

Opinion: Dr. Ananda Bahadur Thapa

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SPOTLIGHT

Sept 22-Oct 12, 2006

Tourism

Hope

And

Anxiety

Peace Process : Fragile Phase
Media Commission : Practical Inputs

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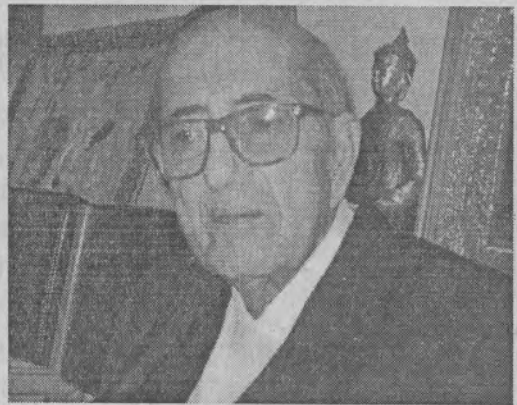
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COVER STORY : Hope And Anxiety

Tourism industry is beset with both hope and anxiety as their expectation for a windfall in autumn season is mired by increasing extortion and intimidation Page 12



PEACE PROCESS:

The meeting between PM and Maoist chairman Prachanda improves the atmosphere and lays groundwork for agreement on political package Page 10



MORIARTY'S REMARKS: Display of Distress

It is not the visit of US ambassador but what he said that should generate debates Page 11

SPOTLIGHT

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Chief Editor And Publisher
Madhav Kumar Rimal

Editor
Sarita Rimal

Managing Editor
Keshab Poudel

Senior Reporter
Sanjaya Dhakal

Reporter
Thakur Amgai

Design and Layout
Jyoti Dangol (Singh)

Photographer
Sandesh Manandhar

Legal Advisor
Advocate Lok Bhakta Rana

Marketing
Navin Kumar Maharjan
Madan Raj Poudel
Bishnu Prasad Chaulagain

Editorial Office
GPO Box 7256, Maitidevi, Kathmandu
Tel (977-1) 4423127 Fax: (977-1) 4417845
Chief Editor's : 4435594,
E-mail : spot@mail.com.np
Internet : www.nepalnews.com/spotlight

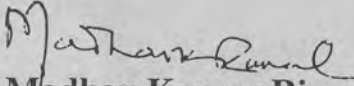
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P.O. Box : 1655, Jwagal, Kupondole,
Lalitpur, Nepal
Tel : 5551251, 5529530
E-mail : degiscan@wlink.com.np

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E-mail : rbnewspaper@hotmail.com

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Nepal's biggest national festival – Dashain – is just at the door. This festival has always given all Nepali, wherever they be, joy and happiness in a family reunion without any distinction of big or small and rich or poor. But ever since the country has been embroiled in violent insurgency, a pervading gloom has overcast this festival and no Nepali has been able to celebrate it like in the olden days. But this time, even the very feeling of joy or happiness is conspicuously absent. Despite the success of Jana Andolan II, the country seems to be lost in the fog of ineffective administration and personal aggrandizement of men in power. Not only lack of peace and political stability, not only the persisting fear of abductions, extortions or killings and not only the autocratic behavior of the forcibly reinstated so-called democratic House of Representatives but the anti-national policies of the opposition-less authoritarian SPA government led by the ailing octogenarian Girija Koirala also has filled the hearts of all patriotic Nepalis with deeper apprehensions that the very sovereignty of the nation is being imperiled. How self-interest and partisan feelings corrupt even men of integrity can be easily seen in the workings of the present House of Representatives in Nepal. We know the House does contain some members who are patriotic and loyal to their country and men of highest integrity. It is simply beyond our comprehension how men like Amik Sherchan or Baldev Majgaiya can tolerate the present atmosphere in the House and continue their participation? While writing this note we came to know from BBC the news about the coup in Thailand. Does this coup give any message to Nepal? Nepal's security forces are not only world renowned, they are also very patriotic and most dedicated to defend their country. They cannot be demoralized in any manner. Will this SPA government also try to learn something from this Thai coup? Is the SPA government preparing the pitch for Jana Andolan III? These are some pertinent questions to which the SPA government must not delay in finding reasonable answers and work accordingly. They must not fail to realize that proxysm never pays and always boomerangs. We do hope our message gets home even as a change. We also hope the Maoist leaders, too, must have become wiser by now to fully understand that piggy-backing has the dangerous possibilities of sudden falls that could prove fatal. To conclude, we would like to pray to Durga Ma to grant wisdom to all those who have lost their path to return to their track and wish all our countrymen will enjoy their Dashain in a free and fearless atmosphere. ■


Madhav Kumar Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher

Priority On Women's Health

The cover story "Women's Health Mired In Conflict" (SPOTLIGHT September 15) was very admirable. So, first of all thanks to the author who has raised the relevant issue. Obviously, many of us have heard and read the story about Nepal having the highest maternal mortality rates. This is a very critical and sad story to read. But, anyway this is a fact. It is mentioned in the magazine that a study report shows that the cause of maternal deaths are severe bleeding, sepsis, toxemia, obstructed labor and the consequences of abortion. If so, what causes these



problems? There must be awareness for every citizen of the country so that the root cause of it can be addressed. Problem itself is not big but its solution must be found soon.

Kabita Bista
Hattisar

Hopeful Signs

The cover story "Women's Health Mired In Conflict" had lots of information. It is my great pleasure to comment on this story. Though the story was known to all, the author has done a great service by putting them in written words. The author has raised both the problem as well as the hopeful signs. The ceasefire gives an opportunity to implement a new program to provide basic health service to women. This is a hopeful sign. The government has already designed the short term program including the mobile health service and temporary health camps in different parts of the country. Thus, with the financial support from European Commission's Humanitarian Aid department, the UNFPA has launched mobile reproductive health outreach services to conflict prone areas. Such program really plays vital role to stop the mortality rate of women in our country. It creates

awareness to the public that would help to reduce the mortality rate of women.

Subin Gurung
Manbhawan

No Replacement

The higher secondary colleges or plus two colleges are mushrooming day by day. Most students who join such colleges after passing out the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) are quite happy and satisfied ("Growing Charm" SPOTLIGHT September 15). It seems they feel comfortable and enjoy the education in a modern setting after joining the plus two colleges. The attraction of plus two colleges has definitely affected the admission numbers in government colleges. But it has certainly not replaced them. Still, there are a large number of students who are in queue to join the government school. Despite the fact that government colleges are politically influenced,

students do find some charm in them. As I am a student of Ratna Rajya campus, I can tell you that in my college every classroom is packed. It shows there is attraction of students towards government colleges. The author of the story has tried to cover the points of private and government college. But, she has left out one big point. While comparing private and government institutions, it is a fact that the government colleges are very cheap and affordable to all whereas private colleges can be afforded only by financially and academically capable students. Thus, there are many prominent figures in our country who are the products of government colleges. If there is no interaction between teachers and students, if there is low result percentage, if there is lower level education, how can they get success in their life? That's why I opine that the students themselves have to be active, alert and laborious at first - the teachers are just the guide.

Kumar KC
Satdobato

Rights of Citizenship

To get citizenship is the right of every people of the country. It would be problematic if a genuine persons is not able to get citizenship easily. It identifies people all over the country and this is the human right of people. But now, knowingly and unknowingly, the problem of citizenship certificate has become the agenda of consensus among the seven party alliance, RPP, Rastriya Janasakti Party and Maoists as all leaders representing terai in these parties pressed the government for this. Whether the people living in terai, hills or mountains, all of them are Nepali and no one should be discriminated under the rule of law. That's why the government should focus more on this issue.

Kebal Rai
Thamel

NOTICE: The next issue of SPOTLIGHT will be published on October 13 after Dashain holidays

Indifference Towards Loan Payment Rescheduling

Even though the government had given timeline to the willful defaulters to reschedule the payment of their loans with their respective banks, very few of them have shown interest. Only 34 applications have been filed with the Nepal Bank Limited (NBL) and Rastriya Banijya Bank (RBB) requesting for the reschedule. Of them, only 12 are completed applications. These two banks have 52 big willful defaulters and very few of these have made such application. At the budget announcement this year, Finance Minister had asked the willful defaulters to take steps to reschedule their loan payment within September 15. The government has warned that stringent measures will be taken against those defaulters who do not reschedule their payment with the banks. The government is under pressure from donors also to recover the huge amount of Non Performing Loans. *Kantipur daily reports.*

Indonesia Requests Nepal To Vacate Its Candidature

Indonesia has requested Nepal to vacate its candidature for the post of temporary membership of the United Nations Security Council for the year 2007/08. While welcoming Nepal's right to stand as a candidate for the position, Indonesia claimed that Nepal should vacate it in order to present a single voice from Asia. Indonesia is another Asian country that has filed its candidature for the same position. Earlier, Nepal, Indonesia and South Korea had announced their candidature for the position. However, South Korea vacated its candidature as a South Korean diplomat has already announced his candidature to the position of UN Secretary General. Current SG Kofi Annan is retiring in December this year. Meanwhile, in Havana, deputy prime minister and foreign minister KP Oli is busy lobbying for Nepal's candidature. He has been requesting representative of every nation to vote for Nepal. Oli is attending the summit meeting of nations of Non Aligned Movement (NAM) in the Cuban capital. The voting for the temporary membership of Security Council is taking

place next month in New York. Nepal would require to bag two-thirds of votes from among 192 nations. In Kathmandu, foreign ministry spokesperson Yadav Khanal said that there is no possibility of Nepal vacating its candidature. "We are lobbying hard to win that position," he said. In another development, during the meeting between UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh in Havana, on the sidelines of NAM summit, the two leaders discussed the issue of Nepal. Annan is learnt to have clarified Dr. Singh about the nature of UN involvement in the peace process here. *Nepal Samacharpatra daily reports.*

SC Judge Jha Demoted

For the first time in Nepal's judicial history since 1990, Supreme Court judge Parmananda Jha has been demoted to the post of chief judge of appellate court two years after serving in the Supreme Court. The Chief Justice Dilip Kumar Poudel-headed Judicial Council (JC) took the decision on Friday not to extend Jha's tenure citing a drug pedlar acquittal judgment passed by him one and a half years ago. "He has been demoted as he had decided the case in a wrong manner and without proper examination of the evidence," a member of the JC said. *The Himalayan Times daily reports.*

Maoists Thrash A Businessman

Accusing him of standing in the way of their forced unionization in his enterprise, scores of cadres of the Maoists' trade union barged into the residence of Dr. Heramba Rajbhandari and physically thrashed the 74-year-old agro-expert and renowned businessman. The patient of high blood pressure, Rajbhandari and his son Araniko were beaten in their residence in Satdobato by the Maoist cadres who even tried to abduct him. The Maoists later left his residence after a team of policemen and local people gathered there. Rajbhandari has been charged of not allowing the expansion of the Maoists' trade union in his Nepal Dairy. Rajbhandari has been admitted to Bir Hospital. The family members of the victim have alleged the Maoists of physically attacking them

despite their willingness to resolve the issue through dialogue. Meanwhile, the leader of Maoists' trade union Shalikram Jamarkattel rejected reports that his cadres thrashed Rajbhandari. He accused that his cadres were first attacked when they went to Rajbhandari's residence to understand about the issue of expansion of their organization. *Leading dailies report.*

CJ Rues Attack On Judicial Independence

In a blistering criticism against the government and the parliament, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Dilip Kumar Poudel said that the judiciary cannot remain independent if there is a sword dangling over the head of judges. Speaking at an interaction program organized by the Society of Judges, CJ Poudel said neither the executive nor the legislative had the authority of examining the verdict of judiciary. He made this remark referring to the efforts made by parliament's Public Account Committee (PAC) to examine SC's verdict on the case of bank defaulter. Likewise, CJ Poudel also took a strong exception to moves towards re-appointing the judges. Speaking at the same program, Home Minister Krishna Situala asked the judiciary to abide by the mandate of the people's movement. *Leading dailies report.*

Upper Tamakosi To Be Awarded To Foreign Investors

The government has determined that the financially attractive Upper Tamakosi project cannot be built on its resources. Even though studies have shown that this project could be the most economical one, the government has decided to accept foreigner as main investors in it. Companies from Norway and India have already shown interest to invest in this project. The meeting held at Finance Ministry on Wednesday concluded that the government would have to give guarantee when gathering domestic capital for the project – a move anticipated to draw huge criticism from multilateral donors like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The multilateral donors have been opposing the practice of state

providing guarantee, which they claim is against the policy of financially strengthening public enterprises. Sources said that the meeting, which was attended by the Finance Minister, State Minister for Water Resources, Secretaries of Finance and Water Resource Ministry, and governor of Nepal Rastra Bank, concluded that the only viable option for developing the project is to invite foreign private investor. Earlier, the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) had been working to gather domestic capital from Employees Provident Fund (EPF), Citizen Investment Fund, Rastriya Beema Sansthan, commercial and development banks to invest in the project. The NEA and the institutions had even reached informal agreement about the investment. The 309-MW Upper Tamakosi project will be located in Dolakha district. It would need the total investment of Rs 28 billion. The cost of generation of electricity from this project is estimated to be Rs 1.12 per unit compared to average of Rs 6.5 per unit that NEA is currently charging its customers. *Kantipur daily reports.*

Business Community Threaten Agitation

Stating that there is no environment of doing business in the country, the business community has threatened to unleash countrywide agitating stopping all business activities. Speaking at a press conference on Saturday, president of the Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) Chandi Raj Dhakal said, "There is a situation in the country where we cannot conduct our business and industries." The business community have accused the Maoists of launching terror in the name of extortion and unionization. They have accused the government of failing to provide a business environment. The FNCCI is holding an extensive conference in Birgunj from Monday to decide about their agitation. *Nepal Samacharpatra daily reports.*

WB Can Provide Rs 30 Billion If There Is Political Settlement

The World Bank (WB) can provide Nepal with Rs 30 billion of assistance in next two years if there is political settlement

and stability. The vice president of World Bank's South Asia section Praful Patel said Nepal, too, can obtain assistance at the level of African nations in poverty alleviation efforts. This amount is more by Rs 5 billion compared to what Nepal got as support in last two years. "The amount can be further increased in consultation," Patel said. He advised Nepal to move ahead with second phase reforms in financial sector, among others. "Strong action should be taken against the willful defaulters for the purpose of financial sector reforms," he said. Patel added that although the government has introduced various acts, implementation has been weak. "There are acts and laws. But in the absence of their implementation, the government's credibility has suffered," he said. Patel complained that none of the commitments made three years ago regarding the action against willful defaulters have been fulfilled yet. Likewise, Patel stressed on maintaining macro-economic stability. He expressed concern over the slow pace of reforms in some sectors and the continued government subsidy in petroleum products. "We are watching how the reforms unfold in the coming days," he said, adding that Nepal could even get budgetary support from WB this year if the IMF gives continuity to its poverty reduction program here. *Kantipur daily reports.*

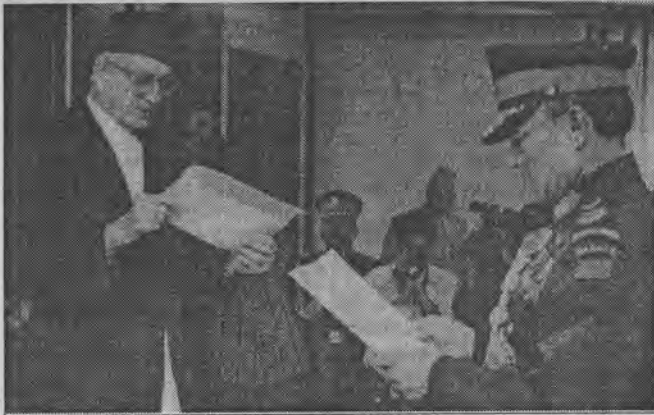
SAC Starts Discussions On Military Act

The State Affairs Committee (SAC) of the House of Representatives has initiated discussion over the proposed Military Act from Thursday (September 14). The parliamentarians, Speaker, ministers, and army officer all took part in the discussion on Thursday. During the discussion, the participants agreed to make the proceedings of Military Court transparent in all cases except those related with national security, public good and when there is a need to protect victim's rights. The discussion was also held about the issue of subjecting cases in which civilians are involved to civilian courts. The participants also talked about the need to legally protect human rights. The panel also discussed about the need to make the Army Welfare Fund transparent. The discussion, which is a first time in history

when elected representatives are framing the Military Act, will continue on Friday. Leading dailies report

PAC Decision To Review Sc Verdict Kicks Off Controversy

The Public Accounts Committee of the House of Representatives decided on Wednesday to examine the reasons for the Supreme Court verdict on Mahalaxmi Sugar Mills bank loan defaulting case has sparked a confrontation between the MPs and the legal experts. The MPs said they would investigate the issue, as the verdict violated the rule of law and lacked public accountability, while the lawyers warned them not to interfere in the independence of judiciary. The lawyers advised the MPs to initiate impeachment process against the particular judge if they found any judge involved in any irregularity. Shambhu Thapa, president of Nepal Bar Association, said the PAC action was an attack on the independence of the judiciary. He challenged the MPS to promulgate a separate act with a provision to review the SC verdicts by the House. "If you promulgate such an act to review the verdict, the apex court can examine even that decision," Thapa said. MPs, on the other hand, say the verdict was a hurdle in recovering Rs 1.38 billion bank loan from the Mills. In January, a division bench of justices Arjun Prasad Singh and Badri Kumar Basnet had issued the verdict scrapping the decision to blacklist the Mills owned by businessman Binod Kumar Chaudhary. General Secretary of the NBA Madhav Baskota said, "We had participated in Jana Andolan seeking judiciary's independence and we would never tolerate any attack on judiciary's independence." Former president of NBA Harihar Dahal said the parliament could impeach any judge involved in corruption but could not examine the apex court verdict. Attorney General Yagya Murti Banjade and senior advocate Sindhu Nath Pyakurel also condemned PAC action. PAC chairman Chitra Bahadur KC said they would even initiate action against judges involved in irregularities. "This may be a final verdict of the apex court but people can raise question, as irregularities occurred in this case," he said. *The Himalayan Times daily reports.*



PM Koirala administers oath of office and secrecy to Chief of Army Staff General Rukmangat Katawal

Gorkhapatra

THE HIGH LEVEL COMMITTEE FORMED TO STUDY ABOUT the petro-pricing has decided to hold direct talks with the officials of the Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) on issues such as supplies agreement, supplies procedure, pricing mechanism and so on. The committee was formed last month by the government after violent riots erupted nationwide in Nepal forcing the government to roll back increase in price of petroleum products. The government had formed the committee headed by former finance secretary Bhanu Acharya to advise the government about supplies, pricing and market management of petro-products. Although the government has formed different committees to study petro sector in the past, this is the first time that such a committee is holding direct talks with IOC – the sole supplier of petroleum products to Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC). In order to hold the talks, a three-member delegation of IOC officials has arrived in the capital on Sunday (September 17). At present, NOC has dues worth Rs 8 billion to the IOC. It is running losses of Rs 830 million a month.

THE EMPLOYEES PROVIDENT FUND (EPF) HAS INFORMED that its total deposit that can be invested has crossed Rs 53 billion. Of them, Rs 48.18 billion belongs to provident fund; Rs 2.81 billion belongs to reserve fund; and Rs 2.09 billion belongs to other funds. The report of EPF released on the occasion of its 45th general assembly states that of the total deposits, the EPF has invested Rs 49.99 billion in loans and investment; Rs 750 million in buildings land assets. The remaining Rs 2.34 billion is utilized in fixed and current capital. According to Dr. Ramesh Kumar Bhattarai, chief officer of the EPF, they are finding it challenging to effectively mobilize their resources due to lack of clear policy on its use and investment. Leading dailies report

ON THE OCCASION OF THE 42ND CHILDREN'S DAY ON Bhadra 29, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) issued an appeal requesting all concerned not to use children in any kind of political demonstrations or rallies. It asked both political parties and their sister organizations not to do so. The NHRC stated that all NGOs and actors involved in the area of children's right need to come together to guarantee the rights of the kids. The Commission said that thousands of children in Nepal are still at risk due to lack of education and health. Meanwhile, the government had decided to observe Children's Day on Bhadra 29 – the date of the signing of International Child Rights Convention by Nepal – from this year. In the past the day was observed on Bhadra 4 – the birthday of Queen Mother Ratna Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah.

THE GOVERNMENT IS PLANNING TO PROVIDE CONCESSIONAL loan to private sector to invest in the hydro power projects. The government would provide Rs 2.59 billion (\$35 million), which has been

given by the World Bank for the Power Development Fund, to the private sector for investing in 30 MW strong Kabeli A and 2.4 MW strong Ridi Khola hydropower projects. The government is investing the amount through Window I and Window II program. The amount would be provided at less than 7 percent interest rate. As per the Window I program, the government will use up to \$ 24 million for investment in projects between 10 to 50 MW. Likewise, as per the Window II program, the government will make available \$11 million for projects between 1 to 10 MW. The loan maturity period for Window I and II program will be 23 and 15 years respectively.

WITH THE VIEW TO STRIP THE KING OFF THE POWER TO enact laws, the House of Representatives, on Tuesday, unanimously endorsed the Bill on Document Authentication. Now, the parliament does not need to send any bill to the palace for royal seal. Laws, orders or acts can now be approved by the Speaker himself or by the authority determined by the government. The MPs had been voicing against the earlier provision requiring royal seal and, therefore, they decided to introduce the new bill removing previous provisions. The Bill of Document Authentication was presented to the HoR after long discussions in State Affairs Committee (SAC). Earlier, the SAC has unanimously decided to scrap Clause 2 and other clauses in a bill on public document authentication, thereby, curtailing the King's power to issue any order for enacting new acts, regulations and government decisions.

THE OFFICE OF THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF MIGRANTS (IOM) has been formally established in Nepal. The office is located within the UN complex in Pulchowk. The IOM is an international organization that works for the cause of migrant workers. It also engages in rescue of migrants whenever necessary. As hundreds of thousands of Nepalese workers have gone overseas as migrant workers, the opening of IOM office is expected to be of help to them in future.

THE FIRST MEETING OF THE TASK FORCE FORMED BY the government on Terai Forest Management held on September 15 2006 discussed the sustainable use of and ensuring rights and interests of all stakeholders including local community in the Terai Forest. The 17-member task force under the convenorship of Mr. Jamuna Krishna Tamrakar, Joint Secretary at the Ministry of Forest, had been formed two weeks ago including all stakeholders of forest including Forest Ministry, department, forest technical officials, forest users' association/federation, civil society and donors. The first meeting of the task force made a number of decisions: to add its members to make it more inclusive, form a committee to prepare working rules for the task force, and to call the meeting of donors to decide about the expenditure management of the task force. A committee headed by Krishna Man Pradhan, president of Rural Development Foundation, a representative from civil society, was formed to prepare the working procedural for the task force.

THE ROYAL PALACE PRESS SECRETARIAT HAS REFUTED news carried by a section of media alleging that the palace had been receiving hefty commissions for allowing recruitment of Nepalese soldiers in British Army. "The attention of this Secretariat has been drawn to reports in some newspapers (on September 18) that the Royal Palace receives a royalty of one million pounds annually in return for the recruitment of Nepalese youths in the British Army as Gurkhas. This Secretariat underscores the fact that His Majesty the King and the Royal Palace are in no way involved in such recruitments. The Royal Palace has never received any royalty at any time. Therefore, this Secretariat condemns these reports as totally fabricated and motivated by malicious intent." ■

“Let no one suspect my intention. I am fully committed towards peace process and constituent assembly.”

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, talking to reporters in Baluwatar.

* * *

“After I came to know about the news (of arms report and ensuing chaos), I immediately contacted with many leaders including Ian Martin, the emissary of UN Secretary General. But when I tried to contact PM Koirala repeatedly, efforts were made to sideline a responsible party.”

Madhav Kumar Nepal, general secretary of the UML, criticizing the style of functioning of the PM, in Nepal Samacharpatra.

* * *

“The arms and violence of the Maoists are obstructions to the peace process.”

James Francis Moriarty, the US ambassador to Nepal, to reporters in Nepalgunj.

* * *

“Presence of the state is very limited. It (government) was ineffective before (during the armed struggle), but its shrinking now (after the ceasefire took effect in April).”

Matthew Kahane, the United Nations Resident Representative



Bimarsha

and Humanitarian Coordinator in Nepal, in The Kathmandu Post.

* * *

“Summit talks, though for a limited objective of building confidence, will be helpful in making the peace process successful. Not all summit talks are held with a clear agenda and both sides now should understand the people’s desire for peace.”

Pashupati Shumsher Rana, president of the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), addressing party cadres in the capital.

* * *

“There is a situation in the country where we cannot conduct our business and industries.”

Chandi Raj Dhakal, president of the Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), at a press meet.

* * *

“We had participated in Jana Andolan seeking judiciary’s independence and we would never tolerate any attack on judiciary’s independence.”

Madhav Baskota, general secretary of the Nepal Bar Association (NBA), criticizing the efforts by parliamentary Public Accounts Committee (PAC) to examine a Supreme Court verdict, in The Himalayan Times.

* * *

TRANSITION

AWARDED: Krishna Dharawasi with the prestigious Madan Puraskar for the year 2062, for his book titled “Radha” by the Madan Puraskar Guthi.

Bhairab Risal, senior journalist, with the prestigious Jagadambashree Award for the year 2062, for his contribution towards enriching Nepali language through journalism, by the Madan Puraskar Guthi.

Nepal has been awarded with ‘Toyota award’ in the International Robert Competition.

Eleven personalities, with ‘National Talent Award’ by ‘Digo Bikash Nepal’. The awardees include runner **Rajendra Bhandari**, singer **Phatteman Rajbhandari**, singer **Koili Devi Mathema**, **Kabita Ale**, social worker **Ram Gopal Shrestha**, **Kabita Poudyal**, **Man Bahadur Budha**, **Mohan Karki**, **Purna Lama**, **Ram Chandra Koirala** and litterateur **Unnati Bohara Shila**.

ANNOUNCED: M. Phil classes, by Tribhuwan University, on major subjects like

Economics, Population and English in Humanities.

FORMED: A three-member committee, including **Ananda Bahadur Dhungana**, **Tek Bahadur Chokhyal** and **Mahendra Pandey**, chief whips of Nepali Congress, NC-Democratic and CPN-UML, respectively, to “make timely amendment on some provisions of HoR Regulations 2063.”

ENDORSED: The parliament endorsed, unanimously, the Bill on Document Authentication. ■

WARS OF THIS CENTURY: Water Resources

By DR. AB THAPA

Water is absolutely necessary for the very existence of human being who appeared on the earth some two to three million years ago in early Pleistocene. At present the population of the world is rapidly increasing. Similarly, the demand for water for use in agriculture and industries is also constantly rising, with the result that the availability of water is already critical to future developments in many areas of our world.

It is said that water shortages would lead to international conflict as countries compete for limited water resources. In 1995 Ismail Serageldin, a top official at the World Bank, declared, "the wars of the next century will be over water." Political tensions over water often result when different nations lay claim to the same river, lake, or aquifer. According to the UN, more than 300 river basins and aquifers worldwide cross national boundaries, creating the potential for conflict.

The Resource Base

Enormous volumes of water are involved in the global water cycle. The most comprehensive studies of the global water balance are those by a Russian scientist N.I. L'vovich. There are about 1.4 billion cu. km of water on the earth. Slightly more than 97 percent of this amount is ocean water and is therefore salty. However, because the water that evaporates from the ocean is almost free of salt, the rain and snow that fall on the earth are relatively fresh. Fresh water is stored in glaciers, lakes, and rivers. It is also stored as groundwater in the soil and rocks. There are about 36 million cu km of fresh water on the earth.

The atmosphere holds about 14,000 cu km of water at any time, while all the world's rivers and freshwater lakes hold about 120,000 cu km. The world's two main reservoirs of fresh water are the great polar ice caps, which contain about 28 million cu km, and the ground, which contains about 8 million cu km.

Almost all of the world's fresh ice is found in the ice caps of Antarctica and Greenland. These ice caps cover more than 17 million sq km of land to an average depth of more than 1.5 km. Most other glaciers, formed in mountain valleys at high latitudes, are tiny compared to the ice caps. If all of the ice in the ice caps and other glaciers melted, it would raise the sea level by about 80 m.

Water that flows down streams and rivers is called surface runoff. Every year about 41,000 cu km of water flows into the seas from the world's rivers. The Amazon River, the world's largest river, provides about 15 percent of this water. Runoff is not constant. It decreases during periods of drought or dry seasons and increases during rainy seasons, storms, and periods of rapid melting of snow and ice.

Estimating Water Demands

Humans use water for three basic purposes: agriculture, industry, and domestic and municipal use such as drinking, cooking, cleaning, and so forth. In the mid-1990s humans withdrew from rivers, lakes, and aquifers 3,750 cu km of water each year for these purposes, according to the United Nations (UN). About 2,270 cu km of that water was consumed. Examples of ways in which water can be consumed include water that evaporates from irrigated fields, becomes part of finished industrial goods, or is absorbed by a plant or animal.

Of all the uses humans have for water, agriculture has always required the most. Even today, to produce 1 metric ton of grain takes some 1,000 metric tons of water—enough to fill up three average-sized houses. According to the UN, about 70 percent of all water withdrawals in the 1990s were used for agricultural purposes. Thus agriculture consumes more water than any other use. The UN figures indicate that more than 90 percent of water used for agriculture is consumed, much of it through evaporation.

Industry, by comparison, uses far less water. For example, less than 2 metric tons of water are needed to manufacture 1 metric ton of aluminum. According to the UN, about 20 percent of water withdrawals in the 1990s were used for industrial purposes—as a coolant, a solvent, or as part of finished goods, such as soft drinks. On average, less than 4 percent of the water used by industry was consumed, with the remainder returned to rivers and lakes as discharge. Municipal and household uses drew the smallest amount, less than 10 percent of total withdrawals the UN reported.

The basic divisions of water use vary widely among nations. Industrialized nations, such as the United States and many European countries, withdraw less for agriculture and more for industry. In countries with hot climates where water is used primarily for agriculture, withdrawals of water for agriculture can be higher than the global average. Municipal and domestic usage also varies. According to the UN, a person living in Europe or North America uses between 500 and 1,000 liters of water per day. The typical person living in the developing countries of Asia, Latin America, and Africa uses between 50 and 100 liters per day. In areas where water is scarce, the figure is even lower.

Water Scarcity

The world's population grew enormously in the 20th century. According to UN estimates, 1.65 billion people lived on Earth in 1900. By 1999 the world's population had passed 6 billion people, and the UN estimates that it will reach 9 billion people by 2050. But the annual supply of renewable fresh water will remain constant. As the UN Commission on

Sustainable Development noted, the amount of water available to each person decreases as the population grows, raising the possibility of water shortages.

Water shortages will not come all at once in every part of the world. Just as the world's population is unevenly distributed by region, so is the annual supply of renewable water. Rainfall and snowfall are determined by uneven weather patterns and landscape, and as a result, some areas of the world get more precipitation than others.

For example, Canada is one of the largest countries in the world, with a total land area of about 10 million sq km. In the late 1990s Canada's population was about 29 million people. In India, by contrast, about 984 million people live in a total land area of 3 million sq km. Clearly India has a higher demand for water than Canada. But Canada has more water. According to the World Resources Institute, Canada's annually renewable water resources total 2,901 cu km per year, compared with India's 2,085 cu km per year.

The same holds true elsewhere in the world. Brazil has more renewable water than central and southern Africa. And the combined renewable water resources of Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt are less than that of Nicaragua alone.

This uneven distribution of water resources means that supplies in some parts of the world are already stretched thin. According to the UN, about one-third of the world's population lived in countries with moderate to high water stress in the late 1990s. Moderate water stress means that the country is currently using 20 percent or more of its annual renewable resources. Countries in this category included Germany, India, South Africa, Spain, and the United States. High water stress means the country is using 40 percent or more. Countries in

this category included Egypt, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. By 2025 the UN expects that two-thirds of the world's population will live in countries with moderate to high water stress.

India's Demand for Water

Like in the USA, where agriculture accounts for 83% of the total water consumption, in India also the demand for agricultural water dominates the total demand for water. India has the second largest population in the world. There are plentiful rains over most of the country but they are concentrated in a few months. As a result, India is already experiencing water scarcity. Mr. Chaturbedi M.C. has claimed that by 2005 the total ground and surface water would have been assigned to users and thus further irrigation would be restricted.

Nepalese Situation

Some years back studies were carried out in the Water and Energy Commission (WECS) to estimate the maximum potential demands for Nepal's surface water resources and to determine how those demands compare to the supplies available. The potential demand for surface water in Nepal is in the order of 1200 cu. m/s. The available supplies of all the rivers at 80% probability factor could be considered to be very close to potential demand in the absence of regulation of runoff. Thus under such condition Nepal will not have any surplus. However, after the regulation of the runoff of all the rivers the available supplies could exceed our potential demand by almost 4 times. Despite such enormous surpluses, the dry basins like the Kankai, Bagmati, West Rapti would be experiencing water shortages even after the regulation. ■

(The author writes on water resources)



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SPOTLIGHT FAMILY

PEACE PROCESS

Fragile Phase

Even as the key actors agree to resolve political issues by Dashain, the sudden outbursts of incidents like 'arms import' point to the fragile nature of the process

By A CORRESPONDENT

After weeks of growing restlessness, the meeting between Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and Maoist chairman Prachanda on Sunday (September 17) has helped to end the uncertainties surrounding the peace process.

The two agreed to resolve political issues before Dashain festival. Prachanda and his second-in-command Dr. Baburam Bhattarai visited PM Koirala at the latter's official residence in Baluwatar on Sunday afternoon to discuss about the growing uncertainty.

After the two-hours-long talks, the two leaders agreed to send a positive message to the Nepalese people before Dashain. "There is an understanding to have summit talks before Dashain, which means within 8 to 10 days," said Dr. Bhattarai. Both the sides said that the level of trust has increased after the meeting.

The talks discussed issues such as preparations for summit talks, finalization of interim constitution, interim government, interim legislature, status of the King and arms management. The summit talks is expected to come up with package solution.

The meeting was a crucial one as it came in the wake of increasing frustrations among the general public regarding the outcome of the peace process.

Since the government and the Maoists wrote identical letters to the United Nations, the country witnessed contradictory remarks and activities from the two sides. While the government kept on insisting that the Maoists first

agree on arms management, the latter stuck to their stance saying that all issues should be dealt in a package form.

Amid the impasse, activities like force donations, unionization campaign, abductions and even killings occurred in several parts of the country. Furthermore, there were two bizarre arms import episode. No sooner had the first episode about the rumor of Ukrainian aircraft carrying weapons to Nepal dismissed, the Maoists accused the government of bringing arms from India.



PM Koirala : Delicate phase

Last week on Wednesday (September 13), the capital city and many other parts of the country encountered flash strikes and protests by the Maoists. After the Maoists charged the government of importing arms laden in new trucks from India, there were sporadic tensions all across the country for the whole day on Wednesday. Maoist cadres came down to streets burning tyres and announcing strike. For several hours normal traffic was thrown out of gear in Kathmandu.

Later the Home Minister made a statement in the parliament rejecting reports of arms import. "This government

has no policy of importing arms. The trucks arriving from India were being brought for the purpose of Nepalese Army peacekeepers who will soon leave for Lebanon," said Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula. Likewise, Indian Embassy in Kathmandu issued a statement refuting the report of arms import. Stating that the news of import of arms from India had drawn its attention, the Embassy said, "These allegations are completely baseless and untrue." The Embassy added that no arms have been supplied by India to Nepal since February 1, 2005. Even the ceasefire code of conduct monitoring committee members who visited the barracks of Nepalese Army in Gajuri on the same day told media that no arms were found in the trucks there.

Earlier Prachanda had termed the response by the government as 'dramatic and concocted.' He accused the government was being guided by foreign forces and was bent on spoiling the atmosphere of peace process.

Adding to the woes of the government, the general secretary of the Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) Madhav Kumar Nepal threatened that his party could walk out from the government if the Prime Minister continued the current trend of governance without transparency. Saying that PM Koirala refused to talk with him despite repeated attempts on Wednesday, Nepal termed the government as 'incompetent.' Nepal said he had tried to talk with PM regarding the arms

import issue. "After I came to know about the news at Tuesday night, I immediately contacted with many leaders including Ian Martin, the emissary of UN Secretary General. But when I tried to contact PM Koirala repeatedly, efforts were made to sideline a responsible party," Nepal said.

Fortunately, after Sunday's meeting between the PM and Maoists leaders, the country has reverted back to the peace process for the time being. However, the utterly fragile nature of the process demands that all key actors tread responsibly and carefully in order to avert disaster. ■

MORIARTY'S REMARKS

Display of Distress

It is not the visit of Moriarty, but what he says that should generate debate in the country

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

Storm over a teacup! Its not merely a proverb anymore in Nepal . Last week the country witnessed two different storms. The first was the one triggered by rumors – which were later found to be baseless - that truck-loads of arms were imported from India .

The second one was less dramatic but equally telling. The American ambassador to Nepal James Moriarty went on a visit to mid and far western regions of Nepal to inspect US-assisted flood relief program as well as conflict mitigation projects. There he said that until and unless the Maoists abandoned violence, the peace process cannot succeed in Nepal . He added that “continued violent activities” of the Maoists could derail the peace process.

These are the sentiments that are shared by virtually every independent Nepali citizen at this crucial phase of the country's history.

However, Moriarty's remarks attracted disparaging criticism from not only the Maoists but also some leaders of the ruling Seven Party Alliance. He was charged of everything from trying to interfere into Nepal 's affairs to actively working to derail the peace talks. Some MPs representing radical communist outfits – such as Lilamani Pokharel of People's Front - went to the extent of demanding that the government ask Moriarty to leave the country.

The viewpoint that arms of the Maoists should be managed before the holding of Constituent Assembly has been favored by majority of the people and also the current government. “Everybody knows that fair elections cannot be imagined when one party continues to hold arms. It seems everyone is bowing before the Maoist intimidation and pressure tactics. At least somebody (Moriarty) is still there who is saying right things,” said a political analyst.

Moriarty has denied that he has committed any interference or has crossed his diplomatic norms. “It is my duty as a US ambassador to understand the ground situation not only in Kathmandu but also outside the valley,” Moriarty had told reporters on Saturday after meeting with the general secretary of the Unified Marxist Leninist (UML).

Interestingly, the whole ‘foreign interference bogey’ has been raised by the very people who warmly courted the

political leaders – with single and unequivocal message.

The US assistant secretary for South and Central Asia, Richard Boucher, was the first senior foreign dignitary to visit Nepal after the political upheaval in April. The top US official in charge of the regional affairs met a number of leaders, officials, army chief and the civil society members. Three months later, a top senator Arlene Specter, chairman of the powerful Senate Judiciary Committee (which looks after issues including terrorism), came visiting followed by a bi-partisan congressional delegation in late August led by Republican Jim Kolbe.

All of them underscored the need for the Maoists to abandon the path of violence first. So it appears futile for Nepalese communist leaders to vilify Moriarty. He is only doing or saying things that the Washington wants him to do or say.



Moriarty: Well-meaning concerns

foreign support during the royal regime – when the King's government was busy summoning foreign ambassadors for ‘crossing their diplomatic limits.’

“It seems our leaders have no objection to foreign interference if it suits their interests but will raise a ruckus if it does not,” added the analyst.

For his part, Moriarty seems to be strictly adhering to the current policy of his government towards Nepal . Since the political change in April, there has been a flurry of visits by American officials and

And isn't he saying things that should be seriously discussed by the people, civil society and the parliament? Nobody is talking about outright disarming of the Maoists without negotiating on the political package. But that doesn't mean the Maoist can continue with their violent ways holding the whole country at ransom when they have already professed their commitment to multiparty democracy and human rights and have pledged to settle their grievances through talks. ■

TOURISM

Hope And Anxiety

This year, for the first time since 1999, the prospects for tourism have brightened substantially. With the political change of April and the possibility of restoration of lasting peace has encouraged the tourism entrepreneurs. Hotels have informed that the booking for the upcoming autumn season has surged. Airlines have informed that their flights have been booked for the next three months. New international airlines have shown interest to operate flights to Nepal. The overall positive image Nepal enjoyed after April in the international media has helped lure tourists from around the world. But this is only one side of the coin. Unfortunately, just as the tourism entrepreneurs were demonstrating excitement, a series of activities by the Maoists has dampened their spirits. The unabated rise in extortion, the unchecked intrusion and forced unionization in hotels and politicization of the sector has compelled the entrepreneurs to send out signals of distress and frustration. So much so that the leading tourism organizations have published a notice stating that they could shut down the whole industry if the situation is not brought under control

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

Although Charles Dickens used it in a different context for a different meaning, his phrase "It was the best of times and it was the worst of times" applies equally well to the situation of Nepalese tourism industry at this juncture.

On the one hand, the country is basking in a newfound sense of security after a decade-long conflict but, on the other hand, the fragile nature of the peace threatens to trigger further uncertainty.

Tourism entrepreneurs who were waiting for a return of peace could not have been happier with the start of credible peace process between the government and the Maoists. However,

their joy seems to be short-lived. No sooner were they planning for a problem-free tourist season, they have encountered numerous problems like continued extortion, harassment, forced unionization, surging demands and the lack of response from the government. These apart, the utterly fragile nature of law and order has exposed them to new challenges that are beyond their control.



A tourist in Kathmandu: Individual travelers on the rise

A case in point could be the incident of last Wednesday (September 13) when due to rumors of arms import, the Maoists suddenly brought the city to halt. The workers of hotels were asked to stop their work and join their rally. Although the problem was resolved soon afterwards, it showed how vulnerable the industry is.

Earlier, the country suffered from violent riots on August 19 and 20 quite suddenly after the government decided to increase the price of petroleum products. For two days, the city was under siege as protestors disrupted all normal activities.

As tourism is one of the most sensitive industries, the daily strikes, sit-ins, traffic jams and crimes have further hurt its brightening prospects. As the phase of transition prolongs, the tourism entrepreneurs are concerned that the volatile situation could worsen in the coming days.

Hoping Against Hope

Since 1999, tourism sector has had no chance to recover from a series of bloody blows. The year of 1998 and 1999 are the best in terms of the number of tourist arrival. Since then, everything has changed.

It all began with the 1999 Christmas eve hijacking of Indian airlines (en route from Kathmandu to New Delhi) to Afghanistan. In 2000, the country

suffered from anti-India riots on Hrithik Roshan episode. The year 2001 was particularly brutal – the unprecedented royal palace massacre, intensification of Maoist insurgency and clamping down of state of emergency together dealt a knock-out blow to the tourism industry as the country suffered from terrible image abroad.

In subsequent years, the nation tottered from one crisis to another – never able to return back to peace and stability.

However, the mass uprising of April this year has created a situation where people can expect durable peace returning to the country. As such, this season, given the favorable image of Nepal abroad, hotels are reporting around 90 percent booking even as airlines have announced that they are fully booked for the next three months.

After wallowing in 20 percent occupancy for years, the hotels are looking forward to the coming season. "Hotel booking is around 85 percent for the season beginning from October," said Prakash Shrestha, president of Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN).

Not only the big and five-star ones, the smaller non-star hotels in Thamel also hope for 80 percent occupancy during the season. Airlines like Thai, Qatar, Gulf and others have indicated that their flights are almost booked for the coming season. There were even reports that big

groups from Europe had to cancel their trip due to lack of tickets.

Likewise, new airlines like Sri Lankan Airlines, Ettiayad, Orient Thai have shown interest to operate flights to Kathmandu. Korean Air has already received permission to operate chartered flights once a week for three months.

These news have been received with expectation and excitement by the tourism entrepreneurs.

But these positive news have come with a pinch of salt as well. Unfortunately, even before they could start smiling, the entrepreneurs are facing tremendous challenges due to the pressures in the domestic front.

Industry in Distress

On September 19, ten leading tourism organizations came out with a joint public notice stating that they were on the verge of announcing shut down of the total industry.

The organizations revealed that even before they could benefit from the positive vibes created by the April uprising followed by credible signals of improvement in situation, the tourism industry was facing unprecedented crises.

In the public statement, the organizations noted "the incidents of recent weeks such as forced donations from tourism industry, enterprises and entrepreneurs; politicization of tourism institutions in the name of trade union; unilateral and random fixation of salary and other benefits; and holding of lock-outs if management express inability to fulfill such demands; harassment of management and daily increase of unnatural and undesirable activities" as having seriously jeopardized the whole tourism sector.

The public statement signed by presidents of major tourism organizations - such as Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN), Nepal Association of Tour and Travel Agents (NATTA), Nepal Association of Tour Operators (NATO), Nepal Mountaineering Association (NMA), Trekking Agents Association of Nepal (TAAN), Nepal Association of Rafting Agents (NARA), PATA Nepal Chapter, Nepal Freight Forwarders Association (NEFFA), Himalayan Rescue

Association (HRA), and Thamel Tourism Development Board (TTDB) – has also expressed frustration over the lack of cooperation from the government.

“We entrepreneurs have felt discouraged and clueless after the government authorities demonstrated indifference and incompetence instead of assuring us of help when we apprised the concerned Minister, Ministry and authorities about our plight,” the hard-hitting public statement adds.

“If the concerned agencies do not take any required initiative even when a serious threat is hanging over the key component of national economy, a situation will arise where all enterprises and industries will have to shut down. Such a move would not only soil the international image but also cause negative impact to other industries and enterprises,” the statement adds.

Earlier, last week, a meeting of the leading tourism organizations was held in which the entrepreneurs concluded



Hotels: Great Expectations

that they would have no option other than to shut down their businesses if their pleas went unheeded.

This conclusion was drawn a few days after the Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN) issued a warning that the hoteliers may be compelled to halt the operation of hotels if the Maoists continued to demand huge amount of donations. “We will be forced to close down our hotels if the Maoists keep on making illogical demands,” said Prakash Shrestha, president of HAN.

The half-yearly meeting of the HAN held in early September even endorsed a proposal allowing its member hoteliers to take the extreme step of closing down their business if they face such situation.

This decision was a result of extreme frustration especially as it came soon after the reports that the hotels have registered around 90 percent

booking for the forthcoming season beginning October. In recent months, hotels like so many other industries in the country, have also come under severe pressure from the pro-Maoist trade union groups, who have not only tried to make huge demands for workers but also press for ‘donations.’

The hapless hoteliers complain that they have been running on losses for many years and many of them are already under pressure due to the need to pay bank loans and interests. “And on top of that, we are now facing exorbitant demands from the Maoists. How can we meet such demands?” a hotelier asked.

Added tourism entrepreneur Hari Man Lama, “In this kind of environment, it will be hard to expect that large number of tourists will come. Perhaps the individual travelers would come but the big groups may stay away.”

Lama, director of the Incentive Tours and Travels, said that due to lingering doubts about the peace process here and frequent disruptions and riots, the foreign tourists, particularly the Americans, have continued to stay away from Nepal. “Definitely, there has been some improvement in the arrivals and bookings. But that is not the whole story,” Lama added.

As the tourism industry stands in the cross-roads, the industry can expect to survive and prosper only if the peace process heads towards right direction. Otherwise, all hopes will be lost. ■



Tourists: Seeking Information

MEDIA COMMISSION

Practical Inputs

The High-level Media Commission submits its report to the government to reform the media sector

By A CORRESPONDENT

In a rare show of collective commitment, the 13-member High-level Media Commission has not only completed their assignment (of preparing a recommendation report) on time, but also did it unanimously.

The Committee headed by Adheshyam Adhikari presented their 40-page report to the Prime Minister on September 15. The report provides suggestions on various aspects of media such as advertisement policy, categorization and investment.

"Although there were 13 members in the commission, we could prepare the report on consensus within the allotted time of 2 months," said Babita Basnet, a member of the commission and president of Sancharika Samuha.

Explaining the salient features of the report, Basnet said that it provides concrete recommendations about regulating the media sector. "This time we have thoroughly studied about all kinds of media including print, electronic as well as online," she said. This is the first time that digital medium has been studied from the media perspective. It is a high time that authorities regulated digital media, as online news portals have assumed substantial significance as viable means of journalism.

The report also provides suggestions about regulating the advertisement. "The report suggests dividing government advertisement into three categories, namely commercial, public information and public interest. Among them, the latter two will have to be provided proportionally to all."

On gender front, the report advises that government media agencies employ at least 33 percent of women. It also

suggests promoting those private media houses who employ 33 percent women, said Basnet.

The issue of foreign investment in media has generated huge debates in the country in the past. "The report also suggests about foreign investment in media sector. It suggests that less than 50 percent of foreign investment be allowed in a transparent manner along with ensuring that Nepali citizens are employed in decision-making level," she said, adding, "If the recommendations of the report are implemented, they will bring a drastic change in Nepalese media sector."

Adds, another member of the Commission Raghu Mainali, "For the first

time, the report talks about diffusing the media-hold from Kathmandu to mofussils. Till now, it is the media in Kathmandu that shape debates on every kind of policy. As a result, a minister representing far west region is compelled to go by how the Kathmandu-media views his policies. We want to bring about a change in this situation so that the minister will start taking into consideration what media in Nepalgunj have to say about his policies."

Mainali, coordinator of Save the Independent Radio Campaign, added that the report, if implemented, would also be helpful to FM radios. The report also suggests that the government form Information and Communication Commission to regulate the media sector.

After the report was submitted, the State Minister for Information and Communication Dilendra Prasad Badu vowed to implement the report's suggestion soon. He said the government is planning to table a bill in the parliament to bring into force the Right to Information.



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TIBETAN AUTONOMOUS REGION

Fight Against Poverty

Shennan Prefecture in Tibet shows how to tackle poverty by adopting the policy encouraging marginal farmers to go for cash crops

By KESHAB POUDEL in Shennan Prefecture

At a time when Nepal has been passing through a very critical time in its political history with growing instability and anarchy, Nepal's northern neighbor Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) of China has been witnessing tremendous changes in its all round development. Following the completion of Lhasa-Quinghai railway, the pace of development in Tibet is definite to increase much further.

From poverty alleviation to industrialization and improvement in education and health sectors, every thing is falling into place as people living in Tibet are having enough reasons to rejoice as their living standards have shot up.

Nepal could learn many lessons from the progress made by TAR, particularly in the area of agriculture in the mountain areas. One of the reasons behind the TAR's successful growth is its road network linking remote parts with the cities. For farmers, they have market as well as established road.

According to an official of TAR in Lhasa, Tibet's annual growth rate has been over 15 percent in the last few years. The visible boom in building infrastructures in rural parts of Tibet as well as in cities reveal trickle-down effects of high economic growth in TAR.

Thanks to the technological innovation and their practical use, farmers of all parts of Tibet have benefited. The introduction of Green House technologies has changed the pattern of agriculture production. Till a decade ago, farmers were subsistence-based and they produced just one crop - barley or

wheat in a year. Now the situation has changed and the farmers are producing vegetables and other cash crops in all kinds of weather.

Ani, 50, a farmer of Nudong Village of Shennan Prefecture, has seen many ups and downs in her life. Her family's monthly income was less than 500 Yuan (US\$ 80) but now her income has gone five fold more reaching about 2000 Yuan (US\$ 320) in a matter of few years.

Living in most remote parts of interior Tibetan Autonomous Region of China, Ani's annual income has gone up now by many folds. This change was possible because of implementation of cash crop program in the area. Along with producing wheat and barely, her family now also produces various kinds of vegetables.

"The cash crops have brought the change in our annual income," said Ani. "Next year, we will produce more

vegetables and make more money," said Ani, who has already built a new house with the support from Shennan Prefecture.

Like Ani, other farmers living in the remote areas of Shennan Prefecture, too, have seen similar change in their income and living styles. Known as a hub of historical, cultural and political aspects of Tibet, Shennan, 180 kilometers South west of Lhasa, used to be dominated by a large number of subsistence-based farmers who just made enough money to survive. In the past, the lives of farmers were so difficult that they had to work hard just to produce enough food to feed their families.

Although Shennan was said to be a village, which started farming in Tibet, only the recent process of modernization has brought the visible change. Situated at the South of Gangtise and Nyanchen Tangla ranges along the milled lower reaches of Yarlung Tsangpo river, Shennan has also many historically and religiously important places like Yumbulhakang Palace, the first palace as well as one of the earliest construction in Tibet, which was built in Second Century BC.

Built in mid-8th century, the Samye Monastery is another religiously and culturally important site of Shennan



Train to Tibet: Promises of Prosperity



Tibetan landscape: Beauty of Nature

commercialized one, they also have started using mechanical equipment like tractors.

“The economic growth rate of Shennan prefecture was 17 percent last year. Although the contribution of agriculture is gradually coming down, the service sectors like tourism has made a significant contribution,” said Sangpu, deputy chief of Shennan Prefecture.

“With a literacy of 99 percent, Shennan’s challenge in future is to attract more investment,” he said.

As economy grows, there is a high demand of middle-level technical manpower. According to assistant principle Tashi of Shennan Higher Secondary Vocational, more students want to study subjects related to agriculture. “Since past few years, pressure is building in the schools as many parents want their children to acquire modern knowledge on agriculture,” said Tashi. Shennan higher Secondary Vocational School is only institution of education, which provides

vocational education to the people living in the region. “Over ninety percent of the students of our schools are offspring of farmers,” said Tashi.

With the economic development, the city of Shennan Prefecture is also transforming its traditional face with new infrastructures like buildings, roads, communication and other facilities.

Since there is an access to road in all 12 districts and schools and health posts, Shennan’s development is touching a new height. “Our aim is to provide equal development opportunities to all the districts. This is why in coming five year plan, we will shift our attention more to the remote parts of the region,” said Sangpu. “If we want to eradicate poverty, we must build more infrastructures in remote parts of the prefecture. We have already made a lot of progress in poverty reduction. We will eradicate the level of poverty from all prefectures within few years,” said Sangpu with determination.

Shennan is an example how China’s policy to “go west” towards remote parts are transforming the livelihoods of people through the launching of programs targeting the poor and desperate farmers of the region. ■

Prefecture. Because of the location of many other such historical and religious sites, the officials want to develop the area as a tourism center.

“Till five years ago, our livelihood was so hard and difficult as we produced traditional foods like malt, wheat and other traditional crops,” said Ani. “Sometimes, our food production was not even enough to feed our family for six months. Thanks to the introduction of cash crops, garlic, onion and vegetables, we now have money to buy other foods.”

Realizing the need to improve the livelihoods of the poor subsistence-based farmers’ family of the region, the government of Shennan Prefecture has implemented a broad-based program to bring about change in the subsistence-based agriculture system.

Farmers like Ani who used to grow only a crop annually, are now planting two crops a year. Even the prefecture is encouraging farmers to do farming through the green house. As the farmers’ income increase, they are investing the money in housing and education. For the farmers living below the poverty line, the Shennan prefecture also gives grant to build the house.

Although the electricity was supplied by TAR’s grid, the farmers are given subsidy to use the solar energy for household purposes. Traditionally relying on animal dung and straw, the farmers in the region are now using the solar energy for cooking and other purposes.

As the farmers move from traditional subsistence farming to modern



*We Extend our Hearty Greetings
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**NEPAL TELECOM
FAMILY**

Constitution Making Process - Some Basic Requirements

By LALIT BAHADUR BASNET

The seven political parties (SPA) and the Maoists have decided that the election of the constituent assembly should be held within one year to make the new constitution. The making of the constitution is an important task in the history of any nation. That's why; every one should seriously think and study about the constitution making process and its basic requirements. Constitution making after conflict is very much a serious task fraught with risks. If there is a mistake, it could mean that the conflict would never end and nation would land in a deadlock. The constitution making process must pursue the sometimes-divergent goals of representing the peoples' wills, and forging a consensus regarding the future of state. It must pursue its course while ensuring respect for universal principles such as human rights and the basic norms of democratic governance. So there are some basic underlying requirements, which should be duly considered during the constitution-making process. The following requirement should help in the pursuit of all these aims.

Sign a peace accord -

After the end of armed strife, a peace accord should come before the process crafting a constitution begins, which will lay the groundwork for making environment conducive for the process of making of the constitution. Otherwise, the process would face much difficulties. The troubled Yugoslav republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina where a peace accord could not be signed may serve as a cautionary example in this regard. Likewise, in Zimbabwe the 1990 constitution has not proved conducive to the resolution of the conflict because the protection of white-owned farms was necessary for peace. Without the protection of them, the conflict could not be resolved. So the main conflicting groups should sign a peace accord before entering into constitution making process.

Address on security issues -

It is the basic and minimum requirement to make the conducive environment. A turbulent security situation hampered the constitution making process in Ethiopia where there is no legally constituted national army or police to ensure the security for effective local participation in the election. In Cambodia, the main political parties agreed to a comprehensive, UN brokered political settlement, the Paris Agreement. But it failed as a peace accord, because there was no disarmament or demobilization, and cease-fire violation kept occurring. The continued flaring of political violence had disturbed the election of the constituent assembly in Colombia; the 1991 constitution was an attempt to mitigate ongoing violent conflict. But the refusal of two large leftist guerilla forces to take part in the constitution making process, which dealt the peace a heavy blow, ensured that the internal conflict and violence continued across all over the national territory.

Must involvement of key stakeholder while drafting the new constitution -

To endure and promote peace, the key stakeholders must be involved in the constitution making process. In Cambodia, one rebellion group was excluded from the constitution making process and that is still fighting against the government. Likewise, in the Balkans some rebellion groups were excluded in the constitution making process. In South Africa, a culture of reconciliation between the government and the rebellion made it possible to have the most democratic constitution of the world. In Namibia, all interested parties agreed in 1981 on the principles concerning the constituent assembly and the constitution of the independent state of Namibia. Then the constituent assembly unanimously adopted the constitution with these principles. The Ethiopian opposition did not take part in the constitution drafting process and hence denied the legitimacy of the constitutional commission. The paucity of public debate left important issues of ethnicity, self-determination, and federalism inadequately addressed which later fed secessionist trends within Ethiopia. Venezuela's 1999 constitutional process facilitated the take over of the state by a single group. With the constituent assembly dominated by the party of populist president and one-time coup leader Hugo Cha'vez, many political forces were shut out and popular participation were limited and some important issues like decentralization and party reform went un-addressed. Now the Venezuela political system being deadlocked in a feud between pro- and anti-Cha'vez forces cries out for major reforms. Similarly, in Colombia, the constitutional process has not brought peace because the two larger rebel groups did not take part in it.

Conduct preparatory work well before choosing a constituent assembly -

This is a fundamental requirement because the constitution-making process itself is not really the beginning. Rather, the process must be mapped out before it starts, and everyone knows that process affects outcomes. So the methods, timetables accord to which new constitution is to be written, discussed, and approved may become the bone of contention. South Africa's interim constitution was made through intense negotiations among key stakeholders. It set out the basic principles governing the constituent assembly and ensured that no one group would dominate the process of transition. In Namibia, substantive and long-term discussion among all key actors resulted in an agreement to hold the election of constituent assembly.

No to domination of one political force in constitution drafting body-

In Nicaragua's 1984 constituent-assembly elections, the Sandinistas party won 67 percent of the vote, but they offered concessions to opposition parties to elicit extensive public participation in constitution drafting period. In East Timor's first post independent election, one party won a sweeping victory but it invited the opposition parties to take part in the drafting process. The same process had been adopted in Ethiopia also. But in

Venezuela, the ruling presidential party dominated the 1999 constituent assembly by flagrantly violating the existing constitution, the principles of dialogue and totally ignored the opposition party and assumed all powers for which it had no mandate. As the party totally ignored the reconciliation, consensus-building in constitution-making process, Venezuelans are paying the price, as their country's turbulent history under the 1999 constitution attests.

Serious and thorough talks among key stakeholders-

Consultation and cooperation among key stakeholders are the basic requirements in constitution making process, which helps to visualize the destination of the constitution. Namibia held a constitution debate that lasted several years, which influenced all political development. All stakeholders agreed after long discussion on the list of the constitution principles that "Namibia will be a unitary, sovereign and democratic state". Likewise, in South Africa an understanding was made among key stakeholders about the basic principals of the future constitution. In post-Franco Spain, the initial phase of the constitution - drafting process, main political parties had agreed to make the basic framework for the new constitution. They unanimously agreed to address such core issues as outlines of the new polity, territory organization, fundamental freedoms and the reform or abolition of Franco- era political institutions. In contrast Bosnia and Herzegovina's constitution was adopted without consensus of main political parties on the nature of the state of the political system.

Popular participation -

Basically constitution-making is an exercise in democratic empowerment and can contribute significantly to nation-building. Large people participation in the making of the constitution can promote and strengthen the legitimacy of the constitution, which assures the citizens to claim the constitution as their own. South Africa is the latest example of public participation in constitution-making which enjoys extraordinarily high legitimacy. Namibia and Eritrea also had intense and long-term participation in constitution-making so that their constitutions today enjoy a high degree of legitimacy.

Constitution-making process should be open and transparent-

If we produced constitutions without transparency and adequate public participation, it will lack legitimacy. Unlike in South Africa, the Cambodian public never got access to the constitution drafting sessions and had no input into the text. That's why Cambodian's constitution established a weak democratic structure. In Ethiopia, the closed process harmed the legitimacy of the constitution. The East Timorese had merely ninety days to deliberate on a constitution and not any civil societies got the time to prepare adequate submissions. Fiji's constitution commission declined to present the draft for the public discussion.

Should incorporate universal human rights and democratic values -

It should be made sure that the constitution incorporates the basic principles of universal human rights, including the right to participation and democratic governance. Most of post conflict constitutions adopted these principles. East Timorese and Nicaraguan constitutions explicitly acknowledge the importance of international law in safeguarding human rights. And they

incorporate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the main two UN human rights conventions, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Culture Rights (ICESCR) and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

Seek help from experts -

Constitution-making is, to a large extent, a purely technical work also. So it should take help from international and domestic experts, and look abroad for lessons, which would make valuable contributions. The Asia foundation had sent constitutional experts to East Timor to give technical advice. Nicaraguan political leaders traveled to study various constitutions and met with experts at home and abroad.

We are going to make the new constitution through the constituent assembly within one year. But processes and contents of the constituent assembly have not been studied seriously by any political party and/or intellectual group. The history of our constitutional development provides a sorry story. We have made five constitutions within last sixty years. This shows that Nepal has become a laboratory place for conducting constitution-making experiments, not the place for proper use of the constitution. Our constitutional history shows that we failed all constitutions, not that the constitutions failed us. Now Nepalese people have got the golden opportunity to make their constitution themselves. This golden opportunity should be put to good use to make good constitution, which would guarantee the bright future of Nepalese people.

(The author is a constitutional lawyer. He can be reached at Lalit_gulmi@yahoo.com)

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RESERVATION IN EDUCATION

Private Foray

The government announces its intention to introduce reservation in private schools

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

Even as students of premier medical, management and engineering institutes in India continue to protest the decision by their government to introduce quotas for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in private educational institutions, the Nepalese government has announced similar policy.

Last week, the cabinet approved the draft bill to amend the Education Act with provisions making it mandatory for private schools to set aside 10 percent of seats to underprivileged groups such as girls, Dalits and indigenous people.

Dilendra Prasad Badu, the government spokesperson and State Minister for Information, said the cabinet has endorsed the bill, which would now be presented before the parliament for final approval.

The news was received with a fair degree of surprise by the private school operators. "This was unexpected news for us. In fact, we were working with the government to provide 2 percent reservation in scholarships to conflict-hit students and children of families of martyrs," said B.N. Sharma, vice president of Private and Boarding Schools Organization of Nepal (PABSON). Sharma added that even if this decision is 'imposed,' they cannot implement it now in the middle of one academic year.

"We can implement new scholarship provision in next academic year only and we are not in a position to provide 10 percent quota," he added.

Sharma added that the private school operators, by themselves, cannot provide full scholarship. "We may be able to take care of academic tuition fees but what about lodging, boarding, food and other costs. The state cannot wash its hands off by announcing such provision," he said.

Likewise, Karna Bahadur Shahi, general secretary of National-PABSON, accused that the Ministry did not

consult with them while announcing the percentage. "This is not practical. Perhaps some schools have capacity to provide 10 percent quota but not all of them can do so," he argued.

Baburam Pokharel, principal of VS Niketan College and advisor of PABSON, said that the government should not announce such mandatory quotas. "There are many schools that are not in a position to provide big chunk of scholarship due to their poor financial capacity," he said. He, however, conceded that the private schools, too, must demonstrate social responsibility and try to help the underprivileged students.

The officials claim that the new provision would benefit backward section of society. There are around 800,000 students in over 10,000 private schools across the country, at present. The new bill also proposes to set up criteria to select the students for scholarship under reserved quota. ■

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Peace-Building and UN Support

By DR. SOM P. PUDASAINI

Nepal has been confronting a violent Maoists insurgency for over a decade. After the 12-point agreement between the Maoists and the seven party alliance (SPA) in November 2005, the very successful 19-day long Janaandolan-II of April 2006 and momentous 8-point agreement between the Maoists Supremo Prachanda and the Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala in June 2006 the country has entered into a new era. Peace talks are going on for the past months between Nepal Government and the Maoists to find a negotiated settlement to the conflict. Finding solution to political and socio-economic problems that triggered the Maoists conflict must be at the heart of conflict resolution and peace building. Without massive socio-economic transformation and change in the prevailing political culture it will not be possible to build an inclusive Nepal consistent with the desires of countrymen of all castes, creed, ethnicity, gender and regions. The Maoists, SPA and Government have agreed to invite the United Nations for managing arms held by the rebels and the state to ensure peaceful and free constituent assembly elections. There are still confusions and complications to be cleared before arms management and constituent assembly (CA) elections can take place.

Peace talk started on 26 May 2006. Post-conflict reform and restructuring roadmap is not yet visible. The uncertain peace talks and post-conflict Nepal is a central national concern. A successful negotiation with a rebel outfit that has led a violent insurgency with a radical agenda for over a decade is unlikely to be easy. It is important to understand that past two rounds of negotiations failed badly. Chances are better now as there is an agreement on conducting constituent assembly (CA) elections to frame a new and inclusive constitution and resolve contentious issues. However, a lot of issues concerning date and modalities of CA election, role of monarchy, arms management, interim constitution, interim government etc continue to be matters of differences between PM Girijababu, Prachanda and his team, and SPA.

One must understand that the following five points are crucial for the parties in conflict to remember if they are to lead to lasting peace through negotiation. First of all, a successful negotiation demands a clarity on negotiating position or "bottom-line". Secondly, adequate confidence between the negotiating parties is essential. Thirdly, compromise or flexibility to adjust expectations, egos and positions remains at the heart of sound negotiations. Fourthly, continuity is indispensable for successful negotiations as building confidence and reaching agreement requires much more time than planned in the beginning. Lastly, without a rock-solid commitment nothing succeeds. Additionally, the sooner the remedies for root causes of the conflict are discussed and devised the better will be the prospects for a lasting peace. Over 40 percent of conflicts are reported to return within 5 years and 50 percent within 10 years if the root-causes are not handled adequately.

On 9 August 2006, the Prime Minister and the Maoists supreme Prachanda agreement and sent separate letters to UN Secretary General for (1) continuing monitoring human rights situation through the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Nepal, (2) helping monitor the 25-point Code

of Conduct, (3) verifying and monitoring the confinement of the Maoist combatants and their weapons in designated cantonments, (4) monitoring confinement of NA and their weapons in barracks to ensure that they are not used for or against any side and (5) observing elections to CA. It was agreed that qualified civilians will be deployed to monitor the Maoist combatants and their weapons. In view of continuing disagreements on details, it was also agreed that the modalities for all arrangements, including of arms and munitions, will be worked out between the parties and the UN in the future.

After the Central Committee Meetings of the Maoists in Kamidada, Kavre, on 2 September 2006 they declared their sharp dissatisfaction with the Government, SPA and the key international players on their emphasis on separation of the combatants' arms before the Maoists can join interim government. They insisted that political package consisting of interim constitution, interim government, and CA election must be addressed first. In the absence of resolution of the political issues they threatened to start 'Urban Uprising' and agitations to force the government. They want to disarm their combatants only after CA elections. The fundamental problem is that of trust as the government is unsure of the intentions of the Maoists continuing to be "armed" and the Maoists are not sure how their position will deteriorate if they "disarm" before CA elections.

UN Office opened in Kathmandu under the leadership of Ian Martin, Special Representative of Secretary General Kofi Annan, is in a fix on how to streamline its mandate as per the 5-point request in the contentious milieu. International players are blamed to be unduly influencing internal politics and peace process in the absence of honest common stand on the part of political players. While external pressures can't be completely ignored, it is important for our power centers to stand firm and united to resolve our own problems by accepting fair and useful advice and decline whatever is unnecessary. This will both help solve our problems and enhance our international standing.

The problems so far appear manageable even though escalation of the conflict can't be ruled out completely. It is important for the PM, SPA and the Maoists leadership to honestly thrash-out political and arms management issues together. Honestly engage the UN Office in arms management, monitoring of human rights and future election observation as it is already here based on their joint request. A well thought-out and national consensus based post-conflict roadmap including relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction; needs to be developed soon. One does not find any serious effort to develop a visionary, pragmatic and consensus-based post-conflict roadmap necessary for socio-economic transformation and restructuring of the state. Undoubtedly, Nepal will need adequate technical and financial resources from the outside world to build damaged infrastructures and expedited inclusive development in the future. The support of India, Japan, USA, EU and China will be crucial in addition to efforts to mobilize maximum resources domestically.

(Dr. Pudasaini has served UN in Sri Lanka and Yemen. Send feedback to spudasaini@yahoo.com)

Role of Community in Reducing Automobile Dependency for a Sustainable Kathmandu

By SUBAS DHAKAL

Several decades of impromptu urban sprawl within a 667 sq km area of Kathmandu Valley has sky-rocketed a demand for driving space. More than 250,000 registered vehicles (one fifth being automobiles) are now estimated to be operating within poorly maintained road infrastructure of mere 1200 km. Anticipation of any slump in automobile ownership due to the fuel price hike and environmental deterioration surely is contradictory to ubiquitous media headlines like 'recurrent traffic pandemonium' and 'double digit growth in car sales'. People within the valley must often wonder how a once peaceful, walkable & cyclable community transformed into a chaotic pile of polluting & honking automobiles. An attempt is made here to voice the need of seeking sustainable alternatives to the mounting automobile dependency at the community level.

Let's begin by revisiting sustainability in the context of transportation. Ideally, safe and easy access as well as environment-friendly transportation aiming to enhance economic growth and facilitate social well-being can be considered sustainable. However, diminishing capacity of authorities to manage ever-increasing automobiles has made sustainability an ambiguous concept in the valley's context. Ironically, concerned authorities seem to be driven by a perception that prominent challenge is the helter-skelter traffic in bulk of the 'bottlenecked' intersections caused by the narrow roads. Such myopic acumen is evident from the haphazard (mis)utilization of resources to accommodate more automobiles to an extent that pedestrian have simply been stripped away from their rights to walk safely in the name of road-widening. Dire encroachment or complete disappearance of pavements within busy shopping districts (i.e. portions of NewRoad & Dillibazaar area) portrays lack of will to think beyond the car-dependent society for whatever reasons. At any cost, such deeds have contributed to retreating social well-being because root-cause of increasing automobile dependency is not the demand for vehicles itself but rather inability to meet the travel needs of commuters in realistic terms. Renowned Australian Professor, Peter Newman's years of academic research also points to the fact that increasing driving space (building new and widening existing roads) have a rather boomerang affect in easing congestion as more space becomes available for more automobiles and Kathmandu valley is no different!

Increasing population and commerce have transformed once a medium-paced valley into a vibrant economy. Growing faction of the working class and their mobility needs have amplified automobile dependency in the valley where private operators dominate the public transport sector with a capricious service. Situation worsened further when the futile political leadership (elected and autocratic) with vested interest led to not only collapse of the popular and profit-making state run public transport system but also promoted imports of gas guzzling giants by providing tax breaks to the political and bureaucratic elites. It is hard to believe that bulging issue of the public transport is yet to become a priority at the policy level and any sustainable intervention, if any, must therefore be instigated by the community. Nevertheless, it's much easier said than done as community members

that are fortunate enough not to own automobiles often (mis)perceive that automobile dependency provides them with increased mobility independence and save time/money compared to the usage of public transport. How valid is such perception? A simple cost and benefit analysis on automobile dependency of a reputed travel agency director (who owns an entry level compact car with a market price of 1.5 million) certainly reveals otherwise! Director spends several hours a week in unproductive traffic jams and estimates annual automobile operating cost for his personal usage (fuel, driver, insurance, state tax, minor maintenance, parking fees and so on) to be at least 180,000. In a country where average citizen earn less than US \$ 240/year, annual operating cost of US \$ 2,400 for an automobile worth US \$ 20,000 is simply outrageous.

From a business perspective, cost of automobile dependency for director must translate into everyday benefits of more than 500 rupees/day simply to break-even. Thus, director agrees that automobile dependency has become a socioeconomic reverence for him rather than the actual need. Well, even from a sustainability perspective, rising fuel cost, environmental/health cost and an opportunity cost associated with the hefty upfront investment certainly outweighs the benefits for majority of working class community who want to fulfill their mobility needs using an automobile. So, what are the pragmatic alternatives for a community?

- Aware those who spend hours in traffic jam as well as thousands on the fact that using public transport has additional economic, environmental and social advantages compared to the automobile dependency.
- Initiate dialogue with transport operators to maintain timetable and routes that link community (ward or cluster of wards) with major hubs and promote periodic dissemination of such information through accessible medium (newspaper, radio, TV or internet).
- Find ways to finance much awaited 'walkways' and 'cycle lanes' in close collaboration with the planning officials/donors, agencies as major economic hubs in valley are within a walking or cycling reach.
- Apply appropriate economic instruments at the community level to discourage automobile usage by a) imposing toll charges during the peak hours as there are no incentives for not driving automobiles, and b) developing a mechanism to flow-back portion of such charges to the community so that collected funds can be invested in walkways or cycle lanes.

In order to reduce if not reverse the growing trend of automobile dependency for a sustainable Kathmandu, community with a collective voice must therefore take an eminent role in transforming on-hand transport services into efficient/effective means of commuting as well as adopting sustainable alternatives when possible! ■

(Author is a PhD candidate at Institute of Sustainability and Technology Policy, Murdoch University - Australia and can be contacted at subasdhakal@gmail.com)

Akram only asks for Food !

By INDRA ADHIKARI

Akram Shah, 28, is a Muslim youth living in Manikapur 2, Banke district. He is one among his 30 neighbors keenly hoping if he can get food (relief) today - a week after the flood swept the total village. The monsoon was almost over in Nepal swept in the last week of August, unexpectedly, over 70,000 people from about 13000 families were seriously affected by flash floods and landslides in mid and far western region of the country. Dozens went missing as torrential rains lashed across the region. People had to flee their homes to save their lives.

A frail body, unshaved beard and worn-out dresses - a visibly pale Shah was listening to his neighbors outside Banke Red Cross chapter, who were narrating their hardship of hunger and shelter in the aftermath of floods that damaged most of their houses. All items of food, utensils, and clothes were swept away in a very short time. They had virtually minutes to gather their loved ones, pack few essentials and run away from their locality as water gushed into their village from swollen rivers. "Immediately, my spouse took my three months child on her shoulder and I carried my old father, who was helpless, on my back, to an elevated place. By that time, the water level was up to my shoulder. We protected our lives but we lost all our belongings," said Shah in a low voice.

It was about ten at night and most villagers were in bed. Suddenly, they heard a horrible noise. He narrates "In the beginning, it seemed that it was just raining as usual. But minutes later, the water from the ground level surged rapidly; there was no light but we came to know that it was flood. Flood! Flood! I heard people shouting. Others were screaming here and there."

Nature is almighty, it is kind enough to give life and food but when it goes out of control, there is nothing a poor man can do. What can he do when the situation is beyond his capacity? "I don't know if my name was missing in the Red Cross list of affected people. We, in a half hours' distance got nothing (referring food) while other people did. I cannot read and write", says Shah. Rubbing his palms, his says, "But since a week I am taking shelter at the place of other neighbors. How long can I live like that Please, provide us food today", he adds.

Suddenly, his three-months-old child fell ill. Fortunately, the doctor kindly cured his child free of cost. Shah used to earn his bread working in a bicycle maintenance workshop. He does not know how to read and write; everywhere he uses his thumb print for signature. He was waiting for day and night if there would be anyone to distribute food. For days he even had to live without food. He asks "Sir, can I get something tonight. Food is everything for me now".

Shah is one among thousands of similarly affected flood-victims who are appealing for relief and rehabilitation.

(Adhikari is Director, Communication and Humanitarian Values Department at Nepal Red Cross Society, Kathmandu)



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UJWAL GHIMIRE

Multi-faceted Personality

Ghimire has contributed the country through various activities

By KABI ADHIKARI

Perhaps that was the golden age for theatre. Large number of people used to go to theatre eager to watch live performance on stage. The natural acting of the performer caught the attention of huge number of people in theatre that time. Though there was no publicity or marketing gimmicks through television or other advertisements, the stage drama attracted a fair number of crowd. That was the time when Ujwal Ghimire took his first tentative steps on the stage in 1982.



Ghimire: Versatile actor

More than two decades ago, when he started his career performing on the stage, he was engaged in Radio Nepal, too, as an anchor. Within this period, he had managed to involved in both fields together. As an actor of stage he spent a number of years giving performances, which shaped his subsequent career as well.

Ghimire didn't know that he would one day achieve such success in this field. Born on February 26 in 1960 in Biratnagar, Ghimire is gifted with multiple talents. He has made his name as dramatist, actor, director and producer. He has even made documentaries. Ghimire has performed in dozens of dramas. Among them, 'Jemanta', 'Yama' are his favorites.

Ghimire is also the first director to direct the first tele-film (serial for television) in Nepal

Television. That tele-film was named 'Yastai Hunchha'. It was produced by Santosh Panta. Ghimire was also busy in training of the audio-visual media in an institution called Worldview International Foundation (WIF) that time.

Ghimire is known as director of the several feature films. 'Gothale' of Krishna Malla, 'Jindagani', 'Biswash', 'Subhakamana' etc are some feature films in which he has directed. 'Jindagani' is his own feature film. Rajesh Hamal, Dilip Rayamajhi, Karishma Manandhar are the major characters in this film. It was the super hit film of 1999.

Besides direction, Ghimire has earned fame in acting also. His performances in several films are very admirable. The feature film 'Santan' of Prakash Thapa was the most successful film in 1987. The role he played in this film earned him great name and fame in his life. That's why he bagged award for the best negative role in the film. 'Dhadkan' and 'Abhimanyu' are two other feature films in which he has played different roles.

Similarly, Ghimire has also played in several films made on 'Joint Venture' (with producers from other countries) like 'Swartha', 'Lady Commando' etc. While playing role in such films, he has visited several countries like Philippines, Malaysia, Hong Kong etc. Now, he is busy in three films of Chhabi Ojha, Chiranjibi Basnet and Ajay Nepal.

Apart from film direction and acting, he is equally known for making documentaries

and advertisement/commercials. Since he had taken the training of audio-visual, he has keen interest in documentaries too.

In collaboration with foreigners he has made several documentaries. Once he had made the documentary for Danish Volunteer Organization and Red Barna.

"Documentaries are the main source which can be extended world wide and they can do international marketing", says Ghimire. "To me documentaries are the long lasting profession whereas direction and acting are side jobs", added Ghimire.

Ghimire claims himself as the first person to make film on mainstream as well as documentaries at the same time. Influenced by Shekhar Kapoor, an Indian director, Ghimire says, "Shekhar Kapoor is the one who can make the film like 'Bandit Queen', 'Mr India', and even 'Elizabeth'. He has reached great heights. As a film director he/she must be ready to make any kind of art film or commercial film in his career."

Apart from making documentaries, direction on films and advertisements, and acting, he has interests in literature, too. Dozens of stories and poems written by him have been published in 'Samakalin Sahitya', 'Bhanu' and so on.

'Every man is learning anytime'- Having inspired by this proverb, Ghimire is still learning from foreign feature films. That's why he watches English movies regularly.

In recognition to his contribution to Nepal, Ghimire has been awarded and felicitated by several awards and medals. He has been awarded with 'Best film award' on 'Bishwash' in 2001 by the program organized by Nepal 1, 'Best negative actor award' on 'Santan' in 1987, among others. ■

विज्ञप्ति दशती २०६३
शुभ नेपालीका लागि
सुखमय रहोस् ।

• दूर दृष्टि (Vision)

नेपाल अधिराज्यभर बैकिंग सेवा प्रदान गर्दै अग्रणी बैकको रूपमा स्थापित हुने बैकको दूर दृष्टि रहेको छ ।

• ध्येय (Mission)

विशेष गरी ग्रामीण अर्थतन्त्रको विकासका लागि बैकको विस्तारित कार्य सञ्चालको अधिकतम उपयोग गरी समय बैकिंग तथा वित्तीय सेवा उपलब्ध गराउने बैकको ध्येय रहेको छ ।

• उद्देश्य (Objective)

मुलुकको आर्थिक समृद्धिका निमित्त ग्रामीण क्षेत्रमा काम गर्ने गरी कृषि, उद्योग, व्यापार, सेवा, व्यवसाय आदिसँग सम्बन्धित कार्यको लागि गृणस्तरीय र भरपटो बैकिंग तथा वित्तीय मध्यस्थता सेवा उपलब्ध गराउनु बैकको उद्देश्य रहेको छ ।



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फोन नं. ४५५५१०
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