

Opinion: Laxmi Thapa

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The National Newsmagazine

# SPOTLIGHT

July 07-13, 2006



## Train To Tibet

# Opportunities For Nepal

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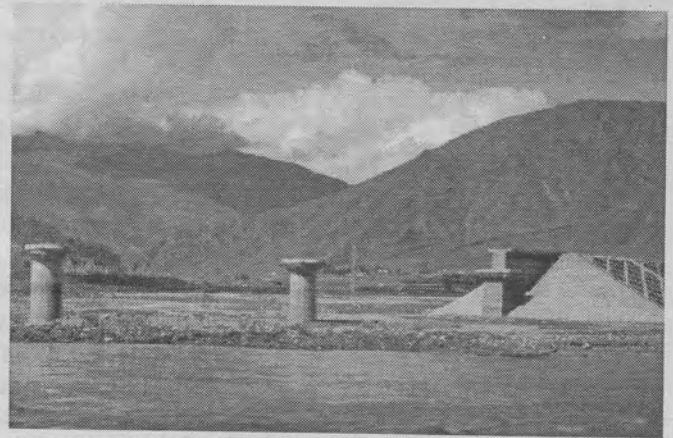
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## COVER STORY : Train To Tibet

The marvelous feat by China in constructing Qinghai-Lhasa rail link could have impact on geo-strategic position of Himalayan region  
(Photo courtesy : Xinhua)

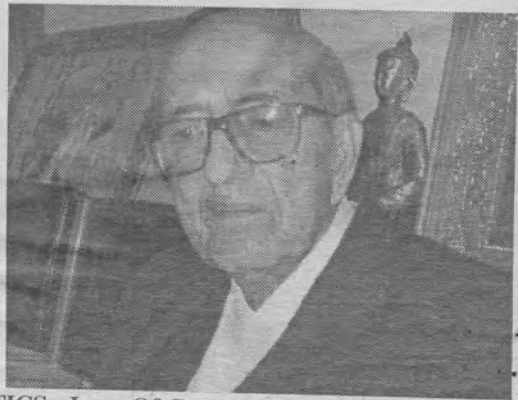
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## BUDGET: Eyes On Rural Region

Finance Minister Dr. Mahat reiterates he will focus villages in the forthcoming budget

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## POLITICS : Issue Of Concern

Poor health condition of PM Koirala has become a big issue of concern, especially as the country passes through transition

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**SPOTLIGHT**

THE WEEKLY NATIONAL NEWSMAGAZINE

Vol. 25, No 44, July 7, 2006  
Asar 23, 2063

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**Cover Design : Digi-Tech Scanning & Pre-Press Pvt. Ltd.**  
P.O. Box : 1655, Jwagal, Kupondole,  
Lalitpur, Nepal  
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**Distribution : R.B. News Paper Traders**  
New Road, Kathmandu, Nepal  
Ph : 4232784, 2020247, 4244679  
E-mail : rbnewspaper@hotmail.com

**Printers : Printers World P. Ltd.**  
Maitidevi, Kathmandu  
Ph : 4423904  
E-mail : printerworld@wlink.com.np

C.D.O.Regd. No  
151/039-40  
Postal Regd. No  
42/61/62  
U.S. Library of Congress  
Catalogue No. 91-905060

**I**t seems Prachanda, the supremo of the CPN (Maoists) has started enjoying his new role. As the undisputed leader of the strongest and the biggest political force in Nepal he is the most sought after person, at the moment – by the self-styled influential and prominent personalities of Nepal. There are others, equally important, if not more, who are viewing him as a dangerous phenomenon. After the resounding success of his party in Nepal even his long time friend seems to have become wary. He sure must be finding that the life of a politician is more challenging than that of an underground rebel leader battling to overthrow the ruling government by violent means. When his dream is knocking at the door he finds obstacles sprouting from seen and unseen quarters. Turning into a mature politician from an insurgent leader is not an easy task. Moreover, in a country where established politicians have to run up to their alien masters for advice and help, will he be able to break this unhealthy tradition and assert himself as an honest and patriotic politician of a sovereign independent country by relying on his own wisdom and judgment? A patriotic Nepali politician even runs the risk of losing his life in mysterious accidents. If he wants to stay his own master, he has to gird up his loins and be prepared to face all eventualities. If he is fully aware of his debt to his country and loves his country more than the theoretical ideology, he must dedicate himself, come what may, to meet the one and only priority –redressing the miseries of poor, deprived and exploited countrymen. We do trust he is fully cognizant of the fact that it will be extremely difficult for him to seize the reins of the government on his own without the unstinted cooperation of honest Nepali intelligentsia. And he must not repeat the mistakes King Gyanendra did – surround himself with his own so-called trusted men and limit his public relations to the discredited politicians only. Keeping himself tied to a handful of mercenaries, quislings and opportunists will only land him up in the ditch. He not only needs to cultivate but sincerely seek the help of the honest and patriotic backbone of Nepali society and the teeming millions of poor Nepalis if he wants to steer the nation as a proud Nepali. If not, may God help Nepal.

\* \* \*

Sitaram Yechury, influential politburo member of Communist Party of India – Marxist (CPI-M) has emerged as another good friend and well-wisher Indian who thinks India is Nepal's biggest benefactor and does not interfere in Nepal's affairs. When India became independent from the British colonial rule in 1947, Yechury must have been a toddler, if he was already born, and, naturally, would not know anything about the beginning of Nepal-India relations. As a politician with a bright future in his own country, he must familiarize himself with the reality about the bilateral relations between the giant and the pigmy nations with contiguous borders and not repeat the parrot talk. Anyway, the beginning of the relations between the two neighbors with the signing of the Treaty of 1950 had only sown the seed of mistrusts and misgivings for coming generations. Poor Mohan Shumsher, the last Rana Prime Minister of Nepal who signed the treaty for his country was no match against the astute statesman, the Great Indian Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru. Consequently, Mohan Shumsher was taken for a big ride by the Indian Prime Minister. Yechury would do well to update himself with the truth rather than trying to mislead poor Nepalis with his rhetorics. Why is he so much interested in Nepali affairs and visits Nepal so frequently is beyond ordinary Nepali's simple comprehension. Friendly Nepalis think Yechury rather should devote his energies to prevent the specter of disintegration taking concrete shape in his own country instead of fishing in the troubled waters of a small and weak but friendly neighbor. We are, therefore, reminded of the Shakespearean proverb, "Physician, heal thyself."

  
**Madhav Kumar Rimal**  
Chief Editor & Publisher



## Accept the power of youths

I fully support the dialogue "Youths had played important role for the success of people's movement II so they deserve special focus" by Dr. Ram Hari Aryal "Changing Dynamism" (June 30). This is very right to say because without them the success was impossible. Therefore, first of all their problems need to be solved before other problems including the process of constitutional Assembly. Ignoring the problems of youth would put the whole process into uncertainty. In this course, all the development programs, which are of interests to the youths, have been sidelined. This may cause adverse effect on them. If youths are again ignored, that will lead to instability in the country.

*Sreejana Thapa*  
Koteshwor

## Concentrate On Youths

Youths are the foundation upon which nation states are built. If such base is not made strong, the nation could easily crumble. Nepal, which has a high growth rate and where the younger people dominate the entire population, needs more care and attention. This will also guide the destination of the nation. "Changing Dynamism" (June 30) raised very genuine and serious problems about the youths, which need to be eliminated as far as possible. The problems like illiteracy, dropouts from primary level, unemployment, in turn, make youths start working from early age despite their desire to continue their studies. Consequently, anomalies like depressions and frustrations emerge in the mind of youths and the country can't move ahead at its will. Until and unless this newly formed government does not bring a new package for the youths, this problem is not going to be solved automatically. Moreover, the concerned people should not forget that these youths are the power of the nation who can bring about a drastic change through demonstration. They are also the permanent force for political and economic instability. They were involved in the People's Movement II to make their dreams come true. And to resolve the problems of the youths like unemployment, illiteracy and so on. They will not remain silent if

their concerns and interests are not addressed by the newly formed government.

*Rajan Sigdel*  
Thakur Ram campus, Birgunj

## Be Human First

One should not be total money minded even if he/ she may be businessperson. Because before he/ she is businessperson, they first are human beings. Therefore, they should not go against social ethics, which has negative impact on the society. Therefore, we should seriously think about the issue raised by Maoist leader Dev Gurung in the article "Economy: Maoist Perspective" (June 30) about not promoting industries like alcohol, tobacco and cola drinks because they are against the interest of society. Every one involved in such business should be stopped. And the state should adopt strong policies to control such industries, and such investment should be directed towards productive sector.

*Bikas Ghimire*  
Thapathali

## Do Not Repeat History

To resolve Maoist problems and other social issues, one needs to eliminate the demarcation line between the urban and rural areas (June 30). Because this is the

main, cause which breeds a number of problems. The urban youths benefit from all kinds of facilities whereas rural people are far away from the reach of even traditional facilities. This is one reason why people in rural areas got alienated and were attracted towards the Maoists. Therefore, the current government should learn from the past and not repeat the history.

*Paras Lamsal*  
Tinkune

## Good Option for Employment

The interview with Dr. Ram Hari Aryal (June 30) raised a valid point that the utilization of current trend of labor migration was beneficial to the country. Since there is a huge demand for Nepalese labor in the international market, it would obviously benefit them individually and the country will also enjoy by way of increasing remittance that would, in turn, increase the Gross National Disposable Income (GNDI).

*Jagadish Ghimire*  
Baluwatar

## Greatest Leader of the Region

I wish to ask the Indian friend of Girija P. Koirala to identify himself to the Nepalese public and substantiate his statement that "Koirala is the greatest leader of the region" (Spotlight, Editors Note 23/6/06). Merely making such statement is foolish unless proven by true facts and figures and actual accomplishments, but not on idle gossip.

*Mrigendramani Dixit*  
Pulchowk, Lalitpur

## Nepal's National Anthem

Why there is such a big hullabaloo about a new national anthem for Nepal? When the political leaders and the Prime Ministers of Nepal run to New Delhi for consultation, advice and final orders. Can Nepal not get her national anthem too from the Indians? For the time being, Nepal can borrow – Jana, Gana, Mana and when the Indians give a new one, Nepal can adopt it. This will make the Indians happy and all the India lovers in Nepal too.

*Nepalman Singh*  
Singh Darbar  
Kathmandu

## 19 Missing After Boat Capsizes In Kosi

At least nineteen persons went missing after a boat capsized in Kosi river near Prakashpur in Sunsari district on Friday (June 30). The boat carrying around 69 passengers capsized in the swollen river as it was crossing over to Srilanka island. The boat was carrying people who were returning from a wedding party. In fact, the boat was carrying the bride, the groom and relatives of the groom. They were all returning to the home of the groom. Local people, police and army personnel rescued 36 passengers including the bride and the groom immediately after the accident. Fourteen more passengers who were earlier thought to be missing came into police contact. They had swam to safety. Rescue efforts are continuing, according to Chief District Officer Sharda Bhakta Poudel. *Leading dailies report.*

## Prachanda Withdraws His Comments Against Nepalese Army

Maoist chairman Prachanda has withdrawn his comment against Nepalese Army (NA). In an interview he gave to state-owned Nepal Television on Saturday (July 1), Prachanda said he regretted that his remarks made two weeks ago had unintentionally leveled charges against the entire army fraternity. Addressing a joint press conference in Baluwatar two weeks ago, Prachanda had accused that the NA had done nothing for the country except 'kill the people and rape the women.' In his interview, Prachanda clarified that he did not intend to accuse the whole army. "I feel there were some weaknesses in that remark. It seemed like a blanket accusation against the whole NA. I want to say I am sad over this," he said, adding that he wanted to say that a section within the NA had such attitude. "Majority of soldiers are sons and daughters of common people and they do not have such objective. I am sad over the use of words. I want to withdraw those words," he said. *Kantipur daily reports.*

## Rana Admits He Advised The King To Be Active

Talking to reporters after he furnished his replies to the Rayamajhi commission, former army chief and secretary of Raj Parishad Satchit SJB Rana conceded that he had advised the King to assume active role. "It was our duty to make the King active," he said referring to the activities of Raj Parishad, which had organized region-wide meetings urging the King to sideline the parties and become active in politics since October 4, 2002. Rana, however, refused to own up any responsibility in the repression against People's Movement. The Rayamajhi commission had summoned Rana, former Law Minister Niranjan Thapa, suspended Additional Inspector General of Nepal Police Krishna Basnet and suspended AIG of Armed Police Force Rabi Raj Thapa for interrogations on Friday. Meanwhile, Sharad Chandra Shah, former advisor to the King, returned to Kathmandu from Bangkok on regular flight on Saturday. Earlier, reports claimed he had fled the country for good. Shah is wanted by the Rayamajhi commission for interrogation. *Leading dailies report.*

## 'Lay Down Arms First': Moriarty To Maoists

The American Ambassador James Francis Moriarty met with Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala at the latter's residence in Baluwatar on Saturday (July 1) on the eve of his trip back to Washington. Talking to reporters after the meeting, Moriarty said that America wants to see the Maoists lay down their arms before they join the interim government. He said that the US assistance could be affected if an organization in the terrorist list joins the government without renouncing violence. When asked if he was leaving for Washington for specific purpose, Moriarty said he was going on a vacation. *Compiled from reports.*

## Yechuri Meets With PM Koirala And Prachanda

Sitaram Yechuri, leader of Communist Party of India (CPI-Marxist), met with Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala at latter's residence on Friday (June 30). Talking to reporters after his meeting with PM Koirala, Yechuri said he found the health situation of Koirala has improved a lot. He said he also brought with him best wishes from India and Indian people towards Nepal and Nepali people. He held discussions over issues such as eight-point pact with Maoists and arms management. Asked to elaborate whether he discussed the issue of UN's involvement regarding arms management of the state and the Maoists, Yechuri said: "All those issues figured during the meeting," and added "It is up to the Nepali people how they would like to manage arms of the rebels and the state. What India could do is to express its goodwill and best wishes for Nepal's stability." Asked to comment on US Ambassador to Nepal James F. Moriarty's statement that the Maoists should lay down arms before Constituent Assembly poll, Yechuri said: "It will be good for the world that a sovereign country takes its own decision independently." Yechuri also met with Maoist chairman Prachanda and leader Dr. Baburam Bhattarai. He said he found the Maoists committed to the eight-point pact. *Leading dailies report.*

## Prachanda Proposes Merging Command Of Two Armies

Prachanda has proposed merging the command of Nepalese Army and Maoist army after the formation of interim government. "Whoever is the Prime Minister will be the supreme commander of the two armies," he said, during an interaction with central officials of Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ). During his interactions with leaders of political parties, he is said to have proposed forming a joint committee of generals of the two armies. Prachanda added that if the two sides agree, the

armies can be managed by Nepalese themselves and there would be no need to invite foreigners. Meanwhile, he clarified that Maoists do not want to have "October revolution." Referring to remarks made by US ambassador James Moriarty, he, however, hastened to add that the revolution would take place if the Maoists are pushed. Prachanda told FNJ officials not to suspect the Maoists on their commitment towards press freedom. *Kantipur daily reports.*

## Dr. Giri Refuses To Shoulder Blame Of Repression

The high-level commission formed to probe allegations of repression against people's movement has started interrogating former ministers in the royal regime. On Tuesday (June 27), the commission summoned former vice chairman of Council of Ministers Dr. Tulsi Giri and former ministers Badri Mandal and Nikshya SJB Rana. Talking to reporters after his interrogation, Dr. Giri said he was not responsible for the repression. "Nobody wants to kill people just like that. In course of agitation and movement, there were some problems and the government of the day had to take some actions," he said. Likewise, Mandal said the blame for the deaths of 21 people during the people's movement should go for concerned security bodies. He added that while "there was a probe over the deaths of these people, nobody was talking about who should be held responsible for the deaths of 3000 Nepalis." Former health state minister Nikshya SJB Rana also refused to shoulder any such blame. "I was fully focused in health ministry-related activities," he told reporters. The commission is expected to summon more former ministers and key royal advisors in the coming days. *Leading dailies report.*

## Speakers, MPs Take Fresh Oath

Speaker of the house of representatives Subas Nemwang and all the MPs took fresh oath in the parliament on Wednesday (June 28) expressing

allegiance to the God, parliamentary proclamation and mandate of the people's movement. However, Prime Minister, deputy prime ministers and ministers have not taken the oath of office. Reports say the PM did not come due to health reasons. After taking oath himself, Speaker Nemwang administered the oath to MPs of both House of Representatives and Upper House including former ministers in royal cabinet and nominees of the King at the Upper House. Sources at the Parliamentary Secretariat said the PM and ministers could take oath on July 2. Likewise, the House will call senior government staff, army and police officials and judicial service officials except judges to take oath of office. As per the parliamentary proclamation, anyone refusing to take the oath of office will be removed from his/her post. *Leading dailies report.*

## One Fourth Of Budget Spent On Road Development

The government could spend only one fourth of what it had allocated on the development of roads in the country in the current fiscal year. This was due to obstruction in development programs by conflict. According to the Department of Road, out of the allocated budget of Rs 5 billion, only Rs 1.24 billion could be spent. Currently, the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and DfID are supporting/funding road construction in different parts of the country. The government is also mobilizing its resources for road construction. This year the government had aimed to construct 244 km of road but only 30 km could be completed excepting the ones constructed by the army. "Due to Maoist problem, contractors did not have the environment where they could work," said Durga Prasad KC, director general of the department. *Kantipur daily reports.*

## Tariff Change Results In Losses

The changes in the custom tariff made by then Minister of State for

Finance Dr. Roop Jyoti has resulted in losses to the tune of Rs 2.5 billion. Dr. Jyoti who was the minister in the royal cabinet had changed the tariff and excise six months ago. According to Ministry officials, the reduction in custom tariff resulted in losses of Rs 1.5 billion while the reduction in excise resulted in losses of Rs 700 million. During January ordinance, Dr. Jyoti had reduced tariff for 130 products. Majority of these products were of interest to Jyoti Group of Industries. The reduction in tariff for spare parts of motorcycles benefited Syakar Company while the reduction in tariff for television, cotton fibre and mixed polyester benefited Jyoti Spinning Mills. Dr. Jyoti has huge stakes in the Jyoti Group of Industries. Although he had claimed that reduction of tariff would result in increased imports, his move has turned out to be a failure. Meanwhile, Ministry officials are engaged in homework to 'undo' the mistake in the forthcoming budget. *Kantipur daily reports.*

## Each Nepali Owes The World Rs 13,000

In a startling revelation, Auditor General Gehendra Nath Adhikari said that the foreign debt has now crossed Rs 324 billion, which works out to the tune of Rs 13,000 per head, calculated on the basis of current population put at just over 23 million. Adhikari revealed that the cumulative fiscal irregularities have crossed Rs 28 billion. The irregularities of the current fiscal year alone have been put at Rs 7 billion. Adhikari said that there are over 7000 tax assessment files pending since past 40 years. Clearing the files, he said, would have accrued Rs 520 million to the state exchequer. There are also about 14 state-owned enterprises which are in the red and thus a liability to tax-payers. So much so, that the loss adds up to over 300 percent of the paid up capital in each case. Adhikari also traced the rise in expenditure allocated to the royal palace. The budget for the royal family has shot up to Rs 680 million from Rs 120 million prior to 2002. *The Himalayan Times daily reports.*



**SPOTLIGHT Family extends best wishes to King Gyanendra on the occasion of his 60th birthday**

**FORMER JAPANESE PRIME MINISTER RIYOTARO**

Hashimoto died at International Medical Center of Tokyo on Saturday (July 1) due to stomach ailments. The 68-year-old Hashimoto had been a close friend and regular visitor to Nepal. He heads a foundation that is helping in socio-economic development of Nepal including the development of Kanti Children Hospital. Hashimoto was the chairman of Japan chapter of Japan-Nepal Golden Jubilee of Establishment of Diplomatic Relations Celebration Coordination Committee. "He was not only a close friend of Nepal but also politically very influential in Japan," said Kedar Bhakta Mathema, former Nepalese ambassador to Japan. "In his death, Nepal has lost a very good friend," he added.

**PRADEEPGYAWALL, MINISTER FOR CULTURE, TOURISM**

and Civil Aviation, has said that the national flag carrier Nepal Airlines Corporation (NAC) will be made autonomous. Addressing a function held in Kathmandu on Saturday (July 1) to mark the 48<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the airlines, the minister said: "It is urgent to reform the airlines – make it autonomous and let it increase services and profits." He advised that the airlines be reformed by following the norms of public-private partnership. "Nepal Government is not in favor of privatizing the NAC," he clarified. Stating that the major problem of NAC was the lack of aircraft, Gyawali said the government was engaged in homework to add new big and small aircraft to NAC's fleet soon. Speaking on the occasion, managing director of NAC Krishna Bahadur Poudel said that the airlines was currently operating international flights in nine sectors through two Boeings and in 28 domestic sectors through four Twin Otters.

**A FORMER INDIAN AMBASSADOR WHO WAS WELL**

known for his active involvement in bringing the Mahakali Treaty between India and Nepal to fruition has revealed that the implementation of the treaty is not a priority for India now. He stated that as Nepal was passing through political transition, the treaty implementation is not a priority for India.

He added that Indian priority lied on economic, social and political development of Nepal. "The first priority of India on Nepal is to restore peace and democracy," he said.

**THE STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE AT THE HOUSE OF**

Representatives has instructed the government to assess palace properties and submit the details. The committee meeting chaired by Hridaya Ram Thani gave this instruction to the government. The Committee members also held consultations with chief secretary Mukunda Sharma Poudel over the state of implementation of House declaration. Likewise, Public Accounts Committee meeting chaired by Chitra Bahadur KC has called for property details from royal family members, ministers and MPs within fifteen days.

**THANKS TO THREE-WEEK-LONG STRIKE BY THE**

employees and scientists at Nepal Agricultural Research Council (NARC), the research activities in this sector has become standstill. The employees are opposing the decision by the Agriculture and Cooperatives Ministry to remove its executive director who was appointed as per the NARC Act and installing a political appointee instead. The strike has seriously affected functions like testing of seeds and management of agro products. "The activity of maintaining seeds and products that were sowed for research has come to standstill," said Birendra Khadka, an employee engaged in the strike.

**MAOIST LEADER DR. BABURAM BHATTARAI AND**

spokesperson Krishna Mahara went to Indian Embassy in Kathmandu on Wednesday (June 28) to meet with Indian ambassador Shiv Mukherjee. Reports say Dr. Bhattarai requested the Indian government to release Maoist detainees in Indian jails. According to Maoists, there are around 137 Maoist inmates in Indian jails including around 40 central leaders. Likewise, Maoist leaders Mahara and Suresh Ale Magar also met with Swedish ambassador Lena Sundh. These meetings mark the beginning of Maoist attempt to convince the diplomatic community about their intention. "We did meet with Indian envoy. We found India is positive towards changing political situation," Mahara told Kantipur FM, adding, "We also raised the issue of releasing Maoist detainees in Indian jails. The envoy was positive about that." Mahara said issue of conflict resolution was discussed during their meeting with Swedish ambassador.

**OF THE SEVEN SOLDIERS OF NEPALESE ARMY (NA) WHO**

were abducted a month ago by Congolese militia, two have been safely released on Tuesday. According to Department of Public Relations, NA, soldiers Prem Bahadur Thapa and Kale Sarki have been released. Others are still in captivity and are said to be in safe condition. A month ago, they were abducted from conflict-torn Ituri region after a clash between UN peacekeepers belonging to NA and the militia. One NA soldier was killed during the clash. The UN is continuing its efforts to safely release the remaining NA soldiers. ■



**“I** urge the Maoists to end the drama by dissolving all its so-called People’s Court.”

*Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli, deputy prime minister and foreign minister, criticizing the Maoists after the latter summoned two cadres of UML for interrogations at their people’s court in Kathmandu.*

\* \* \*

**“N**obody wants to kill people just like that. In course of agitation and movement, there were some problems and the government of the day had to take some actions.”

*Dr. Tulsi Giri, former vice chairman of Council of Ministers, talking to reporters and refusing to accept the blame for repression against People’s Movement.*

\* \* \*

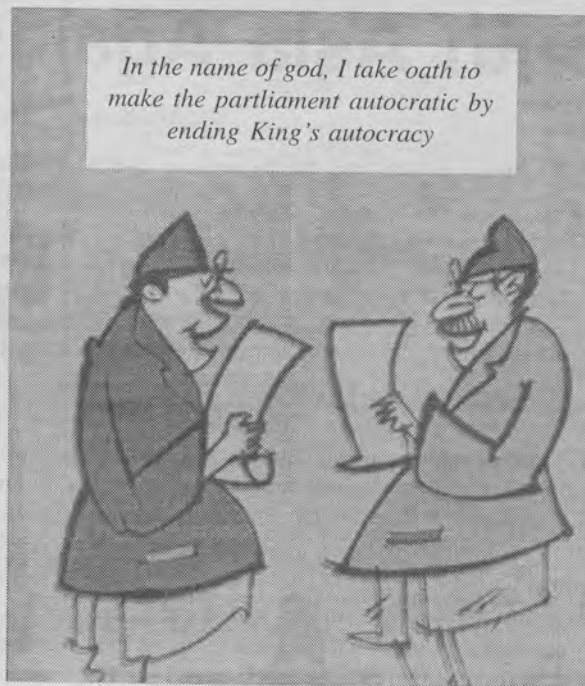
**“T**he political parties have worked hard... without restoring to intimidation, to bring about a new political order... The Maoist need to show the same spirit of cooperation and compromise.”

*James F Moriarty, US Ambassador to Nepal, addressing a program organized by Rotary Club of Dillibazaar.*

\* \* \*

**“I**t will be good for the world that a sovereign country takes its own decision independently.”

*Sitaram Yechuri, politburo member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), an important ally of the*



Bimarsha

*ruling United Progressive Alliance (UPA) in New Delhi, commenting about the remarks made by US Ambassador to Nepal James F Moriarty that the Maoists should first lay down arms, in The Himalayan Times.*

\* \* \*

**“W**e are ready to put the armed forces of both sides under a single command when a government is formed as per the new interim statute.”

*Prachanda, Maoist supremo talking with officials of the Federation of Nepalese Journalist in Lalitpur.*

\* \* \*

**“I**f what Moriarty spoke is the official voice of the US, we urge the US to review

it since it is against the aspirations of the Nepali People and entire democratic forces.”

*Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Maoist spokesperson, in The Kathmandu Post.*

\* \* \*

**“I**t was our duty to make the King active.”

*Satchit SJB Rana, former army chief and member of Raj Parishad, talking to reporters after he furnished replies to the Rayamajhi commission, referring to the activities of Raj Parishad, which had organized region-wide meetings urging the King to sideline the parties and become active in politics since October 4, 2002.*

\* \* \*

## TRANSITION

**DIED:** Riyotaro Hashimoto, 68, former prime minister of Japan and a very good friend and frequent visitor to Nepal, of stomach ailments.

**FORMED:** Women Traffic Post by the Valley Traffic Police Office (VTPO), for the first time in Nepal in the capital city. **Laxmi Gurung** will head the model traffic post.

**RELEASED:** Dhatananda Bhattarai former mayor of Tansen district, who was abducted by the Maoists since June 22.

**RETURNED:** Sitaram Yechuri, leader of Communist party of India - Marxist (CPI-M), returned after completing his three-day visit to Nepal.

**EXPANDED:** The high-level Media Commission, by the government, by inducting **Binaya Kasaju, Dhruva Hari Adhikari,**

**Rajendra Dahal, Prateek Pradhan, Shiva Malla and Ram Rijhan Yadav** as new members.

**APPOINTED:** Prof. Dr. Kamal Krishna Joshi, as the chairman, and Kedar Bhakta Mathema and Dr. Bal Kumar KC, as members, of the University Grants Commission, by the government.

**Udaya Raj Soti,** as the chairman of Teachers Service Commission, by the government. ■

# South Asia Against Colonialism

By MRS. LAXMI THAPA

End of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century was a critical period in the history of the South Asia when various states within this vast region were drawn into a fierce struggle to uphold their independence from the world's mightiest colonial power the Great Britain. Powerful countries of that period like Bengal, Oudh, Mysore, Burma, Sri Lanka and others were forcefully captured and according to the renowned historian H.G. Wells were subjected to extortions and cruelties. We Nepalese should be very proud of our ancestors that our country could defend itself against the Britain in the war laden upon us that stretched over a period of three calendar years. As a result, Nepal all the time continued to be an independent country. All other countries of the South Asia and most of the countries of Asia and Africa were forced to surrender their independence and accept the harsh treatments from their colonial masters. In those countries later on countless number of peoples had to sacrifice their life to regain freedom from the colonial powers.

Our ancestors, who fought against the British aggression, were in the forefront among the nations of that period to uphold the sacred principle of freedom which was the key issue beginning to reshape the new history of the world. Unfortunately the new generations thereafter and our generation were not up to the mark. We lagged behind. Now we are among the most backward countries in the world. Nepal could again gain its rightful place among the fast developing nations to be in the forefront in the field of economic growth and development if we draw moral lessons from our ancestors, who had surprised the world by their bravery and great sacrifices.

## Nepal's Unification Campaign

Eighteenth century was a period of great political turmoil in the Indian subcontinent. The powerful Mogul empire had come to an end at the very beginning of this century. To the west of the Sub-continent was the Iran under the rule of Nadir Shah described in the history as the most hated man of his age who massacred people in uncounted thousands and plundered the country and after his death his successor not too different from him. The colonial powers like England and France were doing their utmost to increase their presence by exploiting the weaknesses of the rulers of small states recently broken off from the Mogul empire. The whole region was being swiftly converted into the colony of the western powers. At that time the peoples living in the Himalayan region must be finding themselves very insecure.

The enlightened peoples living in different parts of the Himalayan region must have sensed the urgency to be united. Because, without being awakened to the realization that the unification of the whole region is a

matter of the utmost importance to the peoples across the Himalayan region, it would not have been possible in a very short period to bring together under a common umbrella peoples living in a vast region demarcated on the west by the Sutlej and Bias rivers and on the east by the Teesta. The final outcome of such unification was the creation of the Great Nepal.

## New Threat to British Empire

Nepal was able to rise from a scratch to be a formidable Himalayan power within a very short time. Our country had gathered enough strength to move forward to protect the peoples dwelling in the northern part of this vast region from anarchy. However, the build up of Nepalese strength brought her on a collision course with the colonial power of that time. Colonial power Britain had good reason to fear that if the Nepalese build up continued for some time, the colonial rule of Britain could soon come to an end in South Asia much the same way as in the North America a short time before.

## Expansion of British Rule

The Marquis Wellesley became in 1798 the British Governor-General of India. In 1798 the French fleet was defeated in the Battle of the Nile at Abu Quir Bay in Egypt by the British admiral Horatio Nelson significantly weakening its strength. After the 1798 naval victory British rulers in India must have felt that France would not anymore be able to pose serious threat to further expansion of the British Empire in South Asia. Britain started the task of further expansion of the British Empire.

Governor General Wellesley played decisive role in the expansion of the British Empire in India. Colonel Wellesley, the younger brother of the Marquis Wellesley, had also come to India. Colonel Wellesley afterwards became Sir Arthur Wellesley, and then Duke of Wellington who defeated Napoleon in Waterloo Battle. Later on he became the Prime Minister of the Great Britain.

## Oude Nawab Cedes Do-ab to Britain

Governor General Wellesley used every possible means to expand British Empire in South Asia. Wellesley asked the Nawab of Oude to agree, like the Nizam of Hyderabad, to cede to Britain some of his territories in exchange for British protection. At first the Nawab would not agree, but at last, when he saw there was no use of trying to resist, he gave in. British army was sent to Oude, and to pay for it the Nawab gave up the Do-ab or the country between the Jamuna and the Ganges. Meanwhile Wellesley turned his attention to Delhi. In 1803, General Gerard Lake captured Delhi and Agra.

It was very clear that British rulers in India did not want Nepal to become a strong power. They must have realized that sooner or later they would have to wage a war against Nepal. British and Nepalese forces were virtually

standing eyeball to eyeball in the west after the Wellesley's conquest of the North India. However, British rulers must not have liked to risk getting caught in battles against Nepal in unknown high mountain terrains without penetrating into Nepal's defense system in advance.

**Worst Days in Nepal's History**

It was early 1810s. Great Britain was the most powerful country in the whole world. Its vast empire had stretched across all five continents. At that time it was ruthlessly expanding its empire in the South Asian Sub-continent. Britain was tempted to make Nepal also its colony. Nepal was attacked without formally declaring war. Britain hoped that Nepal could be quickly subdued in a blitzkrieg invasion. The battle fronts stretched over a distance of about 1500 km. between the Teesta River and the Sutlej River.

Needless to say that those were the worst days in the history of our country. The war stretched over a period of three calendar years in sharp contrast to the expectation of the British Government. Nepal bravely defended its independence. Britain was forced to abandon its grand design to enslave Nepal though we lost some of our territories.

**Anglo-Nepal War**

British had expected a blitz-krieg victory. It is said that the Governor General Hastings had planned to win the war in one mighty sweep in one to two months in end 1814 but certainly before the Christmas. He was badly mistaken in his assessment. We Nepalese fought very bravely. In early months of the war the initial British invasion was completely beaten off. British offensive ended in complete failure. Nepalese force stationed within the shelter of the fortress were not only able to defend their position against an invading enemy many times superior in strength but they even shocked them by their dreadful counteroffensive that used to be accompanied by big losses on British side. The British rule in India was at a risk of falling apart. Unfortunately at that time the Sikhs and Marathas did not join Nepal in liberating the whole of the South Asian Continent from the grip of the European domination.

After the initial defeats the British changed their strategy to avoid their casualties. They started to deploy long range guns to level the fortification and to force us

to retreat. This strategy paid off. The British were able to advance quickly into the territory under our control. They even used elephants to carry heavy guns across the mountains.

**Historic Deothal Battle**

British had at their disposal virtually unlimited resources from the Nepalese perspective. They continued to press Nepal all across the frontier that stretched over a distance of more than 1500 km. Nepalese resources were being sharply depleted. There was not any chance that they would be replenished. So the ability of the Nepalese force to defend the territory under their control was steadily declining. But they continued to fight despite heavy losses. Towards the middle of the 1815 Amar Singh Thapa, chief of the Nepalese force fighting in the western front was confined within a small area of the Malaun fort. The fate of Nepal was going to be in the hand of the Governor General Lord Hastings, unashamedly imperialistic and who

became famous for having established the British Empire in India more firmly than before. At that time there could not be any room for doubt in his intention either to eliminate Nepal completely and bring it under the British rule or to turn it into a vassal state like so many other states under that category in British India. He could be forced not to take any such decision detrimental to the honor of Nepal only if he perceived that such action could pose serious threat to the continuance of British rule in India. The historic Deothal Battle could not be anything else but a clear message to the British warning them not to take

*British had expected a blitz-krieg victory. It is said that the Governor General Hastings had planned to win the war in one mighty sweep in one to two months in end 1814 but certainly before the Christmas. He was badly mistaken in his assessment. We Nepalese fought very bravely. In early months of the war the initial British invasion was completely beaten off. British offensive ended in complete failure*

lightly the determination of all Nepalese people to lay down their life, irrespective of whether they are young or old, to protect the honor of their country.

**Our Forefathers' Great Sacrifice**

Finally, Britain must have realized that it was futile to continue to fight against Nepal. They were forced to abandon the idea of making Nepal one of their colonies. A treaty was signed to end the Anglo-Nepal War.

Thus, our ancestors were able to protect the honor of our country while almost all other countries in Asia and Africa failed. Nepal was able to defend its independence because of our forefathers' great sacrifice. ■

*(Thapa writes on history)*

## BUDGET PREPARATIONS

# Eyes On Villages

Dr. Mahat reiterates he would focus on rural areas in the budget. How he does that remains to be seen

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

In fact, no finance minister in recent memory has ever said that his budget would not focus on rural development. As such, the repeated comments being made by Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat that he will focus on rural areas in the forthcoming budget is nothing new or exciting revelation. What could be new is the programs he would put for achieving his aims.

"I would go to rural areas in the budget. Building better schools, better health facilities, rural infrastructures, electrification and hydropower development would be the focus areas of the budget," said Dr. Mahat, addressing a seminar "Peace, Democracy and Development" organized jointly by Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Nepal Economic Association (NEA) last week.

Rural reconstruction is an issue that has gotten a wide consensus approval from all sections of society including economists, political leaders, civil society and common people. Battered for over a decade by brutal conflict, rural areas of Nepal do need immediate attention. If the budget, as Dr. Mahat claims, achieves in doing that, it would be the minister's singular success. However, beyond rhetorics it is pretty much unclear how the new government would go about in implementing its lofty programs, particularly at a time when the Maoists are pushing for its replacement by an interim government.

It is indeed both "best of times" as well as "worst of times" for Nepalese economy to borrow the quote by Charles Dickens. As the country stands in the crossroads, it is staring at an uncertain future that can be molded by the policies it adopts today.

"Currently, Nepal is witnessing a sharp decline of GDP from the average of 5 percent in the period of seven years before 2002 to around 2 percent now – hovering

around the population growth rate. One-third of population is below poverty line with many more coming in an out of poverty based on whims of man and nature. Fifty-five percent of children below five years of age are stunted by malnutrition. Net enrollment rate is among the lowest while infant mortality at 82/1000 live births is among the highest. These issues will not go away no matter what happens in other areas," said Sultan H. Rahman, country director of ADB/Nepal Resident Mission. He added that the huge increase in remittances and location between two fastest growing countries in

at 8 percent, per capita income can grow to \$845 in 13 years (2018) and to \$858 in 12 years if it can grow at 9 percent. At present, the cut-off point for middle-income countries is \$ 805 per capita. He called for 'tearing down walls' that constraint 'creativity'; increasing the share of non-agriculture in GDP; and faster opening up of economy particularly on service sector, in order to achieve those targets.

Rahman also suggested developing dozens of "urban hubs" between Mahendranagar and Kakarvitta. But the ultimate success, he stated, depended on two preconditions: "the country has to be governed extremely well and there has to be peace."

Like Rahman said, the country needs good governance to steer off the current difficulties. The fact that the country is staring into exciting possibilities is made clear by the overwhelming demands for budget allocation this year. According to a news report, various ministries and departments have flooded the Finance



**Dr. Mahat:** Many promises to fulfill

the world are some of the positive features for Nepal.

"After having traveled to different parts of Nepal and studying economics of Nepal, I feel this country has better chances of becoming a middle-income country than other countries of this region," said Rahman. He stated that Nepal can achieve \$875 per capita income in 15 years if it can grow at 7 percent. Likewise, if it can grow

Ministry with demands for budget allocation of over Rs 450 billion for the coming fiscal year. The demand is very high compared to the last fiscal year's budget that was just around Rs 126 billion. As such, Dr. Mahat will need to walk a tightrope to be able to both satisfy the people's aspirations and ensure that reforms continue and economic growth accelerates.

# KOIRALA'S HEALTH Issue Of Concern

Ill health of the prime minister Koirala is a matter of gravest concern coming as it does at a crucial period of country's history

By A CORRESPONDENT

At the last leg of his six-decades-long political carrier, Prime Minister Girija Koirala is a consensus leader leading not only a coalition government of seven parties but also gaining the confidence of rebel Maoists.

At this juncture, there appears no second generation leaders in any parties that can win broad support and acceptance from all sections and power centers other than Koirala. It is obvious that Koirala's presence is of crucial significance as the country passes through delicate transition.

It is, therefore, a news of great concern that the health of Koirala has deteriorated. On Monday night Koirala was rushed to Gangalal Heart Center in Bansbari after doctors detected a patch of pneumonia in his lungs. He has been kept at Intensive Care Unit. And his condition is said to be stable.

"In the evening I got the information that PM suffered from bout of weakness. In course of examination, I found there was a patch of pneumonia in his lungs," said Dr. Madhu Ghimire, private physician of PM Koirala, told reporters on Monday. "After consultations, we thought it appropriate to take him to the hospital

where he is kept at ICU so that he can receive maximum attention," said Dr. Ghimire, adding that his condition was "stable." He said that PM Koirala would have to be kept at the hospital for at least two days.

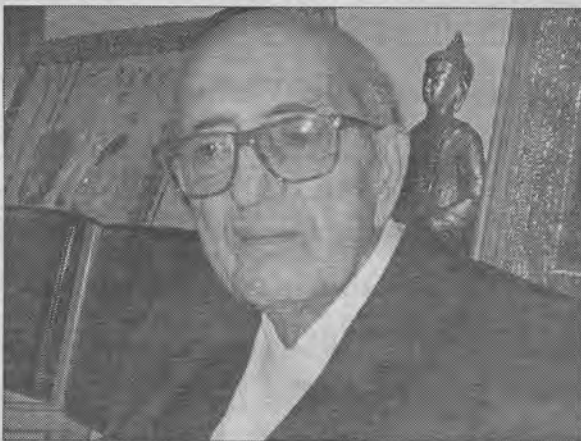
The sudden deterioration of Koirala's health followed his ten-day trip to Bangkok where he had undergone a

laser prostate surgery and successfully recovered.

On Monday, Koirala had chaired the cabinet meeting that had made some crucial decisions. It approved government's policies and programs for the fiscal year 2006/07. The policies and programs were scheduled to be presented at the parliament by the Prime Minister.

The cabinet also decided to scrap the national holiday on the occasion of the King's birthday on Asar 23. From now onwards, only the employees at the Royal Palace would get holiday on the King's birthday.

Likewise, the cabinet has also decided to revoke the system of unified command and has recalled 3700 police personnel currently deputed to work with the Nepalese Army under the unified command.



**Koirala:** Leading the nation in crucial moment

The health condition of Koirala in the coming days would determine the pace at which the peace process would go through. Reports had said that a second summit meeting between him and Maoist chairman Prachanda was being planned.

After he was rushed to the hospital, many senior ministers, leaders and

## Dr. Mahat Calls For Aid From Donors

Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat has urged the donor community to come forth with financial assistance in view of the forthcoming budget. Speaking at an interaction program held by Management Development Center to discuss about the forthcoming budget, Dr. Mahat said the foreign assistance is required for the purpose of rehabilitation of Maoist militia and conflict victims.

He said that the government would announce such rehab program with small seed money from internal resources through the budget. He also urged donors to come forward with flexible attitude since the country was passing through big change.

Addressing the program, Kenichi Ohashi, country director of World Bank, said that the coming budget was going to be the "most important budget in the modern history of Nepal." He said the current government had a big responsibility of showing the efficiency of the state.

Dr. Narayan Khadka, former vice chairman of National Planning Commission (NPC), said the budget should direct the future course of the country. Likewise, Dr. Bimal Koirala, former chief secretary, urged the donors not to push the country for difficult structural reforms at this crucial period. He said there was a need to increase direct fiscal transfer from center to local bodies from the existing level of 6 to 9 percent. ■

officials visited him there. From deputy prime minister K.P. Oli to Nepali Congress vice president Sushil Koirala and from senior government officials to chiefs of Nepalese Army and Police, all went to see him on Monday night itself.

After having led the successful People's Movement II, Koirala is now shouldering the responsibility of steering the nation through the current difficult transition. Will his health permit him to successfully manage this transition remains to be seen. ■

# RAILWAY TO TIBET

# Opportunities

# And

# Challenges

After the grand inauguration of Qinghai-Tibet Railway, the geo-strategic position of Himalayan region has undergone a profound change as this miracle of technology has opened a new vista of opportunity for close cooperation for the development among the countries of this region. The coming response from the largest and powerful country south of Himalaya would determine if this new change in strategically important place would result in tranquility and peace in the region. Sandwiched between two Asian powers - India and China which are yet to settle their long border disputes in Himalayan region - the challenge for Nepal, which has been suffering from fear psychosis of its neighbors, is how to grasp the new opportunities lying just north of its border. Whether somebody likes it or not and irrespective of the nature of government in Kathmandu, Nepal, which may have to suffer more painful situation in coming days, has to live with the new reality. At a time when Chinese authorities have already expressed their willingness to bring the railway connection to the border points, it would also influence Nepal's future geo-strategic position

By KESHAB POUDEL

**L**ess than twenty four hours after the inauguration of Qinghai-Tibet railway, the first rail road linking Tibet with the rest of China, by Chinese president Hu Jintao, a group of Tibetan refugees in exile in India organized a demonstration in their headquarters Shimla, a state capital of

Himanchal State of India, terming the scientific miracle as a black day. The refugees also drew the conclusion that the rail way is a threat to their motherland as well as security of India.

Although the rail way, observers see, paves the way for close cooperation between countries in the Himalayan region, the demonstration organized by Tibetan refugees gave a different

message that India is yet to reconcile with China despite the opening up of Nathu la Pass trade route and confidence building measures between them.

Chinese mandarins view the strong presence of Tibetan refugees in India as a security threat to them, how China will take this kind of threat issued from the Tibetan refugees in India is anybody's guess.



**Railway bridge under construction:** Miraculous technology *Photos : Xinhua*

“Yes, it has brought a hope to entire region but it is just an outmoded and narrow-minded view to see it as a security threat to India. China definitely has a military capability to create threat to any power in the world. But, the way China has modernized its economy, slowly and gradually, its society also tends to open and liberalize. There are well-educated persons in press and politics in India who don’t distrust and mistrust China’s bonafide intention to be a partner in development,” said a political analyst. “China is definitely in a competition of a very vast scale and faster speed but that is mainly on its economic development and linking its economy with world economy. That way, the trend of development in China is for global partnership for peace and independence.”

Other scholars, too, argue that China threat continues to haunt the Indian mindset. “However, the China threat continues to dominate the Indian strategic horizon. The China **factor has been a critical and constant element in the Indian security equation since 1962** □ Sino-Indian war through the first Chinese nuclear test in 1964, □ writes **Pal Singh Siddhu and Jing-Dong Yuan in the book** □ China

and India Cooperation or Conflict.” “Until now the absence of a railway network meant that only the limited network of narrow roads could be used to deploy the infantry. However, the move to build 1,118 Kilometers railway line connecting Golmud in the western territory of Qinghai to Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, which is expected to be completed by 2005, is likely to dramatically improve China’s military capability in Tibet.”

Despite all out efforts, the Himalaya region is yet to find the respite from hostility, covert and overt, between the two big powers. “The Himalayan region occupies a strategic position between China and India. Although factors of tensions and instability are always present in this region- because of unresolved territorial disputes and also political upheavals in Nepal – a new era in regional diplomacy is about to start as China takes steps to realize its priority for economic development in a peaceful environment. “As the hinterland of the Himalayas, Tibet is at the forefront of China’s strategy in this region. The impact of that strategy on China’s perception of the Tibet issues needs to be reassessed in the context of China’s “Go West” policy and trade diplomacy toward South Asia,” writes Thierry Mathou, a carrier diplomat and an

associated political scientist with the Department of Himalayan Studies of the National Center for Scientific Research, Paris, in his article “Tibet and Its Neighbors, moving toward a New Chinese Strategy in the Himalayan Region” published in Asian survey issue of July August 2005.

“Until recently, China’s strategy in the Himalayan region was essentially conservative because of recurrent tensions with India and a defensive approach to the Tibet issue. With the easing of tension and implementation of its western region development program, the People’s Republic of China is reconsidering the role of Tibet within its own territory and also in the Himalayan regional context. This does not mean, however, that China is taking a new approach on the Tibet issue; it only implies a change of perspective in geopolitical terms. From being an underdeveloped and landlocked area located in the backyard of the Chinese territory far from Beijing, the Tibetan Autonomous Region could become a bridge between China **and** South Asia,” Mathou writes.

According to the analyst, China is a factor in the international politics which cannot be ignored. “In the first phase of development, China developed certain economic zones. In the present stage, China has a priority for development in its interior backward parts including Tibet. The massive infrastructures of roads and railways in Tibet have opened a possibility of closer economic cooperation with India and other countries south of the Himalayas. It has equally posed a serious security challenge to India from north. Apprehending the implications of developed infrastructures in Tibet, India has increased worries about its security in the north. Its hectic activities have far fetched reflections in Nepal which needs no elaboration,” said the analyst.

#### **Turmoil in Nepal**

Following the beginning of construction of Tibet Railway in June, Nepal has seen many tragic political situations with unmanageable level till now. From massacre of Royal family members in early June of 2001 and

ascending to the throne by inexperienced but arrogant King, Nepal's five years political history has seen many ups and downs.

Following the intensification of Maoist insurgency in 2001, Nepal has lost almost all institutions built in the past step by step. Following the dismissal of elected government led by Sher Bahadur Deuba in October 4, 2002 by King Gyanendra, the pace of destruction of political and other traditional institution accelerated.

After April 2006, along with the Constitution of Kingdom of Nepal 1990 all institutions and practices developed in the last five decades are on the process of destruction. In a fragile situation, nobody knows what will be the fate of the country and who will be the next victim of political change.

#### China's Rise

For smaller countries like Nepal with long border with China, it cannot ignore the rise of China at its policy level. The government, of any form and color, may come and go but this reality is going to be there.

"For perhaps the first time in Asia's history- certainly for the first time since European colonialism- a security architecture that is continent-wide security interdependence, which is

converting the landmass called Asian into a region, is clearly linked to the rise of China. In other words, if a rising China did not exist, there would be no Asia- in geopolitical terms. However, China is rising, and every one of China's neighbors has to make this fact an integral part of their policy calculus," writes Varun Sahni, professor of international politics at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi in his article India and the Asian Security Architecture in current history. "India's emergence, of course, cannot be considered in isolation. It is occurring against the backdrop of the rise of China. Beijing is working hard to signal to its neighbors that its rise is "peaceful," the odyssey of a large country on the road to development rather than the onward march of a rising power."

On the eve of growing political tensions ,China sent a senior official Tang Jiaxuan, state Councilor of the People's Republic of China to Nepal in March. "China and Nepal are close neighbors on the two sides of the Himalayan Mountains and have a long history of friendly ties. It is said that more than two thousand years ago, Manjushri came all the way from the Wutai Mountains in China to Nepal. Historical records show that the friendly exchanges

of China and Nepal date back to as early as the mid-7th century," said Jiaxuan in his statement in Kathmandu. "We consistently support Nepal in its effort to safeguard sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. Nepal is a sovereign country, and its internal affairs shall not be interfered with in any way by any outside forces," he added.

Despite efforts to build confidence, there are still some irritants in India-China relations. "Although highly publicized, especially in China, India's declaration that it "recognizes that the Tibet Autonomous region is a part of the territory of the People's Republic of China and reiterates that it does not allow Tibetans to engage in anti-China political activities in India" did not depart from New Delhi's traditional policy toward the Tibet issues. China, on the other hand prefers to downplay politics, at least for the time being, in order to clear the ground for its economic strategy," writes Mathou.

Whether one likes it or not, the railways have ushered in a new era in the Himalayan region. "Geopolitically speaking, this is most unprecedented development and credit goes to science and technology," said Dr. Upendra Gautam, general secretary of China Study Center Nepal. "In trans-Himalayan

relationship, the impact - which it will create in Trans-Himalayan relationship - will be historic. The railways integrates Tibet with rest of China. In terms of China's international relations, it is unprecedented. It will contribute to the mobility of people. Tibet is no more remote part of the world," he said.

#### Implications For Nepal

Chinese leaders have already declared that the railway is going to be extended further south including to the border areas of Nepal. In the future, the main railway



High altitude railway line: Pride of humanity



could be extended from the Lhasa to the border area in Southern Tibet.

“Although the adequate sources of financing are often lacking, considerable attention is also being paid to road building and renovation of existing state highways. Special efforts are being made to strengthen the so-called ‘three vertical and two horizontal links’ namely the China-Nepal, Qinghai-Tibet, Xingjian-Tibet, Tibet-Sichuan, and Tibet-Yunan highways that are supposed to place the TAR in the middle of a hypothetical network stretching from central to South Asia. The development of a rail link between Tibet and Inner China will further



**The train:** Beautiful wonder

exacerbate the trend of integration and development. In the medium term, an extension of the rail link could also facilitate communication between Tibet and other Himalayan states and regions and benefit Tibet. The consequences could be strategic as well as economic. With the extension of the transportation work in the border areas, China intends not only to enhance its capacity in terms of border defense and internal control but also to create the conditions for transforming Tibet into a trading hub in the Himalayan region, which has become one of the objectives of Beijing’s bilateral diplomacy towards Nepal, India and Bhutan,” writes Mathou.

“The opening of Yadong area has been listed as a priority in the TAR’s 10th Five-Year Plan. This district, adjacent to Bhutan on the east, used to be the region’s largest land port. TAR officials expect an increase in border trade of 15 percent annually when Yadong is reopened. From the Chinese point of

view, such a move is intended not only to boost the economy in Tibet but also to fuel foreign trade in China’s western areas such as Qinghai, Gansu province and the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. Currently exports from these areas to South Asian countries have to go through Guangzhou or Hong Kong. Via these routes, the transportation distance could be shorted by more than 5,600 miles.”

Experts argue that with the opening of the Qinghai-Tibet Railway, Yadong is expected to play an even more important role in the development of China’s western areas. Recent shifts in the Sino-Indian relationship in the Himalayas do not mean that all sources of bilateral tensions there have disappeared. The two sides have yet to fully demarcate their respective territories.

The improvement of infrastructures in Tibet in northern part of Nepal will have many implications to mountains and hilly region and it will also help to

maintain supply of essential commodities to these areas. Few years ago, Nepal Food Corporation sent tons of rice to Nepal’s northern districts through the Tibetan roads.

“How China takes recent developments in Nepal will have a decisive effect upon India-China relationship at least for the present. If India emerges as a dominant power in Nepal, it would have a negative impact in the relationship of both China and India,” said an analyst.

Chinese scholars support Nepal’s independence for their own security. “Nepal’s independence is essential prerequisite for China’s security. Nepal living under the security umbrella of India is possibly a constant threat to Chinese security. The strong presence of Tibetan separatist in India and Nepal-India open

border are such matters which will not permit Nepal to be part of any country’s security umbrella,” writes professor Wang in his book *Nepal’s National Defense Strategy and Nepal-China Relations* published in 2005.

If Nepal’s political situation turns more chaotic, other power will definitely try to intervene. The political stability in Nepal is in the interest of both the neighbors. The recent remarks by Indian leader Sitaram Yechuri, who came to Nepal after a briefing of Indian prime minister, also points to this interest. Yechuri who was instrumental in bringing about recent changes and upheavals in Nepal stated that now the country needs stability – an indication of a larger wish among Indians. “The political developments - which have taken place in Nepal after the Delhi Declaration of November 2005 reportedly prepared with the initiative of India – have partly internal and partly an external effect. Internally, it will take a lengthy and

complicated process to stabilize a popularly built up political process but its external impacts have not assured even the USA and other western countries. Silence from China on this matter might be a lull before the storm," said the analyst.

"China is relaxed and it does not have worries regarding political development," said a Chinese diplomat on condition of anonymity. "We hope Nepal will secure the lasting peace and prosperity."

If China responds with the same security concern - which India has in Nepal, the collision in peace may create a cold war like environment which may involve at least this region. "One cannot rule out its negative prospect observing the mind set of the security agencies and hardened bureaucracy of the South Block," said the analyst.

Chinese scholars have already described that Nepal's open border with India and strong presence of Tibetan refugees in India is serious security threat to China. "There are still constraints and irritants in our relationship. The strong presence of illegal immigrants from China's Tibet in Nepal and their separatist activities being launched from the Nepalese soil at the backing of the anti-Chinese international lobby has been a constant sore in Nepal-China

relations," said Madan Regmi, chairman of China Study Center.

#### Course of Uncertainty

Although the railway brings an opportunity for prosperity, no one can predict the future course of the region. The changing geo-strategic position may bring about prosperity and cooperation just as it could trigger devastating results.

"It is unfortunate for whole world that a great opportunity for peace and cooperation between India and China might be wasted due to the trauma Indian security experts suffer from given the history of 1962 reversal. That leadership and attitude is not in China now but it has left scar on the relation between the two countries. And smaller neighbors are worse sufferers of which Nepal is a tragic example," said the political analyst. "Whatever complains the people may have against King Gyanendra, declaring Nepal as a transit country between India and China cost him all his royal position."

Chinese diplomats in Nepal argue that they don't want competition in Nepal with other power for destruction but what they genuinely want is the competition on development and progress of Nepal.

For Nepal, there is hope as well as despair. "China has a chain of command of overall system whereas India lacks

that. The disadvantage with China is a monolithic structure of the state and governance whereas positive side of India is a well built up system of open and competitive society. Chain has advanced much in defense as well as economic development. India, too, has advanced much after the liberalization from 1992. China and India are two biggest and most powerful countries of Asia at present and have possibility of emerging as global powers," said the analyst. Despite difference in political system, China has been able to build up relations of trust and cooperation with the western world whereas that is not the same with India-China relations.

#### India's Old Mindset

The military setback of India in 1962 has had a lasting impact in the Indian mindset. "Though Vietnam and Cambodia had suffered much more with the USA in a war than any other countries but they have at present the best of economic relationship with that country. India did not have such conflict with the USA but the influence of dissolved Soviet Union has left a powerful psychological hangover. Not only communist but a substantial section of a middle class of India still has mindset that America is imperialist power which has deterrent effect in India's closer relations with the west," said the analyst.

The old mind set continues to influence India's perception towards China also. In his recent article in Pioneer Daily, G. Parthasarathy, person who was one of the architects of India's foreign policy during the heydays of Indira Gandhi, termed China as a threat to Indian security.

"Despite these developments, China remains the most destabilizing factor for Indian national security. It has consistently sought to undermine India's influence in Asia and indeed across the world," writes Parathasarathy.

With the opening of railways, there has opened a great chance for development and prosperity. However, the fate of this region is hanging upon whether there will be peace of permanent nature, or war of varied forms of, overt and covert, between two Asian giants. ■



A local resident of Tibet: Dreams come true

# Qinghai Tibet Railway

There are some startling facts associated with the building of the Qinghai-Lhasa railway that has redrawn the face of Himalayan region in terms of development.

The Qinghai-Tibet Railway is the first railroad linking Tibet with the rest of China. China has solved three major difficulties, frozen tundra, high altitude and plateau environmental protection, to rewrite the history of global railway construction.

None of the hundreds of thousands of railway builders died of altitude sickness during the construction. The railway is the world's highest railway. Some 960 kilometers of its tracks are located 4,000 meters above sea level and the highest point is 5,072 meters, at least 200 meters higher than the Peruvian railway in the Andes, which was formerly the world's most elevated rail.

The railway is the world's longest on a plateau, extending 1,956 kilometers from Qinghai's provincial capital Xining to Lhasa in Tibet. The newly-completed Golmud-Lhasa section

Upon its completion, the maximum train speed is designed to reach 100 kilometers per hour in the frozen earth areas and 120 kilometers per hour on non-frozen earth.

Construction of the Golmud-Lhasa section of the landmark railway commenced on June 29, 2001. About 29.46 billion yuan (US\$3.68 billion) have been spent on the Golmud-Lhasa section which runs 1,142 kilometers.

A hard seat sells for 389 yuan (US\$48.6) from Beijing to Lhasa, while hard sleeper costs 813 yuan (US\$101), and the price for a soft sleeper is 1,262 yuan (US\$158).

The Mountains of Tanggula, meaning "mountains on the plateau" in Tibetan, was regarded as "insurmountable even by eagles" in the eyes of locals, where the lowest temperature reach 45 Celsius degree under zero. It is also the source area of the Yangtze River, the longest river in China.

The train, "Tibet 2", carries about 700 passengers with 16 carriages. It will run more than 2,100 kilometers across "the roof of the world" and is expected to arrive at the terminal of Lanzhou in some 30 hours.

Although the oxygen content at the Tanggula Mountain Pass is only 50-60 percent of that at sea level, no passengers on "Tibet 2" felt sick thanks to the oxygen supply on the train, according to Xinhua reporters on the train.

Tanggula Railway Station, the world's highest at 5,068 meters above sea level, has no stationed workers because of the high altitude. The equipment of the station is controlled via the satellite and its operation is also under the eyes of long-distance monitoring system. Experts and builders overcame three difficulties, namely frozen tundra, high altitude and plateau environmental protection, to finish the track-laying of the more challenging Golmud-Lhasa section in last October.

The entire railway around the Tanggula Mountain Pass runs on frozen earth, which "posed a major challenge to the railway construction," said La Youyu, deputy director-general of the headquarters for the Qinghai-Tibet Railway construction.

"Frozen earth is vulnerable to climate change, which will thaw in summer and distend the railway base in winter," La said. To avoid possible dangers, the deputy director-general said, designers of the railway used technology of heat preservation, slope protection and roadbed ventilation in frozen earth areas. ■



zigzags 1,142 kilometers across the Kunlun and Tanggula mountain ranges.

About 550 kilometers of the tracks run on frozen earth, the longest in any of the world's plateau railways. Tanggula Railway Station, 5,068 meters above sea level, is the highest railway station in the world.

Fenghuoshan Tunnel, 4,905 meters above sea level, is the world's most elevated tunnel on frozen earth. Kunlun Mountain Tunnel, running 1,686 meters, is the world's longest plateau tunnel built on frozen earth.

## WTO PROCESS

## Doha In Doubt

Has the political reality finally taken over trade ambitions?

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

After much ballyhooed Hong Kong Ministerial, the ongoing Geneva process seems to be heading towards a dead-end. The Geneva process was earlier initiated with the aim of ironing out existing differences on domestic support, export subsidy and market access among developed and developing countries after Hong Kong ministerial could not reach consensus on them.

However, on July 1, Indian Commerce Minister Kamal Nath threatened to walk out of the crucial mini-ministerial in Geneva. Media reports said Kamal Nath was furious after being unable to "thrash out thorny agriculture and industrial tariff issues, with the United States refusing to agree for wider cuts in farm subsidies."

Kamal Nath said that there was no need to 'pretend' that this round of the talks is not a failure. "We came here to negotiate, but there is no space for negotiations. We (India) are on 8 to 9 percent growth. I've come here looking for a trade deal which helps me to reach 10 to 11 percent," he said.

Although earlier the Geneva process was initiated with the aim of sealing the deal within April, this deadline has now been stretched up to August. However, going by the way the talks are going on in Geneva, there is hardly any room for optimism. Trade ministers from about 60 countries including India had began the mini-ministerial meetings in Geneva to find out ways to cut agricultural subsidies and industrial tariffs.

The standoff in Geneva, however, reflects a larger problem that has started haunting the WTO process. "The Doha Development Round has started suffering from the political realities," stated Amir Khosru, former Commerce Minister of Bangladesh, who was recently in Kathmandu to take part in a Regional Meeting on "South Asia and Doha Round Negotiations" organized by South Asia Watch on Trade, Environment and Economics (SAWTEE). "Realities have surfaced now and things have started to grind to halt because for



**Agriculture:** Food security is important for LDCs

politicians, whether from South Asia or United States, at the end of the day what matters most is another election," he said.

Consequently, in recent months, the US or European leaders have not been able to meet the demands made by developing countries on slashing domestic farm subsidies as they have to confront their constituencies. Initially, the trade issues got the prominence and everyone started making promises, but now when the time to deliver or as WTO general Secretary Pascal Lamy likes to call "moment of truth" has come, the

politicians have developed weak knees. "Politicians must realize that they need to sacrifice. Those from developed countries must sacrifice more and those from developing must sacrifice less and both of them must take on board the LDCs and integrate them into the mainstream of global economic development," added Khosru.

However, if the Geneva process does, indeed, gets derailed, that would mean that all the earlier commitments made by developed countries in Hong Kong Ministerial including providing duty and quota free access to 97 percent of products from LDCs could come under review.

Meanwhile, speaking at the program organized by SAWTEE experts from the region said that the difference of opinion on trade issues were prevalent not only WTO level but also at the regional level. In the South Asian region also there are two different sets of countries with varying trade interests. India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka as developing countries have particular interest whereas Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Maldives as LDCs have quite different interests.

Presenting her paper on South Asian common position in WTO negotiations, Rashmi Banga of UNCTAD-India, however, pointed out that the SAARC countries do have complimentary interests like in common development levels and goals; common food security and livelihood concerns; and the benefit of

working as a bloc. Likewise, they also have constraints to common agenda such as conflicting interests between developing and LDCs; conflict of interest between net food importing and net food exporting countries and so on.

As there is no alternative to working together for extracting maximum benefit out of global trading regime, the countries of South Asia need to first come together as regional and/or issue-specific blocs for collective bargaining. Since WTO is nothing more than a set of trade-offs, getting together in a bloc makes a lot of sense. ■

# SAFTA Comes Along

After a delay of six months, the SAFTA finally comes into force

By A CORRESPONDENT

In what is seen as a test of economic and trade liberalization commitments of leaders of South Asian region, the much-talked-about South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) has come into force beginning July 1, 2006.

The seven member states of SAARC except Nepal – India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Maldives and Bhutan – will start the phase-wise program of custom tariff reduction beginning July 1. They will reduce the tariff by 5 percent as per the agreement under SAFTA. Nepal, however, will do so beginning August 1. Nepal is expected to reduce tariff in the coming budget for the purpose.

In the first phase of the SAFTA, developing countries of SAARC – India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka – will need to bring down the current level of tariff rate to 20 percent within two years whereas least developed countries – Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Maldives – will need to slash the rate to 30 percent within the period.

Likewise, in the second phase of SAFTA implementation, India and Pakistan will need to bring down custom tariff rate between 0 to 5 percent within 2013. Sri Lanka will need to do so within 2014 and rest of the member states will need to do so within 2016.

The SAFTA pact has come into force at a time when regional experts and economists were criticizing it for failing to take off soon. “The fact that the member states haggled strenuously just to decide on the issues of Rules of Origin and Negative List provides an ill-omen for the future of this regional trading bloc,” said an economist.

Even as rest of the world had realized the potential benefits of working as a regional trading bloc – ASEAN, EU, Mercosur, NAFTA etc – the South Asian countries were very slow in coming forth. “To talk about forging common position of South Asian countries in WTO when we couldn’t get the SAFTA going on time is not understandable,” said Amir Khosru, former commerce minister of Bangladesh. Khosru added that given the prevalent mindset, the SAFTA would not deliver any fruitful results even if it comes into force.

South Asia is home to one-fifth of humanity. Although predominantly an



A Nepali small trader: Will he benefit?

agrarian region, countries of this region have steadily embraced industrial development as well. Trade, investment and growth have been encouraging, particularly in India and Pakistan – the two biggest nations of this region. However, the political disputes have tied down the pace of progress in the region. Take for instance the intra regional trade volume; the intra-regional trade volume among SAARC countries stand at abysmal 4.46 percent of the total trade of member states whereas the intra-EU trade is 55 percent, intra-NAFTA (North American Free Trade Area) trade stands at 61 percent and intra-ASEAN trade is 25 percent of its total trade.

Economists and trade-watchers are keeping their fingers crossed that with the start of the phase-wise enforcement of SAFTA, the intra-regional trade figures would increase. Officials have estimated that under the new trading arrangement, the intra-regional trade could rise from the current \$5-6 billion to \$18 billion in five years. Likewise, under the new system, tariffs on 4000 items in the member countries would be reduced to zero percent in staggered phases.

## BIMSTEC Implementation Delays

At a time when the Doha Development Round in the World Trade Organization (WTO) seems to be hitting a snag, another regional trading arrangement, too, is facing problems.

The implementation of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-sectoral Technology and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) free trade pact has delayed by at least another six months. This is contrary to the expectations that the Initiative marked a new beginning in the region.

After the member states of the organization – including Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Nepal and Bhutan – failed to complete their dialogue process the deadline of implementing the pact by July 2006 has been crossed.

The 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Trade Negotiation Committee of the BIMSTEC could not take place as scheduled in April due to political unrest in Thailand. And without the next round of negotiations, many issues still remain unresolved. Understanding has not yet been reached on issues such as Rules of Origin, Negative List, Market Protection Method, among others. The different member states are favoring different kind of Rules of Origin. They have also come up with fairly large number of items in the Negative List.

However, understanding has been reached on the formation of a commission for dispute settlement. Officials now say that free trade of products could start only by January, 2007. The BIMSTEC had earlier aimed to conduct free trade of services and investment by 2007. ■

# US Disappointed Over Lack Of Good Faith

In a significant development, the US ambassador James Moriarty has stated that he is "disappointed" that "the Maoists are yet not showing the same good faith" as the new Nepal government, which "has shown its good faith by trying to be responsible to the will of the people, and accordingly has invested heavily in efforts to bring peace to Nepal by entering into agreements and negotiations with the Maoists."

Addressing a program organized by Rotary Organization Dillibazar in Kathmandu on Wednesday (June 28), Moriarty said, "Like much of the media, many political party leaders, and indeed the average Nepali I meet on trips around the country, I am concerned by the continued gap between Maoist commitments and Maoist actions. Kidnapping, extortion, intimidation, and murder are not tools for mainstream democratic political parties – which the Maoists claim they are becoming."

He cited examples of kidnapping, extortion, threats and murder by the Maoists in recent days. Moriarty feared the Maoist intention when he quoted Maoist chairman Prachanda saying that the Maoists are ready to lead "October revolution" akin to what happened in 1917 in Russia when Lenin seized power violently and created a totalitarian state.

"We all want to believe that the Maoists have changed, that they will permanently renounce violence, that they will give up their arms before constituent assembly elections and submit themselves to the will of the Nepali people, and that they mean what they say when they speak loftily of supporting multiparty democracy and liberal economics. I share your hope that Nepal may soon have its

lasting peace. However, until the Maoists bring their conduct in line with standards of mainstream political parties in multiparty democracies, it would be premature to declare that peace is already at hand," he said.

When asked whether it would be acceptable for the US that Maoists join interim government without giving up arms, Moriarty said the question is actually whether it is acceptable for the Nepali people. "In US, we have a law that prohibits any kind of material support to an organization in list of terrorists," he added indicating that the US would not support such interim government until and unless Maoists stop keeping the option of going back to violence open.

During his address, Moriarty also heaped praises on Nepali people for the successful Jana Andolan that restored democracy. "The US is pleased to support the Nepal Government's efforts to fulfill its mandate to provide peace and democracy to the people. We have increased our bilateral assistance by \$12 million dollars in recent months to a total of \$45 million this year, including some \$8 million for programs that directly build the capacity of vital democratic institutions such as the Peace Secretariat, the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority, National Human Rights Commission, Election Commission, and the judiciary." ■



# New York City Honors A Great Nepali Community Leader

Dr. Tara N. Niraula, President of America-Nepal Friendship Society (ANFS) and a prominent Nepali community leader was one of the five distinguished South Asian honorees who was honored by the William C. Thompson, the Comptroller of the City of New York at special event organized on June 28 in New York City. The Comptroller as an elected official represents over 8 million residents of New York. Dr. Niraula received this award in recognition of his leadership and contributions to strengthening immigrant communities in New York and beyond.

Thompson, presenting the award to Dr. Niraula, said that it was "in recognition of his commitment and patience as a teacher; his dedicated efforts to assist the educational goals of immigrants and refugees; and his willingness to put his knowledge and time in the service of noble public goals."

In his acceptance remarks, Dr. Niraula thanked the friends and members of the America-Nepal Friendship Society and the larger Nepali community for their work in helping to foster the magnificent and ongoing growth of a healthy and mutually beneficial relationship between the peoples of the United States and Nepal through education, collaboration and cultural exchange.

Praising Thompson for his support of the immigrant community, Dr. Niraula said, "You have always been a leader in our immigrant community and we appreciate that. I assure you that Nepali community will always stand with you and follow your leadership as greater challenges and greater opportunities lead us to greater heights."

The event was attended by many prominent Nepali American and South Asian community members, including Madhu Raman Acharya,

the Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations, Murari Raj Sharma, member of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Issues of the United Nations and former Nepali Ambassador to the United Nations. Extending his personal congratulations to Dr. Niraula, Ambassador Acharya said, "It was Nepal's as well as all Nepali people's pride. We are all very proud of this". Similarly, Sharma said, "The recognition of your contributions to Nepali and South Asian Communities is a matter of great pride for friends like me and the Nepali diaspora at large". Many other Nepali and South Asian community members, including Mr. Mohan Gyawali, President of Ridgewood Nepalese Society, Tek Bahadur Gurung, President of Nepalese Democratic Forum, Chandra Prakash Sharma, Founder of Nepali Mandir and Director and Publisher of Nepali Aawaz and many other local Nepali community members and American friends of Nepal participated the program.

Currently, Dr. Niraula is the Senior Research Scholar and Director of Research Projects with Columbia University's prestigious Teachers College. A highly respected personality in Nepali and South Asian Community, Dr. Niraula has been one of the strong driving and unifying forces in the Nepali Diaspora's campaign to support the recent democratic movement in Nepal. ■



# The Indispensability Of Political Parties In Managing Local Bodies

By KRISHNA MAN PRADHAN

The need of the local bodies arises in order to identify the daily problems of the people living in villages and cities and delivering immediate service as per their demand. For the fulfillment of these very issues, Village Development Committees (VDCs), District Development Committees (DDCs) and municipalities were formed as local bodies in Nepal.

For a multi-lingual, multi-regional and multi-ethnic country like Nepal, it is simply impossible for the central government to carry out all activities. Therefore, it is imperative to ensure effective operation of local bodies and equip them with adequate resources so that they can identify and resolve people's problems and, ultimately, uplift their standards of living. If this system can be adopted by way of decentralization, the vision of good governance can be realized and democracy, too, can be institutionally developed. There is no alternative but to allow the local bodies to carry out activities at the local level in a country like Nepal where many people live in geographically difficult terrain and where rural people occupy larger share of the population. In order to realize these objectives the Constitution of 1990 and Local Self Governance Act 1999 were promulgated. Likewise, effective machinery has been provisioned and duties, responsibilities and resources provided in order to make the local government units able and efficient.

After the restoration of democracy, two local elections were held in the country – in 1993 and 1998. In the first elections, around 200,000 representatives were elected and they successfully carried out their tenure. In the second election, around 40,000 women representatives – including the mandatory 20 percent in wards and 10 percent in VDCs – were elected. However, due to political instability and vested interests, these achievements ended up becoming meaningless. The existing Act envisages the local governments as permanent governments. Underlining this vision, the Article 239 of the Act states that the Nepal government can extend their tenure by one year or conduct it through other means in case its regular election cannot be held owing to natural disaster, economic problems or special circumstances. However, in 2002 July, instead of extending their tenure by one year, then Deuba-government decided to hand over the management of local bodies to bureaucrats. Consequently, local bodies, which are regarded as foundations of democracy, were rendered devoid of elected representatives. And the bodies failed to work for the local people.

Since the 1990 Constitution was not able to incorporate the emotions and desires of entire people, a rebellion emerged within the country. And there was the People's Movement II, which resulted in the reinstatement of House of Representatives (which was elected in 1999). The restored House has declared itself sovereign and the central government was formed by the leading political parties. The government and the Maoists have declared ceasefire and entered into formal negotiations. The House has declared the elections for Constituent Assembly, as demanded by People's Movement II, and an interim statute drafting committee, too, has been formed.

In this backdrop, the Association of DDCs, Nepal (ADDCN), National Association of VDCs in Nepal (NAVIN), Municipal Association of Nepal (MuAN) as well as political parties such as Nepal Workers and Peasants Party (NWPP) and Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist), have demanded that the local bodies, too, be restored just like the parliament. However, after Maoist chairman Prachanda warned that the restoration of local bodies could result in derailment of peace process, this issue has been pushed to the back-burner.

On the side of the state, the democratic government has handed over the local bodies to the bureaucrats and has given them the authority of Village Council, Municipal Council and District Council. On the side of the Maoists, they have also formed their village-level and district-level governments. Consequently, the common people are in a state of confusion as two parallel governments are in operation at local level. Perhaps, to address this issue, the recent eight-point agreement between the Maoists and the seven political parties talks about dissolving the House of Representatives as well as Maoists' people's governments.



As a result, the government has the only option of forming all party committees including the participation of seven parties and Maoists at VDC, municipality and DDC level to carry out interim arrangement till new elections can be held. The local bodies can be operated at two levels – the bureaucrats can be mobilized for administration and implementation of decisions made by executive committee whereas executive committees should be formed for plan formulation, selection, decision-making and monitoring. In the interest of social justice, such executive committees should have the following composition – civil society representation (20 percent), seven political parties (60 percent) and Maoists (20 percent).

Such executive committees may have 25 members at district level, 11 members at VDC level and in municipalities one member each may be selected from each ward. When selecting the 60 percent candidates from seven parties, those who were elected in the past should be inducted. Likewise, those working in people's government may be selected from Maoist quota. When choosing representatives from civil society, at the village and city level people from Users' Group, Mother's Group, local NGOs, Clubs, Dalit association should be selected and, at the district level, people from NAVIN, ADDCN, MuAN, District Bar Unit, District Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Women Development Office and Forest Community Users' Federation should be selected.

If working committees can be formed as mentioned above, all the state services can be delivered to people in villages and cities. And the development construction activities that had remained suspended since past ten years would resume and can be completed within two years minimum. Handing over the judicial authorities as per Article 33 and 101 of LSGA and publication of this decision in the National Gazette would help formalize the ongoing judicial activities at the local bodies' level. And this will result in the appropriateness of the appointment of Rajendra Pandey as the Local Development Minister since he has been working for the last 15 years for the autonomy and judicial empowerment of local bodies. If these committees are mobilized to spread the news and communicate about the election of Constituent Assembly that could educate 26 million people of this country and enable them to properly use their voting rights. And if donors, too, indeed wish to consolidate democracy and expedite development in Nepal, they should channel their fund and use them through these committees.

*(Pradhan is President of Rural Development Foundation. He can be contacted at [kmprdf@mail.com.np](mailto:kmprdf@mail.com.np))*

## REVIEW

# An Artist's Optimism

An artist delves into 'hopeful' signs in a display of paintings in Siddhartha gallery

By A CORRESPONDENT

The walls of Siddhartha Art Gallery are decorated with the paintings by Govinda Sah 'Azad' on a single theme 'Pillars of Hope'. The paintings are filled with water colors of different tastes. The show has 41 different water color paintings depicting various aspects of hope and optimism.

Govinda Sah 'Azad', who has already established his talent in painting through 21 solo art exhibitions in the past, has returned with the collection of paintings under the theme of 'Pillars of Hope.'

As a young artist, he has painted different situations in the forty-one paintings exhibited at the gallery. His painting titled include Pillars of Hope, City of Hope, Lost in thought, Uku Bahal, Patan Towards Hope, Hiranya

Mahavihar, Patan, Women from Rajbiraj, Pashupatinath Towards Hope, Patan Darbar Square, Offerings of Hope, Bhairav and Temple Lion, among others. The show has been on since June 30.

Appropriately titled the paintings at the exhibition underscore the penchant for peace and hope of a better future. The Pillars painted on the Canvas with blue, orange, cream, yellow, red, black and other colors reflect calmness that is both soothing and pleasing to the eyes of viewers.

The painter's use of colors has made all the paintings come alive. The Pillars, which have been holding up Nepalese belief and faith, reminds one about the rich ancient culture to the viewers.

The paintings themselves suggest that hope must survive in the face of hard times. Although the styles of projections differ from each other, most of the paintings seem to be longing for peace. Targeted especially for the peace, some of the paintings are also focused on culture and heritage. A Newari woman with lights (Diyo) in Newari dress symbolizes the bright future of the country.

Govinda, as an artist, seems to be very-tense in the present situation. That's why he has focused mainly on peace and titled 'Pillars of Hope'.

"Pillars of Hope has a symbolic message- the pillars that I have painted are rooted in tradition and I believe that pillars draw communities together, inspire hope and spiritual strength, these pillars are a meditation on peace," says Govinda.

Artist Govinda can be described as an artist in a great hurry to spread the message of peace, love and understanding through his art. Govinda was the first Nepali to declare the 21<sup>st</sup> century as the century of Art and

## Houses Swept Away By Bagmati

Flood in Bagmati river following torrential rain the previous night washed away nine houses in the Pashupati temple vicinity on early morning of Sunday (July 2). "Nine houses are already destroyed, and one more is about to collapse," said Sthaneshwore Devkota, chief district officer of Kathmandu. He said 227 persons from 57 families have been displaced due to flood.

According to reports in The Himalayan Times daily, local complained that the river's water level rose because the doors of Rajrajeshwori dam under Pashupati Area Development Trust (PADT) could not be opened. The trust has been keeping the door of the dam locked for the past few months.

Victims said they got no time to retrieve their possessions from their houses as everything happened so swiftly. "We asked the PADT officials to release the sluice gates of the dam but they refused," said Dinesh Ghimire, a local.

Enraged locals gheraoed the PADT office and vandalized it. "The dialogue among the victims, PADT officials and Home Administration has decided to avail the dharmashala at Bankali for the displaced to live until further arrangement is made," said CDO Devkota. Devkota also said the trust has agreed to provide Rs 4000 to each family as compensation and Rs 125 to each person for food. ■

Peace. As a student at the Fine Arts College, Govinda Sah was once described as "Lion Heart" by Govinda Dangol, a senior artist and the campus chief.

His paintings not only communicate serious messages but also inspire those who have just started their journey in this field of creativity. ■



Sah's painting: Hopeful signs



## BOOK

# On People's Movement

Prakash A. Raj looks at main actors of political stage and analyses the political events of April 2006.

For the last five years following the Royal Massacre, Nepal has seen unexpected political development with the results of long term implications in Nepalese life. After the promulgation of Constitution of Kingdom of Nepal 1990, Nepal's political problems were close to have settled. Although the Maoists held the gun demanding to scrap the present constitution and replacing it through the elections of Constituent Assembly, the overwhelming majority of political forces were in favor of the present constitution.

After the dismissal of elected prime minister by King Gyanendra in October 4, 2002, there appeared a first crack on the agreement between monarchy and political parties. The climax of political process was reached following King Gyanendra's actions of February 1, 2005.

This is the point when distrust and mistrust reached into the climax and slowly and gradually political parties sided with the demand of CA. After 19 days of demonstrations, the King finally gave away power to the people but the era of chaos and uncertainty has not gone away.

Noted author Prakash A. Raj closely watches all these political developments and ups and downs in Nepalese politics. His analysis of political development of the 19 days is based on the political facts.

After the Royal Proclamation of April 24, the country has seen many ups and downs in Nepali politics and

power shifts from one end to other. King Gyanendra who chaired the cabinet after February 2, 2005 proclamation, is now isolated and seven political parties and Maoists have come to the central stage of Nepali politics.

Having written a number of books on Nepal, Prakash A. Raj, who comes from the family of Nepal's Royal Preceptors and his association with the ruling family, is a well known political

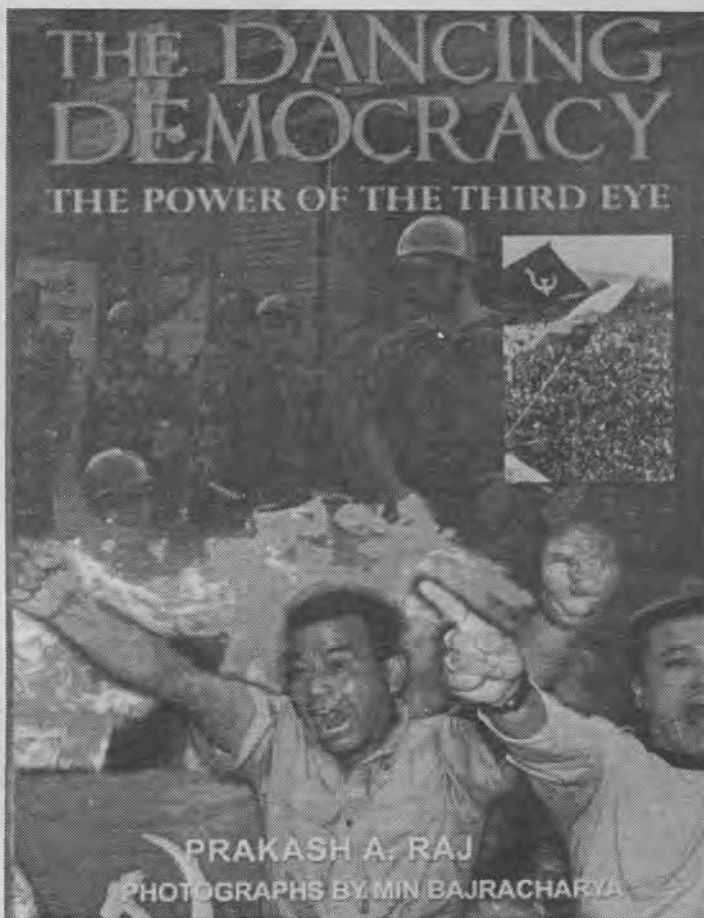
commentator. In his book, Raj discusses the role of the monarch, the political parties, the Maoists, and the international community.

Following April 24, many announcements have already been made making the monarch as no more than ceremonial. Political parties of all ideological affiliations have already started to drum up for the republic. In this situation, Raj tries to explore the role of Nepalese Army and how Nepal Army would operate in a Republican state. Raj also raises the question whether Maoists would join the mainstream politics or would try to capture the power.

Although many unexpected political

developments have taken place, this is the first kind of book highlighting and discussing Nepal's political problems on the basis of ongoing events as well as historical development. Raj, among others, spares no time to discuss and debate the role of different political actors and their possible reactions to on going political change. From monarchy to Seven Political Parties Alliance and Nepal Army to international community including India, China and the United States, Raj highlights their role and discusses them in detail.

"This book attempts to examine the roles of three main actors on the Nepalese political stage, the monarch, the political parties and the Maoists insurgents, as well as that of international community, including India and China and the United States of America. The stakes of India, Nepal's close neighbor, are especially high keeping in mind security issues. Nepal's future, then, appears to lie in the outcome of the interaction between the three main actors internally, and the three external influences," writes Raj. ■



*The Dancing Democracy  
The Power of the Third Eye*

By: Prakash A. Raj

Photographs by: Min Bajracharya

Price: Rs.195.00 , Pages: 138

Published by: Rupa Co. Co Ansari Road,  
Daryaganj, New Delhi

KOMAL OLII

# Prolific Singer

Oli has earned name and fame through her characteristic songs

By KABI ADHIKARI

**B**When singing songs in a melodious voice, she used to attract a fair number of crowd two decades ago. And in this period, she has managed to reach new heights. She is non other than Komal Oli. The success she has earned as a singer was because

of her struggle since childhood. She did not know that she would one day achieve such success in this field. Komal Oli, today, has a wide herd of fan following and is already an established female singer.

In her mid-30s, Oli who hails from Dang is gifted with mellow voice and elegance for singing. Her talent in music field is fertile and nurtured.

On her early age she used to sing many songs that would catch the attention of many people. Without feeling shy, she used to sing songs in front of teachers, friends and so on. The environment of her family was very appropriate. Her father and mother both were instrumental in encouraging her. Furthermore her friends and families also encouraged her to sing songs.

This inspiration led her to participate in school level contests. Oli gave a speech in essay competition at her school when she was studying in grade five (2039 B.S.). She won the first prize. Then she was invited to visit almost all major districts of Nepal by then government minister. That was when she first came to Kathmandu. She got good opportunity to travel to many more cities at that time. The competition made her talent known beyond her family and

school. The trend of participating in more other contests started and she began bagging more and more awards in her school life.

In 2044 B.S she again got an opportunity to come to Kathmandu to record folk songs at Radio Nepal. During that contest, she obtained second position. This was the time when she felt very proud with herself as a young lady of Dang. The popularity of her first song 'Raptiko Jharana,' profoundly changer her career dynamic. The album was brought out by Music Nepal to the market.

Fortunately in 2047 BS she was invited to participate in Japan for debating program where she was selected for special prize among 48 international participants. The moment was also very especial in her life.

Though she used to participate in various contests and programs, she was not yet established till then. However, after having involved in this sector for 19 years, she is now a well-known figure. But she claims she is not satisfied. "I am improving my way of singing", said Oli. The music has become an integral part of her life. Without music, her life has no value, she says. Although she has taken up singing as a profession, she is not ready to call it a business.

Oli has already sung 12 dozen songs in films and already brought out 11 albums till now. Her latest album "Bihe Bhachhaina" (Not Married) has just come to the market. The sole purpose of this album is to inform about the condition of women in this society who have already crossed the age to get married. It actually resembles the condition in her own life. Although she has already crossed the normal age for marrying of Nepalese women, Oli is still single. That's why I chose this topic "Bihe Bhachhaina".

Although she mostly sings folk songs and dohori songs, Oli has more interest in other genres, too. She is also a news reader of Radio Nepal and Nepal Television. She is also considered a role model for women in a country where the population of female are often repressed and discriminated against. As an active woman she might be the source of inspiration to all Nepalese women. ■



Oli: Career of melody

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