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The National Newsmagazine

# SPOTLIGHT

Aug 10-16, 2007

## Urban Growth Expansion of Opportunities

Politics	:	Crisis of Realignment
MJF-Govt Talks	:	Heading Toward Deadlock?
Maoists' Plenum	:	Disturbing Dithering

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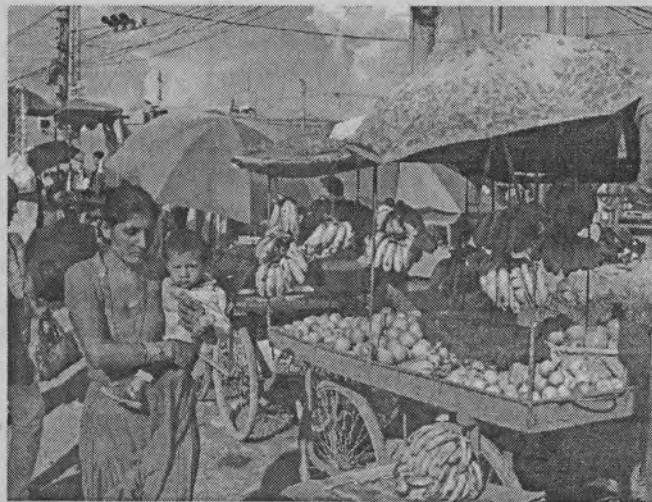
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## COVER STORY: Expansion of Opportunities

The growth of urban areas has opened new opportunities

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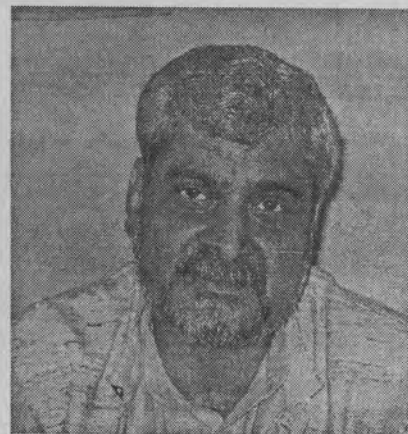
## POLITICS: Crisis of Realignment

Anew political realignment seems to be in the making

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**INTERVIEW:**  
**Hridayesh Tripathi**  
 Leader of Nepal  
 Sadbhavana Party,  
 Tripathi, stresses  
 need for common  
 political front of  
 Madhesis

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**SPOTLIGHT**

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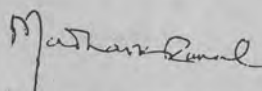
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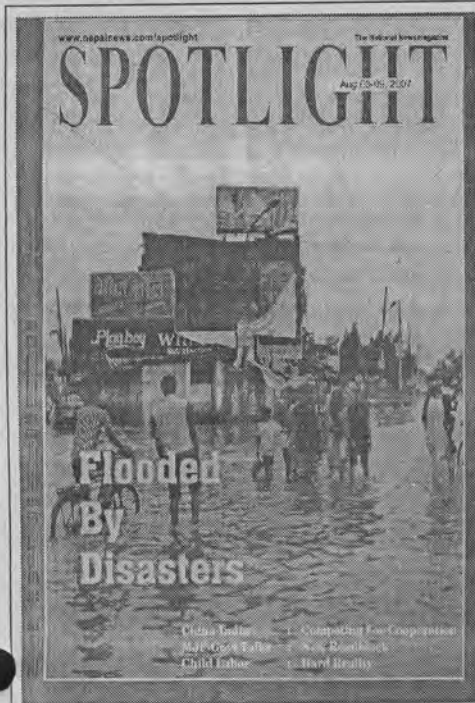
**H**earty welcome to Nepal, Nancy Powell. We all are very happy to see a good friend come back. Representing the number one country in the world, you would, no doubt, be the number one envoy here. And you can rest assured; we will leave no stone unturned to make your stay in our poor country happy, pleasant and fruitful. As you would know, your second innings here will be totally different. Not only that, this tiny poor country has been struggling to stay alive in one part for more than a decade, even the policy of your great country towards this small Himalayan nation has taken a vicious shift. And this shift has hurt Nepal immensely. Knowledgeable Nepalis do understand the constraints and compulsions the United States has to face, on account of its unique position and its global commitments. But, it need not have impelled her to stay a silent spectator to all the nefarious designs of political destabilizations of this landlocked, tiny and helpless country meant to lead it to ultimate disintegration. Firstly, this poor nation's disintegration would not benefit the great United States in any manner whatsoever. And secondly, as the nation responsible to uphold the integrity of the weak, poor and victimized, your great nation is morally bound to help Nepal preserve her identity and independence. Not that Nepal is short of friends and brave Nepalis, who don't hesitate to sacrifice their lives to save others, cannot look after themselves. But Nepal does not want that the whole region should ever be plagued by extremists and become a breeding ground for terrorism. You must be aware Nepal has had that sorry experience for more than one decade when the whole civilized world stood silently watching poor Nepal being bled from her neighborhood so much so that she has almost become a failed state. We know you can prevent that happen and restore peace and normalcy in this poor land. As such, we are harboring great expectations from you that you will not hesitate, even for a moment, to uphold the ideals of your great country and rescue our small nation from further machinations that are sure to push her down the precipice. We do hope and trust you will not fail us.

\*\*\*\*\*

The report of the Rayamajhi Commission has escaped out of the Pandora's Box. As long it was hidden it had a certain mystery that generated intense curiosity amongst a large section of Nepalis. But once in the open it is just "sound and fury signifying nothing." The Report has recommended action against those who obstructed and opposed the agitation of the opposition. No administration in the world fans agitation against itself or supports it. It tries to suppress it and, no wonder the regime at that time did that. The leader and other members of the commission must be "paragon of virtues" with not a blemish- the Satyabadi Harischandra of modern day. The agitators prevailed and became self-styled heroes and rulers. Those in power failed and became culprits facing commissions and punishments. Pity, there is no Jesus today to say "let the one who has not committed any crime try the first culprit."



**Madhav K. Rimal**  
Chief Editor & Publisher



## Common Problems Common Solutions

I agree with your argument that Nepal and India need to sit together to solve the water inundation and floods problem in terai ("Flooded by Disaster" SPOTLIGHT August 3). People living in Indian side of border and Nepalese side of border are suffering from the flood caused by monsoon rain. Recently, the situation has gone from bad to worse because of human intervention in the natural course. Nobody will benefit from blame game.

**Deepak Gupta**  
Gharbaritole, Nepalgunj via-  
email

## Bleak Future

"Hard Labor, Hard Reality" (SPOTLIGHT August 3) depicts the real situation of child labor in our country. The article shows that the situation is bleak. Thousands of children are still involved in worse forms of labor. The government is just busy in other issues. Child labor has been neglected in recent times by the government. The law enforcement is lax. This issue has not been addressed. The government has introduced no new policies or programs to control child labor. Law enforcement is such a rarity that many people don't fear to exploit children brazenly. Child labors are escalating at a very high rate in urban areas these days. If this issue is not addressed earnestly by the government, the situation of child labor will be worse in the future.

**Dorjee Lama**  
Boudha, Kathmandu

## Good Article

The article "Flood and Landslides, Wreaking Havoc" (SPOTLIGHT August 3) has highlighted a very pertinent issue in the present context of our country. Deluge has become perennial phenomenon in Terai for the last few years. Most of Terai has already been inundated whereas we are still in the middle of monsoon. We can expect more intense inundation. Everyone is well aware that the reason behind the flooding is not only heavy rain. Embankments and barrage on the other side of the border are flooding Terai. Natural flow of river is obstructed by dams like Sarda, Karnali at Girijapur, Saryu (Babai) barrage, West Rapti barrage (Laxmanpur) and Rohini barrage. To prevent more inundation these embankments must be opened to allow the natural flow of water during heavy rainfall. Until Indian side agrees to do so, there is no long term solution to the problem of flooding. Floods will continue to destroy properties and lives of people if these embankments are not opened this autumn. Nepalese government must request Indian side to allow natural flow of rivers in order to protect the lives of its citizens and prevent losses of properties.

**Anu Rai**  
London, via-email

## More on Population

I found it was very interesting to read "Population, Male as Partners" (SPOTLIGHT August 3), which indicated positive issue. It seemed that parliamentarians are always busy discussing politics. Parliamentarians seemed oblivious to health sectors. After attending seminar on Men as Partner in Maternal health, the 15 MPs must have realized the situation of maternal health of Nepal. In our country the condition of maternal health is poor. Many women still lack prenatal and post natal care. Still women give birth in homes. Maternal mortality rate of our country is very high. We still lack skilled medical staff. Reproductive health related complexities are still rampant in rural areas. It is disappointing that such issues are still not raised in the parliament. The issue regarding maternal health must be addressed by the government properly. After the speaker conceded that he hoped members of parliament will raise health related issues, it seems that the problems of health sectors would be addressed in the future.

**Jagriti Shrestha**  
Melbourne, Australia via-email

## False Reporting

We write this in connection with the report published in your magazine on June 29, 2007 issue, titled "Row in Casino - Tarnishing Image of Nepal." The report is biased with the intention to tarnish the image of Rakesh Wadhwa. The said report is factually incorrect and appears to be motivated by ill intention. Prior to publishing the report, Rakesh Wadhwa was not approached for his side of the story. This is in violation of the very ethics of journalism. Needless to state, it appears that the sole intention is to malign the image of a prominent, widely read and respectable columnist. Your reporter is incorrectly advised of the facts and circumstances. We may bring this to your notice that Canossa, a company which holds major share of NRC is owned and controlled by Rakesh Wadhwa. Thus, the rightful majority share in NRC is with him. R.D. Tuttle, who has already sold his share, is not and cannot be the authorized person of NRC.

**T.R.Bhatt**  
General Manager -  
Press and Administration  
**Casino Everest**



## Flood Toll Reaches 93

The Home Ministry, on Sunday (August 5) has stated that the total number of people killed by floods and landslides this monsoon season has reached 93. Likewise, it stated that over 9700 families have been displaced by the floods. The Ministry has informed that nearly 60,000 families have been affected by this year's floods. Meanwhile, Home Minister Krishna Sitaula inspected the flood-affected regions in Banke and Bardiya districts on Sunday. *Leading dailies report*

## Dr. Gurung Claims Nfin Has Not Withdrawn Demands

Coordinator of the talks team of the Janajatis (Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities, NFIN) Dr Om Gurung, on Sunday (August 5), said that media reports about the stance of the Janajatis were misleading. He clarified that they have not withdrawn their demands. "Our stance for a fully proportionate election system has not been withdrawn. Media have carried misleading reports without being clear about the issue," he said, while addressing an interaction on restructuring of the state organized by the All Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities- Unified. He clarified that the Janajatis have demanded that the First- Past-The-Post election system should also have proportionate representation of ethnic people and the proportionate election system should be representative in the real sense. "Our stance was that the government should ensure at least one representative of each ethnic group that are not accommodated by both the election systems in the CA," he said. In the function, member of the Interim Constitution Drafting Committee Kumar Yonjan demanded that Dr Gurung clarify the news reports that the Janajatis have dropped the demand for representation for all 59 Janajatis. He termed the parties' decision to go for a mixed election system nothing but a ploy to save monarchy. *Leading dailies report*

## Rayamajhi Commission Report Presented

Eight months after it was presented to the Prime Minister, the government, on August 3, publicized the Rayamajhi Commission report. Home Minister Krishna Sitaula tabled it at the parliament. However, moments after publicizing it, Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula indicated that the government would not take action based on the report's recommendations. He told reporters that the government has already taken necessary action against those named as guilty in the Rayamajhi Commission report. The commission was formed 15 months ago to probe allegations of repression against the Jana Andolan. "Previous cabinet committee had recommended actions to different ministries. I don't think any action is pending now," he said, adding that even the security personnel named in the report have been penalized appropriately. The report, which documents widespread human rights abuses and misuse of state coffer to suppress last year's mass uprising, recommends legal action against 202 persons. The probe commission headed by former Supreme Court judge Krishna Jung Rayamajhi had submitted its report to the government on November 20 last year. Reports say that the Rayamajhi commission report asks the government to formulate necessary laws to take action against then chairman of Council of Ministers (the King), and the cabinet members. It has also named 71 Nepal Police personnel including its then chief for action. Likewise, it has named 20 Armed Police Force personnel including its then chief for action. It has named 25 Nepali Army personnel including its then chief for action. The current army chief is also named in the report for action. *Leading dailies report*

## New National Anthem Unveiled

The new national anthem has been unveiled on August 3. The old anthem was scrapped by the House of Representatives declaration on May 18 last year as it was criticized as a eulogy for the monarchs. The new one is written

by Byakul Maila – whose lyric was selected through open competition. The government presented the CD of national anthem at the parliament. Subsequently, in the evening, Speaker Subas Nemwang released it at a press meet. Earlier, veteran musician Ambar Gurung's composition had been selected by the cabinet for the new national anthem. The cabinet meeting, on Wednesday (August 1), made this decision. Three compositions by Gurung, and others by Nhyoo Bajracharya and police and army bands had been submitted for cabinet consideration. The new national anthem "Sayaun Thunga..." will replace the "Shreeman Gambhir Nepali.." *Leading dailies report*

## Maoist Dissidents Accuse Leadership Of Abandoning Revolution

A group of Maoist dissidents have started coalescing accusing the leadership of abandoning the revolution. "If the current attitude persists, this will mean abortion of revolution," claimed Laxman Tharu aka Roshan, who is said to be the coordinator of CPN-Maoists - United Rebels Front. He had earlier defected from the Maoist party where he used to head the Tharu wing. Claiming that his group will continue the revolution, Tharu boasted in his talks with Kantipur TV that he has army strength of three battalion at his immediate disposal. Saying there are 4000 workers with him, Tharu added that PLA fighters in cantonments are also in his contact. "Most of the deserters have come into our contact," he further claimed. The front has given a month long ultimatum to the Maoists to walk out of the government. It has demanded destruction of India-constructed dams, which have caused flooding on the Nepali side. It has also demanded action based on Rayamajhi commission report and has threatened to take "people's action" if the government does not pay heed to their demands. *nepalnews.com reports*

## Matrika Denies

## Withdrawing Resignation

Adding to the mystery surrounding his resignation saga, Forest and Soil Conservation Minister Matrika Yadav has denied withdrawing his resignation. In a

statement he issued on Saturday (August 4), Minister Yadav conceded that his party chairman Prachanda had rejected his resignation. "But news reports that I have withdrawn my resignation are not true," he stated. Yadav added that he has already vacated ministerial quarter and gave up other ministerial benefits like vehicles and guards, too. Yadav has said he will not resume his ministerial duties unless the issues he has raised are not addressed. He had cited reasons (for resigning) such as lack of cooperation from the Home Ministry in curbing the sandalwood smuggling; dissatisfaction over the ongoing talks with "criminal groups" operating in Terai, and the government's failure to act on involuntary disappearances. He further said his department was gripped by commission scandals. He said he could not bear the fact that some of his party colleagues were still behind bars. Yadav had tendered his resignation letter, on Thursday (August 2), to Krishna Bahadur Mahara who leads five-member Maoist ministerial team in the cabinet. However, Prachanda rejected his resignation. *Compiled from reports*

### **Koirala Says He Awaits**

#### **Decision By Maoist Plenum**

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala has said that he is keenly awaiting the decisions by the ongoing plenum of the Maoists. He said so in response to queries by the media persons in Biratnagar on his reaction to recent proposals by Prachanda that the country should immediately announce republic and adopt PR election system if CA election is to be held. Koirala, however, reiterated his commitment to hold the constituent assembly election on the scheduled date. He also underscored the importance of eight party unity. In Biratnagar, Koirala met with security officials to take stock of the situation in Terai. *Leading dailies report*

### **Maoist Fighter Claims 1000 Have Deserted Cantonment**

A platoon commander level Maoist fighter who escaped from Fourth Division cantonment of Nawalparasi district has claimed that around 1000

fighters have left the camp in the face of repression, inhumane and unjust behavior of senior commanders. Kul Prasad Bhattarai aka Kusum addressed a press meet in Chitawan on Tuesday (July 31) accusing the Maoist army to have become more unjust than 'army of the old regime.' Kusum, who had been wounded by bullet during insurgency, said he was denied treatment despite repeated requests. He said there is still a bullet in his left leg. "I am injured. I requested battalion vice commander Nabin for treatment. He said I was psychologically ill. When I said I would seek treatment on my own, they charged me of supporting Madhesi Forum. I escaped unable to bear such injustice," he said. Kusum said he was captured when he first tried to escape. But he escaped again. He claimed around 1000 fighters who had gone out of the camp had not returned. Meanwhile, commander of the Fourth Division camp Pratiksha dismissed Kusum's claims saying he was a mental patient. "No one has left the camp except him," Pratiksha claimed. *Nepal Samacharpatra daily reports*

### **Mahabir Pun Wins Magsaysay Award**

Mahabir Pun from Myagdi district became the fourth Nepali national to win prestigious Magsaysay award. He has been awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award 2007 for his outstanding contribution to community leadership. He won Asia's premier prize for his innovative application of wireless computer technology in Nepal, bringing progress to the remote mountain, connecting Nangi village to the global village. "I am glad to win the prize but I am not excited. I always worked as it I had duties to carry out. I was not expecting any award," said Pun. In the past, three other Nepali nationals have bagged the Magsaysay award including Mahesh Regmi, Bharat Dutta Koirala and Dr. Sanduk Ruit. *Leading dailies report*

### **Govt Replies To The WB**

The government has written a reply

to a letter sent by the World Bank recently warning to pull out of financial sector reform programs. In its letter, the government has strongly defended its case and regretted the language used in the WB letter. Finance Secretary Bidyadhar Mallik replied to the letter sent by Susan Goldmark, WB Country Director. He has written that he regrets to inform that the letter's intent and some points did not reflect the mutual trust and relations. He said some points in WB's letters were far from reality. The WB had warned that it could pull out of the financial sector reforms program if the government did not install expert management team of ICC at the Nepal Bank Limited (NBL) within a month. The ICC team had unilaterally withdrawn from NBL saying it did not receive the support from the central bank. It was also not happy for six month extension of its tenure by the Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB). *Kantipur daily reports*

### **VDC Secretaries Return To Work**

Dropping their ten-day-long strike, the VDC secretaries have decided to return back to their work after the government agreed to meet most of their demands. The three-day long talks between the officials of Ministry of Local Development and VDC Secretaries Rights Protection Center ended on Thursday (August 2) after reaching 9-point understanding. As per the understanding, the government has expressed its commitment to restore local bodies with political representatives within two weeks; ensure security to them; ensure compensation to anyone injured; announce VDC secretary who are killed in course of duty as martyr and so on. The VDC secretaries launched their agitation primarily demanding security after a VDC secretary Ramhari Pokharel was killed in Terai last month. The government has also agreed to step up security for the VDC secretaries and have also agreed with their demand to let them work from outside their village station in case security situation is unsatisfactory. *Leading dailies report*





Writer Byakul Maila, composer Amber Gurung and Speaker of parliament Subas Nemwang (right) at a function to release new national anthem

**FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ITS HISTORY**, the Nepal Stock Exchange (Nepse) index crossed 700 points on Sunday. The index reached 702.73 points – growing by 9.5 points from last week's closing. In the last two months, the Nepse index has surged by 100 points or Rs 30 billion in market capitalization value. With the latest increase, the total market capitalization value of Nepse has reached Rs 192 billion.

**THE PARLIAMENT PASSED THE AMENDMENT BILL** to the Civil Service Act (2049), Friday (August 3), with a provision providing for automatic promotion of eligible civil servants. The amendment bill states that the gazetted and non gazetted officials who have completed certain years of service and who are academically eligible, will be automatically promoted by one rank. Likewise, the amendment bill also allocates 45 percent of the seats opened for open competition will be reserved for women, Madhesi, Janajatis, Dalits, disabled and backward people. Of the total reserved seats, women have been allocated 33 percent; Madhesi 22 percent; Indigenous Nationalities 27 percent; Dalits 9 percent; Disabled 5 percent and backward people 4 percent. The amendment bill also allows civil service officers up to the level of section officers to join trade union.

**MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS SAHANA PRADHAN**, Friday (August 3), invited representatives of Kathmandu-based foreign diplomatic missions and international aid bodies at the Ministry and appealed for help to cope with consequences of natural disasters. Due to weeks-long monsoon rainfall, floods and landslides have affected most parts of the country. Particularly, Terai districts have been ravaged by the floods with human toll reaching 86. Around 200,000 people have already been displaced from their homes. Minister Pradhan informed that 60,000 people needed to be fed for at least three months period. At the meeting with the Minister, most of the foreign representatives pledged help to Nepal. They have agreed to provide emergency as well as long term assistance. British ambassador Dr. Andrew Hall said that DfID will be looking at how it can help in the reconstruction and rehabilitation. The acting ambassador of the United States, Robert Hugins, said that his government had provided \$ 50,000 humanitarian assistance to the Nepal Red Cross Society as initial response. "We will look at new information and make available further assistance as needed," he said. Earlier, the World Food Programme (WFP) in Nepal had committed to help in feeding of 60,000 persons.

**SAYING THAT HE HAS PUT HIS ENTIRE** political career at stake over the success of the forthcoming Constituent Assembly elections, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala urged the Armed Police Force (APF) to work with high morale giving highest priority to maintaining security for the elections.

Addressing the national conference of senior officials of APF in Halchowk on Thursday (August 2), PM Koirala pledged total back-support towards APF actions. The APF has been given the responsibility for providing security for the November elections. At the function, chief of APF, IGP Basudev Oli vowed to fulfill the duty. He informed that APF will set up Election Security Base in each of the 75 districts as well as Election Constituency Security Base in each of the 240 constituencies. He said that of the 24,278 manpower of APF, 21,427 will be mobilized for the election security purposes.

**DURING HIS MEETING WITH** Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala on Thursday (August 2), the Japanese Senior Vice Minister for Defense Takahide Kimura pledged all possible assistance for Nepal's democratization and peace process. Kimura, who returned to his country on Thursday after completing a brief visit to Nepal, said Japan appreciates the Prime Minister's effort for democratization of Nepal. Kimura was in Nepal primarily to inspect the work of Japanese Arms Monitors in the UNMIN.

**ALL THE CHIEF DISTRICT OFFICERS (CDOs)** of the 75 districts have issued a joint statement deploring the attack against CDO Uddhav Bahadur Thapa of Dolakha by Maoist-affiliated Young Communist League (YCL) cadres. The CDOs have drawn the attention of concerned parties to ensure that such incidents do not repeat in future. They have called for clear demarcation between politics and crime to help in law enforcement. They have said that the attack has made the civil servants and people further suspicious at a time when there are so many challenges to hold the Constituent Assembly (CA) elections. "A CDO is not an individual but an institution of the state. We take the attack against this representative institution of state as an attack against the state itself," the statement says. They have also expressed solidarity with CDO Thapa for his commitment to uphold law enforcement. Their joint statement came in the wake of Maoist decision to "expose" CDO Thapa whom they have accused of being regressive.

**COMPARED WITH LAST YEAR**, the number of Nepalis going overseas for work has increased by 21 percent. According to the Department for Labor and Employment Promotion, during the fiscal year 2063/64 (2006/07), 199,111 Nepalis left for 15 different destinations – up from 165,252 who went overseas the previous fiscal year. Malaysia continued to be the most favorite destination where 71,074 Nepalis went during the period. This figure, however, is down by 14.39 percent compared to previous year when 75,526 workers went there. Till now, 367,000 Nepalis have gone to Malaysia for work. During this period, the number of workers leaving for Qatar reached 58,084 – up from 55,892 last year. The number of workers headed towards Saudi Arabia reached 37,779 – up by 113 percent from 15,813 last year. The UAE, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Israel are other preferred destinations.

**KUBER SHARMA OF GREEN NEPAL PARTY** has decided to contest the forthcoming Constituent Assembly elections by advancing the slogan of 'clean politics and clean environment.' His party's election symbol is mango, Sharma has said his party will raise the issue of private property and individual freedom during the election. Sharma said his party will abide by the people's decision on the fate of monarchy.



**"I** am keenly awaiting the conclusions of the Maoists' plenum."

*Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, in response to media queries regarding Maoists' new preconditions for Constituent Assembly elections, in Biratnagar.*

**"L**et everyone understand: we are very clear regarding (decision not to return to) armed revolt and (maintaining) ceasefire. The only decision we will be making (through the plenum) is whether to go for people's movement or not."

*Prachanda, Maoist chairman, talking to reporters on the eve of party's fifth expanded meeting (plenum).*

**"M**aoists' preconditions for election will only block the CA polls."

*Ram Chandra Poudel, Minister for Peace and Reconstruction, responding to Maoist condition of republic announcement and Proportional election system for holding CA, at a press meet.*

**"T**here is no more action that remains to be taken. The government has already taken appropriate actions against those named in Rayamajhi report.

*Home Minister Krishna Sitaula, talking to reporters after publicizing the Rayamajhi Commission report.*

**"W**e have mentioned that then chairman of the council of minister should shoulder the blame for the



repression."

*Krishna Jung Raymajhi, chairman of then commission formed to probe allegations of repression against people's movement, defending his report whom many have said has let the King off the hook.*

**"T**he Rayamajhi Commission report can be used as basis by the government if it really wants to take action against the repressors of peaceful movement. But it has also left the room open for the government that does not want to take action."

*Devendra Raj Pandey, civil society leader, saying that he had hoped that the report would unequivocally pin the blame on the King and then ministers for repression.*

**"I**t is my great fortune that I was called

upon to give composition to national anthem. Even for greatest of musicians, such an opportunity rarely comes in their life."

*Ambar Gurung, senior musician, who composed the music for the new national anthem.*

**"T**his is not my individual creation but the creation of all the people of Nepal."

*Byakul Maila, the writer of the new national anthem, speaking at its releasing ceremony.*

**"I** am glad to win the prize but I am not excited. I always worked as it I had duties to carry out. I was not expecting any award."

*Mahabir Pun, from Myagdi district of Nepal, winner of Ramon Magsaysay Award 2007, in The Himalayan Times.*

## TRANSITION

**TABLED:** The report of the High Level Judicial Commission formed to probe the allegations of repression against people's movement, by Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula, at the parliament.

**RELEASED:** The new national anthem "Sayaun Thunga..." by the government. It will replace "Shreeman Gambhir...."

**AWARDED:** Mahabir Pun, from Myagdi district, with the prestigious Magsaysay award. He has been awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award 2007 for his outstanding contribution to community leadership for his innovative application of wireless computer technology in Nepal.

**RETURNED:** Takahide Kimura, Japanese Senior Vice Minister for Defense, after completing a brief visit to Nepal.

**CROSSED:** Nepal Stock Exchange (Nepse) index, 700 points, for the first time in history.

**PASSED:** Amendment of the Civil Service Act by the parliament.

**REJECTED:** The resignation from his post tendered by Matrika Yadav, Minister for Forest and Soil Conservation, by his party chairman Prachanda.



# WORLD MARVELLED AT BHAKTI THAPA'S SACRIFICE

- By Mrs Laxmi Thapa

**I**n the late eighteenth century the South Asian region was being swiftly converted into the colony of the western powers. The way new territories in India were brought under the British control had provoked even the British public. British Parliament had gone completely against it. Historian HG Wells has written about the British rule in India at great length in his book (History of the World) According to HG Wells at that time the British rulers in India were adopting every possible method to enlarge the empire. Englishmen at home were perplexed when the generals and officials came back to make dark accusations against each other of extortions and cruelties. Upon Clive, Parliament passed a vote of censure. He committed suicide in 1774. In 1788 Warren Hastings, a second great Indian administrator, was impeached.

During this period when the countries in increasing number in South Asia were being brought under the colonial rule, Nepal was able to rise from a scratch to become a formidable Himalayan power within a very short time. Nepal was gathering enough strength to move forward to protect the freedom of the peoples dwelling in this vast region against European domination. However, the build up of Nepalese strength brought her on a collision course with the Great Britain. Colonial power Great Britain had good reason to fear that if the Nepalese build up continued for some time, the colonial rule of the Britain could soon come to an end in South Asia much the same way as in the North America a short time before.

## Leadership of Bhakti Thapa

Bhakti Thapa, apart from being named the bravest of the braves in the world by the historians for his great courage and valour in the Deothal Battle against the British army, had equally played the most important role in the unification campaign of the Great Nepal. He had proven himself to be the best strategist of his time. Historians have written that the Bhakti Thapa had impressed the Gorkha commanders during the War of Consolidation and joined those who were to be the eventual ruler of Nepal. Kazi Amar Singh Thapa had treaded in the footsteps of Bhakti Thapa. In his first major military operation itself he demonstrated his exceptionally brilliant skill in launching a very successful operation under the most adverse condition that was sure to astonish anyone.

Bhakti Thapa joined the unification campaign in 1789 at a time when the advance of the Nepalese force to the west of the Bheri River was completely blocked for more than two years by then powerful kingdom of Jumla. Hamilton states that Jumla had collected an army

of twenty-two thousand men to face the Gorkhalis, a force far superior to anything the Gorkhalis could put in the field at that time. In view of the narrow valleys and the very high mountains in the Jumla area, it was not surprising that Jumla with such an army was able to resist the northern Gorkhali army's advance for more than two years. After joining the unification campaign, Bhakti Thapa changed the strategy of the predecessors and led an attack on Jumla from the difficult north route. The result was a swift victory and the life of many people was also saved. A letter sent by the king to Bhakti Thapa highly commends him for the skill displayed in successful accomplishment of the Jumla operation.

## Confrontation With British

In the 1790s, the effort to unite the Himalayan region had been greatly intensified. Nepal spared no efforts and resources to accomplish this historic mission. The process of unification had gone ahead at an exceptionally rapid pace. At the height of this unification campaign Bhakti Thapa was the supreme commander and the administrator of the entire territory to the west of the Chepa-Marshangdi. At that time the western boundary of Nepal had extended up to the Jamuna river. Unfortunately, soon after, the unification campaign of the Great Nepal came to a complete halt due to political turmoil in the capital Kathmandu. The next phase of the unification campaign began in early 1800s. Nepal's western boundary had extended up to Sutlaz river by 1812. Continued expansion of the Great Nepal was seen at that time by the Great Britain as the biggest threat to realization of their dream to convert the whole of the South Asia into their colony. So the Great Britain declared war on Nepal in 1814. British invasion had started even before the war was officially declared. The war continued for three consecutive calendar years.

## The War

The British began preparation for the war from the time when F.R. Hastings- Earl of Moira landed in India as Governor General and Commander-in-Chief in 1813. The actual declaration of war against Nepal is recorded as 1 November, 1814, though the war began from middle of October. The decision to declare war had been made six months earlier so the territorial dispute appears to be only a pretext. British force had marched into Nepal across a frontier of more than 1500 km to attack at several points at the same time. The eastern British flank was moving north from the Teesta area whereas the farthest western flank from the Sutlej river area. It was virtually a modern type warfare extended over a period of three calendar years and necessitating to protect the entire region bordering the enemy held territory. The British invasion force, in



comparison with Nepalese, had absolute superiority in cavalry, pioneers, and at least the superiority of 10 times in infantry and 100 times in artillery. They also had the advantage of maneuverability in movement of their fighting force.

The Britishers were expecting a blitz-krieg victory. It is said that the Governor General Hastings had planned to win the war in one mighty sweep in one to two months in end 1814 but certainly before the Christmas. He was badly mistaken in his assessment. We Nepalese fought very bravely. In early months of the war the initial British invasion was completely beaten off. The British rule in India was at a risk of falling apart. Unfortunately at that time the Sikhs and Marathas did not join Nepal in liberating the whole of the South Asian Continent from the grip of the European domination. British army had at their disposal virtually unlimited resources from the Nepalese perspective. They continued to press Nepal all across the frontier that stretched over a distance of more than 1500 km. Nepalese resources were being sharply depleted. There was not any chance to be replenished. So the ability of the Nepalese force to defend the territory under their control was steadily declining. They were forced to pull back. There was breakdown in control and command system. Towards the middle of the 1815 Amar Singh Thapa, chief of the Nepalese force fighting in the western front was confined within a small area of the Malaun fort. The fate of Nepal was going to be in the hand of the Governor General Lord Hastings, unashamedly imperialistic and who became famous for having established the British Empire in India more firmly than before. At that time there could not be any room for doubt in his intention either to eliminate Nepal completely and bring it under the British rule or to turn it into a vassal state like so many other states under that category in British India. He could be forced not to take any such decision detrimental to the honour of Nepal only if he perceived that such action could pose serious threat to the continuance of British rule in India. The Deothal Battle could not be anything else but a clear message of threat from Nepalese people to the British ruler warning them not to take lightly the determination of Nepalese people to protect the honour of the country.

### Deothal Battle

Towards the sunset of the April 15<sup>th</sup> evening Bhakti Thapa and the army units under him arrived at the Malaun fort from their station at Surajgarh without being noticed by the British army units scattered around the Malaun fortress. The subsequent events help to explain that he might have come to persuade Amar Singh Thapa on behalf of all the brave commanders prepared to sacrifice their life for the country to pursue more aggressive methods to deter the enemy from overrunning the motherland. He might have even advised him to pull back from the Malaun to regroup

the army units spread all across the Garwal and Kumaun to go to a completely new type of offensive.

The following day in the morning Bhakti Thapa at the age of 74 led a kamikaze type counterattack against the British force entrenched at Deothal. Historians have presented the description of this battle at great length. It was 3.15 a.m. when a force of 400 under Bhakti Thapa marched out of the Malaun fort, to a slow but steady beat of a drum. The British column under Thompson had taken position at Deothal on reverse slopes. The cannons of 6 pounders were properly concealed. There were two Indian battalions, the Grenadiers companies of the Light Battalions and some 1000 Irregulars. The British strength was up to about 3,500 troops and weapons.

Bhakti Thapa and his followers in the counterattack appeared to have vowed to fight to the death. Bhakti Thapa had even handed his infant grandson in the custody of the Amar Singh Thapa just before going to the battlefield. It was a bloody battle. It would not be wrong to visualize that the Khukri charge and the battle cry of the Nepalese fighters might have shaken the enemies with fear. RP Ochterlony, the author of "Sketches Of The Goorka War" has written. A body of Gorkhas advancing to charge bears no resemblance to a European column. Several huge trumpets putting up a harsh but stirring noise, set the multitude in motion who, except some carry shields, grasping each a matchlock in his left hand and a broad sword in his right, rush on, disregarding all regularity, very like a pack of hounds in full cry.

Bhakti Thapa laid down his life in the battlefield. Every one who fought from the Nepalese side was either killed or wounded. The British casualties were also very high. The Britishers have praised their officers and soldiers for their bravery in the battle. According to one account the British casualties of dead and wounded in Deothal battle were 384 as against 390 Nepalese casualties - almost a ratio of one to one, under the most adverse conditions to the Nepalese.

### Bravest of the Braves Bhakti Thapa

Needless to say that British rulers were thoroughly shaken by the bravery of Nepalese in the Deothal Battle. Bhakti Thapa became a legend in the eyes of British. Historian CB Khanduri writes quoting various contemporary British historians "The euphemism of the BRAVEST OF THE BRAVES had been used by Napoleon for Marshal Ney, whose bravery during the retreat from Moscow in 1812 was one of the highest. BRAVE LES BRAVE, said Napoleon of him. British then used this citation for the Gurkhas during and after the Anglo-Nepal War. Such was the bravery shown by Bhakti Thapa that the next legend of the Bravest of the Braves had been created on the day - 16 April, 1815 at Deothal."

*(Thapa writes on history)*



## TALKS PROCESS

## Towards Deadlock

Increasingly, the government is heading towards deadlock in its talks with agitating parties like MJF

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

The fourth round of talks between the government and the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) ended inconclusively on Sunday.

The sudden demand for parliament dissolution, which was presented by the MJF during the third round of talks, was met with sudden proposal by the government to expand its talks team by including a Maoist member. The government side proposed to expand its team (currently three member: Ram Chandra Poudel, Gyanendra Bahadur Karki and Ram Chandra Yadav) by including UML leader Jhal Nath Khanal, Maoist minister Dev Gurung and Nepali Congress (Democratic) leader Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat.

For the MJF leaders, the government proposal seemed very suspicious. It is no secret how bitter the relations between the MJF and the Maoists are. Frequent clashes between cadres of the two leading up to the Gaur massacre have poisoned the relations between them.

Maoist leaders have minced no words in describing MJF as criminal groups and have even demanded banning them. As such, the MJF leaders refused to enter into further talks on Sunday.

The MJF chief Upendra Yadav accused the government side of not paying serious attention to their demands and not doing enough homework.

Besides, the MJF also added a new demand calling for amendment in the CA Member Election Act, 2007. The MJF leaders claimed that a provision in the Act, which states that a party contesting the election in less than 20 percent of the total number of seats need not require to field candidates in an inclusive manner, is against regional parties.

At the meeting MJF reiterated its demand for the dissolution of Parliament

soon after the Election Commission publishes election schedule, guarantee of federal system of governance along with rights of self determination as well as proportional representation based election system.

Meanwhile, the talks between the government and the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NFIN) have progressed to crucial stage. After the government agreed to NFIN demands for guaranteeing minimum representation of ethnic groups, the two sides have inched closer to sealing a deal. The two sides were preparing for



MJF leaders: Shifting gears *Newsfront*

crucial talk on Tuesday (August 7).

Reports have said that as the government has agreed to comply with NFIN demand to ensure minimum representation of each of the listed ethnic community, the NFIN climbed down from its demand for fully Proportional Representation (PR) based election system for the forthcoming Constituent Assembly (CA) elections. The government has agreed to ensure at least one representation of 59 listed ethnic communities and has also agreed to look into ways to accommodate 30 other groups. The two sides are working on the modalities to realize this goal. On the other hand, the NFIN, too, agreed to accept the Mixed election system if the government guarantees proportional representation of various communities and regions through this system. ■

## Rayamajhi Commission Report Publicised

Eight months after it was presented to the Prime Minister, the government, on August 3, publicized the Rayamajhi Commission report. Home Minister Krishna Sitaula tabled it at the parliament.

However, moments after publicizing it, Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula indicated that the government would not take action based on the report's recommendations. He told reporters that the government has already taken necessary action against those named as guilty in the Rayamajhi Commission report.

The commission was formed 15 months ago to probe allegations of repression against the Jana Andolan. "Previous cabinet committee had recommended actions to different ministries. I don't think any action is pending now," he said, adding that even the security personnel named in the report have been penalized appropriately.

The report, which documents widespread human rights abuses and misuse of state power to suppress last year's mass uprising, recommends legal action against 202 persons.

The probe commission headed by former Supreme Court judge Krishna Jung Rayamajhi had submitted its report to the government on November 20 last year. Reports say that the Rayamajhi commission report asks the government to formulate necessary laws to take action against then chairman of Council of Ministers (the King), and the cabinet members. It has also named 71 Nepal Police personnel including its then chief for action. Likewise, it has named 20 Armed Police Force personnel including its then chief for action. It has named 25 Nepali Army personnel including its then chief for action. The current army chief is also named in the report for action. ■

## MAOISTS' PLENUM

**Disturbing Dithering**

Over a year after they joined the political mainstream, comrades seem to be having second thoughts on their strategy

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

As the calls for quitting the government and launching "people's revolt" have increased at the ongoing plenum, the Maoist leadership is finding itself in a difficult quandary.

Having led the 'revolutionary' workers educated in hard-line communism through a decade-long people's war and into the peace process ignited by the 12-point agreement reached in New Delhi, India in November 2005, Prachanda is now being asked to justify the "flexibilities demonstrated by the party in its current alliances with other political parties."

In a move that could end up destroying the fragile peace process, large sections of Maoist party including representatives of its People's Liberation Army (PLA) have asked party leadership to quit the government and launch revolt. The Kathmandu Post quoted deputy commander of Maoists, Barshaman Pun, as saying that the PLA division commanders have expressed serious dissatisfaction with the government and the party, and urged the party leadership to immediately pull out of the government.

The seriousness of the demands raised by PLA members have increased as it comes in the wake of reports that groups of Maoist dissidents have started coalescing accusing the leadership of abandoning the revolution. "If the current attitude persists, this will mean abortion of revolution," claimed Laxman Tharu aka Roshan, who is said to be the coordinator of CPN-Maoists - United Rebels Front. He had earlier defected from the Maoist party where he used to head the Tharu wing. Claiming that his group will continue the revolution, Tharu boasted in his talks with Kantipur TV that he has army strength of three battalion

at his immediate disposal. Saying there are 4000 workers with him, Tharu added that PLA fighters in cantonments are also in his contact. "Most of the deserters have come into our contact," he claimed. The front has given a month long ultimatum to the Maoists to walk out of the government.

The fifth expanded meeting (plenum) of the Maoists being held at Balaju Industrial Estate in Kathmandu has generated huge interest not only among the party workers but also other parties, civil society and international community as it comes close on the heels of recent central committee meeting where Prachanda had proposed to launch revolt or movement in case the republic is not announced immediately and fully proportional representation based election system not adopted before the Constituent Assembly elections.

During the plenum, team leaders of 45 different groups have been responding to the Prachanda's political report. Most of them have stressed that CA election may not be possible and have advised their leaders to go for "people's revolt."

Held at the Balaju industrial estate, the plenum is participated by almost 2000 Maoist workers and leaders. Although the participants have called for struggle, they are still discussing whether to call it "people's revolt." Workers have advised to name it revolt. "People's revolt is the higher form of people's movement. The main thing is whether this revolt should be armed or peaceful. For now, most have called for peaceful revolt," said one participant.

After listening to the party comrades about his report, Prachanda will respond to the issues they have raised and the plenum will formulate future strategy of the party. The fourth plenum held in



**Prachanda:** Facing stiff questions

India's Haryana in 2005 B.S had decided to form "base areas" in their strongholds in some mid-western districts.

Earlier, Prachanda had clarified to the reporters that there has been no proposal to launch "people's revolt." "We have not decided to launch the revolt as has come out in the media," said Prachanda. "Let everyone understand: we are very clear regarding (decision not to return to) armed revolt and (maintaining) ceasefire. The only decision we will be making (through the plenum) is whether to go for people's movement or not," Prachanda added.

Meanwhile, Prachanda's problems seem to have increased as a member of his party resigned from his position as a minister without the party's knowledge. Although he has refused to accept the resignation by Forest Minister Matrika Yadav, the latter has issued a statement that he will not withdraw his resignation.

On the other hand, leaders of other parties are worried with the developments within Maoist party. Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala has said he is keenly awaiting the conclusions of the plenum.

Minister for Peace and Reconstruction Ram Chandra Poudel has already expressed dissatisfaction over Prachanda's preconditions for the Constituent Assembly. Poudel criticized the Maoists for making demands that could 'block the elections.' He also reminded Prachanda about his signature in the earlier agreement regarding holding CA polls on mixed election system and deciding the fate of monarchy through the first meeting of elected CA. Likewise, UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal, too, has advised Maoists not to back-track from earlier understanding. He said such move could thwart the elections. ■



## URBAN GROWTH

# Opening Up Opportunities

With increase in population, Nepal's urban areas have become a center of economic activities generating tens of thousands of employment opportunities for rural poor. From capital city Kathmandu to other smaller cities, they are helping to reduce the poverty and increasing the income of marginal communities. Although the growing populations in the cities are creating many problems including the cost on environment, one cannot ignore the role played by cities in reducing the poverty

By KESHAB POUDEL

*Jasbir Tamang, 42, a resident of Ramechhap and father of three children, migrated to Banepa, 25 kilometers east of Kathmandu, three years ago to survive from intense conflict. Being a subsistence based farmer with no economic activities in his home town to generate more income, Tamang's life was full of miseries.*

However, his migration to city has changed the situation. Tamang, who started as a daily wage labor in building construction in early days, now works as a subcontractor earning Rs.10,000 to Rs. 15,000 ( US\$ 150 to US\$200) a month. Even his wife runs a small tea-stall in nearby bus stand.

"What I am earning now was beyond my imagination till five years ago. Of course, the life is very hard

here but it pays us," said Tamang. "I am sending my two sons and one daughter in the local boarding school and I have learned new skill of entrepreneurship. Previously, what we knew was only the hard work on the agriculture field that produced little benefits."

Ram Bahadur Bhujel, 35, a resident of Okhuldhunga district, 400 miles east of capital, has also similar story to tell. After moving out from village to capital city, Bhujel's major achievement has been that he is now out of poverty bracket. Bhujel - who runs a vegetable shop in Baneshwor - generates monthly income of about 10,000. Father of two, Bhujel entered into vegetable business by taking low interest loan available under a micro-credit program.

Bhujel, is now sending his two sons to a private boarding school hoping to give quality education to them. "Although Maoist conflict forced me to leave my parental house, migration, which was very painful in early days, turned into a boon to my life. Had I lived in the village, my work would be as a porter ferrying the goods from one village to another and my children would not have enrolled in school because my villagers do not permit Dalits to go to school," said Bhujel.

Srilal Kanu Saha, 35, a resident of Dhanusha district 300 kilometers south of capital, sells fish imported from southern terai in Koteshwor. Making a living for a family of five, Saha, who earns about Rs.15,000 a month, also sends his two sons in the local boarding school.

“Migrating to the city helped me a lot to increase my family income. It is impossible to earn the money in village. For a lot of villagers, it is a dream to send their children to the boarding school,” he confided.

Like Tamang, Bhujel and Saha tens of thousands of rural people – who have migrated to the urban areas in the last one decade – have seen sea change in their livelihood. From merely a subsistence based farmers living in absolute poverty, they are now persons skilled with entrepreneurship in competitive urban area. The new skills have lifted them out of absolute poverty.

Though the hygienic condition of the cities are getting worse day by day particularly in the area where people of low income live, cities offer better facilities, quality service as well as employment opportunities.

The movements of rural folk to urban areas have drastically increased the population of cities putting a lot of pressure on the existing infrastructures including health, sanitation, education and others. However, the growth of population in cities contribute to reducing the poverty.

Kathmandu valley – which had less than 500,000 population till a decade ago, has now population of over 3 million including the floating population. From hill to terai, every one is coming to Kathmandu valley with a hope to have better future. Compared to rural areas, the life in the cities, though there are growing disparities, is much better than rural areas where health, education and employment opportunities are virtually non existent.

### Transformation of Kathmandu

Although the valley is still to build infrastructures to prove as a good city, the life of Kathmandu city is now completely different than what Swiss scholar late Toni Hagen (read *Observation on Certain Aspects of Economic and Social Development Problems in Nepal 1959*) and the first member Hugh Wood of United States

Operation Mission (read *Half-a-Century of Development, the History of U.S. Assistance to Nepal 1951-1001*) observed.

“The most characteristic fact is the total lack of a transport system in the greater part of the country. Only the Terai Belt and the Kathmandu Valley have a few roads that can be used by cars. The whole of Midlands are covered only by trails. Bridges are non-existent. Thus, during the rainy season

to generate the self employment.

### Effects of Migration

Migration has a profound effect on structure, composition and growth of population in a country therefore it is an important area of population studies. Because of job opportunities in urban areas, rural to urban migration takes place with increased tempo. Therefore it is natural that in developing countries, urbanization is considered s a symbol of development.



**Crowded marketplace:** Exploding population

wide valleys are entirely cut off from the rest of the country and the rest of the world,” writes Hagen.

Oregon contractor Hugh Wood recalls the details of daily life in the 1950s. “Simply reaching Kathmandu was a major accomplishment in itself. The Wood family tried for over a week to fly from Patna to Kathmandu during the 154 monsoon, the alternative being a four-day journey by bus, truck, train and foot. For eight successive days they packed up and went to the airport; on four of these days they flew within a vertical mile above Kathmandu but were unable to land in the sea of clouds.” (read *Half-a-century of Development, the History of US Assistance to Nepal 1951-2001*).

From virtually isolated from rest of the country, Kathmandu city now has links with almost all cities of mountain, hills and terai. One can fly to most part of the world from the city.

People do not have to walk to collect salt and people grow all kinds of vegetables in nearby cities. The road network opened new opportunities as well as turned into boon to the valley as well as the citizens of Nepal.

In the last five decades, the valley has turned from just an isolated and rural city to a modern city with all kinds of opportunities.

For the rural poor - who rely on the subsistence based farming – cities offer enormous opportunities to learn new skills including entrepreneurship



“Nepal is still least urbanized among the developing countries, but also among the SAARC countries as well. Gradually, number of urban areas as well as population living therein is increasing over the years in Nepal. The rate of urbanization i.e. increase in the proportion of population living in urban areas is relatively low compared to other countries of this region. In recent years, rate of urban population growth as well as number of urban areas have increased substantially,” said Dr. Ramhari Aryal, population division chief of Ministry of Health and Population.

According to Nepal’s Population Report 2007, in the span of 40 years, Nepal’s urban population increased from 3.6 percent of the population to 14.2 percent of the population. This is an increment of 400 percent over a forty-year period. In 1952/54, the percent of urban population was 2.9 percent. In 1962, percent of urban population was 3.6 and annual growth rate of 4.53 compared to county’s annual growth rate of 2.07. In 1981, the urban growth rate was 7.55 percent compared to national growth of 2.66 percent with 6.4 percent population living in urban areas. The momentum picked up since the 1981 and continued to rise. In 1991, the 9.2 percent population lived in the urban areas with growth of 5.89 percent and 14.2 percent in 2001 with 5.89 percent growth.

In the past forty years, Nepal’s urban population increased from 3.6 percent of the population to 14.2 percent of the population. This is an increment of 400 percent over a forty-year period.

Published by Ministry of Health and Population, Nepal Population Report 2002 revealed that the rise of urban areas in Nepal take place through three reasons. First declaring an area as urban is a political decision made by the government. Therefore, just by declaring an area urban government can easily increase the proportion of

population living in the urban areas. Some urban areas still have so many rural characters. Secondly, old urban areas increase their geographic size by incorporating adjoining VDCs in their municipality. Thirdly, increase in the urban population is due to the natural increase plus the migration figures. Because of increased opportunity for employment in the urban sector, people from rural areas migrate to urban areas for employment.

### Economic Perspective

The expansion of urbanization in Terai region is much faster than in hill areas. This is due to better infra-structural development in the terai areas than in the hills. Population settlements in terai are dense thus population requirement of urban areas can readily be reached. And thirdly, because of higher level of economic activities, required income of the municipality can also be easily met.

“Urbanization has 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 percent compared to population growth of 2.25 percent. Conflict and internal disturbances have 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



Street scene: Urban mismanagement

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 areas,” said Junko Sasaki, country representative of UNFPA to Nepal. (See Spotlight July 20-26)

Experts argue that tales of urban success attract more people to cities than most urban economies can support. This leads to significant unemployment and underemployment in the cities, as well as in burgeoning informal sector where job security tends to be limited, health and safety precautions minimal, hazards high and incomes low.

“It is extremely difficult to link poverty alleviation in the process of urbanization in Nepal,” said Professor Dr. Bishwambher Pyakuryal. “Nepal’s current process of urbanization is not

a natural growth but it is due to internally displaced population and insecurity in rural parts of Nepal. There are so many externalities in the urbanization, Nepal's current pace of urbanization is just a migration caused by insecurity."

Despite all these problems, cities play a major role in national and global economics and politics. Large cities in particular can make a substantial contribution to the overall economic performance of a nation, providing centers of commerce, trade, industry and culture. Cities can act as the engines of national growth, adding value to rural produce, serving regional markets and attracting international investment. According to economists, cities will account for between 60 to 70 percent of gross domestic product.

The size of the cities determines the access to labor market, schools, colleges and universities. Proximity to other businesses also provides advantages and access to specialist products and services including lower interest rates on loan and strong network

For many it is not the actual growth of cities that is the problem: it is the sharp differences between the urban rich and urban poor, for whom conditions seem to get worse year on year. These inequalities present not only a moral crisis but the potential for economic disaster and civil unrest.

The increase in population in large cities in the country comes from both internal growth and from net inward migration from rural areas, smaller towns, other cities, and indeed other nations. High internal population growth may reflect both high national population increases and also the better health care and sanitation systems often found in cities.

According to Panos Briefing June 1999, large-scale inward migration to cities generally reflects economic imperatives and people's perceptions of economic opportunities. The

number and range of work opportunities is greater in cities, and incomes are higher. In addition, there are a number of push factors for rural-to-urban migration, including environmental problems in rural regions, from land degradation to nature disasters.

The World Bank Report Resilience Amidst Conflict, an assessment of Poverty in Nepal 1995-96 and 2003-04 writes the incidence of poverty declined dramatically

falling from 42 percent in 1995-96 to 31 percent in 2003-04. Progress occurred in both rural and urban areas, although it was much greater in urban areas.

"Urbanization moved worker from low-productivity jobs in rural areas to higher productivity activities in urban areas. Urban areas have significantly lower levels of poverty than rural areas (10 vs. 35 percent respectively in 2003-04). Urbanization was a powerful driver of poverty reduction: changes in the population shares across urban and rural areas and across regions accounted for about one-fifth of the overall reduction in the poverty headcount rate," writes the report. Urbanization was also important for changing social relations between advantaged and disadvantaged ethnic population groups, as discrimination is less in urban areas.



**Fruit-sellers:** Opportunities for marginalized people

Prepared under the support from the World Bank by Central Bureau of Statistic, Nepal Living Standard Survey 2003/04 stated that about 37 percent of the enumerated population aged 5 years and above are found to have migrated from another VDC or municipality or from outside the country. Most of the movement is from the rural areas (81 percent) as against from urban areas (6 percent) and from other countries (13 percent). The study showed that substantial proportion of population migrated hoping to have easier life style and looking for job.

Despite many debates, the migration to the cities has transformed the lives of people like Jasbir, Ram Bahadur and Srilal - people from three different rural ecological regions of Nepal contributing to overall reduction of poverty. ■



## “Madhes Is In Search Of A Strong Political Leadership”

-Hridayesh Tripathi

*Our experiences have shown that as long we cannot have common ground and common party, we cannot solve the problems of Madhes. Our aim is to set up strong regional political party for Madhes.*

*Former minister and dissident leader of Nepal Sadbhavana Party -Anandidevi HRIDAYESH TRIPATHI is now in the news following his efforts to unite members of parliament representing from terai. After the unification of his regional-based Nepal Sadbhavana Party, Tripathi and some of his colleagues have decided to remain passive in the party. Tripathi spoke to SPOTLIGHT on various issues related to terai and new emerging political trends. Excerpts:*

**As the disturbance in terai is yet to die, how do you see the possibility of holding the elections for Constituent Assembly on schedule?**

We don't have any option other than to hold the elections for the Constituent Assembly on November 22. That is the only way to find out political solution and clarity for the country. Since 1950, the demand of all the agitation has been to hold the elections for CA. It is unfortunate that the elections for CA could not be held because of political conspiracies. The present political complexity is directed to either postpone the elections or to indefinitely discontinue it. The election for CA is required to restructure the state and as a Madhesi, we want it. Some forces, which have been monopolizing the state power and who are now in the center of power, are not honest to hold the elections for CA and they want to postpone the elections in the name of terai disturbance.

**How do you hold the elections when armed groups are terrorizing the people in Madhes?**

Of course, Madhes is still in the agitation mood. From armed rebels to other parties who believe in peaceful agitation, all of them have been launching one or other kinds of program.

**Some political leaders are saying that the elections of CA will not be held because of agitation in terai. How do you look at it?**

Top leaders do not want to hold the elections for Constituent Assembly but they want to make Madhes as a scapegoat. Political parties are now trying to strengthen their earlier position and influence in terai. As long as their influence remains negligible in terai, they will not hold the elections.

**What were the experiences you learned from Madhes agitation?**

After February agitation, Madhes is now in a different stage. Madhesi's agitation gave some important messages. First Madhesis have shown that they will not tolerate discrimination and

oppression of the rulers and they want their right back. Second, Madhes wants justice, pride and self respect. Madhesis also gave message to the international community that there is a Madhes within Nepal. Madhesi people also gave the message for the leaders like us that Madhesi can launch any agitation without us. Madhesis also showed that they can go to any extent to establish their rights.

**You are reportedly working to form a regional based party. Tell us more.**

Madhes is in search of a strong political leadership. To fulfill the desire of Madhesi people, we are in consultations and discussion process among Madhesi political leaders of various political parties. In new federal structure, there requires a strong regional party. Our experiences have shown that as long we cannot have common ground and common party, we cannot solve the problems of Madhes. Our aim is to set up strong regional political party for Madhes. This will help to strengthen loktantrick system as well as help to raise the issue of Madhesis. Madhes wants sacrifice and martyrdom from the Madhesi leaders. Madhes has not seen such sacrifice. Although there are many divisions among Madhesis, Madhes now wants to see the unity among all these factions to strongly raise their cause. Madhesis have drawn the conclusion that they have not secured gains commensurate with the sacrifices they have made.

**Do you mean Madhesi leaders are incapable for this?**

Like the ruling class, the leaders of Madhes are also responsible for the present sorry state in Madhes as most of them have shown opportunistic behavior whenever they were offered the official positions.

**What is the difference between your proposed regional party and the political fronts including Nepal Sadbhavana Party, Madhesi Janadhikar Forum and armed rebel parties?**

At a time when Madhesis' aspiration is to see unity among all the parties working in Madhes, our aim is to bring all of them in a single front to contest in the forthcoming elections of Constituent Assembly. This is the aspiration of Madhesis. So far as Nepal Sadbhavana Party and Madhesi Janadhikar Forum are concerned, they have their own limitations. Similarly, the armed rebellion groups like Jawala Singh and Goit have their own limitation as they can not sustain these kinds of rebellion for a long time.

**Don't you think the possibility of expansion of Nepal Sadbhavana Party to include all the voices?**

There are many handicaps for a party like Madhesi Janadhikar Forum and Nepal Sadbhavana Party. We were unable to encourage participation of Dalits, Tharu and Muslims in Madhes agitation. Our aim is to bring all of them in a broader front.

**Some of the members of eight political parties including CPN-Maoist and others charged that Madhes agitation was not indigenous but instigated by the Hindu fundamentalists and other forces from India. How do you look at it?**

There is a general tendency among hill based politicians to blame India whenever people launch their agitation to demand their rights. It was true all the time. I don't see any hand from across the border in India. It was the people of terai who launched their agitation sacrificing more than 40 lives demanding their right and self respect. By making these kinds of irresponsible remarks, leaders of main stream parties have minimized the sacrifice of people of terai.

**You mean there is no role of regressive elements and fundamentalist Hindus from across the border as accused by other parties?**

Of course, few people might have penetrated but the last agitation of Madhes was launched by Madhesi people and it was purely based on the aspiration of the people.

**How did agitation in Madhes flare up?**

The background of Madhes agitation begun following the signing of the document of Interim Constitution by leaders of eight political parties on 16 December 2006. On behalf of our party, we signed three-points note of dissent on it. Our party had called Madhes Bandha on 25 December which was a grand success. After proclamation of Interim Constitution on January 15, 2007, Madhesi felt betrayed by eight political parties resulting in the massive agitation against the constitution.

**Since interim constitution was amended twice to accommodate the demands raised by Madhes, why the agitation continues?**

Although the interim constitution was amended twice within the few months of its promulgation, it is yet to address the genuine issues of Madhes. The interim constitution accepted to have federal state of inclusive nature but it is yet to show that in practice. The situation has not changed much even after second amendment. The state is yet to address genuine demands of Madhes. I give you a recent example of discrimination. When 204 police inspectors were recruited in Armed Police Force, no single person from Madhes got appointed. Is that not

discrimination? The situation is similar in civil service, army and policy where participation of Madhesi is very nominal.

**How do you see the secessionist demands coming from Terai?**

I don't think the demand of separate state is coming from their heart. It is just a result of frustration. The eight parties which are in power do not want to solve the problems of Madhes. If political leadership were genuinely concerned about the problems, they would have invited two factions of Jantantrik Terai Mukti Morcha. Madhesi want to live in Nepal as equal citizens with self respect and pride. What Madhesi want is self respect and equal rights and self rule.

**Do you see the possibility to have peaceful negotiations?**

If the government shows sincerity, these groups will come to negotiation table. When seven party alliance and Maoists agreed to bring the peace in the country through negotiations, we also can find solution by bringing the armed groups in the table. If eight parties fulfill genuine demands of Madhesi people, the issues like separate and independent Madhes will get diluted.

**How can you hold the negotiations with Terai Jantantrik Mukti Morcha (Jwala Singh) and Goit who have already demanded independent terai?**

It is a result of sheer frustration since the government of eight parties did not respond to their demands for federalism. I don't think people of Madhes support such secessionist demands as they want to live in unified Nepal as Nepali citizens. In every negotiation, rebel groups raise high demands even up to the extent of secession. If government shows sincerity, they will give that up.

**As Nepal's large areas in terai were submerged in water last week, how did you respond?**

The situation in terai is terribly bad and large numbers of people have lost their lives and properties. The government's response was very poor as people are yet to get minimum relief.

**As it is accused by many members of parliament that embankment and dam built on the Indian side of border is responsible for the present state of flood in Nepal? How do you look at it?**

You cannot solve water inundation problems just by blaming India. Haphazard construction of roads and other infrastructures in Nepal are also responsible for that. As India and Nepal have natural borders, it can be solved through the meaningful dialogue between the two countries. We need India's support to solve the problems in Terai. ■



*There is a general tendency among hill based politicians to blame India whenever people launch their agitation to demand their rights.*



## POLITICS

# Crisis of Realignment

As Nepal enters into a new political phase, a new alignment is in the making

By KESHAB POUDEL

CPN-Maoist leader Prachanda announced that there is a need to declare Nepal as republic before the elections for Constituent Assembly and demanded completely proportional representation-based election system in coming elections.

When CPN-Maoist signed peace agreement and interim constitution, the party leaders agreed to decide the fate of monarchy through the elected CA and gave their stamp of approval on the mixed pattern for the elections for CA. What prompted them to change their mind?

CPN-UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal sees the new demands of Maoist as a betrayal that could foil the elections for constituent assembly. "The Maoists do not have faith in the people and they are misleading the people," said Nepal. Nepali Congress leader Ram Chandra Poudel, too, objected the Maoist move saying it is irresponsible.

In the meantime, Madhesi Janadhikar Forum, a regional based party, has suddenly forwarded its demand for the dissolution of interim legislature and formation of an interim government with broader participation of all dissenting groups.

If these political events are any indication, it shows that a process of political realignment is in the making. Although 85-years-old prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala wanted to see eight party alliance continue for another eight more years, it seems that the new alignment is inevitable to emerge in this context when external power is much concerned about the implications of present alliance.

In a country where diehard Gandhian leader Matrika Prasad Koirala led the violent movement to overthrow Rana regime and his brother G.P. Koirala is

leading alliance of extreme communists – which do not have any faith in liberal democratic norms - every kind of alignment is possible. So, one cannot



Maoist leaders at the plenum: Sudden shifting of stance *Gorkhapatra*

deny the possibility of MJF becoming a member of new alliance.

For prime minister Koirala and CPN-UML general secretary Nepal, they would not have any hitch to join alliance with MJF as they have already shared power with CPN-Maoist – which had killed hundreds of their grass root workers.

"Till Maoist upsurge all major instabilities occurred on the cover of political ideology, even though it had no root and acceptability in the masses. Now new kind of cover is being used which is anti-dote and, therefore, deterred to ideological appeal," said a political analyst. Now an upsurge has been initiated under the cover of regional and the ethnic issues to fragmentation of Nepal into several pieces. However, the same kinds of people are being used under different appearances and alliances.

Whatever the nature of alliance, everything can be workable in Nepal. The question is now for whom the political realignment is required and for what interest these alliances serve. Even for King Gyanendra, who dismissed elected prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba terming him – "inefficient" – Deuba later became efficient whom he re-appointed as prime minister.

"It is normal phenomenon for the foreign policy of any society to be strongly affected by domestic political and economic factors, and this is certainly the case in Nepal. But the reverse principle- namely that international factors have strong and often decisive impact on Kathmandu

domestic politics – is even more apparent. This is a painful fact of life of many Nepalis and that some of the world prefers to ignore," writes Leo. E. Rose and John T. Scholz in the book *Nepal: A Profile of a Himalayan Kingdom*.

What Leo E. Rose had depicted as the peculiarity of Nepalese politics can clearly be perceived even at the present situation. "People usually are perplexed to see unnatural alliances being formed by politicians who themselves don't have much idea about the emerging trends in politics. That helplessness has remedies elsewhere. It is, therefore, whenever that kind of things have to be resolved either, they go to Delhi to resolve their differences or emissaries from there come to Nepal to meddle in its internal rifts. Sometime back leading persons of the parties had reached Delhi for their 'medical checkup' and came back with

political rejuvenation," said the political analyst.

Similarly, a few days back some leading personalities of ruling United People Alliance and opposition party from India like Sitaram Yachuri and Yeshwant Sinha came to Nepal and had hectic meetings with heterogeneous political groups of Nepal who don't trust each other but remained subservient to Indian pontification.

"As a landlocked country with giant neighbors, Nepal cannot shield itself from outside influences. Its rulers, and the factions competing have always been ready to look beyond Nepal's border for support. India's Mantra of non-intervention has not entirely concealed significant behind-the-scenes maneuvering not just facilitating the accord between the Maoists and the political parties but in almost every subsequent step," writes Rhoderick Chalmers in his article Toward New Nepal published in Current Affairs.

It is always regional powers that make and break internal political alliance as political leaders and ministers have very little to say. "In Nepali politics, China and India count much than any country, even uni-polar player USA. A vocal and overactive former US ambassador to Nepal James F. Moriarty saw decline of democracy during the King's active rule and was helpless spectator when Maoists were one of the major force to reach to absolute power without any effective checks and balances," said the analyst.

Nepal is in a serious crisis of turning point in its history. Nepal is going through a very painful process of realignment which has been covered by series of actions and reactions of a mysterious nature including the sudden shift of tone by Maoist leaders. The Maoist party's ideological closeness towards north seems to have provoked south to form another alignment of non-ideological nature.

"Given its track record, however, it is reasonable to assume that Kathmandu will continue to function as an independent minded, friendly nationalist polity that exploits any and all opportunities to devise policies that advance its perception of Nepal's interest," write professor Rose and Scholz. ■

## BOOK

# On People's War

Historian Dr. Surendra KC's new book records all the documents related to Maoist People's War

By A CORRESPONDENT

After the signing of the peace agreement between the government and Maoists, many books have already come out in the market about the subject.

At a time when everyone is writing about the success story of Maoists and the contribution made by the Maoist leaders in the course of 12 years long people's war, historian Dr. Surendra KC has come out with a book compiling all the documents formed during the last twelve years period of People's War.

As a historian with the PhD in the communist history of Nepal, Dr. Surendra KC has extensive knowledge on the communist parties, their formation and their contribution in Nepalese politics. This book also reveals history of CPN-Maoists and its decision to wage the People's War in 1996.

KC's book, among others, highlights the role of CPN-Maoist present leadership to successfully launch the People's War. Dr. KC also deals with the various factions of communists and their regular cases of split. There is a brief history of formation of Communist Party of Nepal till the launching of present Maoist Party. According to Dr. KC, CPN-Maoist is the first communist party in Nepal which launched the armed revolt against the state.

Although CPN-ML also waged the people's war back in 1972 as a Naxalite movement, it did not last for long. The Maoists launched People's War which came to an end after running for more than a decade devastating properties and lives.

Despite many flaws and factual errors in the book, Dr. KC's book deals with all the aspects of CPN-Maoist including the series of negotiations held under the different government. One of the very useful parts of the book is that it consists of all the documents and information about the Maoist movement in Nepal.

The book is divided into five chapters. The first chapter discusses the historical background of the communist movement in Nepal. From the establishment of Communist Party of Nepal to People's War, KC discusses all matters. It also includes the factional struggle in the communist history of Nepal.

Second chapter consists of reports of various political parties regarding the Maoists movement of Nepal. From Nepali Congress to CPN-UML and other parties, all have set up committees to study the nature of Maoists. Dr. KC tries to explain the report presented by them to their leadership.

Third chapter consists of ceasefire, peace negotiations and current situation. Dr. KC

intensively discusses the entire process of ceasefire and peace negotiations held between the Maoists and various governments in the past. The author also discussed the strategy and tactics used by Maoists to extract advantage through the talks.

It has also separate chapter where one can find all the documents and proceedings of negotiations taking place in different times and different places. From first negotiation with Sher Bahadur Deuba's government in 2001 to last 12-points agreement conducted in New Delhi, author Dr. KC records all the documents.



**People's War in Nepal: Different Commissions and Dialogue**

**By: Dr. Surendra K.C.**

**Price: Rs 450**

**Pages: 546**

**Published by: Makalu**

**Publishing House P. Box 3880**

**Dillibazar, Kathmandu**

**Phone: 4220206 and 4435148**

There are also reports of all the commissions including Mainali Commission, Dhimi Commission, Deuba Commission, Khanal Commission and Lohani Commission on the issue.

This is a good book where one can find all the events and documents related to the Maoist movement in Nepal. Dr. KC, deserves thanks for producing this book which will be useful to all of those who want to understand the Maoist history in Nepal. ■



## TRC BILL

# Concerns for Credibility

As the government prepares to set up toothless Truth and Reconciliation Commission, OHCHR-Nepal expresses grave concerns

By A CORRESPONDENT

**T**he OHCHR-Nepal office has expressed its worries with regard to the provisions of the draft Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) bill.

“OHCHR-Nepal is deeply concerned about provisions which would amnesty the perpetrators of gross human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law (IHL), including extrajudicial execution, torture and disappearances. Amnesty provisions which prevent prosecution for these offences are inconsistent with Nepal’s obligations under international law,” its statement says. Three days ago, the United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, reaffirmed the UN’s policy of not endorsing or condoning amnesties for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes or gross violations of human rights, nor undertaking or encouraging activities that might foster them, it said.

“Among the other main concerns regarding the bill is the lack of safeguards regarding the independence, impartiality and diversity of the Commission, both in relation to the selection of commissioners and in relation to operational and financial matters. According to the bill, the commissioners will be selected by a government-appointed body that

may consist of political actors, rather than a diverse group that is representative of society. At the same time, there are no provisions to ensure diversity based on ethnicity, gender, caste, geographic region and religion.”

The OHCHR-Nepal handed its comments on the first draft of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Bill. The bill proposes the creation of a TRC with a mandate to investigate the facts surrounding the commission of gross violations of human rights and crimes against humanity committed during the course of the armed conflict between 13 February 1996 and 21 November 2006. The Commission, which will consist of up to seven commissioners, will have two years, with a possibility of a 12-month extension, to complete its work. It will then provide the Government with a report of its findings, and recommendations as to reconciliation, prosecutions, amnesty and reparations.

The UN rights body has pointed out that the creation of a TRC is a very important initiative that can assist a nation in building a culture of peace and reconciliation based on truth, justice and reparation. It should provide an opportunity for the people of Nepal to address the past so as to identify the root causes of the armed conflict. It is also an opportunity for

meaningful justice for the thousands of victims of the violence, and their families by bringing to account the perpetrators of serious human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law.

The OHCHR-Nepal recalls that when in January, Louise Arbour, the High Commissioner for Human Rights visited Nepal, she had stressed the need to ensure the integrity of any truth commission emerging in Nepal. She had stated that “It is essential not to rush the process but rather to ensure that broad constituencies, including victims’ groups and human rights NGOs at all levels, are thoroughly consulted and participate in shaping the design and focus of a future truth-telling process.” At the same time, the political conditions for a TRC must be such that victims, families and witnesses can testify without fear of retribution. Given the continued violence in the country, serious thought must be given as to whether the time is right for such a process.

While the OHCHR-Nepal has expressed its appreciation at being given the opportunity to provide comments at an early stage of the TRC process, it has urged the Ministry of Peace to take into account the concerns raised by Nepalese civil society and others about the TRC bill. “In making its own comments public at this stage, OHCHR-Nepal wishes to contribute constructively to discussions on the nature and timing of a truth and reconciliation commission, and thereby contribute to the creation of a timely, credible, impartial independent commission which will address the victims’ rights to truth, justice and reparation” said Sandra Beidas, Acting Representative. ■

## HIGH HIV INFECTION RATE IN SEX-TRAFFICKED GIRLS

Researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH), USA, have come up with a shocking report that says Nepali girls sex-trafficked to India and then repatriated have high HIV infection rate.

The HSPH researchers found that among the 287 girls and women documented in the research, 38 percent tested positive for HIV. Among those with complete documentation of trafficking experiences (225 girls and women), the median age at time of trafficking was 17 years, with 33 girls (14.7 percent) trafficked prior to age 15 years.

Compared to those trafficked at 18 years or older, girls trafficked prior to age 15 years had an increased risk for HIV, with 60.6 percent infected among this youngest age group, the research paper published Wednesday (August 1)

said. "HIV infection has been seen as perhaps the most critical health consequence of sex trafficking, but sex-trafficked girls and women are rarely studied — leaving the prevalence of HIV and other health issues among this highly vulnerable population little understood," research team Jay Silverman, Associate Professor of Society, Human Development, and Health at HSPH, said.

"This study sheds new light on infection rates among a sex-trafficked population and exposes both the tragic existence of the youngest victims and the dire health consequences of this crime," added he.

The research indicates the infection rate exceeded 60 percent among girls forced into prostitution prior to age 15 years. One in seven of the study's participants had been trafficked into sexual servitude prior to this young age.

"The high rates of HIV we have documented support concerns that sex trafficking may be a significant factor in both maintaining the HIV epidemic in India and in the expansion of this epidemic to its lower-prevalence neighbors," Silverman further said.

The team reviewed the medical documentation and case records of 287 girls and women who had been sex-trafficked from Nepal to India between the years 1997 and 2005. All of them had been repatriated back to Nepal and had received rehabilitative services from Maiti Nepal, a non-governmental organization that works to assist trafficking victims, the report said.

According to the US Department of State, which partly funded the HSPH research, approximately 600,000 to 800,000 people are trafficked across the globe every year, and 80 percent of these individuals are estimated to be women and girls. The State Department further reports that the majority of transnational victims are females trafficked into commercial sexual exploitation. ■

## TOURIST ARRIVAL INCREASES

The number of tourists arriving, by air, in July grew by 25 percent compared with the same month last year. A total of 26078 tourists came to the country in July, according to the data released by Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA), Office.

The European market as a whole has shown a healthy growth of 45 percent with encouraging figures from major tourist generating individual countries, says a statement released by Nepal Tourism Board (NTB). The UK market with the largest share of the total European arrivals has increased by 30.8 percent. Germany (33.4%), France (65.7%), Spain (65.8%), Netherlands (21.6%) and Belgium (75.1%) also registered very healthy growth this month compared to the corresponding month of last year.

The arrivals from the Australian and American markets are also very encouraging with 53.9 % and 82.9 % growth respectively. Arrivals from Austria and Norway are down by 34.2% and 21.2 percent respectively. Some regional and emerging markets like Korea, China, Taiwan, Singapore and Thailand are pro-actively depicting an upward growth trend instilling a sense of hope. Korean and Chinese markets grew by staggering 180.4% and 90% establishing their prominence with 4% and 3.8% respectively in total arrivals.

"It is very noteworthy that Korea and China are in the same range contributing more than 3 percent in the total arrivals till July. Only UK, USA, France, Germany, Japan, Korea and China are such countries, excluding

India in the count," says NTB.

The arrival figures from some neighboring countries have not gained the momentum and hence not encouraging as yet. Indian, Pakistani and Sri Lankan arrivals are down by 4.4%, 7.6% and 8.8% respectively. The Bangladesh market nevertheless grew by 94.8%. The total arrivals till July increased by 35.6 % with total 193211 numbers of tourists till the month of July.

"The situation manifests that not a single country records negative growth in its total arrivals till July. Which means, the prospect and the trend of tourist arriving is on the rise for the days to come. NTB presumes we all should collectively engross more for fetching more number of tourists capitalizing the peace and stability in line with the promotional efforts of all," the statement adds. ■



## YOUNG SMOKERS

# Carelessness Or Callousness

Number of teen population particularly girls with smoking habits is rising alarmingly

By NIRAKAR POUDEL

One can encounter a number of young boys and girls smoking cigarettes in the restaurants in urban areas. Most of these students are studying in +2 schools of the valley.

Although smoking is not a new thin in the urban areas, the fact that this habit is ensnaring the teen-aged students has become a cause for concern. One can see young girls and boys taking to cigarette smoking. Although most of these young ones are occasional smokers, it seems that if these teenage girls and boys continue to smoke for a prolonged period, they could turn out to be lifelong addicts.

Not only in urban areas, there is a large number of smokers in rural areas also. But, the number of teenage smokers is escalating rapidly in urban areas.

Nowadays, the sight of teenagers smoking openly in pubs, cafes, pool houses and other public places has become commonplace. The teenage smokers come from all kinds of social background. Most of the street children and child labors like helpers in vehicles, workers in factories and porters have also been hooked up with this habit. These street children lack proper education and guidance from guardians. Other teenagers are from well off families. They also have access to education as well as parents who guide them. Despite this, they have become addicted to smoking. There are many factors behind escalating rate of smoking among teenagers.

Says Abhisek Rai (name changed), an 18-year-old smoker, "I started smoking when I was in grade 7. I had many friends in the hostel who smoked. They used to urge me to smoke as well. Ultimately, I gave it a try after initial resistance. Gradually, I got addicted subconsciously." These days Abhisek smokes 4-8 cigarettes a day.

It is evident from the experience of

Abhisek that peer pressure is one of the most significant factors behind teenage smoking. Teen age is the most vulnerable period of a person's life. Teenagers usually spend most of their time with their group in the school as well as outside. Their peer group also plays a major role in molding their behaviors.

If an adolescent has a peer group where there are smokers, it is probable that he/she will also learn this habit. Usually, adolescents cannot resist pressure from their group. Some teenagers have also started smoking because of curiosity. There are teenagers who think smoking as expression of their freedom and defiance of their parent's control. Some are also influenced by celebrities smoking in movies. These excuses are ridiculous when the adverse impacts of smoking on health are considered.

According to the study of World Health Organization, Nepal accounts for one of the largest number of female smokers in the world.

Smoking accounts for half a million premature deaths the world over. It is one of the most preventable risk factor for Coronary Heart Disease (CHD). Smoking also accelerates the atherosclerotic process in adolescents thereby making them more susceptible to CHD in their adulthood. In women the incidence of heart attack and death is higher compared to men smokers.

The risk of lung cancer is high in smokers than in non smokers. In our country, many women smoke during their pregnancy. Smoking during pregnancy is a major factor contributing to still birth. It is also fatal for pregnant women. Other short term impacts of smoking include loss of taste, nausea, and increase in blood pressure.

These impacts of smoking are also

included in health curriculum in school. Therefore, school students who smoke must be aware of these impacts. According to statistics, 20% of health workers are active smokers. Therefore, education is not only enough to prevent smoking. In schools, strict punitive actions like suspension and expulsion are taken against students who are caught smoking. However, such actions have not prevented many expelled students from smoking. Nor have they deterred smoking among other students. The main reason for smoking is negligence.

Parents need to play a major role in preventing their children from being caught up in fatal habits like smoking during their adolescent. They need to be aware of the peer groups and activities



Cigarettes: Brands galore

their children are involved in.

According to sociologists, parent-child relationship is not transparent in Nepal. Many children conceal their habits from their parents. Parents also don't keep track of their children's behavior. On the other hand, once they find that their children are involved in bad habits, they use force to reform their children. There are also parents who think that disclosing their children's bad habits to society will damage their reputation in society.

They argue that parents should be very open with their children encouraging discussions. Parents should properly counsel their children and take them to proper rehabilitation center once they find that their children are smokers, they say.

It seems that number of adolescent smokers will grow in future as there is no effective anti-smoking campaign. The government and civil society must take immediate action to address the problem of adolescent smoking. ■

# China, Nepal mark 52 years of diplomatic ties-

By Dr. Upendra Gautam

China and Nepal have enjoyed close ties for more than 2,000 years. The shared mountains and rivers are manifestations of the perennial natural links between the two ancient countries. The intimate bilateral cultural and spiritual links have continuously been nurtured and promoted by Buddhism, which itself was expounded by Shakyamuni Gautama Buddha (about 563-483 BC), who was born in Lumbini, a township in the Rupendehi district of modern day Nepal.

Master Buddhahadra (AD 359-429), Princess Bhrikuti (AD 617-649) and Architect Arniko (1245-1306) from Nepal; and Wenshu (Manjushri), Master Monks Fa Xian (AD 360-430) and Xuan Zang (AD 602-664), and Tibetan King Srontsan Gampo (AD 617-649) from China all have contributed to the dissemination of Buddhism in China.

Nepali people, for example, the Kirats and the Newars from the Arun and Kathmandu Valleys, together with the Lamas and Sherpas from the high mountain environs, have been conducting social and trade interactions with Tibet for centuries via the world's highest mountain passes located along the more than 1,400-km-long China-Nepal border.

Notwithstanding their ancient ties, the two countries took some years to duly modernize their state-to-state relationship. And while planning and conducting their international affairs independently, both faced foreign interference.

On August 1, 1955, the two signed an agreement establishing diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level. Probably reflecting on the situation at that time, on Sept. 30, 1950, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai said in his report: "China shall never tolerate any foreign invasion nor shall it watch it taking place in any neighboring country with folded arms."

On October 2, 1961, Chinese Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister Chen Yi during a visit to Kathmandu echoed Zhou when he said: "China will not tolerate any aggression against Nepal by any country."

Forty-six years later, Zheng Xianglin, the new Chinese ambassador to Nepal, specifically reconfirmed the intergenerational continuity in China's anti-foreign invasion and interference policy towards Nepal in his exclusive interview with a national weekly (Nepal, June 17, 2007). What serious observers discerned from Zheng's interview was that there was an expansionist geopolitical nexus between the activities of splitist Tibetan forces, use of Nepali

territory and China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It was in this context that Zheng asserted China's long-standing Nepal policy.

In the competitive 21st century world environment, foreign invasion and interference has acquired a political-commercial-information interface with the intricacy of smart and soft industrial diplomacy. The key operational objective of a foreign invasion and interference is first to dislocate the national institutions and its unifying indigenous forces and then thoroughly destabilize the political processes to control or impair the target country's national decision-making capability. In the invasion and interference process, the secondary power at the regional level lacking self-confidence in conducting an independent, transparent foreign and defense policy has always been prone to goad the powers pursuing smart and soft industrial diplomacy.

As a consequence, Nepal needs China's proactive cooperation for putting the modern instruments in place to effectively combat foreign invasion and interference. With the passing of time and lessons learned, it is commendable that leaderships in both countries have increasingly started to realize that Sino-Nepali ties require a more creative and innovative futuristic approach than a mere qualitative exposition of historical and geographic ties.

Perhaps fully aware of the imbalance in the existing overall bilateral relation and its 21st century requirements, then Chinese President Jiang Zemin enunciated a good neighborly partnership (GNP) framework for bilateral ties when he visited Nepal in December 1996. It is significant that Jiang's enunciation of the GNP framework was made at a time China was planning a West China Development Strategy (WCDS) covering 12 territorial units of the country including the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and Sichuan Province.

The WCDS's positive geopolitical and socio-economic impacts on the greater Trans-Himalayan region including Nepal, to say the least, were far-reaching.

On July 1, 2006 - the day the Chinese national railway was successfully extended to Lhasa, the Tibetan capital and roof of the world - the Trans-Himalayan region felt such an impact. Under the WCDS the Chinese government in 2006 alone invested

\$20.4 billion in key transport, communication and energy projects.

Describing the importance of the TAR in the context of the total scheme of national development in general and the WCDS in particular, President Hu Jintao, who was then vice-president, on July 19, 2001, said: "Tibet is in the southwestern frontier of the motherland, with a vast stretch of land and a most important strategic position. The development, stability and security of Tibet have a direct bearing on the fundamental interests of people of all ethnic groups in Tibet as well as ethnic solidarity, national unity and state security. It is the common aspiration and mission of people of all ethnic groups in China, the Tibetan people included, to build on the prosperity and progress and maintain stability and solidarity in Tibet."

As a matter of fact the WCDS's forward linkages with Nepal suitably constitute the foundation for China-Nepal socioeconomic ties in the 21st century. It was against the backdrop of such foundation work, Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji and Nepali Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala signed six cooperative agreements, which included the second road link between the two countries when the former visited Nepal in May 2001.

But the condemnable massacre of the entire family of Nepal's King Birendra in June 2001 and the intensification of foreign interference in Nepal's internal affairs demonstrated the critical need of a reassertion of China's anti-foreign invasion and interference policy that unflinchingly and resolutely supports Nepal's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

It is noteworthy that Nepali Prime Minister Koirala even at the personal level feels honestly committed to a one-China policy. During his upcoming visit to China, leaderships in both countries look set to steer Sino-Nepali relation toward new heights. Their bilateral effort is understood to have received unprecedented support through China's multilateral role in Nepal's peace process under UN Security Council Resolution of 1740 (January 23, 2007) whereby the UN reaffirms Nepal's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence.

Predictably Sino-Nepali relation in the 21st century will be trailblazing like the 2008 Olympic Torch relay that will not only enlighten the global village on its way but also rejuvenate civilizations on either side of the great Himalayas.

(The author, Dr. Gautam, is the general secretary of the China Study Center, Nepal and this article recently published in Shanghai Daily)



# Local Good Governance For Effective Service Delivery

-By Krishna Man Pradhan



The people's movement of April, 2006 became successful because, among other reasons, the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990 and various laws failed to fulfill the public aspirations to enjoy services and benefits from the state in a quick, efficient, and economical manner and from close proximity. In the language of good governance, such service delivery needs to be transparent, sustainable, participatory and cost effective. Whether central or federal system, most of the citizens are raising their voices in favor of institutionalizing good governance at local level whereby they can make their own decisions.

The People's Movement of 2006 had raised demands like ensuring good governance through restructuring of the state and allowing people to determine the system of service delivery they want. With the success of the movement, Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007 has been promulgated. Although the new constitution has been promulgated, the state affairs are being conducted with many old laws and the people are now even preparing to launch third people's movement. Due to the lack of coordination among the interim constitution and existing laws, even though the state is spending double amount to try to deliver service to the people, the latter are forced to bear huge cost to obtain such service.

According to the Article 139 of the Interim Constitution, "arrangements will be made to set up local self governance bodies to ensure the people's exercise of their sovereignty by creating congenial atmosphere and thereby ensuring maximum peoples' participation in the country's governance, and also by providing services to the people at the local level and for the institutional development of democracy, based on the principle of decentralization and devolution of power." This article denotes that people should be able to exercise their sovereignty from the local level itself.

On the other hand, there is the Local Self Governance Act (LSGA, 1999), which aims to make local bodies effective, efficient and powerful, and capable of mobilizing resources for launching development efforts. But this LSGA has not been effectively implemented.

At present, there are two kinds of local level agencies – the branches of state organization such as district administration office, forest office, land revenue office, agriculture and livestock office etc as well as local bodies such as Village Development Committee (VDC), municipalities, and District Development Committee (DDC).

Owing to the political instability, the

fresh elections for the local bodies have not been conducted. On the other hand, government employees who are currently operating the local bodies are not working in a secure environment in Terai region. In this situation, it does not look easy to deliver service to the people.

Although there is an understanding to carry out development activities with the consent of eight parties, the same has not happened in all the places. In terms of service delivery, while central government and local bodies are the deliverers, the common public, private sector and civil society are the recipients.

The analysis of the legal and practical issues related with the local self governance and effective service delivery throws up a number of strengths and weaknesses of the current system.

## Strengths & Weaknesses

The strong points of the current system include the clear demarcation of area of operation, functions, duties and authorities of VDCs, municipalities and DDCs by the LSGA and its rules. It has also separated the works for the central and local bodies.

The existing laws have clearly laid down principles of fiscal decentralization and identified ways for resource distribution. In an encouraging sign, donor partners have also started cooperating with the local bodies like DDCs in the spirit of decentralization.

Another positive aspect is the formulation of devolution policy by the government whereby it has started testing devolution in agriculture, health, education and communication sector since last four years.

The grants to the local bodies have been increased and public participation enhanced. Even though there is an absence of elected leadership in the local bodies at present, the eight parties have been operating/monitoring programs in mutual consent.

In the area of planning and implementation, the local bodies have started to plan their programs on their own. By allowing them to identify relevant plans and implement them, the sense of ownership and responsibility has shot up among the local bodies. For instance, in all the 75 districts, the DDCs formulated district transport master-plan and in 52 districts, they even started preparing periodic plans. To increase transparency/accountability the system of public hearing has been introduced. The local bodies have developed ties and coordination with local civil society organizations. The concepts like inclusive democracy have also been promoted.

The weaker points, however, are no less. Since last five years the local bodies are

running without elected leadership. The devolution is limited in four sectors and the processes like plan formulation, program monitoring and evaluation are very weak.

In the absence of election, local bodies have become accountable not to the public but to the concerned ministries. In many districts, one VDC secretary is operating more than one VDC due to inability to fill vacancies. Likewise, in many areas, VDC secretaries continue to operate out of district headquarters.

The provision of citizen charter has lost its meaning as the local bodies do not always abide by their promises made in the charter. Public hearing and public accountability have been limited to formalities. Local bodies have not made enough efforts to cooperate and coordinate with local civil society organizations, community groups and private sector. They have weak relation with political parties and the people.

The local bodies have also failed to carry out development efforts that are in the interest of marginalized communities including women, Janajati, Dalit, children, disabled etc. In municipalities, the non-productive expenditures are very high due to over-staffing and high administrative spending.

## Conclusion

In the current situation, there must be some sort of interim management to ensure effective service delivery and local good governance. The constitution to be written by Constituent Assembly will determine the final shape and structure of the state. Till then, state needs to satisfy the demands and issues of the people by way of effective local good governance. As such, in order to ensure accountability, transparency and public confidence, the government must nominate leaders of eight parties and opposition at the VDCs, municipalities and DDCs. Likewise, the security for VDC secretaries must be ensured. Good governance should be translated from theory into practice. Likewise, the public, civil society, political parties and intellectuals should also work to promote the culture of receiving service in lawful manner by fulfilling legal provisions. If all of us carry out our duties, the concerned authority will be compelled to become accountable.

(Pradhan is president of Rural Development Foundation)

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