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The National Newsmagazine

SPOTLIGHT

Oct. 12-Nov 02, 2007

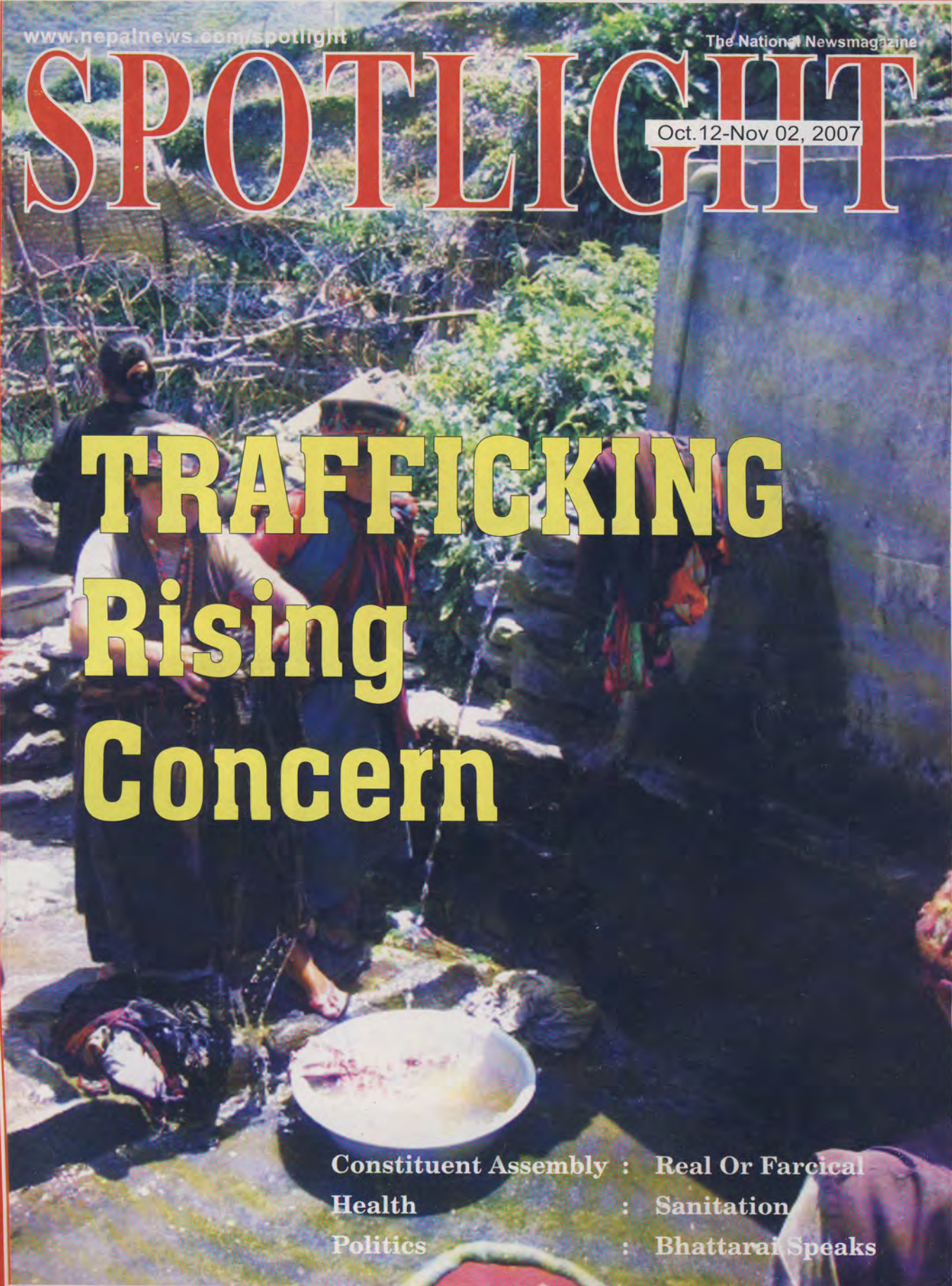
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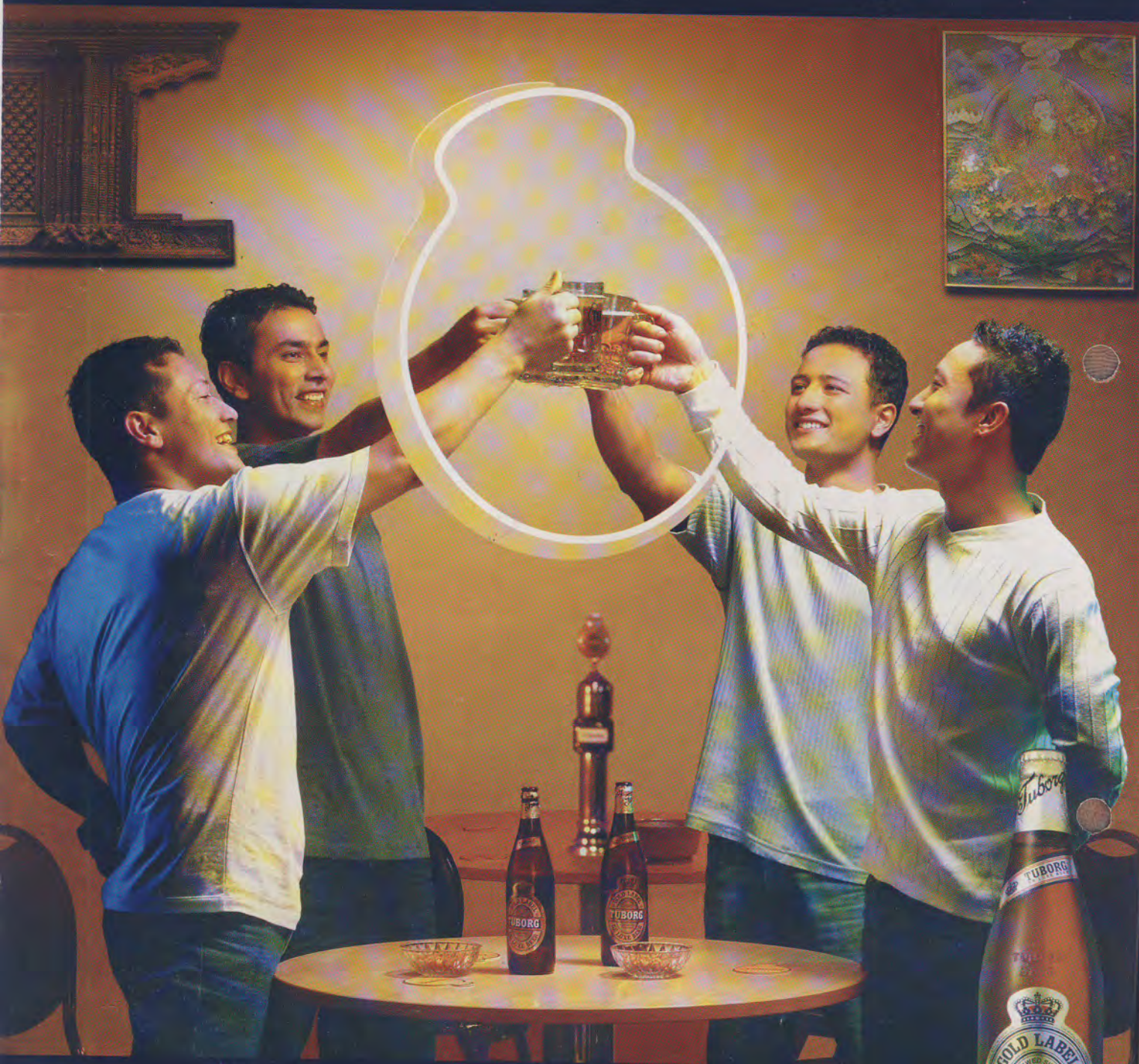
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SPOTLIGHT

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Chief Editor And Publisher
 Madhav Kumar Rimal

Editor
 Sarita Rimal

Managing Editor
 Keshab Poudel

Senior Reporter
 Sanjaya Dhakal

Design and Layout
 Hari Krishna Bastakoti
 Jyoti Dangol (Singh)

Photographer
 Sandesh Manandhar

Legal Advisor
 Advocate Lok Bhakta Rana

Marketing
 Navin Kumar Maharjan
 Madan Raj Poudel

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

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 P.O. Box : 1655, Jwagal, Kupondole,
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 Tel : 5551251, 5529530
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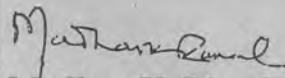
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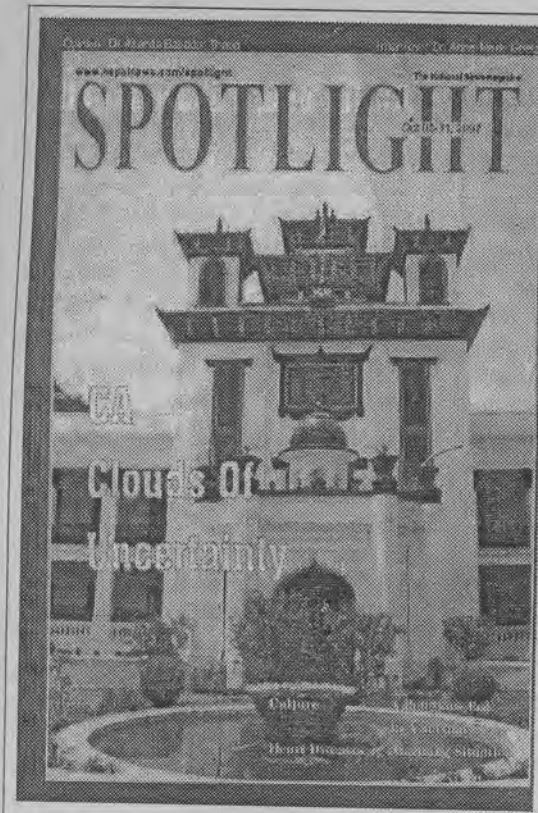
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Our predictions and apprehensions both have come true. The seven party government have postponed the elections *sine die*. We had, time and again, warned our millions of poor countrymen about the real intentions of the politicians in power. Are our poor countrymen still not convinced that the seven party government is neither patriotic, nor moral nor democratic? Their first and foremost duty after the annulment of the polls would have been to resign. Men of integrity quit their posts on much smaller issues after failing their responsibility. But the seven party government are not only sticking to their posts but making their impious plans to lead the poor people astray. What has surprised us most is that their mentor too has failed to teach them the correct democratic behavior despite the fact that he comes from the biggest democracy in the world. Prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala in his six decades long political career has again missed the opportunity to prove that greatness has not been thrust upon him. At the fag end of his long political innings, which has neither been illustrious nor clean, he could have salvaged his soiled image to some extent, had he been able to shed his fondness for power and pelf and resigned. Unfortunately that was not to be. He won't quit unless he is made to. The most recent political development in the country is a clear indication to the people that it has become imperative for them to rise against the imbecile government that has wasted eighteen months of the precious time and billions of the invaluable resources of one of the poorest countries. As long elections to the Constituent Assembly are not held the politicians should take holiday and let a neutral government take the reins of authority. At least, for a change the seven parties involved in the misrule and mismanagement of the country should resort to some kind of self-introspection and honestly start working to save the country from going to total destruction. Our unfortunate country has reached a stage where the absolute unity of all people only can defend its integrity. It is no time to nurse personal or partisan interests. It is no time to propagate for ethnic or regional interests. It is the time when all Nepalis, irrespective of who they are or where they come from, have to unite to save the country from the clutches of the unscrupulous politicians. And it is the time when Nepal's good friends have to stop patronizing and supporting political thugs and help the people find an honest and efficient government so that the country may achieve its objective of framing a people's constitution that will take the country to real democratic way of life. We do trust our big and powerful neighbor, India, will forsake its hypocritical behavior, give up its vacant rhetoric and sincerely help the poor people of Nepal by restoring political stability, so that they may go ahead to hold elections in a peaceful atmosphere which will surely help India win back the good will and friendship of the Nepali people. We would also like to appeal, specially to our Maoists friends, not to embroil the country again into any more agitations and join the band wagon in a peaceful manner. And lastly, indeed, we would exhort our security forces to stay alert to perform their most pious duty of saving the country.

Dashain, the biggest festival of poor Nepalis is knocking at the doors. The prices have skyrocketed and the poor are in a fix and unable to meet their needs. But *Dashain* has to be solemnized come what may which people think, only the politicians cad do. After all, *Dashain* is for people who have money to spend not bothering how they have earned it. However, we do wish all our countrymen a Very Happy Vijaya and avail of this opportunity to pray to the Benign Mother to grant us all the wisdom to sink all our differences and to unite to fight the evil forces that are casting their evil shadows on our dear motherland.


Madhav K. Rimal
 Chief Editor & Publisher



Maoist Agenda

Of course, the election for Constituent Assembly was the Maoists agenda. And now they are opposing the election. Of course, the elections result is always unpredictable and people are yet to be convinced about Maoists given their past record of violence. In this situation, it is sheer foolishness to expect the Maoists taking part in the elections. Maoists know that they want to continue the present interim parliament for another couple of years to protect themselves. I don't think Maoists are such foolish to take part in the elections which is not going to benefit them.

*Krishna Shrestha
Lagankhel*

Dream Shattered

Nepalese people's dream to vote for the elections for Constituent Assembly in November 22 is over now as seven party alliance and Maoists have failed to reach agreement. At a time when leaders of eight party alliances are enjoying opportunity to exploit country's resources for their personal gains, hoping them to hold elections is itself a sheer foolishness. The elections for the CA are no more than myth for the common people.

*Nisha Aryal
Thankot*

True Face

Maoists have shown their true face by attacking free press. In the last two months, they have attacked three media houses compelling them to suspend their publications. After Nepal Samacharpatra and publications of APCA House, they attacked Kantipur Publications. Of course, the labor union might have

genuine concern and demand, but one cannot justify the actions to threat the free media. Maoists seem to have forgotten that all these broadsheet media had supported and justified Maoists' extreme and violent agenda to the extent that Maoists were projected as a guarantor of peace and Loktantra and establishment of erstwhile regime was deemed as full of criminals. By attacking them, Maoist is betraying their contribution to promote their cause.

*Bhuvan Adhikary,
Washington D.C. Via- email*

Insincere Government

I don't think the government is sincere to provide the relief materials to the victims of Kapilbastu carnage. From prime minister to home minister and leaders of seven party alliances, all of them want to engage in central politics rather than to take certain initiative to provide relief materials to them. It will take years for the people to recover from the psychological and

mental trauma. What the government can do now is to work to heal their wound. The victims of Kapilbastu carnage deserve government support.

*Dilip Pariyar
Butwal, via-email*

Good Debate

The interview of Canadian professor Peter Russell is very noteworthy (September 14-20). When a large number of so called Nepalese intellectuals are talking about the need to declare Nepal as a republic, Russell disclosed that the most stable democracies in the world so far have been in monarchies. All the Scandinavian countries, Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain, United Kingdom, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and Canada are monarchies. But only the few countries have stable democracies under the republican. If that is the situation, why Nepal's so called democratic political parties and so called members of civil society are pleading for republicanism? I think they have vested and petty interests. As professor Russell said, if monarchy can guarantee stable democracy, why should Nepal need to remove it.

*Rajendra Sharma
Texas, via-email*

Too Much Politics

I am frustrated to read too many political stories in your magazine. Don't you think there are many other serious issues in the country? From scarcity of drinking water to law and order and price rise, there are number of problems. I hope you will cover more such social issues like girl trafficking, poverty, child rights, and women rights and so on.

*Nirajan Baral
Pokhara via-email*

Notice: The next issue of SPOTLIGHT will be published on November 2 after Dashain festival, Ed.

CEC Urges Parties To Reach Agreement Soon

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Bhojraj Pokharel has urged political parties to reach agreement soon. Addressing an interaction on Wednesday (October 3), Pokharel said, "They should agree today itself so that we do not have to wait with bated breath till the last minute." He also said that since the date of November 22 for CA election had been fixed by the parties themselves, they should not try to change it any further.

Leading dailies report

Army Chief Smells Conspiracy To Divide NA And Democratic Forces

The Nepali Army chief General Rookmangud Katawal has said that conspiracies are being hatched to drive a wedge between army and democratic forces. The NA chief said that disruptive elements were working hard to fulfil their vested interests by creating such rift. He did not clarify who such elements were. Addressing army officers in Nagarkot, General Katawal said that the rift was being created by the elements that are against national interest and do not want peace and happiness for the people of Nepal. *Leading dailies report*

Journos In Streets Over Kantipur Obstruction

Journalists have hit the streets to protest pro-Maoist workers' intervention and obstruction in Kantipur Publication. Journalists were accompanied by rights workers, professionals and civil society members in the protest rally, which started from New Baneshwore and ended at Maitighar where various speakers addressed the participants. "They are trying to gag the voice of Kantipur. They may bomb the structures, but they will never suppress our voices," said Prateek Pradhan, editor of The Kathmandu Post daily. Raghuji Panta, UML MP, asked the Maoists to be ready to face criticism. "What would we need the democracy for if we cannot speak against Prachanda," he said. Likewise, Nepal Bar Association's former president Shambhu Thapa said, "We are at a point where we have to ask ourselves if there is a democratic system in place." Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ) president

Bishnu Nishthuri deplored the seven parties for failing to take up the agenda of attack on press. On Tuesday (October 2), Home Ministry issued a statement deploring the vandalism and obstructive actions by pro-Maoist workers. Promising security to the Publication, the Ministry has stated that the current obstruction is tantamount to violation of right to information. The Ministry said it has already directed local administration to ensure adequate security to the Publication. Meanwhile, extending their interference in the Publication, the pro-Maoist workers have also disturbed the publishing of Kantipur and Kathmandu Post dailies from Bharatpur and Biratnagar divisions. *Leading dailies report*

Envoys Urge PM To Stick To Election Timetable

Reports say that the ambassadors of India, the United States and China met with Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, separately, on Tuesday (October 2). The envoys reportedly urged PM Koirala to hold the Constituent Assembly election on time on November 22. Their meeting has come at a time when political deadlock has deepened with Maoists stating that they would not allow the election to take place if their demand for changing the election system is not fulfilled. In another development, British Minister Shahid Mallik made a telephone call to Maoist leader Dr. Baburam Bhattarai to talk about the political situation. *Leading dailies report*

Unrest Affects Development In Terai

Frequent strikes and violent incidents in the Terai region are increasingly creating difficulties in implementing development activities there. The activities of the UN World Food Program (WFP) are badly affected because it has not been able to transport food items via the national highways because of frequent general strikes called by various groups. "WFP assistance should be reaching needy families living across 30 districts, but with the increase in bandhs and blockages over the last year, we have seen delivery delays," the WFP Country Representative to Nepal, Richard Ragan, told The Himalayan Times. According to him, the delay in

delivery of WFP's food relief has ranged from a few days to nearly two months. "The saddest part of such obstructions is that it usually affects either the poorest people in the country or those affected by natural disasters," Ragan said. "The terrain in Nepal is one of the most challenging on Earth, but insecurity and frequency of strikes in the Terai region has made it one of the most difficult operations I've ever managed," Ragan further said. "Delay in delivery dramatically increases the transportation costs, which means WFP is forced to provide less food to the 2.5 million hungry Nepali people that the international organization are trying to reach," he said. The WFP even warned that it would be forced to suspend its activities after one of its trucks was burnt on September 19 in Dang along East-West highway. Last Wednesday, a truck ferrying 12 metric tons food grain to Dadeldhura for WFP food aid program was attacked and set ablaze by a mob in Dang. The truck driver escaped unharmed, but all the food grain was burnt. However, the WFP alone is not bearing the brunt. Other development organizations are facing the same plight but in a different degree. Some education projects in Terai district, being implemented by some European donors are being indirectly affected due to strikes. "The school projects are not being smooth because students tend to be absent whenever there are strikes," said a European diplomat in Kathmandu. The foreign trainers who arrived here lately for educating national election observers feel insecure to go to Terai districts to conduct regional training programs. *Leading dailies report*

SC Upholds EC Decision

The Supreme Court has upheld the decision by the Election Commission to recognize the Anandidevi Singh-led Nepal Sadbhavana Party stating that it cannot interfere in the poll process already underway. In response to writ petition filed by dissident leader Rajendra Mahato demanding that his faction be recognized as legitimate NSP, the apex court bench including judges duo Min Bahadur Rayamajhi and Rajendra Kumar Bhandari said that the court cannot make decision that could affect the election. *Leading dailies report*

Kantipur Signs Deal With Maoist Union

After the signing of the four-point deal between the All Nepal Trade Union Federation (ANTUF) and Kantipur Publications, the printing, publishing and distribution of Kantipur and The Kathmandu Post dailies have resumed. The deal was signed by ANTUF chief Shalikram Jamarkattel and managing director of Publications Kailash Sirohiya, on Thursday (October 4), in presence of Maoist chairman Prachanda and Dr. Baburam Bhattarai. As per the deal, the two sides have agreed to take initiatives to free pro-Maoist workers arrested by the police for causing disruption of the newspapers. Likewise, the Publication has agreed to withdraw suspension of some of the workers and to withdraw charges against them. Detailed discussion on workers' demands will take place on Monday (October 8). *Leading dailies report*

WB To Fund Biogas Plants

The World Bank has agreed to provide assistance of \$ 5 million to co-finance the setting up of 37,000 biogas plants in rural areas of Nepal. The WB-administered Global Partnership on Output Based Aid (GPOBA) has signed a grant agreement with the government under the fourth phase of the Biogas Support Program (BSP-IV). The Project will be implemented by the Alternate Energy Promotion Center (AEPC). The grant signed on Thursday is also funded by the United Kingdom 's Department for International Development (DFID). "The Project complements user contributions by the target group with an output-based subsidy in order to foster local ownership and to increase the reach of donor funding," states a press release by the WB. "The Project aims to replace traditional energy sources used by the rural population, such as fire wood and kerosene, with modern biogas plants." "Switching to biogas reduces carbon emissions as well as deforestation and decreases the frequency of respiratory infections that result from burning sooty fuels in poorly ventilated households. The Community Development Carbon Fund estimates that families will also save approximately three hours of labor per day from the conveniences of gas in

addition to financial savings from not purchasing other fuels and fertilizers. Women and girls, who are traditionally responsible for collecting firewood and cooking, will be among this project's primary beneficiaries. Furthermore, access to biogas will enable families to use gas lanterns after sunset to provide light for children's studies or other household activities," the release adds. The Biogas Support Program was started in 1992 by the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV) together with the Government of Nepal to promote environmentally friendly and affordable energy to remote rural areas. The project has also received substantial funding from KfW. Since 2006, the BSP-IV is benefiting from funding from the World Bank's Community Development Carbon Fund in exchange for reductions of emissions of greenhouse gases. Since 1992 the Biogas Support Program has helped to install 150,000 biogas plants in rural Nepal. The local non-governmental organization Biogas Sector Partnership - Nepal (BSP-N) is serving as project implementing agency.

Compiled from reports

FM Rues Politicization of Economy

Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat has regretted the politicization of economic issues. Speaking at a program in the capital, on Thursday, Dr. Mahat appealed to all to look into economic issues from economic perspective. He said agitation, bandhs, and strikes were preventing the economy from expanding. "Durable peace, democracy and economic prosperity is the need of the hour," he said. He said there was no alternative to liberal economy. "Liberal economy with the sense of social justice is needed," he said. Meanwhile, Dr. Mahat has directed the Finance Ministry to take steps to waive off interest on loans taken by people of conflict-hit regions. *Kantipur daily reports*

World Class Animation and Visual Effects Studio in The Offing

A MOU was signed today between Pink Slip Productions, a company based in California run by a former Disney artist and executive, KuKri Ventures Inc, a USA based investment company,

Mercantile, the largest IT company in Nepal and Transcube International Pvt. Ltd., a computer graphics and animation company, to set up a world class animation and visual effects (VFX) studio in Kathmandu to service the international market. The new company, which will be called Incessant Rain Animation Studios Pvt. Ltd., will start recruiting immediately and plans to come into production by the first quarter next year.

Kiran Joshi of Pink Slip Productions, a 17 year veteran at Walt Disney Feature Animation involved in the production of classics like The Lion King, Beauty and the Beast, Aladdin, The Hunchback of Notre Dame and other feature animated films, says, "I have been keeping an eye out on the talent of young Nepalese graphic artists for a few years and feel that now is the time to start something in Nepal to promote this talent pool.

Sanjib Raj Bhandari of Mercantile said the international market for VFX and animation is growing at a rapid pace and a state of the art VFX and animation studio will be set up in Nepal to tap into this market.



Suyogya Tuladhar of Transcube International Pvt. Ltd., which operates a 25 person graphics operation in Kathmandu, said, "We feel that with the technical and creative assistance of experts from the US, we will easily be able to meet the quality expectations of the international market. We are excited to be part of this team and see a very bright future for Nepalese graphic artists and animators." Incessant Rain Animation Studios Pvt. Ltd. plans to start operations with a team of about 40 and expand to a 100 within a year.

Caption for attached photo: Suyogya Tuladhar, Kiran Joshi and Sanjib Raj Bhandari after signing the MOU. ■



PM Koirala and chief justice Kedar P. Giri after oath taking ceremony

EU HEADS OF MISSION has issued a statement saying they remain concerned by the public security situation in Nepal and have urged all parties to work together to uphold the rule of law. The EU said that increased public security is vital not only for holding credible elections in November but for Nepal's long term stability. In the backdrop of action by Maoist affiliated Young Communist League of picketing private residences of persons who they have labeled as corrupt, the EU said that it is "concerned by reports of harassment against those mentioned in the Rayamajhi Commission. As in any democracy, it is the responsibility of the judiciary to rule on what action is necessary against those alleged to have broken the law. We urge all parties to respect the rule of law and disband parallel law enforcement." UK Ambassador Andrew Hall said "Disputes and disagreements are part of life. But in a democratic system, due processes of law must prevail and disputes must be resolved through peaceful arbitration. I ask all parties to respect this and settle disputes through democratic channels."

MAOISTS HAVE "REFUSED" TO EXPRESS commitment to ban landmines in Nepal. Talking to journalists, Purna Shova Chitrakar, coordinator of the Ban Landmines Campaign Nepal (NCBL), said that the Maoists still are not ready to come up with an official commitment to ban the use of landmines in conflict. "We met Maoist leaders (Tuesday)," Chitrakar said, accusing Maoist leaders of "turning their back from showing commitment to banning landmines". Nepal is one of the countries that have not ratified the Mine Ban Treaty. Altogether, 155 countries have ratified it after the Ottawa Convention, which was held in 1997. After having failed to convince the government to ratify the treaty, the NCBL urged the parties to come up with their party-level commitment to ban landmines. Nine parties, except the Maoists, have expressed commitment in writing to ban landmines. "We don't know why this ratification is not taking place. We are asking the government and others to clarify why they are not ratifying it," she said, adding that lack of coordination among the stakeholder agents is a major roadblock facing the ratification. "Nepal could be and should be the 156th state to join the Mine Ban Treaty," she said. In 2007 alone, landmines or Improvised Explosive Devices have caused 86 casualties, including 43 children, in 25 out of 70 affected districts

THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER ALSO witnessed a healthy growth in the arrival of tourists. The month witnessed a healthy growth of 27 percent in arrival of visitors to Nepal

by air, up by 6,847 compared to the corresponding month of last year. According to visitors' arrival data released by Immigration Office, this growth in tourist arrival has been possible as the American and European markets have registered a robust growth of 33.1 percent and 38.5 percent respectively, followed by a significant growth in major tourist generating markets. There has been a positive growth in visitors' arrival from UK (32.1%), Germany (25.2%), France (18.6%), Italy (33.6%), Spain (49.1%), Japan (29 %) and USA (38.5%), according to the data. "What this connotes is a rebound in tourism industry. If this growth trend sustains for few more months, we are quite optimistic of imparting the renewed confidence amongst the industry for achieving our target to regain the lost image," said Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) in a press release. The release further adds - Chinese and Korean markets, up by 158.8 % and 98.4 % respectively, have been strengthened considerably after the operation of direct flights from these destinations. The total arrivals in the last nine months have gone up by 32.3 % having 2,52,407 visitors by air in comparison to the same period last year with each country recording very optimistic growth. However, the arrival figure from India has shown negative growth due to the fact that the Indian market is "very sensitive to negative news".

WORLD BANK HAS AGREED \$100 million (Rs 6.5 billion) grant to the Poverty Alleviation Fund (PAF), recently. However, it will come into effect once the WB board endorses it in December. It is the highest amount World Bank has committed to the PAF so far. The representatives of government, PAF and WB finalized the accord recently. PAF works for the below poverty line communities 'only'. Dr Ram Prakash Yadav, vice-chairman of PAF says that PAF has a different approach. "It works with below poverty level community. The community distributes the amount among themselves. Though, community does not have to pay back the amount to PAF, the individual has to pay it back to community and it remains as a revolving fund. They sometimes can use the amount for small infrastructure like constructing small bridges or roads, where poor and non-poor, both participate unlike in income generation activities. Earlier, WB has provided \$40 million — in two phases \$15 million and \$25 million — grant to the PAF. As PAF is a targeted national program, government has also allocated budget to it. PAF will cover a total of 40 districts from this year. It is planning to add 15 more districts, making it to a total of 55. In the remaining 20 districts from the total 75 districts, PAF is planning pocket programs. Beside regular program in 25 districts, PAF is currently supporting innovative programs under its special window program. ■

*We Extend Our Heartiest Greetings and
Best Wishes To All Our Valued Readers,
Patrons, Well Wishers And Friends
On the Occasion of
Happy Vijaya Dashami 2064 B.S.*

SPOTLIGHT FAMILY

"I am in favor of monarch who is liked by the people."

Nepali Congress leader and former prime minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai in the Himalayan Times.

"I will work impartially as we judge don't care what happened in the past."

Chief justice Kedar Prasad Giri in Annapurna Post.

"If Nepali Congress gives up B.P. Koirala's national reconciliation, I don't want to continue as a member of Nepali Congress Central Committee."

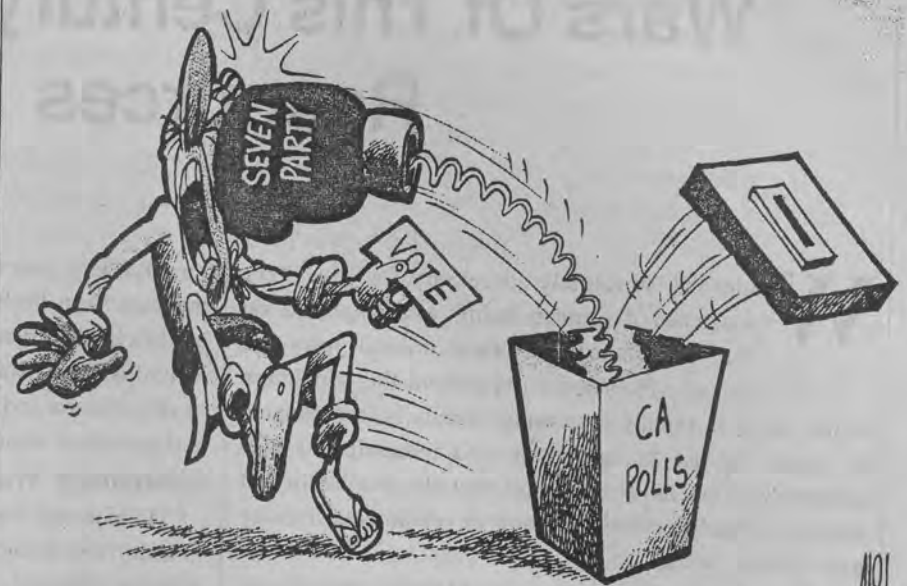
Sunil Kumar Bhandari, Member Nepali Congress Central Committee Member in Kantipur.

"Our party is in no mood to search alternative to prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala."

C.P. Gajurel, CPN-Maoist leader in Kathmandu Post.

"Morally, prime minister Koirala has to take responsible for the postponement of the elections for Constituent Assembly but we don't want to create misunderstanding demanding his resignation."

Amrit Kumar Bohara, CPN-UML politburo member



www.abin.com.np

"This government has already lost its legitimacy to rule."

Pashupati Sumsher Rana, president of Rastriya Prajatantra Party in Gorkhapatra.

"Don't talk about the past. We need to move ahead looking at the future."

Prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala addressing Nepali Congress Central Committee member.

"Those who misled prime minister

Girija Prasad Koirala should take responsibility for the present uncertainty."

Govinda Raj Joshi, Nepali Congress Central Committee Member.

"Oh! It was huge money. It was happiest moment of my life when I secured the first position along with the cash prize."

Rewat Bahadur Dahal, the winner of the Springwood NRN Kathmandu International Marathon in Rajdhani.

TRANSITION

APPOINTED: Kedar Prasad Giri as a chief justice of Nepal under the recommendation of Constitutional Council.

WON: Rewat Bahadur Dahal Springwood NRN Kathmandu International Marathon along with \$ 10,000 and additional Rs.100, 000.

SUMMONNED: The special session of Legislative Parliament by Prime Minister on October 11.

HOSPITALIZED: K.P. Sharma Oli - leader of CPN-UML and former deputy prime to Apollo Hospital in New Delhi for treatment of stomach ulcer

FELICIATED: Senior poet Dharmaraj

Thapa by Ujjawal Vidya Bikash Higher Secondary School for his contribution in Nepali literature

Journalist and Nepal Television News Anchor Pushpahari Camparai Libbuj-Bhumju Award 2063 by Bambule Rai Literary Publication.

ELECTED: Ganesh Prasad Adhikari of Loktatnrick Group elected as a president of Kathmandu District Court Bar Association

ABDUCTED: journalist Birendra Shaha from Bara district by Maoists

ELECTED : The General Assembly of the meeting elected Bandana Rana of Nepal as the Vice President for the coming two years term. The 32nd International Biennial Conference of

International Association of Women in Radio and Television (IAWRT) on "Women Building Peace" was held in Nairobi, Kenya from 29th September to 3rd October, 2007. The conference was attended by more than 50 women media professionals from around the world. The other members of the seven member executive committee of IAWRT are from Australia, Sweden, Philippines, Cameroon, Kenya, and Canada.

IAWRT was established in 1951 and is comprised of more than 300 members of 51 countries from around the world. Bandana Rana and Deepa Gautam of Nepal attended the 32nd Biennial Conference of IAWRT. IAWRT also has a chapter in Nepal. ■

Wars Of This Century: Water Resources

By DR. AB THAPA

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

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

The Resource Base

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

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

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

Water that flows down streams and rivers is called surface

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

Estimating Water Demands

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

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

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

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

liters of water per day. The typical person living in the developing countries of Asia, Latin America, and Africa uses between 50 and 100 liters per day. In areas where water is scarce, the figure is even lower.

Water Scarcity

The world's population grew enormously in the 20th century. According to UN estimates, 1.65 billion people lived on Earth in 1900. By 1999 the world's population had passed 6 billion people, and the UN estimates that it will reach 9 billion people by 2050. But the annual supply of renewable fresh water will remain constant. As the UN Commission on Sustainable Development noted, the amount of water available to each person decreases as the population grows, raising the possibility of water shortages.

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

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

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

This uneven distribution of water resources means that supplies in some parts of the world are already stretched thin. According to the UN, about one-third of the world's population lived in countries with moderate to high water stress in the late 1990s. Moderate water stress means that the country is currently using 20 percent or more of its annual renewable resources. Countries in this category included Germany, India, South Africa, Spain, and the United States. High water stress means the country is using 40 percent or more. Countries in this category included Egypt, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. By 2025 the UN expects that two-thirds of the world's population will live in countries with moderate to high water stress.

India's Demand for Water

Like in the USA, where agriculture accounts for 83% of the total water consumption, in India also the demand for agricultural water dominates the total demand for

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

Nepalese Situation

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

(The author writes on water resources)

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CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

Real or Farcical ?

Every body has been talking about Constituent Assembly; however, no body knows whether it is going to be farcical or real?

By KESHAB POUDEL

"I will hold the elections for Constituent Assembly at any cost. That was the mandate given by the people." prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala (May 21, Kantipur 2007)

"I will not compromise with anybody on holding the election for Constituent Assembly. I will not postpone it." Prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala (October 4, 2004 meeting with Finish Minister).

"Seven party unity needs to maintain and the new election date must be announced soon." Prime minister Koirala October 2007.

Although he has already hold off the election twice, prime minister Koirala, the leader of the government, is still assuring the people that the elections will be conducted at any cost. Instead of dealing with the problems - which were hindering holding of free and fair election, prime minister Koirala was taken aback by ongoing situation.

People - who believed him - were too shocked by the postponement of the election. There are also some noted "experts and analysts" among people who were enjoying their wishful drive against the real decisive force. However, they were also disappointed by the decision to defer the election. "The postponement of elections shattered our notion that prime minister Koirala is man of action," said lawyer and member of civil society Bhimarjun

Acharya. "I don't think election for CA. will be conducted"

Conducting the elections for Constituent Assembly and making a constitution through it is a very difficult task. Delaying of the election several times in recent days has proved that what elder generation of politicians did was right as elder politician showed respecting the drafts of the constitutions is more significant than the ritual of holding the elections for that.

However, a group of communist, all

the time, has taken a stand against the main trend of democratic forces to formulate the constitution by consensus rather than to make it an issue of contesting farcical election for Constituent Assembly.

"One has to take the postponement of CA elections as a bitter truth on the basis of ground reality. An unseen power, which has decisive influence in the government and the decision making process of all the members of the alliance of ruling coalition, does not want it. The conflict between the prevailing public opinion and the unseen power seems to be incompatible.

Thus, the present deadlock- the postponement of CA elections- supports that apprehension," said the political analyst.

Past Experiments

At the grass root level, everybody needs political stability and social order as a foremost priority. To achieve stability and order, a strong parliament, elected through electoral process, is required. Nepal's past experiences have proved that a first-past-post system of elections comes out with major parties; thus, they forms strong and stable governments.

The brief experiments of the first parliamentary form between 1958 and 1960 and the second parliamentary form between 1991 and 2002 were the successful examples of strong and stable governments. Nonetheless, these

governments suffered reversal through unconstitutional methods or by other kinds of extra constitutional machinations.

After the dismissal of Sher Bahadur Deuba's government by King Gyanendra on October 3, 2002, subsequent events were not in accordance with the constitution. As a result, the last experiment of parliamentary democracy was jeopardized. Like democratic minded people, the institution of



Prime minister Koirala:Leadership at top

monarchy has also faced a great crisis. A wishful thinking of monarch could not change the situation in his favor. The situation is similar with the seven party's leadership when they delayed the election repeatedly.

"The King failed once in his push but this coalition has failed twice to hold the election. Prime minister Koirala expressed his wish that in an abnormal situation in his country, the elections too would be abnormal. He failed miserably even to hold that kind of elections which he had visualized," said the analyst.

Prime minister Koirala has several alternatives for the people and the parties of alliance. Nevertheless, both the people and parties seem to have no alternative for prime minister. Even after the postponement of Constituent Assembly for uncertain period, Koirala has assured the people about the continuation of his leadership to next poll.

"This is time to show that there need a strong unity among seven parties alliance. This unity needs to persist till the elections will be held." prime minister reportedly told CPN-UML leader Madhav Kumar Nepal. Prime minister Koirala's indication is that he

has capability to retain this unity. CPN-UML backs Koirala as an incontrovertible leader.

Functioning of Party

As Nepal's political parties are not guided by grass root level popular opinion, there is slim possibility to produce impartial outcome. The way political party functions in Nepal does not truly reflect the opinion of the grass root. Instead, it reflects the opinion of the center of patronage. In normal democratic process, leadership is influenced by the people but in a handicapped democracy like in Nepal, people are forced to decide in accordance to their party or patrons.

Leo Rose and John T. Scholz have written in their book Nepal Profile of a

Himalayan Kingdom, "The structure of these early party organizations reflected the patron-client relationship characteristic of the Rana social order, although there was considerable more variety in party recruitment techniques than Rana patrons had. Some leaders gathered followers through personal charisma or ideological persuasion, other through previous acquaintances in schools, the British or Indian army, or earlier political activities, still others by extension of more traditional relationships or ethnic identity. Successful party leaders attracted followers who themselves were patrons with their own following, thus creating party linkages based on personal support through several intermediate patrons."

"Loyalty varied considerably in intensity and longevity, with numerous intermediate patrons shifting their allegiance when conditions changed.

Ethnic identities, status, conflicts, and regional factors, of course, limited the interchangeability of these intermediaries- if a powerful notable joined one party, local factions opposed him would seek the support of a competing party," write authors duo.

The recent convention of Nepali Congress is an example of how senior party leader forced his juniors to accept decision as he wished. Despite absolute majority in the central committee who favors that the fate of monarchy be decided by the Constituent Assembly, the party endorsed republican agenda.

As Congress president and prime minister Koirala knew that the party leaders were against his move, he ruled out the issues in debate and vote.

Moreover, he declared that his fellow members should endorse his proposal for republic form.

"If a credible and liberal democratic party like Nepali Congress has that kind of working behavior, one cannot imagine the lowest ebb of other parties of the alliance in which almost all are

of one party totalitarian ethos of communist dogmas," said the analyst.

With half of the population illiterate and more than 30 percent of the population living below poverty line, the country is handicapped in several senses. In addition to these, the country has not developed infrastructures well as mechanisms to guarantee the rule of law. As there are ways to rig election in a handicapped country like Nepal, it is just a wishful thinking to hold free and fair election.

"Above all these, there are other serious constraints of zonal conflict which has its disguise and influence. A prolonged crisis of political instability has made all previous efforts to build up required infrastructures and procedures to govern ineffective and irregular. In such a background, it is unthinkable that people in Nepal will be able to decide their fate fairly and fearlessly," said the analyst. "When all these things have already been destroyed by a ruling syndicate under the blessing of an unseen power, the sovereign people would be force to accept the fate accompli"

In search of a better constitutional order, Maoists faction of communist led an insurrection in which about 15000 persons lost their lives. There was irreparable loss in every aspect. Despite all these, Maoists failed to materialize their dreams after they got stuck in their conflicting choice between personal ambitions and political ideals.

Leaders of previous parliamentary parties have lost their will to adhere to the "ideal" constitution of 1990. Like Maoist, they have also failed to formulate better alternative constitution than what the nation has practiced through



People at polling booth: Democratic experiments

previous parliaments.

"In such a situation, an honest soul searching require from all segments of society instead of roaming in the wilderness for a better constitutional order. Let there be a direct decision of the people through referendum as Maoist and CPN-UML demanded as an alternative proposal to end deadlock. It would be very logical and prudent to let the people decide whether they support the same constitution of 1990 which was an outcome of Janadolan I or they want a new one based upon republican model," said the analyst.

"It is unnecessary to put monarchy into referendum if the previous constitution is out voted in the referendum. The fate of monarchy would consider shield and if people don't want another form of constitution and the whole extremist pressure will be subsided and the country would much ahead to tackle its all round progress and development," said the analyst.

However, none of the political parties has clear perceptions about the firms and contents of the coming constitution. They have repeatedly declared to the people that the election will be held on time. Nonetheless, they have already postponed the election twice. Despite their failure to substantiate their promises, they still have reasons to believe that the elections for Constituent Assembly will be held on time. The eight parties have again promised to conduct impartial election on time. However, people still have reasons to question, "Is the election going to be real or farcical?" ■

GIRL TRAFFICKING

Rising

Concern

At a time when the number of girl trafficking cases has risen unexpectedly, the government implemented the new act against human trafficking with harsh punishment for the traffickers. The past experiences have shown that laws are not alone enough to stop the number of girls crossing the border. Living below the poverty level, Nepalese girls fall easy prey for the traffickers who can lure rural women by promises of better life. Devastated by eleven years long conflict, it will take a long time before rural economy can develop. As long as rampant poverty, illiteracy and lack of employment opportunities continue to exist, overcoming the girl trafficking could be an uphill task

By KESHAB POUDEL

- At the joint initiative of police personnel of Kakarvitta Area Police Office (APO) and Maiti Nepal, six Nepali women were rescued from Kakarvitta of Jhapa, 700 kilometer east of capital on 23 September. The girls were heading towards a Gulf country via India.

However, the police failed to arrest those persons who were taking the women under pretext of taking them to the Gulf country.

Often Nepalese women's journey towards dreams of prosperity ends up in Indian brothels.

Illiterate and economically backward, the rescued women Gita Tamang, Khel Maya Magar, Sapana Rai and Chhabi Maya Dahal of Letang VDC in Morang district, and Mina Lama and Anju Bal of Hetauda were put in Maiti Nepal's Transit Home in safe hands of Maiti Nepal.

"Following the rescue, the women were sent to our transit home," said

Govinda Ghimire, Eastern Regional Coordinator of the Maiti Nepal, an NGO working for the rescue and rehabilitation of the trafficked girls.

Similarly, seven Nepali children were rescued on September 23 from border check post of Sangrapur of Sarlahi district, 300 kilometers south west of capital. Indian nationals Rabi Yadav, Mahesh Mukhiya and Anil Kumar were arrested in this connection.

Likewise, four Nepalese girls were rescued from Sunauli, Bhairahawa, bordering town located 300 kilometers south west of capital. These women were on way to India with some unknown persons when police intercepted their convoy.

In many border check posts, volunteers of Maiti Nepal have intercepted thousands of women before crossing the border. The volunteers watch and monitor all the activities and mobility of women.

At a time when most of the police

posts in the rural areas were dismantled and relocated and many police posts were removed, Maiti Nepal's border check posts were the only ones working to prevent trafficking.

After the establishment of border checks points in 1996, the volunteers of Maiti Nepal have already prevented thousands of women and rescued those who were being trafficked to Indian brothels. The shelter home provides shelter to those who are rescued in the border check posts.

In recent years, there has been increase in the number of Nepalese girls being trafficked across various border entry points of Nepal. Earlier, 8,000 Nepalese girls between 12-19 years used to be trafficked across Indian border annually. However, this figure has increased to 12,000 annually over the past few years.

According to Maiti Nepal, thousands of Nepalese girls are undergoing hardships including sexual

exploitation in various cities of India. Maiti Nepal informed that the transit home at Kakarvitta alone has rescued 104 girls who were about to be trafficked into India, and intercepted 960 other girls who were heading for India. Since 1996, Maiti Nepal's volunteers have been monitoring the mobility of girls in the 26 entry points adjoining Indian border.

As the law and order situation has deteriorated following the intensification of conflict and people have been displaced from rural parts of the country, there have been further increase in the number of the Nepalese girls being trafficked across various border entry points of Nepal.

New Act

At a time when cases of trafficking are increasing alarmingly, the announcement of new anti-human trafficking act by the government is a major step.

Although police and Maiti Nepal volunteers often intercepted the traffickers and many women filed cases against those involved in trafficking, the culprits escaped easily as there were many lacunae in the previous laws.

After a continual pressure from non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders, the new act is now in the process of implementation. Unlike previous anti trafficking act 1986, the new act shifts the burden of proof to the culprit, not to the victims.

Since the number of girl trafficking continues to rise, police actions alone are not enough to contain it. There is a great

need for public awareness in border areas as well as alertness in order to control girl and human trafficking across the border.

According to the new act, the imprisonment for persons indicted in the human trafficking has been increased from 15 to 20 years. There is also a provision for trial in the closed court room. In the past, the victim often felt offended to deal the matter in open court.

The Attorney General's Annual Reports of 2006/07 showed that the office filed 203 cases in the districts courts on trafficking. Among them, 60 were convicted and 35 freed while 108 cases are still pending. As the judicial process is lengthy, victims had to wait for a long period

of time to get the justice. "The legal process is lengthy and it takes a couple of years to complete the proceedings," said attorney general. Statistics also show that the judicial proceedings are very long.

Among others, as per the new act, victim shall receive half of the ancestral property of concerned person who is found guilty in the case.

As the burden of proof has been shifted to accused, lawyers believe, the process will now be shorter than in the past. Earlier, the delay was also caused by time spent in gathering evidences.

Level of Awareness

Although more than two dozen non-governmental organizations have been working to generate awareness among the rural population



Rural women: Vulnerable

regarding anti-trafficking, their message is yet to reach to all the households. In many cases, their activities have been confined to urban centers only.

With the intensification of Maoist insurgency, many rural populations were displaced and many NGOs shut down their site offices in the remote parts of Nepal. Removal of police posts in the rural areas gave more space to the criminals.

Along with the need to launch awareness campaign at different levels, there is also a need to increase awareness about trafficking at the school level while tightening security checks at exit points.

After the signing of Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Maoists and seven party alliance government, the situation has improved now in rural parts of Nepal. Many police posts were rehabilitated and NGOs have started to launch their drive in the rural areas again.

UN's Prediction

Despite easing tension in the rural parts of Nepal, the girl trafficking is now alarmingly high. In its recent report UN Regional Office for South Asia for Prevention of Drugs and Crimes disclosed that 10,000 to 15,000 girls are



Education: Limited coverage

being trafficked from Nepal to India.

According to the UN report, they are allured to India of good job and sold there. "illiteracy, poverty and Nepal's long armed conflict and other economic and social causes are behind (it)."

The office provides training to the police who are working to check the human trafficking and other human crimes.

The organization is actively involved in the programs like implementation of the laws, capacity building, and rehabilitation of the victims in South Asia, including Nepal. Studies have shown that the number of displaced has surged in Nepal, problem of internal migration has worsened and Kathmandu has prospered as a centre of trafficking of women and children due to the long armed conflict. The women and teenage girls who come to Kathmandu in search of the jobs become soft targets for the pimps.

Surges of HIV/AIDS

As the trafficking surges, the number of AIDS and other sexual transmitted diseases have also shot up. A study recently conducted by a US institution showed that 40 percent of the sexual workers returning to Nepal from different Indian cities carried HIV/AIDS.

There are today more than 200,000

Nepali girls in the Indian brothels. In the worldwide multi-billion dollar human trafficking industry, Nepal is also contributing significantly. No doubt, trafficking has become one of the worst evils of modern-day Nepal.

The social problems have been devastating. For many trafficked women and girls, forced prostitution has proved fatal, leaving them with the HIV virus which causes AIDS. Many studies have shown in recent years that more than 70 percent of the trafficked women have been infected with HIV



Women carrying feeder: In poverty trap



Highway: Unsafe Journey

or other STD.

Majority of women who were rescued from Indian brothel and returned to Nepal are HIV positive. If they are allowed to go to village without proper counseling, they are going to be a major risk factor.

It is estimated that more than 150,000 innocent rural women and girl children are trafficked to Indian brothels and cities alone for commercial sex.

Poverty As The Cause

Poverty is the main cause of women trafficking in Nepal in the rural areas. Faced with low family income and hardships to survive, many parents give away their children to brokers with the hope for economic prosperity without judging the risk.

However, these brokers sell off these girls to brothels in India. When the girls realize, it is always too late and rescue is too little. In a cycle of poverty trap, the women infected with HIV face big difficulties to survive. Many families have to face additional burden of taking care of their children with HIV.

Although some programs like income generation were introduced in the districts with high prevalence of girl trafficking, it will take a long time before it produces the attractive benefits for the rural population. The literacy rate of women too has gone up in recent years. But these positive growths are still too little.

At a time when all indications and studies have shown that girl trafficking is alarmingly increasing, the only solution will be to fight against poverty to root out the problem. ■

Sustainability of Federalism in Nepal

Shirish Bhat, Ph.D.

Abstract

Ethnic, linguistic, racial and religious conflicts have become the dominant issues facing the world order today. Nepal is not an exception. While many Nepalese politicians look on federalism enthusiastically and involve themselves profoundly on the process, many others are in ferment over the federal idea. Federalism provides no "one size fits all" type of solution. Each Country has to examine and adopt arrangements conducive and suitable for individual needs. Nepal too needs to explore the federal idea intensively and fully before deciding whether to accept or reject it or adopt it with appropriate innovation. We need to explore the federal idea and have an informed debate about its pros and cons and also on deciding whether we adopt or reject it.

Federalism

To date, many countries in the world including Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Canada, Comoros, Ethiopia, Germany, India, Malaysia, Mexico, The federated states of Micronesia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, St. Kitts and Nevis, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United States of America, and Venezuela have federal and/or quasi-federal structures of government. Though federal, none of these countries share exactly the same system. Each country has different administrative arrangements and internal structures. They also vary greatly in size. Russia has republics and many types of regions within; India has states and union territories; Switzerland has cantons while Germany and Austria have landers. Belgium has three regions and three cultural communities while Spain has autonomous regions; the USA has states, unincorporated territories and Native American domestic dependent nations. Canada has provinces, territories and aboriginal organizations. Venezuela has states, territories, federal dependencies.

The proponents of federalism argue that adopting it will strengthen unity and territorial integrity. Switzerland, India, Malaysia, Belgium, Germany, Spain etc

are cited as examples. But it cannot be denied that federalism has failed to prevent secession too. The disintegration of Soviet Union and Yugoslavia are well - known examples. The Malaysia - Singapore and Pakistan - Bangladesh splits in the past as well as modern break-ups of Czech and Slovakia, Serbia and Montenegro are also lessons. In Canada, separatism flourished in Quebec despite federalism. Britain devolved power to Scotland and Wales but secessionism seems to have gained ground there. Nigerian federalism did not prevent the Biafran civil war. There are, however, many nuances to take into account when analyzing the countries in question.

Current Political Shift in Nepal

Ideas cannot be 'killed'; these can only be defeated by greater or better ideas. Another truism is no force can stop an idea whose time has come. Nepal can be a perfect example of this truism.

A recent policy shift of a major political party, Nepali Congress, from 'multiparty democracy and constitutional monarchy' to 'federal democratic republic' has created ripples in fluid politics of Nepal. Now, it seems supporters of federalism have increased in Nepal. The main supporters of the federalism are the Maoists and other communist parties. But none of them have started open and meaningful discussions for and against the system they want establish. There are both supporting and opposing arguments to federalism; however, the real issue is the desirability and sustainability of a federal set-up in a small and landlocked country which is diverse both religiously and ethnically. Many people think that in Nepal's deeply polarized society, federalism can be worse. At one end there are the "unitarists" who are adamant that the unitary structure of the country should not be changed. At the other end are the "federalist" who want the country to make several "autonomous states with right to self-determination." On this ground, one sees the federalism as a conspiracy to break up the nation while the other views it as a quest for "new Nepal."

Can Federalism Bring Peace in Nepal?

Many questions raised by opposing to federalism are: can it bring lasting peace? Can it save our territorial integrity? Can it save our "unity in diversity"? Can it save our ages-long tradition of tolerance, harmony and brotherhood? As all the political leaders and interest groups haven't done enough exercise or enough study on these questions and there has not been proper explanation on the suitability of federalism to the ordinary citizens, the answer is still uncertain. Many proponents of federalism may argue that a utopian devolution mechanism will cause things to happen in favor of bringing peace. But the causal connection is too remote to rely on. The bitter reality is that there can never be any practical devolution unit/mechanism/degree that all stakeholders can agree upon. Suppose a federal structure was put in place; then what? If the Maoist armed forces continue to remain thereafter, many fear a jobless army can be more dangerous. More complex issues exist about the police force. Therefore, federalism may not bring peace. For peace to hold, firstly, unlawful armed groups should be disarmed and lawful armed groups should uphold the law. Above all, rule of law and total end of impunity can secure us from socioeconomic disaster and political instability so deeply rooted in the nation.

Is Federalism a Sustainable Solution for Nepal?

The international communities (it is said) pressurize the political parties and the government to agree to a federal set-up, the question arises how sustainable would it be?

Assuming a federal solution is put in place after a lot of haggling, pressurizing, etc. If it cannot bring about economic and political betterment in tangible proportions, the opposing forces will amass votes to bust it and that's exactly what they will do when elected. Therefore, federal systems will not be able to be sustained unless they can add

sizable amount of value to the aspirations of the majority. It is regrettable that most 'political solutions' disregard the aspirations of the majority in our country. It is apparent in Nepal that most of the political leaders and their 'political solutions' are guided by foreigners, specifically Indians. Moreover, it is very unlikely that the international community suppress the opposing forces forever and they continue to sustain the fragile 'yes' vote in favor of it.

Economics of Federalism and Conflicts over Water Resources

Who should benefit from the economic benefits of the natural resources? Should it be the residents in these regions or the nation as a whole? These are the questions that can cripple any federal set-up. Regional leaders and national leaders will have widely opposing views. It is easy to say the whole country will eventually benefit, but practically it is very difficult as evidenced from around the world. Matters will get even worse if foreign parties enter the fray, which is very likely to happen.

A classic example on conflict over water resources is the Murray- Darling Basin development program of the Australian federal government. The basin drains roughly three-quarters of New South Wales, half of Victoria, a substantial portion of southern Queensland, and a small part of eastern South Australia. The basin development program is not supported by states amidst a severe drought that has hit Australia. Victoria has repeatedly and decisively declined to cooperate as it has enough water resources. Nepal is not too far away in getting into such inter-region conflict once it is federalized. It will be unimaginably chaotic in a federal set-up and the army will have to be called-in to settle the matter given the fact that water is as important as gold in the dry zone. Prolonged and persistent conflicts can take a heavy toll and things will surely escalate when political forces interplay with them.

Diplomacy

Should the regions be allowed to formulate their diplomatic priorities or should they follow the central government? If they do not have such powers, the regions will surely demand it. It is no secret that Nepali Congress wants much closer ties with India, USA, Japan, and UK. Maoists want closer ties

with China, North Korea, and Cuba. Other communist parties want to be closer with socialist countries around the world. Hindus want closer link with India, similarly Muslims would want closer link-ups with the Islamic world. These situations would heighten diplomatic importance to the various regions. Apart from obvious conflicting interests, how can Indian interest, for example, be managed by the central government and the regions? These conflicting interests may lead the nation into diplomatic anarchy under federalism. On the other hand, if the regions' rights to diplomatic interests are curtailed, would federalism achieve its desired targets?

The Risk of Outside Interferers

Another big risk for the country and the regions is the risk of heightened outside interference. NGOs and even the UN may run their own zones within some regions. In the absence of an acceptable regulator to both the regional and the central governments, these issues are likely to take the centre stage in any federal setting in Nepal.

A 'racial-federalism' can be considered much more dangerous than federalism itself in Nepal. This doesn't sound well but that's exactly what most politicians in favor of federalism demand. A separate Muslim unit within the Hindu territory? Separate 'Pahaadee' unit within 'Madhesi' area? 'Rai/Limbu' area within 'Newari' territory? How ridiculously racial? We are likely to fall into a bigger 'ethnic' trap if we try to solve the 'ethnic' conflict by federalism. We should be moving in a different direction that can integrate the ethnic groups. We don't differentiate ethnic celebrations, ethnic foodstuff and ethnic attire. We need our fellow citizens who run them to live and thrive in our nation among.....

Final Remarks

Ethnic, linguistic, racial and religious conflicts have become the dominant issue facing the world order today. Wars after 1945 have been as much within countries as between them, with disastrous consequences for peace and security.

While many Nepalese politicians (not silent majority of Nepalese people) in Nepal look on federalism enthusiastically and involve themselves profoundly on the process, the rest of the world is in ferment over the federal idea. There was a time when federalism was

seen as the ideal remedy for many of the world's political maladies. It was perceived as the universal device to achieve unity in diversity. Experience has shown that this is not necessarily true in all situations.

Federalism provides no "one size fits all" type of solution. Each Country has to examine and adopt arrangements conducive and suitable for individual needs. Nepal too needs to explore the federal idea intensively and fully before deciding whether to accept or reject it or adopt it with appropriate innovation. The federal idea is dynamic and constantly evolving. What we in Nepal need to do is to explore the federal idea and have an informed debate about its pros and cons and also on deciding whether we adopt or reject it.

Federalism will create new and never ending conflicts and confrontations on the issues of:

Fixation and safeguarding of borders between states.

Distribution and utilization of natural resources

Rights to majority and minority in political, racial, religious, cultural issues (we should remember ill-fated Bhutanese Refugees in Nepal); Madhesi and Pahadi; backward and forward etc.

Unlimited and unbearable economic burden to the nation (for example, expenditure to one federal govt and ten state govts; one pm and ten chief ministers; one president and ten governors, one federal parliament and ten state parliaments etc.....)

Nepal, small in size and population, can be managed and governed by inclusive, constructive and cooperative system of representation. Let many ideas play. Let different parties contest and compete with a spirit of "rule of the games." Let the sovereign people decide freely. Decentralization of power to the local governments with zero interference of the center can make a magic change. Living peace, political stability and the rule of law (good governance) are the basic conditions to flourish and strengthen democracy. Socioeconomic development is possible only in an atmosphere of national unity and mutual confidence among all stakeholders.

Dr. Bhai is an executive member, Nepali Janasamparka Samiti, USA and he can be reached at shirish.pokharel@gmail.com

BADHE FESTIVAL

Destination Manang

Manang celebrates Badhe Festival as a part of Destination Manang 2007 which will begin from 25 - 28 October

By A CORESSPONDENT

Major Hindu festivals like Dasain and Tihar are celebrated in the lower reaches of Manang district. But since upper Manang is largely Buddhist, and in some parts Bon Po, the Nyeshang valley has its own unique set of customs and festivals. Older Manangis vividly remember how villagers used to gather once every three years in the fall to celebrate Badhe, a Nyeshang oral tradition and intricate performing art. Basically a play, where mother earth is the stage, with courtyards and terraced field forming the backdrop Badhe is full of sound, color and intense drama, which tell a story of two warring brothers. The main objective of Badhe is to free the village of evil spirits, demons, enemies, diseases and natural calamities, to ensure peace, security and prosperity in the village.

Badhe is celebrated once in three years and is held on a rotational basis in Manang, Nar, and in Sampa village of Mustang. The ceremony generally falls on the 1st day (approximately 8th November) of the tenth month of the Tibetan calendar.

A decade ago, the Badhe tradition started to decline due to the lack of economic resources and local interest. It was revived in 2004 during the Destination Manang Campaign. The costumes and finery were brought out from gumbas and households, and the people of Nyeshang came from far and wide to revive this ancient tradition.

No historical manuscripts highlighting the origin of Badhe exist. According to local belief, however, the festival started in the village of Ngawal, then shifted to Bhraga and finally to Manang where it established its roots for many years. But it has been a while since

the props and manuscripts related to the festival have been locked away in private homes and the small monastery in Manang village.

For seven days and seven nights, the performers, local villagers are outdoors. Apart from the roles of king and priest—character roles inherited by a generations of the same family—various other roles can be enacted by any villager. Badhe has interesting ties with the cultural practices found in the middle hills and the high Himalayan regions. It is similar to the 'dohari' songs, a popular folk tradition in the mid hill communities of Nepal. Villagers dressed as warriors, on the other hand, display war techniques similar to that of the ancient Tibetan kings and their armies. They are dressed in gold and don exotic bird feathers on their forehead. It is a rhythmic festival full of sound, colour and intense drama leading to a peaceful climax. There are two different groups. The narration begins with two brothers visiting a temple. The elder brother is offended when he finds that his younger sibling has visited the temple before him. The fight or rather the play of Badhe begins. In a poetic war, the two brothers who are camped on opposite sides berate each other through the 'dohari' songs. Through song and satire, they fight out their battle. To boost the morale of their teams, both sides also display their war skills through role-play.

Carried away in their various roles, sometimes the villagers do start a brawl that is soon controlled by the younger soldiers who stand between the

supporters of the two brothers. But actual violence does not occur. When things start getting out of hand, villagers step in to bring things back to normal. Spectators from surrounding villagers flock to Manang for the festival. They are all welcome. Nyeshang households disperse roasted millet and wheat powder rolls from their rooftops. The spectators then sleep under the skies



while the actors retire in their camps. The last day of the festival is the festival is the grand carnival day. All women folks who would be busy preparing meals and taking care of the guests also join in the merriment.

Earlier 12 virgins used to be sacrificed to the gods at the beginning of the Badhe festival. Owing to Buddhist beliefs, the practice was stopped and goats were offered instead. Later, only the tips of the ears of goats were offered. Now that the Nyeshang community follows the peaceful middle path of the Buddha, Badhe festivals in future will not encourage animal sacrifice. As consciousness of how traditions and customs are an integral part of a cultural identity grows, Destination Manang 2004 hopes to revive this ancient oral tradition. ■

DETAINEES

Rights And Realities

By SAHISHNU POUDYAL

"When I was arrested along with my child- who is now only two and half years old - was naked. He did not have any cloth to cover his body for weeks. For days, my child survived just on one piece of clothe donated by an inmate in the prison," said 40 years old Mina Chepang (name changed on her request) who was arrested by the police in the jungle in Chitwan a year ago.

Unaware about the provision made by law regarding right to prison inmates, she did not ask for anything for her child who had to live without clothes for a week. According to Clause 8 of Prison Act, the government is responsible to take care of inmate's minor children - who are totally dependent on their parents who have to serve prison term.

She even found problem in getting together with her family. After having written a letter to her family members, she could not find out if it reached her parents. "I wrote a letter to my family but I don't know whether they got it or not," she said.

Due to lack of awareness about their legal rights, most of the detainees and prisoners like her are being deprived of their rights. "Because of my poor economic condition I am unable to consult a lawyer," said Ram Bahadur (name changed as per request) at Dillibazar Jail.

According to constitutional provision, prisoners are allowed to defend their cases and can choose their lawyer.

The research conducted among 90 detainees who were in the custody and under

investigation in the period between 12 March to 10 June, 2007 in four detention centers - Dillibazar Prison, Bharatpur Prison and detention centers at Baneshwor Police beat and Metropolitan Police at Hanumandhoka

- revealed that there is rampant violation of rights of detainees because of lack of awareness among them.

The response given by eighty detainees out of ninety when asked if they were aware about their rights or not, fifty seven detainees said they were unaware - which means 71% do not know about their rights.

In a situation when they even don't know their own rights then how could they raise their voice against their violation? For a solution, the concerned persons who are working in sectors like human rights commission need to visit them to make them aware about their rights and it is also the demand of most of the detainees. 63 detainees out of 69 or 91% said they wanted to be guided by experts.

Detainees are also deprived of their rights because of the violation of laws by concerned officials. "All kinds of prisoners, those who have already been convicted by the court and the detainees who are still under investigation are placed in the same place because of lack of infrastructure. Though the number of detainees increase, the capacity of prisons remain the same as it was a decade ago." said Deepak Kumar Joshi, Director of Department of Prison Management.

According to Clause 6 of Prison Act, 2019 there should be different centers for different cases. According to the act, convicted detainees of different age, health (healthy and unhealthy) should not be placed in the same place as far as possible. Detainees who are under investigation and those who are already convicted should be kept separately. The article 11 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates that everyone with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which

he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defense.

Being a member of the UN, Nepal needs to follow the provision made in the declaration but it is not practiced in prisons of Nepal. All the prisoners are treated equally as murders and the pickpocket and kept in the same place. This shows that there is direct violation of National as well International law by the concerned officials.

The condition of overwhelming majority of such detainees under investigation is poorer than the detainees who are convicted. It is clearly written in the declaration that such detainees who are in the process of investigation should be treated as innocent but here they are treated as criminals and are equally treated and kept in the same place. Because of this they will have to face adverse effect on their social prestige. A report presented by Jail Reform Committee, formed under the chairmanship of Badri Ram Bhandari in 2047 had also recommended the concerned department to separate the place for the two kinds of detainees because those who are under investigation might have adverse effect on their social life if they are kept with other inmates.

Besides this, the first and the foremost problem of the detention centers seem to be lack of space for the detainees to stay. If one watches the place one can realize how congested the places are. It is like an animal farm. They keep maximum number of detainees than their capacities. "The capacity of the center is 150, but we have 324 detainees here," said Krishna Prasad Sapkota, chief of Dillibazar Prison. The situation is same in Bharatpur prison at Chitwan. The capacity of the Jail is only hundred and there are 228 prisoners. "This is the common problem of most of the Jails in Nepal," Sapkota added.

Another problem faced by detainees is the long and time-consuming process of getting justice.

"Even after four years of hearing, the court is yet to decide my case. It is a big torture for me. The court should decide the case in time," said Dhamendra Chettri (name changed), another detainee at Bharatpur jail. The same problem is faced by another detainee at Dillibazar jail. "I am here for three years," said 30

years old Magar.

There are many provisions in the national and international laws to safeguard the rights of the detainees and prisoners. The clause 8 of Civil Code (Muluki Ain) protects the rights of detainees.

Similarly, the clauses 3, 6,7,8,9,11,14,15,18,21 of Prison Management Act 2019, Prison Manual 2020, the Constitution of Nepal, International laws, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Convent on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Convention on the Right of the Child, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and other international doctrines have been made for the welfare of the people including detainees.

Unfortunately they are not implemented. "The officials use vulgar words against us," said (Rajan Koirala), a 15-year-old boy of Nuwakot who is kept in the custody on the charge of committing crime at Metropolitan police at Hanumandhoka. "We are not given proper food. Dal is like mixture of yellow ginger, salt and water. The place where we stay is so congested that even air can't pass between us. We are five/six people sitting together in a small room. Number of lavatory is very few in comparison to the people here. In winter season we even can't see the face of the Sun."

According to the law, "no person who is detained during investigation or for trial or for any other reason shall be subjected to physical or mental torture, nor shall be given any cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. Any person so treated shall be compensated in a manner as determined by law."

Although there are many national and international laws, it seems that they only remain as a piece of paper.

"What is the name of this place where we are staying?" this was the question asked by some of the detainees at Baneshwor police beat. It shows some of the detainees even don't know where they are kept in or are told in which detention center they are being kept. The staffs use the word "cage" for the place where the detainees stay.

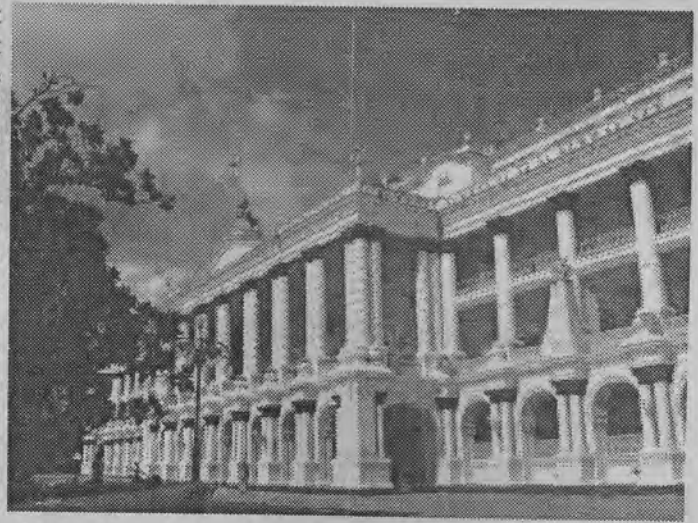
"We accept that we are not running as per the National and International policies and laws provided. Unless and until the new policies and new infrastructure are not provided to us, we are unable to solve the problem of space and other requirement of the detainees, because we are bound to work under limited budget on the basis of old infrastructure." said Deepak Kumar Joshi, Director of Department of Prison Management.

Detainees and prisoners in prisons are given 170 grams of rice and 30 rupees per day, which the prisoners claim are not enough to sustain. "170 grams of rice and 30 rupees are not enough for us, we have to buy our essential goods from outside the prison," said Hari Jaaar Kaat (33) in the Bharatpur Jail.

He added, "We want to earn money doing some work here but lack of opportunity prevents us from doing that. We are also not given any kind of training so that when we are released, we can start new life." This is also one of the main problems faced by them -

when they are released from prison, they don't know how they would be reintegrated in the society.

Detainees also complain that they are not treated humanely by the staffs. The reply of the 85 detainees who participated in the questionnaire showed that 43%



Cabinet Secretariat: No Policy

complained of inhumane behavior.

The detainees also said that they are most concerned about the situation of human rights and wanted the government to address this issue.

The detainees also complained at the lack of library facility or books/magazines, sports facilities and so on.

According to the latest data provided by Department of Prison Management, there are 6228 detainees under investigation. Out of them 5811 are male, 417 are female and 42 are children who are dependent to their parents. According to the data, there are altogether 73 jails, one in each district of Nepal excluding four districts, Bhaktapur, Bara, Sunsari and Dhanusha. There are two prisons each in Kathmandu and Dhading. And there are 33 detention centers in Kathmandu Valley which is under Home Ministry.

(Excerpts of a research conducted for National Human Rights Commission under a scholarship for media person)

A Happy Greetings
On the Auspicious Occasion of
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POSTPONMENT OF CA POLL

Foreign Concern

Nepal's foreign friends express concern over the postponement of CA polls

By A CORRESPONDENT

United States of America, India, European Union and United Nations expressed concern over repeated postponement of polls saying that it erodes credibility of democratic transition

Expressing disappointment at the suspensions of the elections in Nepal, India has said that repeated postponement of elections erodes the credibility and legitimacy of democratic transformation. "We are disappointed at the postponement of the elections in Nepal, which has occurred for the third time. The repeated postponement of elections erodes credibility and affects the process of democratic transformation and legitimization in Nepal," a statement issued by India's Ministry of External Affairs said. India, however, expressed hope that the special session of the parliament would resolve all pertaining issues and go for free and fair elections at the earliest. "We hope that the special session of the Interim Parliament will address all relevant issues democratically, to enable the people of Nepal, who have sacrificed so much, to choose at the earliest their own future and the manner of their governance, through a free and fair election process." Meanwhile, the United Nations Mission in Nepal has stressed on the alliance of the political parties in the face of the suspension of the polls. "Although there will be great disappointment among many people in Nepal and on the part of the international community, what is important now is that the political parties maintain their alliance and go forward to agree on how to create the conditions for the Constituent Assembly election, and on how to sustain and deepen the peace process and its implementation," UNMIN chief Ian Martin said, expressing commitment to sustained support for peace process in Nepal

The United States is disappointed by the decision by the Interim Government of Nepal to suspend the Constituent Assembly election process. The people

of Nepal have been denied a timely opportunity to elect representatives to decide the framework for the future Government of Nepal. It is important that all parties firmly commit themselves to quickly establish a new election date. The United States wishes to express its appreciation to the Election Commission, which met the legal, technical and logistical challenges that the Constituent Assembly election posed. We urge the Government of Nepal, with the full support of all parties, immediately to address the key elements of the Comprehensive Peace Accord which remain unfulfilled and to implement its agreements with various ethnic groups. The period between now and the Constituent Assembly election should be used to show the people of Nepal that the Interim Government is responsive to and can meet its commitments to make a better life for the people of this country.

EU Heads of Mission are deeply disappointed that elections will not take place as scheduled. But this is a new phase and critical opportunity in Nepal's peace process. The European Union is ready to support this new phase and

remains willing to continue helping move the peace process forward. The EU is confident that supporting the peace process is what the overwhelming majority of the Nepalese people want.

"We urge the Government, the political parties, civil society and others to work together in support of the peace process and to honour the agreements and commitments they have already made. Setting out a clear plan for what will need to happen to enable free and fair elections to go ahead in the future will be an important part of building trust and confidence in the peace process. An agreed roadmap will be vital," said European Union in its Press Release.

The Government needs to improve the delivery of basic services in particular health, education and roads. We encourage the parties to develop some high-profile initiatives on basic services which they can jointly support. Development must remain a priority for Government and its international partners. The Nepalese people need to see tangible improvements in their lives, not just political change, if they are to remain confident in the future. We will work with the Government to take this forward.

The Carter Center is disappointed with the announcement of a second postponement of Nepal's constituent assembly election. The Center hopes that Nepal's political leadership will now use the time ahead of them wisely to reach reasonable compromises on key issues in dispute. The peace process will be under severe stress if the delay is too long, and all sides should as quickly as possible agree on and establish a timeline for implementing key steps and holding an election. ■

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Office: Radha Kuti Arcade, 1st Floor, Putalisadak
P.O.Box: 623, Kathmandu, Nepal, Tel.: 4411187, 4412268,
Fax : 977-1-4412961, E-mail: shining@shining.wlink.com.np

NEPALI POLITICS

Polarisation On The Cards

As republican debate heats up, politics gets poised for a new polarisation

By NARAYAN KARKI CHHETRI

On Tuesday morning former Nepali Congress president and the two-time prime minister, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, had a surprise guest at his Bhainsipati residence, on the outskirts of Kathmandu.

The chairman of the monarchist Rastriya Prajatantra Party-Nepal, Rabindra Nath Sharma, had made a quick but long dash from the Budhanilkantha height, on the other outskirt.

Bhattarai is the only surviving founding leader of the country's largest and oldest party. Sharma is the founding leader one of the country's smallest and newest parties.

The meeting of the septuagenarian leader of the only prominent monarchist party with his octogenarian host took place less than twenty four hours after the latter issued a fresh warning ostensibly against moves towards a Red-led republic. (see:box)

"The courtesy call", as Sharma would describe it on return home on a red Pajero, hit the headlines and created ripples in the fragile political atmosphere.

Speculations began doing the rounds about a sharp political polarization.

On the surface of it, Bhattarai does not have a party affiliation. He recently quit the Nepali Congress over the party's endorsement of a republican agenda.

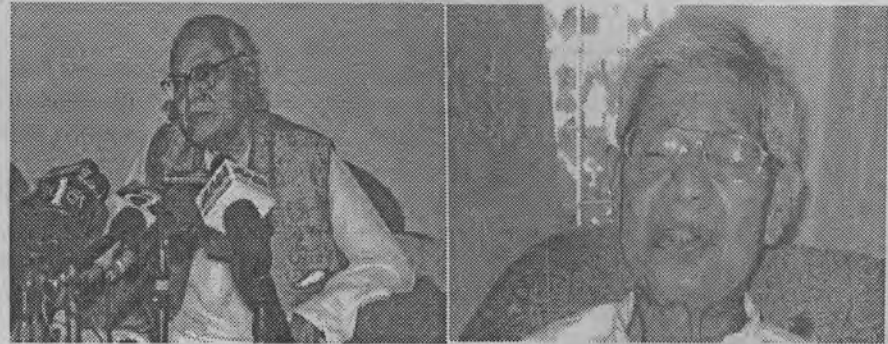
Bhattarai has however urged all to defy "the party discipline" in the special session of parliament when it takes up the Maoist resolution for a republican regime.

"Otherwise," he warned, "our

discuss the Maoist-sponsored republican agenda in its special session.

It does not have an organization strong enough, either, to take on the cadres of the non-Monarchist outfits.

But few can ignore the connections and leverage Sharma



Bhattarai (Left) Sharma (Right): A New Polarisation

sovereignty, national integrity and even independence will be seriously endangered."

That many of the Nepali Congress MPs are supportive of him was evident during the party's latest central committee meeting.

This should embolden Bhattarai who chose to come out of political oblivion and defy own frail health at a critical phase in the country's history.

On the other hand, Sharma's RPP-Nepal does not have a single seat in the interim parliament that is set to

does hold at home and across the influential southern borders, which analysts believe, more than make up for his party's organizational handicap.

It may be premature to expect a dramatic development in the near future, but clearly there are strong undercurrents of a sharp political polarization in the face of the Red raiding the long-standing centrist citadel of a pluralist parliamentary democracy in a constitutional monarchy. ■

GNP demands Neutral Government

Green Nepal Party demanded the dissolution of Interim Parliament and form neutral government to hold elections. In a statement issued by GNP chairman Kuber Sharma said stalling of the elections to the Constituent Assembly due on 22nd November 2007 has exposed the seven party government as well as the Maoist. "Their accusing each other is only a drama to be fool the simple Nepali people. Had they been honest and democratic tradition demands that after announcement of elections dates, a neutral caretaker government must take over to conduct a free and fair elections," said Sharma.

GNP has also demanded the prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala resignation without delay and called for a round table conference of all sections of the people which must be representative of all the various ethnic groups and political parties which will decide about the next government for holding the elections as early as possible. GNP urges friendly governments and United Nations to use their good offices in realizing this objective so that the poor country could be saved from prolonged destabilization and resume its democratic behavior with a fully representative democratic government

Krishna Prasad Bhattarai's Statement

As the November 22 constituent assembly elections remain suspended, an extensive political crisis has arisen in our country. Therefore, the leaders and the workers of all political parties need to demonstrate a strong collective commitment and take an effective step by, if needed, defying even the party discipline.

If in case this is delayed on whatever pretexts, our sovereignty, (national) integrity and even independence would be seriously endangered.

I think that the special session of parliament due to be held on October 11 is a very suitable opportunity to commit oneself towards this through a collective resolve.

Then, once a new and comprehensive chapter of national unity in our country

is heralded,

I politely request my friends who are known as the Maoists only to also contribute to the important campaign of this unity. Besides, I am of the opinion that this campaign would not be complete without the participation of the youth, the intellectuals and the technical community.

I therefore make a special request to them to assume the responsibilities of realizing this goal.

Krishna Prasad Bhattarai

(2) October 8, 2007

प्रस्तावित ६ गतेको संविधानसभाको निर्वाचन नहुने
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आम्बित
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INVESTMENT IN SANITATION

Greater Benefits

Global return on investment in sanitation far exceeds costs

By A CORRESPONDENT

The economic benefits of investing in sanitation are far greater than the cost of investing.

Credit: WaterAid / Marco Betti
The global return on investing in sanitation is projected at roughly \$9 for every \$1 spent, with even higher returns for universal coverage.

On 1 October, the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and WaterAid launched a new report, *Sanitation and economic development: making the case for the MDG orphan*, demonstrating how global return on investment in low-cost sanitation provision would far exceed the costs.

According to the report, the absence of adequate sanitation has a large financial impact - the analysis states that failure to implement the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets of halving the proportion of people without access to safe water and sanitation by 2015 would have an economic cost of around \$38 billion per year, with sanitation accounting for 92% of this value.

The report was formally launched at a public forum at UCLA and attended by international sanitation experts including Dr Albert M. Wright, Former Co-Chair, MDG Task Force on Water and Sanitation.

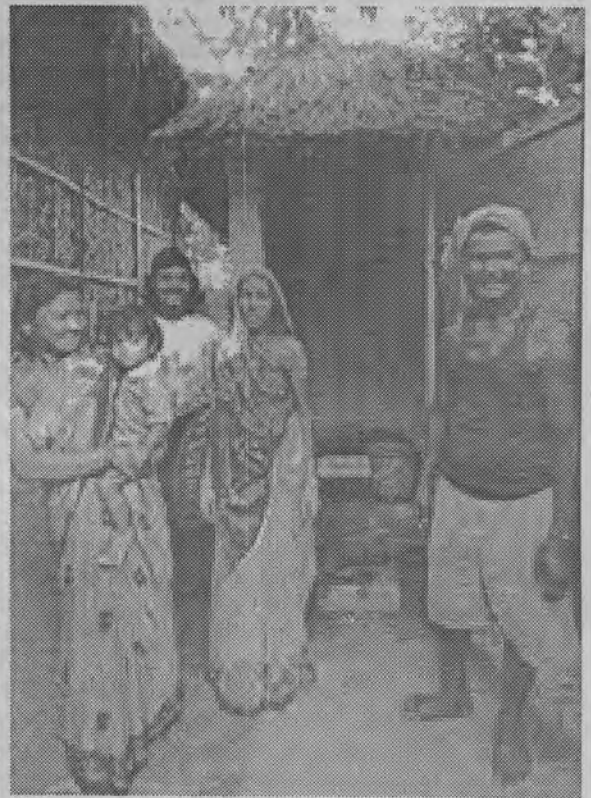
Stephen Turner, WaterAid's Director of Policy, commented, "As the report makes clear, sanitation is one of the most neglected Millennium Development Goals. There are

numerous moral and humanitarian reasons alone which justify a greater investment in sanitation, but this report makes a sound economic argument for investing in low-cost sanitation provision. On reading this report policy makers must act now with moral and economic conviction."

Dr. Steve Commins, editor of the report and a lecturer at UCLA's Department of Urban Planning and research associate for UCLA's Globalization Research Center - Africa, added, "Investments in the provision of sanitation more than pay for

themselves. The international community simply can't afford not to address the global sanitation crisis."

2007 marks the midway point for reaching the MDGs. At the current rate of progress the sanitation target will not be met until 2076. The release of this report is timed to inform public policy debate during the United Nations' International Year of Sanitation in 2008



Toilet : Changing status

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Rangoon isn't Kathmandu

- Shishir Gupta

India's Burma policy has to pass a series of reality checks. Some of them relate to N-E militancy, some to China.

A country's borders define it in more ways than one. Six years ago as a part of then foreign minister, Jaswant Singh's entourage that crossed over a narrow ramshackle bridge from Moreh, India's outpost, to enter into Burma's Tamu, one could not help noticing that even the border town's civil administration was handled by a retired major of the ruling State Peace and Development Committee. After inaugurating the historic 160 km Tamu-Kalewa road built by Indian Border Roads the same day, it was the signboard at the Royal Mandalay Palace, seat of the last hereditary Burmese King Mindon, that confirmed for the visitors how strong was the ruling military junta's grip. Written in red in English, it said: "The Tatmadaw (army) shall never let the nation down."

These past days, US President George Bush and the Indian Left have joined hands to ask New Delhi to use its influence to get the Burmese junta to the dialogue table with the dissident monks fighting for restoration of democracy. But the present foreign minister, Pranab Mukherjee's response is a predictable reiteration of India's policy of non-intervention. It is not that India does not support democracy. The fact is that New Delhi has precious little option, given Burma's influence in containing militant groups operating from across the border in the Northeast.

Since the launch of Operation Goldenbird in 1995 on the tip of Mizoram, the ruling SPDC has made significant efforts not to allow Indian Northeast groups like NSCN (I-M), NSCN (K), ULFA and PLA to establish training camps in Burma. The fact is that at least thrice between 2002 and 2005, the Burmese army suffered serious casualties in hunting down Indian militants in the Sagaing division across Nagaland. By establishing radio links between its Northwest Command and Indian Army's III Corps at Moreh, the junta routinely warns the other side about militant crossings or arms shipments. Not only has the junta taken action time

and again against ULFA camps in the Vijaynagar salient across the Arunachal Pradesh border, it has put a check on arms supply to the Indian insurgents from distant Ranong on the Thailand border via Myanmar. Operation Leech in 1998 in which Arakanese gun-runners were covertly killed by the Indian forces was a direct result of this cooperation.

If internal security was paramount to the Indo-Burmese equation, the growing Chinese influence in Burma, after the latter was shunned by many countries in 1989, has also alarmed South Block. Sharing a 2204 km border with Burma, China is the lifeline of the ruling junta and supplies it with everything from food grains to weapons. Much to New Delhi's chagrin, the security scenario got more complex when in 2000 Pakistan also supplied weapons worth \$ 2.5 million to Burma. Left with no options, India jumped in and supplied 105 light field guns, 5.56 mm rifles, machine guns and four naval surveillance aircraft. It is only because of this deft thinking that New Delhi has an assurance that the Chinese will not get infrastructure projects west of Chindwin river, a tributary of the mighty Irrawaddy and also close to the Indian border. Burma is involved in Mekong-Ganga Cooperation, seen as an alternative to China's Kunming initiative. It has also agreed to act as a strategic gateway from India to Asean countries.

In 2005 the ruling junta allowed the Indian navy's surveillance planes to overfly the Coco Islands to satisfy New Delhi's long-standing apprehension that Burma had allowed China a station on this island to listen in on tests at the Interim Missile Testing Range at Chandipur. And Pakistan's ham-handed attempt to take over the mazaar of the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, in Rangoon was rebuffed by the Burmese government.

Although the EU-US wants India to repeat its Nepal performance in Burma, India knows that the two situations are very different. The fact is that the strategic levers at India's command in Nepal are missing in Burma. Indo-Nepal trade stands at \$ 2 billion with Kathmandu relying totally on New Delhi

for fuel supplies and 70 per cent of its exports and 65 per cent of its imports. India may share a 1338 km border with Burma, but bilateral trade is a sluggish \$ 569 million, with Burma having direct sea access and strategic lines of infrastructure and communication to Kunming in China.

India could have played the kind of role it did in Nepal if it had utilised all the opportunities offered by Burma. In 1997, Burma agreed to Indian assistance in the upgrade of road communication in the Kachin state, Chin state, upgrade of railway systems, development of port facilities and inland water terminals in the Chindwin and Kaladan rivers. After the Asian meltdown, Burma even offered its proven gas blocks in the Bay of Bengal after Thailand decided to give them up. A decade down the line, the Kaladan multi-modal link is still to be completed, the Tamanthi hydro-electric project is still to take off and even the Vajpayee government's decision to allow import of 50,000 tonnes of sticky rice for the northeastern states only exists on paper. And the decision to acquire gas blocks for exploration purposes is still being contested between Foreign Secretary Shiv Menon and Petroleum Secretary M.S. Srinivasan.

The UPA political leadership, in particular the Congress leaders, may privately be supportive of Aung San Suu Kyi and the monks now on Rangoon's streets, but overtly it will have to deal with whosoever is in power; such is the security calculus. New Delhi also knows that with the Burmese army controlling every part of society, transfer of power in that country will have to come through negotiations and not through revolution or isolation of the military regime. New Delhi has not forgotten that two years after Suu Kyi was awarded the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding in 1993, the Burmese army suddenly withdrew in the midst of Operation Goldenbird and the surrounded militants escaped from the Indian dragnet. It does not want to visit that nightmare again. This article appears in Indian Express.

<http://www.indianexpress.com/story/223207.html>

अब... १* रु. १ मै बचत खाता



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