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SPOTLIGHT

THE WEEKLY NATIONAL NEWSMAGAZINE

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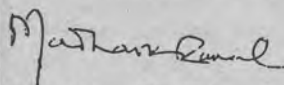
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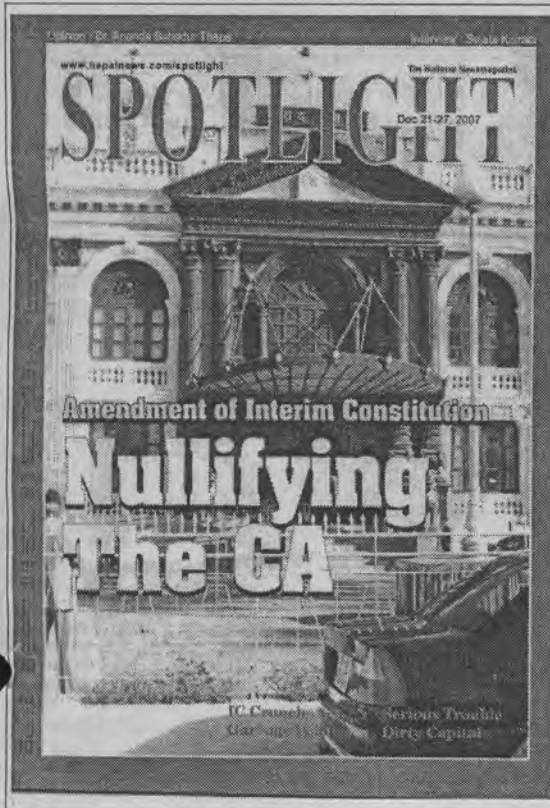
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The Seven Party Alliance have, once again, agreed to amend the constitution so that this unconstitutional parliament may declare Nepal a Republic to be ratified by the first meeting of the Constituent Assembly. The CPN (Maoists) too have agreed to rejoin the SPA government. This new development has cleared all obstacles to SPAM's unrestricted authoritarian rule in the country for any length of time. The proposed elections to the constituent assembly before the end of Chaitra 2064, (in less than four months), cannot be accomplished by this SPAM government. According to a senior SPAM politician neither the SPA nor the Maoist are willing to go to the polls. This drama of consensus was only to take the poor Nepalis and the donor countries for a ride. As things stand now this government has no control over the law and order situation in the whole country and they won't be able to hold the elections in the capital valley even. Moreover, the Madhesi behavior is a loud and clear writing on the wall, warning the SPAM government. If one cannot read that one must be blind. And what force is aiding and abetting the Madhesis is also crystal clear on the horizon. It is also widely rumored at high places in Kathmandu that those surrounding the Head of SPAM government would not let him use his judgment as they are not at all keen to relinquish their hold on the administration. And poor head of the government, as recent events have shown, has even poorer judgment. Consequently, the poor country and the millions of poor Nepalis have to go on suffering if they cannot rise against the tyranny of the SPAM. There are people who seem quite unhappy at the indifferences of the so called big donors and democratic countries who are unabashedly not only condoning but supporting the anti national behavior of self oriented politicians. For those who understand international politics there is nothing strange in such a behavior There are examples galore to prove that Nepal is not the only country to suffer from the hypocritical behavior of big countries. No country sacrifices even on an iota of its interest to help the needy and poor countries in distress. Since the money they provide as assistance cannot be best utilized when the country is in turmoil, millions of rupees would go waste as proved by past experiences, if peace, law and order are not restored. Omens in the Nepali sky don't warrant them and if the poor people are not benefited it is their misfortune. What can the donors do about it? As such it is the people themselves who have to rise up and defend their rights and privileges. Politicians who shout at the top of their voice in the floor of the parliament criticizing the government have to go to the streets and lead the people to bring down the government that is taking the country to the dogs. Since the elections to the C.A. are indispensable and this government is neither keen nor competent to hold them, the country urgently needs a new caretaker government of honest and patriotic Nepalis to conduct a free and fair elections. Our security forces, the army and the police can no more afford to stay as silent spectators and must take upon themselves the responsibility to impress upon SPAM to make room for the new government without delay. And it is really high time for the powers that be to become more sensitive to the miseries of millions of poor Nepalis and for a change, stop supporting the corrupt and incompetent government and help and to bring it in an honest and competent government to power so that the Nepali people might get redress from their unending miseries and look forward to a better future.


Madhav K. Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher



Biased Point

Your cover story on Amendment of Interim Constitution: Nullifying the CA (Spotlight December 21-27), and political crisis in Nepal is biased as you tried to disgrace the great sacrifice of Nepalese people. In a revolution, there is no question of following rules, constitutions and regulations. It is the wish of the people and mandate of the people, which guides the nation. I don't agree with you that the government is nullifying the Constituent Assembly by amending the interim constitution. This government does not need any constitution since it has mandate of the popular revolution.

*Subodh Singh
Via-email*

hostile a large number of its friends in Nepal's northern hill adjoining China. India has committed a blunder and it will have to pay a long term price for the short term gains. If India is really concerned about its security interest, it must back the forces of stability. One can predict the actions of reasonable persons but one cannot say to what extent a fool can go. In Nepal, India's policy seems to be not in the hand of reasonable persons so it can go up to any extent. Of course, Nepalese are paying the price now. Ultimately, it will be India which has to bear all the consequences. I would like to thank editor of Spotlight for showing the right way for our southern neighbor India. His words might be bitter but they are aimed at greater good.

*Binaya Jha
Melbourne Australia
Via-email*

Strange Politics

It is very strange to read the political analysis about Nepal (Spotlight December 21-27). I agree with you that Nepalis politicians have to take responsibility for dismantling all democratic values and institutions in the country. Actually, politicians betrayed the nation and people for the sake of power. Prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala who took oath of his office from the King to protect the constitution finally played a role to destroy it. What drama Nepal has seen in the last one and half years is going to be a new phenomenon for the history of the world. As all the political leaders have set bad precedent to remain in power, it opened a door for others to follow suit.

*Sangita Rai
London Via-email*

India Exposed

I would like to thank chief editor of Spotlight for exposing India's suicidal role in Nepal. No rationale person can understand what Indians will gain by supporting, abetting and promoting

violent forces in Nepal. Although Indian leaders have been preaching that they don't have any other interest other than to see stable and prosperous Nepal, they have been following exactly the policy which makes Nepal unstable, poor and weak. In the last one decade, India has promoted extremists, terrorists and regional groups to shake the stable and strong institutions like monarchy, Nepal Army and democratic institutions- which are known to have pro-Indian leaning. In the name of making India secure, Indians have been following opposite policy to create chaos in its neighborhood. It is very difficult for reasonable persons to understand how a weak and chaotic Nepal guarantees India's security interest? At a time when it has already made India's friendly institutions weaker and unable to cope with the forces hostile to Nepal as well as India at the time of crisis, only god can save India's interest in Nepal. India is now playing Madhesi card in Nepal's southern plain promoting separatist movement and anarchist forces. By supporting a faction, India is making

Future Leader

The interview of Sujata Koirala was quite interesting. It shows that she has all the characters to become a future



leader in the party. From defending, B.P. Koirala's national reconciliation to arguing in favor of giving some space to monarchy, Sujajta has shown she has got the ideas. What I did not understand was the way she has been targeting home minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula who is just a junior colleague of his father's cabinet. She can make this complaint to her father. No need to engage in public bashing.

*Binita Adhikari
Via-email*

Ambitious Modification Proposed In Melamchi

The issue of the Melamchi Water Supply Project is likely to gather momentum with a group of experts proposing a modification in the ongoing project to make it at least six times bigger in terms of water supply and generate at least 225 MW of electricity. A group of water experts has proposed a modification in the \$500 million project to make it six times bigger in terms of water supply and to include extra components like hydropower and irrigation in it. The ambitious concept is going to be presented to the Natural Resource Committee of the parliament on Monday. "We are going to brief the lawmakers on the new version of project," said Bhushan Tuladhar, the executive director of Environment and Public Health Organization. He said that the modification was necessary because the current infrastructure of the project will be insufficient to meet the demands of the Valley when the project is completed. "Instead of completing the project as per the original plan and start looking for another source of water supply by the time the project gets completed, it should be modified in a way that it could serve the Valley for several decades to come and include additional components like electricity generation and irrigation to the project," he said. According to the plan proposed by the experts, water from two other rivers would be added to the water from the Melamchi River and used for electricity generation before it reaches Kathmandu. If the water becomes surplus in the beginning, which is most likely, it would be used for irrigation in the Terai.

He added that a detail study is needed in this regard, but the government's positive attitude is needed first before going for such a study. "Without the government's support, the new proposal won't move forward as it demands modification in the ongoing project. Further, the modification will also be a matter of concern for donor agencies," he said. *The Himalayan Times daily reports*

Murarka Freed By Abductors

Businessman Mahesh Murarka, CEO of Pashupati Paints, returned home safely on Saturday (Dec 22), five days after being abducted by an unidentified criminal gang from Baneshwor area while returning home. Reports quoted family sources as saying that Murarka came back home alone at about 9 pm. They however did not disclose further details, only adding that he is physically all right but in little bit of mental stress. Murarka was abducted while he was traveling in his car with license plate number Ba 3 Cha 3298. A blue vehicle had intercepted his car at Maitidevi area. Soon an armed group dragged his driver out of the car and took Murarka along with the vehicle. But the car was later found abandoned at Pingalasthan in the same evening. Immediately after the abduction, Murarka's family members had received phone calls demanding ransom of Rs 50 million from Mumbai, India. The police had raided dozens of locations within the capital valley in the following days but without success. Police suspect that local criminal gang under the instruction of organized crime group in India had carried out the abduction. *Compiled from reports*

Landmark Judgment In Favor Of Sexual Minorities

The Supreme Court, on Friday (Dec 21), passed a landmark judgment in favor of the sexual minorities including



trans-sexuals, bisexuals, gays and lesbians. The apex court asked the government to give recognition to the people of third sex when giving citizenship certificates or other state benefits. They can now use their own sexual identities when receiving such

certificates. The Court asked the government to protect the rights and recognition of the people of sexual minorities. A division bench comprising two judges Balaram KC and Pawan Kumar Ojha delivered the verdict in response to a Public Interest Litigation filed seven months ago by Sunil Babu Pant, president of Blue Diamond Society. The bench has ordered the government to bring out necessary legal changes to ensure the rights of sexual minorities. It said that their rights must be protected as guaranteed by the constitution and international conventions. On the issue of allowing same sex marriages, the SC has asked the government to carry out studies and has also asked to form a committee to carry out the study. Meanwhile, Pant said that SC's judgment has given the freedom and recognition to sexual minorities. He hoped that the judgment will be fully implemented by the government. Pant claimed that various studies show 8 to 10 percent of the people belong to the sexual minority group. *Compiled from reports*

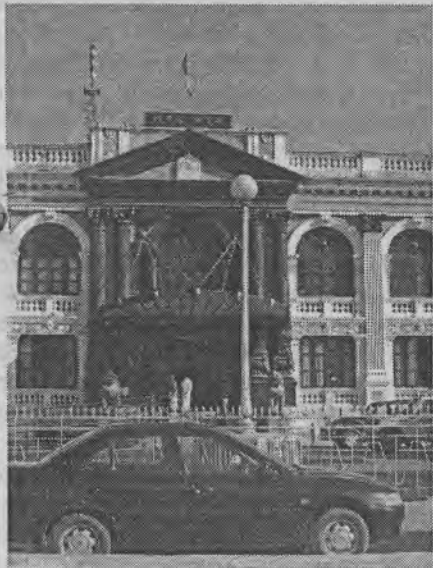
India Denies Susta Encroachment Charge

India has categorically claimed that it has not encroached upon Susta and challenged the Nepal government to show proof of encroachment. The Indian side made this claim at a three-day meeting of the joint technical committee, which concluded in New Delhi. Chief of the Survey Department of Nepal Toyanath Baral and surveyor general of India CM Gopal Rao headed the Nepali and Indian delegations, respectively. The minutes of the meeting were not signed. Baral said he requested the Indian side to keep the Susta border on status quo according to 2024 BS (1968 AD) line, to which India replied that it will show papers on the status of the disputed border. The Indian side also asked the Nepali side to show papers and reference points on the Susta border, but the latter could not present any such document, Indian officials claimed. The Indian side also insisted on keeping 1968 AD as the cut-off date for maintaining the borderline. According to a Nepali delegate, Rajaram Chhatkuli, efforts are

being made to collect relevant papers and revenue receipts from the Nepalis living in areas adjoining Susta. Chhatkuli said India categorically denied encroachment in Susta. During the joint-secretary-level meeting of the technical committee held two years ago, India had offered to present documents on Susta and Kalapani and asked Nepal to do the same. Despite two consecutive meetings, Nepal has been unable to present proof of its claims, an Indian official said. Meanwhile, Baral said the tenure of the joint-technical committee was ending this month. He said this was the last meeting of the committee and claimed that the committee had solved all other problems save the border dispute. He added that the committee had urged the governments of both countries to set up a permanent mechanism comprising the director of Nepal's survey department and surveyor general of India to resolve border disputes and to repair and re-install 8,000 border pillars. Fifteen Nepali officials attended the meeting.

The Himalayan Times daily reports SMEC Says It Cannot Give Free Power

The developers of 750 MW strong West Seti hydropower project, the Snowy Mountain Engineering Corporation



(SMEC) has said that it cannot provide the ten percent free power from the project. It has written to the government that it is technically not possible to

provide the power, according to sources at the Ministry of Water Resources. The parliamentary panel had earlier urged the government to obtain ten percent free power instead of equivalent money from the project. *Kantipur daily reports*

Petrol And Gas Prices To Be Adjusted With Int'l Level

The government is considering adjusting the domestic price of petrol and cooking gas with international level. As per a draft being discussed by the Finance Ministry, the prices of kerosene and diesel, too, will be increased in phases. The gas sector will be left for the private sector. In kerosene, the government is planning to provide cash grant by identifying targeted groups. In order to resolve the petroleum price crisis, the government is introducing a package policy to raise Rs 3 billion worth public bond, increase price of gas and petrol and liberalize the whole sector. The policy will be put into effect after getting it endorsed by the cabinet. The Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) owes Rs 2.34 billion to Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) in which it has to pay interest at 9 percent rate. Officials say, bonds can be floated at lower level of interest in the domestic market. Meanwhile, Radhes Pant, president of Nepal Bankers Association, said that the banks could be interested in buying the bonds if they are accompanied with concrete plans. There is also a plan to receive Rs 500 million loan for NOC from Nepal Bank Limited. The cooking gas sector will then be handed over to private sector, who can reach pact with Indian suppliers to bring them into the country. It is said this will lead to rise in cooking gas price by around Rs 250 per cylinder. *Kantipur daily reports*

Rebellion If Maoists Tie Up With Royalists: YCL

President of the Maoist-affiliated Young Communist League Ganesh Man Pun has said rebellion is the only answer against the parent organization if the party joined hands with hardcore royalists. Pun, who participated in the YCL Mechi Mahakali Republican youth march, said this at a press conference organized by the YCL district committee on Wednesday (Dec 19). "YCL will revolt against the CPN-Maoist if it joins hands with the royalists calling them



nationalists." "There is always a possibility of reforming oneself, no matter what background one has, and a chance should also be given. However, I doubt that hardcore royalists can ever become nationalists." He said the persons indicted by the high-level Rayamajhi commission should not be accepted in the party and added that all those who wish to come forward by accepting the republic and new Nepal are welcome. Earlier this month, CPN (M) Chairman Prachanda called for a new unity between nationalists, including those associated with the former royal regime. *The Himalayan Times daily reports*

Rhino Census In March

The Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation is going to conduct a new rhino census in March 2008 within three years of the previous head count, even though the census used to be carried out in every five years. The census will begin in Bardiya National Park in the first week of March and it will begin in Chitwan National Park (CNP) in the second week, chief of Tiger and Rhino Conservation, Nepal Nature Conservation Fund, Ram Chandra Nepal said. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and a British organization will extend help for the census. The number of rhinos was 544 at CNP in 2000 and the number had plunged to 372 in 2005. Statistics say poachers killed 94 rhinos and 66 rhinos died of natural causes within the five years. The first rhino census was conducted in 1994. *Leading dailies report* ■



Nepalese children enjoying Christmas *Annapurna Post*

FINANCE MINISTER DR RAM SHARAN MAHAT on Saturday (Dec 22) said a special plan is being formulated to pay off the Nepal Oil Corporation's dues to the Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) and a bill will be introduced to hand over the petroleum trade to the private sector. He said the government cannot bear the huge losses incurred by NOC in petroleum trade forever. Speaking at a program organized at the Reporters' Club, Mahat said: "To ensure a normal supply of petroleum in the market, there is no other alternative but to match the domestic price with the international price. The government is actively working on it." Mahat also said the government was not thinking along the lines of importing oil from China. "It is cheaper for us to import oil from India and we have to pay money for our imports anyway." Mahat also said that the country should not only be caught up in political matters but focus on economic policy, too. He claimed that there had been a remarkable progress in the economic sector this year. "This year, revenue has increased by 21 percent. Apart from tourism, agricultural production has also increased," he said.

THE NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (NHRC) has said it will excavate some spots in Alle forest inside the Shivpuri National Park, some 20-km north of Kathmandu,

suspecting there could be mass graves of persons who reportedly disappeared from Nepal Army's Bhairabnath Battalion. NHRC spokesperson Gauri Pradhan said the rights watchdog was planning to carry out excavation at some spots inside Shivpuri forest with the help of forensic experts on Friday. He said foreign experts would also be roped in, if necessary, for the investigation. NHRC members today discussed the investigation process with senior police officials and the scientists at Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (NAST). According to Pradhan, the NHRC has once again requested the government to seal off the suspected areas in Shivpuri where human rights activists had found suspicious materials that could have been used for the cremation of detainees after murder. Various human rights organizations including the NHRC and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights have said that 49 persons detained at the Maharajgunj-based battalion have gone missing. On the other hand, the army has denied its hand in the disappearance of the 49 people.

THE HEARING AGAINST SUSPECTED international serial killer Charles Gurumukh Sobhraj has been extended for a few months. The bench was supposed to pronounce the verdict on Wednesday (Dec 19) but it issued an order to reopen a fake passport possession case against Sobhraj. "I am surprised as we did not expect an extension of hearing. All our efforts have gone in vain," Sobhraj's lawyer Rajaram Dhakal said. "Reopening of the fake passport case would have been appropriate in the initial phase when the apex court had started the hearing," Dhakal added. A division bench of justices Anup Raj Sharma and Top Bahadur Magar said there was a need to reopen fake passport possession case against Sobhraj. The case was scrapped by the Kathmandu District Court and was upheld by the Patan Appellate Court. The lower courts have convicted Sobhraj of killing American National Connie Jo Bronzich in Nepal in 1975. The bench said there was a need to reopen hearing on fake passport possession case, as there was contradiction between the murder case verdict and fake passport possession case verdict. The bench, however, said there was no need to proceed hearing in the contempt of court case filed by Sobhraj against the government. Sobhraj had filed contempt charge against the government as he claimed that the government authorities had produced fabricated documents in order to mislead the court.

A FORMER CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA has suggested that subjecting judges of Supreme Court (SC) to the parliamentary hearing is a wrong practice. "It is not wise to hold inquiry into judges by any branch of government except by the judicial council," said PN Bhagwati, who was recently in Kathmandu to attend a program by Nepal Bar Association. He said that the provision in the interim constitution, which states that judges of the apex court have to go through parliamentary hearing is not correct. ■



SPOTLIGHT Family extends happy wishes to Crown Prince Paras on the occasion of his 37th birthday

HIMALAYA AND EARTHQUAKE

■ Dr. AB Thapa

The convergence of the Indian plate northward into the Eurasian plate has resulted in the formation of the Himalayas. The Indus-Tsampo suture (ITS) acted as the primary locale of plate interaction and convergence. There are two main faults running from east to west. Upper one is the Main Central Thrust (MCT) and the lower one the Main Boundary Thrust (MBT). It is regarded that the rocks between the ITS and the MCT, and the rocks between the MCT and the MBT represent successive slices of the Indian plate that have been accreted into the Eurasian plate.

It is considered that since the closing of the Indo-Tsangpo suture, the active plate boundary has shifted progressively southward, first to the Main Central Thrust and more recently to the Main Boundary Thrust. The more northerly MCT represents the older, presently less active boundary, while the MBT represents the present active plate boundary. Thus, periodic great earthquakes (magnitude 8+) occurring in this region are thought to have originated on the MBT.

Plate Tectonics

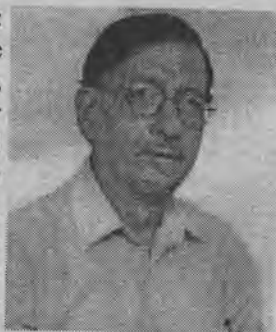
Plate Tectonics is based on theory that the outer shell of the earth is made up of thin rigid plates moving relative to one another. The theory of plate tectonics was formulated during the early 1960s. It revolutionized the field of geology. Scientists have successfully used it to explain many geological events, such as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions as well as mountain building and the formation of the oceans and continents.

Tectonic plates are made of either oceanic or continental crust and the very top part of the mantle, a layer of rock inside the earth. This crust and upper mantle form what is called the lithosphere. Under the lithosphere lies a fluid rock layer called the asthenosphere. The rocks in the asthenosphere move in a fluid manner because of the high temperatures and pressures found there. Tectonic plates are able to float upon the fluid asthenosphere because they are made of rigid lithosphere.

Now, there are seven large and several small plates. The largest plates include the Pacific plate, the North American plate, the Eurasian plate, the Antarctic plate, and the African plate. Smaller plates include the Cocos plate, the Nazca plate, the Caribbean plate, and the Gorda plate. Plate sizes vary a great deal. The Cocos plate is only 2000 km wide, while the Pacific plate is the largest plate nearly 14,000 km wide.

Geologists study how tectonic plates move relative to a fixed spot in the earth's mantle and how they move relative to each other. The first type of motion is called absolute motion, and it can lead to strings of volcanoes. The second kind of motion, called relative motion, leads to different types

of boundaries between plates: plates moving apart from one another form a divergent boundary, plates moving toward one another form a convergent boundary, and plates that slide along one another form a transform plate boundary. In rare instances, three plates may meet in one place, forming a triple junction. Current plate movement is making the Pacific Ocean



smaller, the Atlantic Ocean larger, and the Himalayan mountains taller.

Driving Force of Plate Motion

Although plate tectonics has explained most of the surface features of the earth, the driving force of plate tectonics is still unclear. According to geologists plate movement should include three forces. Those three forces are the pull of gravity; convection currents, or the circulating movement of fluid rocky material in the mantle; and thermal plumes, or vertical columns of molten rocky material in the mantle.

Cause of Earthquakes

Earthquake, shaking of the Earth's surface is caused by rapid movement of the Earth's rocky outer layer. Earthquakes occur when energy stored within the Earth, usually in the form of strain in rocks, suddenly releases. This energy is transmitted to the surface of the Earth by earthquake waves.

Most earthquakes result from the sudden slip along geologic faults. The faults slip because of movement of the Earth's tectonic plates. The rocky tectonic plates move very slowly, floating on top of a weaker rocky layer. As the plates collide with each other or slide past each other, pressure builds up within the rocky crust. Earthquakes occur when pressure within the crust increases slowly over hundreds of years and finally exceeds the strength of the rocks. Earthquakes also occur when human activities, such as the filling of reservoirs, increase stress in the Earth's crust.

In 1911 American seismologist Harry Fielding Reid studied the effects of the April 1906 California earthquake. He proposed the elastic rebound theory to explain the generation of certain earthquakes that scientists now know occur in tectonic areas, usually near plate boundaries. This theory states that during an earthquake, the rocks under strain suddenly break, creating a fracture along a fault. When a fault slips, movement in the crustal rock causes vibrations. The slip changes the local strain out into the surrounding rock. The change in strain leads to aftershocks (smaller earthquakes that occur after the initial earthquake), which are produced by further slips of the main fault or adjacent faults in the

strained region. The slip begins at the focus and travels along the plane of the fault, radiating waves out along the rupture surface. On each side of the fault, the rock shifts in opposite directions. The fault rupture travels in irregular steps along the fault; these sudden stops and starts of the moving rupture give rise to the vibrations that propagate as seismic waves. After the earthquake, strain begins to build again until it is greater than the forces holding the rocks together, then the fault snaps again and causes another earthquake.

Human Activities

Fault rupture is not the only cause of earthquakes; human activities can also be the direct or indirect cause of significant earthquakes. Injecting fluid into deep wells for waste disposal, filling reservoirs with water, and underground nuclear test blasts can, in limited circumstances, lead to earthquakes. These activities increase the strain within the rock near the location of the activity so that rock slips and slides along pre-existing faults more easily. While earthquakes caused by human activities may be harmful, they can also provide useful information. Prior to the Nuclear Test Ban treaty, scientists were able to analyze the travel and arrival times of P waves from known earthquakes caused by underground nuclear test blasts. Scientists used this information to study earthquake waves and determine the interior structure of the Earth.

Scientists have determined that as water level in a reservoir increases, water pressure in pores inside the rocks along local faults also increases. The increased pressure may cause the rocks to slip, generating earthquakes. Beginning in 1935, the first detailed evidence of reservoir-induced earthquakes came from the filling of Lake Mead behind Hoover Dam on the Nevada-Arizona state border. Earthquakes were rare in the area prior to construction of the dam, but seismographs registered at least 600 shallow-focus earthquakes between 1936 and 1946. Most reservoirs, however, do not cause earthquakes.

Earthquake Scales

Earthquake size can be measured by seismic intensity as well, a measure of the effects of an earthquake. Before the advent of seismographs, people could only judge the size of an earthquake by its effects on humans or on geological or human-made structures. Such observations are the basis of earthquake intensity scales first set up in 1873 by Italian seismologist M. S. Rossi and Swiss scientist F. A. Forel. These scales were later superseded by the Mercalli scale, created in 1902 by Italian seismologist Giuseppe Mercalli. In 1931 American seismologists H. O. Wood and Frank Neumann adapted the standards set up by Giuseppe Mercalli to California conditions and created the Modified Mercalli scale. Many seismologists around the world still use the Modified Mercalli scale to measure the size of an earthquake based on its effects. The Modified Mercalli scale rates the ground shaking by a general description of human reactions to the shaking and of structural damage that occur during a tremor. This information is gathered from local reports, damage to specific structures, landslides, and peoples' descriptions of the damage.

Modified Mercalli and Richter Scales

The Modified Mercalli and Richter scales are used to rate and compare the intensity of earthquakes. The Modified

Mercalli scale is somewhat subjective, because the apparent intensity of an earthquake depends on how far away from its center the observer is located. Rating intensities from I to XII, it describes and rates earthquakes in terms of human reactions and observations. The Richter scale measures the motion of the ground 100 km (60 mi) from the earthquake's epicenter, or the location on the earth's surface directly above where the earthquake occurred. The rating scale is logarithmic; each increase of 1 on the scale represents a tenfold increase in the motion of the ground.

All magnitude scales give relative numbers that have no physical units. The first widely used seismic magnitude scale was developed by the American seismologist Charles Richter in 1935. The Richter scale measures the amplitude, or height, of seismic surface waves. The scale is logarithmic, so that each successive unit of magnitude measure represents a tenfold increase in amplitude of the seismogram patterns. This is because ground displacement of earthquake waves can range from less than a millimeter to many meters. Richter adjusted for this huge range in measurements by taking the logarithm of the recorded wave heights. So, a magnitude 5 Richter measurement is ten times greater than a magnitude 4; while it is 10×10 , or 100 times greater than a magnitude 3 measurement.

Today, seismologists prefer to use a different kind of magnitude scale, called the moment magnitude scale, to measure earthquakes. Seismologists calculate moment magnitude by measuring the seismic moment of an earthquake, or the earthquake's strength based on a calculation of the area and the amount of displacement in the slip. The moment magnitude is obtained by multiplying these two measurements. It is more reliable for earthquakes that measure above magnitude 7 on other scales that refer only to part of the seismic waves, whereas the moment magnitude scale measures the total size. The moment magnitude of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake was 7.6; the Alaskan earthquake of 1964, about 9.0; and the 1995 Kôbe, Japan, earthquake was a 7.0 moment magnitude; in comparison, the Richter magnitudes were 8.3, 9.2, and 6.8, respectively for these tremors.

Few Suggestions

Earthquakes cannot be prevented, but the damage they cause can be greatly reduced. Adequate precautions, such as education, emergency planning, and constructing stronger, more flexible, safely designed structures, can limit the loss of life and decrease the damage caused by earthquakes. Our country, like many other countries, must establish earthquake safety and regulatory agency. Such agency should develop codes for engineers to use in order to regulate planning and construction works.

Risk assessment maps, such as geologic hazard and seismic hazard zoning maps, should be made to understand where faults are located and how to build near them safely. The geologic hazard maps should be used to predict the average ground motions in a particular area and apply these predicted motions during engineering design phases of major construction projects. Risk assessment maps should also be used to avoid building on major faults or to make sure that proper earthquake bracing is added to buildings constructed in zones that are prone to strong tremors. ■

NEIGHBOURS

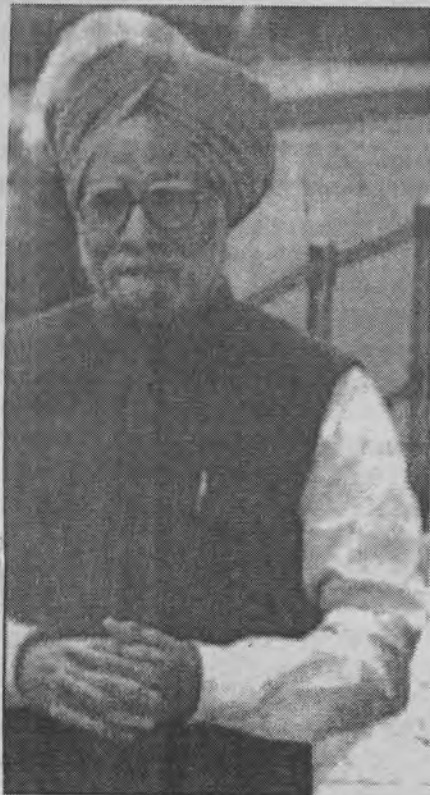
Cautious Words

India and China have been quick to react to the recent seven-party deal. But the tone is different.

By SUSHIL SHARMA

Two countries that matter most to Nepal are India and China. It became clear one more time this week.

As the powerful west including the United States got engrossed in the Christmas celebrations, it was business as usual for Nepal's big, rival,



Indian PM Dr. Singh: Cautious Words neighbours.

Less than 24 hours after Nepal's seven parties inked an agreement in Baluwatar to virtually evict the king from Narayanhiti, India came out with a statement that was conspicuously silent on the fate of monarchy.

The external affairs ministry spokesman's statement lauded the fresh election commitment, dubbing it "an encouraging development in the right direction."

To him, it was important that seven-party agreement "accorded CA elections the central importance."

In Nepal, however, even as the central importance was being attached to the move to incorporate "federal democratic republic" in the interim constitution, most people and the parties alike remain only cautiously optimistic, if at all, about the polls.

A day after the Indian response to the seven-party deal came the Chinese reaction.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Qin Gang welcomed the "progress made in the peace process" of Nepal.

"As a good neighbour, we sincerely hope the peace process will keep going to realize the political stability and economic development."

But going by a Beijing date-lined report by the official Xinhua news agency (The Kathmandu Post, December 26), the spokesperson did not refer to the 23-point agreement of the seven parties of Nepal.

While reiterating the traditional principles of "non-interference in other country's internal affairs", the spokesperson was silent on the constituent assembly elections commitment, unlike her Indian counterpart.



Chinese PM: Different tone

But like the latter, the Chinese too did not feel the need to make reference to the republic move.

The two big neighbours that have the highest stakes in Nepal remain tight-lipped on an issue that is shaking the earth beneath the Nepal Himalayas.

But, coincidentally, both speak out and apparently share views on the importance of "stability" in their strategically located neighbour.

India expressed "readiness, as ever, to assist in all possible ways Nepal's transition to a democratic, stable, peaceful and prosperous State."

China was quick to follow, "we will continue to play constructive role in the peace and stability of Nepal."

The future Nepal including that of the beleaguered monarchy will depend on what roles the two neighbours plan to play – and how.

As of now, there are confusing signals. Quipped a regional analyst, "the mutually wary neighbours are as confused as the ordinary Nepali people are."

It will take some time before the dust settles and the picture becomes clear, he added.



Delegates at the Forum: Searching commonalities

CHINA'S TIBETAN CULTURE-KATHMANDU FORUM Northern Commonalities

Nepal and Tibetan Autonomous Region of China share commonalities in geography, religion and culture. Prolonged instability in Nepal will have a spillover effect to its northern neighbor

By KESHAB POUDEL

At a time when Nepal's northern neighbor Tibetan Autonomous Region of China has been making all round progress with over 12 percent economic growth by preserving its religious and traditional culture, Nepal has been passing through a very critical phase of its survival as political instability and chaos continues.

Any prolonged political trouble and instability in Nepal—which shares more than 1400 kilometers border with Tibet—is definite to have some kind of repercussion in Tibetan Autonomous Region also.

Although Nepal and Tibet are divided by mighty Himalayas, they have never been a barrier to the movement of people as well as idea. Buddhism entered into Tibet through Nepal and there are centuries old trade relations between the

two countries. Ethnically, culturally and religiously, people living in Nepal's northern areas and mid hills share many commonalities with Tibetan people.

Considering all these commonalities of interests, Nepal's instability will have spillover effect on Tibet.

Last week, by organizing China's Tibetan Cultural Forum in Kathmandu, China Association for Preservation and Development of Tibetan Culture tried to show commonalities in culture, geography and ethnicity between the two.

"Nepal and China are friendly neighbors and the two countries have kept extensive and close exchange in culture. Many Nepalese friends have long been active in the social economic development of Tibet and the protection and the protection and publicity of

Tibetan culture. All Chinese people including the Tibetan people will not forget that," said Sita chairman of China Association for Preservation and Development of Tibetan Culture.

As Nepal is known to be a soft belly of Tibet, stability in Nepal is necessary to guarantee security and stability in the high Himalayan border. Thus, China has always attached great importance for stable, prosperous and independent Nepal. Unstable and weak Nepal is vulnerable to China's security.

"Because of the proximity and other related factors, it is more or less a natural phenomenon that the development of Tibet will contribute to Nepal's development and the existing strategic Sino-Nepal relation. The question of security of both Nepal and China's western region, particularly the region of Tibet, is no less than fundamental and crucial. It is imperative for both sides to attach a high degree of importance to this reality," writes Madan Regmi, chairman of China Study Center in his paper presented in the Forum.

Chinese officials and scholars agree that Nepal is one of the important countries in its southern border and it shares many commonalities with Tibetan Autonomous Region of China.

"Nepal and China are friendly neighbors. Both countries have unique but complementary human culture and the exchange of human culture between the two countries owns a long history. I do believe that the forum will provide more Nepalese people with an opportunity to appreciate special charm and rich meanings of excellent Tibetan culture," said Liu Yangdong, Vice-chairperson of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

Tibet has shown that the physical development and preservation of traditional culture and religion can go together. This is what one can see in new Tibet.

"I have experienced the century-long changes taking place in Tibet and saw the unprecedented vigor of ancient Tibetan culture in the new era. The excellent Tibetan Culture has not only been effectively inherited and preserved but also developed with the process of

society. In Nepal, there are many friends who care for and devote themselves to the preservation and development of traditional Tibetan culture for a long time," said vice-chairman of the Chinese

People's Political Ngapoi Ngawang Jigme.

From bringing railway to the improvement of road infrastructures and other changes, Tibet has made enormous progress opening up opportunities to Nepal. "Railway has already reached Lhasa. Nepal would get a lot of economic benefit if it is extended up to Nepal," said foreign minister Sahana Pradhan. "I would like to request Chinese government and people to extend it up to Nepal," said Pradhan.

Development and progress in Tibet has already knocked the door of Nepal. "This kind of interaction between the scholars of two countries will help understand each other's problems and commonalities," said Chinese ambassador to Nepal Zheng Xianglin.

Nepal and China have a long history of their relations. Nepal's always shares the development and prosperity of Tibetan Autonomous Region of China.

"Nepal and China are neighbors linked by mountains and rivers, and the friendly ties between the two countries can be traced back to a long time ago. As the bridge and carrier of the friendly ties between the two peoples, China's Tibet plays an important role in the bilateral exchange. From Nepali Princes Bhrikuti's marriage with Songtesen



Participants at the Forum: Exchange of ideas

Gampo of Tupo to Master Arniko's supervision of construction of the White Stupa Temple in China to the long distance of Ancient Tea-horse Road created by both the two people, we can witness many moving stories, which verify the historical development process of the two civilizations, represent the traditional friendship between the two countries and reflects the spirit of consolidation and endeavor of the two people"

Organized by China Association for Preservation and Development of Tibetan Culture and Nepal Arniko Society, more than a dozen papers were presented by

the scholars from Nepal and China regarding China's Tibet and its culture and similarities between the two.

"Linguistically speaking, of the 59 total indigenous nationalities of Nepal, 45 belong to Sino-Tibetan family and out of 59 state recognized nationalities of Nepal, racially 56 are Sino-Mongoloid. All the

facts define the strong linguistic, religious, racial cultural affinities between the native indigenous nationalities of Nepal and the people of People's Republic of China," writes Tamla Ukyab in his paper Nepalese Indigenous Nationalities and Chinese Minority Nationalities.

Other Nepalese scholars too have similar opinion. "Nepal and China are separated by sea but linked by mountains. The progress in China's Tibet shows that modern prosperity and preservation of religion and culture can go together," said Dr. Harish Chandra Shaha, president of Arniko Society, Nepal.

Nepali politicians who have recently traveled to Tibetan Autonomous Region are impressed by the way China maintained balance between physical progress and preservation of traditional culture and religion in China.

"China has shown how modern progress can support the preservation of culture, religion in China's Tibet. Along with modern development, I have seen well preservation of all Tibet's religious sites as well as its culture," said Surendra Pandey, leader of CPN-UML.

The day long forum showed that China's Tibet and Nepal share many commonalities of interest and Nepal can benefit a lot from the development and prosperity in Tibet. ■



Nepalese and Chinese officials: Coming together

IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Mixed Bag For Agriculture

The leaders of the world recently concluded a major summit in Bali, Indonesia expressing their renewed commitment to deal with the problem of climate change. They finally agreed, unanimously, that the global warming is, indeed, causing problems, which if not addressed immediately could jeopardize humanity's destiny. The global warming is caused by Green House Gases, which are released by industrialized nations. But its effects are more pronounced in geographically vulnerable countries like Nepal. The impact of climate change on agriculture is an issue that is very close to Nepal since it is predominantly dependant on agriculture. However, experts have said that till date, the effect of climate change on agriculture in Nepal is mixed. The rising temperature to an extent is helpful toward production of paddy and wheat. But the erratic weather pattern since in recent times, unleash untold miseries. The time has come for the Nepalese authorities to find out and employ adaptive measures to mitigate the effects

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

Gyan Lal Maharjan is a farmer hailing from Patan, Lalitpur. He has been involved in rice farming.

But in recent times, Maharjan has felt that the weather is not supportive towards agriculture.

"We plant paddy rice in our fields in the month of Asar (between mid-June and mid-July). This is the time when we need to have good monsoon rainfall. But in recent years, the rainfall has not been satisfactory in the month of Asar. The rainfall comes in Shrawan or Bhadra. That

negatively affects the production of paddy," Maharjan said.

"Traditionally, we have been planting paddy in Asar since the time of our forefathers. If we are not able to do so, then definitely it will cause problems for us," said Maharjan, who has taken up the profession of part-time construction contractor as agriculture alone is not able to sustain his livelihood.

Similar is the experience of Indra Lal Bijukchhe, a potato farmer from Panauti, Kavre. "Potato is very sensitive to weather

pattern. There has to be right degree of sunlight, rainfall and coldness," he said.

"We need sunlight as well as right amount of rainfall. But we cannot expect the weather to follow the normal course these days," Bijukchhe said.

"Erratic hailstorms and strange weather pattern has been causing unexpected losses to farmers," he said.

Bijukchhe's family earns a good portion of income from selling potatoes. But given the degree of uncertainty in its production, he has also opened a retail



Agricultural fields: Mixed effect of climate change

shop to supplement the household income.

Both Maharjan and Bijukchhe say they are unaware that the erratic weather pattern could be caused by what global experts have termed as climate change – a slow but gradual rise in average temperature of the planet earth due to the excessive release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

“It (climate change impact on

agriculture and weather pattern) must be so if the experts and scientists are saying. We hope that something will be done quickly to correct these problems,” said Maharjan.

Mixed Impact

Experts and scientists have said that the global climate change is having a mixed impact on Nepal’s agriculture.

Increase in temperature by few degree Celsius will have favorable effect on production of major crops like paddy and wheat, particularly in hilly region. However, the erratic weather pattern can have highly negative impact on agriculture, which is totally dependent on natural climate, according to agro-scientists.

Given its geographical make-up – with

high Himalayas and hilly region occupying a large portion of country's territory – Nepal is more vulnerable to impact of climate change than other countries of the world.

Even a small rise in temperature can accelerate the rate of snow-melting. This, in the long term, can lead to scarcity of water resources. Scientists have said that in Nepal, the temperature is rising at the average rate of 6 degree Celsius per century. This rate is much higher if only mountain regions are considered.

According to Ghanashyam Malla, a scientist at the Agriculture Environment Division at the Nepal Agriculture Research Council (NARC) in Khumaltar, the rise in few degrees of temperature is having positive impact on production of paddy.

"Our studies have shown that across the country and particularly in hilly region, the rise in temperature by up to five/six degree will have positive impact on production of paddy," Malla said.

However, the climate change also causes disruption in normal weather pattern inviting untimely rainfall; changing intensity and duration of monsoon; increase in warmer days and so on.

"We have seen situations like excessive rainfall or under rainfall. Problems like floods, landslides and drought have also increased. I can give you an example how when recently a team was sent by the government to find out the impact of drought in one place. When the team studied the situation and returned, the same place suffered from flood," said Bholu Man Singh Basnet, agriculture scientist and spokesperson of NARC.

"These situations are having definite impact on agriculture," he said.

Basnet said that in recent times, the monsoon pattern has also been changing with increasing intensity but decreasing duration of rainfall.

This year, however, fortunately the rainfall was said to be better. "Officials said there were 24 more days of rainfall than average this year. Perhaps because of this the paddy production has increased by 17 percent this year," he said.

Long Term Catastrophe

Even as the production of paddy and wheat might increase in the short term due to few degrees of rise in temperature, in



Farming in hills: Slight rise in temperature is okay

the long term the situation looks catastrophic.

"Experts of the world have concluded that the water resources are depleting day by day. I recently read a report in Newsweek that in the next 30 years, the quantity of fresh water available to human will go down by half. This is a very bad news for a country like Nepal whose major crop is paddy, which needs tremendous amount of water," Basnet said.

According to him, to produce 1 kg of rice, farmers will need 3000 liters of water. "To produce rice in 1 hectare of land, you will need 800,000 liters of water. How can we be able to maintain the water supply if there is climate change?" he asked.

Basnet says that the government must be able to introduce adaptive technologies to deal with the situation. "Even at NARC we have developed varieties of rice seeds, some of which can be used even when there is less water available. We must adopt Integrated Crop Management technology to overcome this challenge," he said.

Rice or paddy is not only a simple agricultural product but also a major pillar of food security for Nepalese. As Basnet says, it will be foolhardy to minimize the impact of paddy on Nepal's food security by going for other crops only.

"Just this year, India banned exports of common quality rice (non-Basmati) because of decrease in production. So, we



Majestic Himalayas: Rich source of freshwater

cannot remain dependent on import of items, which are factor of food security," he said.

There are five major crops of Nepal including rice, maize, wheat, finger-millet and barley. In the last thirty years, the

productivity of crops have doubled with the population in the country. Since last six years, Nepal is again food-surplus country but there is huge regional disparity in production. While Terai or plain region attains huge surplus, the high hills and mountain regions are suffering from food deficit.



Farmers of the valley: Unaware of consequences

Because of the high speed industrialization of western countries as well as neighboring countries like India and China, there has been astronomical growth in release of Green House Gases causing climate change in the whole world. But an underdeveloped country like Nepal is facing the worse consequences of such actions due to no fault of its own. As such, experts believe that it is the duty of the developed and resourceful countries to come to the assistance of countries like Nepal to help adapt to the newer challenges. ■

“Our Only Interest Is To See Peaceful, Stable And Prosperous Neighbor”

- Prof. Ciwang Junmei

Managing Director of the Preservation and Development of China's Tibetan Culture, Professor CIWANG JUNMEI was recently in capital Kathmandu with a high level delegation to participate in the daylong Workshop on Forum on China's Tibetan Culture. Chairman of Tibetan Academy of Social Science, professor Ciwang, a resident of Lhasa, is a Nepal watcher in Tibetan Autonomous Region of China. Ciwang spoke to KESHAB POUDEL on various issues related to Nepal and her relations with China and Tibet. Excerpts:

As Nepal shares more than 1,400 kilometers long border with China, how do you see Nepal's ongoing unstable and chaotic situation?

As a close neighbor, we are quite concerned about the situation in Nepal. The political changes and other happenings in Nepal are on our notice.

From what sources do you get such information?

We read a lot of news about that through various channels. The political change is the internal affairs of Nepal and we will accept the choices of Nepalese people.

There is a big debate going on in Nepal on monarchy and republic. As a Tibetan scholar what would you prefer?

China has no policy to impose particular political system on particular country. It is up to the Nepalese people to decide what kind of political system they like and what their choices are. Outsiders have no right to impose any political system.

As UNMIN is here in Nepal and other international forces are also present, do you think Nepalese will find the solution?

As a close neighbor, we sincerely hope that Nepalese people will find proper solution of the present conflict to realize development and prosperity. We are confident on capability and strength of Nepalese people, government and leaders.

What does China want to see Nepal?

Our only interest is to see peaceful, stable and prosperous neighbor in our south. For a neighbor, this is our sincere wish.

In case of any intervention from outside force, how would your government react?

China's longstanding policy is that they will not interfere in the internal affairs of any country including Nepal. China will not tolerate outside intervention in Nepal's internal affairs.

Why are you so much concerned about Nepal?

As a close neighbor, particularly, as resident of China's Tibet, it will hurt us if Nepal suffers from any foreign interference. People of China's Tibet are prepared to provide all kinds of support to their brethren living in Nepal to overcome hardship.

As Tibet has made tremendous progress in

economic and other areas, how can Nepal benefit from the development there?

China and Nepal have a long history of friendly relationship. We don't have any bilateral problem. Developments of both the countries will benefit each other. The experiences of peace, development and harmony can be shared by each other.

How do you see the opening of second highway between Nepal and Tibet through Syaphrubeshi?

Such highways are required to increase the bilateral trade, and cultural contact between the two countries. Such highways also help to strengthen people to people relations by increasing interactions between them. Construction of the road is going to be a milestone in the bilateral relations between the two.

Our government has requested for expansion of railways up to Nepal? How the people of Tibet Autonomous Region look at it?

During our stay here in Nepal, we have met a lot of Nepalese friends who have been demanding that railway should be brought up to Nepal. It shows that it is a strong wish of Nepalese people who want to see expansion of railway up to Nepal. If Nepalese friends and common people have these kinds of request, we are happy to say that it can be realized.

Do you see a possibility to bring railway up to Nepal from Lhasa?

These kinds of dreams need to be realized as railway is a very convenient way for transportation. Bringing railways is a very big event and it should be decided by the concerned authorities of Chinese government.

How much hope do you have for this?

I am very confident that in the future economic development and bilateral relations between Nepal and China will strengthen. I came here by bus last time. This time I came here by plane and may be next time I will come here by railway.

Have you visited Nepal on a personal basis?

I have visited Barabhishe this August by bus near Tatopani. I found that the road is under maintenance. Arniko highway – which connects Nepal and China's Tibet-, will be better and broader in future.

Tibetan refugees living in outside world accuse that in the name of modernization of Tibet, the traditional religion and culture are being destroyed in Tibet? How do you respond to them?

These all are propaganda against the development in Tibet. Some people are crying foul

I came here by bus last time. This time I came here by plane and may be next time I will come here by railway.

by not understanding the real situation in Tibet or what Tibet is now. There are some rumors to discredit the image of China especially the image of Tibetan Autonomous Region of China. Even many scholars from China and Nepal gave a lot of examples how China's Tibet has been transforming by preserving its religion, culture and traditional values.

Don't you see there is anything wrong?

China and China's Tibet also suffer from wrong policy followed during the Cultural Revolution. But, after introduction of new socialist economic development program, everything has changed. Chinese government has been working for the preservation and development of Tibetan Culture.

If that is so, why is there such debate?

It is meaningless to debate on non issues like what has been preserved and what has not been preserved in China's Tibet without visiting the place. Most of the people who are making comments have not come to Tibet. Most important thing is one should visit Tibet and see by their own eyes.

Do you mean all the cultural and religious sites in Tibet are well protected?

Yes. Chinese central government has been spending a lot of resources to preserve the historical, religious and cultural sites in China's Tibet. One can debate whether it is enough or not but don't go by rumors spread by those people who are intentionally working to disgrace the image of China. I request all the people to visit Tibet and see what is going on in there by their own eyes.

How do you see the Tibetan refugees' activities in Nepal?

We are aware that some elements in Nepal are trying to create false propaganda against development in China's Tibet and tarnish the image of China. I will challenge such elements that they should come and see what is going on in Tibet's China. Nepalese government has assured us that they will not allow anti-China activities in Nepali soil.

You also had a plan to interact with the students of Tribhuvan University. How did you find it?

Due to present conflict in Nepal, it also influenced the lives of students. We went to Kirtipur Campus on 20 December but it was closed because of strikes. We missed the opportunity to interact with the people. This showed that political instability and chaos can make trouble for all. There is a need for political stability to bring the prosperity everywhere.

How have been your experiences of Nepal visit?

Definitely, I felt very happy to be here for a second time to participate in China's Tibet Culture Forum because Nepal is our close neighbor and Nepal is very close to Tibetan Autonomous Region of China. This time I got an opportunity to sit together with scholars and experts of both the countries. We had exchanged our views regarding the preservation and development of Tibetan Culture.



How do you see Nepal's changing scenario from your last visit and now?

Of course, some things have changed now as Nepal has been passing through an unstable political situation. Nepal has been making progress in many areas. When I first visited Nepal in 1986 leading a 20 member youth delegation from Tibetan Autonomous Region of China, I exchanged my views with Nepalese counterparts particularly young generation. What I was impressed by was the conviction of people of Nepal to retain their identity in all troubled times. We also went to Pokhara that time but this time my visit was confined to Kathmandu valley only. Because of busy schedule, I did not get enough time to visit many other parts of Nepal this time.

Since last few years armed rebellion in Nepal's southern plain have been creating new problem with a demand of separate state, how do you look at it?

China always wants to see peaceful, stable, sovereign, independent and Nepal. We also support Nepal's territorial integrity.

As a residence of Lhasa, did you have previous contact with Nepalese people?

Many Nepalese have been living in Lhasa. This is the reason I always feel Nepalese are very close to us. Whenever we visit Nepalese neighborhood, they always maintain their traditions of warmth. Since cultural linkage between Nepal and China's Tibet has been very close, I am convinced that it will be even closer in future.

How do you see the results of recently concluded forum?

I found that there were a lot of common things, which had been historically there between us. We can introduce our opinion and our research results to our Nepalis counterpart. The forum also provided opportunity to know how Nepalese scholars and experts see Tibet through their eyes and what their feelings about development in Tibet are. These kinds of opinions will help understand each other. As Nepal and China's Tibet share many commonalities in religion, ethnicity, nature and culture there is a need to increase these kinds of interactions. ■

We are aware that some elements in Nepal are trying to create false propaganda against development in China's Tibet and tarnish the image of China. I will challenge such elements that they should come and see what is going on in Tibet's China.

COMBATANT VERIFICATION

Wrapped Up

The UNMIN has wrapped up the second stage verification of Maoist combatants. Now the difficult task of reintegration will have to be taken up

By A CORRESPONDENT

The United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) has announced on Saturday (Dec 22) that it has completed the second stage of registration and verification of Maoist army combatants, in accordance with the Agreement on Monitoring of the Management of Arms and Armies (AMMAA).

"The last combatants to be verified were those retained outside the cantonments to provide security arrangements for the Maoist leadership or for medical treatment, in accordance with the understanding on this matter agreed between the Government and the CPN (M). They were interviewed at CPN (M) headquarters in Kathmandu on 20-21 December 2007," states a press release by the UNMIN issued on Saturday.

The UNMIN has said that it will now prepare a final report on the results of registration and verification, to be submitted to the parties to the AMMAA and to the Joint Monitoring Coordinating Committee (JMCC), and "thereafter will make the results public."

As per the AMMAA, those found to

Government and the CPN(M) to reach decisions relevant to discharge and reintegration, including regarding payments. Discharge and reintegration are responsibilities of the parties, but the United Nations has expressed its willingness to assist the parties with this process."

The UNMIN has said that its chief Ian Martin expects to hold further meetings in the near future with the Maoist leadership and the government



Verification process: Results awaited

be born after 25 May 1988 will be honorably and automatically discharged.

Meanwhile, the UNMIN has urged for quick decisions on discharge and reintegration of combatants and has also offered its assistance in this process.

"UNMIN has repeatedly urged the

to discuss discharge and reintegration arrangements.

Following the first stage verification in seven main and 21 satellite cantonment sites, it was reported that there are over 30,000 Maoist combatants with just over 3000 weapons.

INDO-NEPAL TRADE

Deadly Deficit

Experts say hydropower can help reduce trade deficit with India in the long run

By A CORRESPONDENT

The burgeoning trade deficit between Nepal and India can be reduced if Nepal develops and exports hydropower to India, according to minister and expert speakers at a program held in the capital, Wednesday (Dec 19).

Addressing the workshop on Nepal-India Trade and Economic Relations, Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat said that the growing trade deficit with India can be addressed by developing

hydropower projects.

"We should stop harboring suspicions to move forward," he said. Indian ambassador to Nepal, Shiv Shankar Mukherjee said that development of hydropower sector can "kick-start the Nepalese economy on an upward trajectory of an all round economic growth."

"Precious time and resource have been lost in the past due to misplaced arguments and missed opportunities. Too

often, Nepal's hydropower sector is discussed in the context of India's energy demands. I think today, there is an ever greater urgency in addressing Nepal's own huge and rapidly growing power deficit. It is ironical that despite having a huge hydropower potential, Nepal is dependent on imports to meet its domestic demand and is likely to remain so in the foreseeable future," Mukherjee said.

Arun Chaudhary, president of Nepal India Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NICCI) also complained about lack of forward movement in hydropower sector. "When we want to begin big projects, including hydropower, hurdles have been put on the road in the one or another pretext, politicizing the issue," he said.

Currently, Nepal's trade deficit with India has grown to nearly Rs 100 billion. Two-third of Nepal's foreign trade is concentrated with India alone. ■

23-POINTS AGREEMENT

Nullifying The CA

By proposing a constitution amendment bill under twenty-three points agreement, seven political parties have nullified the Constituent Assembly polls

By A CORRESPONDENT

Just a few hours after signing the 23-points agreement among the seven political parties, one of the prominent leaders of Nepali Congress from Terai region Jaya Prakash Gupta resigned from the member of interim legislature charging that leaders are not serious about the problem in Terai.

Similarly, armed rebels shot dead Sunil Shrestha, a senior official of Nepal Bank, in Birgunj, the gateway to Nepal near Indian border. Two socket bombs were detonated in front of emergency ward of Nobel Medical College in Biratnagar in eastern border town.

At a time when leaders of seven parties are terming their 23-points agreement as historic to settle all of the country's problems including in terai, voices echoed by regional leaders like Gupta and violent acts committed by armed rebels in terai indicate otherwise.

The message from southern border is clear as they have told seven political parties that their 23-points new agreement has nothing to do with their demands. With the announcement of agitation beginning from December 30, Madhesi Janadhikar Forum led by Upendra Yadav and Nepal Sadbhavana Party led by former minister Rajendra Mahato have challenged that the government of seven party will be made defunct.

As news of people of hilly origin including Janajatis and Dalits getting displaced in thousands from plain areas have been coming up in media and amid threat by newly formed regional-based party to launch a new phase of agitation from next week, it shows that the accord including a point declaring Nepal as a federal republic is not a panacea for country's ills.

After signing the accord at night on December 23, 2007 at prime minister's

residence in Baluwatar, leaders of seven parties declared that all the problems related to CA have been settled now and that they will hold the election for CA in mid April 2008.

"Twenty-three points agreement is another historic step in Nepal's political history. This will address all the problems



SPA leaders: We are supreme

including Terai," declared CPN-UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal. "Our focus should be now to hold the elections for Constituent Assembly."

The government tabled constitution amendment bill in legislative parliament as per the agreement on December 24. This will be passed by the parliament on 28 of December. Major aspects of constitution amendment bill are: to declare Nepal as a federal republic subject to implementation by first sitting of elected CA, hold an election for CA within mid April, 2008 and increase the number of CA members from 497 to 601.

Under the third Constitution

Amendment Bill, the government proposes the amendment of Article 159 to replace the provisions regarding the King by provisions of the head of state. After approval of the bill, Nepal will be republic to be implemented by the first meet of the CA. But a two third majority of the existing members of the interim house can declare a republic even earlier if the King creates obstacles in holding the CA polls, it says.

The amendment has added provision whereby 240 members will be elected in first-past-the-post system. The bill also proposes 335 to be elected under the proportional system. The bill also proposes 26 members to be nominated by the cabinet.

Although leaders of seven political parties launched the joint agitation two years ago to make the people of Nepal sovereign by giving them opportunity to

choose the forms of government and nature of state through the CA polls, by signing the 23-points agreement and declaring Nepal as a federal republic, seven party leaders have nullified the objective of CA.

Unfortunately, even after having sacrificed all the values and principles of democracy in the name of people, these party leaders have failed to bring normalcy in southern plain and woo the leaders of regional parties. This indicates that amendment of interim constitution and declaring Nepal as a federal republic cannot solve all the problems and neither can it create conducive atmosphere to hold the election. ■

'The King May Decide In A Week'

- RABINDRA NATH SHARMA

RABINDRA NATH SHARMA is the chairman of Nepal's only major political party that still supports the continuation of constitutional monarchy. The monarchy is on the throes of elimination today. But the 77-year-old veteran politician has however not met King Gyanendra since last two months. As it turned out, the monarch has apparently not felt the need to meet the chairman of the Rastriya Prajatantra Party-Nepal. As Sharma reveals, the king has not met other senior leaders of the party, either, in recent days. Excerpts of interview with **KESHAB POUDEL** on Tuesday evening at his Budhanilkantha.

As the monarchy's future looks almost sealed following the recent constitution amendment moves by the seven party alliances, you must have met the king to discuss the new situation. After all, you are the chairman of a pro-monarchy party.

No, I have not met the king lately. The last time I met him was about two months ago. Even the people close to the king are not in touch with me.

Other senior leaders of your party may have been in touch with the king.

I have no idea about it. But I hear that the king has been meeting some other persons lately. I am not aware of their utility. Since we don't have major strength, arms and ammunition and are unable to go to people at the moment, we are perhaps not useful to the king at present. It is either the representatives of international community or the army whom the king needs to see more.

If the king does not see the need to meet monarchists like you at this critical juncture, does not it imply that the king himself is not interested in retaining the monarchy?

There is logic in your question. But, there is another part. As the king is yet to set his mind, there may not be at point in meeting with us now. Once the king sets his mind about the future, which I think is likely within a few days; our advice can be useful and meaningful.

What option the king is left with, now that a move to declare the country a republic is already in parliament?

In normal situation, the king's strength is the army and the people. Either the people have to rise to defend the monarchy or the army should resent the republican move. I have not seen any possibility of the people's revolt or the army's open resentment against the decision of the seven parties.

The army can not come to his rescue?

It can, only if there is a guarantee of its supply lines. This depends on the direct support of India or China and indirect support of the United States. I do not see the guarantee of the supply lines if the army moved in to defend the monarchy

So, these countries especially India is now supportive of the republic move which is under consideration of the interim parliament?

The wording of India's official statement on the 23-point seven-party deal has double meaning. It is not clear

if India has welcomed the fresh election commitment only or the entire deal that includes the declaration of a republic.

What do you think will the king's move be, now?

If the Indian statement was clear, we could have predicted the king's likely move. Since there is confusion, no one can predict the situation. The king is perhaps waiting to see the new constitutional provisions. Only after that he will decide his future course. The king will have to take a decision after that. It should come out within a week.

Why not, right now?

No matter how big claims we make, no internal players of Nepal are in a decisive position. Our decision is always influenced by the international community particularly the two neighbors. The king knows that.

When the seven parties have already moved a bill to declare Nepal a republic and India's new stand is also confusing, would not it be prudent for the king to pack his bag and leave the palace?

As the picture is still unclear, the king will wait and see.

Constitutionally, the country may have become a republic now. But confusion remains. If the republic is put in the preamble of the constitution, it will have a decisive meaning which will be totally different if it is mentioned under other articles. Despite declaring Nepal as a republic, the seven party's alliance has not yet made it clear that they will control the command of the Narayanhiti palace.



What is the actual status of Nepal right now? A republic or still a kingdom?

Republic in the Singhdurbar (the cabinet secretariat), constitutional monarchy in the Narayanhiti Durbar (royal palace). The interim parliament is republic-oriented, but the country is not. The seven parties are republic-headed, but the most people are not.

And the powerful army?

Even today there are many officers and soldiers in army's rank and file who are loyal to the king.

Newspaper reports said that a highest ranking intelligence official of India was in Nepal ahead of the recent seven-party. Do you see any link?

Based on my past experience, I can say that such visit does not take place

without a purpose. As for a possible link that referred to, it is anybody's guess. But I have no substantive evidence to back it up.

But it is clear that India has gone for a republican Nepal?

I don't think so. India has still left a place for monarchy. I think India is negotiating with the king,

What about the Indian position on the Maoists?

India knows that the Maoists cannot be their permanent friend.

If so, why did it welcome the Maoists-engineered 23-point deal?

It uses the Maoists, but does not fully trust them.

What about the Chinese position on the new political situation?

In the past, China was never involved in Nepal's internal politics.

After April 2006, China's interest has been growing. Almost every month, a high level Chinese delegation has been visiting Nepal. China has already made it clear that it consistently follows the policy propounded by Marshal Chen-Yi in 1960 that China will retaliate against any foreign intervention in Nepal. It has given its message. However, I don't see any possibility of a direct conflict between India and China in Nepal before the Beijing Olympics next year.

China will not bother over the boiling Terai on Nepal's borders with India?

It certainly will. If India increases its influence in Terai through its proxy forces, China will definitely react. They have already given clear indications about it. ■

BOOK

On Mt. Everest

There is no dearth of books written on Mt. Everest but Prateek Dhakal's book is one of few ones published in Nepali language

By A CORRESPONDENT

Sir. Edmond Hillary has not only made a record as the first climber of Mt. Everest but he is also known as the first person who spent and committed his whole life to describe the beauty and majesty of Mt. Everest in the western world.

But, only a few Nepalis are aware about this beauty in their own country. Since there are virtually no books on Mt. Everest and Khumbu region in Nepali language, a large number of Nepalis do not know about its beauty.

Among the Himalayas, Mt. Everest (Sagarmatha in Nepal) has its own majestic importance as this is the highest mountain of the world. Besides, its natural beauty always inspires mountaineers and trekkers around the world. This is the reason why trekking even up to the Mt. Everest base camp is everybody's desire.

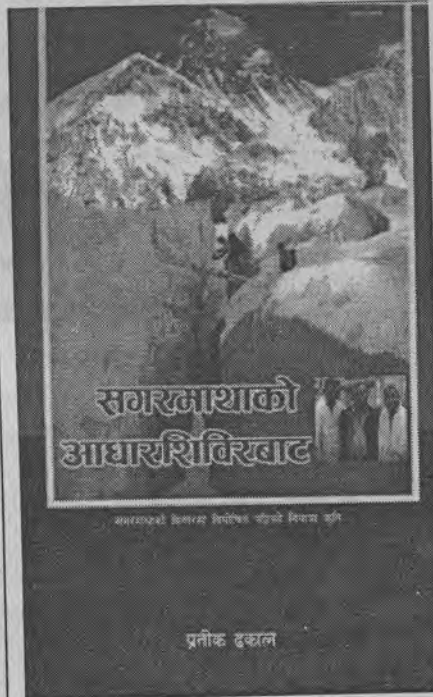
For foreigners trekking to base camp is a lifetime achievement. This is the reason why annually 70,000 to 80,000 tourists visit one of the remote parts of the world by trekking up to its base camp or by flying there.

Written in Nepali language, Prateek Dhakal's book highlights the beauty and challenges faced by trekkers and mountaineers who go to the journey of naturally hostile but beautiful place of the world.

According to Nepalese religious scripts, Himalayas have much important significance as it is known as the home of lord Shiva, all powerful

gods of creation, protection and destruction. Religious people see Himalayas as a place of meditation and dedication to the God. Whatever religious significance it has, only a few Nepalese have shown the interest to go on a long trekking in Himalayas.

There are many pilgrimage sites in the Himalayas and taking a dip in the



**Sagarmathako
Adharsibirbata
(From the base camp of
Sagarmatha or Mt. Everest)
By: Prateek Dhakal
Published by: Makalu
Publication Phone 4435148,
Kathmandu Nepal
Price: Rs. 150.00
Pages: 152**

glaciers in the Himalayas has aesthetic value as people regards the practice as a part of salvation to go to heaven. Despite all these religious values of high Himalayas, there are few Nepalis who have shown interest to go to mountain.

Mountain climbing and mountain trekking is still monopolized by the Sherpas and other ethnic groups of high Himalayas and mid-hills like Tamang and Gurung. One of the reasons behind this is the spread of Mahayana Buddhism across the Himalayas.

Only a few Nepalis from majority ethnic groups have shown interest to visit Khumbu region and other interesting routes of Himalays.

Based on his experience of trekking as government liaison officer of mountain expedition, Dhakal has detailed events in this book with his bitter and joyful experiences. Dedicated to Nepali readers, Dhakal's book has made a good contribution to highlight and describe interesting place along the Khumbu region.

Divided into 10 different chapters, Dhakal's book begins with the major highlights of Sagarmatha. He also puts the opinions of successful mountaineers. Appa Sherpa's experience of climbing Mt. Everest is a very important topic for those who like to know something about mountaineering.

His one day traveling to Namche Bazar is another interesting topic to read. Similarly, his experience with Amadablam's base camp and Lhotse base camps are other interesting reads.

His description of Lukla, the gateway to Mt. Everest is another interesting chapter. From life of local people to food habits and difficult passes but beautiful glaciers, Dhakal has proved his ability to describe the mountain to average Nepali reader ■

“Those who are in power are not ready for sacrifice to take the nation ahead.”

Prachanda, Maoist chairman, speaking at a program in the capital.

“To ensure a normal supply of petroleum in the market, there is no other alternative but to match the domestic price with the international price. The government is actively working on it.”

Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat, Finance Minister, in Reporters' Club.

“Precious time and resource have been lost in the past due to misplaced arguments and missed opportunities. Too often, Nepal's hydropower sector is discussed in the context of India's energy demands. I think today, there is an even greater urgency in addressing Nepal's own huge and rapidly growing power deficit. It is ironical that despite having a huge hydropower potential, Nepal is dependent on imports to meet its domestic demand and is likely to remain so in the foreseeable future.”

Shiv Shankar Mukherjee, Indian ambassador to Nepal, speaking at a workshop on Nepal-India Trade and Economic Relations.

“When we want to begin big projects, including hydropower, hurdles have been put on the road in the one or another pretext, politicizing the issue.”

Arun Chaudhary, president of Nepal



Newsfront

India Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NICC), addressing a workshop on Nepal-India Trade and Economic Relations.

“There is always a possibility of reforming oneself, no matter what background one has, and a chance should also be given. However, I doubt that hardcore royalists can ever become nationalists.”

Ganesh Man Pun, president of the Maoist-affiliated Young Communist League (YCL), in The Himalayan Times.

“SC's judgment has given the

freedom and recognition to sexual minorities.”

Sunil Babu Panta, president of Blue Diamond Society, an NGO advocating the rights of sexual minorities, after the apex court ordered the government to recognize the third sex.

“Yes, the judge face senate hearing in the US, but such a practice does not help in developing countries.”

PN Bhagwati, former chief justice of India, on the practice of parliamentary hearing of judges in Nepal, during his recent visit to Kathmandu, in The Himalayan Times.

TRANSITION

WRAPPED UP: The second stage verification of Maoist combatants, by the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN).

FREED: Businessman Mahesh Murarka, CEO of Pashupati Paints, on Saturday (Dec 22), five days after being abducted by an unidentified criminal gang from Baneshwor area.

ORDERED: The Supreme Court, on Friday (Dec 21), passed a landmark judgment in favor of the sexual minorities including trans-sexuals, bisexuals, gays and lesbians, by

ordering the government to give recognition to the people of third sex when giving citizenship certificates or other state benefits.

RETURNED: Madhav Kumar Nepal, general secretary of the Unified Marxist Leninist (UML), from Kolkata, India where he attended a meeting of Indian communist party.

RESIGNED: Jaya Prakash Prasad Gupta, former minister and Member of Parliament of Nepali Congress (NC), from his party position and MP.

ACCEPTED: The resignation by Maoist ministers Krishna Bahadur

Mahara, Hisila Yami, Khadga Bahadur Biswakarma, Dev Gurung and Matrika Yadav.

DISCHARGED: Former ministers and Nepali Congress (NC) leaders Mahantha Thakur and Jaya Prakash Prasad Gupta, from all the party positions including ordinary membership by the party.

KILLED: Kiran Aryal, a Nepali Congress (NC) leader and relative of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, by suspected cadres of Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM-Jwala Singh) in Sunsari.



Jo's paintings: Play of Colors

EXPOSITION

Colors of Life

Korean artist Jo exhibits her feelings of love by playing with various colors

By A CORRESPONDENT

Korean Artist Jo has a unique fascination for colors. She symbolizes the bird as a sign of happiness. In all her paintings, Jo portrayed how human share happiness and love with each other.

Korea is far away from Nepal but there is a fairly good number of expat Koreans living in Nepal serving in different fields. From hospitals to social works and other

sectors, Koreans have been contributing to development in Nepal. Artist Jo is one of them who has dedicated her time in Nepal to paint on love and happiness.

Her topics of love and happiness have universal meaning as all the human beings enjoy love and want to live in happiness. The only question is the kind of happiness people prefer. As a person from oriental society, her

love and happiness is related to the spiritual rather than material. This is the reason she sees the pleasure in the bird. The bird is a lovely creature, which can fly in the sky with complete happiness.

The love and happiness in birds attracted artist Jo's mind. Her hand and brush combined together to help her explain the feelings of love. In one of her paintings, she shows the ear of two people stretched out to join each other as if both of them are trying to listen to each other's heart.

Human society is full of pleasure and sadness, love and tragedy but there are ways to express these feelings. Among all these things, love always overcomes other issues. This is what one can see in the paintings of Jo.

Her art exhibition was organized at the New Orleans Café, Thamel in the mid of December.

In most of her paintings, the artist uses softer hues which describes her overall concept. Unlike other artists, her paintings are simple and attractive.

She uses ink and water color in most of her paintings but also wood with oil colors in some. The combination of colors is excellent.

At a time when Kathmandu's weather is gradually becoming colder, her paintings provide warmth.

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