

www.nepalnews.com/spotlight

The National Newsmagazine

Feb 8-14, 2008

SPOTLIGHT

FOREIGN AID SEEKING SUCCOR

Politics : King Speaks
 Children : Mortality Rates Improves
 CAN : IT Dream

C.D.O. Regd No. 151/039-40
Postal Regd No. 20/000-61

30.00 Other SAARC Nations..... US \$ 1.00
 25.00 Asian Countries..... US \$ 1.00
 25.00 Japan..... US \$ 1.00
 China/Korea..... US \$ 1.00
 ME/Israel..... US \$ 1.00
 Hong Kong/Taiwan..... US \$ 1.00
 Australia/New Zealand..... US \$ 1.00
 Europe..... US \$ 1.00
 USA/Canada..... US \$ 2.00

Nepal..... NRs.
 India..... Rs.
 Bhutan..... Nu.

< TUBORG Law no. 15 >

All for one, Tuborg for all!



TUBORG
GOLD

< TUBORG Law no. 1 >

जिउ जिन्दगी रमेर



CONTENTS

Page

LETTERS 3

NEWS NOTES 4

BRIEFS 6

OPINION : Dr. Ananda Bahadur Thapa 7

POLL POLITICS: Compulsive Options 9

CAN SHOW: IT Dream 18

CHILD HEALTH: Handsome Progress 19

WORLD BANK: Generous Gesture 20

VIEWPOINT: Kyung wha-Kang 21

BOOK: Looking Back 22

QUOTE UNQUOTE/TRANSITION 23

NEIGHBOR: Cultures Come Together 24



COVER STORY: Seeking Succor Cash-strapped government looks to donors for succor

Page 12



KING SPEAKS: Silence of the Mind All over the world, silence is the best form of speech for monarchies

Page 10

INTERVIEW:
Pasang Sherpa
President of Nepal
Federation of
Indigenous
Nationalities
(NFIN), explains
how the indigenous
movement is
proceeding

Page 16



SPOTLIGHT

THE WEEKLY NATIONAL NEWSMAGAZINE

Vol. 27, No 22, February 08, 2008
Magh 25, 2064

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

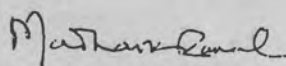
Cover Design : Digi-Tech Scanning & Pre-Press Pvt. Ltd.
P.O. Box : 1655, Jwagal, Kuponhole,
Lalitpur, Nepal
Tel : 5551251, 5529530
E-mail : degiscan@wlink.com.np

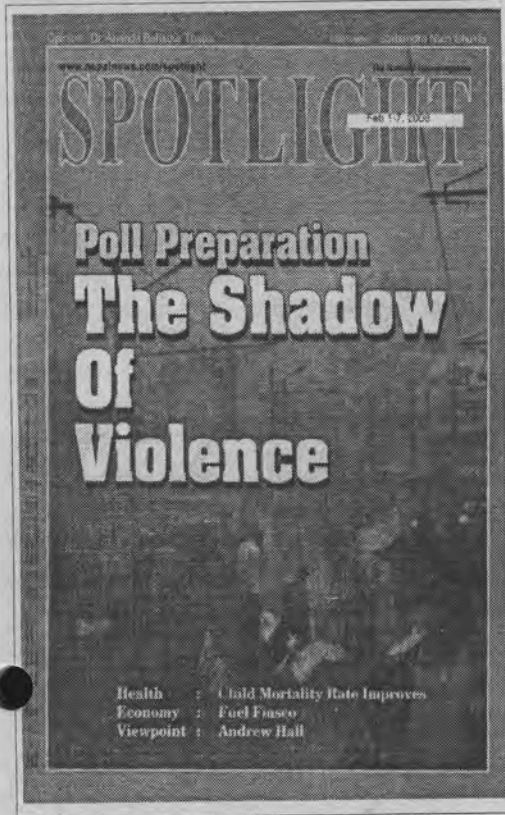
Distribution : R.B. News Paper Traders
New Road, Kathmandu, Nepal
Ph : 4232784, 2020247, 4244679
E-mail : rbnewspaper@hotmail.com

Printers : Printers World Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.
Maitidevi, Kathmandu
Ph : 4423904, 4426520

C.D.O.Regd. No
151/039-40
Postal Regd. No
42/61/62
U.S. Library of Congress
Catalogue No. 91-905060

Leaders of the SPAM are trying to show that they have been gripped by the election fever. But their enthusiasm does not seem to be infectious. The rest of the country is not only skeptical but outright pessimistic that this time also elections to the constituent assembly will definitely be postponed at the last minute. Since the SPAM leaders are over confident that there is no power on earth, at the moment, that can displace them from the seat of power, they naturally are neither keen nor sincere for elections to the consembly. Their vociferous outbursts for the elections and their campaigns under tight security, do not manifest their hidden insincerity. They are a wonderful camouflage to hide their keen interests in the hundred of millions that have been apportioned for the conduct of the elections not to say anything about the huge undeclared amount the donor countries, who are votaries of democracy and friends of the poor Nepalis, would be providing. Moreover, their machinations to support each other to make their protégés win would turn the elections, if they are ever held, into only a farce. Besides, the frank call given by the supremo of the CPN(Maoists) Prachanda, that they would capture power whether they win or lose the elections also would make the elections only a drama. The intolerance being practiced by the SPAM against all non-SPAM politicians and political parties clearly indicate that they won't be granted full security and equal opportunities to campaign. As a matter of fact, the continuous abductions, loots and killings would never inspire other political contenders to risk their lives. In the existing situation, no politician other than belonging to the SPAM would seriously think of contesting the elections even if he believed the elections were going to happen. But, the volatile environment in the Terai with scores of Madhesi groups bubbling for the fulfillment of their illogical demands and resorting to murders, *Bandhs* and *Chakkajams* does not guarantee that SPAM government would be able to bring all the Madhesi groups to the negotiating table before the elections. The SPAM politicians must be aware that it might not be quite easy to placate the resenting Terai leaders. In such a volatile and uncertain situation, India could play a very important and positive role to bring peace and normalcy to the tiny neighboring country which is supposed to be traditionally a friendly nation with so many commonalities. Unfortunately, this will not happen. And Nepal's lop-sided foreign policy has turned her into a satellite state. As such, if all the poor millions of patriotic Nepalis are keen to safeguard their sovereignty, their heritage, their religion and their traditional independent character, they have to gird up their loins and jump into the fray. We are confident that the patriotic Nepali army will stand by them shoulder to shoulder.


Madhav K. Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher



Right Assessment

It was well assessed cover story on election preparations (February 1-8). I agree with you that the SPA government wants to hold the election at any cost but I don't think holding the election alone is panacea. As you wrote, holding election cannot bring political stability in the country. If that was the case, Nepal would not have suffered from political instability even after the three consecutive election for House of Representatives. I am certain that even after holding election, Nepal will have to go through another phase of instability. Terai's political groups have already indicated that they will boycott the election. One needs to understand what is written on the wall.

Jeetu Basnet
Via-email

No Relief From Power Cuts

After reading Water Resources Minister Karki's interview, I have realized that there is going to be no relief from load-shedding for this generation as it will take at least a decade to complete the projects which can feed enough energy in Nepal's grid. Although there are so many dubious statements, minister Karki seems to have taken certain important steps to implement the projects. I don't understand why minister Karki hurriedly issued license of Upper Karnali and Arun III to Indian companies.

Sumitra Shrestha
Via e-mail

Foreign Concern

British ambassador Andrew Hall's opinion was interesting. I really agree with British ambassador Hall's remark that Nepal can be bridge between two economic powers of Asia. When Nepal's intellectuals and politicians have been expressing frustrating remarks, Ambassador Hall's remark

Biased Story

The cover story is biased as you seem have no interest in holding of election for CA and solve the country's problem. If we cannot hold the election now, the country will have to enter into a civil war. What Nepali Congress acting president Sushil Koirala said is true. We must hold the election at any cost. Seven parties cannot rule the government without a legitimate public mandate. If we cannot hold the election giving one or other reasons, the country will land in disaster.

Srijana Shrestha
Via-email

No End In Sight

After reading cover story on transmission lines (January 25-31), I have come to realize that there is no immediate solution to load shedding. Even if the government constructs few more power houses, there is going to be problems for transmission lines. For a country like Nepal which has been slowly and steadily moving towards

development, uninterrupted supply of electricity is prerequisite. I hope policy makers need to give their attention to improve the infrastructure.

Nirmala Gurung
Via-email

Transmission Saga

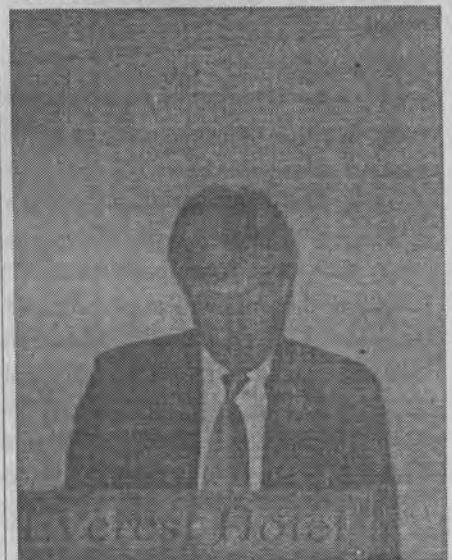
As the country has been passing through a serious phase of power crisis, your cover story on transmission lines was interesting to read. As a weekly newsmagazine, you need more such articles and analysis in contemporary issues of nation. Instead of publishing political stories, you need to focus more on developmental issues.

Birendra Thapa
Via e-mail

Subtle Observation

It is nice to read Sushil Sharma's articles in Spotlight. He has made some superb observations on Nepal's political drama. His analysis on SPA's rally was very interesting. I hope Spotlight will carry more articles like them in future.

Basanta Rimal
Perth, Australia Via-email



visualizes Nepal's potential as a nation. Spotlight needs to publish more articles like that. As an old friend of Nepal, Britain has always backed Nepal's quest to survive as a viable, independent nation. Hall's article shows that concern.

Neema Lama
Via-email



Peace Only After Polls, Says Nepal

The general secretary of the Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) Madhav Kumar Nepal has said that peace will come in the country only after election. "If we think that election should be held only after restoring complete peace in the country, then the election may never happen," he said at an interaction with party advisors in Balkhu on Tuesday (Jan 29). "We must understand that peace will come only after the election," Nepal said. He said that even in different restive places in the world, election have been held from time to time. *Compiled from reports*

"SILENCE IS ALSO (AN) ACTION": KING GYANENDRA

King Gyanendra is reported to have said that he has remained silent to let the peace process succeed.

In a chat with Hari Lamsal, Editor of Rastra Bani weekly, which was published on Wednesday's (Jan 30) edition of the weekly, King Gyanendra is quoted as saying that he remained silent to make the peace process successful. Nepali people themselves should speak out on where the nation is heading, on the direction it is taking and on why it is becoming chaotic, the King is reported to have said.

King Gyanendra has also refuted that monarchy has ever sought power. When asked why he did not speak out till now, the King said, "Silence is also (an) action."

In the weekly's report, which has been published at a time when the interim parliament has amended the interim constitution declaring Nepal a federal

republic, subject to endorsement by Constituent Assembly, the King has said that the monarchy predates the unification of Nepal itself. He asked, where would we be today had the nation-builder Prithvi Narayan Shah not unified Nepal?

King Gyanendra also said Nepal has such a large heart where every Nepali can find shelter. He also recalled his February 1, 2005 move – which prompted political parties to unite with the Maoists that ultimately forced the King to step down. He accepted that his move turned out to be a failure.

Stating that the monarchy should never involve in politics, the King pointed out the need to strengthen relations between monarchy and democracy.

Editor Lamsal has said that he met with the King last Friday at the Narayanhiti Royal Palace. Although it was not a formal interview, Lamsal said, he took permission to publish the King's views at the end of his audience. *Compiled from reports*

Deuba's Rally Marred By Blast In Sunsari

A bomb went off at Sakhuwagachi of Inaruwa, Sunsari district, where senior Nepali Congress leader Sher Bahadur Deuba was attending a mass meeting organized by the NC Saturday (Feb 2) afternoon. The blast occurred few hundred meters away from the program venue, injuring an 8-yr-old girl, reports said. She has been admitted at a local hospital in Inaruwa for treatment. The Madhesi Mukti Tigers (MMT) has claimed responsibility for the blast that was apparently meant to terrorize the people participating in the mass meeting. The Jwala Singh faction of Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM) had called a shutdown strike in the area to disrupt the program. Last Saturday, the MMT had carried out a series of small blasts in Inaruwa targeting senior NC leaders including acting president Sushil Koirala. However, no human casualty had taken place in the bomb attacks. *Compiled from reports*

YCL Sets Fire To Indian Vehicles

Protesting the detention of over two dozen Young Communist League (YCL) cadres by India's Seema Suraksha Bal (SSB) in Maheshpur border area in Jhapa district, the Maoist-affiliated YCL resorted to vandalism and rampage targeted at vehicles with Indian number plates in Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari district on Saturday (Feb 2). According to reports, around 27 YCL cadres were detained for four hours and released by SSB, on Friday. But the SSB had not returned equipment and documents carried by the YCL cadres who had gone to the region to inspect border, the report added. Subsequently, they set fire to two Indian vehicles – one truck and a jeep – in Jhapa district. The YCL also imposed ban on the plying of Indian vehicles in the three districts. They torched an Indian truck in Biratnagar for flouting the ban. A central member of YCL, Agni has said that they will intensify their agitation if their documents and equipment are not returned. Meanwhile, Indian truck drivers closed down the Jogbani border point on Saturday to protest the torching of an Indian truck. *Compiled from reports*

Seven Parties Differ On FSU Polls

The meeting of the high-level steering committee of seven parties was marred due to differences among the parties over the Free Student Union (FSU) polls slated to be held in Tribhuvan University, Nepal Sanskrit University and affiliate colleges across the country on February 28. At the meeting, on Thursday (Jan 31), the UML flatly rejected Maoists' proposal to put off the FSU polls by two months. Congress has shown its neutral stand on the issue. Maoist chairman Prachanda said that since student organizations affiliated with the parties will make the election as 'do or die issue,' it would send a wrong message to the public ahead of Constituent Assembly election. The UML, on the other hand, has said that the FSU election will help create environment conducive for polls by demonstrating friendly contest. The parties have agreed to discuss the issue with student organizations on this issue. *Leading dailies report*

Blasts Overshadow SPA Assembly In Birgunj

Over two dozen people including Prasa chief district officer Bhola Siwakoti were injured when two bombs



went off outside the Narayani Stadium where an election assembly of the seven-party alliance (SPA) was underway Wednesday (Jan 30) afternoon. The blasts occurred in the parking lot of the stadium at around 4:00 pm, reports said. Nearly 20,000 people were participating in the mass meeting. The blasts took place despite heavy security presence in the town. Earlier in the morning, CDO Siwakoti had told reporters that 2000 police force including Armed Police Force personnel were deployed in Birgunj to ensure security. The injured persons have been admitted to Narayani Sub-regional Hospital, Birgunj, for treatment. Various armed outfits operating in Terai have phone FM radio stations in Birgunj claiming their responsibility for the explosions. Police, however, have not confirmed anyone's involvement. Meanwhile, UNMIN chief Ian Martin has condemned the blasts in Birgunj. "I condemn in the strongest terms the bomb attack during a political rally held to promote the Constituent Assembly election in Birgunj today, as well as bombings and threats related to other recent rallies," he has said in a statement. *Compiled from reports*

Maoists Should Not Dominate: US Envoy

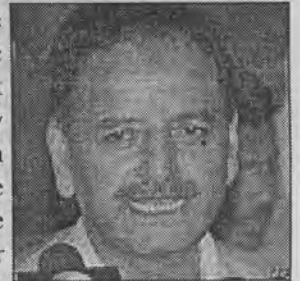
US envoy to Nepal Nancy J Powell said in New Delhi, India, on Wednesday (Jan 30), the US wanted that the Maoists did not dominate Nepal politics. Powell, who is here for regular political

consultative meeting with Indian authorities, said this while meeting high-ranking officials of the Indian External Affairs Ministry, diplomats, security affairs expert and media persons on Wednesday. Powell held extensive discussions with joint secretary in-charge of Nepal-Bhutan desk at the Indian External Affairs Ministry Preeti Sharan on the latest political development in Nepal, a diplomat at the Delhi-based US embassy said. She also met Indian diplomats, security affairs expert and media persons at the luncheon meeting hosted by her at the US embassy on Wednesday. Matters concerning the CPN (Maoist), peace process in Nepal and Terai unrest figured in the discussion. Former Indian envoy to Nepal KV Rajan, retired army general Ashok Mehta, security affairs expert Ajay Sahani, journalist Shaurav Shukla and Indrani Bakhchhi of the Times of India were also present on the occasion. "Our discussions centered mainly on latest political developments in Nepal," foreign correspondent at the Times of India Bakhchhi said. According to an official at the External Affairs Ministry, Nepal's political development and latest Indian stand on the CA polls were discussed between Sharan and Powell. According to a diplomat at the US embassy, Powell is scheduled to meet the joint secretary in-charge of border management at the Union Home Ministry on Thursday. *The Himalayan Times daily reports*

Sitaula Says Nepal Receiving Decisive Help From India

Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula has said that Nepal has been receiving "decisive help" from India for the ongoing peace process and the elections to constituent assembly. "The people and the government of India have extended moral and political support to Nepal's democratic movement in 2006 and Nepal has been receiving decisive help and cooperation from the government of India in her ongoing peace process and elections to the constituent assembly," Sitaula told

Indian official news agency, Press Trust of India. He further said, "So far as I know, India wants to see the ongoing peace process conclude successfully and conduct the constituent assembly polls without any obstacle." When asked for his comment on the recent remarks made by UNDP resident coordinator, Mathew Kahane, over India's role in checking violence in Terai, Sitaula said, "We ourselves should solve the problems seen in different parts of the country and I think India will continue to extend help and cooperation in our endeavors towards that end." "So far as the various agitating ethnic groups, regional groups and professional organizations putting forth various demands are concerned, I think they should also contribute in various ways to making the historic constituent assembly elections a success," the Home Minister added. In an



interview to the same news agency few days earlier Kahane had called upon the Indian government to help check different armed groups operating in Terai that are fomenting unrest in Terai, in order to ensure smooth supply of humanitarian aid and conduct election activities. The leaderships of numerous Terai outfits including the two factions of Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM) are believed to have been based in bordering Indian states. The Indian government has not said anything categorically regarding the media reports that armed Terai militants have been taking shelter in Indian states, but has dismissed speculations that it might have been harboring the insurgents to create trouble in the northern neighbor. Various armed groups have intensified bombings, targeted killings and abduction to upset the CA election campaigning of the parties in Terai region. *Nepalnews.com reports*



Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala (left) with Dr. Bhagwan Koirala, while inaugurating the expansion of Gangalal Heart Center.

PRIME MINISTER GIRIJA PRASAD KOIRALA has said he is ready to meet all the just demands made by disgruntled Madhesi parties if they show readiness to take part in the forthcoming constituent assembly election. "I want to tell the Madhesi friends that they just need to become ready to participate in the elections, then it will be for me to meet all the just demands they are raising," Prime Minister Koirala said addressing a function organized to inaugurate the new block of Shahid Gangalal National Heart Centre in Kathmandu Tuesday (Jan 29) afternoon. Stressing that only dialogue can resolve the Terai problem, the Prime Minister also urged the Terai groups to come to the negotiating table. He said he was fully committed to hold the CA polls on time. This was Koirala's first public appearance after two weeks of complete rest due to bad health. During his 10-minute long speech at the function, the Prime Minister also blamed the media for the negative hype about his health condition recently and said that he was hale and hearty now. Sources said the octogenarian Prime Minister, who has been suffering from multiple health complications for a long time, attended the function despite the advice of his doctors for complete rest for a couple of days more. Meanwhile, with the construction of new block in the hospital at the estimated cost of Rs 120 million, it will be able to serve 180 in-patients – up from current 80 patients.

THE DAILY POWER CUT INCREASED to eight hours from current six hours beginning Friday (Feb 1). The Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) has said that it had to increase the hours of load shedding since the Kulekhani powerhouse needs to be repaired. According to Sher Singh Bhat, chief of Load Dispatch Center of NEA, there is total demand of 10 million units of power everyday in the country. The NEA is experiencing shortfall of 2.4 million units. The shutdown of Kulekhani for around two weeks for repair and maintenance

will further cut NEA's supply capacity by 300,000 units. As per new schedule, every household faces 8 hours of load shedding for three days and 7.5 hours for three days while each of them can enjoy one day without any power cut.

GREEN NEPAL PARTY HAS DEMANDED TO FORM

A neutral government to hold the CA election. In its recent working committee meeting, the party condemned all highhanded acts. Government established by Janandolan II has declared itself all powerful and hence has ignored the demand of other parties to form neutral government to

conduct CA polls as per democratic practices. GNP holds the SPA responsible for increase in regional, communal and criminal politics due to their short sightedness and incompetence. It said due to negligence of leading parties, the CA election was postponed twice in the past. The party doubts whether the election could be held on date set for 10th April looking at the deteriorating law and order situation. GNP feels that people are scared of rising incidence of murder, violence, maladministration, scarcity and foreign interference. Issued by party chairman Kuber Sharma, the press statement said to end the destabilization in the country the GNP party insists on holding election as per schedule. For that leaders of seven parties must show sincerity and magnanimity to dissolve the present nominated interim parliament and cabinet and form neutral government together with parties outside the government and parliament.

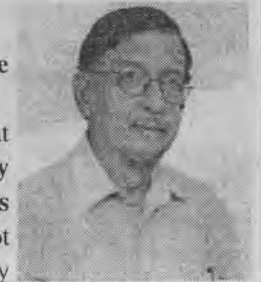


THE GREEN NEPAL PARTY PRESIDENT PUSP LUINTEL recently met with Simon Hughes, the president of the Liberal Democrats of the United Kingdom. He discussed issues of mutual interest, situation in Nepal and about GNP.

KARNALI PEOPLE ROBBED OF VAST WATER WEALTH

Suicidal Upper Karnali Hydropower Deal

•Dr. AB Thapa



Several dailies including THE KATHMANDU POST of January 25, 2008 reported horrifying news that the Ministry of Water Resources has signed a MoU with a GMR team to finalize the deal to allow latter to implement the 300 MW Upper Karnali Project. The MoU to implement the 300 MW Upper Karnali Hydropower is going to be a suicidal deal. The Karnali people will be robbed of the great opportunity to benefit from their vast water wealth as a result of the decision to implement the 300 MW Upper Karnali project.

The proposed 300 MW Upper Karnali project can be implemented only at the cost of sacrificing the 4180 MW Upper Karnali Storage project According to the pre-feasibility study report the 300 MW Upper Karnali project and the 4180 MW Upper Karnali storage project are mutually exclusive. The 4180 MW Upper Karnali project is the most attractive hydropower among the projects identified so far in Nepal. It far excels even the highly attractive 10,800 MW Karnali Chisapani

project in performance to generate electricity at extremely low cost on a massive scale. It can be roughly said that the 4180 MW Upper Karnali project might be able to produce as much as 50% of the total energy generated by the 10,800 MW Karnali Chisapani project at only about 1/3 cost of the latter.

The overwhelming superiority of the 4180 MW Upper Karnali storage project among the large hydropower projects identified so far in Nepal is so obvious that the team of the consultants conducting the pre-feasibility study of the 300 MW Upper Karnali project under the financial assistance of the World Bank found themselves duty bound to warn us to refrain from harming the 4180 MW Upper Karnali storage project. They have clearly stated in the pre-feasibility report that the construction of the 300 MW Upper Karnali project will preclude the implementation of the 4180 MW Upper Karnali storage project.

Is Parliamentary Committee Adequately Informed?

It is reported in the newspaper that at some stage the **Parliamentary Natural Resources and Means Committee** was also involved. It is not clear whether or not the Parliamentary Committee was informed about the fact that the 300 MW Upper Karnali project and the mammoth 4180 MW Upper Karnali storage project are mutually exclusive. Do all the members of the Parliamentary Committee know the whole truth about the Upper Karnali projects? Is the Acharya task force or another Committee under the former finance secretary, set up to advise the Government, competent to make satisfactory recommendation, which requires in-depth analysis of all relevant technical documents? .

People Must be Informed

There is no escaping the fact it is not possible to implement the proposed 300 MW Upper Karnali project without sacrificing the most attractive 4180 MW Upper Karnali storage project. Do not the people of our country have the right to know from

It is not clear whether or not the Parliamentary Committee was informed about the fact that the 300 MW Upper Karnali project and the mammoth 4180 MW Upper Karnali storage project are mutually exclusive. Do all the members of the Parliamentary Committee know the whole truth about the Upper Karnali projects?

the Water Resources Ministry and Parliamentary Natural Resources and Means Committee why the mammoth 4180 MW Upper Karnali storage project is being sacrificed to implement the relatively tiny 300 Upper Karnali project?

Why Upper Karnali Storage So Attractive

The Karnali river makes a big loop in its lower reach near a place called Asare. From here the river flows in the south-east direction for about 25 kilometers, after that the river makes a complete reversal in its direction. The river comes back to a point just two kilometers away from its earlier position near Asare. There is a drop of about 150 meters in Karnali river bed elevations between these two positions merely two kilometers away from one another The project to utilize

this bend for power generation is known as the Upper Karnali Project. There are very good sites to build a large storage dam at the beginning of the bend. Thus, it makes the Upper Karnali Storage Project far superior to the 10,800 MW Karnali Chisapani Project in terms of per unit capacity investment cost because its hydropower station would be operating at a firm head two times greater than that of the latter though the total length of the waterway of both these hydropower plants would be almost exactly the same.

Large Cost Reduction at Higher Heads

Of all the site characteristics, head is the most important. **Design guidelines, 1989 approved by the American Society of Civil Engineers** (a document used throughout the world for the design of hydropower) has given some simple reasoning that would help to explain why the Upper Karnali project operating at a head about two times greater by comparison with the Chisapani hydropower could be built at far less per unit installed capacity 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**

e n e r g y development the conduit area and reservoir volume are halved and further large cost reductions occur for powerhouse and machinery costs. **This**

Our grandiose national plans to develop our water resources to uplift the economic condition of our country in general and the people of Karnali in particular would be nothing more than an empty rhetoric if we failed to intervene in time to save the 4180 MW Upper Karnali Storage Project which might be the best even in the whole world for the generation of cheap peaking energy on a large scale.

fundamental consideration is at the root of the large cost reductions that occur at higher heads.” Needless to mention that the lower investment cost means the generation cost of the electricity would also be less.

Comparative Investment Cost of Upper Karnali Storage

By comparison with the mammoth 10,800 MW Karnali Chisapani Project the firm head of the Upper Karnali Storage Project would be almost two times greater. It can be derived based on Stage A Optimization Study Data of the World Bank financed Karnali Project (Chisapani) Study report that per KW installed capacity construction cost of the Upper Karnali Storage Project could be only about 2/3 of such cost of the project at Chisapani. If such comparative cost reduction advantage is treated as additional bonus to accrue to Nepal on top of normal royalty to be received from private developer then our country might be able to earn per year at present cost of peaking energy about US \$ 300 million as extra bonus which is equivalent to gross value of the total annual production of paddy in the whole country considered to be between 2.5

to 3 million tons at a price of about US \$ 100 per ton.

Upper Karnali Pre-feasibility Report

The World Bank supported pre-feasibility study has clearly explained that the 4180 MW Upper Karnali Storage Project and the 300 MW Upper Karnali Diversion Project are mutually exclusive. The relevant excerpt from the World Bank supported study report is presented below.

“Even when assuming that the KR 1 A run-of-river project (it indicates the small 300 MW Upper Karnali project) is a sunk cost, it will be seen that a single large power plant (4180 MW) associated with the major storage project is less costly than the combined cost of smaller plant at the same location (3532 MW) and a second power plant at the foot of the storage dam (348 MW) discharging directly into the KR 1 A run-of-river project head pond. Based on this assessment, it appears that the later development of the major hydro storage project at Site KR 1 (4180 MW Upper Karnali Storage Project) would cause the KR 1 A run-of-river project to be effectively discontinued. There may be limited opportunity for secondary energy generation

during the periods of spillage”.

Foreign Expert Against 300 MW Upper Karnali

Mr. Paul Terrell from the Bechtel International of

the USA was Chief Advisor Consultant of the Upper Karnali Project study conducted under the World Bank financial assistance. Mr. Paul Terrell has categorically cautioned Nepal in his article published in the journal “HIMAL” that our country should never compromise optimum development for the sake of a quick deal.

In Conclusion

Our grandiose national plans to develop our water resources to uplift the economic condition of our country in general and the people of Karnali in particular would be nothing more than an empty rhetoric if we failed to intervene in time to save the 4180 MW Upper Karnali Storage Project which might be the best even in the whole world for the generation of cheap peaking energy on a large scale. We should not hesitate to invite competent foreign experts for advice if we find ourselves not capable to make correct judgment on this very important matter. ■

POLL POLITICS

Compulsive Options

Defying own rhetoric about 'option-less' April polls, key actors begin readying for the alternatives

By SUSHIL SHARMA

It is early morning on the last day of the first month of the New Year. The 'busy' minister without portfolio Sujata Koirala's phone gets ringing, as usual, from the wee hours.

One of the first callers that morning was a special one. The prime minister's father Girija Prasad Koirala. Furious over what he heard the daughter say in a BBC interview the previous night.

The ailing early-to-bed early-to-wake-up prime minister woke up that morning to hear fresh complaints about the daughter.

The complainants were some of his close aides and senior party figures. The issue was, again, the monarchy.

In the interview, Sujata did advocate for a cultural monarchy.

She said it was her personal opinion. But that was enough to earn the ire of the rivals in the deeply factional party that the Nepali Congress always is.

The senior Koirala was angry with his widely believed heir apparent over the complaints that he received about her.

Two hours later, the scene had changed. The senior Koirala got to listen first hand what the dear daughter actually said.



Sujata: Searching option

He was a happy man now. He found nothing wrong with the interview.

While Sujata's remarks on monarchy grabbed the headlines and the critics' attention, one crucial point she made went unnoticed.

It was this very point that the octogenarian seasoned leader apparently took the notice of. It was about keeping all options open in the present-day volatile politics.

"No aspiring leader moves without keeping all options open to give the



Prachanda : Leading red brigade

country an outlet. He/she must have an option."

"The April elections must be held, let there be no doubt", Sujata said. "But what if elections do not take place?" she asked. "We must keep all options open for any eventuality."

She did not explain the options that she had in mind.

She did not need to. Her advocacy for the cultural monarchy told it all.

It is not just the Nepali Congress or



Diplomat: Poll concern

the Koiralas. Others have also begun to look for options in the event of any eventuality.

At the forefront is the second major constituent of the governing seven-party alliance – the Maoist communist party.

As an option, it has begun openly befriending what it calls royalist nationalists "to set up a 21st century brand of republic."

It has projected the party chief, Prachanda, as president of the monarchical republic that, Nepal currently is.

The constituent assembly election is supposed to draft a new constitution that will draw a new roadmap for Nepal.

The Maoists have made their alternative roadmap clear ahead of the polls.

"An executive presidential form of governance is what we want to establish," said Maoist lawmaker, Khimalal Devkota.

The message is clear: election or not, Maoists aim to seize the power and put the supreme commander of their 19000 red brigade at the head of the government.

This has sent a wave of jitters beyond the national boundaries.

As April 10 draws closer, the cocktail circuits of the Kathmandu diplomatic community are abuzz with speculations.

As a top western diplomat put it, "We are also keeping all options open." ■

KING SPEAKS

Silence Of The Mind

Following a year long silence, King Gyanendra puts his views cautiously but does not face sharp criticism as in the past

By KESHAB POUDEL

Silence has been a great strength for the monarch as it has helped the institution regain some popularity in the people.

In fact, silence has been the strengths of monarchs all over the world as is shown by the history. British Queen Elizabeth remains one of the most popular monarchs because she rarely speaks.

Similar was the case with late King Birendra who gave very few interviews during his reign as a constitutional monarch. Just after he was crowned, King Gyanendra, however, gave a series of interviews to the media and spoke whatever he liked. His style of speaking not only made him unpopular but even pushed the monarchy to the brink. After taking over the direct rule and heading the cabinet as its chairman, King Gyanendra gave a number of interviews to various media though then Constitution of Kingdom of Nepal 1990 had given a limited constitutional role to him.

Even after handing over power to the parliament following the popular agitation II, King Gyanendra gave made controversial statements which sparked nationwide reaction paving the way to curtail his authority further.

However, King Gyanendra seems to have realized now that silence is a great strength. That might be the reason why he spoke after maintaining silence for nearly a year. In the last one year, political parties amended the interim constitution twice adding certain articles giving right to the interim parliament to declare Nepal as a republic, but the King had chosen to keep mum.

Except some well known republican ministers like Ram Chandra Poudel,

Krishna Prasad Sitaula and Maoist minister Pampha Bhusal, nobody raised any question on King Gyanendra's interview this time. The interview was given to Hari Lamsal, the editor of a low profile weekly tabloid Rastravani.

Silence As Action

"Silence also is (an) action," said King Gyanendra in the interview published last week. "We have remained silent as we have wished to make the peace process a success." This is the first realization of King Gyanendra - who had made all kinds of futile exercises by organizing press meet, inviting intellectuals for consultations and so on after dismissing the elected government.

Had he decided to go for any broadsheet high profile media, every one would have published it. However, his choice was selective and deliberate. "Ultimately, King Gyanendra has come out with his view in a low profile weekly as he wanted to come out with his views moderately but in dignified manner. Besides, he also expressed his faith in the verdict through a democratic process. In the history of Nepal, the institution of monarchy has witnessed many ups and downs," said the political analyst.

Looking at bitter experiences of past, others, silent supporters of monarchy, fear that the King might start to speak again as in the past. If he starts to speak, he will court controversy and popularity of institution of monarchy will suffer. As an institution based on faith of people, monarch has no privilege to speak to the people like popular political leaders.

Monarchy's future will not be determined by majority or minority votes of the people like political parties and



King Gyanendra: Silence is golden

leaders. Monarchy will be there even if the overwhelming number of people are against it since it is an institution that relies on faith.

"The institution has always been run as per the wishes of the Nepalese people. We wish for peace, democracy and strengthening of nationalism - the type of political system should be as per the wish of the Nepalese people. That system has to be suitable for the country and the people. The Nepali people should be able to stand with their head held high. The effort to solve instability also has to be

done through a democratic process," said King Gyanendra.

Along with faith upon the verdict of democratic process, King Gyanendra also has mildly expressed his differences with the main actors at the political stage.

"What situation the country is passing through, how the country has been destabilized, the Nepalese people have to speak up about the situation prevailing in the country. Due to many reasons, people have not been able to speak. In the name of democracy, attempts have been made to destroy the country's physical structure. I don't think these are democratic practices. Nobody should take the people for granted," King Gyanendra said.

Unlike his late brother, King Gyanendra was not groomed to be a King as he was not in the line to succeed. He became King twice by historical coincidence in 1950 for about two months and after massacre of Royal family members in 2001.

"In fact, King Gyanendra was not born as a direct successor to throne. By historical coincidence, he was declared as the King at the age of 4 years when his grandfather took a risk of his throne while acting against then autocratic Rana regime. A few months after his first coronation, the situation brought him again to his previous position of Prince. After more than half a century, he again became the King after the horror of the Royal massacre in 2001. The destiny has always put him in the throne like a musical chair," the analyst said.

Till a few months back, nobody in the popular politics was prepared to risk his career in defense of the institution of monarchy. Now the tide seems to be turning as all viable alternatives with the ruling parties seem to have been exhausted and the country is facing a serious threat of lawlessness and disintegration. Slowly and gradually right thinking persons in politics are looking towards various options including the time-tested traditional institution of monarchy.

A recently appointed minister



Breaking of Silence: Boomeranged

without portfolio Sujata Koirala seems to have made an intelligent guess of coming events as she dared to stand for time-tested traditional institution by highlighting its cultural base. "Monarchy has cultural importance. In my personal view, I don't mind to have cultural King," said Sujata Koirala.

Political results cannot be predicted by astrologers. It depends upon several variables. In the absence of one or other variable, the unexpected role may produce a different result.

"What King Gyanendra did by assuming all the powers of state in him on February 1, 2005 might not be the only reason by which he had to face this unpleasant situation," observed the analyst. "Results would have been definitely different had King Gyanendra acted with due patience and tolerance. King Birendra did that but other variables were persistent to destabilize Nepal and the King was removed from his role."

At this critical juncture in Nepal, King Gyanendra, whether as a person or King, has a great role for the peace and democratic transformation of the country. "Even if he loses the throne; he may have larger space in the hearts and minds of the people of Nepal. As long as the monarchy enjoys that credibility, it would remain a unifying factor for the nation,"

said the analyst.

Global Experiences

One has to go through the recent history of Afghanistan and Cambodia. It was ultimately the long dethroned King Zahir Shah who was requested by all the conflicting parties to legitimize the constitutional change of Afghanistan into the republic. And diehard republican communists in Cambodia needed that unifying institution of monarchy to maintain peace and stability.

When King Norodom Simhanouk wanted again to relinquish his throne, interestingly, the communist prime minister Hun Sen refused his request and said that the constitution does not permit him to relinquish the privileged position of the monarch.

"Unfortunately, Nepal does not yet see anybody like President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan or prime minister Hun Sen of Cambodia who understands the historic necessity," said the analyst.

"Although he spoke his mind this time, the most valuable advice to King Gyanendra would be to maintain restraint as much as possible in actions as well as utterances. Let this be one of his rare expressions of personal opinion. Let him always keep in mind that silence also goes to the mind of the people," said the analyst. ■

FOREIGN AID

Seeking Succor

As the election for the Constituent Assembly (CA) approaches, the government is scurrying around searching for funds. As internal resources are not going to be enough, the authorities are casting their glance towards donors. But even the donors do not seem to be in upbeat mood, given the history of election postponements. In the run up to the consultation with donors on February 21 and 22, the government held a pre-consultation meeting this week in the capital. Attended by representatives of donor agencies and concerned stakeholders, thematic discussions were held on key subjects like infrastructure development, peace process and foreign aid policy. Officials have said that the pre-consultation meeting will help them assess the need and prepare themselves for the upcoming meet with the donors. The consultation meeting was held at a time when the government had publicly acknowledged that it is facing cash crunch in the face of rising expenditures

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

On January 16, the Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat made a fervent appeal in front of the representatives of key donor agencies and diplomatic missions based in Kathmandu.

"Nepal perhaps never felt the greater need for external financial assistance than what is being felt, at present. And, I think, this is perhaps the most important time that our development partners can come forward with generous support,"

the Finance Minister had told the donors.

Despite such requests, the government, however, could not get enough commitments from the donors—perhaps an indication of donors' increasing frustration with the prolonging transition and instability.

The government had requested the donors to provide US\$ 47.8 million (over Rs 3 billion). But, as Finance Secretary Bidyadhar Mallik, revealed,

they have only given commitment to provide around US\$ 30 million (less than Rs 2 billion).

According to the Finance Minister, the Nepal Peace Trust Fund (NPTF), which was created to mobilize international resources for facilitating the peace process, at present, has "far too limited resources to meet our current and imminent requirements, which as per the current estimates stand at about 5.04



Consultation with donors: Continuous exercise

billion Nepalese Rupees (equivalent to USD 81.3 million). NPTF currently has external commitments available to the tune of USD 17.4 million. The shortfall, therefore, after government's own commitment is about 47.8 USD million."

Donors In Dilemma

"Earlier, all donors were very excited to put their resources to help in election activities. But after they were postponed twice and the donors could not spend their allocated resources, they have been disappointed," said Secretary Mallik.

Amid this environment, the Ministry of Finance held pre-consultation meeting with donors and stakeholders beginning Friday (February 1) ahead of key conference with donors, which will be held on February 21 and 22 in the capital.

"We are holding thematic discussions on different subjects with the

representatives of donors and other stakeholders such as media, NGOs etc," said Mallik.

He said that the government will be putting forth its agenda including three-year interim plan, peace process, reconstruction and development during these pre consultation and consultation meetings with development partners.

As per the schedule, the government held thematic discussion on Infrastructure Development (Roads and Water Resources) on Friday. On Sunday, similar discussions were held on Economic Update and Reforms and Foreign Aid Policy. Likewise, on Monday, discussions were held on Social Sector and Evolving Peace Process.

"The synthesis of these discussions would be taken up in the February 21 and 22 Donors Consultation Meeting,"

said Secretary Mallik, adding that these conferences are not pledging conferences.

"We plan to hold Nepal Development Forum meeting in autumn of 2008 where we would be appealing for financial aid from the donors and development partners. We think we will need their assistance worth \$ 1 billion every year for coming five to eight years," Mallik said.

Added Burden

The government is feeling additional financial burden since the signing of 23-point agreement among the seven political parties.

Even as the pact cleared the deck for holding election in April, it also created a number of new fiscal liabilities to the beleaguered government.

"(The Agreement) commits to



Rural people: Development, first

addressing the promises made during the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord over two years ago. The issues that currently warrant immediate attention, among others, are the payment to the verified combatants and their reintegration and readjustment, repatriation of discharged combatants, rehabilitation of internally displaced persons (IDPs), managing the cantonments, relief and rehabilitation of the victims of the conflict, and rebuilding of infrastructure. Added to that, formation

of the commissions and committees as committed in the Agreement will also create further financial burden," said Minister Dr. Mahat.

The minister added that the Election Commission (EC), too, has come up with an expenditure estimate that is far above what was budgeted earlier this fiscal year. "It appears that there is hardly any room for applying austerity measure in proposed election expenditures if we intend to be holding free and fair elections, which we, of

course, certainly do. Allied to the election is reinforcing of the security measures. We cannot contemplate any compromises on election security as this only can ensure free and fair election and this is the only one opportunity that Nepali people will ever be getting to participate in CA election," he said.

At present, the government still needs to give around Rs 1.4 billion to the EC. The increase in the allowance of officials also resulted in additional burden. "This time, the total expenses for the election



Donor representatives: Partners in Development

would be above Rs 6 billion including the expenses in security enhancement," said a government official.

Cash Crunch

In recent weeks, the government has faced a new challenge in managing the macroeconomic stability. The commercial banks have reported serious liquidity crunch.

The liquidity crunch in the market means that the government will not be in a position to engage in domestic borrowing to fund its activities. "This clearly signals to us that this is not the right time for government to think about additional borrowing from the market for government spending. To be precise, there is very limited scope for government to raise the domestic borrowing limit this year without further aggravating macroeconomic stability," the minister admitted.

Then, there is the nagging problem of continued subsidy in petroleum products. In the face of violent protests, the government had to rollback the price hike two weeks ago.

The government is preparing to present a supplementary budget to the parliament. "However, our options are

limited. Revenue growth has been satisfactory thus far, in keeping with our expectations, but hardly sufficient to meet mounting expenditures, specially the new additional needs. It would not be fair to think of any additional taxes at this juncture when fledgling manufacturing, export and tourism sectors are struggling hard to find a

recovery," Dr. Mahat said.

On the macroeconomic front, the Ministry of Finance expects the overall economic growth rate to improve this year as the agricultural GDP has been projected to attain higher growth. The revenue, it says, is growing healthily at 26 percent.

"The shortfall in export and the consequent rise in the trade deficit has remained one of the major problem areas. The balance of payments position for the past few months has turned negative, indicating weak investment environment in the country. The inflationary expectation remains somewhat high, mainly due to the effects of the petroleum price adjustments and the price rise in the food items. Despite our efforts to make the fiscal situation sound and sustainable, the treasury position portrays mixed signals on account of sudden jumps in the recurrent expenditures arising from the additional liability in the management of country's political transition, among others," states its press statement.

While many say the country is in the political crossroads, the upheavals in the economic field suggest that the nation could, very well, be also in the economic crossroads. ■



Officials and stakeholders: Fruitful discussions!

'Janjati Groups Want The CA Polls At Any Cost'

- *Pasang Sherpa*

Even as various groups have been organizing protest programs demanding that their concerns be addressed before the Constituent Assembly (CA) election, Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NFIN) - which was in the forefront of struggle of indigenous nationalities in recent past - is seen nowhere in the frontline. Why? PASANG SHERPA, president of NFIN, explains to KESHAB POUDEL, in a candid interview at the NFIN office at Sanepa, Monday. Excerpts:

We haven't seen NFIN on the streets these days. Your agitation has fizzled out, or what?

If burning the tires, buses, calling general strikes and paralyzing the lives are symbols of a forceful agitation, you are right. However, it does not mean that we are silent or inactive. We have been active in our own way.

What are you doing?

We have been doing what is needed to protect and promote the interest of the indigenous nationalities of Nepal. Our struggle is aimed at establishing our right. This has continued.

You plan to go the Terai groups' way?

Some organize agitation even as the date for Constituent Assembly election draw closer. Interestingly, they withdraw all their agitation once the election is postponed. When the government expressed commitment to hold the election, they again speak a threatening language. We are not like that.

What is your objective then?

As indigenous nationalities, we need to be clear about the necessity to hold the election for Constituent Assembly. This is the reason we have been launching peaceful programs to press the government to implement the agreement. We don't want to create any disruption in holding the CA polls. We want to press the government that the election for CA should be held at any cost.

Do you have any specific program?

We are planning to bring peaceful programs soon. However, our program will not be directed at disrupting the election. We hold the view that the further postponement of election

for CA will hurt the indigenous nationalities the most.

You will follow peaceful ways?

It will depend on how the government responds. The mood of agitation will be determined by the ground situation.

So, you do not rule out a violent movement altogether?

If the election is for change, it must be held to fulfill our interest as we are the marginalized group. We need to bring one or other kinds of programs for that purpose. That is the objective of our organization. We will launch our programs to bring the change in our favor. We will not hold any program to disrupt the election.

But various indigenous groups and regional groups have been launching agitations even to the extent of disrupting the elections. How do you look at it?

Although such groups identify themselves as indigenous entities, they are registered as political party and their aim is to get maximum votes in the coming election.

Are they doing the right thing?

As a political party, such programs may be necessary for them to create a conducive situation for them in the coming election. What NFIN wants is that all political parties should work to promote our interest. We will press political parties to look after our interests in the election. The government needs to address genuine demands raised by such political parties.

But, these parties are concerned with particular ethnic groups. Do you believe that these parties can protect the rights of all the indigenous groups in the region?

Of course, parties are set up in the names of Limbuwan and etc. but they should not only work for Limbu as they must accommodate all the indigenous communities living in the area. These parties, too, have to mobilize their programs in accordance with proportional representation and inclusive policy.

How do you distinguish your organization from other organizations which have been established recently to protect the rights of indigenous groups?

There are organizations like ours, which had

We will launch our programs to bring the change in our favor. We will not hold any program to disrupt the election

been struggling for the protection and the promotion of the rights of indigenous people even before the popular movement of 2006. There are other organizations born after Janadolan II. The newly born organizations are backed by the elements in palace and their aim is to restore the king. So far as our organization is concerned, we have actively participated in Janandolan II to remove the monarchy.

Do you see any possibility of a working unity with such organizations?

There is no possibility of any working unity with these organizations, which are run by persons who were close to the king and the palace in the past. These new organizations are now trying to prove themselves as more revolutionary. Of course, the demands raised by the parties formed in the eastern part of the country are genuine but we see penetration of monarchists in their organizations.

What about your own organization. There may be infiltrators, too?

Our organization does not have any monarchist or any person linked with the palace. At a time when all other organizations including the mainstream political parties are penetrated by monarchists and external elements, I can claim that ours is the only organization, which does not have persons with such linkage.

How do you guarantee?

Look whenever the environment for CA election is made, these organizations announce one or other kinds of agitations. Whenever the election is postponed, they also postpone their agitation. Monarchists and some foreign elements do not want elections for CA in Nepal.

But you want it at any cost?

As an active partner of Janandolan II, we are committed to the CA polls. The poll is imperative for indigenous people to establish their rights and



independent identity as well as to end centuries-long discrimination. This is the reason why we are playing more constructive role to hold the election for CA.

The unrest in Terai does not bode well, does it?

There are basically four types of groups involved in violent unrest and agitation in Terai. Some groups are criminal, others are backed by external elements and some are backed by the palace. But there are also some that are genuine political forces. Basically, the demands raised in Terai are largely against their marginalization and discrimination.

Many people belonging to indigenous groups have also reportedly suffered in the violent unrest there.

Although there is a penetration of criminal groups, the Terai movement is basically against discrimination and for recognition of the identity. This is the reason we have been maintaining restraint even when some members of our communities have been attacked. We have clearly said that the unrest in Terai should not lead towards disintegration of the nation. It should also not be against the indigenous communities of Terai like Meche, Dhimal, Thami, Tharu, Rajbanshi, Koche, and Danuwar. The land of Terai belongs to these indigenous groups and Mithila speakers■

Look whenever the environment for CA election is made, these organizations announce one or other kinds of agitations. Whenever the election is postponed, they also postpone their agitation. Monarchists and some foreign elements do not want elections for CA in Nepal.

CAN INFO TECH

IT Dream

The dream of utilizing the information technology for country's prosperity remains unfulfilled

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

Every year since the last fourteen years, the dream of utilizing the information technology for economic development of the country is renewed when the nation observes the annual ritual of Info-Tech Show organized by the Computer Association of Nepal (CAN).

And every year, the dream remains unfulfilled due to lack of initiatives on the part of planners and policy-makers.

The way the much-touted IT Park in Banepa has been left to dilapidate also indicates the level of attention this sector has received in recent years.

While neighbors like India and China have emerged as global giants in software and hardware, respectively, Nepal has missed the bus.

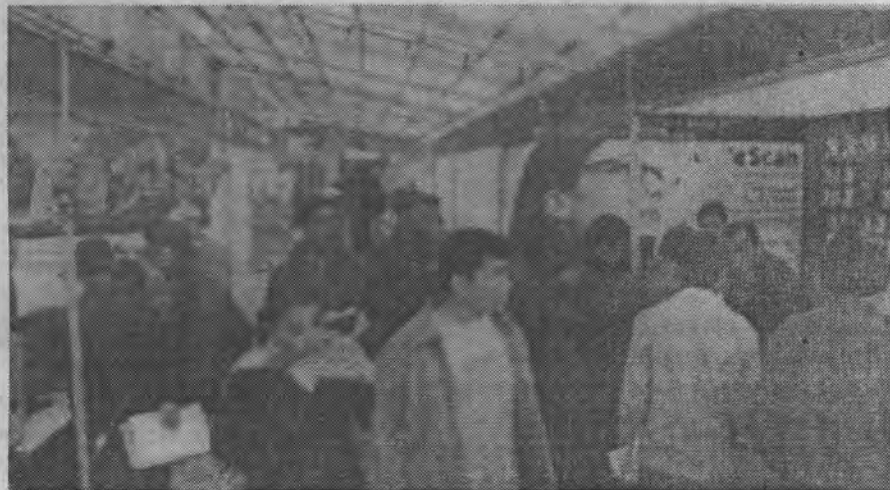
The promising sector of Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), too, has not taken off in the country.

"India earns over \$7 billion from BPO alone every year. If we can earn even a fraction of that amount, it could mean a big boost for our economy," said Biplav Man Singh, president of CAN.

BPOs include the enterprises such as the call centers, medical and legal transcriptions and host of other activities that are outsourced by foreign multinational companies.

Nepal can easily cash in the BPO market, according to Singh, because it only requires English language and IT proficient workforce. Every year around 2000 students graduate in IT studies in the country while tens of thousands pass from Plus Two schools with reasonably proficiency in English.

"If these youths can be involved in BPOs, that could resolve the problem of



Youths at IT fair: Checking out technologies Kantipur

unemployment by a certain extent," said Singh.

According to him, there are around 20-25 BPOs operating in the country right now.

"The BPOs provide hug opportunity for us students of IT in the country. The government should create conducive environment for investment and growth in this sector," said Raju Kattel, an IT student.

Despite promising potentials, why couldn't the BPOs take off then?

"There are a number of reasons, the lack of stability in the political environment is one reason that has prevented big businesses from coming in," said Ashish Kapoor, chief of the Serving Minds, one of the largest BPOs operating in the country. The Serving Minds is involved in program development, web designing and host of other activities.

14th CAN Show

The 14th CAN Info Tech kicked off

in the capital city from Tuesday (Jan 29). Information and Communication minister Krishna Bahadur Mahara inaugurated the Info-Tech at the Birendra International Convention Center (BICC), Naya Baneshwor.

The event runs for six days till February 4, showcasing the latest advancement made in the information and technological (IT) sector.

Apart from the latest innovations in the IT sector, mini-laptops, color printers, multipurpose gadgets including a range of soft-wares and hard-wares are

on display.

Similarly, products of renowned international companies including economical laptops will be the new attractions this year. Besides hosting various exhibitions, CAN is also organizing the eighth ICT Conference on February 1 and 2 with the underlying objective of expanding the reach of ICT developments to rural areas of Nepal. The conference will have paper presentations by national and foreign ICT experts on seven different tracts – Effective Communication, E-Governance (E-Business Market and Government Initiation), ICT Usage in Finance, ICT Manpower, Outsourcing Possibilities and Cyber Security.

As the national body of information technology in Nepal, CAN has been organizing CAN Info-tech since 1995 as a forum for displaying latest technology, creating awareness about IT applications in the country and promoting Nepali IT sector across the world. ■



A poor child: Deserves more attention

CHILD MORTALITY

Handsome Progress

Nepal makes remarkable progress in checking child mortality

By A CORRESPONDENT

The State of the World Children Report 2008 by the UNICEF has stated that Nepal has attained a big achievement by reducing under five mortality rate by more than 67 percent over the decade and is likely to achieve an important Millennium Development Goal by 2015.

The Report, which was released in Geneva last week, states that the under five mortality rate has gone down from 142 per 1000 children in the year 1990 to 59 by 2006.

It makes Nepal one of the three countries in the world to achieve the feat. It also notes that infant mortality rate has

decreased 46 per 1000 child in the year 2006 from 99 in 2000.

The report however, shows that the country still stands at 63rd position in the world so far as under-five mortality rate is concerned and urges the stakeholders to focus on reducing neo-natal mortality rate—the greatest challenge for Nepal.

Nepal's neo-natal mortality rate stands at 40 out of 1000 (as per the data of 2000), the report shows. It also warns that many countries South Asia region are not likely to meet MDG4 goals, and calls for integrated health strategies to catch up with the rest of the world.

MDG4 or the Millennium Development Goal 4 aims to reduce the global under-five mortality rate by two thirds between 1990 and 2015.

The report adds that “attaining the goal is still possible, but the challenge is formidable”. It especially emphasizes the need to involve local communities as they generate necessary demand for quality health cadre, and their engagement is vital if marginalized remote populations are to be reached.

The report also describes the impact of simple, affordable life-saving measures, such as exclusive breastfeeding (up to the age of two), immunizations, insecticides-treated bed nets and Vitamin A supplementation.

Meanwhile, the government officials have said that they will now launch a ‘community-based new born health package’ in at least five districts within this fiscal year and expand it in the upcoming years to other districts to reduce neo-natal (children aged less than one month) mortality. ■



Signing ceremony: Hoping for best utilization

WORLD BANK GRANT

Generous Gesture

The World Bank provides its biggest ever grant to Nepal

By A CORRESPONDENT

The World Bank (WB) has agreed to provide a grant assistance of Rs 15.92 billion to Nepal for implementation of four projects.

Susan Goldmark, country director of the WB and Vidyadhar Mallik, secretary at the Ministry of Finance signed an agreement at a function held on Thursday (Jan 31).

"Together the four projects constitute the largest ever grant program the World Bank has offered in a single year," said Praful Patel, vice-president, South Asia Region, the WB, speaking at the signing ceremony. Of the total grant assistance, Rs 6.30 billion has been provided to the Poverty Alleviation Fund, Rs 2.69 billion to the Road Sector Development Project, Rs 3.15 billion to the Irrigation and Water Resources Management Project and Rs 3.78 billion to projects run under Education for All.

The money under the Road Sector Development Project will go for building all-season road accesses in different districts. Patel said this assistance package demonstrates the WB's commitment to ensure social and economic inclusion of the poor, marginalized groups, and less developed regions.

"Through improved schools, roads, irrigation, and income-generating activities, we hope that these projects will help the country step up the delivery of basic services, particularly in areas that have lost over a decade to conflict," he said.

Patel said these new funds should be spent in a timely and efficient manner, and for the purposes it they were intended for. Finance Minister Dr Ram Sharan Mahat urged the officials to speed up implementation of programs giving quick benefits to the people.

Domestic Funding For Tamakosi

Taking a measure step towards finalizing the domestic investment for Upper Tamakosi hydropower project, the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) and the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) have signed an agreement.

As per the agreement, the EPF will provide Rs. 12 billion to the NEA for the construction of the 309 MW strong hydropower project, Kantipur reports.

NEA executive director Dr Arjun Kumar Karki and EPF administrator Sashi Bikram Rana signed the agreement. The project to be constructed at Lamabagar VDC in Dolkha district is estimated to cost Rs 27.44 billion exclusive of the interests on the loans. EPF is extending Rs 10 billion in loan and investing the remaining Rs 2 billion in equity through purchase of debentures convertible later into shares.

NEA has also informed that talks with the Citizens Investment Trust, Rastriya Beema Sansthan and other commercial banks for the remaining loans have been positive. NEA aims to complete the project by 2012/13.

Upper Tamakoshi is said to be a highly attractive and low risk project with generation cost of electricity standing at Rs 1.85 per unit. The peaking run-of-the-river project is dubbed the best among proposed projects due to its very low per unit cost, and minimal environmental and social costs.

Also, the project's location in central Nepal will help ease the power generation imbalance in a country where almost all projects are located in the western parts. The project will produce 1.74 billion units of electricity annually. Detailed engineering design of the project has not been completed yet. NEA will hold 51 percent of the shares of the project. The EPF will own 20 percent of the shares, and general public and other stakeholders will get the rest of the shares. ■

Stress On Ending Impunity

- *Kyung-wha Kang*

It is evident that important progress has been made on a number of fronts but that more is needed. The issuing of more than two million citizenship certificates is a major step forward in addressing the situation of marginalized groups as is the introduction of recruitment quotas in the police and civil service. The appointment of Commissioners to the NHRC after a 15-month gap is a positive step in strengthening the national human rights system. The Commissioners made clear to me their determination to establish the authority of NHCR as a fully independent and credible national institution which will set the agenda for the defence of human rights in Nepal in the future. OHCHR is increasing its efforts to support and assist the NHRC in this endeavour.

The Supreme Court has continued to play a key role in support of human rights in this period of transition. The Court's decisions on disappearances, in the Maina Sunuwar case and on the rights of sexual minorities are landmarks in the defence of human rights. The signing of the Convention on Disabilities and the ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and CEDAW constitute important commitments on the part of the Government. These decisions and obligations now require implementation.

Nonetheless, major obstacles to the enjoyment of human rights remain. When the High Commissioner visited Nepal one year ago, she focused on two main issues: the need to end impunity and the need to address deep-rooted discrimination. A year later, impunity remains unchecked in Nepal and not one perpetrator of past or on-going human rights violations has been convicted as a result of a criminal investigation. The consolidation of the peace process will continue to be at risk without political will on the part of the authorities to end this culture of impunity.

The agreements between the parties require the setting up of a commission on disappearances and a Truth and

Reconciliation Commission, important measures to bring out the truth, address the past, and also the underlying causes of the conflict with a view to ensuring that the violations of the past are not repeated. These Commissions must be set up in accordance with international standards if they are to guarantee the rights of victims and their relatives to truth, justice and reparations. OHCHR-Nepal Office has already offered assistance and advice and will continue to do so.

On-going impunity as well as a security vacuum due to weak law enforcement and criminal justice has also led to an increase in violent actions, including killings and abductions by armed groups. We are especially concerned about the increasing number of explosions in the context of political rallies, some of which occurred during my visit. The explosions and other violent actions have had a serious impact on the enjoyment of the human rights of the population in the Terai, particularly the rights to life, freedom of assembly and association. These acts of violence only serve the interests of those seeking to disrupt the peace process and will make more difficult the holding of free and fair elections. The holding of the election on 10 April is essential for the consolidation of peace.

The security vacuum in the Terai has also led to communal violence. In Kapilvastu, I had the opportunity to discuss with both displaced persons as well as members of a community whose village was burnt. Perpetrators can be identified but the victims have no confidence in the justice system after having experienced violence and displacement on multiple occasions. Discussions with these groups revealed that in order to gain the trust of the affected communities, law enforcement agencies need to be more representative of the population and need to enforce the law firmly and impartially while fully respecting human rights.

Caste-based, gender-based and

ethnicity-based discrimination remain entrenched in Nepali society. I was alarmed by the testimonies from the family of victims of gender based violence in Nepalgunj and from members of civil society fighting to end such violence. Discrimination in all its forms must be addressed systematically and with determination or it will continue to place the peace process at risk. OHCHR is working closely with the authorities, the NHRC and civil society to ensure access to justice for victims, follow emblematic cases through the judicial process, and raise awareness of the issue in remote communities. It is clear that the Government needs to do more to effectively address these long standing human rights abuses.

Human rights workers informed me of the increasing threats against them. The Government has a special duty to protect human rights defenders so that they can carry out their activities without hindrance or threats to their security.

Despite the many remaining human rights challenges, I am convinced that with continued courage and determination further progress can be made on the pivotal issues of impunity and discrimination. In my meeting with the authorities I have urged them to address these issues as a matter of priority and I have assured them that OHCHR will continue to work in support of and in cooperation with them.

The High Commissioner's Office continues to work closely with UNMIN and UN Country Team to support the peace process and strengthen human rights protection. As the peace process moves forward, OHCHR will increasingly focus its work on supporting our national partners.

(Excerpts of a statement by United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, delivered at a press meet in Kathmandu on February 3)



BOOK

Looking Back

Renowned economist, Dr Badri Prasad Shrestha, who has served the nation for more than five decades in various capacities, recollects his experiences

By A CORRESPONDENT

Dr. Badri Prasad Shrestha needs no introduction in Nepalese economic and planning area as he has served in various positions in Nepal's economic, administration and diplomatic service in the last five decades.

Having written various books on Nepalese economy, Dr. Shrestha is a first Nepalese scholar to have done Ph.d in economics in 1962. He has also written first economic book on Nepal named An Introduction to Nepalese Economy.

He started his career as an officer of Organization and Management section under the Ministry of Finance. Dr. Shrestha has witnessed all kinds of economic development and modernization process in the country.

From officer at Organization and Management to visiting professor at the Pennsylvania University of United States, Dr. Shrestha was involved with the teaching profession in Nepal as well as foreign countries. Later on, he became vice-chairman of National Planning Commission and also served as an ambassador to Japan. Just a few years back, he also served as the Minister for Finance.

In his book, Dr. Shrestha recollects his past and Nepal's overall economic situation. He shows how Nepal started its economic development from scratch and built the institutions over the period of a long time.

Whether he was in planning or education institution or diplomatic service as an ambassador to Japan, Dr. Shrestha's quest remained to find out



Samjhana ra Vichar Memoir and Opinion

By:

**Dr. Badri Prasad
Shrestha**

Published by:

**Nepal Economic
Association**

Price:

Rs. 150.00

Pages: 118

appropriate model for economic development in Nepal. He has also honestly put his conversations with King and other high dignitaries regarding Nepal's economic challenges.

After reading his book, one can perceive how Nepal's bureaucracy was functioning during the direct rule of the King. The lack of coordination between various organizations created problems. As a vice chairman of National Planning Commission, Dr. Shrestha traveled extensively to various districts of Nepal. He trekked for 46 days visiting 17 districts of Nepal.

He also recollects his time in briefing and debriefing in the palace with the King. It showed Nepal's way of bureaucratic functioning. Dr. Shrestha's book gives some interesting insights about Nepal's over all development.

As an economic scholar, Dr. Shrestha involved in various policy making and institutional development process in Nepal. As a vice-chairman of National Planning Commission, Dr. Shrestha propounded the concept of regional development. With virtually no institution and overwhelming rural population, Dr. Shrestha stressed the need to have dual economic policy for Nepal. He holds the view that Nepal's rural population cannot compete with urban sector as there is wide gap in terms of income and infrastructures.

He is known for his concept on regional economic development, which was introduced in the period of fourth five year plan. "With immense contribution in Nepalese economy, he places himself as a pioneer in Nepalese history," said Professor Bishwambher Pyakuryal in preface. Like Mahesh Chandra Regmi who established himself as a first economic historian, Dr. Shrestha has made contribution as a first development economist.

After restoration of democracy in 1990, many civil servants, politicians and other scholars have recorded their past and Dr. Shrestha, too, has given something to read for the future generation. ■

“Decide to take part in the election, and all your demands will be fulfilled.”

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, urging Madhesi parties to declare they will take part in election.

“If this government fails to hold election, we will have to capture the state power to hold the polls.”

Prachanda, Maoist chairman, talking to journalists in Dang.

“The people and the government of India have extended moral and political support to Nepal’s democratic movement in 2006 and Nepal has been receiving decisive help and cooperation from the government of India in her ongoing peace process and elections to the constituent assembly.”

Krishna Prasad Sitaula, Home Minister, in Press Trust of India (PTI).

“If we think that election should be held only after restoring complete peace in the country, then the election may never happen. We must understand that peace will come only after the election.”

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

“I condemn in the strongest terms the bomb attack during a political rally held to promote the Constituent Assembly election in Birgunj, as well as bombings and threats related to other recent rallies.”

Ian Martin, Special Representative of Secretary General of the UN, and chief of UNMIN.



“The April election is favorable for Maoists. They are working as per their plan to capture each polling booth by mobilizing YCL cadres. Their strategy is just to capture power.”

Binaya Dhoj Chand, a central leader of Nepali Congress (NC), in Deshantar.

“There is concern on the activities of certain groups that are making things difficult for people in the Terai area. Some of these groups may have some kind of links in North India, so it would be enormously helpful if Indian authorities are able to keep these people

under control.”

Matthew Kahane, United Nations Resident Representative and Humanitarian Coordinator in Nepal, saying that in many districts of Nepal people are chronically facing food shortage and asked India to ensure a regular supply of food and other crucial supplies to them, in the Press Trust of India.

“I have not met the King for quite sometime.”

Pashupati SJB Rana, president of Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), refuting reports that he has met with the King.

TRANSITION

INCREASED: The load-shedding hours from six to eight hours a day, by Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA)

APPOINTED: Yogendra Dhakal, as the Nepali ambassador to Australia, after the Australian government belatedly accepted his nomination.

LEFT: US ambassador to Nepal, Nancy Powell, for New Delhi, India, to hold talks with Indian officials on Nepal situation.

RETURNED: The United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights Kyung-wha Kang, after completing her five-day visit to Nepal.

DEFERRED: The case against governor of Nepal Rastra Bank, Bijaya Nath Bhattarai, till February 15, by the Special Court. Bhattarai along with NRB director Surendra Pradhan is facing charges of corruption slapped by the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA).



CHINESE SPRING FESTIVAL 2008

Sharing Culture

Organized by Araniko Society, Chinese Spring Festival 2008 (New Year) was observed by launching various programs

By A CORRESPONDENT

When Chinese Ambassador to Nepal Zheng Xianglin joined the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Civil Aviation Prithvi Subba Gurung at the stage, a popular Nepali song Resham Firiri... was sung, which drew cheers and joy from the Chinese and Nepalese audiences at a hall in Hotel Yak and Yeti.

Organized to celebrate Chinese New Year, Chinese ambassador Xianglin chose the song to express greeting to Nepali people on the occasion of Chinese New year. Taking part in joint chorus with the Minister, Chinese ambassador made Nepalese and Chinese audience jubilant in the Chinese New year.

The two-hour-long cultural program was full of interesting shows demonstrated by professional Nepali and amateur Chinese citizens living and working in Nepal. Along with Nepalese cultural groups, Chinese

citizens also presented various dances, songs and recital of poems.

“Chinese government and Chinese people believe that Nepal’s peace process will completely achieve its objective to bring long term peace and stability in Nepal in coming year,” said Chinese ambassador to Nepal Xianglin. “In the last year, China and Nepal have seen some important progress in their bilateral relations. The trade between the two countries jumped over 50 percent and people to people contact have made significant progress as the mobility of the people increased by 300 percent.”

This year symbolizes the mouse year

– a year of hope. Most of the performances were based on the peace and hope. From Chinese teachers and Nepalese students of Confucius Department of Kathmandu University to other Chinese youth volunteers teaching Chinese language in various academic institutions, they presented programs wishing happy and prosperous year.

“As Nepal and China share many culture and religious values and many Nepalese ethnic groups too celebrate new year during this time, I am very happy join celebration of Spring Festival 2008 in Nepal,” said Minister Gurung.

The program started with the dance of Bajrayogini of Sankhu and ended with a concert of Sitar-Sudha.

The dance of Bajra Yogini symbolizes the combination of Hinduism and Buddhism. Another important aspect of Vajra Yogini is that every Nepali who planned to travel to Tibet and China used to worship this goddess before leaving for the trans-Himalayan journey.

“We have been organizing this kind of program in Nepal for the last few years,” said Dr. Harish Chandra Shah, president of Arniko Society. “This helps



to strengthen the people to people relations between the two countries.”

The gathering of a large number of Chinese living in Nepal and Nepalese from different walks of life to celebrate the Spring Festival showed growing relations at the people to people level between the two countries. ■

SPOTLIGHT

The News
Magazine
Packaged
with
Up-To-Date

News
Views
&
Analyses
Our Readers
Deserve The Best



SPOTLIGHT

The National News Magazine

BALUWATAR, GPO BOX: 7256

TELEPHONE: (977-1) 4423127, FAX: (977-1) 4417845

Email : spot@mail.com.np

