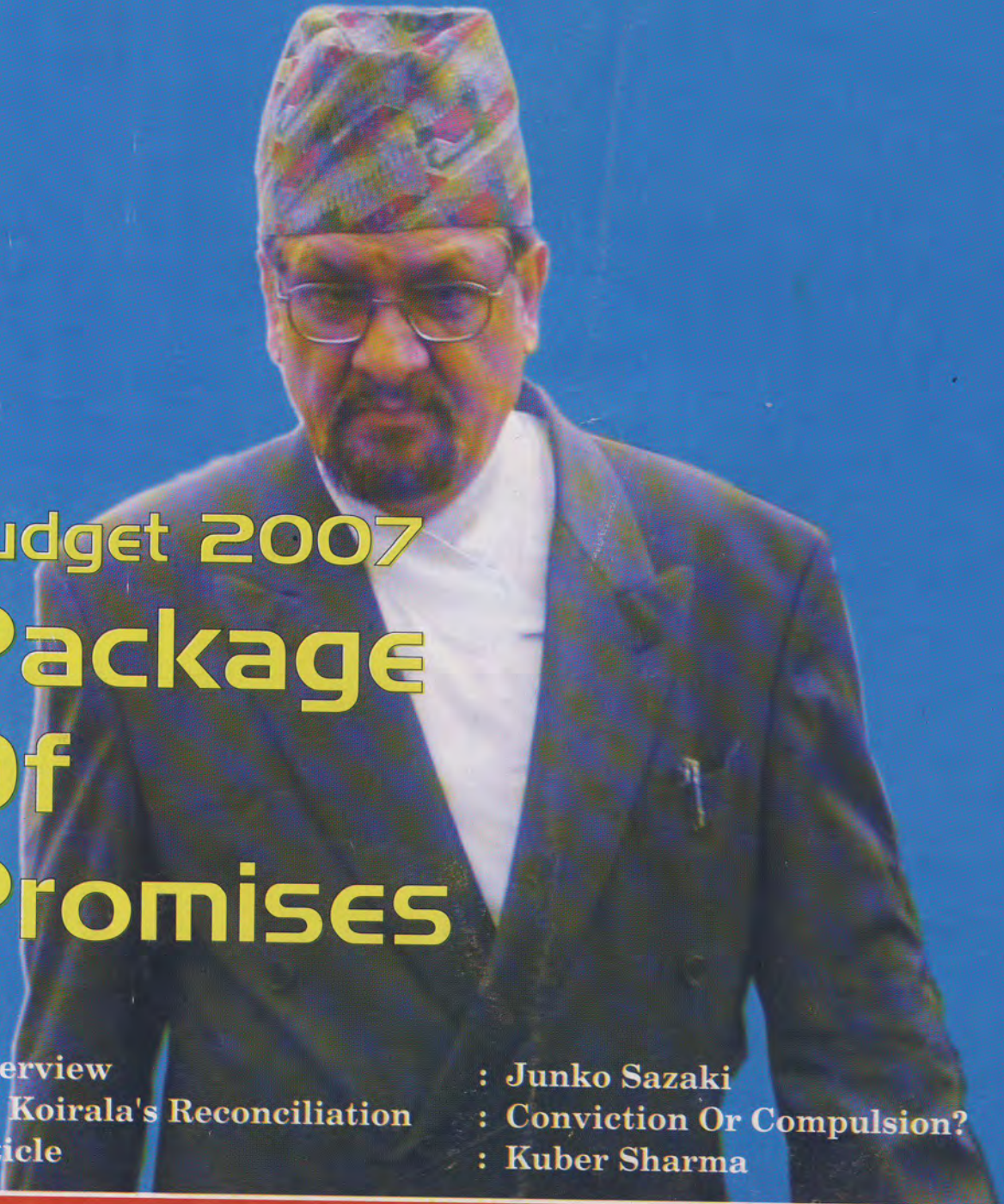


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The National Newsmagazine

SPOTLIGHT

July 20-26, 2007



Budget 2007 Package Of Promises

Interview	: Junko Sasaki
GP Koirala's Reconciliation	: Conviction Or Compulsion?
Article	: Kuber Sharma

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 India..... IRs.
 Bhutan..... Nu.
 30.00 Other SA&FC Nations..... US \$ 1.00
 25.00 ASEAN Countries..... US \$ 1.00
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रु. १,०००/- मा लोटस बचत खाता*

...अब मात्र



Lotus

बचत खाता



नेपाल इन्भेस्टमेन्ट बैंकले तपाईंहरूको विश्वास र चाहनालाई ध्यानमा राखि फेरि ल्यायो जीवनभरको लागि मात्र रु. १,०००/- मा लोटस बचत खाता । यो योजना नेपाल इन्भेस्टमेन्ट बैंकका सबै शाखाहरूमा लागू हुनेछ ।

विस्तृत जानकारीको लागि नेपाल इन्भेस्टमेन्ट बैंकको शाखाहरूमा सम्पर्क गर्नुहोला ।



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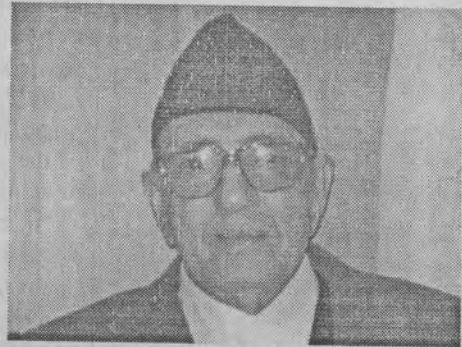
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COVER STORY: Package of Promises

To cope with rising unproductive expenditures, FM Dr. Mahat presents ambitious budget making grand promises. Will he be able to deliver? Page 12



GPK's NATIONAL RECONCILIATION: Conviction or Compulsion?

Although PM Koirala also claims to espouse the spirit of National Reconciliation, it is unclear whether that has sprung out of his conviction or compulsion Page 10

INTERVIEW:
Junko Sazaki The UNFPA Country Representative to Nepal, Sazaki, elaborates the demographic challenges facing Nepal

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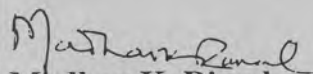
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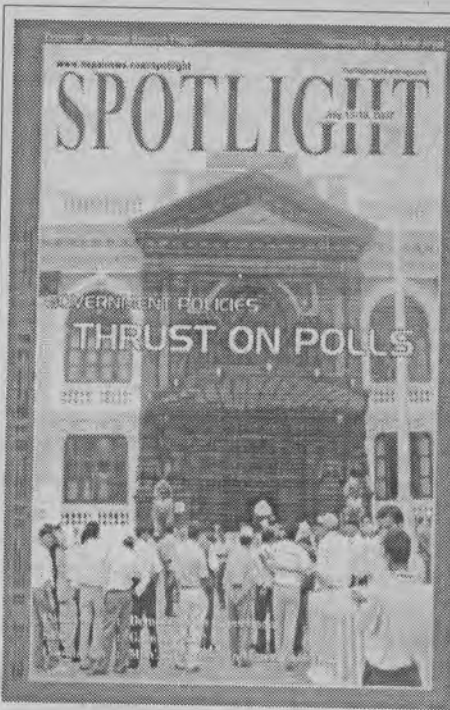
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Nepal is a strange land of paradoxes. If it is the most beautiful country, the majority of its leading politicians are most ugly. If it has an overwhelming majority of illiterate and uneducated people, it has an unaccounted number of intellectual prostitutes. If it has a large number of exploited and discriminated but dedicated junior civil servants, majority of its limited number of senior civil servants is not only pliant but of slavish mentality. If its giant neighbor encircling it on three sides does not tire loudly voicing its traditional friendship for the pigmy neighbor in public, she leaves no stone unturned to dig her roots to destabilize and disintegrate it in private. If all the political parties in power are crying hoarse for polls on the stipulated date, it is authentically reported none of them wants the polls to be held. Because they will lose all the luxuries and sinecures they must be the first in their dynasty to enjoy. If the honorable representatives of the United Nations, the United States of America and most European powers- the votaries of democracy, justice and equality for all – have not hesitated to openly hail the fall of the authoritarian government of King Gyanendra, they are keeping their mouths shut at the most undemocratic and authoritarian behavior of the eight political party government. We think these few examples are enough to prove our opening statement. As such it is for any body to guess or see which way the wind is going to blow in Nepal for the next few months.

Since there is no semblance of democracy and fair play in the behavior of the eight party government, it is no use criticizing or praising its policies. Since this government had no mandate to make any policies of far reaching consequences and if it had genuine faith in democratic behavior, it should have resigned after the announcement of the polls date vacating the seat for a non-political government to conduct a free and fair election. It is needless to state their not resigning clearly manifests their intentions. We will suffice to say neither the budget nor the three year plans and programs for the nation prepared by the Vikas Parishad are legal and constitutional. And neither taking any party-affiliated – militant- organization to be merged with any national security forces will be legal or constitutional and even desirable. Since the Election Commission has not been able to function in an independent manner as it should and has become a stooge of the government, commenting on its behavior too will not be worthwhile. The nation does only apprehend that the elections, if they are held at all, might neither be free nor fair under the present management. We, indeed, can only hope that the newly appointed honorable Election Commissioners will realize their grave responsibilities and rise above their petty self-interest and boldly refuse to carry out any unjust, unfair and undemocratic directives of the government and set an example to others to follow.


Madhav K. Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher



Well Done

Your cover story on government policies and programs is very analytical and timely (Thrust on Polls SPOTLIGHT July 13). It is a very wise decision of the government just to thrust upon the elections for Constituent Assembly. Although the country has been facing many problems in the development sector, the present government cannot spend money to deal with them. Despite your efforts to analyze the events carefully, I found many lacunae in the story. You need to assess the government policies and programs critically so that readers like us benefit. I hope you do that in the future.

*Umesh Gurung,
London Via e-mail*

Frustrating Negligence

After reading the cover story on the policies and programs of the government (Thrust on Polls SPOTLIGHT July 13), it was very frustrating to see government's negligence towards country's development issues. In a country where more than 30 percent of population still live below the poverty line, one cannot justify undermining the development sector.

*Manisha Sharma
Balaju*

Experiments after Experiments

The article "Democracy in Experiment" depicts that the interim constitution is controversial because it restricts certain fundamental rights of people (Democracy in Experiment SPOTLIGHT July 13). It is ironic that some articles provide despotic power to eight parties despite proclamation of people as sovereign and executive power holder. For example, prime minister who is supposed to be elected by people can be appointed by political consensus of eight parties. The

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country is ruled at the whims of eight parties instead of elected representatives, which is clearly reflected in the constitution. As the constitution doesn't respect fundamental rights, many people have already defied it. Even the eight party leaders do not act according to it. Prachanda's claim that Nepal can be declared republic from legislative parliament disregards constitution. The constitution mentions that the fate of monarchy can only be decided after the CA poll. In our country there is a tradition of disregarding constitutional values. In a country where even the prime minister doesn't abide by the constitution what can we expect from other people. Unless all people respect constitutional values and constitution also recognizes fundamental rights of people, Nepalese constitutions will always be controversial however good they are made.

*Abhadesh Shrestha
Jyatha, Kathmandu*

Good Interview

The interview of Dr. Ram Hari Aryal is very pertinent at a time when

Nepalese population is growing fast. The growth rate of 2.5% will be a major problem in the future because it becomes difficult to manage a large population. At the same rate the population will double in thirty years. A serious question has arisen. Is such a large population sustainable to small nation with limited resources like ours? The government has decided to bring a population master plan. It is a very positive step forward.

*Ashish Rai
Lagankhel*

Corruption Woes

The corruption allegation on the governor of the central bank has aggravated the frustrations of the finance minister as the financial reform program has been thrown off track. Major donors agreed to provide budgetary support on this reform program. This has sent a very wrong message to the international community. On whose behalf CIAA has been working?

*Sabina Malla
Via-email*

Too Much Expense

Expenditure on the CA poll is extravagant. Such high expenses on the CA polls seem to be unnecessary. This year, the main focus of the budget should be on peace, reconstruction and inclusive development. Although the pace of spending has not increased, the demand for spending has increased. This shows that the money allocated has not been used properly. This year also a huge amount of money allocated for the local development cannot be used properly as the mechanisms to manage the local bodies are yet to be formulated. It seems obvious that this year also the budget will be full of controversies.

*Brij Kumar Gupta
Biratnagar via-email*

Maoists Engaged In Strategic Homework

Analyzing that their role will be further minimized if the transitional period prolongs, the Maoists are engaged in internal homework to forge their future strategies and tactics. According to a report in Kantipur daily, the Maoists have concluded that their role could not be advanced in the government and the parliament as per their target and prolonging transition has reduced their role in national politics. The Maoists have also pointed out that Nepali Congress (NC) has 'pressed' the party the most. "NC has pressed us everywhere and the party is discussing on how to resist this," a source said. The source added that party's earlier decision to engage in struggle in the government, parliament and streets could not be implemented. The Maoists are preparing for a 'plenum' meeting of their leaders including up to district-level leaders in late July and early August. The issue of extent of flexibility is also figuring in the party discussion. "There are preparations from all quarters to cast us aside and there are increasing chances of us getting trapped amid prolonging transition. Future strategy on this is being prepared," the source added. The plenum is going to be an important gathering after the second national conference of the Maoists. Senior leaders are busy writing documents for the plenum. "During the two months of monsoon, the issue of PLA management will be more important and people, too, won't come to the streets, so it is decided to launch struggle from inside the government at this stage. The meeting will focus on the topic of inevitability of struggle afterwards," the source said. The party plenum will also take up the issue of its relations with the Revolutionary International Movement (RIM). The RIM has expressed dissatisfaction with the agenda of 'democratic republic' currently accepted by the Maoists. *nepalnews.com reports*

Home Minister Appeals Terai Groups To Join Dialogue

Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula has appealed to 'Madhesi Janadhikar Forum, JTMM factions and

other groups' to come for talks with the government within 15 days. "Government wants to resolve the problem in a political manner," he said on July 14. Speaking at parliamentary committee, Sitaula said that issues like national integrity and sovereignty are non-negotiable. He also warned that the government will start taking strong security measures in case the talks offer is not accepted. He said these measures will be aimed at creating proper environment for November elections. On Friday, Sitaula had told the CA Election Monitoring Special Committee of the parliament that the government has devised security plans for elections – including providing security to candidates, parties, voters and polling centers by deploying Nepal Police and Armed Police Force. The government also plans to recruit temporary security personnel for the purpose. Sitaula said the government had planned four tiers of security arrangements- for registration phase, election campaign phase, vote counting phase and post-election scenario. He said the Armed Police Force (APF) would be stationed in all 240 constituencies with arrangements to extend the security presence in the areas of need. He also informed that the Nepal Police would be provided with more than 550 and the APF will be given 400 vehicles for patrolling during the election period. A separate panel headed by Chief District Officers (CDO) will also be established at the district level.

Leading dailies report

33 Killed In Separate Landslides

Around 33 persons have died in separate landslides that hit villages in Baglung, Bajura and Jajarkot districts over the weekend. At least 25 people have died and eight others are missing in landslides in Gwalichour and Jaljala VDCs of Baglung district. Landslides hit these villages on Thursday night and Friday morning triggered by incessant rainfall. Nearly two dozen persons have been injured in the incident. Nepali Army (NA) mobilized its chopper to bring injured to hospitals in Kathmandu. Police and social workers have gone on rescue mission. In Brahmatola VDC of

Bajura district, five persons were killed in a landslide while in Bhagwati VDC of Jajarkot district three persons have died of landslide on Saturday (July 14).

Leading dailies report

Maoist Ministers Lay Blame Squarely On NC

The Maoist ministers have blamed the Prime Minister and Nepali Congress (NC) for the failure of interim government to perform as per public aspirations. Assessing the performance of the interim government on the completion of 100 days in office, Maoist ministers have conceded that the government failed to work as per the people's aspirations. "This period marked a period of experimenting and testing. People had high expectations from us, but we could not match them," said Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Minister for Information and Communication and government spokesperson, addressing a press meet by Maoist ministers on Wednesday (July 11) afternoon. Another Maoist Minister Dev Gurung, who holds the portfolio of Ministry of Local Development, went on to blame Nepali Congress (NC) for the failure of the interim government. "Although the interim constitution clearly stipulates that decisions have to be taken based on political consent, NC works as if this is a one-party government," Gurung said. At the press meet Maoist ministers also briefed about achievements made by the Ministries they lead. There are five Maoist ministers in the interim cabinet including Mahara, Gurung, Hisila Yami (Minister for Works and Physical Planning), Matrika Yadav (Minister for Forest and Soil Conservation) and Khadga Bahadur Biswakarma (Minister for Women, Children and Social Welfare). *Compiled from reports*

PM Calls Moriarty Spokesperson Of Democracy And Human Rights

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala has praised US ambassador James Moriarty as spokesperson of democracy and human rights. Addressing a ceremony of dedication of newly constructed US Embassy building in Maharajgunj on July 11, PM Koirala also urged Moriarty to

leave behind the memory of attack against him by "YCL men." PM Koirala said the attack had 'humiliated' and shamed all the people of Nepal. He also praised Moriarty for maintaining his stance despite being physically attacked by YCL and also 'by some media.' Later a beaming Moriarty told reporters that he found the PM liked him more than Maoists. He hoped that YCL will learn it is not good to pelt stones at diplomat in coming days. Meanwhile, Moriarty said the new US embassy building was a symbol of friendship between the two countries. Moriarty is returning home after completing his three year tenure on Friday. "The new Embassy compound was designed by Sorg and Associates of Washington, D.C. and constructed by U.S.-based Caddell Corporation. Nine Nepali prime subcontractors and the Turkish firm ENKA provided technical and specialized skills, including soil and earthquake analysis, concrete testing, and other technical services. The new Embassy project added \$15 million USD to the local economy and employed Nepali vendors to ship overseas supplies and provide local building materials such as sand, wood, and office equipment. With a total of 500 employees, including 300 Nepali and 150 Turkish nationals, the new Embassy cost more than \$80 million USD. Employees of the Department of State's Bureau of Overseas Building Operations were responsible for the day-to-day management and technical oversight of the project," states a press release by US Embassy. "The new Embassy complex occupies six acres of land. With a heavily reinforced concrete design, its buildings are among the most earthquake-resistant in Nepal. The entire compound is environmentally friendly. Complying with the U.S. government requirement of the nationally-accepted standard of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, the building incorporates a series of elements for sustainable energy use, such as an on-site waste water treatment plant and energy efficient light fixtures."

Compiled from reports

CEC Warns Govt On Security Situation

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Bhoj Raj Pokharel has said that if the current security situation does not improve, then elections cannot be held

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even in November. "Election environment is still absent," he said at a meeting of parliamentary CA Management and Monitoring Committee, on Tuesday (July 10). "If government and political parties do not work to create environment even now, the situation of June can recur," he warned. The committee headed by Speaker had invited CEC to discuss about poll preparation. The committee has decided to invite Home Minister and security chiefs on Friday to discuss security issues. CEC Pokharel said that although the Election Commission needs to mobilize its officials in districts right away, it could not do so in many districts. He said that EC's technical and logistic preparations were going on smoothly. He said that within two weeks, the EC will prepare guidelines and complete party registration. He informed there will be 10,000 polling centers and 22,000 booths. He said 150,000 employees will need to be deployed on polling day who have to be given training as well. He said 20 million ballot papers need to be printed and 40 different kinds of election materials purchased and transported.

Kantipur daily reports

Journo Missing; Reports Say He Has Been Killed

Journalist Prakash Thakuri who has been missing since one week from his apartment in Bhasi of Mahendranagar could not be traced till Tuesday (July 10). A three-time former vice president of Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ)-Kanchanpur district chapter, Thakuri had been close to royal regime after February 1, 2005, according to Kantipur daily. Thakuri had been staying in the capital and had returned to Mahendranagar only a few days ago. His wife Janaki Thakuri has informed the police that he was abducted by Maoist cadres. "Maoist worker Pumlal Sharma had come and inquired about Prakash following which YCL cadres took my husband away in motorcycle," she told reporters. Based on her allegations, police has taken Pumlal Sharma under their control. Sharma later told reporters that Prakash could have been taken away by YCL cadres. Even as he conceded that Prakash could have been abducted by YCL, in a separate press meet Maoists have denied their hand in the abduction. Adding to the mystery, a hitherto

unknown group calling itself National Republican Army has emailed newspapers claiming Prakash has been killed as he was involved in pro-King activities. The email signed by its spokesperson 'Krantideep', however, does not clarify where and how he was killed. FNJ has issued a statement demanding investigation of the issue and has asked the authorities and all concerned to bring out the truth. Meanwhile, Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and Reporters Sans Frontieres (RSF) have expressed deep concern about the status of Thakuri and have urged the authorities to seek his whereabouts. **Compiled from reports**

Sharan Meets With PM

Former Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Sharan paid a brief but meaningful visit to Baluwatar last week. During his meeting with Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, the latter is said to have complained about the activities of various Terai outfits, some of whom have declared secessionist movements. Sharan is said to have assured the PM that India will not allow such activities targeted at Nepal from its soil. He, however, urged the PM to address Madhesi issues and hold Constituent Assembly elections on schedule at any cost. **Compiled from reports**

Who is secured most?

Nepalese have shown their unique character of compromise and respect to each other. Till a year ago, Nepalese police force was the main target of Maoists and Armed Police Force (APF) was set up to fight against the Maoists. Interestingly, CPN-Maoist leader who is said to be surrounded by his cadres will now be guarded by Nepali Police and APF. With the decision of the government, Maoist leader Prachanda will get additional security of 50 armed and other police personnel along with his own militia. The new security arrangement given to Maoist leader Prachanda is equivalent to the prime minister. At a time when the country's law and order situation is deteriorating and life in southern plain is disturbing, leaders need more security. But the question is who will protect the lives of ordinary citizens. Do ordinary citizens not deserve to live in secure life? Who will secure the commoners? **Compiled from reports** ■



PM Koirala (right) at a function to celebrate "Test-tube babies"
Annapurna Post

THE ELECTION COMMISSION (EC), on Sunday (July 15), registered eleven political parties and provided them with election symbols. The parties were registered after detailed study of their application documents. The EC has also provided them with election symbols. Nepali Congress (NC), Unified Marxist Leninist (UML), and Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) have retained their past symbols Tree, Sun and Plough, respectively. Likewise, Nepal Workers and Peasants Party (NWPP) and Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP-Anandidevi), too, have retained their symbols 'Madal' and Hand. Nepali Congress (Democratic) has obtained 'Kalash.' The Maoists have been given the symbol of Hammer & Sickle. The Rastriya Janashakti Party (RJP) has obtained Umbrella while National People's Front has got Glass as their symbols. The Communist Party of Nepal (United) and Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist-Leninist-Maoist) have got Sickle and Maize.

ENDING THE UNCERTAINTIES, THE Asian Development Bank (ADB) has given green signal to proceed with the Melamchi project. Following the meeting between visiting ADB delegation and Ministry officials on Sunday (July 15), Minister for Works and Physical Planning Hisila Yami has said that the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has given a 'green signal' to proceed with the multi-million-dollar Melamchi Water Supply Project (MWSP). "They have urged us to move forward in a new framework," she said. Yami added that the delegation assessed the physical and institutional reform measures, which are required before starting the construction of tunnel of the project. "They have given us good message and asked us to work in a new framework," she said. The ADB headquarters had dispatched the delegation led by its deputy director general of South Asia Division Sultan Hafeez Rahman following request made by the government of Nepal to proceed with the MWSP. Earlier, after Yami refused to honor the previous government's agreement to allow UK's Severn Trent to handle the management of valley's water distribution system, the ADB had warned it might not renew the funding commitment for the project. However, later it agreed to hold further talks with the government. ADB is the principal donor for the project and has agreed to finance the construction of 26 km long tunnel – said to be the costliest component of the project – to bring water from Melamchi river to Kathmandu valley.

THE ELECTION COMMISSION (EC) has proposed the schedule for the upcoming constituent assembly elections scheduled for November 22. As per the EC schedule, the commission will publish the election program on September 22. Parties and individuals will have to file their candidature by September 24 for direct election and by September 26 for election based on proportional representation. The commission will issue the election symbols to candidates and parties by October 10.

The commission has set aside 41 days for public campaign for the candidates contesting the election. The voting will be held on November 22 in one phase from 7 am to 5 pm, the EC has proposed. The EC held discussion on its proposed schedule with the representatives of political parties, on Friday, at the EC office. "We have also urged the parties to form joint 8-party mechanism up to the booth level. This will greatly facilitate the mobilization of our employees," said Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Bhojraj Pokharel.

THE BRITISH EMBASSY HAS refuted reports that the British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, ordered a review of cases related to British Gurkha veterans after his meeting with Victoria Cross holder Tul Bahadur Pun. "At no point did the Prime Minister undertake to order a review of the benefits received by former Gurkhas," a press release issued by the embassy said. It added that the British Ministry of Defence (MoD) had no plans for a further review of issues relating to the Gurkhas who retired before July 1997. Citing the "comprehensive review of Gurkha Terms and Conditions of Service" by the British MoD — the results of which were announced in March this year — the embassy reiterated that the British government had no plans to review them further. The review gave "serving and some recently-retired Gurkhas access to the same pension benefits as the rest of the army." The review did not consider the pension or immigration status of those Gurkhas who retired before July 1997.

INDIA HAS AGREED TO provide Rs 13 million assistance to construct new building of a school in Nawalparasi. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on July 13, 2007 by the Embassy of India with the District Development Committee, Nawalparasi and Shree Janata Lower Secondary School, Arungkhola for providing the aid. The aid will enable the school in addressing its current space constraint and creating requisite infrastructure in keeping with its high educational standards and growing number of students. "This is the fourth educational project undertaken by Government of India in Nawalparasi under the India-Nepal Economic Cooperation Program, and is part of more than 220 large and small projects currently being realized with the Indian assistance in the sectors of education, health, community development and infrastructure covering all the districts of Nepal with an outlay of over Rs. 20 billion," states a press release by the Indian Embassy.

JAPANESE EMBASSY, in cooperation with the Japanese Language Teachers' Association, Nepal (JALTAN) organized Japanese Film Festival in Kathmandu from July 13 to 14 as part of its annual cultural exchange programs. The Film Festival was held in the auditorium of Nepal Administrative Staff College, Jawalakhel, Lalitpur. A total of five Japanese feature films, mostly contemporary comedies, were screened during the festival. Films screened at the festival include Nodo Jiman, Fifteen, Adrenalin Drive, Like Asura and Ghost Pub.

SOUTH KOREAN GOVERNMENT has provided 100 PCs (worth Rs 6 million) to Nepal Police through the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) to support for strengthening the security capacity. Korean Ambassador to Nepal, Nam Sang-Jung stated that ensuring a free and fair election of the constituent assembly in November is crucial for maintaining peace and stability in Nepal in the future. He added that the IT equipment would particularly contribute to securing security during CA polls in November. The Korean Government has already provided some IT equipment to Election Commission last March, 2007 for peace process. "The Korean Government will continue to support Nepal not only for economic cooperation but also for peace building, and thus contribute to the latter's national development," states a press release by Korean embassy. ■

“The stoning by YCL men had humiliated all the people of Nepal. I request you to leave behind this bad memory when you return home.”

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, addressing a ceremony held to dedicate new US embassy building in Maharajgunj, recalling the stone-pelting incident against envoy James Moriarty.

“If government and political parties do not work to create environment even now, the situation of June can recur.”

Bhojraj Pokharel, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), complaining at the lack of security situation for holding elections.

“It would be wise for the King to step down ahead of the Constituent Assembly elections and cooperate with the efforts to establish democratic republic.”

Madhav Kumar Nepal, general secretary of the Unified Marxist Leninist (UML), talking to reporters.

“It is good not to have policy of pelting stones at diplomats. It will also be good not to have policy to attack common Nepali citizens, not to extort them or intimidate them.”

James Moriarty, the US ambassador who last week returned home upon completion of his tenure, at his



Jana Bhawana

farewell press meet responding to Maoist remark that they do not have policy to pelting stones at any diplomat.

“Although the interim constitution clearly stipulates that decisions have to be taken based on political consent, NC works as if this is a one-party government.”

Dev Gurung, Maoist minister blaming NC for non-performance of the interim government.

“With this budget, I have tried to bring the economic issues to the center-stage.”
Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat, finance minister, on the budget for the fiscal year 2007/08.

“How can we see the budget which seeks to obtain foreign loans to pay back foreign loans as positive?”
Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, senior Maoist, responding to the budget, in Kantipur.

TRANSITION

APPOINTED: Damodar Prasad Sharma, Ram Kumar Prasad Shah, Gauri Dhakal and Kalyan Shrestha, as permanent judges of the Supreme Court (SC), by Chief Justice Dilip Kumar Poudel. The four judges were recently approved by the Parliamentary Special Hearing Committee.

LEFT: Foreign Minister Sahana

Pradhan for Israel and Egypt, on official visit.

Rajendra Mahato, Minister for Industry, Commerce and Supplies, for New York, the United States, to take part in Eighth World Hindi Conference in the United Nations.

PASSED AWAY: Sushila Koirala, wife of late NC leader BP Koirala, at the age of 84. She is survived by three sons and one daughter –

Prakash Koirala, Shriharsha Koirala, Dr. Shashank Koirala and Chetana Koirala Dixit.

RETURNED: James Moriarty, US ambassador to Nepal, upon completion of his three years tenure.

ARRIVED: A delegation of Asian Development Bank (ADB) led by Sultan Hafeez Rahman, deputy director general of South Asia Division, to hold talks with the government on Melamchi project.

HYDROPOWER COMPONENT AXED

Controversy Surrounding Melamchi Project

▪ By Dr. AB Thapa

The Melamchi Project is surrounded with a great deal of controversies. Now, there are new faces in the Government who are in-charge of the Melamchi Water Project. They have the opportunity to take up the task to implement this project with a completely clean slate.

At present Government seems to have already made up its mind to renegotiate the terms and conditions agreed with the Asian Development Bank. It is hoped that the Government will conduct further negotiations with the ADB with full understanding of the engineering, socio-economic and other problems that surround the Melamchi Project. Government attention is drawn to the following issues directly related to this project.

Why Hydropower Component Axed?

There exists a big potential to generate cheap electricity by using the diverted flow of the Melamchi river. The elevation of the Melamchi intake weir is 1715 m and the inlet to the treatment works near Sundarjal is 1409 m. Thus there is an enormously big gross head of 306 m. The UNDP report has clearly stated that the net increment in investment (the cost of the powerhouse located near Sundarjal with electromechanical equipment) needed to implement the hydropower element is relatively small as the intake headrace tunnel and penstock are already in place for conveying water to the treatment works. The UNDP study has concluded that it would be worth constructing the hydropower and it could make a contribution to reducing the cost of drinking water to Kathmandu. According to the UNDP report even before the diversion of the Yangri and Larke rivers the total annual generation of the Melamchi hydropower would be 60 GWh and out of it the firm power generation would be 40.5 GWh. The Melamchi hydropower electricity generation would have been close to 50% of the annual generation of the Kulekhani No.1 hydropower. After the diversion of the Yangri and Larke the electricity generation of the Melamchi hydropower would be further increased. It surprises anyone to learn that the Melamchi hydropower component has been dropped. Surely Nepal's engineering community has a right to know why the power component of the Melamchi project was dropped despite the fact that the UNDP report has concluded that the power station would be worth constructing and could make a contribution to reducing the cost of drinking water to

Kathmandu residents. It is still not too late to reintroduce the hydropower component.

Low Incomes People Should Not Be Hurt

It need not be explained that Kathmandu valley at present is suffering from water shortage. There is a great urgency to resolve this problem. It is quite clear that the present water shortage problem would hardly be resolved without augmenting the supply. It has been estimated that onward 2010 the supply to Kathmandu valley would have to be further increased even after the diversion of the Melamchi flow into the Kathmandu valley.

At present some of us have a very false notion that the Kathmandu valley water supply problem would be temporarily solved by improving the management system. Thus we are justifying the policy to hand over the management of the Kathmandu valley water supply to a foreign private company despite the fact that we would have to pay an exorbitant amount of money to that company. The water supply charge to be paid by Kathmandu residents would be increased. It will force a vast number of financially weak Kathmandu residents to cut down their daily consumption of water. In this way it will certainly help privileged people to be provided any additional quantity according to their requirement at the expense of the poor.

Langtang River Diversion and Free Melamchi Water

The diversion of the Langtang river for water supply to Kathmandu valley is not a new concept. Initially it was thought to effect diversion from the catchments area instead of the river. A study of such diversion was made by GTZ in 1977. The study provides the following information.

The idea to augment the limited water resources of the Kathmandu valley by diversion of water from the Langtang / Gosaikund massif in the North was first mentioned by Peter Aufschneider in 1960. In 1976 / 77 the project was studied on a very preliminary level by Dr. Ing. Cristian Kleinert. This project, originally not listed by HMG of Nepal under the projects to be investigated for possible cooperation with the Germany had been included into the study programme on the initiative of the German Government Mission itself because of the fascinating concept and promising objects. The Mission report points out that at that time the high cost of the project mainly caused by difficult access

and transportation would not make it viable to undertake this project for further detailed study. Fortunately, now the road situation has greatly improved. The decision to build a 28 km long Melamchi tunnel with a capacity to carry a flow of about 15 cubic meters/ sec just to divert about 2 cubic meters/sec Melamchi flow into Kathmandu valley has radically improved the situation and made the Langtang diversion project perhaps the most attractive for implementation in very near future. Intake of the Melamchi tunnel is not far away from the Langtang river. Thus the diversion of the Langtang river into the Melamchi river for power generation would not involve big investment.

Multipurpose Langtang Development

The concept of the Langtang project solely for power generation was developed under the United Nations Development Programme supported Gandak Basin Master Plan study. This project can be easily linked with the Melamchi project tunnel. The interconnection of these two projects could open up whole new vistas for the most cost effective development of hydropower in near future. The diversion of the Melamchi- Langtang flow into the Kulekhani could be regarded as one of such possibilities. It can be roughly said that after the full development of the Lantang-Melamchi-Kulekhani interconnected projects it could be possible to generate about 2500 million KWh peaking power at a cost of about 2 US Cents per KWh. Three hydropower projects each operating at a head of about 1000 m or more with a total installed capacity of about half a million KW could be built at a cost of about US \$ 1000 per KW. After the completion of the above projects the Melamchi tunnel could be expected to run in full capacity of about 15 cumecs throughout the year though the Melamchi river alone would be able supply only about 1.5 cumec or even less in dry months when the demand for water supply in the Kathmandu valley is the highest.

A New Bagmati River

At present the Bagmati River has virtually turned into city drain. Residents of the Kathmandu valley as well the large multitude of peoples coming to Pashupatinath Temple each day for worshipping from all over the world are appalled at the miserable sight of the holy Bagmati River. It can hardly be denied that the water scarcity is the prime cause of complete deterioration in condition of the Bagmati River. Unfortunately until now we do not have any satisfactory plan to resolve this serious problem. We are pinning our hopes on much publicized Melamchi Project, but it is all eyewash: the Melamchi water will not even reach Pashupatinath Temple area in dry season. According to the Melamchi Project report from 2011 onward the entire Melamchi dry season flow would have to be tapped to meet the growing demand

for water supply in the Kathmandu valley.

Fortunately there is a good solution to resolve the Bagmati River conservancy problem. It would be possible to transform the Bagmati into a medium sized river that would be carrying a discharge of about 10 to 15 cumecs even in the driest month. Many of us might be astonished to learn that the proposed Bagmati flow augmentation program would not at all be a financial burden on residents of the Kathmandu valley. Full cost of the project could be recovered from the sale of abundant cheap hydro electricity. The generation cost of the electricity would be very low, as a result, it might even be possible to lower the present electricity tariff which is among the highest in our region.

Diversion from Kathmandu to Kulekhani

The diversion of the surplus Melamchi and Langtang waters from Kathmandu valley to the Kulekhani reservoir could be a very simple and at the same time the most cost effective proposition despite the fact that at first glance it might appear to be somewhat complicated engineering task. Let us take a hypothetical case that we are going to draw only 4 cumecs water somewhere near Chobar out of the combined flow of the Bagmati, Melamchi and Langtang rivers. It is explained hereinafter that the benefit accruing to the NEA could be as high as US \$22.5 million per annum by investing only about US \$ 20 million in the construction of the proposed diversion structures.

We might have to build a 15 MW pump station at Chobar to lift 4 cumecs water to a height of about 300 meters which might be equivalent in height to the full supply level (FSL) of the Kulekhani storage reservoir. It is equally possible that instead of one big pump station we might need several small pump stations with a total capacity of about 15 MW that would be completely dependant on topography. A 15 km long waterway might be needed to carry the water into the Kulekhani storage reservoir out of it the length of the tunnel could be about 9 kilometers. The total cost of such diversion could be about US \$ 20 million

After the completion of the above described Langtang diversion into the Kulekhani reservoir, there would be a net increase of about 250 GWh firm power in annual generation of the Kulekhani Nos 1,2&3 hydropower stations even after taking into consideration the energy spent on pumping. Thus the additional generation of the Kulekhani hydropower stations after the Langtang diversion would be two times greater than the present annual generation of Kulekhani No 1 Station. It would be possible to increase to such a great extent the electricity generation absolutely without any additional investment in civil structures and electrical equipments of the Kulekhani dam and hydropower stations.

(Dr. Thapa writes on water resources)

GPK'S NATIONAL RECONCILIATION

Conviction or Compulsion?

B.P. Koirala's national reconciliation was based on his conviction but nobody knows whether Prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala's national reconciliation is based on conviction or compulsion

By KESHAB POUDEL

"BP Koirala's national reconciliation still has relevance to the country. I will uphold it," said prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala inaugurating the new building of American Embassy recently.

At a time when prime minister Koirala is leading communist-dominated alliance to uproot monarchy, his expression to uphold B.P. Koirala's national reconciliation - which includes monarchy as a major factor - sounds hollow.

Whether it was a folly or ingenuity, prime minister Koirala has reduced his democratic party into minority from majority status of previous parliament and has helped communists gain majority foothold in the present nominated parliament.

"B.P. Koirala was not anti-communist but he wanted to have distinct image as a democrat in public. He never agreed to dilute his image and political stand with communists who had different ideological image but Girija Prasad Koirala was not an ideologue but an activist. After the death of B.P. Koirala, G.P. Koirala assumed the leadership of his party and joined hands with communists in the agitation of 1990. Though Girija Prasad Koirala projected his image as anti-communist, he mixed up his political image with them. He enhanced the political status of communists and increased their acceptability as much as possible. At least in one thing, communists in Nepal owe an obligation to Girija Prasad Koirala - for their enhanced political status and acceptability," said a political analyst.

What he speaks does not make any difference. Prime minister Koirala's recent actions show that he does not have conviction on national reconciliation - his statements are result of his compulsions.

After the death of his brother and

legendary leader B.P. Koirala, prime minister G.P. Koirala has followed confrontational course with monarchy. Although Koirala looks anti-communists in his political posture, he backs alliance with communists against monarchy in his political course all the time.

"Royal massacre was the turning point in the politics of Nepal to begin the new confrontation. Koirala was an experienced prime minister and King Gyanendra was in power as a new King. Then, the country needed their good understanding and close cooperation to overcome an added crisis. But unseen machination created such a situation that both prime minister and the King headed toward opposite direction. They failed in their duty toward the nation and become instrument for confrontation against each other. This brought about disastrous consequences," said the analyst.

In his last leg of political career, Koirala, who was humiliated by King Gyanendra, sacrificed all his political ideals to take political revenge. Along with forcing him to resign in August, 2001 from prime minister's chair, Koirala was even summoned by Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority on the charges of corruption during the heydays of direct rule by King Gyanendra.

Prime minister Koirala gambled his entire political career to seek revenge for his humiliation but he had to sacrifice everything from his commitment to liberal democracy and patriotism. Groomed under B.P. Koirala, prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala is the only living politician who knows the ethos of national reconciliation. This may be the reason why junior Koirala's subconscious mind often reminds the nation about the significance of National Reconciliation.

B.P. Koirala's national reconciliation



GP Koirala: Driven by compulsion

is between traditional forces represented by institution of monarchy and modern democratic forces represented by Nepali Congress. However G.P. is now joining hands with communists of all brands to uproot monarchy. As long as prime minister Koirala does not define his version of national reconciliation, it has no meaning. Despite preaching the words, G.P. Koirala's actions have gone against the reconciliation propounded by B.P. Koirala.

Whether he was in power as a prime minister or in prison or in exile, B.P. Koirala firmly held the view that there requires reconciliation between the King and democratic forces to move the country forward.

"...no matter how much suffering I had been subjected to; no matter how seriously my faith had been shattered; no matter how much I had been betrayed due to the events of December 15, 1960, I still believe that the country needs a democratic system where the King and the parliament have cordial relations with each other. It is the King's blunder to consider ruling the country through Royal decree on the strength of military force alone. It is also equally a big mistake to ignore the King in prevailing situation of the country. It is only through reconciliation between the two forces that the country can move ahead; national development carried out and the country's international prestige enhanced..." (see Page 21-22 on 1-1-3 1961, "Jail Journal" by B.P. Koirala). This was written at a time when he was in prison and there was no hope for liberal democracy.

"Even in his last dialogue with King Mahendra, B.P. as a prime minister had emphatically explained that neither the King alone nor his party without the monarchy can tackle any prominent issues the country had to face," said the analyst. "B.P. Koirala believed that the

institution of monarchy was compatible with democratic development in the country.”

B.P. Koirala suffered eight years of continuous detention without any specific charges against him but it did not make any difference to his conviction. “After his release, B.P. went to India for his medical check-up and got trapped with the circumstantial compulsions and raised armed against the regime. But from the core of heart, B.P. was not comfortable with that action. He, therefore, ultimately picked up a new thread for making unity between the traditional as well as democratic force as his lasting commitments for national reconciliation,” said the analyst who was very close to B.P. Koirala.

Even in his last statement recorded at the last leg of his life, B.P. was empathetic on national reconciliation. “My national reconciliation is not a grouping between this party or that party or launching movement against the King,” said B.P. Koirala, (See Page 19 of B.P. Koirala’s new book *Raja, Rastriyata and Rajniti*). “Reconciliation is such a system where King needs not be unhappy and people need not be unhappy. As long as it does not happen, there will be no reconciliation,” said B.P. Koirala (see page 82).

There are still many persons with the memory of the past when B.P. used to explain to everybody that his concept of national reconciliation was not a unity with communist against the King as proposed then by prominent communist leaders.

However, prime minister Koirala justifies his alliance with communist saying that the context of B.P. Koirala’s national reconciliation has changed in the present time. G.P. Koirala sees extremist communist as necessary party to restore liberal democracy in Nepal to overthrow traditional institution of monarchy.

“B.P. viewed the King as the necessary party as he had a strong belief that the institution of monarchy was much convenient to work with for a democratic process than totalitarian communists,” said the analyst.

B.P.’s younger brother prime minister Koirala, who was capable of winning the heart and mind of even former American president Jimmy Carter, has again reminded the people that he has not renounced the Mantra of B.P.’s national reconciliation. But, he has his own



BP Koirala: Legacy of conviction

definition of compulsions for power.

Instead of theorizing it through his own political philosophy which has distanced monarchy so far from liberal democratic party - Koirala has stopped the regular expense of the palace and he has no patience to wait the decision of the first meeting of Constituent Assembly, which has been given right to decide the fate of monarchy in its first meeting.

“Contrary to B.P. Koirala’s stand, prime minister Koirala has entered into an irreversible unity with the extremist communist including its Maoist brand against the King. Through his incoherent statements, Koirala has been humiliating a person in throne and denouncing the institution. G.P. Koirala seems to be joining hands with devil and aliens to do away with the time-tested institution of the state- monarchy,” said the political analyst.

Reconciliation in the opinion of B.P. Koirala was unity with the King to promote democracy and nationalism. By assessing the performance of G.P. Koirala as a supreme leader of this new change, even his ardent colleagues in the party

are expressing their frustrations on both the objectives - democracy and nationalism.

“Neither the people of this country are assured the democratic performance, or the safeguard of national interest under prime minister Koirala’s leadership. Perhaps to assure the people that his conviction on national reconciliation was still there in his mind but because seen and unseen compulsions have forced him to lead the political trend, which in all sense contradicts his conviction,” said the analyst.

“Prime minister Koirala wants to assure conscientious people somewhere that he still holds the same convictions regarding the national reconciliation. But his compulsions have made him instrumental to negate all that and get it uprooted from the minds of people - what a pity like a Macbethian dilemma. Power has prevailed over conviction,” said the analyst.

For politicians, B.P. was a philosopher, guide and statesman but his brother never claimed that. As a politician, prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala fought against power and got it full square. ■

BUDGET 2007

Package Of Promises

In his package full of promises, Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat has vowed to check economic ills, push GDP growth, hold Constituent Assembly elections and proceed with reforms. In an uncharacteristically huge budget, Dr. Mahat has made ambitious targets of revenue collection and expenditures. At Rs 168.99 billion, it is bigger than the current fiscal year's budget by one-third. At a time when the security problem in Terai region – the economic artery of Nepal – is burgeoning, it could be a strange naiveté of experienced finance minister to estimate 5 percent GDP growth. One thing, however, has earned him praise from the private sector – he has been able to, by and large, place the economy firmly on track of liberalization and reforms despite the apparent pressures by extremist constituents of the ruling alliance

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

The budget for the fiscal year 2007/08 was keenly awaited not because budgets every year are keenly awaited but because this year the budget would belong to the eight party government, which includes Maoists who follow the policy of radical communists and have called for 'total economic restructuring.'

Defending the budget at the parliament this week, Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat claimed that it was a document of understanding among eight parties.

Notwithstanding the rhetorical volley of criticisms by MPs of Maoists and other parties, the budget, according to FM Dr. Mahat, is the economic understanding among the eight parties. This, he said, will catapult "economic agenda to the center-stage."

As such, Dr. Mahat – despite bringing out an over-ambitious estimation of incomes and expenditures

– did draw praise from economists and private sector for sticking with reforms.

"We are happy that a budget by eight party government has proceeded with reforms and liberalization," said Binod Chaudhary, industrialist and president of Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI).

In highlighting the challenges he faced in preparing and hurdles he is likely to face in implementing the budget, Dr. Mahat said that problems long suppressed and put aside since centuries are now unfolding one by one. "Challenges that the new generation needs to confront are piling up. Demands for the right to development are becoming increasingly vocal. With the democracy restored, villages are competing to claim for more and more infrastructure development such as schools, health services irrigation, motorable roads and electricity for a

quickly visible economic prosperity," he said.

Dr. Mahat added that a well-developed Nepal can be built only if "we can transform people's growing awareness and aspirations for their rights into a creative energy and unleash each Nepali's potential to an optimal extent. If we fail to move towards economic development utilizing the open moment with enormous potential and pursuing a positive disciplined and all-inclusive attitude and commitment, we will risk falling from the height of freedom, self-respect and political feat that were so hardly won by the sacrifice of the countless of martyrs, and end up with despair, dejection and deprivation instead."

Budget Figures

Dr. Mahat presented the budget totaling Rs 168.99 billion on Thursday (July 12) for the fiscal year 2007/08. He

has predicted 5 percent growth of GDP in the coming fiscal year and inflation rate at 5 percent.

In his second budget since April movement of 2006 and first one of eight parties, the FM has allocated Rs 98.17 billion for recurrent expenditure; Rs 55.26 billion for capital expenditure; and Rs 15.56 billion for servicing the payment of principle/interest of loans.

It gives high priority to the Constituent Assembly elections, for which it has allocated Rs 3.5 billion including security expenses.

The budget has been divided into general expenditure of Rs. 93.74 billion and development expenditure of Rs 75.25 billion. The government aims to manage Rs 99.60 billion from current source of revenue, Rs 27.47 billion from foreign grants, and around Rs 17.37 billion from foreign loan.

There is a huge estimated budget deficit at around Rs 24.56 billion. The budget is higher by 17.4 percent as compared to total allocation of Fiscal Year 2006/07 and 28.2 higher than the revised estimate of the same period.

In the security front, the budget has allocated Rs 9.59 billion for the police and Rs 10.89 billion for the army.

In a good news to government employees and bad news to opponents of soaring unproductive expenditures, the budget announced 27 percent salary hike for government employees including 10 percent allowance provided last year. Retired civil servants above 75 years will get additional 10 percent raise in their pension. The Rs 1 million annual grant to VDCs has been given continuity in the new Fiscal Year.

In education sector, the budget has allocated Rs 28.39 billion while Rs 12.18 billion has been allocated for the health sector. The Local Development Ministry has received substantial amount of budget (Rs 13.08 billion) for the Fiscal Year 2007/08. For the Peace Trust Fund the government has set aside Rs 1 billion, part of which will be spend on management of the Maoist army.

Similarly, Rs 9.34 billion has been allocated for road development while Rs 2.13 billion will be spent on expansion of communication services. The



Dr. Mahat: Time to deiver

government has allocated Rs 5.82 billion for the agriculture sector apart from Rs 3.99 billion for irrigation projects.

In the budget, the FM has vowed to develop 5000 MW of electricity in next five years. The budget has allocated Rs 7.65 billion for hydropower development. Likewise, Rs 1.71 billion has been earmarked for Poverty Alleviation Fund, to be spent chiefly on income generation projects in rural areas. Dr Mahat claimed that women would directly benefit from involvement in development and economic projects worth Rs 19.9 billion in the new Fiscal Year. Likewise, Rs 1.8 billion has been set aside for the reconstruction of infrastructures destroyed during the conflict.

As in the past, this year's budget has also promised setting up Industrial Security Force and has vowed to bring in laws to ban bandhs in highways.

Royal Rumble

One of the most contentious aspects of this year's budget was the allocation of resources to the royal palace. When he made the budget speech in the parliament, Dr. Mahat remained silent on the issue of budget allocation to the palace.

The following day, he clarified through a press conference that Rs 12.5

million has been set aside for the royal palace. He said Rs 80 million had been allocated for the palace employees to be spent through the Ministry of General Administration. He said the King and the royal family would get Rs 25 million as allowances and Rs 20 million for repair and maintenance of the palace.

As he subsequently faced scathing criticisms of surreptitiously allocating budget to the palace, Dr. Mahat clarified that he did so because many parties did not want to allocate budget to the palace directly.

"Since the King's status is not mentioned in the interim constitution, the government did not allocate budget to him in separate heading like in the past," he added.

The budget also mentions to implement earlier decision to nationalize the properties of the royal palace.

Political Response

The response of the parties and leaders to the budget was not at all different than in the past. Maoist MPs roundly criticized the budget for failing to reflect the spirit of "People's Movement and People's War" and for failing to prioritize agriculture. "Even police have received more budget than agriculture sector," said Maoist MP Janardan Sharma.

Senior UML leader and ex finance minister Bharat Mohan Adhikary also castigated the budget for not paying attention to agriculture and cooperative sector.

On the other hand, economists have cautiously welcomed the budget. Dr. Shankar Sharma, former vice chairman of National Planning Commission (NPC), praised the finance minister for giving continuity to economic reforms and many other past programs. "The size of the budget is indeed too large. But he could not help it given the need to spend on unproductive sectors such as elections, camp management, and pay hike," he said.

Industrialist Rajendra Khetan, who is also the President of Young Entrepreneurs Council, thinks the budget is half-baked. "There is a need for clear vision on what the government intends to do. For instance the budget has mentioned about the Investment Board with executive powers, which sounds familiar as we already have Investment Promotion Board (IPB)."

Khetan added that he welcomes new and positive ideas like provision of Export House. "Like our economy earlier was called remittance economy the budget has envisioned it could be a Power Economy by exploiting the vast hydro power. But the labor issue is not made clear in the budget. Similar is the issue of economic diplomacy. What we proposed was using of resource collected from granting Certificate of Origin to support economic diplomacy. Furthermore, in the financial sector reform, the measures to recover loan do not seem to be priority. The resolution on industrial unrest is also not clear."

Private sector organizations such as FNCCI, CNI, tourism entrepreneurs and so on have also largely welcomed the budget for its private sector-friendly direction. They have welcomed the new provision promising to allow them to invest in foreign countries under certain conditions.

GDP GROWTH RATE AT 2.5%: ECONOMIC SURVEY

The Economic Survey of fiscal year 2006/07 released by the Ministry of Finance a day before it unveiled the



Rural Women: What lies in store for us?

budget for 2007/08 gave a dismal picture putting the GDP growth rate at 2.5 percent.

The Survey pointed out that despite poor show by agriculture, there were some improvements in social sector.

The Economic Survey 2007 has attributed the slow GDP growth mainly to poor agriculture sector which is projected to grow at a mere 0.65 percent. In the last fiscal year, it had grown by 1.1 percent. The dismal performance of the sector is due to poor paddy production, which dropped by over 12 percent. As a result, contribution of agriculture in the GDP has dropped to 36.1 percent this year from 36.8 percent a year ago.

On the other hand, the share of non-agriculture sector in the GDP has also dropped to 3.6 percent this year compared to 4.6 percent growth in 2005-06. The reason for the low contribution of this sector is attributed to a 'difficult investment climate' and weak law and order situation as well as frequent strikes and transportation problems.

Sectors such as the real estate, commercial services, transportation, communication, education, tourism and industrial have registered growth, while agriculture, construction and health had a negative growth this year.

In the social sector, 7,567 new schools have been built, pushing up the total number of schools to 42,110 this year from 34,543 a year ago. The number of students and teachers have also gone up. The number of health care units, including hospitals and health posts, has increased to 6,944 as of mid-March 2007 from 6,796 in July last year. The number of trained health workers rose to 9,1744 from 90,849 during the period. During the fiscal 2006-07, 312 km of new roads have been constructed, whereas it was only 18 km last year. Of the total built road this year, 174 km has been blacktopped. However, the registration of new vehicles has increased by 1 percent during the same period, making 33 vehicles per km of roads.

The survey forecast that per capita GDP income would grow by 8.85 percent to Rs 27,209 this year, an increase from Rs 24,996 last year. An average income of a Nepali is estimated at \$383, up from \$350 a year ago.

The total foreign trade dropped by 2.6 percent to Rs 154.68 billion. The total foreign debt rose by 6.9 percent to Rs 234.8 billion, while the domestic loan increased by 10.16 percent to Rs 102.3 billion. This means that in the population of 240 million Nepalis, each citizen will have to bear Rs 14,000 loan. ■

PLA VERIFICATION

Serious Snag

The second stage verification of the Maoist army has hit a serious snag, which if not resolved soon, could affect the CA elections

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

One of the most vital components of the current peace process leading up to the Constituent Assembly (CA) elections is the mainstreaming of the Maoists through the encampment of their verified combatants and 'weapons-separation.'

As per the comprehensive peace agreement and the arms management accord between the seven party government and the Maoists, the United Nations had been invited to manage the actual procedure of arms management.

However, in recent weeks, this procedure has hit a serious snag after the Maoists refused to proceed with the second stage verification – which primarily deals with verification of the combatants to filter out minors and those who joined the Maoist army after 25 May, 2006 – citing the nature of questions asked by the UNMIN and their intention.

Maoist deputy commander and MP Janardan Sharma has accused that UNMIN personnel had asked questions "which are obscene in our cultural context and which are totally irrelevant."

"Even our division commanders like Parwana have been subjected to marathon interviews when there is no need to verify their eligibility," Sharma said.

Another deputy commander Barsha Man Pun aka Ananta has blamed that the UNMIN was transgressing its authority. "The UNMIN only has the authority of verifying the army and determining if there are minors or not. We will not obey the UNMIN if it starts to transgress its authority and asks anarchic, irrelevant and obscene questions," Ananta said.

Earlier, Maoist chairman Prachanda had accused the UNMIN of trying to impose DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration) model instead of SSR (Security Sector Reform). He has clarified that verification process can be resumed only

after these issues are sorted out.

The UNMIN, on the other hand, has rejected these accusations and has said that it is only following what has been agreed upon by the parties in the arms management accord.

"They (Maoists) do see verification as linked to a broader agenda, certainly on security sector reform and perhaps on other political issues. However, so far as UNMIN is concerned, however important those other issues may be – and we certainly regard the security sector reform discussion as very important – they are not linked under the Agreement to proceeding with verification. Verification should have followed rapidly

on the first stage of registration, and it ought to proceed rapidly now while other issues are under discussion," said Ian Martin at a press meet on Monday.

Martin considers the current obstruction as serious snag. "I think it is serious, but as I have said what chairman Prachanda has told me is he expects that we will soon resume verification after some of these issues have been addressed."

Martin who is shortly traveling to New York to brief the Security Council, said he earnestly hopes that he would be able to report to the Security Council that "verification continues to be underway, not that it remains stalled."

Martin also refutes allegations that humiliating questions were asked during verification process. "I have no reason to believe that any humiliating questions

were asked. If that had been the case, I think we would have had complaints immediately at the time that verification was being carried out. The framework of the questioning, the general nature of the questions, was agreed in advance at the JMCC," he said.

If the verification process continues to remain stalled for a long time, it is sure to generate serious misgivings about the peace process and could also undermine the elections of Constituent Assembly because the latter hinges on successful peace process.

In a reflection of how the western countries are looking at the situation, at the farewell press meet he addressed last week, US ambassador James Moriarty had said that it constituted "huge violation of commitment by the



PLA soldiers: Waiting for completion of verification

Maoists."

The UNMIN has completed the second stage verification of PLA in one camp in Ilam, whose report has been submitted to the Maoist leadership. It has not been made public how many PLA combatants have been disqualified. Subsequently, the Maoists requested to stop the process in other camps. Some reports have said that the Maoists are not satisfied with disqualification of combatants during the process.

In the first phase, the UNMIN had registered 30,852 combatants and 3428 arms in seven PLA cantonment sites and 21 satellite camps. In the second stage, it is conducting detailed verification to disqualify those who were over the age of 18 on 25 May 2006, and who had joined the Maoist army before that date.

“If Nepal Is To Benefit From Demographic Bonus, Utilize The Window Of Opportunity”

-Junko Sazaki

JUNKO SAZAKI is the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Country Representative to Nepal. She has been working in Nepal for more than three years and is very knowledgeable on demographic development and other population issues in the country. She spoke with **KESHAB POUDEL** on various issues related with population. Excerpts:

How do you see the over all population trend in Nepal? What is the present state of population growth?

We are encouraged by overall population trend in Nepal. After years of efforts from UNFPA and other donors, Nepal's demographic transition is evident in every aspect. Although population growth is still high (2.25% per annum), mostly contributed by natural growth and in-built momentum resulting from age-sex-composition of Nepal's population, we are encouraged to see other signs of demographic transition. Fertility and mortality has declined considerably over the years. The recently concluded Nepal Demographic Health Survey shows improvement in almost every aspect: Infant and child mortality has declined further from 64.6 in 2001 to 48 in 2006. Early indication is that maternal mortality has also come down. Life expectancy has cross 60 years for both sexes. The use of contraceptives has gone up to 44 percent and the total fertility rate has declined to 3.1 children per woman.

How will this demographic transition shape in coming years?

As Nepal moves forward in its demographic transition, we will see continued growth of adolescent and elderly population. Because of the development of transport and communication, both internal and international migration has increased further augmented by more than 10 years of civil unrest and insurgency. As a result, the speed of urbanization has increased so is the problem of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Adolescent and young, elderly, urbanization and IDPs are some emerging population issues in Nepal. These are issues which will be increasingly important for population and sustainable development in this country.

As it is reported that the fertility rate has declined drastically, how will it affect Nepal's long term population management?

We are very pleased to see continued decline in Nepalese women's fertility. In 1971, Nepal's total fertility rate was 6.1 children per woman; it came down to 5.6 in 1981, 4.6 in 1991 and 4.1 in 2001 and 3.1 in 2006. The decline is more pronounced in the five years between 2001 and 2006. Even though

the decline is observed in every age group over the last 10 years, larger declines are seen in older age women. However, let me inform you that the decline has not been universally distributed across the development regions and ecological zones of Nepal. Total fertility rate in Nepal's urban area is 2.1 compared to the 3.3 in rural areas, a difference of a child. Likewise, women in Nepal's mountain region still bear 4.1 children in their life time compared with 3 and 3.3 children in the hills and terai respectively. Both Mid-western and Far-Western regions have higher fertility rate (3.5) than central (3.0) and eastern and western development region (3.1) respectively.

What effects will this disparity have?

I am highlighting these differentials to drive the point that fertility will further decline as we improve access to reproductive health services including family planning and other interventions such as education and rural infrastructures to those areas which are yet to benefit from these development interventions. Let us not say population management, let us say population and development, which is core to our mandate. There are two aspects of this demographic transition occurring elsewhere and in Nepal: one is to facilitate completion of this transition, the other one is to address the results/outcome of the transition. We must continue to build on our successes—continue to focus further on improving women and adolescent's access to quality reproductive health information and services and, improving service delivery, improving utilization of services, making available human resources, specially, skilled birth attendants, providing choices of family planning services and improving the quality of care. All these efforts have to be sharpened further to ensure that Nepal achieves and complete demographic transition as quickly as possible.

What is your impression about fertility transition?

Let me enter into another element of the fertility transition: addressing the results of the transition. You will recall what I said in the beginning; new issues will emerge from transition: number of adolescents and youth will increase leading to a youthful working population. To benefit from this youthful population, policies and programs need to be formulated and implemented. Evidence all over the world has shown that investing in health and education and mainstreaming gender issues and empowering women go a long way to reap the benefits of one and only one window of opportunity popularly known as demographic bonus. UNFPA is working with national and international partners to see that Nepal increases its investment in these key

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sectors to reap the benefit of demographic transition. If that happens, not only Nepal's issue of social exclusion will be addressed, the process will make Nepal a modern state, as per the aspiration of Nepalese people.

As migration to urban areas continue to increase, does Nepal have capability to manage it? What will be the long run implication of population migration?

Over the years, lifetime migration has been increasing in the country and we expect this phenomenon to continue as Nepal integrates more to the global economy. When there are pockets of affluence and deprivation, it is but natural, people are attracted to areas of affluence. Uneven distribution of resources among geographic and social groups results in uneven development. Urbanization is critical for industrialization. No country has prospered without urbanization. Urbanization leads to industrialization and prosperity. Nepal is least developed, partially because it has low level of urbanization and industrialization. Urbanization and industrialization are synonymous. It is also a force of modernization. Urbanization makes it possible to deliver resources at a reasonable cost giving economy of scale.

The theme of this year's Population Day was also urbanization and youth. Can you elaborate?

On 27 of June we launched the State of the World Population Report 2007. This year's theme was on urbanization and urban youth. Urbanization is accelerated with inflow of people to areas with higher potentials for growth, where people can have education, health and employment opportunities. In Nepal, urbanization is rapid—urban growth is more than 5% compared to population growth of 2.25 percent. Conflict and internal disturbances has further increased the speed of out migration from rural to urban areas. Conflict and disasters both natural and man-made have also contributed to internally displaced people, and this number is likely to grow if root causes of conflict: deprivation and social exclusions are not addressed. Personally, I favor rapid urbanization as it has greater potential to solve poverty, deprivation and social exclusion because targeted programs can be implemented with minimal transition costs in urban area than serving a sparsely populated rural area.

What Nepal needs to do?

We need to strengthen the capacity of the government to provide services. Nepal's development partners are working to strengthen capacity of central and local governance bodies to take the challenges of increased migration and urbanization, and I do not think, Nepal will lag behind to benefit from this growth potential. Improving governance, service delivery and decentralization will be important milestones in managing urbanization. However, if we fail to design and implement appropriate policies, we will have a chaotic situation: urban slums, congested cities, traffic jams, lack of basic infrastructures and facilities, environmental degradation and inhabitable landscape.

What is the age structure of population

composition? What Nepal needs to do to manage large number of adolescent population?

Because of on-going demographic transition, age, sex composition of population continues to change and this will be more visible when the demographic transition further intensifies. Of the total population enumerated in 2001, around 39 percent is below 15 years of age, another 19.4 percent is between 15-24 years of age indicating youthfulness of the population composition. Population aged 15-60 years also known as working age group population is 54 percent. Elderly population aged 60 years and above is 6.5%. Population less than 15 years and above 60 years is regarded as dependent population. In Nepal, every 100 adult population (15-60 years) is supporting 85 children and elderly. However, as fertility declines further, and socio-economic interventions improves people's living standards, many more people will survive to old age. As a result, elderly population will continue to increase. Whereas, deepening of fertility transition will reduce the share of less than 15 populations increasing the share of working age population. That's when you will have "demographic bonus"—the dependent population will be less than the working age population. Therefore Nepal must design appropriate policies and programs to address these issues.

As youth population grows, what policies should the government introduce?

According to a projection carried out by Central Bureau of Statistics and Ministry of Health and Population (that time Ministry of Population and Environment), the population of youth ages 15-24 will grow from 4.6 million in 2001 to an estimated 6.5 million in 2021- an increase of 41 percent in just 20 years. However, if you look development policies and programs, you would not find much on adolescent and youths. This is even true of the MDGs, although MDGs is comprehensive, however, it has also failed to include adolescents/youths in its goals, as a result, the issues of adolescents are likely to be less attended.

How do you see Reproductive Health issues?

In Nepal, there has been almost neglect of reproductive health care needs of these people. However, this age group is very dynamic, transitory and formative. They need proper and youth friendly information, education and services so that they are well-informed and skilled to make right decision affecting their lives. Providing, youth-friendly information, education and services will be critical so that the youths behave in a responsible way. The reproductive health needs of Nepalese youth will remain a significant challenge in the future. Yet youth have received only limited attention from policymakers and are largely invisible in the MDGs.

After twelve years of conflict, Nepal has hopes for peace. How can UNFPA support those rural populations who did not get basic health services in the past?



When there are pockets of affluence and deprivation, it is but natural, people are attracted to areas of affluence. Uneven distribution of resources among geographic and social groups results in uneven development. Urbanization is critical for industrialization.

To cater to the emerging reproductive and other health care needs of people affected by conflict, we have been continuously reviewing our policies, strategies and programs so that we are effective to deliver services where it is needed most. During the 5th Country Program, we made a major departure to prioritize our support to the districts. In last two years, we have further intensified our support to the communities in the districts where we have been working. Under this framework, we are working with GON/NGOs and community groups to strengthen their management capacity and improve RH service delivery.

What are your targets?

Our target is to reach the un-reached, marginalized and disadvantaged communities who have been left out by development interventions. We would like to empower them to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate their own development programs. The second mode of delivery is through reproductive health mobile camps. As conflict ended and peace prevailed, we also worked with other UN counterparts and participated in Flash appeals for funds to provide mobile reproductive health clinics in mid-west and far west districts. Donors show that as a priority and we have received funds from European Commission, Directorate-General For Humanitarian Aid – ECHO and ECHO Japanese Government. We are expecting funds from the Embassy of Denmark to support these important initiatives. Our mobile clinics are filling important gaps of health services in general and reproductive health services in particular. They not only provide RH services, they also provide surgical treatment of U. prolapse, a hidden disease affecting a large number of women of reproductive age in Nepal, which is less covered by government policies and programs.

How is UNFPA supporting Nepal to cope with overgrowing population?

Population is a cross-cutting issue. Our support comes under three different thematic areas: Reproductive health, Population and development strategies and Gender and advocacy. Decades of our support to the Government of Nepal has strengthened its capacity to formulate appropriate policies and programs in RH, population and development strategies and Gender issues. Reproductive health is now largely integrated in the framework of Primary health care and we have assisted Government to develop Reproductive Health strategy following the Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). Based on that, several protocols for different tiers of service providers are developed, implemented and followed. Our support to family planning services and reproductive health commodities is critical to ensure that couple who want to limit their family sizes have the choice of methods available in service delivery points. To reduce maternal mortality, we have been working with the technical backstopping of WHO to introduce Skilled Birth Attendant (SBA). To strengthen service delivery, we have been continually supporting training of service providers. Providing appropriate IEC/BCC messages for utilization of services has been one of the pillars of support. In the meanwhile, we have also been integrating and

mainstreaming emerging issues such as Gender and GBV in RH policies and programs.

How you have been assisting the government?

We have assisted GON to prepare a Population Perspective Plan. The Plan is a reference document lying out policies and programs for integration of various sectors to integrate and mainstream population variables so that each sector contributes to improve the quality of life of Nepalese people. If its recommended policies and programs are followed properly, it will significantly contribute to achieve Millennium Development Goals. On gender, our support has been directed to formulate policies and programs for mainstreaming gender issues in Nepal's development and advocate for women's empowerment, equity and equality. Over the years, there has been a progressive change in reducing gender differentials and improving women's status. Our focus is on educating girls. These interventions we believe will inform every individuals and couples of their reproductive health and rights. As educational status and reproductive health services are improved, people desire fewer children as is already evidenced by various surveys and recently NDHS. Enabling couples and individuals to enjoy their reproductive rights and educating girls in the long run will help to slower population growth. We are working with donors, NGOs, Civil Societies and GON to increase funding on health, education, and social sectors so that Nepal achieves its demographic transition as soon as possible.

Do you think Nepal can maintain MMR and CMR as envisaged by MDG?

Our efforts are directed to contribute to the achievement of these goals. Sooner the political transition is over, we hope the better for creating an enabling environment for achievement of international goals and targets including Nepal's own development goals. Current assessment is that CMR is likely to be achieved but MMR is less likely if business continues as usual. If we are serious, even this can be achieved. From the results of the recently concluded NDHS, we have known that all health indicators including MMR and CMR have been improved significantly over the period. Although it is too early whether we have achieved that level of MMR to be sure under conflict condition is something we are looking forward to further investigation. However, to focus on further reducing the MMR, we have been working and advocating provision of SBAs and a consensus has already been reached to field them to service delivery points. As MMR is a result of combination of various factors, improvement of service delivery alone will not suffice, we also need to focus on empowering women through education and income generation, increasing men's involvement in mother/child care and political will of leaders at all levels is also critically important. Sooner Nepal is able to do this; nearer we will be meeting the target. ■

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Nepal in a Zone of Conflict

- Ganesh Raj Sharma,

Having diverse but cohesive communities, Nepal was built up as a nation in a long historical process. As every ethnic or religious group is a minority with the rest of the communities, its assimilation and integration has been an unavoidable way of life. Nepali nationalism has evolved and been consolidated more through social and cultural interactions than conflicts and coercions.

Nepal has the advantage of being the only country in South Asia having its own process of political consolidation and integration in a continuity of national independence since time immemorial. It never had a ruler of an alien root and culture. Whoever emerged victorious in the body politic was assimilated and merged within the nationhood. Because of this unique heritage and national characteristics, Nepal has exhibited, all the time, an ingenuity of resolving its conflicts and contradictions.

Nepal has passed through several turbulences with serious results whenever there has been any interference from any external force in the past. But, this has very destructive results in recent days. Whenever Nepalis have been left to themselves to resolve their conflicts and contradictions, they have shown a remarkable capability of doing that and living in harmony.

Some of the recent events have again proved this internal capability of

Nepal. Persons involved in the armed insurgencies have shown their capability to deal with the adversaries of the past. Some of them who are in power with a background of violence as one of the constituents have for them the National Army as their security guards without any incidence of vendetta and animosity of the recent past. The community at large has gradually accepted them as any other political force in interaction.

Whatever unmanageable threats of conflict and violence are there, any deep study of such developments may reveal a third party's overt or covert role to destabilize the country for its miscalculated strategic interests. For long, Nepal was free from the widespread turmoil of larger dimensions due to its equidistant political posture with its neighbors. Even now, it has a lowest magnitude of violence due to its delicate geo-political location compared to areas of conflicts nearby, i.e. Kashmir, Assam and an emerging red crescent in India from north to the south.

Nepal's conflict may cause much damage to it but if this conflict goes on aggravated, it would definitely be counterproductive for its very initiators. Nepal faces a constant challenge of living in the enlarged conflict zone of this part of the world. It is in every body's knowledge in Nepal that the ongoing acts of terror and disorder till now have the source in India as a solo player yet.



This has now activated response from China after the failure of some of the western countries' attempt to keep away the two regional powers from collision in Nepal. As there is no permanent friend or foe in politics, a process of realignment has begun as seen by hectic contacts of political persons towards the capitals of the south as well as the north. Maoists, who had safe sanctuary with all kinds of logistic support from a non-communist democratic neighbor in the south since long, now, instead, due to an ideological affinity have increasing contacts with the communist regime in the north. A brutal massacre of Maoist militants in large number in a border town of Gour a few months back was the turning point in this realignment.

Nepal under the military control of one on its side would definitely have a destabilizing effect on the other side of it. If India controls Nepal, China may lose Tibet, and thus, the country may face a process of disintegration. Apart from the army, India on its side has the strong presence of the Dalai

Lama. Similarly, if China controls Nepal, India may face an imminent threat of disintegration. China on its side has organized and indoctrinated allies as communists on the south. India has been very generous, more towards China than communists, to emerge as a single largest political force with respectable image in Nepal during the popular uprisings of 1990 as well as 2006. Nepal's height in the Himalayan range as well as its accessibility to the Gangetic plain has its strategic importance to both of its neighbors as their soft bellies of security.

For the security of both the emerging powers of the region, strategic importance of Nepal has tremendously increased, in the present circumstances, compared to any time in the past. It is due to this strategic factor, a position of equidistance is not a matter of choice but has been forced

Punjab. In each of these areas loss of lives and destruction of properties have been many times higher than what Nepal had to undergo. A game of destabilizing one strategic position has an inevitable retaliation at the other. What Nepal is suffering is not basically from internal rifts but till now due to a kind of disguised operation of a regional power. It would be prudent to foresee the unique strategic position of Nepal and let it continue with equidistance and non-belligerent relations with both of its neighbors.

It has been a hard earned lesson of history that Nepal has to go through any kind of horrendous phase of covert military operation against it. But that kind of operation may provoke another equally powerful adversary on the other side to react and retaliate promptly and effectively. Chances of Nepal's survival have increased much now than at any time in the past. Due to miscalculation of any of its

strength of it, but mainly due to its geopolitical location.

The best and wisest policy is to let Nepal enjoy its unique historical position as a friendly link between the two ancient seats of civilization as well as emerging economic powers of the world. Nepal has a great future for peace and progress if its immediate neighbors enter into a new vista for intimate cultural as well as closer economic ties like that of the present European countries which had a much hostile past among them.

Now the greatest challenge of the time in the history of Nepal is to its people and particularly persons in the lead role to realize the delicate situation of Nepal in the regional context and keep away from the horrors of this ongoing regional conflict looming large around Nepal which may use any person or group as a prey or instrument for covert operation. Enough damage has been done by simpleton Nepalis either in ignorance or by mistake to one's own country in the past by falling into that kind of trap. Enough lessons have been imparted by shedding bloods of our own kith and kin in the past. A time has come to forge broadest unity and understanding within the nation ignoring all the divisive jargons and dogmas and embracing all the elements of society, traditional as well as modern. Unless the people are motivated for it, any goodwill and support from any body from any where in the world may not be very much helpful to keep Nepal from the devastating effects of a growing menace of the conflict of the zonal scale. Peace and stability are not only the needs of Nepal but that ensure peace and stability on both of its sides.

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upon Nepal which guarantees her survival. Instead of graceful deal, it has been a compulsion of geopolitics on both its side which has ensured Nepal's survival as a nation yet.

A lot of blood has been shed under several disguised operations in Nepal in recent years but that is much smaller than what is now going on in Kashmir and Assam and which has just now started in some other parts of India apart from dormant violence in the

neighbors, it may undergo any kind of violence and destruction, but that cannot do away with its existence as an independent nation. Its equally powerful neighbors are its greatest safeguard from any serious encroachment in its territorial integrity from either side. Nepal may bleed much, but a serious observation without any exaggeration suggests that it would endure any kind of onslaught on its existence not alone by the inner

WFP

Appeal For Relief

The UN World Food Program has issued international appeal for helping the conflict-hit needy people

By A CORRESPONDENT

The United Nations World Food Program (WFP) in Nepal is launching a US\$49 million recovery program to assist over 1.2 million people who continue to struggle daily with the effects of the recently ended eleven-year conflict between the Maoists and the Government, states a press release by the WFP.

According to WFP's Country Representative in Nepal, Richard Ragan, this represents one of the largest UN initiatives to support the people of Nepal during the transition to a new democracy, and offers donors an opportunity to support a rapid, field-based approach to saving lives and improving livelihoods.

"Despite the political, social and security progress of the last six months, over one million people in Nepal are still struggling with the effects of the conflict – damage to critical infrastructure, and unequal access to basic services. This

is on top of food insecurity exacerbated by three years of drought, conflict related market disruptions and the ongoing tensions in the Terai," said Ragan.

"Our goal is to provide immediate assistance so people can begin rebuilding their lives and be better prepared to participate in the historic process of reshaping Nepal as a peaceful, democratic and inclusive state," Ragan added. The aim of the program is to support Nepal's peace process by providing the most conflict-affected communities with quick-impact economic opportunities and local assets that will serve as a tangible peace dividend, and contribute to longer-term food security in Nepal.

Under the year-long program, WFP will provide food aid to some of the most conflict-affected communities in 28 districts across Nepal. Program activities will focus on three areas: critical infrastructure, return and reintegration,

and non-formal education.

The objective of community-based activities will be to improve market access, create short-term employment, and facilitate basic service delivery. "This is a critical period in Nepal's peace process – expectations by the people are high. The challenge faced by the interim government – to address the root causes of the conflict while at the same time laying the foundation for a new democracy – is arduous. With WFP's deep field presence and experience at running emergency operations in Nepal, we are in the unique position to deliver immediate recovery assistance to remote, conflict-affected populations who have yet to benefit from the peace process," Ragan said.

As a result of the eleven-year conflict, over 13,000 people have been killed, an estimated 200,000 displaced and thousands of cases of critical infrastructure damage have been reported.

WFP projects in Nepal benefit currently approximately 1.4 million people, including food assistance to over 108,000 Bhutanese refugees. Operations include emergency assistance to drought-affected people in Mid- and Far-Western Nepal, and food for work, school feeding, and mother and child health care activities. ■

FM PRADHAN VISITS ISRAEL

Foreign Minister Sahana Pradhan has declared the government's decision to open an embassy in Israel very soon. The announcement was made in her meeting with Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tzipi Livni," states a press release by Israel Embassy in Kathmandu.

Pradhan is on an official visit to Israel – the first visit of a Nepalese Minister for Foreign Affairs to Israel since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1960. "Minister Pradhan also met with the elected President Mr Shimon Peres and greeted him formally on behalf of the Prime Minister of Nepal Girija Prasad Koirala, for being elected to the presidency. Mr. Aaron Abramovich, Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs met the Hon. Minister. The Minister delivered a lecture at the

Israel Council on Foreign Relations. The minister visited "Yad Vashem", the Holocaust Memorial and laid a wreath in honor of the holocaust victims."

The statement adds, "Minister Livni expressed Israel's concerns regarding the threats posed to the whole world by the extreme regime of Iran. Minister Pradhan conveyed her hope for successful outcome of the Middle East Peace Process, based on UN Security Council resolution 242 and a two states solution.

Minister Livni appreciated the ongoing peace process in Nepal and acknowledged with satisfaction the opening of a Nepalese Embassy in Israel which to her view will strengthen the bilateral relations between the two countries. Minister Livni also expressed Israel's desire to cooperate in various fields of priority for Nepal, through

MASHAV – the center for international cooperation."

During their meeting the two Ministers discussed also the issue of the Nepalese workers in Israel and took note of the need to reach an understanding that will enable to regulate the issue of Nepalese manpower employment in Israel. "The government of Israel has expressed it's willingness to consider the issue favorably. In the spirit of the friendly relations between their countries, the two ministers agreed to form a permanent mechanism for bilateral consultations between the two Ministries of Foreign Affairs," the release adds.

Minister Pradhan was accompanied by Hira Bahadur Thapa, Joint secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nepal, her daughter Usha Shrestha and Shatrudhwan Prasad Sharma Pokharel, assistant personal secretary. ■

HIGHER SECONDARY EDUCATION

Unlimited Choice

Thanks to competition among private schools, students have a lot of choices for their future

By Nirakar Poudel

Daily newspapers are flooded with advertisements of +2 colleges after the publication of the result of School Leaving Certificate (S.L.C) examination. The colleges claim quality education and all sorts of facilities. Pictures of seemingly smart and intelligent students carrying bulky books and using computers make the ads alluring. The advertisements contain eye catching information about full or partial scholarship schemes for bright students. Since all of the colleges seem equally enticing, many students are in a dilemma about which college to choose.

There are generally two types of colleges, government/community colleges and private +2 colleges. There is virtually no advertisement of government colleges in newspapers. Government/community colleges are cheaper compared with private colleges. Therefore, the choice between these two kinds of colleges is driven by economic status of the student.

Most of the students from well-off families prefer private colleges to government colleges because the quality of education is better in former ones. For those students who cannot afford the private colleges, the government colleges offer the only choice. These days highly intelligent students from poor economic background are obtaining full scholarship from some private colleges.

According to an estimate, over sixty percent students will join the government and community colleges where monthly fees is less than US\$ 2 a month. Whereas the fees of private colleges ranges from Rs.2000 (US\$30) to Rs.10,000 (US\$ 150).

Those students who can afford private colleges are confused by the plethora of choices. Generally, students select colleges by their reputation. For example, St Xavier's College is the first



Young students at education fair: Searching their best

choice of many students who wish to study science. Likewise, +2 colleges who have good reputations like White House, V.S Niketan, United Academy, Caspian Valley College, Capital College and Research Centre, NIST (National Institute of Science and Technology) are choices of many students.

"The private schools have been contributing a lot offering quality education but their education must be affordable to all. This will support to enhance the quality of education," said Minister of Sports and Education Pradeep Nepal.

Private colleges are said to provide better quality education and most of the graduates from these colleges have easily passed medical and engineering entrance examinations. There is also a trend among a group of peers to go to the same college. Some selections are also based on the reference of a particular college by the teachers, seniors and friends.

"We believe in quality of education and we never compromise on it. This is the reason most of our science students get entry in medicine as well as

engineering," said Baburam Pokharel founder and principal of V.S. Niketan School.

The way most of the students select colleges is not based on their own research or impartial judgment. Therefore, students are not confident about their choices. Selecting a college based on the advertisements in the newspapers may not be a good idea. Colleges tend to exaggerate about the

facilities provided, infrastructures available and academic achievements. There are many incidents in the past when students have been disappointed by the colleges which did not provide amenities they promised. Similarly, selecting a college based on the reference by relatives and friends may also be misleading. The reference may be biased. The reputation of college may also give false impression to students.

"Students must be provided proper counseling to ease the process of selecting colleges. Therefore, an independent organization must be set up that evaluates academic performances, infrastructures and facilities provided based on different criterion. The findings of such organization should be kept in the internet. The colleges should also be ranked based on the information collected," said a teacher.

However, for now, students have no option other than to rely on what is there on the advertisements. But they can always conduct research by themselves about the college they want to join. ■

PARTING SHOT BY MORIARTY

Addressing his farewell press meet on Friday (July 13) just before he left for his home upon completion of three years tenure in Nepal, American ambassador James Moriarty accused the Maoists of committing huge violation of their commitment to peace process by stalling the second stage verification of the Maoists' People's Liberation Army.

Moriarty said, "I am surprised that the Nepali society isn't outraged, civil society isn't screaming and the press not going after it vigorously." In the peace process, he said, "the most fundamental commitment that the Maoists made was to put their combatants, not children, and weapons into the cantonments. You have, presumably many people who failed the verification process in the first camp and now they have stopped it. Apparently, they don't like this fact."

On the issue of CA polls, Moriarty said that it was critically important for Nepal to hold Constituent Assembly elections in November. "This country will be in serious trouble (if the elections do not happen then)," he said. Moriarty expressed his concerns that Maoists and the extremist Madhesi groups were using

multiple violent tactics to keep Nepal off the path to a peaceful, prosperous and democratic future. "Ongoing Maoist and extremist Madhesi violence throughout the country will derail the advance towards democracy unless stopped soon. The Maoists must start to adhere to their commitments under the peace agreement, reign in the YCL and begin to act like a real political party. The extremist Madhesi groups must stop their violence in the Terai and begin to use peaceful, political means to address the legitimate demands of the Madhesi people," he said.

When asked to give his personal advice to the King as he prepares to depart Nepal, Moriarty said, "Personally, my analysis is if King wanted to save the monarchy, he should have abdicated. Of course, my government feels that it is for the people of Nepal to decide this issue." Moriarty said that King's innings are up. He said one blunder he committed during his tenure here was to "hold out hope that the King would reach out to political parties." He said that he had given benefit of doubt to the King for too long.

"It was only five months after (the King took over power on February 1, 2005) that I realized he had no intention of restoring democracy."

Moriarty also regretted that he was not able to shake hands with Maoist leaders before he left the country. He had said that he would shake hands only if the Maoists genuinely gave up violence. On the issue of Maoist chairman Prachanda's accusations that royalists were plotting to assassinate American diplomats here, he said, "That was (it turned out) not true. It just destroys his credibility and makes it that much difficult for them (to gain international credibility)." Prachanda had vowed to provide proof of his accusations but he did not.

Responding to Maoist assertion that they do not have policy of stoning diplomats in the aftermath of YCL attacking Moriarty's vehicle in Jhapa recently, Moriarty said, "It is good not to have policy of pelting stones at diplomats. It will also be good not to have policy to attack common Nepali citizens, not to extort them or intimidate them." Moriarty said that he will leave behind the memory of the 'nasty incident' behind as has been requested by Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala.

SUSHILA KOIRALA

End of an Era

Although she always remained out of politics, death of B.P. Koirala's wife Sushila Koirala marks an end of an era

By A CORRESPONDENT

Rarely a woman has set such an example of courage and patience as late Sushila Koirala did. Although she was the wife of first democratically elected prime minister B.P. Koirala, late Sushila Koirala, who had seen many ups and downs in her life, remained quiet and out of political fame.

Showing her detachment to politics and strong will, just a few weeks before her death she backed her son Dr. Shashanka Koirala, a renowned ophthalmologist, for his decision to return to his profession following a brief stint in Congress politics. Following his involvement in active politics, many

patients were unable to get the best service from Dr. Koirala, who is one of the leading eye experts.

Married in her early teen with Koirala family, late Sushila Koirala maintained her own distinct personality supporting to groom all her children at a time when her husband was prisoned for more than eight years.

Living with Girija Prasad Koirala in a house owned by Dr. Shashanka Koirala in Maharajgunj, late Sushila Koirala was completely detached from the politics going on in her own house. In his book Jail Journal and Atma Brittanta, her husband B.P. Koirala has praised her patience and courage.

In his Atma Brittanta, B.P. mentioned Sushila's courage, dedication and love to him. Even she advised B.P. Koirala not to become a prime minister of Nepal. She stood completely with the cause propounded by her husband B.P. Koirala. This may be the reason B.P. Koirala did not tire mentioning about the painful days of Sushila Koirala while he was in prison.

What were described in three recently published books of B.P. Koirala Atma Brittanta, Jail Journal and Pheri Sundarijal were testimony of Sushila Koirala's personality, courage and decency. She maintained all the decency till her last days.

Only a few persons can maintain their decorum and decency till the age of 83. Just a few months ago, she received award for her contribution to dance. Late Sushila Koirala set an example that person can remain non-controversial despite being in the family of hot bed of politics.

Dangerous Democracy

- Kuber Sharma

Democracy becomes dangerous when procedures to change the government is tampered with. Democracy is sustained by rule of law and fairness of elections. Election Commission reconstituted after Janandolan II is another institution trying to misinterpret and manipulate the laws to reject the applications of political parties not nominated in Interim Parliament. The ten thousand and more signatures submitted by parties are being rejected on sample test basis. We heard that they test checked 2% of 57,221 signatures submitted by Green Nepal Party and found 57.5% mistakes which only shows enumerator's bias. And on that basis they asked GNP to submit another 5750 consenting signatures. GNP reluctantly complied with EC directives by submitting 10,260 voters signatures. EC refused to give photo copy of mistakes. They forced the parties to hand copy hundreds of names which they found non-reconcilable with voters list. Is that transparency and right to information? We hear rumors that Election Commission (EC) is hatching a scheme to order applicant parties to produce certain number of voters before EC personally to testify their signatures. EC is ignoring the universal practice of voter's sovereign rights. EC can not compel any voter to vote in the election nor the voters are bound to obey the instructions of political parties. EC does not realize the cost involved in complying with such absurdity. Here I am reminded of an Arab Sheikh's statement about liberal democracy "I hereby grant democracy where every one has right to vote and those who do not vote shall be hanged". The unrest and obstructions created by Maoist, Regional and Ethnic groups make the task of collecting signatures dangerous and scaring away voters. In elections wrong votes are rejected and no candidate is asked to replace the invalid votes. EC should have rejected invalid voters and honor the right ones. The present government has least respect for existing laws. Statements of PM and leaders of eight parties alliance are taken as law by the bureaucracy. To monopolize power without peoples mandate itself is a clear signal to opponents to oust the government by force. Leaders talk only about CA election and removal of King. As if that is the solution of all evils. Nobody talks about development and poverty alleviation. What a self defeating concept? Those who try to come into the framework of interim constitution to contest the CA polls are not allowed registration. Those who are rejecting interim constitution and delimitation of constituencies are openly threatening to destroy election mechanism by violent attacks. The agitators will gain sympathy of those whose applications will

be rejected. The members of EC may be acting to appease their masters without realizing that they would have to pay heavy price if CA polls are boycotted by large segment of population questioning their impartiality and fair conduct. Country do not need puppet EC. We have been demanding government of neutral persons to hold elections.

I can understand the attitude and actions of Maoists and other Communist Parties. Their goal is to demolish the institutions of liberal democracy. They don't need multi-party system except 'one party dictatorship of Proletariat'. The U.S.A. and EU also have not gauged the consequences of rejecting parties to register. West have evolved two party system over a century. Most European countries have proportional system of representation in parliament. Nepal is experimenting new system of federal republican structure of state through proportional and inclusive representation. Every ethnic community and caste is trying to find a place in Constituent Assembly. Rejection of their political parties can be fatal blow to united Nepal. Nepal has long tradition of politics of exclusion for which country is bleeding even today. Conflict, instability and drastic changes lead to different kinds of regimes. For thirty years Panchayat polity did not allow political parties to function and contest elections. After Jan Andolan I (1990) Pancha's cadres of Panchayat system were marginalized. After Janandolan II (2006) Pro-Monarchy parties and persons are discriminated.

Everybody is talking about creation of new Nepal without any sketch of restructured federal Nepal. Prachanda, Maoist Supremo, has already declared he would be President of New Nepal after two years. Does that mean PM Koirala is presiding over liquidation of plural democracy? Some even say that Prachanda is using Koirala to vacate the throne, bring Nepal Army under Party control to demoralize and demobilize and finally capture Singh Durbar and Sansad (Parliament) to install communist government as Lenin did in Russia. Some leaders of coalition partners have already reacted to U.S. past President's Mr. Carter's remark "G.P. Koirala is my Hero." Some commented - a hero whose party is in minority in Interim Parliament who concedes to unjust demands of CPN-UML and Maoists, who guarantees security to political workers and orders his cadres to return to villages but nobody obeys. Communists say Koirala is not a hero, he is playing villain to save Monarchy. Any drama reaches its climax when villain is stronger and ends when hero

is victorious. If Koirala is a villain then who would emerge as hero? Prachanda? Moriarty the U.S Ambassador to Nepal has returned home without getting a chance to shake hands with Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda). Moriarty often repeated his statement that U.S. Government will follow Nepal policy in close consultations with India. It is not clear yet whether Government of India would like to see Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist and UML) ruling Nepal. The proposed constituent assembly election on 22 Nov., 2007 may give a chance to communists of Nepal to secure majority of seats and form the government by legitimate means. Would that bring end of Monarchy, Koirala Congress, other liberal democrats and Democracy. Communists would nationalize land and private property and bid goodbye to cherished goal of American democracy "life, liberty and pursuit of happiness.

Some Nepalese fear that the new Nepal could be divided into two countries. I personally do not subscribe to that thought because our neighbors will not support that kind of extreme result. India has always recognized Chinese Military power. Dividing Nepal between Terai and Hills will put India face to face with Chinese and its other irritated neighbors. China has already claimed Arunachal of India. Indian govt. admits that Pakistan, Myanmar, Bangladesh have contacts with rebels of North Eastern India. In case Nepal is divided, there are chances that India will be broken at chicken's neck point (Narrow strip between India and Bangladesh near Silliguri). Sensing future turmoil China has already made moves to befriend Maoists. Europeans are inviting Maoists to Europe to orient them with their Federalism and Socialism. Americans may support Maoists through U.N. and NGOs. Past President Mr. Clinton wrote in his memoir how his government pumped money in Russia to defeat communists. American money through NGOs went into the hands of ex-military, journalists, intellectuals, petty businessmen etc. Nepali NGOs sympathetic to CPN(UML) and human rights activists are running countrywide organizations with large budgets financed by U.S. and European countries. The effect is seen on changing versions of UML leaders and PM Koirala along with Civil Society hawkers. At the end, I can say that there will be elections for constituent assembly despite unrest, if eight parties agree to share electoral seats to continue monopoly of today over seats of Government. I also do not rule out the possibility of suppressed groups organizing strongly against such authoritarian sham Government.

(Writer is Chairman of Green Nepal Party)

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