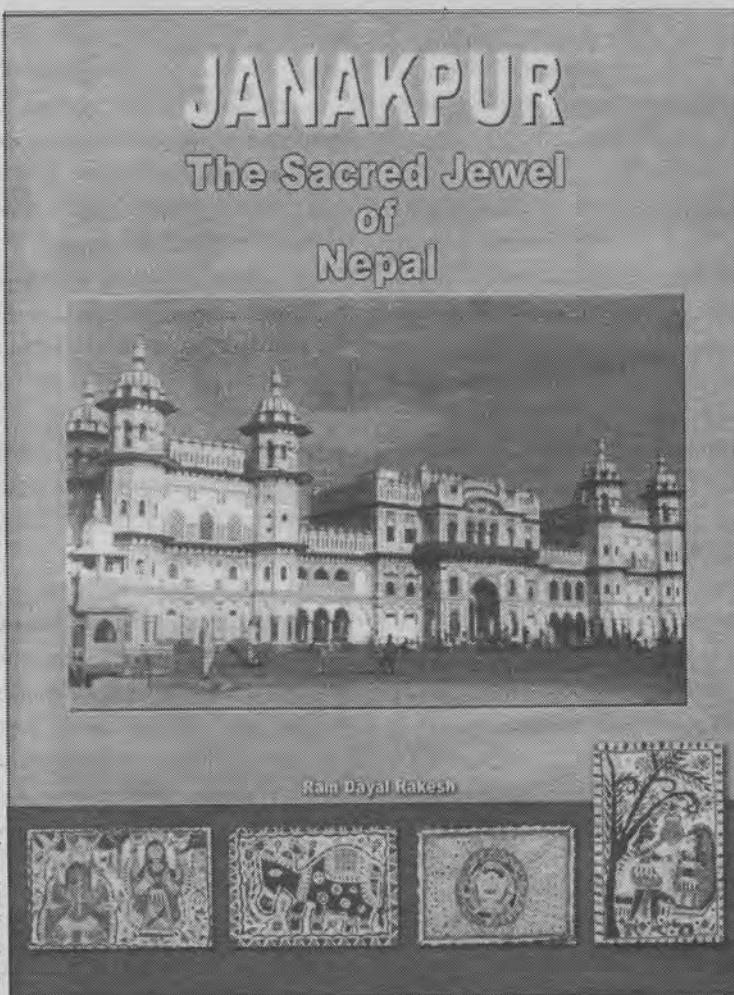
It is a pity that Janakpur, a magnificent city with historical and religious importance, did not catch the attention of authors in the past. Known as a birth place of Sita, wife of legendary Lord Ram of Ramayana, the Hindus living around the world regard Janakpur — as a holy place.

In his long career, Dr. Rakesh has already published a number of books on literature, historical and other importance.

"Dr. Rakesh is one of the foremost folklorists of Nepal, with many books, articles and monographs to his credit. Subsequent to his studies at Tribhuvan University, where his excellence was awarded the Mahendra Vidya Bhushan, he did his doctoral work at Delhi University, completing his PhD in 1975. In 1993, Dr. Rakesh went to Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana, USA, as a Fulbright Postdoctoral Fellow," writes Kathryn S. March. "Dr. Rakesh has written extensively in Nepali folklore studies, focusing particularly on Mithila communities in Janakpur Region."

"In the present work, Janakpur: The Sacred Jewel of Nepal, Dr. Rakesh has taken slightly different approach. This book detailed an elegiac account of one of the most famous cities in Nepal; it is a well-deserved and nice paean to a place significant for many religious, historical and cultural reasons."

Known for his knowledge and research, Dr. Rakesh's book deals in depth regarding the issues he has raised. ■



*Janakpur; The Sacred Jewel of Nepal*

By: *Dr. Ram Dayal Rakesh*

Price: *Rs. 500.00 US\$ 10*

Pages: *130*

# If She Sees Beyond the Curtain of Violence India Also Gains from a Peaceful and a Stable Nepal

By DR. TULSI P. UPRETY

It is a fact that India is a big country and that a smaller nation like Nepal should look up to her as a friend. Nonetheless, this does not mean that India's neighboring countries should be subservient to her. The Indian economy would be much better off if she were surrounded by politically stable and rich nations as opposed to unstable and less-developed nations. Maoist leaders should be congratulated in advance for declaring cease fire and willing to settle the political conflict through a peaceful means. However, until it is settled, Maoist's conflict is still the major issue to be resolved for bringing peace and prosperity in Nepal and it will largely depend on India's willingness to change her unspoken foreign policy towards Nepal, which may be happening.

Apparent economic and political benefits should provide enough motivation for India to see a peaceful settlement of the Maoist violent campaign instead of deliberately creating political and social unrest as their unspoken foreign policy towards Nepal. Wise advisors and decision makers in New Delhi must realize that they would be inviting an incurable political cancer if they try to take over Nepal militarily or otherwise. India can easily use her might but the Nepalese people will never forget their rights. It is time for India to realize the benefits it gets from a stable and prosperous Nepal and it must stop aiding, encouraging and using Nepalese Maoists to create unstable Nepal.

India must accept that her unspoken foreign policy is guided by certain false premises. These include an eventual control of Nepal's precious natural resources by using the Nepalese Maoists as a means to terrorize Nepal and to create an unstable political, social and economic environment. Indian policy-makers, particularly in this case are operating under the false assumption that Nepal as well as other neighboring countries and the world do not know that India is actually harboring Nepalese Maoists to create an unstable political situation in Nepal. One can pretend for a while that India, a "civilized" and a "democratic" country, does not engage in such activities to harm its neighbors. However, the history and practice of unspoken Indian foreign policies tell otherwise. India, Nepal, the neighboring countries in the region and the world know that India is harboring Nepalese Maoists, but all the parties are simply pretending to be blind regarding this issue. As a result of India's misguided and myopic politics, Nepal and the Nepalese people are paying a heavy price.

Our other foreign friends are turning a blind eye to India's blatant insolence by being silent about it or not making even a **single statement against the Indian involvement.** Before it is too late, it is time for them to openly accept the fact that India is using Nepalese Maoists to create political and social unrest and that they should condemn such heinous policies. Further, if these friendly countries do not have their own foreign policy towards Nepal but simply follow the Indian recipe, then their embassies have very little reason to remain in Nepal. They can preach to Nepal and the Nepalese people from New Delhi. Let all of us be aware that **Nepal is facing a sovereignty crisis.** She can no longer afford to play the dirty games of her hypocritical friends and be duped all the time. Therefore, all Nepalese must find unity in their diversity in order to safeguard their country's sovereignty and to develop a free and a peaceful democratic Nepalese society.

Those interest groups, who have been providing a safe haven to Nepalese Maoists in India, who have been training, who have been selling arms and ammunition to Nepalese Maoists, and those who have been receiving funds from the Nepalese Maoists would lose the most, once the Nepalese Maoists accept and practice democracy in Nepal. Their income source would be depleted since the Nepalese Maoists would no longer engage in robbing the Nepalese banks, extorting money from the Nepalese businessmen, teachers, various professional groups, individual families and tourists.

**With the advent of the political settlement in Nepal, India stands to gain many economic and political benefits:**

- A peaceful and stable political situation in Nepal would enhance the Indian economic interests in Nepal and its plan to trade with China using possible transit routes.
- Indian investors would have a favorable environment to invest in establishing new industries, hotel/motel and recreation industries, development of hydro power, and much more.
- Indian cities would benefit by having access to Nepalese hydro power, which would further enhance Indian industrial, commercial and agricultural sectors.
- Indian goods would find a better market in Nepal due to the improved economic conditions of the Nepalese people.
- Under a stable political environment in Nepal, India would safely use various possible transit routes to



engage in trading with China, which has the largest consumer market in the world.

- Due to the settlement of the Maoists conflict, India would gain its credibility and respect among the Nepalese people, as well as other neighboring countries in the region and abroad. Political trust and leadership position can be restored. Consequently, friends will behave and treat each other like friends.
- India will have a friend that she can count on in the international arena.
- Terrorist and violent activities in Indian cities would decrease considerably due to the assimilation of Nepalese Maoist in the political mainstream of Nepal.
- Revenue source of Indian extremists, i.e. Naxalites and Maoists may considerably be weakened after the Nepalese Maoists settle their conflict with the government of Nepal.
- Employment for Indian citizens in India would increase, due to the return of Maoist displaced Nepalese to Nepal.

**Similarly, with the end of the political conflict and beginning of the new democratic political system in Nepal, Maoists would equally be able to reap the benefit of a stable political situation:**

- Nepalese Maoists would have a golden opportunity to be part of the political mainstream and let the world know that they are willing to play a democratic political game. After all they are Nepalese and they can show their good causes by following the law of the land.
- Nepalese Maoists would be able to come out of Indian shadow, which will put them in a stronger position to present their good case among Nepalese people.
- Nepalese Maoists no longer have to engage in violent and terrorist activities and continue to kill their own fellow citizens.
- Nepalese Maoists do not have to engage in extorting money to finance their violent operations. Instead, they could be engaged in productive economic activities of the country to make money.
- Nepalese Maoists would no longer be used by foreign friends as a means to create an unstable Nepal.
- Nepalese Maoists will find families and friends within Nepal.
- A Nepalese Maoist would have an equal opportunity to be an elected leader and govern the country.

**Nepalese people would gain the most due to the political settlement:**

- There will be peace in the country, which is prerequisite to economic and social development. Then, there would not be any difference between Nepalese people and Maoists.

- Nepalese people no longer have to live in fear and threat.
- Nepalese children will be able to go to school without the fear of being kidnapped by Maoists.
- Nepalese people can engage in productive economic activities including investment and reinvestment in industrial, commercial, tourism, water development, agricultural development and so on.
- Nepalese people will see the foreign investment coming into Nepal once a stable political environment is created, given other factors are conducive to such activities.
- Nepalese people would benefit by the ripple effect of Indian and Chinese economic growth, trade and expansion.
- Nepalese people can take economic advantage of its location (sandwiched between two giants), which gives an easy access to two of the world's largest markets.
- Nepal can produce goods and services and supply to China and India.
- Nepalese people would be able to live in a democratic country governed by law and order.
- Nepalese parliamentarians, once again, have got the opportunity to prove to the Nepalese people that they are there to serve people instead of serving themselves. If they fail to do so, then the Nepalese people will punish them accordingly.
- Nepalese people are no longer subjected to cater an autocratic regime.

Recently testifying on developments in Nepal before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, Richard A. Boucher said, **"We hope that the Maoists' commitment to peace and multi-party democracy is genuine. However, based on their track record, they have not earned the benefit of the doubt. They need to be judged by their actions"**. Mr. Boucher's assessment is correct. We must use the same measuring rod to judge the unspoken and unholy Indian foreign policy towards Nepal. After all we all know that India is largely responsible for creating the current unstable political situation in Nepal by supporting and using the Nepalese Maoists for achieving her dubious intentions, and she must be held accountable by all patriotic Nepalese and the world community who have vowed to hunt for terrorists and **those who harbor the terrorists.** ■

*(Dr. Uprety earned his PhD in Economic Development and Public Administration from the University of California Berkeley. He has taught micro and macro economic courses in colleges and universities in the US and abroad and now lives in Tucson, Arizona)*

JEEWAN SHARMA

# Music For Public Awareness

Sharma is a unique singer who has devoted all his life to sing songs that generate a sense of political awareness among the public

By THAKUR AMGAI

**'H**iu Phute Himnadi, Janata Jute Jana Sagar'

Tens of thousands of people thronged at the streets of Kathmandu and other areas of the country to form *janasagar*, (an ocean of people), as stated in this song, during the recently concluded people's movement. Fed up with the atrocities of the dictatorial regime, people had come out of their homes risking lives in order to establish their fundamental rights and to fulfill their quest for peace.

A group of artistes-singers, poets and actors, among others, played a key role in motivating the people and arousing their sentiments. Among the group was Jeewan Sharma, who has been well recognized among the Nepalese as a people's singer. He has been a truly people's singer in that he has devoted entire period of his active life singing such motivational and reformative songs among the public.

Besides the melody and beautiful vocal, his songs also contribute to raising awareness regarding the woes and hardships of deprived and suppressed people and convey a strong message of awareness to rise against feudalism. Sharma has been singing such songs since the last three decades, but probably because of the current political scenario, the songs are gaining new heights of popularity in the recent months.

His old songs had gained similar wide popularity during the 1990 people's movement. While his songs were only

limited to performance in front of the public before 1990, lately his songs like 'Simali Chhayanma Basi, Bhariya Lamo Sas Phereko' have started being aired from media more than ever before. Interestingly, the state owned media like Nepal Television and Radio Nepal, which had boycotted all his songs during the Panchayat era and during the King's direct rule after October 4, 2002, play his songs more than any other media these days.

*A group of artistes-singers, poets and actors, among others, played a key role in motivating the people and arousing their sentiments. Among the group was Jeewan Sharma, who has been well recognized among the Nepalese as a people's singer*

Although he started his singing career in the late 1970s, when Radio Nepal was the only recording facility and the only electronic media of the country, he never got to enter Radio Nepal thanks to the political bias. It was only after 2047, that he started recording his songs in private studios bringing out albums.

He was actively involved in performing among the public before that. Through the name of 'Raktim Cultural Campaign', Sharma along with his friends, traveled to various districts and sang progressive songs like 'Simali Chhayan', 'Aunsiko Yo Rat', 'Dhaulagiri Chhayan', 'Kati Chhan Yahan Chhatpatairaheka' etc. They had formed 'Raktim' in 2043, in order

raise awareness among the public through music. After the political change in 2046, the group started bringing out albums of pro-people songs. They have brought out eleven volumes of 'Raktim' and twenty other albums. Sharma himself wrote most of 'Raktim's songs.

Before forming the group, Sharma sang similar songs in political functions. He was affiliated with a leftist party and was arrested several times by the police while trying to perform.

As a child, Sharma was studious and a promising student. While he actively participated in the folk and religious musical functions at his village, he used to be touched by the poverty of the people and the hardships they went through since tender age.

Probably because of this emotional nature, Sharma, who came to Kathmandu to study engineering slowly became

inclined and absorbed in musical activities to raise public awareness. Sharma had started singing in village and school functions since 2032. This trend gained momentum when he joined Pulchowk Engineering College in 2035. He was affiliated with a pro-left student wing, and would actively participate in all its activities, particularly the cultural ones. During people's referendum in 2036, Sharma actively participated in the campaigns for multiparty democracy by singing songs at various places.

Over the years, by singing songs, what Sharma has collected is only fame and respect of the public. "Materially, I have nothing to gain, but only to lose from singing," says Sharma. A postgraduate in Anthropology, Sharma has made ample sacrifice for the sake of public awareness.

And he has no regrets for the sacrifices he has made, despite the utter hardships he has to undergo in day-to-day life. "I am proud that I have been able to raise the voice of the suppressed class," he says. "I am happy that the public awareness has increased by leaps and bounds since the time we started singing." ■

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