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The National Newsmagazine

SPOTLIGHT

Jan 04-10, 2008

Nepal's Suspended Republic



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PLA Verification	:	SSR Next?
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अब... १* रु. १ मै बचत खाता



नेपाल इन्भेस्टमेन्ट बैंक बढी भन्दा बढी
नागरिकहरुमा बैंकिङ सेवाको पहिलो अलुभ
एवं बानी बस्न सकोस भन्नाका लागि सगौरब
प्रस्तुत गर्दछ... **मात्र रु.१ मा**
“आफ्नै बचत खाता”
सम्पूर्ण अन्तराष्ट्रिय स्तरको सेवा सुविधा सहित ।



जीवनका पहिला पलहरू देखिनै बचतको बानी
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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

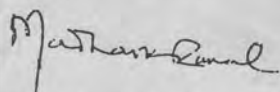
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E-mail : degiscan@wlink.com.np

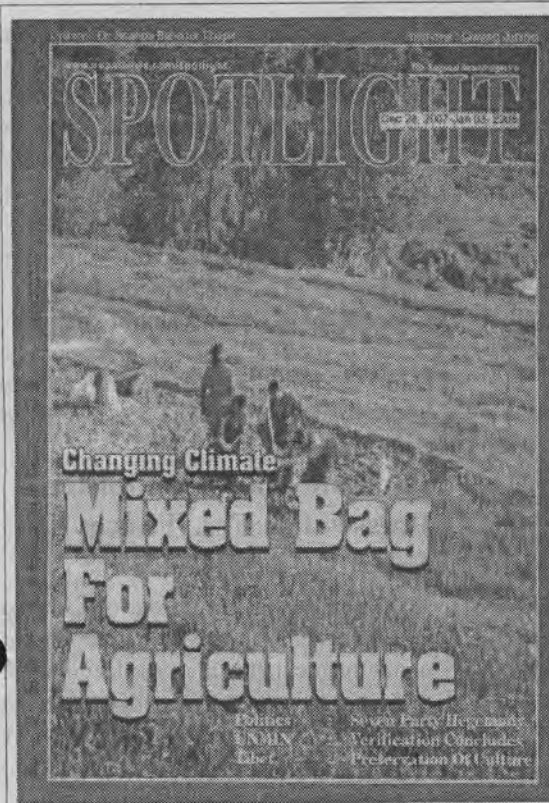
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The CPN (Maoists) rejoining the SPA government has further hardened the authoritarian character of the regime. The latest amendment of the interim constitution by the nominated parliament, trampling on the rights of the people, has not only shamed the very democracy but also exposed the blatant hypocrisy of the so called democratic leaders of the world. How can they approve and stay quiet at the intolerance of the SPAM which has brazenly disregarded all democratic norms by shamelessly ignoring the will and fundamental rights of the overwhelming majority of the populace. If the great democratic countries like India, the United States, the European Union and the United Kingdom keep on shutting their eyes to this inexcusable dictatorial behavior of the unconstitutional parliament of Nepal whose government is being led by an ex-con man who had once been involved in counterfeit currency business, they have no moral rights to call themselves defenders of democratic and clean government. And how will the smaller and weaker nations of the world pin their faith in their hollow protestation if they don't espouse their cause by defending their rights and let the political thugs continue their nefarious activities with impunity? We have been exhorting these friendly countries only to befriend the poor people rather than befriending the unscrupulous politicians. But, it seems, these big powers are least interested in the well being of the poor masses. Scores of example can be cited when regimes have been toppled and politicians have been bumped off to meet the needs of the powers that be. We are not demanding anything of that sort. We only want the devotees and defenders of democracy to sincerely come to the rescue of Nepal's democracy which is gasping for survival under the SPAM dispensation. When asked why they are watching silently they tell us, "it is for the Nepali people to do what they want," and indeed, they are right. It is really time for all the millions of Nepalis to unite and save our country, our culture, and our heritage. They must set aside all their differences, all political ideologies and all interests and work for just one cause- save the country from the rampages of SPAM who have no constitutional validity whatsoever to bring in revolutionary changes without the sanction of the majority of the people. Even the Madhises brethren of terai or the Janjatis of the hills, who have been discriminated and neglected for decades, must come foreword and join the millions of their brethren to give the country a new government that will restore peace and normalcy in the country and conduct a free and fair elections to the constituent assembly that will make the people's constitution which will properly redress the grievances of the all the discriminated peoples of the country. The SPAM government will not go for elections, has failed to restore law and order and turned the whole country into a play ground for its supporters and lackeys. If this trend is not stopped at the earliest where the country will go no one can tell.


Madhav K. Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher



Supreme Parties

It was very frustrating to read the news that seven parties are working as if the unelected bunch of members of parliament are supreme power and they have every right to decide country's major issues on their own. Their recent decision to declare Nepal as a republic from parliament not only devalues the right of people to choose their own destiny but also shows their autocratic attitudes. If they work like this, people will unseat them from power as they did in the past against autocratic King Gyanendra. The leaders of seven parties must realize that people have power to overthrow them.

*Devendra Bista
Kalimati*

Chinese View

It was very interesting to read the interview of Chinese scholar professor Ciwang Junmei. Chinese scholar has



clearly said that his country wants to see Nepal as a peaceful, stable and prosperous neighbor. Although similar statements are coming from Nepal's southern neighbor also, Nepalese have yet to live in a stable and peaceful condition. I hope Asia's two juggernauts India and China will pursue policy to bring stability and prosperity in Nepal in real sense. Nepal's long running political instability will have bad implications to both the neighbors.

*Namgyal Lama
Bouddha*

Serious Subject

Your cover story Changing Climate: Mixed Bag for Agriculture (December 28, 2007-January 03, 2008) was very interesting to read. Of course, there is still a need to do a lot of research to deal with this subject matter. Although the story is incomplete, it has brought the main issue like agriculture in the context of climate change. Spotlight needs to cover such issues frequently since it is going to be major issue in the coming days.

*Dayananda Shrestha
Via e-mail*

Changing Effect

Climate change is going to affect Nepal's overall system and agriculture sector is one of the important sectors which will badly suffer in coming days. In a country like Nepal which is geographically more vulnerable, the climate change will have definite effect on its overall agriculture status. In recent years, some very abnormal situation appeared in many mountain regions. For instance, farmers in high

Himalayas can now grow tomato and other such products which one could not imagine few decades ago. Recent experiences have shown that the rise in temperature will also bring changes in the traditional crops like maize and rice. The time has come for the government of Nepal to do something.

*Subas Giri
Kupondole, Lalitpur*

Basic Sector

As country predominantly depends on agriculture and large number of its population relies on it for their livelihood, the climate change is inevitable to affect overall performance of the national economy. Agriculture production determines the Gross Domestic Product. Any implication of global warming will have long term effect on Nepal's economy. The time has come now to look at it. I agree with your view that the time has come for the Nepalese authorities to find out and employ adaptive measures to mitigate the effects.

*Nita Lama
Brussels, Belgium Via-email*

Be Balanced

Spotlight has a reputation of being a moderate magazine with balanced views on its policies regarding Nepal's foreign relations. However, it seems to be heading towards anti-Indian tilt. Instead of blaming Nepal's close neighbor, it can pursue friendly suggestion to India so that it can be compelled to change its stand. If you write more anti-Indian point of view, your magazine will lose its liberal position. I hope Spotlight will maintain its tradition as an independent magazine.

*Arbinda Thakur
Janakpurdham Via-email*



Thakur Announces New Party

Madhesi leaders from various parties, who had only last week resigned from the parliament as well as their parties, have announced the formation of a new party called Terai Madhes Loktantrik Party. The party is led by Mahanta Thakur. Amid a special function held in the capital, Friday (Dec 28), Madhesi leaders formally announced the new party and also unveiled its concept paper. "I announce the formation of Terai Madhes Loktantrik Party," said Thakur. "Our aim is to achieve republican, democratic, federal Nepal and Terai-Madhes - One Province with right to self determination," Thakur added. He said the new party is not against Constituent Assembly but would like to see concerns of Madhesi people addressed first. He said the new party was formed to liberate the Tera-Madhes region from internal colonial rule. He said the new party calls for separate administration and rule in the region. He said those who labeled the campaigners of the new party as secessionist were not understanding the problem and not willing to provide legitimate rights to the people of the region. *Compiled from reports*

Maoists Send List Of Their Ministers

The Maoist chairman Praclanda has submitted a list of his party's ministers, on Saturday (Dec 29) as they prepare to rejoin the cabinet. According to Maoist spokesperson Krishna Bahadur Mahara, the Maoists have decided to send the same team and are quite ready to rejoin the cabinet. "We are ready to join the government. We are now only waiting for the call from the Prime Minister," Mahara told media. He said four Maoist ministers including Mahara (Information and Communication), Dev Guring (Local

Development), Hisila Yami (Works and Physical Planning), and Matrika Yadav (Forest and Soil Conservation) will be appointed ministers again. Khadga Bahadur Bishwakarma (Women, Children and Social Welfare) will be replaced by Pampha Bhusal - who had earlier been picked as ambassadorial nominee for France but who could not receive the necessary approval from the host country. Besides, two more Maoist leaders Padam Rai and Nabin Biswakarma have also been proposed as State Ministers. The Maoist ministers had resigned from the cabinet on September 18 following differences with other alliance partners. The Maoists have agreed to rejoin the cabinet following last Sunday's 23-point agreement among seven parties. *Compiled from reports*

India, UN Welcome Pact

The Indian government has welcomed the decision among the seven political parties to hold Constituent Assembly (CA) elections by mid-April 2008. In response to media queries on the signing of 23-point agreement by seven parties, Sunday, the spokesperson of Indian Ministry of External Affairs said "that the decision among the seven political parties to hold Constituent Assembly (CA) elections by mid-April 2008 is an encouraging development in the right direction." The spokesperson noted that the agreement accorded CA elections the central importance. "He also said that the exercise of the people's right to elect a Constituent Assembly in a free, fair and fearless manner is the best way to enable the people of Nepal to choose their own future. He expressed the hope that all concerned will work towards maintaining the new deadline for CA elections," states a press release issued by Embassy of India in Kathmandu. Likewise, Ian Martin, chief of United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN), said on Monday that he welcomes the important agreement reached by seven parties. "I must also welcome the fact that they have reached important agreements to reinvigorate implementation of the peace process and recommit themselves to the election of the Constituent Assembly. They have rightly recognized that this requires

action on many fronts as well as the setting of the new election date. I should particularly like to welcome the decisions to form a monitoring committee for the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and other agreements, which it is part of UNMIN's mandate to assist, and to reach a consensus on running local bodies, which I believe is essential to create the conditions of public security conducive to the election," he said at a medal parade program held to honor the Interim Task Force. *Compiled from reports*

Parliamentary Committee Presses For Free Energy From West Seti

The House Committee on Natural Resources has taken strong exception to non implementation of its earlier directive to the government to press for ten percent free energy instead of equivalent royalty from the proposed 750 MW West Seti hydropower project. The Committee, on Thursday, raised objection to Minister of State for Water Resources Gyanendra Bahadur Karki at the government's failure to abide by its directive since last six months. In his response, Minister of State Karki has said that the Ministry has formed a taskforce to find out how it can implement Committee's directive. The promoters of West Seti, an Australian company called SMEC has been saying that it is unable to provide free energy from the project. *Nepalnews.com reports*
END

Bheri Death Toll Reaches 16; 28 Still Missing; Rescuers Continue Search Efforts

The death toll from bridge collapse in Mehelkuna of Surkhet district has reached 16 with one more dead body being recovered a day after the tragedy on Wednesday (Dec 26). Rescue teams had resumed search operation to find people who had gone missing after a suspension bridge collapsed, Tuesday afternoon, in Bheri River in far-west Surkhet. Twenty-eight persons are still said to be missing. Surkhet's Chief District Officer Anil Kumar Pandey said the 32 injured (20 women and 12 men) in the Bheri bridge tragedy were admitted in Surkhet Hospital. The suspension

bridge over the Bheri River at Shobhaghat near Mehalkuna bazaar, Surkhet district had collapsed at 2 pm Tuesday afternoon due to overload throwing hundreds of people into the river. The bridge was built only last year. A huge crowd of people were passing through the bridge to attend the local fair at Subaghat when the bridge collapsed. Meanwhile, the government has expressed deep sorrow over the Bheri bridge tragedy and has promised to form a high-level team to investigate what caused the incident. Issuing a statement Wednesday, the Home Ministry said that the government will provide compensation to the tune of Rs 25,000 to the families of those who fell victim in the tragedy and also promised to bear the medical expenses of the injured people. *Compiled from reports*

Imperialists Trying To Split Nation, Says Prachanda

Maoist chairman Prachanda claimed on Wednesday (Dec 26) that the imperialists are hatching a conspiracy to split the nation in the name of empowering the ethnic people. Addressing a program organized by the Maoist-affiliated Kiratee National Liberation Front Nepal (KNLNF) to felicitate its advisors and trainers, Prachanda claimed that the Maoists had to agree on the mixed election system to safeguard other "important achievements." "We have not abandoned the demand of the fully proportional electoral system. We were compelled to agree on 40 and 60 percent weightage for two electoral systems — first past the post and fully proportional systems — just because we wanted to take the peace process ahead," he said. On the occasion of 114th birth anniversary of Mao, he recalled quotes of Mao, who had told late king Mahendra that Nepal will be independent and prosperous only when the indigenous nationalities are made sovereign. Prachanda said only the unity among all the Nepalis can counter the conspiracy of the imperialists and reactionaries. "During the 10-year-long people's war, we never witnessed any incident of ethnic conflict," he claimed. He added that the final battle is yet to be fought but that battle will be fought on ideological grounds. "For the first time, our constitution has incorporated the

word republic. The constituent assembly would approve the proposal for a republic," he said. *Leading dailies report*

Poudel In New Delhi , Meets With Mukherjees

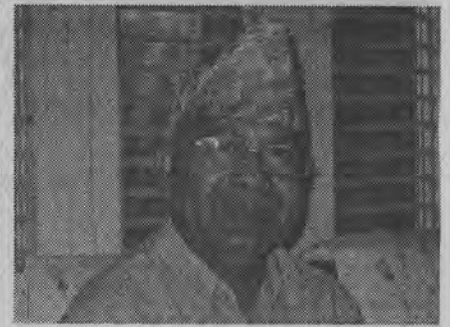
The Minister for Peace and Reconstruction Ram Chandra Poudel met with India's Minister for External Affairs Pranab Mukherjee on Wednesday (Dec 26) in New Delhi. After his meeting with Mukherjee, Poudel told reporters that India has suggested separating the political and criminal issues in Madhes, according to Kantipur daily. "The political and criminal activities should be separated. Political issues should be dealt politically and criminal activities should be strictly controlled," Poudel elaborated the Indian viewpoint to the reporters. He said that India has pledged full support to control criminal activities



in the border region even as it suggested that political issues be dealt with by Nepali political parties themselves. Poudel also met with Indian Home Minister Shivaraj Patil on Wednesday. Indian Foreign Secretary Shiv Shankar Menon also called on him in the morning. Poudel has gone to New Delhi in the wake of fresh 23-points pacts among the seven parties. *Compiled from reports*

All Top Leaders Will Be Elected, Claims Nepal

The UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal has said that the parties would not field their candidates in constituencies contested by top leaders. Talking to reporters in Biratnagar on Wednesday (Dec 26), he said there would be unity among seven parties during the polls. He also did not rule out leftist alliance. *Leading dailies report*



China Welcomes Pact

China has welcomed the recently signed 23-point agreement among the seven parties and their commitment to hold the constituent assembly elections by mid-April. In a statement, the spokesperson of the foreign ministry of China Qin Gang said, "China welcomes the progress of the peace process in Nepal." The statement further reads, "As a good neighbor and good friend of Nepal, we sincerely hope to see Nepal press ahead with the peace process so as to realize political stability and economic development. It conforms to the fundamental interest of Nepal and benefits regional peace and development." The spokesperson said that the Chinese government adheres to the principle of non-interference in other countries' internal affairs, respects the Nepali people's choice for their own social system and way of development, and will continue to play a constructive role in promoting peace and stability of Nepal. *Compiled from reports*

11 Maoist Fighters Join JTMM-J

Eleven Maoist People's Liberation Army (PLA) soldiers on Wednesday (Dec 26) rebelled and joined the Jwala Singh led Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM-J). The PLA men from Khairmara and Solu-Salleri brigades led by Solu-Salleri brigade commander Shikhar left the Maoist saying that there was no intra-party justice. JTMM-J's Siraha district in-charge Bhairav Singh confirmed that 11 PLA men had joined the Morcha after revolting from the Maoist. The former PLA men who are learnt to be all of Madhes origin also brought along few weapons with them. *Nepalnews.com reports*



People of Gurung community celebrate Lhosar festival Photo: Kantipur

PRIME MINISTER GIRIJA PRASAD KOIRALA has said he was stunned by the tragic assassination of Pakistan's opposition leader and former prime minister Benazir Bhutto. He has extended heartfelt condolences to Bhutto's family and her Pakistan People's Party (PPP). Likewise, the interim parliament passed a condolence proposal and observed a moment of silence in the honor of the slain leader. Bhutto was assassinated Thursday evening in a suicide attack that killed at least 20 others at a campaign rally in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, reports said. Eyewitnesses said Bhutto was fired upon at close range before the blast, and an official from her Pakistan People's Party (PPP) said she was further injured by the explosion, which was apparently caused by a suicide attacker. She breathed her last at around 7:01 pm NST at the Rawalpindi General Hospital where she was taken after the attack. CNN reported that witnesses at the scene described the assassin as opening fire on Bhutto and her entourage, hitting her at least once in the neck and once in the chest, before blowing himself up. In October, Bhutto had narrowly escaped a suicide attack in Karachi when she returned from exile to Pakistan. Pakistan's president Pervez Musharraf has condemned her killing and has announced three days of mourning in the country.

AS THE INTERIM PARLIAMENT prepares to discuss and pass the Third Amendment to the Interim Constitution Bill on Friday (Dec 28), a number of lawmakers from various parties have registered 11 separate amendment proposals. The Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), Rastriya Janashakti Party (RJP), Nepal Workers and Peasants Party (NWPP), Rastriya Jana Morcha (RJM) and Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Mahato) have also registered their amendment proposals. The RPP and RJP have sought for retaining the Article 159 unchanged (the Third Amendment Bill seeks to change it to insert democratic republic). The NSP-Mahato has demanded there be fully proportional representation system by having only 240 member Constituent Assembly. Likewise, major parties have also sought to insert a provision regarding appointment of general secretary of the parliament in the constitution itself. The RJM has demanded that the country remain unitary and not opt for federalism. The major parties have already issued whips to their lawmakers to be present on Friday's meeting and vote in

favor of the Third Amendment Bill, which intends to declare Nepal a federal democratic republic. This declaration will, however, be implemented by the first sitting of the elected CA.

THE HOME MINISTRY HAS ANNOUNCED national holidays in various festivals of indigenous nationalities and religious groups. According to sources, Home Minister Krishna Sitaula has decided to announce holidays in festivals like Lhosar of indigenous nationalities, Chhath of Madhesis, Eid Bakr-Eid of Muslims, Christmas of Christians, Maghi of Tharus and Ubhauri Udhyauri of Kirant community. Likewise, local holidays have been announced for Pawan festival observed by

Rajbanshi and Tajpuriya community in Morang, Jhapa and Sunsari districts. Earlier, only people of the respective communities used to enjoy holidays in such festivals.

FINANCE MINISTER DR RAM SHARAN MAHAT said adopting a federal system was a tough challenge and a lot of debate should be initiated before adopting such a system. Speaking at a program titled 'Restructuring of the State and Financial Decentralization National Consultation Seminar' he said Nepal should remain a common market because the nation can only be competitive internationally if our exports were cheap. "Recent reports about business being taxed twice or thrice firstly by the state and then by regional groups are worrying. This significantly raises the price of our exports and in the era of globalization, this is very worrying," said Mahat. He said local level needs massive capacity building, if decentralization was to be effective. "We have failed as this exercise was not properly undertaken in previous decentralization efforts.

NEPAL OIL CORPORATION (NOC) has announced hike in the price of petrol pointing at its burgeoning losses and growing oil prices in the international market. In a press statement issued on Tuesday (Dec 25) evening, the NOC has said that the price of petrol will be increased, effective midnight of Wednesday, from Rs 73.5 to Rs 80 per liter in Kathmandu. Earlier the NOC had increased the price of all petroleum products on October 25. This time it has only increased the price of petrol. The NOC has said that it had to increase the price of petrol to ensure its smooth and easy supply. Currently, consumers have been complaining that the NOC has failed to supply petrol in adequate volume. Serpentine queues in front of petrol pumps have become commonplace in the capital valley. The NOC has said that it will gradually adjust domestic prices of petroleum products to match with the international price. ■

*SPOTLIGHT Family Wishes A Very Happy And Prosperous
New Year 2008 To All Its Readers And Patrons*

RUINATION OF MELAMCHI MULTIPURPOSE PROJECT

Parliamentary Committee Could Save it

▪ Dr. AB Thapa

The Melamchi Water Supply Project to be implemented with the assistance of the Asian Development Bank is in the focus since a long time because this project is lifeline for more than a million people living in the capital Kathmandu and its environs. This project could also solve the problem to supply cheap electricity to the entire country for quite some time. Unfortunate even such a strategically important project has not been spared from being mishandled. The huge investment in Melamchi Project would virtually go down the drain if we failed to correct our recent decisions to ignore the findings of the UNDP supported feasibility study of this project. This project could be a great liability to the nation.

It is still not too late to save this very important project. It is heartening to learn that the Melamchi issue is being studied by PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE. The Parliamentary Committee should go through the reports and published materials, and it should seek information from competent experts also.

How Public Interest Sacrificed

The Melamchi Project feasibility study report prepared with the assistance of the UNDP explains that around the time 2011 the total system demand for water supply (in Kathmandu valley) is expected to reach the total supply from in-valley surface sources and Melamchi. Thereafter the next stage of the development of the Melamchi will be required. This entails diversion from the YANGRI and LARKE rivers that flow to the east of the Melamchi. Water would have to be diverted by tunnels to a point upstream of the Melamchi intake. The total length of the delivery tunnels is expected to be over 12 kilometers.

The Larke and the Yangri are the main tributaries of the Indrawati River. After the diversion of the Yangri and Larke rivers into the Melamchi there would hardly be any flow in the upper reach of the Indrawati River during the dry season.

It saddens anybody to learn that the Indrawati River has been recently leased out to private developers to build a cascade of hydropower. One hydropower is already completed and the others are at planning stage. We see no justification for the decision to lease the Indrawati River to private developers to build a cascade of hydropower. Could not we find some other suitable rivers any where in Nepal to be leased out to private hydropower developers?

Melamchi Tunnel Hydropower

There exists a *big potential to generate cheap electricity* by using the diverted flow of the Melamchi River. The elevation of the Melamchi intake weir is 1715 m and the inlet to the treatment works near Sundarijal is 1409 m. Thus there is an enormously big gross head of 306 m. *The UNDP report has clearly*

stated that the net increment in investment (the cost of the powerhouse located near Sundarijal with electromechanical equipment) needed to implement the hydropower element is relatively small as the intake headrace tunnel and penstock are already in place for conveying water to the

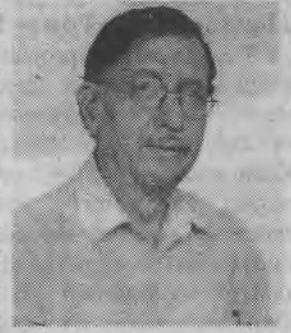
treatment works. According to the feasibility report of the Arun-3 Project operating at a head of about 300 meters (same as the Melamchi Hydropower) the cost of electromechanical equipments and power station civil works is only about 30% of the total project cost. **The UNDP study has concluded that it would be worth constructing the hydropower and it could make a contribution to reducing the cost of drinking water to Kathmandu.** The UNDP report explains that even before the diversion of the Yangri and Larke rivers the total annual generation of the Melamchi hydropower would be 60 GWh and out of it the firm power generation would be 40.5 GWh.

The Melamchi hydroelectricity generation would be close to 50% of the annual generation of the Kulekhani No.1 hydropower project. After the diversion of the Yangri and Larke the electricity generation of the Melamchi hydropower plant would have been further increased.

It surprises anyone to learn that the Melamchi hydropower component has been dropped. Even the alignment of the tunnel has intentionally been slightly modified to preclude the inclusion of the hydropower component later on. We must seriously look into this matter to find out why the power component of the Melamchi project was allowed to be dropped despite the fact that the UNDP report has concluded that the power station would be worth constructing and could make a contribution to reducing the cost of drinking water to Kathmandu residents

Additional Use of Melamchi Tunnel

The 28 km long Melamchi tunnel to divert the Melamchi water into the Kathmandu valley is the most expensive component of this project. This tunnel, apart from diverting Melamchi water into Kathmandu valley, could be developed as a trunk tunnel to provide transit to regulated flow of the Langtang river, and also the waters drawn from the Yangri and Larke rivers. Such conversion would not involve additional investment. A small portion of the combined flow of these rivers sufficient to meet the long term demand for water in the Kathmandu valley could be provided for free after the generation of electricity at hydropower station



located near Sundarjial. The bulk of the water could be dropped into the Kulekhani reservoir to generate abundant cheap electricity. Water thus pumped into the Kulekhani reservoir after being used for power generation in a cascade of hydropower stations (Kulekhani Nos 1,2 and even 3) could also be used to provide gravity irrigation in Chitwan valley.

The Langtang Power Projects

The Langtang projects operating at a head of about one thousand meters and more could produce electric energy at very low cost. Apart from it, water in abundant quantity could be supplied to the Kathmandu valley for free. The concept of the Langtang project solely for power generation was developed under the UNDP supported Gandak basin masterplan study. This concept required some revision to include a new component to supply drinking water to Kathmandu valley. It necessitated dropping the regulated

Langtang water at the end into the Melamchi river instead of the Bhotekosi (Trisuli).

According to the Gandak Basin Master Plan a 120 m high dam has been proposed on

the Langtang Khola near Jaithang. The volume of the reservoir would be about 180 million cubic meters. Based on revised concept the water in the reservoir at a full supply level of 3995 meters would be first tapped by the Langtang-1 power station operating at a gross head of 950 meters. The installed capacity of this Langtang-1 power station located near Ghore Tabela about 15 km downstream from the storage reservoir would be about 70 MW.

Water from the Langtang-1 power station would be directly drawn into the Langtang-2 power station. For augmenting this flow the water from the catchment downstream of the storage dam would also be drawn into the headrace tunnel of the Langtang-2 power station. The installed capacity of the Langtang-2 power station operating at a head of about 1300 meters would be about 150 MW.

Why is Langtang Power Cheap?

Of all the site characteristics, head is the most important. Design guidelines, 1989 approved by the American Society of Civil Engineers has given some simple reasoning that would help to explain why the super high head Langtang power stations operating at many times greater head by comparison with other hydropowers could be built at very low cost. "Very simply if one doubles the head the quantity of water needed to produce a certain amount of energy is halved. Thus, for like site energy development the penstock area and reservoir volume are halved and further large cost reductions occur for powerhouse and machinery costs. This fundamental consideration is at the root of the large cost reductions that occur at higher heads."

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A joint team of German, Japanese and the US consultants has made an interesting reference to a Canadian high head project vis-à-vis the Upper Arun project to be operated at moderately high head. "It is worth mentioning that the search of the worldwide inventory of the existing hydropower installations identified only one plant with a combined head and flow

magnitudes greater than that of the Upper Arun - Kemano in British Columbia, Canada". At present the electricity generated by the 896 MW Kemano Project

with a 16.3 km long headrace tunnel operating at 800 m head provides power for Alcan's aluminum smelters at Kitimat at a cost below US cents 3 per KWh.

Water Supply To Kulekhani Projects

The electricity generation of the Kulekhani projects could be increased by 3 times if the combined flow of the Melamchi and the Langtang after setting aside adequate quantity of water for Kathmandu valley is delivered into the Kulekhani reservoir.

Still Not too Late

In the past the Asian Development bank had been very flexible. They fully cooperated to make substantial amendment to the agreement whenever they were convinced that there is a room to make any project economically and financially more viable. Kankai Irrigation Project could be a typical example.

Feasibility study as well as the detailed design of the Kankai Project was done under a grant directly by the Asian Development Bank outside Nepal. We from the Nepalese side expressed our reservation about the detailed design. After completing various formalities the Bank decided to finance the Kankai Irrigation Project. The construction of this project commenced from around the middle of 1970s.

We proposed the Asian Development Bank to amend the loan agreement by substantially modifying the total design of the project even though the contractors had already started the construction works at site. The modification allowed the capacity of various structures (involving about 2/3 cost of the project) to be increased by about 60% absolutely without rise in project cost. The Asian Development Bank agreed to amend the Agreement. A Supplementary Loan Agreement was signed to incorporate funding for the construction of the infrastructures needed to further extend the canals and to provide services to cover additional areas. ■



King Gyanendra: King in republic

SEVEN-PARTY DEAL

Monarchical Republic

The Maoist-engineered third amendment of the interim constitution gives Nepal a weird identity on the international stage

By SUSHIL SHARMA

In 1951, the autocratic Rana regime collapsed under the weight of a massive pro-democracy movement.

In a country of less than five million people then, thousands poured out on the streets to celebrate the fall of a century-old regime.

In 1990, the king-led party less regime collapsed following another pro-democracy movement.

In a country whose population had reached 20 million by then, hundreds of thousands joined rallies across the country to greet the fall of the 30-year-old royalist regime.

In 2006, the second innings of absolute royal rule — under a different king — came to an end after a little more than a year in the wake of an unprecedented democracy movement in Nepal's history.

The people in their millions joined in victory celebrations — one more time.

In 2007, the governing seven-party alliance declares Nepal a republic by bulldozing a constitutional amendment in the unelected parliament.

The country's population had crossed 25 million by this time. But not a single person turned out on the streets to greet what some saw as an epoch-making event — the beginning of a new era and the “end” of the 250-year-old monarchy.

How does one explain this? This can perhaps be explained in two ways.

ONE, the ordinary people are not convinced yet about the establishment of a republic.

According to the constitutional amendment, the republic is subject to the implementation by the constituent assembly, elections for which are still not certain.

Pending such an uncertain polls, the king will continue to occupy the Narayanhiti palace, with some 3000

soldiers providing security. The number is a sixth of the Maoist “soldiers” verified by the UNMIN.

He will continue to receive perks and salaries sanctioned by a cabinet which comprise, again, of Maoist ministers.

The governing seven parties agreed to remove the monarchy even before the constituent assembly meeting, if the king is found obstructing the polls.

The parties are silent on what will they do if the elections are disrupted by forces other than the monarchy.

After all, a number of powerful forces — internal and external — are at work as Nepal struggles through its critical transition.

TWO, the people are not happy that the hand-picked parliament of the seven parties denied them the right to make a decision on the fate of the two-century-old institution.

Going by the claims of the seven-party leaders especially the Maoists, the fate of the monarchy has effectively sealed.

Says lawyer-turned Maoist lawmaker, Khimlal Devkota, “that no one came out on the street to protest the declaration of republic proves that the monarchy is dead.”

Such an argument can backfire. Royalists used to give a similar argument to defend the royal takeover two years ago.

Spontaneous street protests against the king's February 1 misadventure had been non-existent.

Less than two years later, the situation had reversed. Millions took to the street to force the king to do something the monarch perhaps never imagined.

Said an eminent political commentator, “there is no guarantee that the history will not repeat”.

“Crucially”, he added, “the key external actors that helped end the royal regime two years ago have not committed yet to end the royalty altogether.”

If they reversed the publicly declared position, then the situation would take a decisive turn. Their unchanged position so far has been: “the people should be given the choice between a monarchy and a republic”.

By denying that choice to the people, the seven parties can, at best, hope to have a monarchical republic only! ■



BP Koirala: Evergreen principle of national reconciliation

NATIONAL RECONCILIATION

A Day To Remember

At this juncture of national politics, B.P. Koirala's national reconciliation is more relevant than ever

By KESHAB POUDEL

Today, our country is in a national crisis. All have realized that this crisis is getting heightened since the last few years. As a result, the very national identity has been endangered," said B.P. Koirala in the statement he gave on return from exile on December 30, 1976.

Although more than three decades have already passed since he issued the statement, Nepal's situation is getting much worse. From regional groups to

ethnic groups, there are even demands for separation.

At a time when the country needs to have strong unity and reconciliation between the democratic force and traditional institution of monarchy, under the leadership of B.P.'s own brother prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala, the government is marginalizing the institution of monarchy by putting it in torture chamber?

Congress leaders particularly prime minister Koirala have sacrificed everything for the cause of power. Prime

minister Koirala- who has a long history of democratic struggle, has given up morality, values and ideals for the sake of power.

Prime minister Koirala - who even recently promised that he will go even to hell to bring Maoists to mainstream and has pushed the monarchy - continues to preach the national reconciliation with his own interpretation.

For B.P. Koirala, monarchy was an important component of national reconciliation but junior Koirala prefers reconciliation without monarchy. Contradicting and distorting his own brother B.P.'s ideals and interpretation on national reconciliation, prime minister Koirala has invented his own version. "I have been following B.P.'s national reconciliation by bringing Maoists into political main stream," said Koirala. "Monarchy is no more a component of national reconciliation."

Even from his death bed, B.P. reminded his follower the importance of reconciliation between monarchy and democratic forces to protect the country from crisis. "We are in a very difficult situation. Our country, our race and our land is passing through a very difficult situation. We need to protect them. For this we need to maintain better relations with those institutions including monarchy which can protect the nation. Monarchy is such an institution which can contribute a lot to protect our Nepal, Nepal's nationality from outsider. Thus, we need to act cautiously. Otherwise the element - which has been destroying our nation - can use us to achieve its objective backing us from behind and supporting us."

"If our party follows what I said as reconciliation, our party and country has future. If party leaders give up reconciliation and take other way or decide to take support of foreigners or choose a way for confrontation with King, our party and country do not have future. If our party gives up reconciliation which I have interpreted, our party and country do not have future," said B.P. Koirala in his last message to the people (See King, Nationalism and Democracy page 153).

These messages given by B.P.



PM Koirala: Self interpretation

Koirala from his death bed is now more relevant than in the past.

Till his last breath, B.P. Koirala had never compromised with his political ideals and commitments. Although he had taken many extreme steps including the armed struggle, he maintained morality in politics. Whether he was in prison or exile, B.P. Koirala always saw monarchy as an important component for Nepal's independent identity.

By pursuing the cause of national reconciliation, he pleaded unity between the democratic forces and monarchy. For B.P. Koirala, morality was the key in politics. He argued that the people and monarchy must combine, that there must be total understanding between these two elements of national life. The alternative to this is total ruin.

"If we have to exist as a nation, if we have some role to play in this part of the world, national reconciliation between the King and democratic force is the line. So I don't have any alternative to the present line in my mind. I don't think of any alternative to reconciliation. It is just unthinkable. For that would bring about disintegration of our country," predicted Koirala in his interview to Indian journalist Bhola Chatterjee.

As soon as prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala gave up B.P.'s national reconciliation and chose the confrontation with monarchy, what his senior brother had predicted is coming true. From the voices calling for disintegration of country to fast erosion of base of Nepali Congress, new tragic situation is emerging.

Whatever one says about the importance and relevance of B.P.'s national reconciliation, his own followers including his own brother GP Koirala, is in rush to sacrifice everything for the sake of power. ■

Nationalism and Democracy

The statement B.P. Koirala gave on return from foreign exile on December 30, 1976:

After a pretty long period of exile, we are returning to our country. On this occasion, I would like to say a few words to the countrymen.

Today, our country is in a national crisis. All have realized that this crisis is getting heightened since the last few years. As a result, the very national identity has been endangered. Others have also admitted this. All including the King have from time to time referred to the danger posed to national identity. We are returning to home after realizing this grave reality. We think that the lack of national unity is a major factor for such a national crisis as a result of which foreign elements have started to become successful in playing their dirty games and making Nepal a center of international conspiracy. National unity can be achieved only through a collective campaign and efforts of all Nepali people. Such a collective campaign does also lay the grounds for the institutional base for the emotional unity of the Nepali people. If the sloganeering alone could do this, the national unity would not have suffered so much nor our country would have landed in such a miserable condition in the last sixteen years. Today, there is selfishness, communalism, individualistic practices and the tendency to have external-tilt is rampant in the country. In such circumstances nationalism becomes the first casualty.

Till yesterday, our struggle was confined to the attainment of the people's democratic rights. That's why, we emphasized more on the democratic side. Today, there is a new dimension added to it. A dual responsibility has befallen the Nepali Congress. This second responsibility is, safeguarding the national identity. We have visualized two fold faces of today's Nepal: Nationalism and Democracy.

It means the Nepali people should take the responsibility of restoring democracy as well as safeguarding the nation. If we talk of only one responsibility we will be following the wrong track by being one-sided. And, if we emphasized only on the restoration of democracy, we will not be contributing to addressing this national crisis. Moreover, we may even fall into the trap of the foreigners by such one-sided action. Similarly, if we talk of the nationalism only, we will be repeating the same 16-years-old hollow slogans of nationalism, and will be siding with the authoritarianism. Such a hollow slogan of nationalism cannot generate an internal willpower in the countrymen to safeguard the nation. Therefore, we need now to understand that the national unity can be built on the foundation of democracy only. And the foundation of the democracy can be cemented by the economic development and the just economic system. Therefore we feel that nationalism, democracy and economic development are interdependent on each other.

It is well known that the Nepali Congress has taken historical and serious decisions from time to time in the national interest. The decision to wage the 1951 revolution and its executions are some examples. After finding that there was conspiracy to put off the elections forever, it took the leadership of national campaign for the holding of the elections. We received the cooperation from various parties in that campaign. Nepali Congress launched the resistance movement for democracy after the cruel and the fatal blow dealt to democracy in 1960. And today, we have taken this historical decision seeing the crisis the nation is facing. This is in accordance with the tradition of the Nepali Congress.

In the history of every nation there comes such moment when its people have to risk their lives to safeguard the national identity. We think, such a moment has come in Nepal today. Our well-wishers had advised us not to return Nepal seeing the dangers involved in it. We would like to tell them that we have taken this historical decision because the likely danger to our lives is nothing as compared to the danger to the nation. The workers of Nepali Congress have also shown the example of unprecedented courage and love towards nation by returning to the motherland following the party directives.

In this hour of national crisis, all of us should get united by forgetting and ending the past unhealthy debates, experiences and differences. Our program should be directed by the feeling that we will no more exist in the absence of our nation. I do not know what fate awaits me after I return to the country. Through this statement, as the Chairman of Nepali Congress, I would like to appeal to the entire countrymen that let us all unanimously unite in the pious task of defending the nation, its progress, happiness and prosperity of the people. If I get an opportunity, I will put forth my feelings before His Majesty also. The responsibility to save the nation is the common responsibility of all. Jai Nepal!

Bishweswor Prasad Koirala

Dec. 30, 1976

(This excerpt has been reproduced because of relevancy of national reconciliation)

POLITICS

Nepal's Suspended Republic

After passing the third amendment in Interim Constitution by nominated Legislative-Parliament, political leaders have declared that Nepal has turned into a republic. However, the words written on the amendment article has produced the opposite results as the republic can now only be implemented after the approval of first meeting of Constituent Assembly. As the election for the Constituent Assembly, which was already postponed three times in the past, is still uncertain, the amendment suspends the Republic for indefinite period of time while retaining the monarchy as an institution of continuity

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

"After the amendment of interim constitution, the country has now two systems. There is republic in Singhdurbar (Prime minister's secretariat) and constitutional monarchy in Narayanhiti Durbar (Royal Palace)," said Rabinathan Sharma, leader of RPP-Nepal, a monarchist party.

Although the parliament amended the interim constitution for the third time with an aim to establish republic and abolish monarchy, in real terms, the

interim parliament has suspended the republic till the election of CA and gave continuity to the monarchy.

The article 159 (1) declares Nepal as a federal, democratic republic but its next clause places condition that the declaration will be subject to approval of the first meeting of constituent assembly.

For foreigners, these are words which are enough to confuse the status of Nepal. Article 159 (1) declares that

Nepal is a federal, democratic and republic state. The 159 (2) says that the declaration of Republic will be subject to the approval of the first meeting of Constituent Assembly.

Despite declaration of republic, the constitution also gives continuity to the monarchy. The Article 159 (2) further states that if King makes efforts to disturb CA elections, the two third majority of interim parliament can pass a proposal declaring Nepal as a republic.



Narayanhiy Royal Palace: Monarchy in republic

However, leaders of ruling party alliance found no time to proclaim themselves as republicans. From speaker of the Legislative Parliament to home minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula and from prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala to CPN-UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal and Maoist leaders Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, all hailed the beginning of new republican era.

"After passing the constitution amendment bill by overwhelming majority, the country has moved towards republican. The parliamentary voting showed that there is no opposition voice in the country against republic," thundered speaker of nominated parliament Subas Nemwang.

Though it appears that after the declaration of parliament, a sword is hanging over the institution of monarchy, there are yet many safeguards. The article

159 (2) is a safeguard to the monarchy till the CA. As overwhelming number of Nepalese people are yet to express their voices through ballot, the debate of republic is still there.

"The interim legislature endorsed the popular mandate of people by declaring Nepal as a republic," said Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula. "Nobody can reverse Nepal into monarchical state now."

Whatever home minister Sitaula or speaker Nembang - both of them are lawyers - claim, neither has Nepal become republic now nor has monarchy been abolished under the new amendment.

Since the members of interim parliament have never claimed that they are representative of sovereign people, it is against the sovereign people who have to ultimately decide on this issue.

"In fact, no political party has

republic in priority, what they needed is a sharing in the power. There are two ways to go to power: either through the popular elections or through powerful push up. For a popular election, republic cannot be a catchy slogan as the vast majority of population has an attachment with the traditional way of living and thus respect for traditional institutions," said a political analyst. "When the parliament was functioning smoothly, there were three consecutive elections in which none of these seven parties had republican manifesto. The demand for republic is coming from far away from the country with its base in New Delhi now."

After signing the twelve point agreements between seven parties and Maoists in New Delhi in November 2005, the demands for republic appeared as an agenda of political parties. According to media reports, since then Seven Party Alliance and Maoist have



Singh Durbar: Republic Inside?

signed several other agreements under influence and persuasion of Nepal's southern neighbor.

Even for the last declaration of the parliament, for past-dated republican order, there is some sort of influence from Nepal's southern neighbor. According to a reporting of popular Nepal Weekly (December 30), chief of India's Intelligence Agency RAW Ashok Chaturvedi had visited Nepal and pursued prominent Nepalese politicians including prime minister, Maoist leaders Dr. Baburam and Pushpa Kamal Dahal aka Prachanda and CPN-UML leaders to sign the 23 points new agreement. 1

"These events prove that the trend for monarchy is set not by the popular aspiration of the people but by the tactical maneuvering of the external agencies of neighboring country. Politicians could have been pressurized to accept to do away with the institution of monarchy even by this non-elected parliament. But

time tested institution of monarchy has its utility yet not only for the politicians and people but to any country having serious stakes in Nepal," said the analyst. "Leaders of political parties in Nepal are going through two contradictory allegiances: internal – the people and external – a security conscious neighbor".

According to the political analyst, apart from others, India and China, Nepal's two neighbors, both need peace and stability in this country and the institution of monarchy is one of the historically proven factor of stability. Thus, politicians have served two opposite interests by one resolution. The leaders of the seven parties are clever enough to serve their people's wish on the one hand and please their external patron on the other. "They are yet maintaining access to go to the people through the continuity of traditional institution and at the same time they

have served their external political patrons by putting the King into torture chamber," said the analyst.

Despite issuing three line whips by major parties, many MPs were absent in voting. According to speaker Nembang, out of 330, two hundred and seventy lawmakers voted in favor of the amendment bill and three had voted against it while the rest stayed away.

The government had tabled Nepal Interim Constitution (3rd amendment) Bill 2007 in the parliament on December 24 seeking to overcome constitutional hurdles to declare Nepal as a federal democratic republic and hold elections to the 601-member CA by mid-April 2008.

As per the Article 159, the interim constitution retains monarchy unless there is proved misconduct by the King. It accepts the fact that the King is there. "If there is a king how can one say Nepal is a republic. Until the elections and



Interim Parliament: Proclamation by nominated MPs

convening of the first meeting of Constituent Assembly, the King's position is secured and protected by the constitution. Therefore, any declaration pertaining to republican state had to be postponed till that period," said an eminent constitutional lawyer and former attorney general.

As the Article 159 has made clear that unless the fate of monarchy is decided by the first meeting of CA, the declaration of Nepal as a federal republic cannot be executed. It may arouse the curiosity among the readers about the headlines that Nepal has suspended republic but anybody who has gone through seriously between the lines of the declaration of the parliament may reach to the same conclusion that the republic

Before Amendment

Article 159 - King related Arrangements

- (1) King has no power to exercise in country's administration.
- (2) Prime minister is responsible to exercise all the authority and power of state
- (3) Whatever is written regarding the future of monarchy in this constitution, the first meeting of Constituent Assembly will decide the fate of monarchy by simple majority

After Third Amendment

Article 159 Head of State related arrangements

- (1) Nepal is a federal, democratic republic
- (2) The republic will be executed by the first meeting of Constituent Assembly but the interim parliament can declare Nepal as a republic even before the CA by two third of majority if it found that King has made effort to obstruct the CA poll.
- (3) The King has no authority in country's administration
- (3 b) Prime minister will act as a head of the state till execution of republic

is like a past dated check issued in the name of bank. This amendment has

suspended republic but not the monarchy. ■

“There Is A Possibility Of An Agreement Like 12-point Pact To Launch Decisive Agitation”

-Rajendra Mahato

RAJENDRA MAHATO, president of Nepal Sadbhavana Party, a regional party based in southern plain, is launching a joint agitation in Terai along with Madhesi Janadhikar Forum with a demand for autonomous region for Nepal's southern plain. Former minister Mahato spoke to **KESHAB POUDEL** on various issues regarding the planned agitation by his party and his future plan to press the government. Excerpts:

The Pahadi politicians have a long-held practice to chant anti-Indian slogans whenever they face internal problems. Of course, we need India's goodwill but it is the government in Kathmandu, which has to address the genuine demand of Madhesi.

At a time when Madhesi political parties including yours have been saying that there is a genuine uprising in Nepal's southern terai for the demand of equal status, prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala has recently said that Terai's problem can be solved within a minute in case of India's support? How do you look at it?

It is one of the irresponsible remarks of prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala. His remarks indicate that he is not sincere in fulfilling genuine political demands of Madhesi people. We are demanding our political rights as citizens of Nepal. Thus, it is the responsibility of Nepalese government to address our demand.

If that is so, why prime minister Koirala, with whom you have had a long association in the last four years during the joint agitation against the king's rule, might have said so?

As prime minister Koirala has recently corrected his statement, this chapter has already closed.

It means you don't need support from outside country including India to solve the problems in terai?

There is a tendency in Nepal to blame India all the time for its internal failure. The Pahadi politicians have a long-held practice to chant anti-Indian slogans whenever they face internal problems. Of course, we need India's goodwill but it is the government in Kathmandu, which has to address the genuine demand of Madhesi.

Don't you see the possibility of misuse of open border by armed rebels?

It is for the Nepali government to take necessary actions. The government must distinguish criminal activities and politically motivated activities.

When armed groups are killing people, extorting money and kidnapping commoners in the name of political slogans, how will you suggest dealing with them?

When Maoists took similar actions, we treated them politically. We released all Maoists cadres and leaders involved in killing, extortion, kidnapping and other such acts. We can follow similar precedents to Madhesi armed rebels who have been waging armed struggle to establish the right of Madhesh.

As leaders of seven parties have claimed that they have addressed all the genuine demands

including declaration of federal republic, election though proportional representation and other rights issues and they argue that remaining demands will be addressed after holding the Constituent Assembly polls, why has your party been calling for agitation?

SPA leaders have not fulfilled any of our demands. They have not accepted complete proportional representative system, regional based federalism with right to self determination and regional autonomy and equal status for all the Madhesis. So far as holding of CA is concerned, SPA leaders don't want it. What SPA leaders have been doing is cheating people by preaching rhetoric of elections. Madhesi people want elections and our agitation is directed at holding the elections.

Do you mean SPA leaders are not serious about holding the CA polls?

They are not serious at all to hold the elections for CA. Madhesi people want CA so as our right can be established and our identity of Madhesis will be recognized.

Don't you have identity as a Nepali now?

Our identity is questioned by hill rulers and we have not been treated as a Nepali. Thus, we want to be recognized first as a Madhesi then Nepali.

What are your major demands?

Our first demand is to implement article 33 which was placed after the martyrdom of 40 Madhesis in last January. According to the article, the government has to give equal rights and opportunities to all Madhesis in government services in accordance with the population. We want our equal representation in army, police, judiciary, executive and administration. We want our representation in all state apparatus. The country should be declared federal republic with Madhes as a single region with the right to self determination and election on the basis of proportional representation, which again has to be based on population.

How do you define your term of proportional representation?

The present preoperational representation will give just 32 percent of seats to Madhesis in CA whereas we have 68 percent votes. In the name of Pahadi Janjatis and Dalits, the numbers of seat for Pahadis have gone up. This is a fraud against Madhesi people. We want our votes to be used to choose our own representatives of Madhesh on the basis of population.

Have you discussed these issues with government?

They ignored it when they presented third

amendment bill in parliament. I proposed amendment but seven party alliance bullied Madhesis demand. We are now left with the only option to launch a decisive agitation.

When will the agitation begin?

We have been launching the joint agitation with Madhesi Janadhikar Forum led by Dr. Upendra Yadav. The first round of agitation has already started from December 26. Madhesi people will launch second round of decisive agitation from January 19, 2008.

Will other regional parties also back your agitation?

We have been talking with other regional parties including armed groups. They gave us assurances that all of them will support our agitation. This is going to be final and decisive.

As you said, your agitation will be supported by armed group. Don't you think it is going to be violent?

We believe in peaceful agitation. If Maoists and Seven Party Alliance can launch successful peaceful agitation, there is no reason why Madhesis can't do it.

At a time when armed groups have been terrorizing people of terai particularly those of hill origin by issuing threats, don't you think your agitation will fuel the fire?

Our agitation will be peaceful and it is not directed against any community but to establish the right of Madhesi people. Our aim is also to press armed groups that violence only ignites violence and that they should opt for peaceful agitation, which only can bring the change.

Do you think armed groups will join your call?

If Maoists can join agitation launched by seven parties against royal government and enter into peaceful politics, why do we suspect armed groups of Madhes? When all of us are fighting for the cause of oppressed Madhes and Madhesis, there is a possibility to have an agreement like the 12-point pact to launch decisive agitation against the oppression of Pahadis.

In the name of Pahadi rulers, all Madhesi outfits have been denouncing people of hill origin living in terai and threatening them to vacate the place. Don't you think this is other kind of suppression of minorities of Madhes?

Our agitation is not directed against people of hill origin living in terai as Madhesu struggle is aimed at establishing equal rights of Madhesis.

If that is so, why are Madhesi groups chanting anti-Pahadi slogans?

We are opposing discriminatory policy of Pahadi rulers but not the pahadis. Some people might have been victimized but we want harmonious relations will all communities of Madhes.

Since seven party government has amended the constitution and declared to hold election, why are you blaming them?



You have already seen how they are making a fool of people in the last one year by postponing the election twice. I can't believe that they will hold the election again.

How do you see the role of newly launched Terai-Madhes Loktantrik Party?

This new party will play an important role to promote and protect the rights of Madhesis. Since this new party is led by senior political leaders like Mahanta Thakur, who has a long history of political struggle, our party has already invited them to join us in our decisive agitation.

You have been demanding autonomy for entire Madhes as a one political and geographical unit where different linguistic groups have been living. What would your autonomous region be like?

Madhes autonomous region will have its own judiciary, executive and legislative at regional level. We also want to have equal share in the center also at par with Pahadi community who discriminated against us. Furthermore, the constitution should guarantee us the right to self determination.

Do you mean you want the right to declare Madhes as a separate and independent state?

Of course, if discriminations continue, people should have the right to self determination. It is the right of the people to choose their own destiny.

If you are given regional autonomy and right to self determination, what will the official language of Madhes be?

Local regional language will be given official status. As people of Madhesis widely speak Hindi, our link language will be Hindi. Again, it will be up to the people to decide.

What about Nepali language?

Everything will be decided by the wishes of people.

If Maoists can join agitation launched by seven parties against royal government and enter into peaceful politics, why do we suspect armed groups of Madhes?

PLA VERIFICATION

Headcount Ends

The UNMIN has concluded the second stage verification of the Maoist People's Liberation Army (PLA). But the difficult question of their reintegration and rehabilitation remain unanswered

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

The UNMIN has done its job of verifying the members of Maoist People's Liberation Army (PLA) staying at seven major and 21 satellite cantonments spread across the country.

It is now up to the government and the Maoists to decide the next course to rehabilitate the verified combatants so as to ensure a durable peace.

Not enough serious debates have been held regarding reintegration of PLA combatants into security bodies.

Most political parties are of the opinion that ideologically indoctrinated guerrillas of a particular political party cannot be a part of the national army. But they have not made convincing moves to address the concerns of the Maoists who will need, in turn, to convince its military wing in any such move.

There are proposals being floated that major chunk of the combatants could be reintegrated in police or a separate industrial security force. But these proposals have not been seriously debated.

The unnecessary lingering on this issue could trigger troubles in the coming months. The UNMIN has already offered its expertise in this issue.

End of Second Stage Verification

At a press meet on Thursday (Dec 27), Ian Martin, the chief of UNMIN, publicized a preliminary report of the second stage verification process.

As per the report, of the total PLA combatants staying at various cantonments, only 19,602 PLA men



Maoist combatants: Waiting for rehab and reintegration *File photo*

cleared the verification process.

The report stated that 15756 male and 3846 female combatants were found eligible after the completion of the stage of the verification process. Altogether 31,318 PLA combatants were registered after the first stage of verification at seven main cantonments and 21 satellite camps.

The report says that only 18,923 combatants were registered during the second stage of verification. It said only 697 combatants out of 932 combatants, who were absent during the first stage of verifications, were registered in the second phase.

Around 8640 combatants, who did not turn up during the second stage of

verification, became disqualified.

The report adds that 2973 combatants were found ineligible as they were below the age of 18 in May 25 2006.

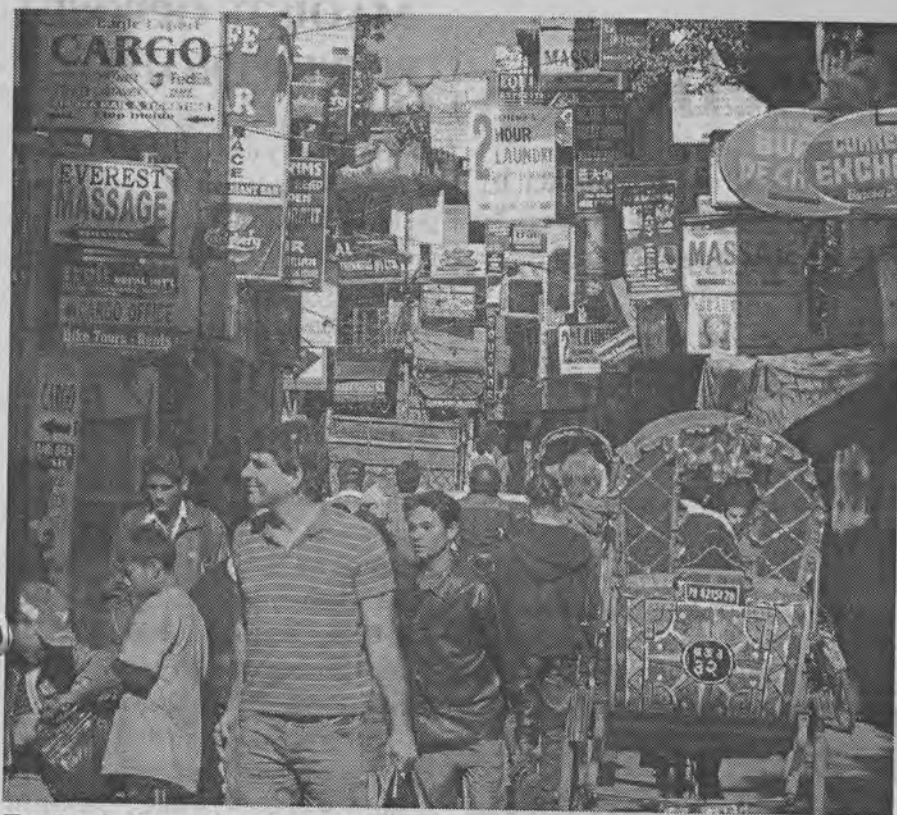
As per the previous agreement, the UNMIN verified only those combatants who were above 18 years of age and who were recruited before May 25, 2006.

After the first phase of verification, it was informed that there were 30,852 PLA combatants and more than 3,400 arms, in the cantonments across the country.

Martin said that the comprehensive report of the verification process would be submitted to the Joint Monitoring Coordination Committee, which comprises the representatives of the UN, Maoists and Nepal Army.

As forty percent of their combatants have been disqualified, the Maoists have yet to react. But they did express displeasure at the UNMIN's publication of preliminary report.

Following the press meet by Martin, Maoist deputy commander Ananta said they were unhappy because he had publicized the report before its endorsement by the JMCC. "We had understood that the report will first be presented to the JMCC," he said. ■



Tourists in Thamel: Business is brisk

TOURISM

Upbeat Mood

As the number of travelers increase, the mood among entrepreneurs is upbeat

By A CORRESPONDENT

It does not need an expert analyst to deduce the mood of tourism entrepreneurs these days. One quick round of Thamel is enough to demonstrate how the entrepreneurs are doing a brisk business.

As the year 2007 draws to close, the major newspapers are splashed with advertisements for sundry parties and New Year's Eve bashes at several star hotels, discos and eateries.

There is a palpable mood of excitement and hope. Hotels have said they are making over 60 to 70 percent occupancy, on average.

Not only in Kathmandu, hotels in Pokhara and Chitwan are also running packed houses.

In the last fourteen months, almost a dozen new international airlines have started operating flights to Kathmandu – a clear indication of increased flow of travelers.

Foreign airlines such as Air Arabia, Etihad, Orient Thai, Silk Air, Dragon Air have started operating flights here while many other existing ones have increased frequency of flights.

The growing number of Nepali migrant workers coupled with handsome growth in tourist arrival led to this surge.

However, the national flag carrier Nepal Airlines Corporation (NAC) continued to be in doldrums due to lack of aircraft.

The Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) has

already indicated that the year 2007 could well witness the arrival of half a million tourists – the first time ever in this country.

And now the tourism entrepreneurs and authorities are already talking about luring a million tourists.

At a program organized recently in the capital, the tourism stakeholders called for integrated promotional campaigns to lure more tourists. They also demanded to institutionalize the partnership among all concerned stakeholders including government, private sector and general public.

Speaking at the seminar on 'A million tourists: opportunities and challenges ahead' jointly organized by Society of Economic Journalists of Nepal (SEJON) and Nepal Tourism Board (NTB), the entrepreneurs said tourism can become a catalyst for changing the face of Nepal.

"Tourism is a causative factor or catalyst for overall development, which requires facelift or dress up time to time," Karna Shakya, a renowned tourism entrepreneur said. "Tourism is not simply a trade. It is also a science of understanding human psychology," Shakya added.

Shakya, who had played major role in making the Visit Nepal Year 1998 a success, said there should be teamwork to ensure that tourism industry is a hassle-free sector. Shakya advocated promotion of new and innovative products like endemic tourism, destination specific products and service.

At the same program, Secretary at the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Lila Mani Poudel, said that government was considering launching a promotional campaign like Visit Nepal Year.

Prachanda Man Shrestha, CEO at the NTB, said tourism can be used as a tool to bring marginalized people into development mainstream.

The earlier experiment of using tourism as a tool to tackle poverty had shown encouraging results. The Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Program (TRPAP) had opened up various new tourist destinations in rural areas. Communities in these new tourism sites have already received basic course on hospitality business. It is now for the private sector to step in to give it a commercial face-lift. ■

MAOISTS REJOIN GOVT

Re-Entry Of Rebels

Three and a half months after they walked out of cabinet by plunging the election into uncertainty, Maoists return to government claiming election is their number one agenda

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

On September 18, when the Maoists made a sudden announcement that they had left the government, the country had plunged into another phase of uncertainty.

By projecting 22-point demands including republic declaration by the parliament and fully proportional representation system, the Maoists had stormed out of the cabinet.

And addressing the subsequent mass meeting in Tundikhel, Maoist leader Dr.

promoted to full minister, was also sworn in along with the Maoist ministers. Minister for Labor and Transport Management Ramesh Lekhak and another Maoist minister Matrika Yadav, who holds the Forest and Soil Conservation portfolio, could not attend the swearing-in ceremony as they were out of the Valley. Along with Karki, Lekhak was promoted to full minister on Sunday. Both represent the Nepali Congress party.



PM Koirala administers oath to ministers: Swearing in for second time

Baburam Bhattarai had thundered that they would foil the election of Constituent Assembly (CA) then scheduled for November 22.

Their decision led to the cancellation of the much-awaited polls. It was after the seven parties reached 23-point agreement meeting their demands halfway that they finally decided to rejoin the cabinet.

On Monday (December 31), Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala administered the oath of office and secrecy to the five ministers including four Maoist ministers. The four Maoist ministers who took oath include Krishna Bahadur Mahara (Information and Communication), Dev Gurung (Local Development), Hisila Yami (Physical Planning and Works) and Pampha Bhusal (Women, Children and Social Welfare). Mahara leads the Maoist team in the interim cabinet.

Gyanendra Bahadur Karki, who was

MAOISTS OPPOSE POWER PROJECTS

On the very day that they took oath of office and rejoined the government, the Maoists have said they do not support the recent decision by the cabinet to award two big hydropower projects to foreign companies pledging most free energy.

At a press meet on December 31, Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Minister for Information and Communication, who heads the Maoist team in the government, said his party is opposed to the decision made by the cabinet on Sunday to award the Arun III (402 MW) and Upper Karnali (300 MW) to any foreign company that pledges 'most free energy.'

Mahara said such far-reaching decision on water resources cannot be made without wider political consultations.

The cabinet, on Sunday, has decided to award Arun III (402 MW) and Upper Karnali (300 MW) to foreign companies by extracting maximum free energy. The government expects to get 123 MW of free power from the two projects. The cabinet had instructed the Water Resource Ministry to talk with the companies who have shown interest in these projects and award it to the ones that pledge highest amount of free energy.

The Ministry has formed a four member team for this purpose. Earlier, the government had called for open global tender on Arun III, Upper Karnali and Budhi Gandaki. A taskforce led by former finance secretary Bhanu Acharya, which was formed by the government, had advised that the government give priority to an Indian company called GMR in both Arun III and Upper Karnali based on its proposals. However, parliamentary committee on Natural Resources had asked the government not to award both projects to a single company. ■

Speaking to reporters after the swearing-in ceremony, Koirala said the main focus of the government was to conduct the constituent assembly elections on time. He also said the government would fix the date for the polls through the next cabinet meeting. Senior Maoist leader Dr Baburam Bhattarai, who was present at the function, said the Maoists had rejoined the government to make CA election a success and added that the party would again walk out of the government if the polls do not take place on the stipulated time.

Later, addressing a press conference, Minister Mahara said that they felt 'victorious' at returning to the government after ensuring that their demands have been fulfilled. "We know there are challenges before the election. But we are prepared to face those challenges and hold the election," he said. ■

ECONOMY

Disturbing Signals

The latest Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) report paints a gloomy picture of the economic state of affairs

By A CORRESPONDENT

As the political leaders continue to be preoccupied with 'big issues' like peace process, constitution amendment and election, the national economy is in a shabby condition.

Due to apparent lack of political guidance and focus, the economy is slowly drifting towards disaster.

At least, this was what was apparent in the recent report by the central bank.

Reports quoting NRB statement said that the budget deficit reached Rs.7.41 billion in the first four months of the current fiscal year. Just a year ago, during the same period, a surplus of Rs.1.97 billion had been recorded.

The government expenditures, in this period, grew by 34.5 percent to Rs.34.54 billion, pushed up mainly by rising recurrent expenditures. Government expenditures had increased by 9.9 percent in the corresponding period of the previous year. Increased expenditure on relief-related activities, salary increment of civil servants, and preparation for the constituent assembly elections resulted in a higher than projected growth in recurrent spending, said the central bank in a statement.

The NRB has also suggested that the government be prudent on non-budgetary expenses. On debt servicing, expenditure on principal repayments increased by 83.0 percent to Rs 4.39 billion as compared to a rise of 35.2 percent in the corresponding period of the previous year. Of the payment, Rs 2 billion went for repaying domestic debt and Rs.2.39 billion for the external debt.

Worryingly, revenue mobilization also slowed down. The total revenue mobilization rose by 13.2 percent to Rs.24.35 billion, while it had grown by 20.3 percent in the same period last year.

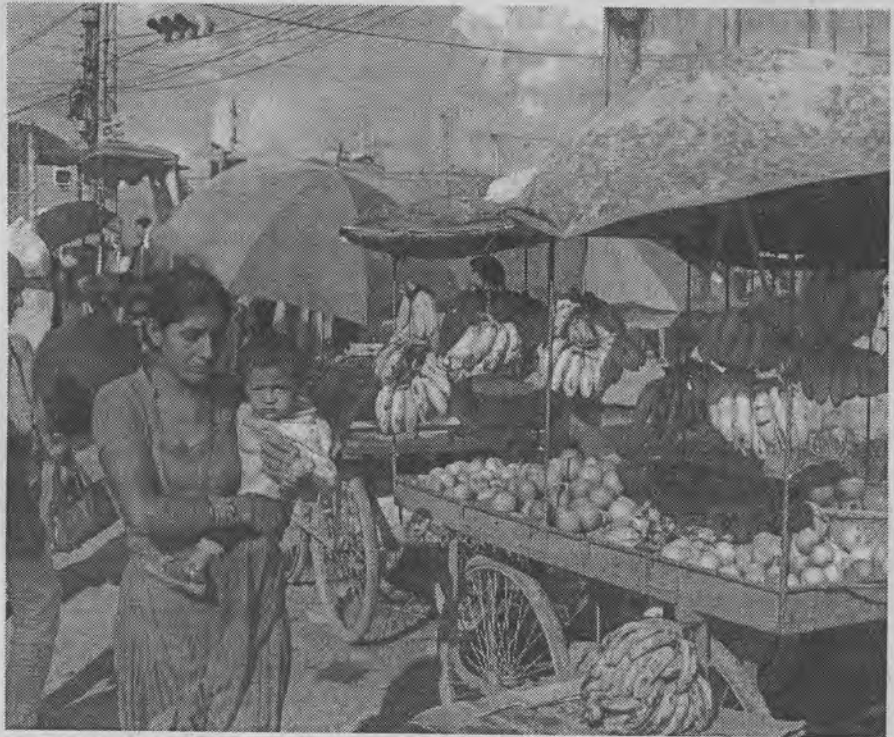
NRB blamed the low revenue collection on adverse impact of frequent bandhs, strikes in tarai on business and industries, and problems in revenue mobilization in bordering customs offices.

Situation was not encouraging on the foreign grants front either. The government received foreign cash grants of Rs 2.26

The overall balance of payments (BoP) recorded a deficit of Rs. 3.61 billion, while it had registered a surplus of Rs 180.8 million in the period last year.

Foreign currency reserves decreased by 1.2 percent in the first four months of this year to settle at Rs 163.12 billion. To meet the rising demand of Indian currency, the NRB purchased Indian currency equivalent to Rs 20.63 billion by selling US\$ 321.4 million.

Inflation slightly eased down. The inflation based on consumer price index grew to 6.3 percent by mid-November, as compared to 7.1 percent a year ago. However, since the petroleum prices have been further increased twice in recent months, the inflation, too, could spiral upwards, say economists.



Marketplace: Sword of inflation is dangling

billion, as against receipt of Rs 3.31 billion in the same period last year.

Both exports and imports performed badly. The total volume of exports fell by 6.3 percent due to decline in the exports of vegetable ghee, toothpaste, textiles, chemicals and pulses to India and woolen carpet, pashmina, readymade garments to other countries. Likewise, imports rose by one percent.

Perhaps to offset this situation, the government is said to be planning austerity measures to cut costs.

"Official trips abroad will be cut and new land and vehicles will not be purchased," Budget Division chief at the ministry, Krishna Hari Baskota told The Himalayan Times. "This way we could save up to Rs 3 billion without compromising on any development activity." ■

BOOK

On Buddhist Stories

Susan Hoivik highlights the Buddhist life which evolves in Nepal

By A CORRESPONDENT

Being a birth place of Shakyamuni Buddha, Nepal is a land full of stories, legends and traditions of Buddhism. From high Himalayan mountains to low land in south of Nepal, Buddhism has made great impacts on all areas.

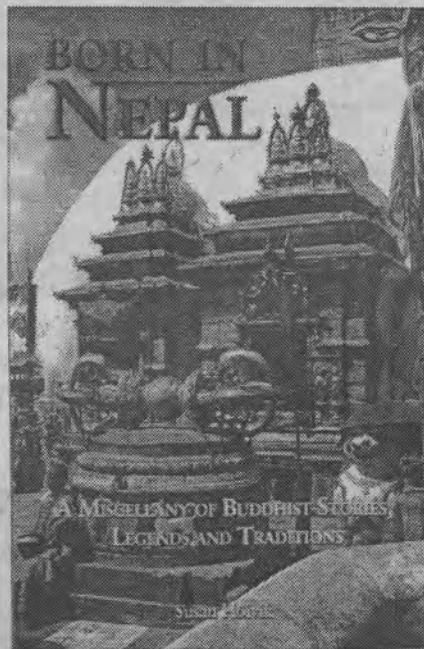
Despite being a society with Hindu domination, the country has never seen any conflict between the various religious sects, particularly Hindus and Buddhists. In Kathmandu valley, people are so tolerant that they build Buddhist and Hindu temple side by side and live together harmoniously.

It is similar in mountain region. In the high Himalayas, the residents are predominantly followers of Mahayana Buddhism but they too respect the sentiments of the people of south who are mostly Hindus. Like Buddhists, Hindus too regard glacier lakes and mountains as the abodes of God of creation and heaven of human life.

This is the reason why people respect and share the common feelings about their religions. Many books have already been published on the important aspects of religious life particularly on those people who have been practicing Buddhism. This is a first book, which tries to explore how religion and culture guide the population with Buddhist faith.

"Buddhism, the second-largest

religion in Nepal, is arguably not a religion at all but a philosophy, a way of life. At least, that is how it started out. However, over the centuries those who followed the no-nonsense teachings of the man who was born as



Born in Nepal
A Miscellany of Buddhist
Stories, Legends and
Traditions

By:

Susan Hoivik

Published by:

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Jyatha, Thamel,

Phone 42205562

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Prince Gautama Siddhartha of the Sakyas began to codify," writes Voivik. "For millennia, people throughout the world have told stories to entertain, to inform and also try to make sense of the universe around them. Every religion has developed its own set of stories, myth, legends, parable – accompanied by a system of rituals, symbols and various traditions."

Having lived for a long period in Nepal, studying and working here, author Hoivik seems to have learnt ethos and values of this society. Through this book she tries to write how distinguishing the stories and other legends in Buddhist countries like Thailand, Korea, India and Nepal are. According to Hoivik, there are wide variations of the stories of other countries. Also within the same country there will be variations, as exemplified by the many syncretic Hindu-Buddhist Newari legends of the Kathmandu valley as compared with the Tibetan Buddhist tales of the High Himalayas.

"This miscellany focuses on one aspect of the vast array of stories, legends, rituals, traditions, and symbols that have developed within the world religion known as Buddhism, namely, those dealing with Nepal. After all, it was in Lumbini, in southern Nepal, that the historical Lord Buddha was born over 2,500 years ago. This volume is meant as a general introduction for all those visitors to Nepal who wish to learn more about its rich and living Buddhist heritage," writes author Hoivik.

All the stories and legends collected in the book are very interesting and they give how important the religious and culture aspects are in the life of common people and how these legends determine their life. ■

QUOTE UNQUOTE

"The country is now a republic. There is no chance of revival of monarchy."

Prachanda, Maoist chairman, after the parliament endorsed the third amendment of constitution stating that the country will be a federal republic to be implemented by the elected Constituent Assembly.

"The Terai should not be a single province. It should have separate provinces to ensure equal representation of all ethnic, lingual and class of people."

Madhav Kumar Nepal, general secretary of the Unified Marxist Leninist (UML), in Birgunj.

"This House of nominated MPs is going to direct the Constituent Assembly to be elected by sovereign people to follow its diktat."

Surya Bahadur Thapa, former prime minister and president of Rastriya Janashakti Party (RJP), criticizing the passage of third amendment of the constitution, at the parliament.

"You (seven parties) are committing another blunder by not fulfilling Madhesi demands through this amendment. There will now be another agitation in Madhes and you guys will be left watching helplessly how all the MPs and leaders from Madhes will abandon you and join that agitation."



Rajendra Mahato, former minister and leader of Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP), speaking in the parliament.

"Our aim is to achieve republican, democratic, federal and Terai-Madhes - One Province with right to self determination."

Mahantha Thakur, chief of the newly announced Terai-Madhes Democratic Party.

"We had understood that the report will first be presented to the JMCC but the

UNMIN went ahead and made it public on its own."

Barsha Man Pun aka Ananta, deputy commander of the Maoists, expressing displeasure at the publication of report of second stage verification by the UNMIN.

"The political and criminal activities should be separated. Political issues should be dealt politically and criminal activities should be strictly controlled."

Ram Chandra Poudel, Minister for Peace, recounting the advice by Indian leaders when he recently visited New Delhi.

TRANSITION

NOMINATED: Dr. Durgesh Man Singh, as a Nepali ambassador, to Republic of India



HIKED: The price of petrol from Rs 73.5 to Rs 80 by, the Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC).

ANNOUNCED: Tera-Madhes Democratic Party, under the leadership of Mahantha Thakur.

National holidays, by the Home Ministry, in various festivals of

indigenous nationalities and religious groups. They include festivals like Lhosar of indigenous nationalities, Chhath of Madhesi, Eid Bakr-Eid of Muslims, Christmas of Christians, Maghi of Tharus and Ubhauri Udhyauri of Kirant community. Likewise, local holidays have been announced for Pawani festival observed by Rajbanshi and Tajpuriya community in Morang, Jhapa and Sunsari districts.

SUBMITTED: A list of Maoist nominees for ministers when it rejoins the cabinet, by chairman Prachanda. The list includes Krishna Bahadur Mahara (Information and Communication), Dev Gurung (Local Development), Hisila

Yami (Works and Physical Planning), Matrika Yadav (Forest and Soil Conservation) and Pampha Bhusal (Women, Children and Social Welfare). Besides, two more Maoist leaders Padam Rai and Nabin Bisjwakarma have also been proposed as State Ministers.

APPOINTED: Rakesh Sood, as an ambassador of India to Nepal.



RETURNED: Ram Chandra Poudel, Minister for Peace and Reconstruction, after a brief visit to New Delhi, India.



Potala Palace: Preserved Tradition

PHOTO EXHIBITION ON TIBET

Pictures Of Transformation

Photographs exhibited at multicolored Tibet Photo Exhibition show the transformation taking place in Tibet Autonomous Region of China

By A CORRESPONDENT

After the implementations of various development programs, Tibetan Autonomous Region of China has seen many changes in terms of development of infrastructures as well as preservation of traditional culture and religious values.

With the construction of basic infrastructures like road, drinking water projects, airports and electricity, the life of city dwellers of Lhasa has drastically transformed. Modern concrete buildings and paved road replaced the old dirt road and narrow lanes. The constructions of railway and modern international airport have linked the Lhasa city with the rest of the world.

One of the noticeable and memorable parts of Tibetan Autonomous Region of China is that the development and progress are made by preserving Lhasa's famed culture.

From photographs of historical religious places to Tibetan architecture and from development of Tibet to its gradual modernization, the photographs exhibited at Photo Exhibition show how China's Tibet is heading towards modernization by preserving its ancient culture and religious values.



Lhasa City: March to modernism

Organized by China Association for Preservation and Development of Tibetan Culture, and co-organized by Chinese Embassy, China Tibetology Research Center, China's Tibet Magazine, World Cultural Net/Chinese Information Center, the two-day Multicolored Photo Exhibition attracted large number of Nepalese audience.

Tibet is endowed with rich cultural, religious and natural resources. The mountain ranges stretch miles away in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and look like a sea of mountains. For the artists and photographers, there is everything to fascinate and fire their creativity. The

Himalayas and mountain peaks are other attractions. Tibet is the origin of world's biggest rivers like Long River, the Yellow River, and the Yarlung River which ends at Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean after crossing tens of thousands of miles. Even Tibet is the origin of many Nepalese rivers.

With the existence of more than 1500 lakes big and small, Tibet poses all kinds of natural beauties. In every moment, Tibet, the marvelous land, is experiencing amazing changes. In Tibet, there are ancient buildings featuring local rich culture. This is what various photographers have caught in their camera.

The construction of Tibetan railway featuring with the flat Tibetan plateau, rivers, green pasture lands, Tibetan Antelopes, photographers have covered wide range of Tibet. Tibetan people of different ethnic groups working and celebrating various festivals are other features of exhibition. School going children and small monks in the various temples are also captured in the photographs.

From early 1950 to present stage, photographs of various times revealed all important transformation taking place in China's Tibet. Not only the modern development activities have transformed the Tibet but preservation of traditional Tibetan monasteries and temples are other priorities. Photographs of Potala Palace, Drepung Monastery, Jokhang Monastery, Tashilunpa Monastery show how well preserved its traditionally and culturally important places are.

The exhibition helps Nepalese people understand what has been happening in Tibet and how it is changing in recent years. ■

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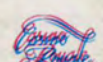
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Fax: 9771 4271244
rdt@mos.com.np



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Durbarmarg, Kathmandu
Tel: 4228650
Fax: 9771 4225228
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Hotel Yak & Yeti
Durbarmarg, Kathmandu
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Fax: 9771 4223933
royal_royale8hotmail.com



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Radisson Hotel
Lazimpat, Kathmandu
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Fax: 9771 4445525
casinorad@mail.com.np



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Hyatt Regency
Boudha, Kathmandu
Tel: 4482517
Fax: 9771 4470722
casinotara@mos.com.np