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The National Newsmagazine

SPOTLIGHT

July 14-20, 2006

Govt. Policies & Programs

Shadow of Instability

Economy : Run up to Budget
SLC Result : Slight Improvement

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CONTENTS

	Page
LETTERS	3
NEWS NOTES	4
BRIEFS	6
QUOTE UNQUOTE/TRANSITION	7
OPINION : Dr. Ananda Bahadur Thapa	8
ELECTORAL SYSTEM: Time To Choose	11
SLC RESULTS: Slight Improvement	19
TRAFFIC AWARENESS: Unruly Roads	20
VIEWPOINT: Madhukar SJB Rana	21
ART: Powerful Movement	22
POPULATION DAY: Hidden Tragedy of Fallen Womb	23
PROFILE: Ani Choying Dolma	24
SPOTLIGHT/JULY 14, 2006	



COVERSTORY : Shadow Of Stability

The government presents lofty programs and policies even as clouds of uncertainty hang heavy

Page 12



BUDGET: Question of Implementation

Even before it is announced, experts raise question on the implementation of the budget

Page 10



INTERVIEW : Dr. Baburam Bhattarai

Maoist number two leader Dr. Bhattarai talks about his party's plans and intentions

Page 16

SPOTLIGHT

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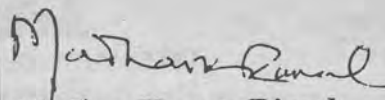
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It seems the latest eight-point agreement reached between the Seven Party Alliance government and the CPN (Maoists) leadership has not totally succeeded to instill faith and confidence in either signatory. As apprehended, the undercurrent that has become much stronger in recent weeks has started influencing the course of events more than the participants directly responsible for restoring peace and normalcy in the ravaged country. As it is, Nepal has never been able to stand up to any serious challenge on her own. No wonder, in the aftermath of the revolutionary changes brought about by the oppressed and exploited masses as a result of their unprecedented historic demonstrations and sacrifices, invisible forces have started muddling in the already troubled waters of the small poor country. In a situation where the autocracy of the monarchy has been substituted by the autocracy of the defunct House of Representatives, whose validity is too fragile as it rests not on the constitution of the country but on the imaginary mandate of the agitating crowd and could be invalidated by a strong and impartial judiciary befitting a sovereign and independent nation, even the legality of the Seven Party Alliance government could become untenable. As such, it has become most imperative that the country framed an interim constitution at the shortest possible time and formed the interim government at the earliest so that the government of the day could be accorded the indispensable constitutional validity. And this cannot materialize unless the CPN (Maoists) become partners in the government, for which the SPA government, its supporters and allies demand that they lay down the arms. According to Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, the Maoists "won't" lay down the arms until after the elections to the constituent assembly (see interview). And this is a stalemate that needs urgent intervention by a party agreeable to both. Since it is already almost three months, the country is being run by a government without legality, this emergency situation must not be prolonged under any pretense. But this is exactly what is happening. All those who are enjoying the perks, at the moment, want the House of Representatives as well as the SPA government to continue *sine die*. But the greater paradox the nation is facing is non-functioning of the government when it should have been exemplary. The head of the government has become incapacitated and unbridgeable differences amongst the constituents are making the government more ineffective. How long such precarious situation should be permitted to linger on? And who is there to take any new initiative? When the monarchy has been bereft of all authority and the Nepal Army, at the moment, demoralized, and when the government in power looks paralyzed, every constituent going its own way without any coordination, wherein lies the authority and where is country heading to? How long will the CPN (Maoists) keep up their patience? They sure have something up their sleeves. They have assured the Nepali people that they will maintain peace and will not go back to the jungle. But they have not said that they will stay silent spectators if the country moves towards disaster. Even Nepal's good friends should no more stay unconcerned. If they really want that Nepal should no more slide towards greater destruction, they must change their preconceived mindset and sincerely help the poor people to arrest the rot. But the biggest responsibility is, indeed, that of the people of Nepal. Are they alive to the most uncertain situation they are facing? Will they rise up and come to the rescue of their own country? ■


Madhav Kumar Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher



Way to Economic Prosperity

Yes, it is very narrow-minded to view Qinghai-Tibet railway as a security threat to India by the Tibetan refugees and to demonstrate against it, "Opportunities and Challenges" (July 7). It is rather an open and co-operative door for the economic prosperity of the two countries and as a Nepali, I also feel happy that in near future railway is going to be extended from Lhasa to the border area in Southern Tibet including to the borders of Nepal. It will definitely lead Nepalese to the economic prosperity.

Puspha Kheral
Hattiban

Good News For Nepal

The opening up of Qinghai-Tibet railway is a good news for Nepal ("Opportunities and Challenges", July 7). Since it joins the mainland China with Tibet area through railway link, it has the potential of drastically transforming the outlook and development of Tibet, which neighbors Nepal. As Chinese leaders have been saying that they would now build railway link up to southern Tibet and even up to its borders with Nepal, there are enough reasons for rejoice. However, Nepal would need to quickly take necessary steps to take advantage of the coming developmental revolution. It needs to build its infrastructure, communication, policy regimes as well as human resources in order to be able to take advantage of the situation.

Kiran Bista
Sanepa

Understand Situation

We all accept that Prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala is the one who has succeeded to gain the confidence of rebel Maoists and led towards the first step of peace in the country. However, it is very ridiculous to postpone vital concerns of nation because of his poor health (Issue of Concern, July 7) because country needs stability as soon as possible. The issue raised by Madhav Kumar Nepal, general secretary of UML a few days ago, is quite

genuine as he talked about transferring responsibilities of the Prime minister to another responsible person. Because country can't stop its progress because of a single person. Therefore, it is better to work as suggested by Madhav Kumar Nepal to move the country ahead smoothly.

Atul Maharjan
Patan

Be optimistic

India should break down its old mind set about China as a threat to Indian security. Because with the opening of the railways there has opened a great trade way and chance for development and prosperity for the both countries. Moreover, they should utilize this opportunity because there is a phrase that a pessimist can only complain about the noise when opportunity knocks but an optimist seizes the opportunity at right time and succeeds.

Harihar Moktan
Lalitpur

Is it possible?

Experience has taught us that it is very easy to say the upcoming budget will be more focused on villages but when it comes to implementation process, it is quite tough ("Eyes On Village" July 7) In the absence of the peoples' representatives in villages and lack of budgetary support by other countries except India, it seems very hard

for Dr Ram Sharan Mahat to fulfill his promises.

Dina Nath Rayamajhi
Pulchowk

Be Committed

Instead of tempting the rural people by using good words, I think Dr Ram Sharan Mahat should show his commitments by doing or implementing his words into action (Eyes On Village, July 7) People no longer want to listen to any stupid speech or promise because in the past they have already listened to enough of them. Now, they need commitment and you cannot make people fool repeatedly by only providing them lovely speeches.

Sarada Lamsal
Tinkune

Keep Promise

Every time a finance minister prepares a budget, he promises to help rural areas. But these promises are never kept (Eyes on Village, July 7). The current Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat has had the opportunity to present budget a number of times in the past. Although he is credited for ushering in the era of liberalization in the country after the restoration of democracy in 1990, he has not been able to guide the country towards all-round prosperity. Circumstances have given him another chance now. It is high time Dr. Mahat made the full use of his ministerial capacity to help the teeming millions of rural population who are suffering from poverty and misery. If he succeeds to help those people, his lifetime career as a politician and economist will have been put to good use. Otherwise, there is no sense is just rambling about helping the poor.

Keshav Gautam
New Baneshwore

Politicians Be Strength of Nation

Until and unless the political system is not made stable, other sectors of society are not going to be well groomed and economy of the country is not an exception. For the economic prosperity, politicians must realize that they need to sacrifice and they should not be weakness but strength of the country.

Grishma Tuladhar
Bagbazar

Military Secretariat Will Be History In Few Days

Defense Secretary Bishnu Dutta Upreti, on Sunday (July 9), told the Parliamentary State Affairs Committee (SAC) that the government would dissolve the Palace Military Secretariat within a few days. "We are in the process of doing away with the military secretariat and the Acts related to the army would be amended within a week," Upreti told SAC. The SAC had summoned six secretaries, including chief secretary Mukunda Sharma Poudel, to have updates on whether the bureaucracy has been working as per the declaration of the House of Representatives. The Palace Military Secretariat used to take decisions on senior army officer's promotion and posting. However, now the cabinet has been given the authority to appoint, promote and post senior army officers. On the Nepali Army celebrating King Gyanendra's birthday despite the government's decision not to mark the occasion, Upreti said the Army was not directed to do so. *The Himalayan Times daily reports.*

Whole Village Submerged Due To Rapti Flood

As Laxmanpur barrage and Kalkalwa barrage obstructed the flow of swollen Rapti river, the water rushed towards Holiya VDC in Banke district inundating all the wards. The village remains cut off due to swollen river. Residents of the villages are staying sleepless. "This is all due to barrages. As the flow of river was obstructed, the flood entered into village," said Gobre Daffali, a local resident. Every year, flood in Rapti river affects five VDCs located in its banks. Victims have accused the government of indifference towards their plight. The District Disaster Rescue Committee is planning to trans-locate the flood victims of Holiya VDC in three phases. *Kantipur daily reports.*

NHRC Chief, CEC Resign

In order to avoid the impeachment by the House of Representatives, the

Chief Election Commissioner Keshab Raj Rajbhandari and chief of National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Nayan Bahadur Khatri tendered their resignation on Sunday (July 9). Likewise, all members of NHRC also resigned from their jobs. Rajbhandari said he resigned to help the government. He faces accusation of holding meaningless municipal elections to strengthen royal government. Likewise, members of NHRC organized a press conference announcing their resignation. "We had met with the Prime Minister before this controversy. He told us to remain in office. Otherwise, we would have vacated sooner," said Khatri. Other members of the NHRC who have resigned en masse include Sudip Pathak, Sushila Singh, Gokul Pokharel and Dr. Ram Dayal Rakesh. Meanwhile, other election commissioners at the Election Commission Damaru Ballav Bhattarai, Jayaram Singh Bohara and Dil Bahadur Karki have not resigned from their posts. *Leading dailies report.*

NC, UML Discuss Handing Over PM's Duties

Owing to the poor health of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, leaders of Nepali Congress (NC) and Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) discussed about handing over his duties. The discussion took place in UML headquarters in Balkhu. At the meeting, UML said that the health condition of the PM should not be allowed to affect the efficacy of the government and the latter should not become prisoner of indecision. "In the absence of situation where (the PM) can work due to health, alternatives have to be explored," a UML leader said, adding, "Let's not put the country in standoff situation. Lets talk with other parties also." The meeting was participated by general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal, Amrit Bohara, Iswor Pokharel and Bharat Mohan Adhikari from the UML and vice president Sushil Koirala, Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat, Mahesh Acharya, Arjun Narsingh KC, Dr. Ram Baran Yadav, Chakra Prasad Bastola and Amod Prasad Upadhyaya from NC. Earlier, UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal had stated that the government's

speed should not be affected due to poor health of the PM. Talking to reporters, Nepal said that regressive elements were becoming active to take advantage of the situation. He said there is a need to initiate discussion to find out alternatives. *Kantipur daily reports.*

NC MPs Against House Dissolution

At the meeting of MPs of Nepali Congress (NC) held on Saturday, the understanding of dissolving the House of Representatives was roundly deplored. They warned against dissolving the House until and unless there is another viable alternative. The eight-point pact between the Maoists and the seven parties include a provision about dissolving the House. One of the participants of the meeting informed that the MPs have asked the parties and the Maoists to clarify about the alternatives to the House. The MPs have even called for dissolving the interim statute drafting committee as the latter has announced that it would provide alternative to the House in the interim constitution. *Leading dailies report.*

Deuba Meets With Indian PM

Former Prime Minister and president of Nepali Congress (Democratic) Sher Bahadur Deuba met with Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh in New Delhi on Saturday (July 8). During the meeting, Singh assured of all possible Indian cooperation to help Nepal restore peace and democracy. "He expressed his commitment to help democracy in Nepal," Deuba told reporters after the meeting. Deuba is currently on a ten-day informal tour to New Delhi. During his stay in New Delhi, Deuba has met with senior ministers, political leaders and officials. *Leading dailies report.*

Interim Statute Drafting Committee To Start Work

Nineteen days after it was formed with a mandate to frame interim constitution within 15 days, the committee to draft the interim statute has

announced it has started official work from Thursday (July 6). Convener of the committee former judge Laxman Aryal told reporters that the interim statute would also provide alternative to the House of Representatives. He added that since the question of monarchy would be decided by the constituent assembly, the interim statute would go by the House declaration as far as monarchy is concerned. The terms of reference for the committee include 12 point pact, 25-point ceasefire code of conduct and spirit of the people's movement. The committee decided to start its work after both the government and the Maoist negotiating team wrote a letter asking them to go ahead and not wait for the expansion. *Leading dailies report.*

House Committee Seeks Clarification Over Letter To UN

House of Representatives Committee for Monitoring Ceasefire has regretted the lack of consultations before the government sent letter to the UN asking for latter's involvement in arms management. It has decided to summon Foreign Minister and team of government negotiators regarding the issue. "We have heard that the government has sent a letter to the UN. But we do not know the content of the letter. And there has been more confusion due to the Maoist reaction that they, too, were not consulted before the letter was sent," said Subas Nemwang, Speaker and chair of the committee. Meanwhile, an official at the UN office in Kathmandu said the negative reaction by the Maoists over the letter has created confusion. The UN officials have been saying that they would need the total understanding of both the conflicting parties for it to accept any role in the peace process. The UN Secretary General is yet to officially react to the letter. *Leading dailies report.*

Civil Society To Launch Agitation From July 26

Accusing that the government actions were going against the spirit of the People's Movement, leaders of civil society have vowed to launch agitation

beginning July 26. "The issues of democratic movement are being shadowed," said Devendra Raj Pandey, adding, "The main demand of the movement was constituent assembly but it is being pushed behind." He added that there was a ploy to make the parliament supreme, which he said was not the demand of the movement. "The continuation or dissolution of the parliament is not an issue," he said. Stating that despite reminding the prime minister and ministers about their demands through memos, the government had not worked in proper direction. "Therefore, the civil society has concluded that it needs to launch street agitation in a big way," he said. Krishna Pahadi, a rights activists, added that such civil society agitation would take the form of democratic republic front. He deplored the government for not taking action against chief of army as advised by the Rayamajhi commission. *Kantipur daily reports.*

Maoists Abduct Six Persons

Flouting the ceasefire code of conduct, the Maoists have abducted six persons including three political party workers. In Dhanusha, the Maoists have abducted five persons including two workers of Nepali Congress (Democratic), one worker of UML, and two civilians. The NC-D and UML have issued separate statements asking the Maoists to immediately release the abductees. Likewise, in Rajbiraj, cadres of Terai Liberation Front affiliated to the Maoists have abducted Tirtha Raj Khatiwada, chief of custom office. Meanwhile, in Banke, residents of Hirminiya village organized a big rally opposing the recent abduction of two civilians. The people marched to Nepalgunj and gheraoed the liaison office of the Maoists demanding immediate release of Hemanta Thapa and Jayalal Mahut, who were abducted a week ago. *Kantipur daily reports.*

Nepal Throws Open Buddhist Circuits To Chinese Tourists

The Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation in cooperation with

Nepal Tourism Board has unveiled Buddhist circuits to Chinese tour operators amid a program in Beijing on July 5. According to a press release issued by the NTB here, the program was attended by over 140 tour operators and media personnel, in which Nepali delegation disseminated latest tourism information and situation updates of the country as well as launched the new Nepal brand "Naturally Nepal' Once is not enough" to Chinese travel trade personalities. *Leading dailies report.*

PAC To Probe Pashupati Bhatta

Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee (PAC), on Thursday (July 6), decided to call the main priest (Mul Bhatta) of Pashupatinath temple to question him about the reported irregularities in the temple funds that comprises people's offerings. The committee delved into a report prepared by the Pashupati Area Development Trust (PADT) on its 'moveable and immoveable properties' as well as the misuse of people's offerings. The committee members also showed concern over the recent flood that damages 11 houses in the Pashupati area. "Misuse of people's offering to Pashupatinath temple has been reported time and again. We have decided to send out team for field visit to investigate such matters," said PAC chairman Chitra Bahadur KC. *The Himalayan Times daily reports.*

Petrol Demand In Border Areas Rise

As the price of petrol is lesser by Rs 15 per liter in Nepal than India, demand for the same has soared in border areas. Vehicles from across the border are seen entering into the Nepalese side to fill up their tanks. In the current year, Amlekhgunj depot (near Birgunj border) alone has sold 24.5 million liters of petrol compared to 19.3 million liters last year. The price difference in diesel stands at Rs 2.6 per liter while that in kerosene stands at Rs 3 per liter. All of them are cheaper on Nepalese side. *Kantipur daily reports.*



King Gyanendra receives best wishes from people on the occasion of his 60th birthday

Gorkhapatra

ALL FIVE SOLDIERS OF NEPAL ARMY (NA) WHO WERE in captivity have been released on Saturday by militia in Congo. In fact, during a clash between peace-keeping forces of NA and Congolese militia in Ituri region one and a half month ago, one NA soldier had died and seven were captured. Two of the captured soldiers were released two weeks ago. The UN had been working to release them.

THE NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (NHRC) has informed that 22 people have died during the last two months of ceasefire period. Although the incidents of human rights violations have reduced, the killings have not stopped, according to the NHRC. "Of the total, 12 have been killed by the Maoists or security personnel," said Sudip Pathak, a member of the Commission. Others were killed due to mine explosions and attacks by vigilantes. The Commission has added that threats, extortion and action by "people's courts" of the Maoists have not stopped. The Commission had prepared the report detailing the incidents of past two months.

THE GOVERNMENT HAS EXTENDED THE TENURE OF Rayamajhi commission by two more months. Earlier, the government had formed the commission in order to investigate repression against people's movement and recommend actions against guilty. It was asked to finish its investigation in two months. But the commission requested the government for the extension of its tenure as it could not complete the investigations in the given time. The commission has been interrogating former royal ministers, advisors and officials about their role in the repression.

OFFICIALS OF NEPAL AND INDIA ARE SET TO REVIEW the railway service agreement to do away with existing hassles in the operation of Indian rail from Kolkata to Inland Container

Depot (ICD) in Birgunj. According to sources at the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies, a meeting at joint secretary-level will be held on July 18-19 in Kathmandu to review the pact. The meeting is being held at a time when the ICD has not been able to operate as desired even though it was set up two years ago. "The meeting will focus on easing the trade and ending hassles in the operation of ICD," said the source. Officials say that once the custom method is finalized and cargo starts coming from various Indian cities, the ICD would come into full operation and help in the reduction of existing trans-shipment cost.

THE LOAN RECOVERY TRIBUNAL HAS NOT been able to effectively help in the recovery of bad debts, according to a data. In the past three years since it was formed, banks and financial institutions have filed cases demanding recovery of bad debts totaling Rs 13.12 billion out of which only Rs 85.8 million could be

recovered. Although tribunal has the authority to imprison any defaulter and make him pay-back the loan, none of the defaulters have so far been imprisoned. As per the financial sector reforms program, the government had formed the tribunal to expedite judicial process of loan recovery. According to latest data by the Nepal Rastra Bank, of the total loan investment (by the banking system) of Rs 155 billion nearly 18.26 percent are bad debts. Commercial banks face bad debts totaling Rs 28.75 billion. Officials say the tribunal has inadequate resources and manpower to deal with the pressure of cases. There are around 2000 cases filed at the tribunal currently.

THE GOVERNMENT HAS OVERTURNED ITS EARLIER decision and has now decided to allow Moondrops Manpower Agency to recruit workers for South Korea. The latest decision was taken after the Korean Federation for Small Business refused to provide workers' quota to government. Earlier, the government had decided to suspend the license of Moondrops charging that its process of recruiting workers were not transparent. The government then decided that it would take over the process of selecting workers itself. However, the KFSB refused to provide the quota to the government saying it has an agreement with Moondrops. The KFSB even threatened to relocate the quota to other countries if the government did not allow the Moondrops to recruit workers. "For this time, the government has decided to allow Moondrops to send workers by fulfilling some conditions," said a source at the cabinet. The first condition is that the company should withdraw its legal case against the government. Other two conditions include that the agency give priority to workers who were selected in the past and the agency provide 10 percent quota to government. Managers of the agency said that while they were ready to fulfill the first condition, the other two have to be discussed with KFSB.

"I urge media persons not to spread any rumors regarding my health situation, particularly since the country is going through a difficult phase. I am recovering well and will talk to media in detail soon."

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, talking to few reporters, from his hospital bed.

* * *

"Children used to fear the name of Gabbar Singh at one time. Now people have the same feeling towards so-called People's Court."

Madhav Kumar Nepal, general secretary of UML, addressing a gathering in Birtamode.

* * *

"Prolonging the tenure of the HOR will only provide a platform for the palace and the army to maneuver against the achievements of Jana Andolan II."

Dev Gurung, a member of the Maoist talks team speaking at a program organized in the capital by the Society of Indigenous Tharu Legal Professionals (SITLP).

* * *

"The OCE decided not to announce the names of the toppers of the SLC examination so as to avoid unethical, unprofessional and un-intellectual maneuvering in SLC results."

Dr Mangal Siddhi Manandhar, Minister for Education and Sports, defending the decision of the Office of Controller of Examination (OCE) not to publish the names of



Bimarsha

toppers, at an interaction program at Reporters' Club.

* * *

"None of the cabinet members will go to the palace this time. We have decided to send a written wish."

Dharma Nath Shah, Minister of State for General Administration, saying that the government decided to send written wish to King Gyanendra on the occasion of his birthday.

* * *

"How do I know who repressed it? You guys are so smart, you should know it better."

Bharat Keshar Simha, honorary ADC to the King, when asked by journalists if he knew who repressed the People's Movement.

* * *

"We will not support the policies and programs amid the status quo. Since our party chairman is deputy prime minister, we will only write a note of dissent."

Lilamani Pokharel, MP of People's Front (PF), rejecting the government's policies and programs, in the parliament.

* * *

"People's Front should choose to become either a ruling party or an opposition one. It cannot be both. It cannot enjoy power and then act as opposition also."

Raghuji Pant, MP of Unified Marxist Leninist (UML), criticizing Lilamani Pokharel's decision not to support government's policies and programs even as his party's (PF's) chairman Amik Sherchan is a deputy prime minister in current cabinet.

* * *

TRANSITION

RESIGNED: Chairman Nayan Bahadur Khatri and members Sudip Pathak, Sushila Singh, Gokul Pokharel and Dr. Ram Dayal Rakesh, of National Human Rights Commission, from their posts.

Keshab Raj Rajbhandari, chief election commission, from his post.

ARRIVED: New Ambassador Designate of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland to Nepal **Andrew Hall** in Kathmandu to take up his assignment.

SCRAPPED: The annual public holiday on the occasion of King's Birthday, by the government.

RETURNED: **Sher Bahadur Deuba**, former prime minister and president of

Nepali Congress (Democratic), after completing his ten-day unofficial visit to New Delhi, where he met with Indian Prime Minister **Dr. Manmohan Singh** among other Indian leaders and officials.

EXTENDED: Tenure of Rayamajhi commission, which is formed to probe repression against People's Movement, by two more months, by the government.

Inland Waterways Of The United States

By DR. AB THAPA

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

In the United States, inland navigation is highly developed. The experience of the USA in dealing with the problems of the development of the water transport could be very useful for the development of inland waterways leading to seaport outlet for Nepal.

United States had 25,380 miles of usable navigable inland channels, exclusive of the Great Lakes in second half of the 20th Century. A nine foot operating depth is standard for these inland channels. Of the 25,380 miles, a total of 15,348 miles have a depth of nine foot or more. The remaining 10,032 miles is under nine-foot depth. Except for the 522 mile New York State Barge Canal all these waterways are Federal Projects.

With the exception of the Upper Mississippi Waterway, the Missouri River and New York State Barge Canal, all the inland channels are open to navigation the year round. Icing conditions close the above three waterways for about four months of the year- December through March. At times, ice forms on the Illinois Waterway, the Mississippi above St. Louis, and on the Ohio River, but seldom impedes navigation for any length of time.

With two notable exceptions the channels are slack water routes which have been improved for navigation by the construction of systems of locks and dams. The Mississippi is open river for 1,000 miles south of St. Louis. The Missouri is open river. Yet the two present a striking difference. The Mississippi is a wide, deep, commodious river. The Missouri has a restricted seven-foot depth. Both the Atlantic and Gulf Intracoastal Waterways are largely open channels, although both have some locks and both have reaches that are exposed to tidal currents and winds.

Introduction of Steamboats

In the United States of America, development of river transportation began as early as 1782. The introduction of steam propulsion in the beginning of the 19th Century gave further encouragement to inland navigation. In 1811, just four years after the invention of the steamboats, the river steamer NEW ORLEANS was launched at Pittsburgh and went into service between there and New Orleans. By 1836, river steamboats were making calls at New Orleans at the rate of 1,000 per year. By 1852, the public landing at Cincinnati was reporting river steamboat calls at an annual rate of 8,000, about one per hour.

Traffic on the inland waterways expanded so rapidly with development of the steamboat that Congress acted in 1824 to improve the rivers and harbors on a planned basis. The President was authorized to utilize the services of the Army Corps of Engineers for this work. Ever since that time, the Corps has had responsibility for the planning, improving, and maintaining of the nation's navigable waters, including harbors.

Water transport through the Great Lakes also developed when grains and iron ore regions were opened up. The Canals constituted another means of transportation and with the success of Erie Canal in 1825, canal construction developed into a speculative boom.

River Transportation in Decline

During the War Between the States, there was a constant struggle for control of the rivers and coastal waters serving the areas of conflict. Traffic in these waters was brought to virtual standstill. Hundreds of steamboats were burned.

For all practical purposes, river transportation was not rebuilt. One of the reasons was the emergence of the railroads as the dominant form of transportation. In 1850 there were only 9,000 miles of rail lines in the United States; by 1890 the railway track length had increased to almost 164,000 miles. Of devastating significance was the railroads' entry into water transportation. They bought up river lines and lake lines. They even bought some privately owned canal. Their purpose was not to promote water transportation, but to destroy it. The railroads used some water shipping lines as fighting ships to bleed competing water lines to death economically. Others were bought to let the vessels rot at their docks. And the docks and terminals rotted with them. Railroad-purchased canal were relegated to disuse.

After 1880 water transport except on the Great Lakes rapidly declined. By the end of the century steam vessels had practically disappeared from the rivers following the development of Railways.

Panama Canal Act

The railroads' tactics to destroy river transportation finally attracted the attention of Congress. President Theodore Roosevelt appointed the Inland Waterways Commission in 1907 to study the status of waterways and water carriers. This Commission recommended in 1908 that Congress make more suitable provision for improving the inland waterways of the United States.

The Panama Canal Act was passed in 1912 to divorce railroads from ownership of water carriers. This Act is considered by historians as the legislative keystone of the revival of inland waterways transportation. It prohibits railroads from owning, controlling or operating a water carrier that operates through the Panama Canal or elsewhere, provided, however, that in the case of a water carrier not operating through the Panama Canal authority is conferred upon the Interstate Commerce Commission

to make a determination as to whether such ownership or operation will be in the public interest and will not exclude, prevent or reduce competition on the route.

In 1959-1962 a major test of the Act was made. The Illinois Central and Southern Pacific Railroads in 1959 filed an application with the Interstate Commerce Commission seeking approval to acquire the John I. Hay Company barge line, a major common carrier operating on the Mississippi River system and the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway. This was the first major effort by railroads to invade domestic water carrier operations since the passage of the Panama Canal Act. The American Waterways Operators, Inc., opposed the application, as did other interests. In 1962, ICC denied the application in a decision reaffirming the established public policy of separation of ownership and operation of the various transport modes.

Revival of River Transportation

A bold policy of active participation of the Government after the first World War had resulted not only in rehabilitating water transport but developing it as an essential mode for the economic development of the country. The opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway may be quoted as an example of the policy adopted by the United States and Canadian Governments. Harnessing the Mississippi system and stabilizing the Channels is another example of the systematic planning and hard work done by the United States Engineers backed by the technical and financial resources of a prosperous country.

Since 1920 the United States of America has implemented plans to create and develop about 28,000 miles of waterways, 10,000 miles of which take over 9 feet draft. The resulting benefit to the country of this extensive development of waterways can be gauged from the fact that the annual traffic carried on these waterways exclusive of the Great Lakes increased from 9,233,362,320 ton miles in 1931 to 97,662,567,000 ton miles in 1955.

Modern Technology

Water transport in the United States has undergone phenomenal changes in recent years as both the Federal and State Governments now fully appreciate the part that inland water transport can and does play in the development of an integrated transport system geared to the overall requirements of the country. Power units have been made more efficient and economical through improvements in craft design and improved methods of propulsion and towage. Considerable progress has been made in the development of articulated push-tows. Transportation needs of steel mills, cement factories, oil refineries, chemical plants, coal mines and numerous other industries are being met by these huge integrated river tows, some of which are longer than the largest ocean freighters and tankers.

Even in the early days, inland water transport was considered cheap, but, with the extensive progress that has been made in recent years in respect of craft design, etc, it has now come to be recognized as the cheapest form of transport. It is interesting to note that currently 15 percent of the total transport requirements of the United States is handled by this mode of transport. ■

(Dr. Thapa writes on water resources)

Setback To Campaign To Control Small Arms

The UN world conference on small arms has collapsed without agreement, despite the majority of governments, including the European Union, and many African and Latin American governments, backing tougher controls on the international trade in small arms and light weapons, according to Amnesty International.

"The conference, which ended on Friday 7 July, collapsed after a small number of states, most prominently the United States, blocked key issues so consistently that no agreement was possible."

During the conference, moves to agree global controls on the small arms trade were blocked by Cuba, India, Iran, Israel and Pakistan, said the statement.

"The world has been held hostage by a tiny minority of countries. At the current rate, up to 12,000 people will have been killed by small arms during this two-week conference. They have been betrayed," said Anna Macdonald, Oxfam International's Control Arms Campaign manager.

The Control Arms Campaign is now taking its call for tougher global arms controls to the UN General Assembly in October. There, decisions are frequently put to a vote meaning that a small minority of governments cannot block progress. Several governments have already indicated that they want a resolution to be put to the UN General Assembly first committee calling for negotiations to begin on a legally-binding global Arms Trade Treaty.

"The world desperately needs a tough and well-enforced Arms Trade Treaty to stop the present flow of weaponry to serious abusers of human rights," said Brian Wood, Amnesty International's research manager for the arms trade.

The Control Arms Campaign has called on the governments to establish such a treaty and to agree global guidelines for small arms sales to stop weapons fuelling human rights abuses and poverty around the world.

"By allowing this meeting to fail, governments have squandered the opportunity to take action that would have saved lives around the world. It is unacceptable for two weeks of talking to produce no outcome, particularly when 1000 people are still dying at gunpoint every day," said Rebecca Peters, Director of IANSA.

Over one million people from 160 countries backed the Campaign by joining the Million Faces Petition, which was presented to UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, on the first day of the conference, Monday 26 June. ■

BUDGET 2006

Questions Of Implementation

Even before the budget is announced, questions are being asked on its implementation

By A CORRESPONDENT

A leading economist last week raised some serious questions regarding the budget of the fiscal year 2006/07, which is scheduled to be presented this week.

Economist Dr. Raghab Dhoj Pant, who created a storm four months ago by stating that the economy was on the verge of collapse compelling then government to come out with clarifications, has now called into question budget formulation, approval and implementation procedures.

"This government, as I understand, is a transitory government that is waiting to hand over the power to interim government. So, where does it get the authority to formulate budget for the whole fiscal year in the first place," asked Dr. Pant. According to him, the current finance minister should only be presenting a transitional budget without going in-depth on programs and projects. "He should only provide broad outline of income and expenditure and leave the rest to the incoming interim government."

Dr. Pant added that since the eight-point pact between the government and the Maoists state that the former has to take decision on any issue of 'far-reaching consequence to the nation' based on consensus, it is important to know whether Maoists have been consulted in the formulation of the budget.

Addressing a press conference, the executive director of Institute for Development Studies (IFDS) Dr. Pant expressed concern over the lack of clarity in the political economic processes in the

country. He said there were lack of clarity on who is going to approve the budget and who will own up the responsibility of implementation in current situation of utter confusion and instability.

He said that despite ceasefire in the country, common people were not yet able to benefit from peace dividend.

Meanwhile, Finance Minister is scheduled to present the budget for the fiscal year 2006/07 at the parliament, most

brought without consultations. Dev Gurung, a member of Maoist talks team, said that if the budget is introduced without consulting with his party and civil society, there will be problems in its implementation. Stating that the Maoists favor total change in the current budget system, Gurung said, "Budget oriented towards poor people and rural areas is the need of the hour."

Speaking at a program in the capital recently, he urged the government to bring forth short-term programs to provide relief to poor people and hold elections for Constituent Assembly rather than going for big projects. "The current government has the mandate to hold CA elections only. Therefore, it should bring people-oriented and short-term budget," he said. He urged the government to adopt progressive taxation system. He also called for



Industrial units: Will the budget give any relief?

probably on July 12. Minister Dr. Mahat has been saying that this time he will give top priority to rural projects, electrification and road construction.

Dr. Mahat knows that he needs to walk tightrope to satisfy demands of various sections of society, especially since public aspirations have soared following the April movement. Maoist leaders have been saying that implementation will be difficult if budget is

nationalization of King's property. "Instead of foreign loan and aid, budget should be based on internal resources."

It seems practically impossible for Dr. Mahat to be able to satisfy demands of all sections of people. But he may be expecting to meet most of their demands while presenting what country director of World Bank Kenichi Ohashi recently said was going to be the "most important budget in the modern history of Nepal." ■

ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Time To Choose

Experts discuss the viability of different electoral systems

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

As the country marches towards the elections of Constituent Assembly (CA), experts have now started debating on what sort of electoral system may be best for ensuring an inclusive and fully representative state in the present day Nepal given its multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-regional and multi-cultural fabric.

Ever since Nepal took its first tentative steps into democratic era since 1950, it has been following First-Past-The Post (FPTP) or winner-takes-all electoral system in which majority rules.

And now when there are lots of debates about the non-inclusion of minorities, women and Dalits in the state structure, experts have started wondering whether the country needs better electoral system.

Amid these debates, Rural Development Foundation (RDF), an NGO, with the help of ESP-DFID, has translated International IDEA (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance) Handbook on

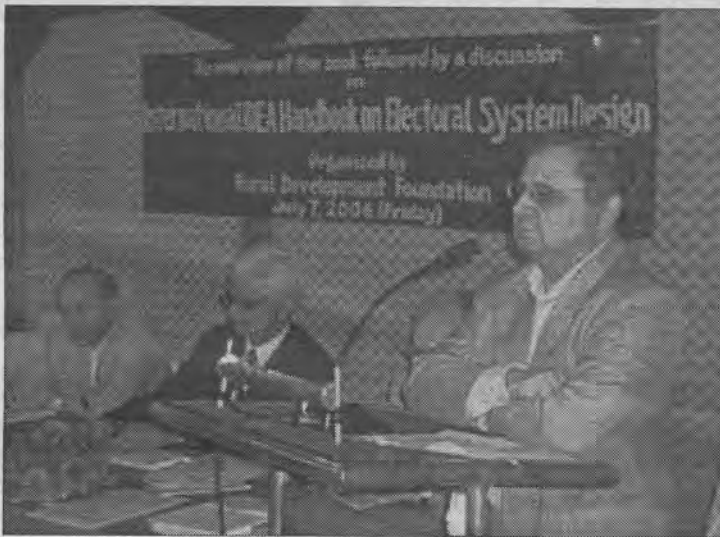
Electoral System Design into Nepali language. The book presents electoral experiences of over 200 countries around the world and discusses merits and demerits of various electoral systems in practice today.

Vidar Helgesen, Secretary General of International IDEA believes that the issue of electoral system 'though it appears as technical is, in fact, a highly political one as they operate on broader national context.' "Different electoral systems, he said, gives different outcomes that can have huge political implications," he said, addressing a program last week held in

Kathmandu. The program was organized by RDF to discuss the electoral systems in the backdrop of translation of the book.

According to Krishna Man Pradhan, president of RDF, "At a time when the national agenda has been set regarding writing new constitution through election of Constituent Assembly, the usefulness of the book has further increased."

Professor of Political Science, Krishna Khanal, leader of the team of translators that translated the book into Nepali, said the book includes electoral experiences of



Discussion program : Relevant topic

213 countries and independent territories around the world. There are primarily three different electoral system and 12 sub-systems.

Professor Khanal said South Africa currently practices what can be called as most accurate electoral system where a party garnering 69.69 percent of votes bagged 69.75 percent of parliamentary seats. Whereas in Nepal, in the last parliamentary election, a party that bagged 6 percent of votes did not win a single seat. He said that as the country is facing the election of Constituent Assembly (CA), the book can be quite useful in making choices

among the existing First Past The Post (FPTP), Proportional Representation (PR) or Mixed system. Professor Khanal added that personally he feels exercising FPTP system to choose fifty percent of the CA members and exercising PR to choose another fifty percent would help the country achieve inclusive democracy.

Professor Dr. Jorgen Elklit, Department of Political Science, University of Aarhus, Denmark, who is also one of the contributors of the original book, said electoral systems provide most complex of choices. He said choosing electoral system involve choosing among conflicting factors.

Addressing the program various political leaders including Arjun Narsingh KC of Nepali Congress (NC), Dr. Minendra Rijal of NC - Democratic, Bhim Rawal and Sahana Pradhan of UML conceded that the country needed to adopt a different electoral system during the time of election of CA itself. They said that it was vital to initiate dialogue among and between parties, civil society and all other stakeholders for the purpose of choosing particular electoral system.

On the other hand, Dr. Birendra Mishra, former election commission, said it was important to determine the number of CA members before deciding on electoral system.

Speaker of the House of Representatives Subas Nemwang said the debate was necessary to ascertain the

nature of electoral system to follow to choose CA. "This book in front of us today will provide valuable inputs (for the debate)," he said.

Anup Raj Sharma, judge at the Supreme Court, said that issues raised in the book would be instrumental in helping us make informed choices and share experiences regarding the electoral system in the world. "Our main challenges are to ensure the inclusion of women, Dalit and backward community and our effort should be geared towards addressing them," he said, adding that the book should be read by all Nepalis. ■

GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

Under The Shadow Of Instability

At a time when shadow of political instability is hovering over the government and the House of Representatives, the government of seven party alliance unveils ambitious annual policies and programs targeting long-term objectives for development. As Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, who has signed 8-point roadmap with the Maoists as a death knell to the HoR, is now hospitalized, nobody can predict the future political course. In this fragile situation, how the policies and programs announced by the government can work remains to be seen

By KESHAB POUDEL

Civil Society Group, which played a major role in the process of People's Movement II, has already announced fresh round of street agitation, which will begin from 26 July with a demand for the dissolution of the House of Representatives (HoR) and formation of new interim government to hold the elections for Constituent Assembly.

An Interim Constitution Drafting Commission has already begun its work to draft an interim constitution in accordance with the agreement reached between

leaders of seven parties and Maoists. The chairman of the commission has already said that the new interim constitution will have arrangements for new legislature.

The same persons of civil society who were instrumental to popularize the demand of restoration of House of Representatives are now demanding its dissolution. The same persons - who believe that by taking oath of changed words would clean their past image - too, have signed in a copy of their own death warrant.

"For many this is a puzzling situation how and why all these things have been

taking place like a magic show, but after analyzing these things in depth one reaches the conclusion that there is a whole process of destabilization by invisible forces with a goal to achieve. The trend of destabilization is set long back - which is recurring time and again in a new form with changed slogans. This is just an old wine in new bottle. It had happened in 1979 and 1990 and now the same trend has been pushed forward vigorously," said a political analyst.

As both these events are directed for the dissolution of the HoR, the announcement of annual policies and



MPs in the Parliament: How long is their tenure?

programs by the government with long-term implications have little meaning.

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala from his bed in the intensive care unit of Sahid Gangalal Heart Hospital authorized the first deputy prime minister K.P. Sharma Oli to read out the policies and programs of the government on 9 July, which among others, stresses the need to continue the HoR till alternative arrangement is made.

Previously, the present Constitution had set forth that the government program is read out by the King on the advice of the Council of Ministers. Under a declaration of the House of Representatives, this time, the seven party government believes that the constitution has changed, though the HoR has no power to do that except through due process of amendment.

"It is known to all that the HoR, which was reinstated after the historic People's Movement (Janandolan), has made an important declaration to translate people's expectations and commitments to total democracy into reality. The declaration has reaffirmed that the people are invincible power and that the Nepalese people are sovereign. Necessary legal arrangements will be made to implement the declaration of the House of Representatives," said prime minister Koirala in his government's annual program message.

"Though the HoR members claim to have the sovereign power of the people

at present, they themselves seem to lack confidence in their own declaration. It is not out of high respect to the prime minister that they accepted what he declared along with Maoist leader Prachanda. Members of parliament have not yet dared to overcome that by any parliamentary command," said the analyst.

Highlights of Policies and Programs

The eight-page long policies and programs include thirty-eight points program, among others, focusing on rural poverty to power, construction of road to economic reform and rural development programs as well as reconstruction of the damaged infrastructure. Besides, the main thrust of the policies and programs of the government for the fiscal year 2006-2007 is to prepare the interim constitution and hold the elections for Constituent Assembly.

The programs state that "sustainable peace will be established in the country in accordance with the aspirations of the people of Nepal by holding elections to a Constituent Assembly in a free and fair manner and in an atmosphere that is free of intimidation while implementing commitments to establishing peace, including the management of arms, in accordance with the various

understandings and agreements reached between the government and the Maoists as well as the Seven Parties and the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist)."

The government also stresses the need of partnership and collaboration between and among the government, the people, and the private and non-governmental sectors in carrying out development activities. Priority will be given to the projects that increase rural employment and income level as well as projects meant for infrastructure building.

On the road development and transportation, the government has given special emphasis. While the construction of the Trishuli-Syaphrubesi-Rasuwadhi road, which links north and south borders, will be started this year, special arrangements will be initiated for the improvement of the standard of the postal highway and other subsidiary highways in terai.

Given the present state of lack of participation of women in the mainstream of national development owing to gender inequalities, priority will be given to women's capacity development and empowerment programs, the programs state.

"To meet the growing demand of Nepal for electricity and to remove the state of load shedding, implementation of some medium-scale hydro-electricity projects will be taken forward immediately. Emphasis will be laid as well on the development and expansion of solar energy, biogas, small scale hydropower and alternative energy technology."

From education to financial sector reforms and special provisions for civil servants and poverty alleviations, the government policies and programs covers all areas. How this weak and unstable government will implement these ambitious programs remain to be seen.

Chaotic Situation

In a chaotic political situation of the country, different interest groups have different outlook about the law. The hearing for the petitions - which were filed in Supreme Court demanding the declaration of the exact position of the declarations of the HoR - has been postponed several times in the last two weeks. The delayed judicial process has



Political demonstrations: Here to stay

prolonged the confusion of the real position of the constitution in the context of HoR declaration.

"It seems that by the time these petitions come for final disposal, the constitution might have been torn into pieces by another group of persons who are supposed to carry the real mandate of the people to prepare an interim constitution," added the analyst.

The leaders have changed their roadmap one after another. Their original roadmap was to fill the vacuum of popular representation in the government as well as to reactivate the constitution fully but in their third roadmap after the restoration of HoR, the idea of interim constitution has come as a provision of the agreement of eight parties.

"MPs have, at least, started to learn from the situation around them that unseen forces are more powerful and coercive than the seen forces within the parliament and within the country," the analyst added.

It is difficult to understand how a government, which even does not have possibility to be in power for three months, can assure the people by its three years policies and programs in peculiar situation of the country. It is not the logic but make-believe that works. People have to believe because the government asks them to believe.

Koirala's Appeal

Everything is not going on smoothly as even the position of prime minister Koirala is uncertain. Nobody needs to wonder if Prime Minister Koirala is compelled to resign under headlines of populist newspapers. Just a day before the announcement of annual policies and program, Prime Minister Koirala appealed to the nation from his sick bed to have patience and tolerance. This is a natural wish from the position of power.

"The media person should not disseminate wrong ideas in the present context when the country is passing through a very difficult situation," urged Koirala to media. "Let no wrong news about my health be disseminated. My health condition has improved a great deal compared to a day or two ago." Expressing regrets over the dissemination of misleading news about health, the prime minister stated that he was compelled to speak out to refute such news.

"What he did as a leader of agitation in the past, there are other persons in the same position who don't want to concede and allow him to enjoy peace and stability in the status quo of the power," said the analyst. "The expectation of the power has always been peace and stability whereas aspirants for power have contrary interest. And therefore, the country is in now in a phase of turmoil and instability."

Like Prime Minister Koirala, almost all members of the HoR have their own interest to fulfill and have their own ideas for peace and stability. "A large number of MPs have come out with their resolute opinion to continue the HoR so long as the elections for Constituent Assembly are not held. MPs want share in the power dislodging the present set of ministers but they don't want to sacrifice the HoR where their interests lie," said the analyst.

Along with other members, speaker Subash Chandra Nemwang, who enjoys maximum power and privilege equivalent to prime minister in accordance with declaration, is lobbying for longer life of the HoR. "There is no question to dissolve the HoR as long as the elections for CA is held," said speaker Nemwang.

Destabilize Prime Minister

Prime minister Koirala, who was indispensable till a month ago for destabilization of political process, seems to be a liability now. Although some aspirants for prime ministership dismissed media report that the process is on to choose alternative to Koirala, there may be truths to those reports.

When the whole nation is wishing the good health of Prime Minister Koirala, CPN-UML leader Madhav Kumar Nepal, who later refuted the charges of dislodging prime minister, as a leader of the largest party in the HoR has revealed his impatience to replace Prime Minister Koirala by implied terms. "The government is ineffective and inefficient. If it is necessary, the leadership should be changed," said **Nepal**.

"Many times in past, CPN-UML general secretary Nepal had chance to become prime minister but his moves were thwarted by the counter-moves orchestrated from elsewhere, which plays the role of real king-maker," said the analyst. "Some believe that if Nepal will be appointed as a prime minister that will be for a very short period but for a very unpopular and unholy task."

Whatever the forms of government and constitutional process, the moves towards destabilization continue. "The country has been destabilized in a very intensive and extensive scale not for nothing. Roadmaps are changing one after another from the very beginning.

Reviewing records of past few months, one can see the uncertain and unpredictable course. Initially, the agitation of seven parties was declared just for four days but it continued for an indefinite period till the decisive showdown was complete," added the analyst.

In the context of changing roadmaps, one cannot rule out the possibility to see the new prime minister to carry out new roadmaps. Prime Minister Koirala, who has seen all kinds of political development in the last six decades, might be hunted by some hidden moves.

Prime Minister Koirala was part of the political game which took two major political decisions. "The HoR declared itself a body to exercise sovereign power on behalf of the people but its leaders, in a dark room meeting at prime minister's residence agreed for its premature death. Elsewhere in a constitutional monarchy, the King is supposed to sign a death warrant. But it was reverse in Nepal where, in practical terms, leaders of the parliament have signed their own death warrant, which may come into execution soon after the interim constitution is announced."

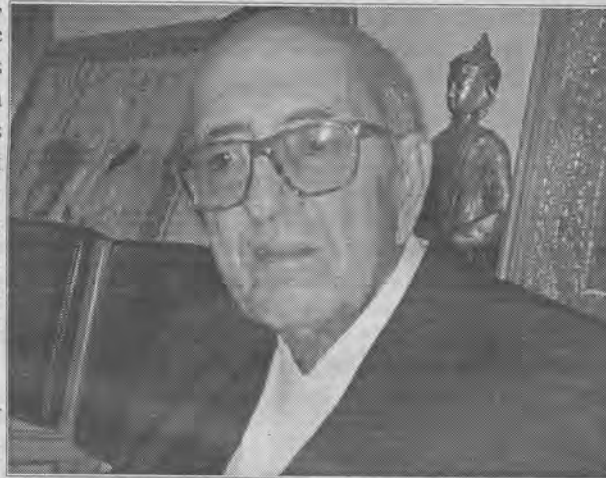
Interim Constitution

No one is sure what type of interim constitution will come out in future. "Some vocal lawyers have harsh criticism against the present draftsmen. They may not know from where the final text of the draft may come. This kind of fear, distrust and lack of faith is growing day by day which is a sign of unstable society. The more the political instability continues the more there will be lack of self confidence," said the analyst.

"The head of commission Laxman Prasad Aryal, with his colorful bio-data including a lawyer as well as judge in the past, has boasted that the present constitution was best in the South Asia and now he is writing another best constitution in the world. A very cruel joke is being cut at the cost of genuine aspiration of the people as well as the tax money of the poorest people of the world," said the analyst. "One is reminded by T. S Eliot "Whether the King rules or barons rule, the fate of the people remains the same."

The Magna Carta was a concession from the King procured by feudal barons of 13th century England. Nepal, in this 21st century, has its own barons now competing against each other for the political superiority.

"But there is no one in the leadership who seem to be above all these petty interests. What the nation lacks at present is a politician of a patriotic and democratic commitment with a long term vision. Nobody can differ with Prime Minister Koirala that the country is in a very difficult phase at present. The process of instability which has been unleashed under his leadership as a commander of agitation has now caused him to become alarmingly worried," said the analyst. "Prime Minister



Koirala: Concerned by signs of instability?

Koirala's concerns for stability might be misunderstood by his competitors as a self-seeking claim. The credibility of political statement has gone so low in the country. After his statement before his armed adversary, next day a leader of his alliance party has come out with a proposal to find an alternative for him."

Stability For All

Although all the forces internal and external want political stability in Nepal, the country's institutions the Monarchy, Army, liberal democratic forces -which have proven record to guarantee the stability in Nepal - are weakened or destroyed one after another.

Now the stability in Nepal is not only the concern of Nepal's own prime minister but others also. Few days back, as an emissary of Indian prime minister, CPI-M leader Sitaram Yechuri also

expressed his opinion for stability which may not have the exact priority in the country. Koirala's motivation must have been to consolidate and regain the power through popularly held elections

As a neighbor, India has an interest of present stability of Nepal having its own favorable strategic situation. If it was only limited to relations between the two countries, it would not have caused much concern to others. But, if it is a strategic gain of one country in Nepal, it will definitely invite actions and reactions from other forces too. Till now spokespersons of western countries have come out with their announcement to maximum permissible diplomatic limit. Last Friday, outgoing British Ambassador Keith Bloomfield - in his television interview with Vijaya Kumar Pandey - touched the hearts and minds of upright and reasonable persons in Nepal. "As we all estimated, Bloomfield stood as a sincere friend of Nepal who had, unfortunately, to speak bitter truth, which he regrettably admitted in his interview," said the analyst.

"The USA and the UK which do not have any strategic interests in Nepal - don't count much in crucial issues of Nepal. "It is a hard fact of Nepal that Nepal has remained a yam

between two boulders as described by Prithivi Naryan Shah the great King, who unified modern Nepal and whose statue currently lies defaced in front of main government secretariat. The statue was partly damaged during the last uprising. It can be understood well who targeted the statue of emotional integration and it has come out as a bad omen of coming days of Nepal as a sovereign, independent and integrated nation," said the analyst. "The damage to statue has hurt the silent majority for whom this was a mere symbol for a hard earned integration that was valuably preserved."

At a time when future of prime minister is lurking under uncertainty and the life of HoR is uncertain, the country does not have the requisite stability required to implement this kind of program. ■

“After The Dissolution Of This Parliament, We Want To Form An Interim Legislature”

—DR. BABURAM BHATTARAI

Dr. Baburam Bhattarai is the number two leader in the Maoist party. Convener of the United Revolutionary National People's Council – a political wing of the Maoists, he has earned his doctorate in Urban Planning from Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi. A leading ideologue, Dr. Bhattarai has been involved in the Maoist People's War since its inception. Dr. Bhattarai who is in capital valley in recent times, spoke with MADHAV KUMAR RIMAL and SANJAYA DHAKAL on various political issues. Excerpts:

“Their idea of democracy is very one-sided and lopsided. For the last 12 years after 1990 change, they ruled the country but they couldn't give genuine democracy to the majority of the people. That's why we had to raise arms against their form of democracy. We wanted full democracy to be enjoyed by the vast majority of the people”

What are your party's immediate plans to restore peace and normalcy in the country?

As you know when we signed the 12-point understanding with seven parties last November, the basic roadmap is outlined there. We see democracy, peace and progress as a whole. These three aspects cannot be separated from each other. If you talk only of democracy and forget the other two, that is not going to solve the problem. If you talk only of peace, that also won't do. But if you talk only of democracy and peace, that will be status quoist peace. We want forward-looking peace. So we want democracy, peace and progress. They must go together.

But, what are the means? How do you achieve them without peace? Do you think there will be total peace?

If you have democracy and progress, there will be peace. Without democracy and progress, there won't be peace. But, of course, you need peace for progress.

Do you think the SPA will be able to give democracy to the country?

Their idea of democracy is very one-sided and lopsided. For the last 12 years after 1990 change, they ruled the country but they couldn't give genuine democracy to the majority of the people. That's why we had to raise arms against their form of democracy. We wanted full democracy to be enjoyed by the vast majority of the people; basically the downtrodden poor people, women, Dalit, oppressed nationalities, Madhesis. We want democracy for all of them. After this movement, we hope we will achieve that.

Do you believe your party will be able to win absolute majority in the general elections whenever it is held in Nepal?

We are not talking about general elections. We first want restructuring of the state and society. This is our basic agenda. First, we want elections for the constituent assembly.

What about in the elections after the constituent assembly?

Let's first have the constituent assembly. Let it formulate a new constitution and devise a new state and new society, which will be very progressive and

democratic. In that democratic state and society, we hope to win absolute majority. We should win.

Can your party meet the people's aspirations for clean, efficient and patriotic government?

We hope so. First, let me clarify one thing. For us, democracy and nationalism, they must go together. In the past, the Panchayat or royal palace talked only of nationalism, they forgot or silenced democracy. Likewise, the other seven parties, they talked of democracy but they forgot the question of nationalism. So, our Maoist movement wants to integrate democracy and nationalism. If you see the 40-point demands we put forward before initiating People's War, you will see that. When we come to power, we would like to integrate both the factors so that we can solve the problem in peaceful, democratic and progressive manner.

Are you prepared to join a coalition government under other party's leadership?

At the moment, this is a transitional stage. If you are talking about after the CA election, it depends. Before the CA elections, we are having interim constitution and interim government, which will be a coalition government. After the CA elections, we hope to win majority so there will be no need for a coalition government. But if the situation demands, we will have to.

The trend in modern day politics all over the world is such that no party may win absolute majority. If similar situation is to arise here, what would you do?

First we should talk about the new state. Government is a part of the state. First we want to institutionalize a state that will incorporate interests of all classes, downtrodden, oppressed nationalities, women and Dalit. After that, when elections are held to represent all these sections of people, we hope to win absolute majority. In case we have to enter into coalition government with like-minded parties, we will have to do it. But we will not compromise on our principles just for the sake of power.

Do you think your party will be ready to compromise its ideology in the context of global economy?

No, its not a question of compromising our ideology. Our ideology is not that dogmatic and rigid. Our ideology is a science, which has to develop according to the demands of the 21st century. As they say, Marxism is not a dogma but a guide to action. Whatever the situation demands, we have to be able to remodel ourselves according to the situation. So, we don't think there will be a need to compromise our ideology. Our ideology can fulfill the demands of the time.

So, you won't mind going for market economy?

We are not for blind market economy. What they call market economy, there is no market economy in a

pure sense anywhere in the world. For national interest, everybody puts some curb on it. Even in the USA, the biggest economy in the world, there is no absolutely free market economy and same thing is true for Japan or Germany or elsewhere. A poor country like ours cannot go for absolute market economy.

Since Nepal will initially need international cooperation for its speedy economic development, how do you plan to obtain that kind of cooperation?

We have started dialogue with international community. We have talked with some of the ambassadors. We talked to representatives of the World Bank and some of the international institutions. We are trying to clarify our position. Our position is, we are ready to work with the international community. But they also have to cooperate with the democratic aspirations of the Nepali people. Whatever Nepali people decide, they should not impose their will. They should respect our sovereignty and independence. If they do it, we are ready to cooperate.

Being aware of Nepal's vulnerabilities, how will you plan to steer Nepal as a sovereign and independent nation?

We are very sensitive about the independence and sovereignty of the country. We won't compromise at any cost about the nationalism and sovereignty of the country. This is our first principle. Keeping this in mind, we are ready to cooperate with major international players including our immediate neighbors India and China.

India has preconceived notions about its own security for which it wants special cooperation from Nepal. In that context, how will you go?

During the insurgency of ten years, people tried to concoct various theories alleging that we have been guided/influenced by various international powers. But nobody could prove we were guided by anybody. Our insurgency or our movement was totally independent and totally homegrown. We did not seek any support – physical or material – from anybody else. In that sense, since it is a totally homegrown movement, once we come to power we will be able to maintain a harmonious relation with immediate neighbors India and China. We also understand that India has some old notions of national security. In this 21st century, that old notion doesn't hold good anymore.

They will have to develop their national security notion in a dynamic manner. Since we are located in between big countries like India and China, we will have to cooperate with them. But they should also cooperate with us to respect our independence.

Do you think the SPA government is fully abiding by the agreements signed between you two?

The 12-point understanding and 8-point agreement laid down basic roadmap of peace and democracy in the country. But after we signed the 8-point pact, there were some discordant notes from responsible leaders. That is quite unfortunate. That's why we rushed back to Kathmandu to make our positions clear. Now these things have improved. We hope they will abide by the agreements signed by themselves.

How do you look at Nepal-India relations? Do you think they need improvement? Can you suggest any measure?

Of course, there are some problems in Nepal-India relations. Nepal and India are economically, physically, culturally, socially inter-related. We will have to co-exist. That historical and national compulsion, nobody can deny. But if you see historically, since the days of the Sugauli Treaty in 1816, there are some unequal provisions in the relation between



India and Nepal. In our public statements and private dialogue, we have been raising this issue. This unequal relation should be changed according to the changed demand of the times like the 1950 treaty whose certain provisions are not equal and are to the disadvantage of Nepal. Through dialogue, we hope we can change it to the advantage of Nepali people and to the mutual interest of both the countries.

Do you mean to say 1950 Treaty needs some kinds of improvements or do you think it should be quashed and a new one signed?

The 1950 Treaty was signed when Ranas were in power and before the beginning of the democratic era. Since then times have changed, demands have changed and aspirations of peoples have changed. So, the best thing will be to do away with it and sign a new treaty.

How do you look at the Anglo-American decision to follow India's lead in matters related to Nepal?

We don't know whether they are following India's lead or not. It is quite confusing. The way the US makes statements – very unwarranted and disturbing statements – we are not sure if they are following the lead.

In this connection, how would you assess the recent remarks and role of American ambassador to Nepal, James Moriarty?

The way Moriarty is making unfortunate-type statements, I think he is not able to come out of the old Cold War mindset. Things have changed but Moriarty seems to be sticking to the old mindset of the Cold War era. We hope he will be able to change his mindset and understand the aspirations of the Nepali people and cooperate with their democratic aspirations.

Don't you think the interim government that will conduct the CA elections must be fully representative of all classes and sections of Nepali society?

Exactly, this is one of our basic demands. In the interim constitution only we want to formulate such clauses where all sections of people will be represented in the interim government. After the dissolution of this parliament, we want to form an interim council where all these people will be represented.

“Our position is, we are ready to work with the international community. But they also have to cooperate with the democratic aspirations of the Nepali people. Whatever Nepali people decide, they should not impose their will. They should respect our sovereignty and independence. If they do it, we are ready to cooperate.”

"I think they have forgotten their own history. In every place including South Africa, Latin or Central America or Northern Ireland, none of the conflicting parties have laid down their arms before the final political settlement. The only thing is, before the political settlement is reached, arms are managed in a manner where both sides can be confident about it."

Bigger parties are not in the mindset to give representation to smaller parties. And since the interim government will have to include all sections, is it going to be very big?

We can't say how big the interim government will be. The main thing is we want to create an interim parliament or interim legislature, which should include all the sections of the people. The eight-point understanding also talks about creating interim legislature after dissolving the current parliament.

How would you select the members of this interim legislature?

They will be chosen according to the aspirations of this recent 19-day People's Movement. All the major players who contributed to the movement—the seven parties, the CPN-Maoist, civil society and various groups of nationalities and others will be represented in the interim legislature.

What will happen if the agreements between your party and the SPA fail to function?

That will be very disastrous for the country and the people. Lets not think it will fail. We have to make it a success. Various forces are trying to sabotage that, we are aware of that. The unity among the seven party, CPN-Maoist and the civil society should be maintained until there is free and fair election to the CA.

In this connection, how do you feel about the lack of consultations (with your party and SPA) when PM Koirala dispatched a letter to the UN seeking its help in arms management?

Even we were surprised by that letter. They shouldn't have done that. Anyway this unilateral action won't make any sense. The UN wants letter from both sides.

So, are you going to write letter to the UN?

First, we would like to know what they have written. Our agreement was both should write same type of letter. Now, we want to see what they have written then if necessary we will also write a letter. But we do not agree with the way they have gone ahead.

Can you clarify the issue of arms management? There are suspicions that you will not be laying down arms before entering into interim government.

Some people have not understood the essence of the 12-point understanding and 8-point agreement. The issues of arms and armies have already been settled in those agreements. That means, till the time of the CA election, both the armies will be kept at different places—the Nepal Army will be kept in barracks and our People's Liberation Army will be kept at definite points and that will be monitored by international body. This has already been agreed to. So, there is no question of laying down arms. Arms will be laid down only after the election of CA. Before that nobody is going to lay down their arms—neither the Nepal Army nor the PLA.

Some western countries, including the US, have been saying that till you keep the option of



returning to violence open, suspicions are bound to linger. What do you say?

I think they have forgotten their own history. In every place including South Africa, Latin or Central America or Northern Ireland, none of the conflicting parties have laid down their arms before the final political settlement. The only thing is, before the political settlement is reached, arms are managed in a manner where both sides can be confident about it. The same rule will apply to Nepal. We are quite surprised why they are trying to apply different rules here.

Why has your party been demanding for the dissolution of HoR when the first thing it did after being restored was to call for CA election?

This issue has been settled already by the eight-point agreement. We want to form more representative parliament in the form of interim legislature. This parliament does not have wide representation. We are not in it. Many of the people who were in the movement are not represented in this parliament. This seven-year-old parliament does not represent the will of the people at this moment. So, the best thing will be to dissolve this parliament and create a new legislature.

Coming back to the economy, what are your party's views regarding issues like privatization, liberalization, globalization and WTO processes?

I think this is, in fact, a non-issue. Nepalese economy is already in private hands. Ninety-five percent of economy is in private sector. So, there is no question of privatization, it is already privatized. But how much should be nationalized, that is the main thing. Some sector of the economy that needs protection from international competition, we have to discuss about it.

How do you feel about the process of interim constitution making? There were some initial controversies and delay.

Unfortunately, there were some delays initially. Now it has started to function. I think within few weeks, we will be able to have interim constitution. ■

SLC RESULTS

Slight Improvement

This year, the pass percentage of SLC increases slightly

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

The annual School Leaving Certificate (SLC) exams are known more for dismal performances by students than anything else. On average, around one-third of students who appear for the test can actually pass.

This year a slight improvement was seen in the pass percentage. Of the total 225,032 regular examinees who appeared for the annual nation-wide test this year, 46.51 percent have passed. This is 7.79 percent more than the pass percentage last year when only 38.72 percent examinees had passed. This year, 4000 students passed with distinction marks; 41,983 secured first division; 53,777 secured second division; and 4894 secured third division marks.

Likewise, among the exempted group, out of total examinees of 69,184, around 12 percent passed including 54 in first division, 5686 in second division and 2626 in third division.

Even as the government gives highest priority to the education sector and sets aside 15 percent of the total annual budget for the sector, the results are very disappointing. Particularly, in the public education sector, the results are quite dismal, indeed.

Over 80 percent of the students who have passed come from private schools. And they are ones who secure high marks. The poor base of learning for students of public schools, lack of family environment for learning, lack of motivation of teachers, effect of conflict, alarmingly low class days are some of the reasons for the bad results by public schools.

As education experts point out, there are a number of disadvantageous factors that work against public schools. The time-on-task is high in private schools for both students and teachers; they provide proper learning

environment and engage the students; they have frequent testing and screening mechanism; they make available additional learning resources; they have professional human resource; they build practice of homework; they have strong administrative management; their parental involvement is high; their students enjoy proper learning environment in their families; they can select best students and remove under-performers; and the students of private schools get 13 years of education including pre-primary level when they appear for SLC, list experts.

In school levels, rarely any student 'fails' in most of the western countries. Even in countries with centralized education system, pass percentage is, on average, 60-80 percent.

At present, the government gives heavy emphasis on Basic and Primary education – for which 55-60 percent of total budget on education is spent. It is still not clear how much share will be given to technical/vocational; secondary and higher education. The overall literacy rate in Nepal stands at around 55 percent at present. The access to basic and primary education has expanded to include 80-84 percent of kids.

This year, the Office of the Controller of Examination (OCE) did not publish the list of top boy and girl students. Chief of OCE Gajendra Lal Pradhan informed that the tradition of publishing the name of topmost students was broken in order to stop 'unhealthy competition.' "There is no such tradition in Higher Secondary Board



Students looking at their results: Moment of joy!

Annapurna Post

Besides, students of public schools are the First Generation of Schoolers – meaning their parents have had no education. Typically, the first generation of schoolers are always under-performers.

There is a big gap in the investment as well. Even now the investment per child per year stands at Rs 1800-2200 for secondary level students in public schools compared to Rs 12,000 in private schools.

exams, or other exams by Tribhuvan University and so on. Therefore, we have also decided to stop this practice," Pradhan said.

Although his arguments may be justified, it could be better justified had the OCE adopted letter-based grading system then. Instead of continuing with the existing number-based grading system, the OCE could opt for letter-based grading system, which is being regarded around the world as more scientific

TRAFFIC AWARENESS

Unruly Roads

In the absence of traffic sense, roads of Kathmandu valley appear more like fish market

By SAHISHNU POUDYAL

Honking of horns, impossible jams and random rides are the basic features of Kathmandu roads. Amid the brouhaha, accidents and obstructions are frequent phenomenon. And add numerous demonstrations and rallies by various interest groups every other day at the center of the capital and you will get a heady mix.

Welcome to the wild world of urban traffic in Kathmandu. Commuters, drivers as well as pedestrians everyone share the blame for this terrible situation. It is normal to find pedestrians jaywalking just below the overhead bridges constructed just for the purpose of their safety and comfort. Traffic lights mean nothing and zebra crossings are coolly ignored.

In the absence of traffic culture, street traffic of Kathmandu has resembled street melee with pedestrians and drivers exchanging occasional fisticuffs. But most of them like to heap the blame on others.

"We have no problem with the streets but we have to be very careful with the pedestrians because by violating the rule they want to cross the road and I think it may cause an accident due to the confusion," said Rajani Dhakal one of the scooter riders.

Supporting Rajani, Sudarsan, another bike rider, said "It is really a very risky job to ride a bike in busy streets. Pedestrians try to cross the road and walk anywhere they want to in the street. Therefore, we need to be very careful with pedestrians as well as the heavy loaded vehicles."

However, pedestrians have their own say. "When we get ready to cross the road on green signal, drivers try to run us over and instead of stopping their

vehicles, they increase its speed. And in such situation, accidents are obviously going to take place," said Sabina Maharjan and her brother Subas, the local pedestrians at Koteshwor Chowk.

Sorakutte, New Baneswore and Narayan Gopal chok are some of the major accident-prone areas in Kathmandu. "It is very difficult job for us to manage traffic and control accidents in the busy roads," said Jagat Man Shreatha, Deputy Superintendent

of Police (DSP) at the Valley Traffic Police Office (VTPO). "The world is moving ahead with the most advanced technologies. Everything moves with automatic system but we are still working with manual system. With the help of the whistle, we are trying to manage the road problems. It is very difficult for us to work with

old technology because of tremendous growth in road-users. To manage the road we are compelled to prevent the plying of heavy load vehicles inside city area during rush hours" he added.

When asked if the narrow roads and increasing number of the vehicles were main causes of road accidents, he denied it and illustrated, "These accidents are caused due to lack of traffic discipline among the riders and lack of traffic awareness among pedestrians."

"To control accidents and jams, from the last few years we have started using traffic light system in eleven places,

which are the busiest intersections. The places are Thapathali, Maitighar, Singh Durbar, Padmodaya Mod, Putalisadak, Naya Baneswore, Tinkune, Koteshwor, Kesher Mahal, Kalanki and Darbarmarg and we are planning to increase the number in the coming days." In addition, he suggests that to control the accidents on the roads, public awareness campaigns need to be initiated; the process of giving licenses should be improved.

As per the record provided by the VTPO, most of the accidents are of motorbikes and the victims of such accidents are the bike riders. There are altogether 502225 vehicles in the country and, most of them are running in the streets of Kathmandu valley.

Meanwhile, according to latest data made available by the Department of Transport Management, total vehicle



Urban Traffic: Lack of discipline

registration increased by 9 percent in the first eight months of the current fiscal year to reach 29,430 – up from 26,060 last year. The registration of motorcycles and scooters, however, decreased by 1.5 percent to reach 20,125 during this period. According to the department, Lalitpur there are 2, 14,000 motorbikes registered from Bagmati zone.

As such, it is necessary to infuse the sense of traffic and road discipline among all stakeholders including pedestrians, drivers and commuters in order to ensure safe and hazardless traveling. ■

Monarchy As A Democratic Institution For Nepal

By MADHUKAR SJB RANA

*"For every monarch overthrown the sky becomes less bright,
because it loses a star"*

Anatole France, *First Nobel Laureate for Literature* (1921)

The People's Revolt II of April 2006 led to the restoration of the defunct parliament by the King's promulgation as per the 1990 Constitution. The parliament hurriedly announced that henceforth parliament is the sovereign body implying, as it were, that it is no more, as is in the U.K., to be a King-in-Parliament government with some executive powers.

Moving on at breakneck speed, the parliament proceeds to clip all powers directly or indirectly vested in the Crown to ensure that it is a 'ceremonial (Hindu) monarchy' in a secular state. After all this, the parliament decides to promulgate an Interim Constitution. Done ostensibly in deference to the desires of the sovereign people of Nepal while quite unsure whether 'parliamentary sovereignty' should mean that there is to be a house or not – and just how many parliamentary houses.

Going by history, they probably feared 'assertive', 'active' or 'constructive' monarchy through constitutional means. To be underscored is that the universal concept of 'constitutional monarchy' is to be henceforth politically incorrect in Nepal.

Republican's contra-monarchy arguments pursue the general lines as follows: (a) it does not promote meritocracy in society; (b) it places a person or family above the law; (c) the institution is opaque and above scrutiny; (d) it is not accountable to the people, and (e) it is undemocratic because one can not elect the king.

Under the present political dispensation we have that the King will be: appointed by parliament; subject to the rule of law; accountable to the courts for civil and criminal acts; liable for all taxes. In sum, the King is to be a commoner who holds the position by virtue of his ancestry. It is as though we have created a Crown, under new Nepal, that is dispensable and yet not quite so. For the simple reason that the question must be asked: to be replaced by what institution?

Republicans would argue that it should be a Presidency. But in what constitutional form is the fundamentally complex question—Indian, Sri Lankan, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, on the one hand, or US, French, Chinese or Russian, on the other.

Interestingly, similar arguments were upheld at the time of the recent Australian referendum on monarchy that, however, failed to obtain a majority. Voters realized that to change would have resulted in a veritable constitutional conundrum for what form of Presidency was Australia to opt for?

Recently, the Queen of England hinted to her subjects, upon reaching 80 years and being perceptive of the vast structural changes in the demography and economic linkages of Australia that it is good time for them to decide on the future of monarchy.

The Aussies are in a catch-22 situation deciding on their model precisely because of the constitutional conundrum that it creates when they rejected the referendum on monarchy: (a) US Presidential model, was determined to be alien to the Westminster parliamentary democracy; was not known to have been replicated elsewhere, was seen to be a product of a civil war alien to most democracies; (b)

French Republic model, which was bound to lead to the 'co-habitation' problem with two politicians in the helm of political affairs and thus considered by Australians as unworkable; (c) Parliamentary model, where the President is chosen by the people after selection of the candidates by the Parliament looks very similar to the choice over the Governor-General and the added fear of politicization of the presidency; (d) Referendum model, where the President is appointed and removed, if need be, by the Lower House; this was conceived to create other problems such as the denigration of the Senate's role and thus weakening the federal system, and finally (e) Minimalist model, where the Prime Minister appoints and removes the executive head of state; this was perceived to be lacking with the necessary checks and balance on the powers of the prime minister.

To be underlined here is the sad fact that having had 16 prime ministers in 15 years of parliamentary democracy the institution of Prime Minister is remarkably under-developed being under-led with suitable statesmanship to create a solid culture of democracy. Who such a person will be is a formidable question that confronts us all with all manner of concern given the fragile health of Prime Minister G.P.Koirala. What type of PM (meaning an institution embodying British classical style of being 'one among equals' or the modern Blair or Thatcher presidential styles) are further fundamentals that need to be seriously addressed.

Regime change causing the fall of monarchs have historically led to totalitarian or dictatorial regimes in agrarian societies rather than to a brave new world far removed from the vestiges of feudalism. This happened in Greece and Spain in the 1960s. It happened again, in the 1970s, in Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Iran. Not to mention the events of the 1980s in Cambodia and Laos.

As a matter of fact, even with respect to Europe Sir Winston Churchill had remarked (1946) "If the Allies at the peace table at Versailles had allowed a Hohenzollern, a Wittelbach and a Hapsburg to return to their thrones, there would not have been a Hitler. A democratic basis of society might have been preserved by a crowned Weimar in contact with victorious Allies".

He realized this because monarchy is an institution above and beyond party ideologies and electoral politics. The mass of people find it easier to identify with the person of the monarch than the president. The monarchy embodies people's respect for authority rather than fear of power.

Monarchs keep away from party politics and so too from the politics of ethnicity and religious sectarianism and thus hope to embody all the people's aspirations. The people feel a sense of calm and comfort, especially the non-youth population, when the royal families execute their public engagements with decorum and a sense of duty, devotion, dedication and discipline.

Monarchy is an institution, not a person: about that we must be clear about when judging its performance or demarcating its role. This is why the British say "The king is dead, long live the king". It may be pertinent here to quote Jacques Lang, French Minister of Culture who said (1993) "I notice that the constitutional monarchies are the most democratic countries of Europe. I can't understand how there could be any debate about it".

Indeed as history is being rewritten in Russia there are those like Oleg Gordievsky who said (1998) "Russia under Nicholas I, with all the survival of feudalism, had opposition political parties, independent trade unions and newspapers, a rather radical parliament and a modern government system. Its agriculture was on the level of USA, with industry rapidly approaching the West European level. In the USSR there was total tyranny, no political liberties and practically no human rights. Its economy was not viable; agriculture was destroyed. The terror against the population rendered a scope unprecedented in history. No wonder many Russians look back to Tsarist Russia as a paradise lost".

The Canadian Jacques Monet best sums up for us the reason why we should have faith in the monarchy as an institution. "A king is a king not because he is rich or powerful, not because he belongs to a particular creed or a national group. He is king because he is born. And in choosing to leave the selection of the head of state to this most common denominator in the world—the accident of birth—Canadians implicitly proclaim their faith in human equality, their hope for the triumph of nature over political maneuver or social and financial interests and for the victory of the human person".

We have examined the historical attributes of monarchy as an institution from a universal perspective. Needless to say as a formal institution monarchies differ in their constitutional powers and duties.

The Emperor of Japan, the world's oldest monarchy, is a symbolic figurehead as are the Scandinavian kings and queens. They, like the Queen of England, are said to "do no wrong", although the British monarchical system, being a Queen-in-Parliament system, has more than symbolic powers as, for example, in times of emergency and also if there is a hung parliament. Probably, this is why Blair seeks to have a written constitution.

Here, we may profitably recall the wise words of Connor Cruise O'Brien who has said (1993) "If constitutional monarchy were to come to an end in Britain, parliamentary democracy would probably not survive it. It is, after all, through the monarchy that parliamentary control over the armed forces is mediated and maintained".

The king of Thailand is perhaps the best example of a monarch who has judiciously led the kingdom to peace, prosperity and progress through the policy of 'restraint and withdrawal' judiciously applied on the elected representatives. The Thai king, who celebrated his 60th year of reign, is purported to have said (1998) "Western people ask me whether it is a paradox that I am king, but support democracy. I have to tell them that in Thailand the king is the guarantor of democracy".

Befittingly, let us conclude on monarchy as an institution with the thoughts of Queen Elizabeth I, perhaps one of the greatest monarchs of all time, who said (1564) "There is nothing about which I am more anxious than my country, and for its sake I am willing to die ten deaths, if that be possible". And let us be ever grateful to our own beloved late King Birendra, who perceptibly realized, more than anyone else, that a good monarch cannot save an unpopular regime and a bad monarch is a potent argument for a republic.

Nepal is mired in the gravest political crisis ever since the Anglo-Nepal war of 1814-16. It is struggling for its survival as a united, democratic, pluralistic and independent state. All the institutions of the state are being tested — be they the monarchy, parliament, judiciary, political parties and the national administrative and security services—for their capacity to lead, unite and protect the rule of law and promote electoral democracy. The mass of individual citizens, born and unborn, silently demand of each of these institutions to unite for the love of the Motherland. ■

(Rana is former finance minister)

EXPOSITION

Powerful Movement

The paintings by Sagar Manandhar reflect the peaceful environment after Jana Andolan-II

Representing a happier and victorious Nepal, artist Sagar Manandhar's paintings are colored on the canvas with reflecting peace and sense of optimism. The light and subtle colors used along with the flexible lines symbolize co-operation. He wants us to enjoy the pleasure and feel his inner feelings and hidden truth through his creations. Those who observe the paintings find a new light of hope and optimistic approach in the paintings. All the paintings are refreshing to look at. Very simply and innocently drawn, those paintings are easy to understand and one easily gets the message that the artist wants to convey.

The fourth art exhibition with 55 paintings "Reflected Realities'06" is being held at Nepal Association of Fine Arts (NAFA) hall, Naxal by Sagar Manandhar. The paintings are filled with water colors of different tastes. The paintings were done three months after Jana Andolan-II.

Sagar Manandhar, son of popular painter, Kiran Manandhar, has revealed his talent in painting through three exhibitions "My Moon For Peace", "Music" and "Paintings in My Eyes" which were held at Shreejana Contemporary Art Gallery, NAFA Gallery and Buddha Art Gallery, respectively. He had displayed 34 paintings in first solo exhibition, 50 in second and 40 in third exhibition. Now, he has returned with the collection of paintings under the theme of 'Reflected Realities'.



His paintings especially portray female figures. He wants to represent Nepal Ama (Mother Nepal) through his painting. "The credit goes to Female for the success of Nepal, that's why I have depicted female pictures in my paintings", says Manandhar. Influenced by father and sister Karuna Manandhar, he gets suggestion from them to improve his paintings. "I am still learning from my seniors," he said.

Manandhar, as an artist, seems to be very influenced by the spring movement that we call Jana Andolan-II. A student of Bachelor in Fine Arts (BFA) third year at the Benaras Hindu University, Sagar saw the opportunity to express his views through creative works when he returned home recently. After gathering views of various people, he has drawn their feelings on the canvas, where real images of the mindset of people have been picturized.

To a normal viewer, his paintings are not just pieces created to utilize leisure. But they expose his innate talent towards painting. The expression with every stroke of brush, lines, colors, figures seek freedom in his paintings. The exhibition will remain open till 14th July 2006. ■

WORLD POPULATION DAY

Fallen Womb: A Hidden Tragedy

Fallen wombs are becoming a major public health problem of Nepalese women

By A CORRESPONDENT

Ratneswori Shrestha, 35, is among a few lucky women who has got opportunity to relieve herself from the problem of prolapsed uterine. Resident of Kirtipur, 10 kilometer south west of capital, it took 15 painful years for Shrestha to know that medical intervention can cure her illness.

Married at early age, Shrestha quickly gave birth to three children. As she had to carry heavy loads from early days of pregnancy and as she had to perform all kinds of heavy work in the field. This led to her uterine prolapse.

Thanks to a project run under RHIYA/PHCET, Shrestha's disease was diagnosed and she received treatment. "I lived a very painful life for 15 years before I got the surgical treatment. I had lost hopes that I could ever be treated," Shrestha explained.

Shrestha's case represent only a single one of fallen womb and to a lady who was living close to capital that has all kinds of medical facilities. What would be the situation of thousands of women living in remote parts is anybody's guess.

"All over Nepal, hundreds of women are suffering from uterine prolapse. Its prevalence among women at reproductive age, exceeds 10 percent and is as high as 24 percent among women between the ages of 45 and 49. All together, more than 600,000 women are in urgent need of medical care," said Junko Sasaki, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Representative. "I am very happy that we are now drawing special attention to this issue together, recognizing that it is social as well as health problem, with low status of women, low awareness and low accessibility posing obstruction to the solution to the problems."

Although uterine prolapse is one of the most widespread reproductive health and social problems in Nepal, the government is yet to take serious efforts to solve it. "The government will take this issue very seriously and support the efforts taken by different agencies to treat the patients of uterine prolapse," said Amik Sherchan, deputy prime minister who also holds the portfolio of Health and Population Ministry. "The

government would like to thank UNFPA for bringing this major health issue in public debate and attention."

For the last few years, the UNFPA has been intensifying efforts to address one of the most serious reproductive health concerns in Nepal: fallen womb. According to Dr. Rajendra Gurung, an expert with UNFPA, it is a leading cause of ill health and exists throughout Nepal. "Out of 600,000 patients of uterus prolapse, 186,000 require surgical repair," said Dr. Gurung. "Surgery for uterine prolapse can be performed effectively and safely in low resource rural settings as well."

Working with many non-governmental organizations, UNFPA has provided reproductive health check up and treatment to more than 31,000 women in 9 districts of Nepal. According to UNFPA, so far only 346 of them have been surgically treated for uterine prolapse.

"We need to ensure prevention and treatment, so that many deprived women, suffering from the Uterine Prolapse, can also actively participate in the peace process and social transformation. It is high time for a national campaign to be launched for the prevention and treatment of uterine prolapse," said Sasaki.

The government officials agreed that there require certain resources. "We have been trying to generate the awareness among women regarding the issue," said Shyam Sundar Sharma, joint secretary, Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare.

"Women, who suffer from fallen womb, have to face social discrimination as well. Negative perception towards women with uterine prolapse in the community is rampant. In many cases, husbands marry second wife," said Dr. Tara Shakya, project director RHIYA/PHCET-Nepal.

Others see this as related to human rights. "It is necessary to understand that prolapsed uterus is an outcome of serious human rights violation of women in this country so it is the state's obligation to support these victims of Human Rights violation," said Dr. Renu Rajbhandari, president of Women's Rehabilitation Center (WOREC).

Nepali Women Draft Inclusion Plan

With the objective of boosting the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in Nepal, a plan of action has been drafted on July 7. The Resolution concerns the role and participation of women for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflicts.

During a one-day workshop, organized by the UN system in Nepal, participants agreed on a series of concrete indicators aimed at creating the structures and mechanisms that will allow Nepali women to be actively involved in the ongoing peace process.

"Although drafting of the interim constitution has begun without women's participation, and none of the newly established committees include women, it is time to work together to reverse this trend. We need to fully embrace this opportunity to commit to the ongoing process and once and for all see Nepali women take-up the roles they are entitled to," said acting UN Resident Coordinator Junko Sasaki.

Workshop participants included a number of UN agencies, representatives from the government, members of the Women in Alliance and the Shantimalika peace network.

Based on a highly vivid and participatory working session, the resulting Plan fleshes out initiatives to be implemented in the areas of: process of constitutional and legal reform; transitional justice and reconciliation; post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation; gender-based violence; and monitoring and documentation.

The Plan will be presented to the donor community during a special session to be held with them next Friday 14 July. ■

"This is major public issue of women but it was neglected and ignored," said Teeka Bhattarai, Kathmandu based researcher addressing the interaction program to mark the World's Population Day.

As this can be prevented, what are required are the public awareness as well as more resources allocation for this problem - which is currently affecting more than half a million of Nepalese women. But, there are only a few like Shrestha who are getting the treatment. ■

ANI CHOYING DOLMA

Sounds Of Peace

Choying has earned wide recognition through her mellifluous voice and touching lyrics

By KABI ADHIKARI

Just as the country was passing through difficult and violent period, there came a soothing voice. When the song "Phul Ko Ankha Ma Phulai Sansara" was first aired through radio, it caught the attention of conflict-torn countrymen in a manner no song had done before.

People were even more surprised when they found that the singer of that song that talked about tolerance and peace – virtues that were missing from the society – was none other than a Buddhist monk. That song helped Ani Choying Dolma, 36, a lady monk, reach new heights.

In fact, Ani is a title given to lady monks who stay in monasteries. Ani Choying Dolma has been staying in "Gumba" (monastery), since the age of 13. Being brought up in the mystical and serene surroundings of monastery, she is now totally involved in "Gumba".

To become involved in such community, everybody has to follow certain rules and regulations. Thus, Ani Choying Dolma, too, is following the conventions. To stay away from violence, not to tell lie, not to think bad of others are some of the basic precepts of Buddha religion. Having followed same concept and feeling, Ani respects

her "Guru" from the core of her heart. Her Guru attained Nirvana in 1996.

From her very early age, she used to murmur songs but in 1998 she got publicity in this field. The success she has earned as a female singer was beyond her imagination. All of her songs are to the God and carry messages of peace, harmony and tolerance.



Ani Choying Dolma: Power Of Voice

The song "Phul Ko Ankha Ma Phulai Sansara" also carries the message of Buddha. It earned her tremendous name and fame. The lilting lyrics of the song are so touching that one cannot remain indifferent.

Her songs also have mysticism attached with them. The flow of singing comes spontaneously from her. That is

why she has established herself as a singer of good repute.

Her talent in music got a fertile ground to be nurtured. She was groomed under her 'Guru'. This inspiration from her teacher led her to participate in singing performances in many countries. Apart from singing mantras and religious hymns in monastery, she has not taken any formal class for learning singing. She claims herself as an honest singer. "Without hesitation one must express one's feelings with honesty that helps to get success in his/her life," said Ani who prefers to sing songs for spiritual peace that gives self satisfaction.

Because of her marvelous songs, she has bagged a number of awards including Hits F.M, Image, Chhinnalata, and Women of Peace awards. Her latest album 'Mantra' (Inner Peace) has just come to the market. The term mantra has its own value. Man means heart and tra means protection of mind. Like in other songs, she has similar theme in this album, too.

As a prominent singer, she has traveled to various countries like the United States, Spain, Canada, Germany, France, Italy, Switzerland, England, Scotland, Belgium, Denmark, Slovenia, Austria, Hong Kong, Japan etc to perform. Her performances were well-liked by audience in these countries.

She is also a social worker. In 1998, she floated the "Bhikshuni Sewa Sangh," which is a school for Ani students.

There are now 50 students studying there and engaged in spiritual and intellectual development. Although the Sangh follows the same curriculum as other general public schools, it has added courses that help students explore spiritualism. Mostly the students from the age of 9 to 25 from remote area are studying there. ■

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