

Opinion: Dr. Ananda Bahadur Thapa

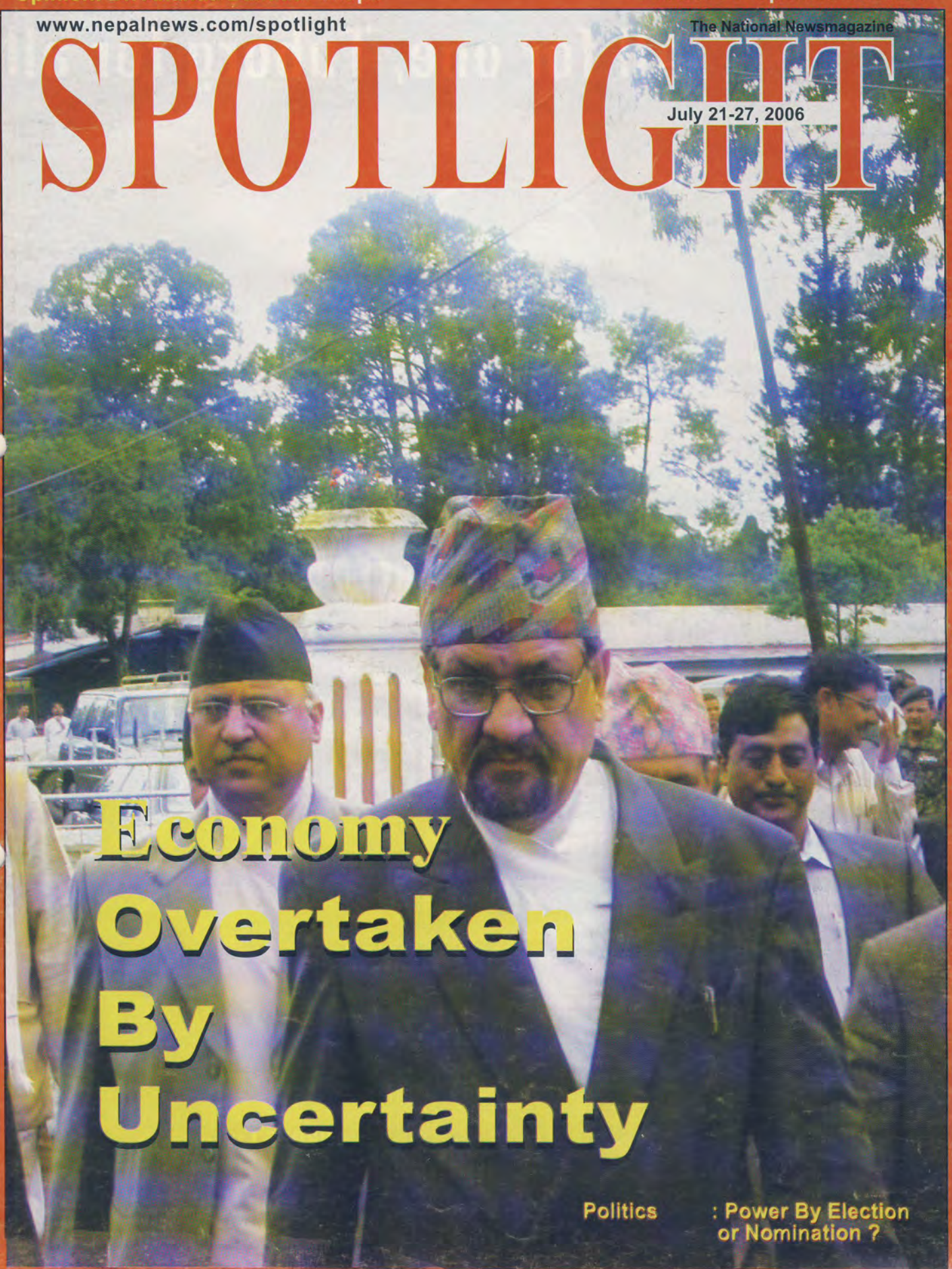
Article: Dr. Upendra Gautam

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The National Newsmagazine

SPOTLIGHT

July 21-27, 2006



Economy Overtaken By Uncertainty

Politics

: Power By Election
or Nomination ?

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CONTENTS

	Page
LETTERS	3
NEWS NOTES	4
BRIEFS	6
QUOTE UNQUOTE/TRANSITION	7
OPINION : Dr. Ananda Bahadur Thapa	8
RAILWAY TO TIBET: Dr. Upendra Gautam	19
ARTICLE: Babita Basnet	20
VIEWPOINT: Dr. Tulsi P. Uprety	22
ART: Powerful Time	23



COVER STORY : Overtaken By Uncertainty
 As the government and parliament themselves may get replaced in near future, the budget and implementation of its programs are under clouds of uncertainty Page 14



POLITICS: Power By Election or Nomination
 Although it is not a legitimate manner of sharing power, everybody seems interested in getting power through nominations Page 10



PROFILE : Sarita Lamichhane
 Catapulted by her success in tele-serial 'Mukti', Lamichhane is now an established artiste

Page 24

SPOTLIGHT

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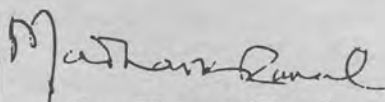
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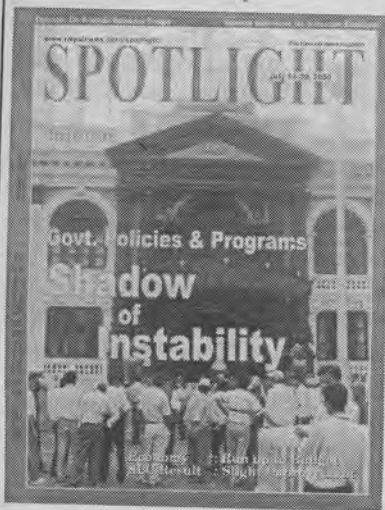
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The second summit between the CPN (Maoists) and the Seven Party Alliance is to be held in a couple of days. But the atmosphere of mistrusts and misgivings between the two is queering the pitch all the time. There seems to be serious differences even amongst the Seven Party constituents. It is, therefore, clearly evident that the invisible undercurrent is, as usual, playing the spoilsport. As long either of the two negotiating parties, or for that matter, the whole patriotic people of Nepal, keep on falling easy victim to the intrigues of the enemies of the nation, a total unity of thought and action amongst all the Nepalis is not possible. As such, the one and only imperative before all the nationalist forces, at this critical time of nation's history, is to candidly acknowledge the impending peril, sink all personal and partisan differences and join hands to overcome the juggernaut problem facing the poor country. Since selfish politicians don't bat their eyelids to sideline or compromise the nation's interests in order to further their own, it becomes the onerous responsibility of the intellectual community of the poorer countries to educate and lead the ignorant masses of their country to be fully prepared to face any contingency to defend their national interest. Although small, Nepal does occupy quite an important strategic situation in the context of not only regional but global politics too. Unfortunately, she has so far, totally failed to use such a natural boon to her advantage due to lack of honest leadership. The anti-nationalist character of the rulers has always stood as a stumbling block in the path of her economic progress and development. As a result of the recent peoples' revolution, the nation is at crossroads. Any false step, at such a critical time, can spell disaster for the country. Consequently, it is the bounden duty of all patriotic countrymen to rise above personal or partisan interests and collectively work for the good of the country. The poor country is groping for an honest and dedicated leadership. Our leadership has not been able to withstand pressures and temptations and done immeasurable harm to the nation. They have fallen easy prey to the machinations of anti-national forces. As such, we do trust the leaders who are meeting shortly to decide the future course of action for the nation will only concentrate on pressing national issues and come up to the expectation of the people and agree to expand the path of peace and progress.

* * *

The recent bomb blasts in Mumbai, India, have jolted the Indians to make them broadly awake to the disastrous consequences of terrorism. Even though, it is not the first time that terrorism has struck India, but the series of blasts that happened in a matter of few minutes have not only perpetrated loss of innocent human lives but also sounded grave warnings that there are too many lacunas that the opponents of peace can exploit. Nepal, as a good and sincere friend of India, is deeply hurt at the tragic loss of lives due to the blasts. Since she has been a victim of terrorism herself for ten long years, she can realize what are the pangs of such devastation. Those who perpetrate such inhumanities must understand that this is the worst manner of putting pressures and can neither win friends nor achieve their objective. Instead, they only create insurmountable bottlenecks in the achievement of their own high ambitions. Because, in this age of global interdependence, one does need the help and cooperation of even insignificant friends and neighbors, howsoever big and powerful one might be.


Madhav Kumar Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher



Clear The Vision

Before making any important decision, one first needs to go through its likely consequences. In the absence of such homework, one may be forced to regret his deed and needs to struggle hard again from the beginning to gain success. The same thing is happening here, which causes regression by making decision before considering its impacts. The civil society is going to launch a demonstration blaming government for not paying attention to the peoples' expectation. (Under The Shadow of Instability, July 14) As a solution, they are now demanding to dissolve the House of Representative for whose restoration they were protesting for 19 days in April. Here they seem to lack the proper political analytical skill and, therefore, seem confused where they want to reach.

Subhadra Adhakari
Kuleswor

Strategic Rigidity But Tactical Flexibility!

I recently got the opportunity hear speech by a Maoist leader Suresh Ale Magar. In his remarks, Magar quite strongly stated that the success of their People's War was mainly because of their ability to adopt the policy of "Strategic Rigidity But Tactical Flexibility." This remark made me quite nervous. I want to ask Maoist leaders including Dr. Bhattarai - who in his July 14 interview talks about his ideology as being science that is flexible to the needs of times - whether they are currently showing Tactical Flexibility only. It seems quite plausible that they may be doing so given their rigid stance on important issues like decommissioning of weapons. When they have already stated that they are committed for competitive multiparty politics, why do they need to cling on to their arms especially when they now appear headed towards entering into interim government even. Since the success of People's Movement II, the Maoists have continued with their masterful strokes and have shown 'flexibility' which may be only tactical. They have not given up arms, they are yet to fully abide by agreements with parties, and they are winning every one of their argument through sheer force and intimidation of weakened parties. Whether it was on the question of holding

unconditional CA elections or inviting UN to monitor arms, they have had their say. The only thing they have done is temporarily suspended their armed activities. And that, too, they have not promised to continue. They want to keep the option of returning to the jungle open. These points do make one wonder about the phrase 'tactical flexibility.' It is high time the Maoists come clean on this issue.

Mahesh Sharma
Lalitpur

Bomb Blasts In India

The recent bombings in Mumbai and Kashmir have killed many innocent peoples. Nepalis have suffered from terrorism for ten long years. India could have stopped this terrorism against Nepal. But, she rather helped the terrorists by giving them shelter and all facilities for training. Now she has suffered herself and must have realized how painful it is. As usual, Indians are blaming Pakistan. But what is surprising for us is why Nepal Police are arresting Pakistanis in Nepal. Whom are the Nepal Police working for? Why they continue to arrest Pakistani nationals at the insistence of the Indian Embassy? India is the biggest and most powerful country in the SAARC and it is her duty to stop terrorism. Without India's sincerity, this region cannot be free from terrorism. India must make plebiscite in Kashmir and all

problems between India and Pakistan will be solved and she will face no more terrorism. They must not keep on doing what they learnt from the British. It will not help them.

S.P. Ghimire
Narayan Gopal Chowk

Terrorists Blast In Mumbai

The recent terrorist blasts in trains in Mumbai, India, has evoked nationwide protests. It is very sad that innocent peoples are killed by senseless bombings by terrorists. We, Nepalis, feel sincerely sorry for all those families who have been affected. The Prime minister of India has charged Pakistan for the crime. We do not know what is the truth. But we do think that the Indians must be realizing now how it must have hurt us when the Maoists were killing Nepali, vandalizing the infrastructures of the poor country with Indian help. We trust India will no more trouble Nepal by helping terrorism against her.

Kalpna Shrestha
Kathmandu

Terrorism Never Pays

There is a saying "don't sow thorn, it will hurt you." India helped terrorism against Nepal. Now terrorism have hit India. Terrorism never pays. I hope India will realize this and stop all terrorism against Nepal.

Buddha Bahadur Rana
A peace-loving Nepali

Bomb Blast In Mumbai

Indian Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh does not tire accusing Pakistan for the recent bomb blasts in Mumbai. He blames Pakistan for permitting the use of Pakistan territory to mount terror acts against India. We Nepalis would very humbly like to ask Singh where was he when his government not only permitted insurgency against Nepal from India for ten long years but also openly allowed training facilities to the insurgents. Singh must realize that his small neighbor cannot even protest against India. Does it behove India to practice this double standard without shame?

Ram Kumar Jha
Janakpur

Landslide Sweeps Away A Village, 16 Killed

A midnight landslide triggered by monsoon rain in Nepal village of Dangsing VDC of northern Kaski district swept away 13 houses killing at least 19 persons. Eleven others are still missing. According to reports, a big chunk of landslide rushed one kilometer down from Banpale hill up to Bhurungdi river sweeping away houses and people along with. As the incident occurred around 1 am at night on Saturday (July 15), most people were caught unaware and could not flee to safety. Among those killed include five men, five women and six children. Those who are missing are said to have slim chances of survival. Rescue efforts have been launched by security forces and local people to locate dead bodies. Meanwhile, in Manang district, three houses have been swept away by a flood in Dudhkhola on Friday night. However, none of the residents were hurt as they could escape to safety. *Nepal Samacharpatra daily reports.*

Maoists Kill Rival Leader

The Maoists have killed a cadre of Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha, a breakaway group of the Maoists, on Sunday (July 16) evening in Rajbiraj. Kulananda Yadav from Saptari's Lohjara-6 was shot by Maoist area commander Balaram Mahato, said police official. Maoists' Saptari district secretary Amar claimed responsibility for the incident. Feud between the breakaway faction and the Maoists is common. *The Himalayan Times daily reports.*

Drafting Committee Expanded

The meeting of the government and Maoist talks team held at Peace Secretariat on Saturday – a day after the meeting of top leaders of Maoists, Nepali Congress (NC) and Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) – has decided to expand the interim constitution drafting committee. The committee headed by ex-

judge Laxman Prasad Aryal was formed on June 16 after the summit meeting between Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and Maoist chairman Prachanda. The six-member committee, however, came into attack after it did not have any representative from women, other political parties and minorities. On Saturday, the two sides – who met in presence of observers – decided to induct nine more members including Agni Kharel, Pushpa Bhusal, Sushila Karki, Chhatra Kumari Gurung, Shanta Rai, Sunil Prajapati, Parshuram Jha, Chandeshwore Shrestha and Kumar Yonjan Tamang. With this expansion, the committee now has 15 members. The talks teams also extended the time for the drafting of the constitution by ten more days till the end of July. Likewise, on Saturday, the talks teams also agreed to form a task force to implement Maoist commitment to hand back seized properties and facilitate the return of displaced persons. The task force members include NC leaders Binaya Dhoj Chand and Laxman Ghimire; UML leaders Yubaraj Gyawali and Surendra Pandey; and Maoist leaders Dinanath Sharma and Barshaman Pun "Ananta". *Leading dailies report.*

Maoists, NC And UML Confer, Another Summit On July 21

Top leaders of Maoists, NC and UML met 'informally' on Friday (July 14) in Godawari to thrash out differences over the dissolution of the parliament. In a meeting that was participated by Maoist chairman Prachanda and his deputy Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, all the participants agreed to abide by the eight point pact. The meeting agreed to form an 'interim parliament' through the 'interim constitution.' With the objective of discussing the structure and participation of the 'interim parliament' top leaders of the Maoists, government and the political parties will meet for summit meeting on July 21. After the daylong meeting at Godawari, Prachanda said, "All the confusions have been settled. Everyone agreed to dissolve the parliament by making appropriate

arrangements." General secretary of UML Madhav Kumar Nepal said that the meeting agreed to go ahead by choosing appropriate alternative. "It is not that we want to give continuity to this parliament forever," he added. NC leader Ram Chandra Poudel said the next meeting would settle issues like 'interim parliament through interim constitution.' The Friday meeting was participated by NC vice president Sushil Koirala, general secretary Ram Chandra Poudel, Home Minister Krishna Sitaula, Mahesh Acharya and Chakra Bastola. The UML participants included general secretary Nepal, Jhal Nath Khanal, Bamdev Gautam, Amrit Kumar Bohara and Iswor Pokharel. Likewise, the Maoist participants included Prachanda, Dr. Bhattarai, Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Agni Sapkota and Barshaman Pun "Ananta". *Leading dailies report.*

Pak Suspects Sent In 5-Day Custody

The two Pakistani nationals who were arrested from Hotel Everest were produced at the Kathmandu District Court on July 14 and were remanded in judicial custody by the court for five days to investigate their alleged involvement in Mumbai blasts. Though the police arrested them in connection with the seizure of RDX some few years ago, the police suspect the Pakistani nationals' role in the recent Mumbai blasts. When the judge asked them whether the RDX (seized from Kathmandu in 2001 from their rented rooms) belonged to them, the two accused – Ghulam Hossain Chima and Aftab Mohiuddin Siddique – claimed it was not theirs. They also claimed they were staffers of the Marshyangdi Road Construction Project and said the police did not formally issue any charge against them. *The Himalayan Times daily reports.*

Army Demoralized By The Budget

The government announcement through the budget to automatically quash any vacant position in Nepal

Army (NA) has sent shockwaves through the institution, according to senior army officials. They have warned that such move could destroy the organization of NA. On Thursday, informal meetings of senior army officials went on throughout the day to discuss the new development. A senior army official said that army was getting demoralized after the Finance Minister announced the decision without any prior homework. The official added that instead of initiating national debate regarding whether the NA strength should be made stable or decreased and taking decision based on the conclusion of such debates, the Finance Minister's sudden decision to simply automatically quash any vacant position could create disruption in the army. He added that every day, 30-40 persons obtain compulsory retirement from the NA. And due to delay in filling up the vacancies thus created, the organization of NA was getting affected adversely. The officials also wondered whether after the army chief retires his position, too, would be quashed. They added that such moves made without consultation and homework could increase distance between the government and the army. The officials said that if vacant positions are quashed, then promotion of army officers would be stopped leading to a situation where elements trying to create rebellion within the army could benefit. They further added that the government should consult with various experts, line ministries, army officers and others before introducing any policy. They claimed that if the government tried to act in the spirit of taking revenge against the army, that could prove counterproductive. *Nepal Samacharpatra daily reports.*

Nepal's Population To Double In 26 Years

Nepal's population is set to double in 26 years, according to a government report. The population of 23,151,423 as was recorded in the 2001 census, will be doubled by 2032, according to a report published today on the occasion of

World Population Day. The report projects Nepal's present population to be 26,427,399. According to the report, each day 2128 babies are born and 617 persons die, increasing the population by 1511 persons. It says that every hour the country's population rises by 63 persons with 83 babies being born and 26 persons dying. Nepal's population has shown a continuous rise except during 1911-1930. In 1920, Nepal's population was 5,573,788. In 1930, it was 5,532,574. After that, population growth continued and it is still on. According to 2001 census, the population growth rate currently is 2.25 percent. *The Himalayan Times daily reports.*

PF Taken To Task Over Dual Role

After its MP Lila Mani Pokharel announced he would write a 'note of dissent' against the government's policies and programs, other parliamentarians raised a ruckus demanding People's Front (PF) make its position clear – whether it is a ruling or opposition party. Although its chairman Amik Sherchan is a deputy prime minister and Health Minister in the current cabinet, its MP Pokharel opposed the government's policies and programs claiming that they were silent about taking action against repressors of people's movement and on issues related to royal palace and army. "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," Pokharel stated. Immediately after he made those remarks, MPs from NC, UML and NC (Democratic) deplored them asking PF to make its position clear. UML MP Raghuji Pant asked PF to stop enjoying both power and also acting as opposition. Likewise, NC (D) MP Narayan Prasad Saud also criticized Pokharel for dual role. *Leading dailies report.*

Maoist Army In Temporary Camps

Maoist army have started to concentrate in temporary camps along

with their arms. In Kamidanda of Kavre district, the third division of the Maoist army is engaged in regular training, exercise, political debates and so on. As the government has sent a letter to the UN asking it to manage the arms on both sides, the Maoists have started to concentrate their army in temporary camps. "There are around 7 to 8 hundred army here," said Bibidh, commander of the third division, adding, "We have stayed here because questions were raised about our movement and arms in the villages." He added that currently the total number of Maoist army is around 36,000 including seven brigades, three division and few special task forces. "We have to inform about our number to the UN later. Currently, we have around 36,000 army. The number changes during war time," Bibidh added. The camp is located some two hours away from Banepa. "We have informed Nepali Army about our camp here," he said. *Kantipur daily reports.*

Maoists Declare War Against Breakway Faction

Central leader of Maoists Matrika Yadav has announced the withdrawal of 'ceasefire' in Saptari and Siraha districts. Speaking at a press conference in Rajbiraj, Yadav claimed that his party was forced to break the ceasefire following growing attacks against its cadres by Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (Democratic Terai Liberation Front) – a breakaway faction of the Maoists. "We tolerated a lot. We also called for dialogue. But in the end we are compelled to take action," said Yadav, who heads Maoists' Terai-wing. The Terai Morcha had split from the Maoists two years ago and is headed by Jaya Krishna Goit. Yadav claimed that the palace and India are helping the front. The front has been spreading pamphlets in the districts protesting the Maoists. The front has till now abducted over 25 persons and killed nine. Likewise, in Saptari, the front has seized houses and properties of 19 persons, according to human rights organizations. *Kantipur daily reports.*



King Gyanendra receiving credentials from newly appointed British ambassador Andrew Hall

Gorkhapatra

PRIME MINISTER GIRIJA PRASAD KOIRALA, in a message to Indian PM Dr. Manmohan Singh, has condemned the serial blasts in different parts of Mumbai and Srinagar on Tuesday killing more than a hundred civilians. Also, Deputy PM and Foreign Minister K.P. Oli, in a message to Minister of State for External Affairs E. Ahmed, has condemns "the4se senseless acts of terrorism."

THE GOVERNMENT'S ANNUAL POLICIES AND programs were endorsed by the majority of the House of Representatives on Tuesday. Although its chairman is a deputy prime minister in the current cabinet, People's Front (PF) refrained from voting in favor of the policies. Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) voted against the policies stating that its five-point proposals were not included. So did Rastriya Janashakti Party and Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP). MPs belonging to ruling coalition of Nepali Congress (NC), Unified Marxist Leninist (UML), NC (Democratic), NSP (Anandidevi) voted in favor of the policies. Parliamentarians of NC and UML have roundly criticized PF for playing dual role - staying in power and acting as opposition.

PAKISTANI MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS RECENTLY issued a statement regarding the arrest of two of its nationals - Ghulam Hossain Chima and Aftab Mohiuddin Siddique - in Kathmandu. "Clarifying the media reports regarding arrest of two Pakistani nationals in Nepal allegedly in connection with the Mumbai blasts, the spokesperson stated that the Pakistan Mission in Kathmandu was instructed to immediately get in touch with the Nepalese Foreign Office to ascertain the facts. Our Mission was later contacted by the Nepalese police authorities who confirmed that the arrest of two Pakistanis was in connection with an old case dating back to 2001 and that no linkage had been established with the Mumbai blasts. The Foreign Office also called the Nepalese Charge d' Affaires to make a demarche asking for consular access and release of the persons," read a statement issued by Pakistani Embassy in Kathmandu. "The employers of the two persons, M/s Sachal Engineering Works that had a road construction project with the Nepalese government some years ago, approached the Foreign Office requesting help and gave further details. According to the company, the two persons had nothing to do with the 2001 case and had visited Nepal several

times for recovery of outstanding payments to the company by the Nepalese Roads and Works Department. These persons had gone to Nepal on 8 July for the same purpose after seeking prior appointment with the concerned Nepalese Department and were in Nepal when they were detained. We are in touch with the Nepalese side through diplomatic channels in this matter."

PARLIAMENTARIANS HAVE RAISED VOICES DEMANDING that the government and Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) build the proposed 300 MW-strong Tamakosi hydropower project through internal resources. They have threatened to organize 'sit in' to prevent the fate of Khimti repeating in Tamakosi project. The MPs have said that cheap projects could end up being expensive when inviting foreign investors. Recently, a Norwegian company had shown interest to finance the Tamakosi project, which lies in Dolakha district. A couple of years ago, a Norwegian company had build 60 MW-strong Khimti project in the same district. Khimti is now regarded as one of the most expensive projects for which NEA has to pay money in US dollars. MPs of Dolakha Ananda Prasad Pokharel and Pashupati Chaulagain have vowed that if the government does not allocate more resources in order to prepare infrastructures for the project, they would organize "sit-in" in front of the parliament beginning July 18. In this year's budget, Finance Minister has set aside Rs 22 million for the project even as it needs Rs 130 million for access road and another Rs 130 million for detail designing. "If the FM does not allocate Rs 260 million, we will continue our sit-in," said Pokharel. He said that financing from Citizens' Investment Fund, Employees Provident Fund, local commercial banks and domestic capital should be mobilized to build the project.

RASTRIYA PRAJATANTRA PARTY (RPP) HAS ISSUED AN 11-point draft stating its positions regarding the forthcoming interim constitution. It has called for people's supremacy, sovereign Nepal, human rights and multiparty competitive democracy. It has said that the interim constitution being drafted by a committee should guarantee rule of law, fundamental rights and press freedom. It has demanded that issues of gender, caste, ethnicity, Madhesi, Dalit, minority as well as religion, language, culture and region should be addressed in the interim statute. The party has called for federal system. The party has stated that adoption of Proportional Representation electoral system could ensure inclusion. Leading dailies report

THE GOVERNMENT HAS WAIVED OFF THE RENEWAL FEE for FM radios. Likewise, it has waived off postal fee for newspapers. Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat informed about the decision to the parliamentarians. He added that the government has decided also to give fifty percent discount on annual royalty to be paid by FM radios and television stations. Earlier, the government had been collecting between Rs 55,000 to Rs 550,000 as renewal fee and four percent of income as royalty. Save the Independent Radio Campaign had demanded waiver of both the fees and had been urging the FM stations not to pay the amount. The royal government had increased the postal fee for newspapers from 10 paise to Re 1. The budget slashed the fee down to 50 paise but the decision was roundly criticized by press fraternity. And now the government has decided to revoke it altogether. ■

“We do not want to give continuity to the current parliament forever.”

Madhav Kumar Nepal, general secretary of Unified Marxist Leninist (UML), talking to reporters after the recent meeting with the Maoists.

* * *

“Let’s get into the vehicle and move out before the journalists catch us.”

Maoist chairman Prachanda talking to his party colleagues and seeking to avoid journalists after he emerged from the tripartite meeting held in Godawari, in The Kathmandu Post.

* * *

“We don’t have to fight with any country. What we need is an army that involves itself in constructive development, not an army that fights battles.”

Pradeep Nepal, standing committee member of the CPN-UML, saying Nepal neither need Nepali Army nor Maoist army at a press meet program organized by the Press Chautari, Rupandehi.

* * *

“We, the small parties, are not prepared to accept the cocky parties’ domination in every decision-making process and do not recognize what have been agreed upon at the Godawari meeting.”



Bimarsha

Chandra Prakash Mainali, general secretary of CPN-ML accusing NC, UML and the Maoists of bypassing them, in The Himalayan Times.

* * *

“In order to restore them (HoR), we even held a street meeting of Upper House in front of Singh Durbar.”

Ramprit Paswan, vice chairman of Upper House (National Assembly), complaining to the Speaker about the indifference towards restoring the House.

* * *

“(I cannot) continue to face allegations repeatedly. Please bring a new system, I am willing to implement it.”

Maha Baleswhore, chief priest at Pashupatinath Temple, talking to Chitra Bahadur KC, chairman of Public Accounts Committee, when PAC delegation visited the temple to probe reports of irregularities in temple fund, in Kantipur.

* * *

“I challenge Dr Mahat (incumbent Finance minister) to prove the misuse of state fund by me. I am ready to hang myself at the Open Theater if he can prove it.”

Kamal Thapa, former Home Minister, denying charges of misuse of state funds, in The Kathmandu Post.

* * *

TRANSITION

ORDERED: The Supreme Court, to the government, to remove the existing conflicting provision on marriageable age in laws relating to men and women.

SCHEDULED: The second round of the summit talks between seven party leaders and Maoist leaders, for July 21.

STARTED: Toll free number 103, by Traffic Police, to enable the public to make complaints and receive updated traffic information

EXPANDED: The interim constitution drafting commission, by inducting nine new members including Agni Kharel, Puspha Bhusal, Sushila Karki, Chhatra Kumari Gurung, Shanta Rai, Sunil Prajapati, Parasu Ram Jha, Chendrashwor Shrestha and Kumar

Yonjan, by the talks teams of the government and the Maoists.

FORMED: A task force, to implement Maoist commitment to hand back seized properties and facilitate the return of displaced persons, including members from NC (Binaya Dhoj Chand and Laxman Ghimire); UML (Yubaraj Gyawali and Surendra Pandey); and Maoists (Dinanath Sharma and Barshaman Pun “Ananta”), by the talks teams of the government and the Maoists. ■

West Rapti Again Floods Banke District

By DR. AB THAPA

Newspapers have again started to report that as in the previous years a large area of the Banke district has already been submerged by the West Rapti flood water. People are abandoning their houses to find temporary shelter elsewhere. It is quite unfortunate that the nation is not paying due attention to resolve this problem that has led to a serious humanitarian crisis.

The Tip of The Iceberg

Last year it had been reported in one of the local English dailies dated July 21, 2005 on clarification of the Indian Embassy what is causing recent flooding in Banke district. "The Embassy reiterates that Laxmanpur Barrage, which is located 8 kilometers downstream of the India-Nepal border, is not yet operational, and the gates are never lowered and remain open at all times. There is, therefore, no question of Laxmanpur Barrage obstructing the flow of water in the Rapti River" It was further stated "The Embassy understands that heavy rains in recent days had led to water logging in this region, including in adjoining areas in India..." It is clear based on the reporting of the Indian Embassy that the present widespread excessive flooding in Banke district could be primarily due to narrowing of the Rapti River course after the construction of the guide bunds upstream of the barrage. Thus the present Banke district flooding problem might be only the tip of the iceberg. A vast area of the Banke district would remain all the time submerged during the wet seasons as soon as the Laxmanpur Barrage would be operational. It is explained hereinafter that the construction of Laxmanpur Barrage is an integral part of an overall plan to utilize the regulated flow of the Karnali and West Seti rivers for irrigation in India. Such plan would be dependant on Nepal's decision to implement the Karnali or the West Seti Storage dam projects. Nepal might have to convince India to amend the design of the Saryu Canal if we want to resolve the Western Terai submersion problem.

Saryu Canal

The Girjapur barrage across the Karnali river is located 1.2 km downstream of the confluence of the channel Girwa and Kauriala and 8.8 km downstream of Katarnia Ghat railway station of North Eastern Railway in India. The site of the barrage is about 16 km from the Nepal border along the River Kaurila.

There are two irrigation canals taking off from the Girjapur Barrage. On the left is the Saryu Canal running to the east beyond the Banganga River and on the right is the Link Canal connected with the Sarda Sahayak Canal planned to irrigate about 2 million ha of lands. At present only the right bank canal is operational because

the dry season flow of the Karnali River is insufficient for both the canals and there are technical difficulties to utilize the monsoon flow of this river. The year round operation of the Saryu Canal depends entirely on availability of the regulated flow from the proposed storage reservoirs in Nepal. The construction of the Saryu Canal, that started a long time ago, is still continuing at a snail's pace perhaps due to uncertainty about the date when the West Seti Project would be ready for operation. Nevertheless, it appears that the Saryu Canal could be made operational at short notice after the completion of the West Seti Storage Project because most of the structures of the Saryu Canal might be already ready. After that our people near the border area would be forced to live virtually in swamps throughout the year.

The Saryu Canal Project consists of a canal network that connects the head regulators of the barrages across the Saryu (Babai River), West Rapti and Rohini (Banganga River). A link channel 48.4 km long taking off from the left bank of the Girjapur Barrage outfalls into the Saryu River just upstream of the barrage across it. Similarly a link canal 56 km long taking off from the left bank of the Saryu River outfalls into the West Rapti River just upstream of the Laxmanpur Barrage. Beyond that a 125 km long canal taking off from the left bank of the West Rapti River extends right up to the Banganga River.

How the Submersion is Caused

The total length of the Saryu canal running almost parallel to Indo-Nepal border is about 230 km. In the original design the barrage across the Saryu River was at a location about 328 meters to the south of the railway bridge at Nanpara. Later, the design was modified and the location of the barrage was shifted 10 km to the north from the original site. The longitudinal gradient of the Saryu Canal has been reduced to a minimum. It is only one meter on a stretch of 9 km. The adoption of such extremely mild slope permitted the alignment of the canal to be pushed as far as possible to the north very close to Indo-Nepal border specially in its middle and lower reaches.

Normally siphons are provided to deliver canal water across a river. The river flow would not be obstructed if such siphons are built. A much higher average slope of the canal is required for the operation of this type of cross drainage structure, which has to operate under pressurized condition. A free flow hydraulic regime needs to be maintained at the river crossing if the average gradient of the canal is to be drastically reduced. For reducing the

average slope of the Saryu Canal an altogether a different type of structures has been devised, which at first glance drives anybody crazy. Barrages have already been built across the rivers to elevate the river water to such a level that would allow free passage of canal water across the river into the canal taking off from the other side of the river. The contentious Laxmanpur Barrage is one of such structures devised to deliver the West Seti water drawn from the Girjapur Barrage across the West Rapti River. It need not be mentioned that the Girjapur Barrage would help in future to draw the regulated Karnali River water also into the Saryu Canal to extend the coverage of lands under year round irrigation.

It would be necessary to maintain all the time pond water upstream of the barrages above certain fixed level to keep the Saryu Canal running at desired capacity. Thus the pond would always be full, with the result that a sizeable area of lands in Nepalese territory could remain perpetually submerged. When the river is in flood, the water would be spreading out onto the lands that were never before regarded prone to flooding.

The Saryu Canal is expected to cross innumerable small rivers and drains on its way. Embankments and dikes are needed to train these drains and small rivers for the protection of the Saryu Canal. These river training structures would also result in flooding inside Nepal where the canal route is close to the border.

A Very Similar Kosi Canal

India had proposed Nepal to build a canal similar to the Saryu Canal to deliver Kosi water drawn near Chatra to irrigate lands as far as Birgunj in the west. Instead of such Indian proposal, Nepal indicated its decision to implement the Sun-Kosi Diversion Project. The Indian proposal was dropped. The canal proposed by India would have led to submergence of a vast area of Nepal's Eastern Terai. The following is the excerpt from the Indian proposal.

"The Project, therefore, envisages the construction of a new barrage at Chatra which would be 8 km downstream of the proposed Kosi High Dam, with two high level canals, one on each bank in Nepal. These canals are expected to serve one of the most fertile areas of the terrain in Nepal. Preliminary assessment on the basis of data available shows that it may be possible to cover a gross command of 11.05 lakh ha on the right bank and 4.17 lakh ha on the left bank (both in Nepal and India). Another major advantage of providing Kosi waters to the high level canals in Nepal would be that, dependence on smaller rivers which are crossed by these canals would not be necessary and it may be possible to develop these rivers in an integrated manner along with Kosi water which would provide irrigation needs both in Nepal and India and at the same time release waters below Chatra for intensifying irrigation in India."

Nepal's Self-deceptive Water Policy

Nepal has embarked on a plan to launch three major storage dam projects in Western Nepal completely

disregarding how the vast quantity of regulated water is going to be utilized in India. The feasibility study report of the Karnali Project carried out at an enormous cost provides in depth information on downstream uses, but we are not interested to look into them. Our concern is only electricity. While the fate of the Karnali and Pancheshwor projects are yet to be decided, the West Seti Project was awarded to a private company SMEC to go ahead with final design works

It might appear utterly unbelievable that Nepal might be going to drown a very large number of her own citizens living in the Western Terai. Unfortunately it is a bitter reality. At present we are about to take final decision to grant permission to a private developer to build the West Seti Storage Dam Project to generate electricity completely disregarding the fact that the regulated flow of the West Seti River would play havoc in the Western Terai to the east of the Karnali River. It has already been explained that the 230 km long Saryu Canal taking off from the Girjapur Barrage already built in India across the Karnali River is going to be the extension of the West Seti Storage Dam Project. The middle and lower reaches of the Saryu Canal run very close to our border. Extremely objectionable type of river crossing structures have recently been built completing ignoring the fact that they would result in perpetual widespread submergence affecting a vast area of Nepal's Western Terai. Already serious flooding problems have been experienced even though those structures are not yet in operation. The flooding situation would be extremely grave once those structures would be in use after the Saryu Canal starts to operate. Our government, various water related agencies and NGOs have already been cautioned about this grave danger through media.

In Conclusion

It is becoming increasingly clear that it was a big mistake to shift the original alignment of the Saryu Canal 10 km to the north, as a result, the submersion problem of Nepalese lands is sure to worsen further in the years to come when the project becomes fully operational. The way the Saryu Canal has been designed to provide river crossings raises fear that the upstream bed of the Rapti River { also Babai and Banganga } would be very rapidly rising. It would even further aggravate the submersion problems.

A through study should be carried out based on confirmed data to determine exactly the adverse impact of the Saryu Canal on Nepalese territory. It would also be necessary to determine how far to the south the Saryu Canal must be shifted once it is established that the proximity of the Saryu Canal alignment to the border is the cause of the present flooding in Nepal.

Nepal should not commit a blunder by sticking to the decision to implement the West Seti Project before resolving the present flood problems in the Western Terai. ■

(Dr. Thapa writes on water resources)

POLITICS

Power by Elections Or Nominations

At a time when the country's prime minister is sick in bed, Speaker of the House of Representatives is confused and overwhelming majority of Nepalese are busy in farming, a small group of people are, however, busy to prepare a draft of interim constitution to pave the way for, interim parliament and interim government. Usual democratic process of power sharing is to go to the people and have their mandate through free and fair elections but hardly anybody is bothered to assume the power through the elections. Although it is not a legitimate manner of sharing the power, everybody wants power through nominations

By KESHAB POUDEL

P rime minister Girija Prasad Koirala, who has been sick in bed for quite a long time - has revealed that he does not know anything about the agreement signed between his party leaders and Maoists regarding the dissolution of House of Representatives and formation of alternative parliament. Revealing the stark reality of Nepalese politics, all powerful speaker of HoR Subas Nemwang - who is also a senior leader of the CPN-UML - has expressed his helplessness to overcome the political problems.

Not only prime minister Koirala and speaker Nemwang, an overwhelming majority of people - who live in rural parts of the country engaged in subsistence based agriculture- do not know what kind of constitution will be imposed upon them by mysterious and dramatic political development.

In this uncertain and bizarre situation, a small faction of urban based members of civil society, however, are busy to write an interim constitution to turn the country's permanent and legitimate state's institutions into interim.



House of Representatives: Clouds of Uncertainty

At a time when country's main players including prime minister and speaker are helpless, nobody knows from where and how the interim constitution drafting committee will get the legitimacy and much-needed guidance.

Prime Minister "Unknown"

Although prime minister Koirala, who was instrumental to sign 12-points and 8-points agreements with the Maoists, is still politically active, his roles seem to have been confined now as he lies sick in his bed.

"I was not informed regarding the agreement signed between my party leaders and Maoists on how to formulate the new interim

parliament," said prime minister Koirala to Speaker of HoR Nemwang who met prime minister on 16 July in Prime Minister's residence.

From including new members in interim constitution drafting committee to dissolving the present HoR and forming new interim parliament and interim government, all the issues are coming one after another through a meeting of handful of people in a dark room. There are more unseen factors in this drama than the seen players.

"The whole drama of interim constitution, after that the interim parliament and interim government is a fraud with the power of the people. These propositions were not there during the uprising of the people. During the agitation, people demanded one thing that is elections for the Constituent Assembly through reactivation of present constitution. For this demand, some people risked their life and everything. Once the uprising subsided, common people returned to their own profession. The intermediary class of political activists and vocal opinion leaders, however, are coming out with their fraudulent proposals. Interim for everything is the figment of their imagination devoid of any popular



Prachanda (left) and Dr. Bhattarai: Rapid political development

support," said a political analyst. "In fact, their proposals lack the consensus support in their own group."

Changing Stands

The CPN-UML leader Madhav Kumar Nepal is changing his words hour by hour. Nepal, who was diehard opponent of dissolution of present HoR - is now defending the idea to form the interim parliament. "This HoR should be dissolved as it is obstructing the peace process," said Nepal. His comrade and vice premier K.P. Sharma Oli is defending the HoR. "The HoR must be retained till the holding the elections of Constituent Assembly. The HoR is not creating any obstruction to the elections of Constituent Assembly."

After an agreement between the top leaders of CPN-UML and Nepali Congress and CPN-Maoists in Godavari on July 14, Nepalese politics has entered into a new phase of power sharing.

"Our meeting was successful to overcome the difference among us regarding the interim parliament and interim government," said Prachanda, chairman of CPN- Maoists. "The constitution drafting committee will present its draft in schedule. After the announcement of interim constitution, everything will be settled."

In the process of new political development, surprisingly politicians like Sushil Koirala, Ram Chandra Poudel and Chakra Prasad Bastola, who were opponents of eight point agreements and dissolution of HoR, are now supporting the idea to form interim parliament. "This HoR does not have any utility now and it should be removed by forming interim parliament," said Poudel. "The interim constitution will decide everything."

There are agreements on several questions on the issues related to power sharing through nominations but the elections are nobody's agenda. Several rounds of talks have already been held between the leaders of seven parties and Maoists but nobody has expressed their commitment to hold early elections by which they can share the power legitimately. Seven party alliances made the constitution defunct through the proclamation of HoR and the Maoists made defunct the all proclamation of HoR through eight points and recent new agreements.

"Usually, democratic process is to go to the people and have a mandate by free and fair elections. That way the supremacy of the people is reflected in the power and it gets the legitimacy too. Silent majority were expecting that the

leaders, who had led them into a furious uprising against the state which was arbitrary or despotic rule of the King by their pronouncement and devoid of any constitutional sanctions, should not be arbitrary and despotic themselves. The King surrendered to the will of the people which was expressed through massive demonstrations. Though the King had army at his command—which was capable of resisting the terrorist actions and providing better sense of security compared to many such states having internal conflicts and civil wars - his political decision was wise and appropriate," said the analyst. "The Royal regime was defeated not in the military front but in the democratic front which is one of the weakest side of popular institution of monarchy. That event was expected to bring a lasting peace, harmony and reconciliation between the monarchy and popular forces."

The popularized demands of the agitation was the restoration of HoR that was considered as a goal in which the real representatives of the people would assume the role in the power though they had an elected mandate years back.

"Nobody had any indication from any political party that they will abruptly reach into a decision to dissolve the HoR and destroy the constitution by a group of nominated draftsmen of the interim

constitution. Mystiques have prevailed over the political process where none of the internal forces know how and for what they have to lead the people," said the analyst.

Speaker's Bombshell

After Speaker of HoR Nemwang's bombshell that prime minister Koirala expressed his surprise over the so called agreement which was supposed to do away with this reinstated HoR, the situation has turned a new course. Parties have again started their dark room maneuvering to show that the decision was taken after the consultation with all.

"It is completely unbelievable situation that the most powerful persons in this government, the prime minister and the speaker, are unaware about major political developments. One is alarmed by the horrible situation of the governance," said the analyst. "All these designs serve the interest of extraneous elements instead of the country and people."

However Home minister Sitaula refuted the comments made by speaker of HoR Nemwang. "Every decision is taken after consultations with prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala. I don't know what speaker is referring to as dissolution of present HoR is one of points of eight point agreement," said Sitaula, in an attempt to control the damage..

Interim Constitution Or Mock Rehearsal

From chairman of constitutional drafting committee to members of civil society, every one is championing the cause of rights of the people. In real terms, no one has pressed for the elections through which people get chance to exercise their sovereign rights. "Mandate of People's Movement II was not to continue this dead house," said civil society member Krishna Pahadi. "We will launch nationwide agitation to press the dissolution of HoR."

Although the present version of democracy, the Loktantra, has declared the people real sovereign, it seems that they don't have any role in the near future to express their verdict through Constituent Assembly, which is being pushed further and further to distance.

The members of the committee of interim constitution drafting are nominated on the wishes of handful of leaders. They are neither accountable to anybody nor have any legitimacy to prove. "We are accountable to the mandate of People's Movement II. No one can challenge our legitimacy," said Laxman Prasad Aryal, chairman of the Interim Constitution Drafting Committee.

There is no basis and criteria in choosing the members of the committee. "A mock rehearsal is being staged in the name of interim constitution. Initial agreement brought six members drafting committee persons' loyalty to their respective political groups with an original mandate to prepare a draft within 15 days. Within a month of its formation its number has been increased more than twice by adding another nine members. One from oppressed class is yet to be nominated. In the meantime, other ethnic groups like Tharus also have come to the street demanding their own representation in the drafting committee. These draftsmen have not been elected either from general public or from their own political committees. Some top leaders recommended their names in a manner of quota system. Interestingly, the UML realized latter on that the president of Nepal Bar Association Sambhu Thapa was not toeing the party line so it included another person in the



PM Koirala: Difficult phase



Nepal: Lack of solid stance

committee on its behalf," added the analyst.

According to the political analyst, for a large number of people, the fast unfolding events are surprising. "Game-plan experts on global as well as regional level may easily come out with their conclusion about this situation but it is not easy for common people to comprehend the whole drama. Anyway, the vast majority of people are already busy toiling in their fields in this monsoon season. A large percent of population is engaged in subsistence efforts in their land. Among the rest of the population, less than one percent of the people have any opportunity to play a vocal role in political matters. Even among them, only one percent of that one percent can afford to play the role of activist to the extent of self-proclaimed civil society members," said analyst.

Strange Situation

From formation of the Interim Constitution Drafting Committee to new political decisions, accountability and legitimacy have been largely ignored. For western countries, every new step of political development in Nepal is just confusing. A deputy prime minister who opposed his own government in the parliament – is still with the government.

"We want to establish new kind of parliamentary practice in Nepal by opposing the government supported by our party," said deputy prime minister Amik Sherchan.

The total scenario of this country may give the very pessimistic impression about the current situation. Friends of **Nepal** who have been pouring their tax payers' money liberally and abundantly may feel dismayed.

Day by day, Nepal's development is being closely watched in international area. From a large number of immigrant Nepalese to foreigners, there are watchful eyes on Nepal. "These kind of global concerns were not seen at any previous difficult time of the country. That is one of the greatest assets as a reservoir of international goodwill to Nepal's independence and rights of the Nepalis people. But the political vitality of Nepal as a nation is still there in the heart beat of the common people. Keeping aside all the vocal leaders and activists if one touches the spirit and wisdom of common man in Nepal, one can sense the common sense politics the village communities are following," said the analyst.

Democratic Experiments

Nepalese have shown that they know how to choose their own

representatives. Whenever they were given a chance to choose the programs and representatives through ballots, they have all the time proved that they can come out with their best of the choices.

In the first democratic exercise in 1958, they elected most imaginative and dedicated leader like B.P. Koirala with two third majority in the parliament. Keeping aside the people and plural opinions, the King came out with his alternative model of Panchayat system, which ultimately at the moment of crisis failed to defend him, too.

After the great change in 1990, the people again through their franchise brought the same party with workable majority but due to collision of conflicting interests beyond the level of the common people created one crisis after another for which the lack of leadership like B.P. Koirala was to blame. Now the situation has again come where the nation has to be united with all political freedom under an enlightened and committed leadership. That seems like a wishful thinking without involving the common people in political process. And that is not possible till they are free to cast their ballots in a free and fair franchise and choose a program and representative of their liking.

"Ultimately, there are several contradictions under which Nepal is suffering from. There is one contradiction between regional powers to secure safe in Nepal. There are contradictions between traditional, modern and extremist forces – one under the ethos of monarchy and other under ethos of radical forces. There are contradictions between majority of rural population engaged in their own traditional occupation and life style and other urbanized and cosmopolitan in their expressions," said the analyst.

Nepal needs compromises and accommodation between contradictory forces to live in harmony, peace and prosperity. The safest and shortest route is to go to people and give them ballots to use in free and fearless environment. Quite a tall order for those who have been enjoying power through nomination. ■

ECONOMY

Overtaken By Uncertainty

Although Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat, a seasoned economist, attempted to shift the focus of this year's budget towards rural areas by pumping resources into the VDCs and allocating budget for rural infrastructures, clouds of political uncertainty threaten to unravel his efforts. At a time when there are talks about replacing the current government, parliament and even constitution by interim ones, it is hard to believe that Dr. Mahat's budget will actually be implemented. Besides the negative reaction by the Maoists, who increasingly seem to establish dominating role in any decision-making in the days to come, does not augur well for the budget implementation

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

The developments in the political field in the past two weeks suggest that the country may have to forget its brief stability soon. With the constitution soon to be replaced by interim one, the current government and the parliament could face the axe. For a country that had seen 13 governments in 12 years of democratic exercise, this may not seem anything new. However, this time the stakes seem a lot higher and consequences far striking.

The gathering clouds of political uncertainty are certain to have terrifying impact on the economy that is just trying to come out of the decade-long conflict-torn phase. It is, therefore, not surprising



Dr. Mahat: Bouquets and brickbats

that one of the most frequent criticism hurled at Finance Minister after he presented the budget for the fiscal year 2006/07 was that he would not be able to implement it.

Apart from usual economic hindrances, the budget faces difficult political terrain. And by failing to hold consultations with the Maoists before he formulated the budget, Dr. Mahat has made his job that much more difficult to carry out. Talking to a reporter, the Maoist number two Dr. Baburam Bhattarai recently said that the budget 'smelt of Panchayat era.'

"There is nothing in the budget that suggests that the country has undergone a big political change. This budget will be scrapped and a new and progressive one

will be introduced once the interim government is formed including us," said Dr. Bhattarai. "We have nothing to do with this budget. We do not support it," he added.

With these few words, the Maoists have indicated that they would not be supportive of the budget and/or economic policies pursued by this government. Consequently, it means that Dr. Mahat will have to quickly rethink his options. Since he had formulated a budget that has given central priority to rural areas, it would be a farce if he claims he can implement those programs without taking the Maoists – who still hold sway over the rural areas – into confidence or at least winning their indifference.

For instance, Dr. Mahat has doubled the direct annual grant to Village Development Committees (VDCs) to Rs 1 million from this year. How can he ensure that these resources will be fully and properly utilized for development this year when last year, the VDCs were able to spend merely 20 percent of the resources they were allocated?

And, in case, the resources allocated for development purposes are not spent



Rural areas: Priority of the budget

adequately, Dr. Mahat will fail in his another plan – to make the economy grow by 5 percent up from around 2 percent last fiscal year.

"This budget, by its outlook, can be said as pro-poor and pro-growth. But it may not be implemented in the absence of minimum understanding with conflicting party," said Professor Dr. Bishwambher Pyakuryal, president of Nepal Economic Association.

However, the Finance Minister appears confident of its implementation. "I am confident that the implementation of this budget shall definitely make some contribution towards building foundation for new inclusive Nepal through equitable economy, by materializing the people's aspirations expressed through the People's Movement," he said.

Budget Aim

During his budget speech, Dr. Mahat laid biggest emphasis on the consolidation of democracy and peace. He stated that the budget was aimed at doing so.

"The national debate today has surely centered on determining the future political system and process to achieve

sustainable peace. This does not mean that the issue of economic development should be pushed to back burner. Democracy cannot flourish on the foundation of a weak economy. The economy is in crisis for over half a decade. It is looking for a new momentum. The economic activities, suspended during the period of conflict, insecurity and absence of peoples' representatives, are waiting to pick up. The rural area seeks new opportunities for employment and income generation. Crisis-ridden industrial, trading and tourism sector is yearning for industrial peace and investment climate. Damaged and destroyed physical infrastructures are in need of reconstruction," Dr. Mahat announced.

Correspondingly, he has allocated resources to spur growth. By decreasing security expenditure, Dr. Mahat has tried to open the avenue for increasing development expenditure.

This, according to him, would go a long way in pushing the economic growth rate of the country. For the past couple of years, Nepal has witnessed around 2 percent of economic growth – which, in absolute per capita terms,

"If The Morale Of Business Community Is Not Boosted, It Will Be Difficult To Attain Five Percent Growth"

— RAJENDRA KUMAR KHETAN

RAJENDRA KUMAR KHETAN is a noted industrialist. Vice president of Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI), Khetan spoke with SPOTLIGHT on issues related to recent budget and the overall economic condition. Excerpts:



In brief, how do you assess the recent budget from the perspective of business community leader? Does the budget lack anything?

Budget has tried to cover all aspects of development of society. It is like a regular budget. It, however, lacks policy issues. It also depends on a number of things as politically we are in transition period. Besides, the rebel force has not accepted it. However, the country needs resources to meet expenses. The country and administration has to go on come what may. If the budget has been formulated for the full year and if it had to be compatible with five year plan, then, yes, it lacks a lot of issues, which could have brought rapid growth.

Many experts say the budget has "scattered resources" and, therefore, not implementable. What do you say?

I agree with this assessment. That's why, I have been saying that this budget is "Jack of all and master of none." It tries to address each and every issue but manages to do so in only few cases. It also suffers from the problem of fluid political situation.

Did the budget meet the expectations of business community?

Not at all. For us there is nothing new in this budget. Instead of stopping leakage on revenue front, it has rather imposed tax on domestic products. There are a few mistakes like imposing more tax on low-alcohol-based beverages and less tax on high-alcohol-based beverages, which seems like an institutional corruption committed by revenue administrators.

Do you think the budget is over-ambitious regarding revenue target and foreign aid expectations?

In the revenue front, it is ambitious as business environment is still down. Foreign aid may come but it also depends on where and how we want to use it. Amount expected on aid front is not ambitious.

Do you think this budget can be implemented given the uncertain political course?

The manner in which the CPN (Maoists) has reacted against the budget, it seems the government would face difficulties to implement the same. But if this can become seven party's proposal and could add what Maoists want on economic front, probably it can become a common document and, therefore, be able to implement.

What is your most important suggestion to the Finance Minister?

I want to suggest the Finance Minister to establish Special Economic Zones (SEZs); develop more sectors for investment, allow export houses to work for SMEs and develop Nepal as SAARC hub, among others.

Would the Minister achieve growth target of 5 percent that he has set?

It is not a difficult target. But morale of business community is down as trade union movement is picking up on the one hand, and new and more taxes are being imposed, on the other hand. If industry's morale couldn't be boosted, it may be difficult to attain 5 percent growth.

The Minister claims that this budget will help rural areas. Do you agree?

Yes and No. Yes, because it touches upon subjects like rural road access and agriculture development. No, because until the political settlement at VDC level is achieved, the fund can't be used. ■

could mean negative growth if it is compared with the population growth rate of 2.3 percent.

The budget aims to attain 5 percent of growth in the coming fiscal year. The FM expects the non-agriculture sector to grow by 6 percent, agriculture sector by 3.5 percent and hence the total economy by 5 percent. The budget expects the inflation will be 6 percent.

The rapid economic growth is imperative for Nepal to address its most vital problem – that of alleviating poverty. Without adequate growth, millions of people cannot be pulled out from grinding poverty. At present, per capita income of average Nepali is just around \$ 300. According to Sultan Hafeez Rahman, country director of Asian Development Bank Nepal Resident Mission, Nepal can achieve \$875 per capita income in 15 years if it can grow at 7 percent. Likewise, if it can grow at 8 percent, per capita income can grow to \$845 in 13 years (2018) and to \$858 in 12 years if it can grow at 9 percent. At present, the cut-off point for middle-income countries is \$ 805 per capita. Therefore, faster growth is essential for uplifting the country from least-developed and low-income status to developing and middle-income status.

Budget Numbers

The finance minister last week unveiled Rs 143.91 billion budget for the fiscal year 2006/07 at the House of Representatives.

In what is seen as the maiden budget by the democratic government after the successful April movement, Dr. Mahat has given top priority to rural development. The budget introduces a number of programs aimed at helping rural areas. It has increased direct grant to Village Development Committees (VDCs) from Rs 500,000 to Rs 1 million a year. The government will have to spend Rs 4 billion on this alone. The budget announces special programs to provide relief to socially and economically backward community, Dalit, indigenous, nationalities, families of martyrs and women. Students of these communities have been provided with scholarships. Senior citizen allowance and widow allowance have been increased.

“Priority To Rural Development Is A Plus Point”

DR. SHANKAR SHARMA, former vice chairman of National Planning Commission (NPC), is a renowned economist. He spoke to SPOTLIGHT about the current budget and its implications to the economy. Excerpts:

What are the plus points of the budget?

The increased allocation to villages in an attempt to distribute peace dividend is a plus point. Likewise, the security expenses, which had been increasing for the past few years, have now been decreased. There is palpable feeling about reconstruction and rehabilitation.

What are minus points, then?

The major minus point is the uncertainty of its implementation. Amid usual bureaucratic problems and weak mechanisms, it will be difficult to implement the budget programs.

Do you think this budget has made ambitious expectation regarding foreign aid?

Indeed. Apart from India, none of the donors have yet made commitment for budgetary support. They are only implementing ongoing projects and programs. The government has not formulated its strategy and priority to convince the budget yet. Given this

— DR. SHANKAR SHARMA

situation, the expectation for foreign aid is ambitious.

What about financial sector reforms?

The budget has made some commitments on issues like addressing bank loan default, petro price fixing, labor laws and service sector.

The budget is silent about developing Nepal as transit corridor. What do you say?

Well, it may not have stated about transit economy but it has committed to build Syaphrubesi road, which would be crucial for developing North-South corridor. ■

For Karnali, the budget announces “Light Program” aiming to distribute 31,000 solar lights. Around 24,000 students of the zone would be provided free education. In Karnali zone, for one member of every family that is totally unemployed, the budget announces

program to provide 100 days worth of unemployment allowance at the rate of Rs 50.

Likewise, in a move to appease civil servants, the budget has provided 10 percent dearness allowance – which will increase the liability by Rs 2 billion.

This budget has slashed palace expenditure by up to 70 percent. The palace has been allocated Rs 219.7 million budget. The government has allocated Rs 1.25 billion for the purpose of holding elections to constituent assembly. Likewise, the budget to the Defense

Ministry has been reduced slightly to Rs 10.36 billion from Rs 12.14 billion last year. The budget to Home Ministry, too, has been decreased from Rs 8.78 billion a year ago to Rs 7.84 billion. Budget for development has been increased substantially.

The budget has allocated Rs 1.1 billion for reconstruction of destroyed infrastructures. It has announced development of 309-MW strong Tamakoshi hydropower



Destroyed infrastructure: Reconstruction effort imperative

project. It has set aside Rs 7.71 billion for road construction; Rs 6.19 billion for drinking water projects; Rs 9.3 billion for health; Rs 3.96 billion for agriculture; Rs 8.41 billion for electrification; and Rs 4 billion for irrigation. The biggest share of the budget has been allocated for education at Rs 22.77 billion, which is around 16 percent of the total budget. Although this amount is high compared with Rs 21 billion budget for education last year, it still falls short of government promise to allocate at least 17 percent of budget to education.

Total capital expenditure has been set at Rs 44.97 billion while the recurrent expenditure has been set at Rs 83.79 billion. Around Rs 15.16 billion has been allocated for loan and interest repayment. The budget expects to raise Rs

85.37 billion revenue. It hopes to generate foreign grants of Rs 23.72



Dr. Bhattarai: Budget not acceptable to the Maoists

billion and foreign loan of Rs 16.9 billion. The budget states that it would

generate the remaining Rs 17.9 billion as internal loans. ■

“Budget Cannot Be Implemented Without Minimum Understanding”

— PROFESSOR DR. BISHWAMBHER PYAKURYAL

PROF. DR. BISHWAMBHER PYAKURYAL is the president of Nepal Economic Association. A well-known economist, Dr. Pyakuryal spoke to SPOTLIGHT about economic situation and budget. Excerpts:

Since there are talks about forming interim government and interim parliament. How do you see this uncertainty hitting the budget?

There will be problem in its implementation. In fact, the Finance Minister should have consulted with the Maoists during pre-formulation phase because they will have increasing stake

in the decision-making process in the days to come. Even now he should reach minimum understanding to implement the budget.

Do you think the budget is ambitious?

Well, in a similarly war-torn country, budget (in post-conflict) period tend to be much larger. In Afghanistan, budget for reconstruction was three times more than regular budget. From that logic, this budget is small. But here we have big problem regarding absorption capacity. Last year, only 20 percent of resources allocated to VDCs could be spent. Likewise, only 40 percent of resources allocated to education

and 35 percent of that allocated to health could be spent.

What kind of budget is this?

This is a “sure to please every one” kind of budget. It has scattered resources. Unfortunately, it has also increased discretionary spending, which would have inflationary pressure on the economy.

What about its target of foreign aid?

Till now, only India has come forth with Rs 1.6 billion of budgetary support. Others have not done so. Therefore, it appears as ambitious target to raise Rs 40 billion of foreign assistance. ■

New Highest Railway Opens All-Round Inter-Regional Link Prospects

By DR. UPENDRA GAUTAM

China naturally integrates with South Asia by mountains and rivers - specifically speaking the Himalayan range, and the integrity of flow of the Ganga, the Brahmaputra and the Sutlej rivers. Now a new high-tech link is being developed. On 1st of July, the 85th anniversary day of the Chinese Communist Party, the first regular railway service to Lhasa was flagged off from Beijing. Covering 4062 KM, the train reached Lhasa after 48 hours. Thus, the railway service became yet another significant steel way to further solidly unify remote Tibet with the rest of the mainland China. This train service started its return trip from Lhasa to Beijing on 4th of July. Indeed, it was 4th of July in 1837 when Grand Junction Railway, world's first long-distance railway, was opened between Birmingham and Liverpool in the UK. It was on this very day in 1886 when the First scheduled Canadian trans-continental train arrived in Port Moody, British Columbia. It was the 4th of July, too, of 1947 when "Indian Independence Bill" was presented before British House of Commons, enforcing bifurcation of British India into two sovereign countries - India and Pakistan, two of the eventual major destinations of the Chinese railway. Surely one cannot forget that July 4 is the US Day of Independence from the British imperialist rule as well.

The reference to the American Day of Independence is being made here because some people assume that the West, led by the US, was against the subject of rail service on the ground of environmental concern. But practical people-to-people cooperation, for example from Canada, indicates that component of the Chinese Himalayan rail service utilized high-tech Canadian products, and people of these countries are more than willing to have a ride on this heavenly train sooner than latter.

No doubt, the rail service travels through the highest elevation of 5072 meters from the sea level. It is the world's highest altitude and longest plateau railway-extending 1956 km from Qinghai province's capital Xining to Lhasa in the southwest.

"The highest altitude" feature marks out China's another great sense - the sublime sense of struggle. About 550 km of this railway track run on permanently frozen earth. It was precisely because of the instability of the earth the Chinese scientists and technologists had to wait for so many years to

link high Himalayan region of Tibet with the rest of the country as they required to innovate the way out. Now the railway uses 1686-meter long Kunlung mountain tunnel, the world's longest tunnel built on permanently frozen earth. The train speed on the permanently frozen earth is designed to be 100 km/hour while this will reach to 120 km/hour on normal track. In such an ecological context, the phenomenon of global warming is certainly a threat to Tibet railway. Chinese Academy of Sciences had long back asked for cooperation among scientists of China, India and Nepal for research on the effects of global warming on melting of snow in the high Himalayan ecology.

"The highest altitude" feature marks out China's another great sense - the sublime sense of struggle. About 550 km of this railway track run on permanently frozen earth. It was precisely because of the instability of the earth the Chinese scientists and technologists had to wait for so many years to link high Himalayan region of Tibet with the rest of the country as they required to innovate the way out.

It will be fitting to pay respect here to Prof. Wang Hongwei of Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, Beijing who long before visualized several railway connections between China and parts of South and Central Asia. His visualized connections included Yunnan-Myanmar and Bangladesh and Tibet-Nepal and the heartland of India (that is, India's Bihar, UP, Delhi, Punjab and Haryana provinces). Even though the railway has now only reached Lhasa, it has brought Nepal closer to Asia's Far East (that is, Japan, Republic of Korea and

Democratic People's Republic of Korea) via Shanghai. Now the Nepali students, tradesmen, workers and tourists can go for their mission as well as long haul visit to various directions through Lhasa.

And Lhasa these days is abuzz with standardization of new lexicon or gamut of words/phrases relating to train services as they did not exist in the Tibetan language before. And one of these phrases is "Mei Kuo Er" or "railway" though "Ri Li" can also be used in Tibetan oral expression for the train. We delightfully appreciate the Chinese and Tibetan scientists, technicians and labor for bringing the new railway culture to the roof or the world, and thus bringing it closer to Nepal, a nation which shares with Tibet the most extensive social, cultural and economic ties.

(This article is based on statement delivered by Dr. Gautam, General Secretary, China Study Center, Nepal on 14 July 2006 in a talk program organized to celebrate historic commencement of regular railway service in Tibet Autonomous Region of China)

Displaced Unable To Return In Absence Of Security Guarantee

By BABITA BASNET

Although the ceasefire code of conduct signed by the Nepal government and the Maoists talks about facilitating the return of persons displaced due to people's war to their native home and rehabilitating them in a peaceful and respectful manner, most of the internally displaced persons are yet unable to return. The Nepal Government formed after the 19-days of People's Movement on April 24, 2006 and the Maoists signed the 25-point ceasefire code of conduct on May 26. The 19th point of the code of conduct states "the properties of political leaders, workers and common people that were seized or locked out or not allowed for use in course of conflict shall be handed back and allowed for use to the concerned persons or families."

There is no definite statistics about how many people were displaced during the last one decade since the start of People's War in February of 1996 from Rolpa district but estimates put them to be around 200,000. Of them, fifty percent comprise of women and children. The conflict that erupted from Rolpa district soon spread to Rukum, Jajarkot, Gorkha and Sindhuli. Security personnel were then extensively mobilized to these districts. Subsequently, male individuals began to be gradually displaced. The displacement of women started only a few years later. The volume of displacement increased suddenly after the mobilization of Nepalese Army. Women and children were also displaced in big numbers. According to one statistic, the number of people displaced during 2003 and 2004 is maximum during the whole decade. Till 2003, the number of displaced persons was around 32,000. In subsequent days, the number increased substantially. When the Maoists started recruiting school students from Baglung, Achham and other districts from early 2004, there was a mass exodus from those districts. The record kept at border points show that up to 1000 youths left for India from Achham district in one month alone during that time. Around 900 people left for India in a single day during that period. Likewise, when the student wing of Maoists – All Nepal National Free Students Union (Revolutionary) – started forcing students in Tehrathum schools to become their members, the students fled to Terai cities of eastern Nepal. Of many reasons for displacement, killing of family members and extortion appear to be major ones. Family members and even neighbors started fleeing their village. Women's displacement increased after the Maoists accelerated their campaign to seize lands, houses and properties. Likewise, there are many instances where the women fled their place after being subjected to interrogation by security personnel regarding the whereabouts of male members of their family. Many women have faced mental and physical torture after their male relatives went underground. According to Jayapuri Gharti, president of Maoist-affiliated

All Nepal Women Organization, about 1500 women associated with Maoists were 'martyred' during the ten years. She said, "There is a big number of women who were raped or subjected to different sexual violence by security personnel." Majority of these victimized women are said to be working with the party and some of them have been displaced to urban areas. In 2060, Siloke Sangraula of Taplejung district committed suicide after being unable to pay Rs 15,000 donation to the Maoists. His wife is mentally disturbed till now. Tirtha Gyawali of Bhaluwang of Dang district became mentally ill after being displaced. In Lalmatiya of Dang, families of 70 households were displaced after Armed Police Force set up their training camp by asking them to relocate. In Nepalgunj, the displaced persons are living in tents, only some of them have since returned. A rich family in Bardiya has been living in a rented rooms in Nepalgunj since last three years after he was forced to move out of his place by the Maoists. The person said, "I have millions of rupees worth of properties in the village. But I have to live in a misery here." Having to live in such tension, his wife Rajya Laxmi has already suffered heart attack twice. Naramaya Khatri who hails from Gamlangtar of Okhaldhunga is currently working in a cow shed in Balkhu. She was displaced after the Maoists threatened her husband former village leader Chandra Bahadur Khatri. Families of Bhairab Bahadur Gurung of Jugu VDC, Solukhumbu and Pradeep Sunuwar, former chairman of a VDC in Okhaldhunga are living a difficult life in Maharajgunj after being displaced by the Maoists. Many of them who used to be well-to-do in villages are now forced to work in brick-kilns and as construction workers.

A big number of families belonging to security personnel who were displaced has not yet returned. "My husband's throat was slit in front of me. I could not even give him water when he died. How can I return to the same place, same house, same bed where my husband was killed? I want to die here only," said Prema Shahi who is living in Nepalgunj. After her husband was killed by the Maoists, she has been living with her daughter in Nepalgunj since three years. A number of girls who fled their villages to escape Maoist recruitment are now working in restaurants. And many of them are forced to engage in flesh trade. Many girls who sell foodstuffs in streets of Butwal revealed that they also engage in prostitution. "Prostitution is not our wish, it is the compulsion," said a 19-year-old girl who sells tea near bus park. She had fled Arghakhanchi to escape Maoist threats. Many girls are also working as domestic helpers in Kathmandu and other cities. The family of Prema Wali is currently in Kathmandu. Her family was made to flee the village in Rolpa by the Maoists because their house was rented by police post. Her family had initially come to Kathmandu to

treat her brother who was mercilessly attacked by khukuri by the Maoists. Sarala, mother of Prema, said, "Sons can go to any place but where can I send my daughters?" The house in village is currently locked up. They do not have any faith that they would be safe when they return home. Many families are similarly suspicious about their security and are unable to return whereas some families are still stopped by the Maoists to return. The family of Ananda Bahadur Shahi of Dailekh are still not permitted by the Maoists to return home. Similarly, many other persons who face charges of being 'informer' think it is impossible for them to return. Of the 1000 displaced persons in Nepalgunj, around 148 persons have returned home in the first phase under the initiative by the Maoists, political parties and different organizations. It is estimated that around

30,000 people have been displaced in mid-western region alone. Most of their lands and houses have been confiscated by the Maoists. On the other hand, some youths who had earlier joined the Maoists and later fled their organization, say that they cannot return home yet since they believe that the Maoists would not leave them alone. The Maoist leaders have not yet spoken about their policies regarding such youths. First of all, in order to facilitate the return of displaced persons the Maoists need to release their confiscated properties, which is not happening in all places except a few. Neither the state is able to provide them adequate security guarantee to return.

(Basnet is a scholar of Peace Fellow with WISCOMP – Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace)

"There Is No Environment For Returning"

—DIWANI GHIMIRE

My name is Deewani Ghimire. I am living a life of a displaced person since last five years in Kathmandu. I was born in Sindhuli district in 1985 (2041 BS). My father joined the Maoist party when I was 12-years-old and the same year he was arrested by security personnel. I did not know what the word Maoist meant when he was arrested. Policemen used to frequently come to our house saying it was a residence of a Maoist. They used to threaten my mother whereas I and my brother used to witness the incidents silently. Father was jailed thrice in separate incidents. Once there was even a news that he was killed. Later on, when a complaint was registered at the Human Rights Commission regarding his disappearance, he was found in Bhadracol Jail in Kathmandu. Due to repeated harassment by security personnel, my mother also joined Maoists. That was when the ill fate struck me and my younger brother.

Me and my brother both used to go to a same school. We were looked upon suspiciously for being children of Maoists. Apart from education, we also had to look after our farm field. Nobody helped us saying we were Maoists. In 2001 when there was the first peace talks between the government and the Maoists, my mother and father were released and for a brief



period we lived together. But when the talks collapsed we all fled to Kathmandu. My father was re-arrested from Kathmandu where we were living at a house of acquaintance. And my mother ran into hiding. Since both my legs had been burnt when I was a child, I was not physically fully able. After we started living the life of displaced persons in Kathmandu, we could no more go to school. My brother who was sharp in studies worked as a helper in microbus to support our family. I started working in garment factory where I had to face bad behavior from people. Despite having adequate lands and properties in village, we were living a miserable life in

Kathmandu. In course of torture by security personnel, my mother became unable to walk properly. In the meantime, my father was released from jail. But he was accused of leaking information about Maoists. He now faced twin threats – from the security personnel as well as Maoists. At present, there is peace talks between the government and the Maoists and the Maoists have said they would allow the return of displaced persons. But we are unable to return because of twin threats. We cannot return before they publicly withdraw charges against my father. Because of these problems I could not study further.

Although I had passed SLC in first division, I could not join college. But this year I have joined a college. I want to return home if there is environment of security. Due to mental tension, many persons have suffered. I have seen two women become mentally ill. One of them was forced to see the killing of her own son by the Maoists while the other one went through extreme financial difficulties. These days, people want to associate with one political party or the other. But I am fed up with politics as I have seen my family suffer. I want to live without joining any party but by believing in democracy. Will the new Nepal have any space for me?

Encouraging Sign of Peace and Political Stability in Nepal

By DR. TULSI P. UPRETY

It is a good sign that Maoist leader Mr. Puspa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) decided to surface from underground and meet with the Prime Minister as well as other members of Seven Party Alliance. However, Maoists must stop extortion and violence if they want to establish themselves as a legitimate political force and win the confidence of the people of Nepal. King Gajendra also had 90,000 strong army but he had to surrender his absolute power to the people and the Maoists must learn a lesson from this political change. They must realize and accept that intimidation, threat, extortion, violence, black mailing and kidnapping are not democratic norms. Democracy demands peace, love, compassion, mutual respect, giving and forgiving, freedom, transparency and respect for the rule of law and the Maoists must incorporate these democratic values and norms in their behavior and practices for establishing their credibility in the national and international arenas.

It is a positive sign that the Maoist leaders are trying to establish their democratic credibility by meeting various government leaders, diplomats and the members of civic society. However, their public relation and diplomatic exercise would not amount to anything unless they renounce violence and lay down their arms. This is exactly what US Ambassador to Nepal James F. Moriarty recently said, "Instead of continuing their diplomatic parleys, the Maoists should change their conduct." We must all understand that ambassador Moriarty is not trying to derail the peace process, as many would have you believe, but simply trying to ensure that the Maoist keep their end of the bargain in the process and make an honest effort at achieving peace through negotiations. And this is only possible when the explicit threat of potential violence is removed from the negotiations. To their credit, Maoists are now openly and freely meeting diplomatic corps and other members of Nepalese society and trying to be recognized as a legitimate political force.

Maoists must also understand that foreign aid plays a big role in the economic development of Nepal. With this in mind, they also need to make an honest effort to be recognized as a legitimate political party in the eyes of these donor nations and not see them as a threat to the political process. At a time when the country needs to build its infrastructure and get itself out of economic downturn, we can not loose aid from our donor nations. Thus the goal of achieving political and an economical stability in the country rests, to a large extent, in Maoists' hands.

Maoists also need to learn to function in a democratic environment where opposing views and dissent are not only allowed but encouraged. Just like Maoists have been allowed to freely hold press conferences and share their ideas with the masses, every citizen should be given the right to express their views without the threat of violence. The Maoists leadership needs to educate its party workers on this if they ever want to be integrated in the mainstream.

It is an encouraging sign that Mr. Dahal has suggested that, perhaps, Maoists army could be put under the command of the Prime Minister. However, there should not be two armies that could be loyal to two different groups or parties as sometimes suggested by the Maoists leader. In addition, implementing mandatory military

training to its citizen to ease the burden on the military would not be very much welcomed by the people either. Mr. Dahal has said the army is too big and should be reduced in size. But the army can be used for development works throughout the country. Various vocational training programs can be established for providing training to Maoist army and equip them with proper skills and tools. With this kind of approach they would be melted into a productive force as opposed to a destructive force. If such training programs are established, Nepal Army could play a complementary role on development works while assisting Maoists.

It is encouraging to learn that Maoists leaders are willing to participate in liberal, transparent and competitive economic system. They have realized that in consideration of the existing economic realities of the country, industrial, commercial, tourism and water development sectors could take a lion's share in creating employment and income opportunities for the people.

Maoists say that they are fair and they would like to play by the rule and abide by the law of the land. If this is true, then they must abide by the existing laws, rules and regulations of Nepal but not create a parallel government.

It is a good sign that Maoist leaders are trying to find alternative ways to feed and compensate their army. While the negotiation is going on, perhaps Nepalese government can offer some financial relief so that they do not have to depend on extortion. Regardless of whether it is rural or urban area, as long as the Maoists continue to resort to extortion to feed their army, it will not help them to establish their credibility and win the hearts and mind of the people.

The parliament has been questioning some of the decisions made by the negotiating team and the Cabinet. This is how the democracy works and the Maoists must get used to the process of check and balance in a democratic state. The parliament should be continued even after the inception of interim government and until the election of Constituent Assembly is not completed.

The current government has been flexible and has been providing all the concessions and accommodations to the Maoists' demand. However, it is time for the government to demand from the Maoists to renounce violence and lay down their arms prior to the formation of the interim government and Maoists must do so for the sake of their own credibility and for winning the confidence of the people. The people of Nepal are simply hungry for peace and economic prosperity and it will all depend how Maoists will behave. ■

(Dr. Tulsi P. Uprety has twenty five years of experience in economic development. As an economic development specialist, Dr. Uprety specializes in industrial and business development, formulation of development policies and planning, financing and institutionalization of development process. He taught micro and macro economic classes in various colleges. Dr. Uprety participated in development activities of Native American Indians of Northern America and worked in Asia. He has a Doctorate Degree in Economic Development and Public Administration from the University of California, Berkeley. (Send your comments and reaction at : durgapur11@yahoo.com.)

EXPOSITION

Powerful Time

The paintings by Mukesh Shrestha reflect the momentous time

By A CORRESPONDENT

The paintings by Mukesh Shrestha hanging on the walls of Nepal Art Council really portray the female characters exposing different moods, based on a single theme 'Mood of Time' with the medium of oil and acrylic on canvas.

Shrestha, who had revealed his talent in painting through group exhibition, has come out with a first solo exhibition 'Mood of Time' now.

He has captured different forms and colors in the twenty six paintings being exhibited at Nepal Art Council till 15th July, 2006. The paintings done on the canvas with green, yellow, black, blue, and other colors give a soothing feeling to the viewers.

Shrestha's use of colors and forms has made some of the paintings come alive. They seem to be moving as though they are real women. Focused on female figure, his most paintings are related with the concreteness of women. The interpretation of his paintings is an interesting exercise as it portrays diverse characteristics of women.

His paintings themselves suggest that the mood depends upon time. Though the styles of projections differ from each other, most of the paintings seem to be influenced by female figures. On different moods, he has painted different paintings. Each paintings have their own importance so that the audience are bound to observe the paintings very closely. To select the paintings only as a subject of female



figure is to take an easy way out. "Women have such power to tolerate everything within a moment, they suffer a lot and bear a lot of burden. That's why I keep female figure as a subject in every paintings," he said.

Shrestha is in the process to repeat same subject in future also. As a student of Lalitkala Campus, Shrestha has already completed his Bachelor level in 2004. He plans to pursue his further study in fine arts in Banaras Hindu University. ■

Green Party's Suggestions

The Green Nepal Party has made a number of suggestions for the interim constitution. Kuber Prasad Sharma, chairman of the party high command issued a statement outlining the suggestions by his party. He presented his suggestions on following eight points:

1. If the Committee's scope of work is limited to the 12 point agreement reached between 7 party alliance and Maoists whether our suggestions would receive your attention? Our party wishes that the feelings of silent majority should also be included in proposed interim constitution.
2. Committee should consider the circumstances that led to overthrow of previous constitutions. What is the mandate of People's movement-II? (a) One party authoritarian regime (b) Multiparty Democracy (c) Ceremonial King. If there is no consensus, the Interim Constitution may face stiff resistance. There should be provision for 'Referendum' on subjects of national importance.
3. In the past the Democracy installed by Peoples Movement of 1990 collapsed because of corruption and abuse of authority. The culprits could not be penalized. To avoid similar situation, the new constitution should give rights to citizens to file corruption cases in courts against the such culprits. Also citizens should have rights to introduce bills in parliament through relevant committees.
4. The accused of the past should not get immunity just because they supported the Peoples Movement. The new constitution should have provisions to amend feudal practices followed by Government

officials, Political parties and Leaders. There should be provisions to stop lifetime leadership and Party control by family. Their financial source and status must be transparent.

5. There should be Decentralization, Regional Councils and Local-self government. Also the representation of women, children, ethnic community, backward community and poor should be adequately ensured. The kingdom should be restructured but the question of national integrity, promotion of nationalism and distribution of rights and resources should be carefully addressed. A serious study is needed on the subject.
6. There should be proportional representation in the parliament. Mixed system of voting should be adopted. Care should be taken to avoid hung parliament. Electoral System should facilitate one party majority as well as proportional representation. We had bad experience of coalition government failing in the past.
7. House of Representatives should not be dissolved at the whim of one person. If necessary, HOR can be dissolved by resolution passed by 75% votes. Otherwise fixed term HOR can be proposed. The size of the cabinet should not exceed 10% of the members of HOR or 25.
8. All appointments of Ambassadors, Constitutional bodies, Secretaries and alike should be scrutinized and recommended by relevant committee of parliament. Also the appointments to lucrative positions of customs, Internal Revenue, CEO and Project Chief etc should be internally scrutinized before posting. ■

SARITA LAMICHHANE

Emotive Artiste

Lamichhane successfully establishes her status in entertainment industry

By KABI ADHIKARI

When a young girl in her twenties entered the flashy world of entertainment inspired by director Rishi Lamichhane and senior artiste Tulsi Ghimire, she never thought she would one day earn wide fan following all over the country.

People were even more surprised when they found that the young artiste of "Mukti" who played a powerful role, was a young and unassuming lady. The emotive, powerful and established artiste is none other than Sarita Lamichhane.

Artistes, singers, poets and actors, among others, play a key role in motivating the people and arousing their sentiments. Sarita is one of them who has been well recognized among the Nepalese as an artiste to reckon with who has devoted her career in projecting the realist, emotional and sentimental roles among the public.

The Tele-serial 'Mukti' earned both name and fame and catapulted Sarita to great heights, as an artiste. She was offered innumerable films, tele-serials, and advertisements after the success of 'Mukti'.

A dozen of tele-serials like Mukti, Achanak, Gahana, Chahana Manko, etc are very well received by the audience and has made her popular throughout the country. Among them Parichaya is her home production, directed by Rishi Lamichhane and produced by herself. She is the first woman producer who has produced a long-episode tele-serial.

While colleagues, well-wishers and audience urge her to continue impressed by the beautiful serial-Mukti she played seven years ago,

Sarita has kept herself busy in managerial tasks abstaining from acting in the latter years. Born in 2036 (1980) in Jhapa, Sarita got a family ambience where she could nurture her interest in film since early childhood. On noticing her flair for acting, relatives, friends and colleagues encouraged her to act.

Like all towns, Jhapa had a strong influence of movies. Sarita enjoyed watching Nepalese movies and serials. Movies especially directed by Tulshi Ghimire, were her major favorites. That's

why it was a pleasant surprise when she was offered her first ever acting role in 'Mukti' that was produced by Tulsi Ghimire.

Real picture of women character are portrayed in the serials played by Sarita. Filled with emotions, feelings, and sentiments, her role is very matching with her personality. When asked why she only portrays the role of weaker gender, she said, "To revolt against male-dominated society, a woman must be disciplined, liberal and tolerant at first and then she can go against it. Otherwise, her mission cannot be fulfilled and there will be no strong support for women. To struggle against something, one has to be prepared first."

Santanko Maya, a feature film, is the first of her feature films. Due to her popularity in tele-serials, she was offered the role in "Santanko Maya" – which also became a hit. According to her, there are two reasons for doing feature films. She

gives first priority to the nature of role, which has to be of her linking, then there has to be satisfaction of working with the particular

unit. More and more producers have started approaching her. But she is quite choosy as she cannot deceive her audiences who want to look her as a typical woman. Without having taken classes for acting, Sarita has come out as an established artiste winning the hearts and minds of the people.

Apart from being an actor, once Sarita was a reporter and a senior producer of Channel Nepal for six years. During her that career also, she won hearts of many audience. However, she wants to establish her identity as an artiste more than anything else.

Very soft-hearted, Sarita has two ambitions in her life. As a social worker, she wants to serve those elderly persons who are deprived from the love of their sons and daughters and those children who are orphaned. ■



Lamichhane: Winning hearts

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