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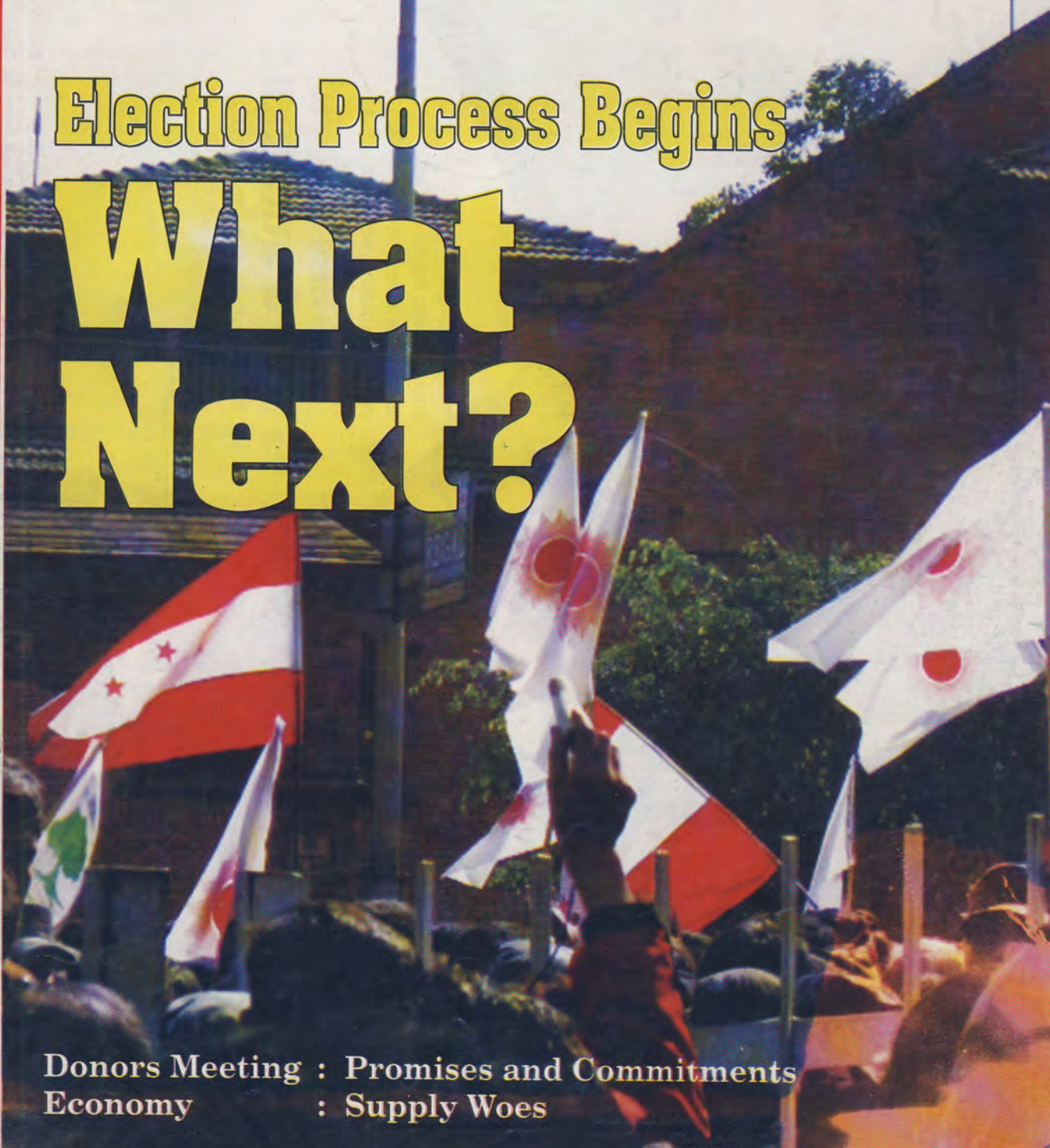
The National Newsmagazine

SPOTLIGHT

Feb 29-Mar 06, 2008

Election Process Begins

What Next?



Donors Meeting : Promises and Commitments
Economy : Supply Woes

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अब... १* रु. १ मै बचत खाता



नेपाल इन्वेस्टमेन्ट बैंक बढी भन्दा बढी
नागरिकहरूमा बैंकिङ्ग सेवाको पहिलो अनुभव
एवं बानी बरन सकोस मेन्नाका लागि सजोरब
प्रस्तुत गर्दछ...

**मात्र रु.१ मा
“आफ्नै बचत खाता”**

सम्पूर्ण अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय स्तरको सेवा सुविधा सहित ।



जीवन्तका पढिया पलङ्क देखिने बचतको बानी
सुरक्षित भविष्यको लगानी

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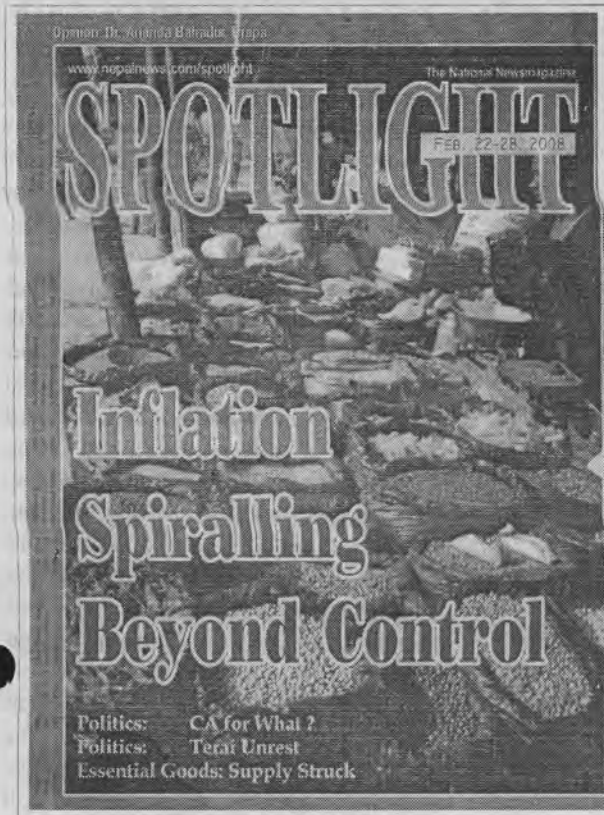
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A midst very serious misgivings of the overwhelming masses, the Election Commission and the ruling political parties seem over enthusiastic about the ensuing elections and are determined to spend the billions apportioned for that purpose. If one were to believe a veteran insider of a leading political party, most of the nominated member of the parliament belonging to the three bigger political parties do not want the elections. Even though the country most imperatively needs a representative government, responsible to the people, which only a free, fair and transparent election can guarantee, no sensible Nepali has any reason to believe that this incompetent government either has the intention or the capability to conduct a free and fair elections. A government that has practically no control over the administration, that cannot maintain law and order even in one district of the country, that has become a helpless spectator to the bandhas and chakkajams, killings, kidnappings and all kinds of lawless activities, has lost all moral rationale to stay in power. Except for its thousands of followers who are running after it to pick the left overs, the nearly twenty six million poor Nepalis are totally disillusioned with this government and want a change. Since the powers that be have no compunction to support this government which has no national backing and there is no other authority except the people of Nepal who can dismiss it, they have been behaving in the most authoritarian manner, worse than a dictatorial monarchy. And when it has become evident that they are taking orders from extraneous forces and a foreign envoy is calling the shots, heads of the twenty six million proud Nepalis are hung in shame and disgrace. The Nepalis, whether from the hills or the terai, are quite capable of solving their own problems. Why are these anti-national politicians looking up to alien forces for solving their home affairs? Consequently, if the Nepalis want to preserve their pride, honor, dignity and even sovereignty, they have to come together forgetting that they are Maghesis, Dalits, Janjaties, Bahuns, Chetris or Newars, pull down this government and form a government of honest and patriotic Nepalis irrespective of where he or she comes from. It is time for our bureaucracy and security forces also to rise up to the occasion and join the patriotic force to safeguard our independent nationhood. If we still permit this kind of leadership to stay in power, we will be boosting the process of Bhutanization and even Sikkimization. Is this what we proud Nepalis want?

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



Economic Angle

Your cover story "Inflation: Spiralling Beyond Control" (February 22-28) was very interesting to read. I agree with you that one of the most pertinent indicators of the macro-economic stability, the rate of inflation, is showing dangerous trends of late. Because of its centrality, economists always watch its movement very carefully. The unchecked inflation threatens to wreck the fundamentals of economy. The warning by economists must be considered seriously.

*Naryankaji Shrestha
Tangal*

Plus And Minus

Of course, it is very painful to live in a country like Nepal with unstable government and chaotic situation. It is also a pleasure to live nearby two most powerful countries of Asia. If there is a weakness, there is also a strength for our country. As these two countries' economic growth is rising higher, Nepal will have a real opportunity in coming days to become prosperous. In the long run, Nepal has a great future to become a bridge between world's two most populous countries.

*Jeevan Shrestha
Montreal*

Silver Lining

Although Nepal's bureaucracy has seen many ups and downs in recent years, there is some silver lining also. After reading the interview of Secretary of Peace and Reconstruction Ministry, Madhav Ghimire, I have realized that Nepal, too, has a pool of talented persons. Ghimire is able to speak what he needs to speak. His perceptions regarding Nepal is clear and he looks like a person with vision. Spotlight needs to publish views of various secretaries working in other ministries also.

*Canada K.C
Washington D.C via-email*

Grim Reality

After reading the cover story on inflation, it showed the grim situation of the country. Of course, Nepal is capable to handle the political problems but it is yet to be seen how it will handle issues like inflation. It is very frustrating to see the total apathy shown by the government. If we are unable to control inflation, Nepal will have to face major problems in coming days. There is a need for more economic analysis like this one in your magazine.

*Jeetu Lama
Via email*

Unpredictable Course

Nobody knows how long Nepal will remain unstable and chaotic. It is depressing to see the failure of our political leadership to understand the crux of Nepal's problem. One cannot escape by just blaming our neighbors for the internal disturbances. For a neighboring country like India, whose

security is linked with Nepal, it is natural to be careful and mindful about Nepal's internal situation. It is very unfortunate to say that Nepal has not found any leader who can steer the nation towards better future. Whether he is King Gyanendra or current prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala, they have failed to show statesman-like quality.

*Niraj Ranjit
Via- email*

Unbalanced Story

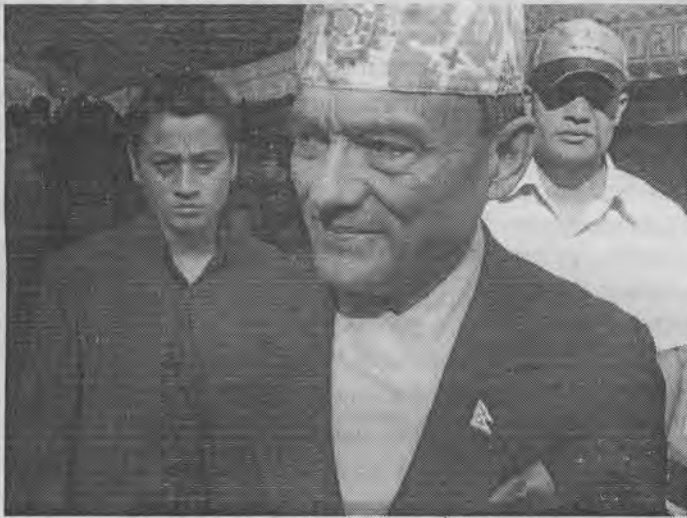
Your cover story about the agitation in Madhes is biased as you did not realize the level of resentment in Madhes against the rulers from hills. It is a very well known fact that Madhesis have been the victims of discrimination and oppression for quite a long time. It is natural to rebel against the regime which is oppressive. This is what Madhesis are doing. Their agitation is not influenced by anybody else.

*Kiran Jha
Baneshwore*

Where Are Development Issues?

Spotlight has been concentrating more of its coverage on economy and politics. What are lacking are the issues of development agenda. For a country like Nepal, political upheavals and uncertainty are nothing new, what it requires is a stable situation to carry out development activities. Along with development activities, there should also be some entertainment column in the magazine. I hope you will serve the interest of broader section of readers.

*Lalima Rai
Via email*



COAS Visits Dalit Soldier's House To Have Lunch

Chief of Army Staff (CoAS) Rookmangud Katawal, Saturday (Feb 23), said that the Nepal army (NA) could be mobilized during the upcoming Constituent Assembly (CA) polls on the government's direction. Stating the government controls the NA, the Army Chief added army can be mobilized under democratic norms during the April 10 polls. During his Chitawan visit, Katawal had lunch at a house of a 'Dalit' soldier in Bharatpur to prove his commitment in ending caste-based discrimination in army structure. He further informed that the army headquarters have issued directions to recruit people from the Dalit, Madhes, ethnic groups, women and other marginalized groups and to treat them fairly during their tenure. *Compiled from reports*

UK Visas To Be Issued From New Delhi

The United Kingdom has said its embassies across the world would start 'checking fingerprints' of all aspirants seeking UK visas to travel to the country in what its Home Secretary Jacqui Smith termed as the "biggest changes to British immigration policy for a generation." The new visa regulation — which comes amidst 'radical changes' made to country's immigration system including the way foreign nationals seek British citizenship so as to "make sure that the

country only takes in the brightest and the best", would, however, not affect Nepali visa aspirants as the British embassy here has stopped issuing visas in Kathmandu to Nepalis effective from Monday. According to the new policy of the UK government, Nepalis seeking

entry into the UK will from now on have to apply to the British High Commission in New Delhi as it has been authorized to decide whether or not to issue visas to them. British Ambassador to Nepal Dr Andrew Hall had conveyed the UK government's new decision to Foreign Secretary Gyan Chandra Acharya last Friday. The decision to issue visas from New Delhi comes as part of UK government's new policy under a global project through which it plans to issue visas from selected regional posts across the world by 2011. The timing of the decision is especially significant as it comes at a time when India is said to be increasingly active in Nepal's internal affairs, with observers saying that it [decision to issue visas for Nepalis from New Delhi] might possibly give more reasons to believe that the west sees Nepal from the "Indian perspective". Mitra Pariyar, political officer at the British embassy, recently told an English daily that Nepali visa aspirants might have to wait longer for visa confirmation than before when it was delivered from Kathmandu. Similarly, Nepalis seeking British visas will not have to face visa interviews nor will they have to visit New Delhi following the decision, as VFS Global, an officially authorized agency in Kathmandu, would oversee the application process, collect the documents and send them directly to New Delhi for further decision. Nepalis foreign ministry officials were not immediately available for comments on the issue. *Compiled from reports*

Govt Levies Rs 500 On Each Migrant Worker

The government has started levying Rs 500 from each migrant worker as a contribution to the Foreign Employment Welfare Fund that is to be used for the benefits of themselves and their families. Based on the provision in the Foreign Employment Act-2007, a minister level meeting last week decided to levy Rs 500 from each worker for the fund, said Keshar Bahadur Baniya, director general at the department of labor and employment promotion (DoLEP). The government has included the provision in response to the growing cases of death, job displacements, deportation and industrial accidents of Nepali workers abroad. The Nepali migrants have had to endure all kinds of problems in foreign lands for lack of money. Though the new Act has mandated Foreign Employment Promotion Board (FEPB) to collect the fee and execute the fund by developing a comprehensive package, DoLEP will levy money for a while until FEPB gets a full shape, Baniya said. The Act has included a provision for the creation of FEPB under the chairmanship of Labor Minister comprising representatives from various government agencies, private sector, independent experts and representatives of manpower recruiting agencies. The board is responsible for developing a comprehensive package for the utilization of the fund for the benefits of migrant workers and their families. According to Baniya, the workers are required to pay the sum through concerned manpower agency before getting the final approval, while in case of individuals-s/he has to deposit at DoLEP at the time of getting stamp on their work permit. All migrant workers, whether obtaining employment at his own or through a manpower-recruiting agency, has to contribute to the fund. He said that the fund would be used mainly to rescue workers caught in difficult situations, bring home dead bodies from different places and also to compensate for the families of deceased workers. "We have decided to give Rs 100,000 for the members of the each deceased migrant worker now onwards from the fund,"

Baniya informed. Apart from supporting the migrants and their families, the government plans to mobilize it for various purposes including pre-departure orientation, public awareness and post job counselling for better utilization of skills and money earned abroad. The latest move comes at a time when the government has been criticized for its lackadaisical attitude towards the protection of its citizens who have been working in various parts of the world. Currently, over two million Nepalis are estimated to be working or living abroad. Each day, more than 600 Nepali workers leave for jobs abroad through official channels. *The Himalayan Times daily reports*

Bhattacharai's Birthday Bash Takes A Political Color

The Royal family has extended greetings to former prime minister and founding leader of Nepali Congress Krishna Prasad Bhattacharai on his 84th birthday by attending a "tea ceremony" he hosted at Hotel Himalaya in the capital Thursday (Feb 21). According to hotel sources, Crown Prince Paras accompanied by his wife Crown Princess Himani arrived at the hotel exactly at 12 noon, followed by King Gyanendra and Queen Komal at 12:20 pm to attend the birthday bash. The royal family stayed at the "strictly-by-invitation-only" ceremony thrown at the Skyline hall of the exclusive hotel for a little over half and hour during which time they are said to have wished a happy birthday to Bhattacharai. Bhattacharai celebrated his birthday by cutting a cake even as he was flanked by UNMIN chief Ian Martin and former prime minister and Rastriya Prajatantra Party leader Lokendra Bahadur Chand, it is learnt. Government ministers, senior political leaders, bureaucrats, heads of security agencies and some diplomats also attended the birthday party. The last time the ailing leader who needs a caretaker to carry him around every time he moves, was in media limelight was when he resigned as the only living founding leader of Nepali Congress after the party removed constitutional monarchy from its party statute. Speaking briefly to journalists at



the hotel premises, Bhattacharai reiterated his position on monarchy, saying that monarchy should stay in Nepal for the next 300 years. *Nepalnews.com reports*

37 Parties File List Of Their Candidates

Thirty-seven political parties including major ruling parties Nepali Congress, CPN (UML) and CPN (Maoist) submitted the closed lists of their candidates to be elected under the proportional system, at the Election Commission (EC), on Wednesday (Feb 20). Maoist leaders led by Prachanda reached the EC office at Kantipath with a huge crowd of supporters at the EC for submitting the list. The party is learnt to have filed the candidacy of senior leader Mohan Baidya for proportional seat. Speaking to reporters after submitting the list, Prachanda said his party has fielded 51 percent women candidates under proportional system. Likewise, Nepali Congress party that submitted the list of all 335 candidates has fielded Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala for proportional seat. CPN-UML filed candidacies of some senior leaders under proportional election system. They include Standing Committee members Sahana Pradhan, Amrit Bohara and Mukunda Neupane. Other ruling allies - Janamorcha Nepal, Nepal Workers and

Peasants Party, CPN (Marxist Leninist) and Shyam Sundar Gupta-led faction of Nepal Sadbhawana Party (Anandi Devi) - also filed their closed lists. Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) also registered the party's closed list for proportional system while Rastriya Janashakti Party (RJP) didn't submit the list as the party had announced on Tuesday that the party would boycott the April 10 polls, citing the government's failure to resolve the Terai crisis. Rastriya Prajatantra Party Nepal (RPP-Nepal), a pro-monarchist party led by former royalist stalwarts, also filed the nominations for proportional voting system. Meanwhile, three agitating Madhesi parties - Terai Madhesh Loktantrik Party, Sadbhawana Party and Madhesi Janadhikar Forum - didn't submit the closed lists. Chure-Bhawar Rastriya Ekta Party decided to boycott the CA election. Nepal Bikash Party, Muskan Sena Nepal, Nepal Janabhawana Party and Samajbadi Prajatantrik Party were among the fringe parties that have filed the closed lists at the EC. The commission had fixed Feb 20 (Wednesday) as the deadline to file the closed list. The parties were asked to submit the closed lists by 5 pm. The Commission had earlier registered 74 political parties. *Nepalnews.com reports* ■



Prime Minister GP Koirala with visiting Korean scholar

EXPRESSING CONCERN OVER THE USE of children in violent protests in Nepal, the United Nations has urged parents and political parties to ensure that the youngsters are not harmed. In a joint statement, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Nepal said they have received confirmed reports of children's involvement, especially in the Terai region, in violent activities. Earlier this month in Nepalgunj, "a considerable number of children," aged between seven and 15, some carrying sticks, were seen supporting the enforcement of general strike called by the United Democratic Madhesi front (UDMF), it said. In another case, children aged between eight and 12 armed with sticks, were observed manning a roadblock in Sunsari district, the UN agencies said. More than 100 children, some in school uniforms, also took part in a violent attack on Nepali Congress members in Darchula district on February 5, they added. UNICEF and OHCHR also urged all parties in Nepal to respect the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to take all measures to avoid exposing boys and girls under the age of 18 to risk of harm.

A GROUP OF NEPALI POWER DEVELOPERS have decided to proceed with the development of 100 MW-strong Kaligandaki gorge hydropower project to help resolve the crisis of load shedding in the country. Hydro Solutions, a company of the Nepali promoters, has said that it aims to complete the construction of the project by 2012. According to Gyanendra Lal Pradhan, director of the Hydro Solutions, the total cost of the project would be Rs 10 billion – of which it has already received pledge of Rs 2 billion investment from different

Nepali business houses. Rest of the investment will be arranged through talks with commercial banks, Pradhan said. Pradhan said that share of the project will be distributed to local population of Mustang and Myagdi districts. The project site is in the border between these two districts. He said that since the big hydropower projects being discussed currently are intended for export purposes, they would not directly address load shedding woes even though they would be beneficial to national economy. So, he said, the Nepali investors were planning to do projects that can be completed at the earliest and help end power crisis. At present, the demand for power has crossed 720 MW but the supply has dwindled to 300 MW – triggering daily eight hours of load shedding.

CONFEDERATION OF INDIAN INDUSTRIES (CII) has proposed the visiting FNCCI delegation a joint venture special economic zone (SEZ) in Nepal during the regular economic council meeting in New Delhi, Wednesday (Feb 20). "The CII has proposed to set up a joint venture economic zone in Nepal during the regular economic council meeting between the FNCCI and CII," said executive director of Sanima Bikas Bank, Badri Ojha. The FNCCI team led by industrialist Diwakar Golchha today met with the CII officials, executive director of Railway Board SK Das and joint secretary at Commerce Ministry Rajiv Kher and discussed economic and other bilateral

issues. "Nepali team, encouraged by the proposal, has replied that a report will soon be forwarded to them after a study," Ojha said, adding that the delegation has, but primarily suggested Tarai, along the Indo-Nepal border, as a feasible location for the SEZ. "The TATA representative — who was taking part in the meeting along with in-charge of SAARC region at the CII, Subodh Bhargav and representatives of TATA company, Asian Paint, Unilever and others — suggested that the SEZ should be constructed in a way that it could be easily expanded in future." Similarly, the Nepali delegation urged executive director of the Railway Board SK Das to expand broad gauge railway to Jogbani. "We might consider it, if there is an official proposal from the Nepal government," economic minister at Nepali embassy in New Delhi, Kedar Bahadur Adhikari, who was present during the meeting, said quoting Das.

AT THE REQUEST OF THE GOVERNMENT, the Elections Commission (EC) Thursday (Feb 22) extended the deadline for filing the closed lists of candidates for the proportional system of elections by one day for 24 February. The EC said it took the decision to this effect considering the ongoing violence in the country. Earlier Thursday, the government had asked the Elections Commission (EC) to extend the deadline for filing the closed-list of candidates for the Constituent Assembly (CA) polls till February 24. The government had decided to extend the deadline to submit closed-list as none of the agitating Madhesi groups, except a ruling Nepal Sadbhavana Party, registered the closed list till the final date for registering closed list, and the government is holding talks with them. ■

AMENDMENT OF GANDAK TREATY MUST PRECEDE BURI-GANDAKI PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

• Dr. AB Thapa

The 1959 Gandak Treaty signed between Nepal and India was very harmful to Nepal. It totally curtailed Nepal's right to use Gandak water for use inside Nepalese territory. The 1964 revision of this Treaty has helped to lessen significantly its negative impact. Nonetheless, even now Nepal is barred from using the Gandak water in dry months for transvalley uses in the months of February to April. After the completion of the Buri-Gandaki Storage Project the dry season flow of the Gandak might almost be doubled. Now it is the most opportune time before we take the decision to implement the Buri-Gandaki Storage Project to press India to amend the Gandak Treaty to lift the restriction on transvalley uses of the Gandak water inside Nepalese territory in the months of February to April.

How Gandak Treaty 1959 Curtailed Nepal's Right

After 1951 Nepal had signed two treaties with India on water resources in 1950s. They are the Kosi Treaty signed

in 1954 and the Gandak Treaty signed in 1959. Soon after their signing Nepal realized that both these treaties were detrimental to Nepal's interest. Particularly the Gandak Treaty was the most harmful. The Article 9 of the Gandak Treaty that curtailed Nepal's water right is presented below:

"His Majesty's Government will continue to have the right to withdraw for irrigation or any other purpose from the river or its tributaries in Nepal such supplies of water as may be required by them from time to time and **His Majesty's Government agrees that they shall not exercise this right in such manner as is likely, in the opinion of the parties hereto, prejudicially to affect the water requirements of the Project** (it is the Gandak Irrigation Project) as set out in the schedule annexed hereto."

The monthly water requirements provided in the schedule were either very close or exceeded the river flows

barring few months of the monsoon season. This treaty would have virtually ended the future prospect for irrigation development in the Gandak Basin within Nepalese territory.

India and Nepal Share Common Principle

India is the downstream riparian of all the rivers flowing across the boarder from Nepal. Our country will have to deal exclusively with India in water issues. Fortunately both Nepal and India not only have a common cultural heritage that binds them together, but also subscribe to similar principles in water right



issues. Both the countries believe that water belongs to the country where it originates, and the existing consumptive uses of the waters of a river cannot in anyway deprive the upstream riparian country of her right to consumptive use of

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the same waters. Because of such similarity in views on water right principles it was not too difficult to amend the existing agreements on water resources with India that were detrimental to Nepal's interest

India Defended Upstream Riparian Rights

The Indo-Pakistan dispute on the Indus arose immediately after the partition in 1947.

M. Zafrulla Khan, the Pakistan representative in the Security Council presented about it during a Security Council debate on the 16th December 1952. The partial text is given below:

"The partition of the Punjab cut across the river system of the Province.....The partition line was so drawn that two of the rivers - Sutlej together with its tributary Bias, and Ravi - while originating in India, later on flow into Pakistan....On April 1, 1948.... India turned off the waters of these rivers which used to flow into Pakistan.."

India's position on the water right principle she is

subscribing to has been clearly stated in the Indo-Pakistan Agreement on Indus (Interim) signed on the 4th May, 1948. It is stated: "...the propriety rights in the waters of the rivers in East Punjab (India) vest wholly in the East Punjab."

West Punjab (Pakistan) disputed India's contention. Its view being that in accordance with international law and equity West Punjab had a right to the waters of the East Punjab rivers. Finally India and Pakistan came to an agreement. The Indus Treaty was signed on September 19, 1960. The Indus Treaty provided that the waters of the contentious rivers Ravi, Beas and Sutlej would be for the exclusive use of India. However, India would have to pay Pakistan some compensation for the construction of projects to tap other rivers in Pakistan to replace the supply from the above three rivers.

Barcelona Convention and India

India needed a greater part of the Ganges flow in the dry seasons for flushing the silts into the sea from the port area in Calcutta. India must

have considered that it is allowed to take up a scheme to divert the flow because of her sovereignty right over the domain. However, the Ganges is a navigable river. The diversion would have violated the International Barcelona Convention on the regime of navigable

waterways. This convention was ratified by British Empire that included India also in 1922. India to free herself to undertake the Ganges diversion scheme, denounced the Barcelona Convention to take effect from 26 March, 1957. Soon after that India commenced the Ganges diversion scheme at Farakka in 1960s.

Revision of Gandak and Kosi Treaties

The Kosi and Gandak Treaties were binding upon Nepal. The Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties states that every treaty in force is binding upon the parties to it and must be performed by them in good faith. It requires the consent of both the signatories for changes and amendments unless there is a special provision for it in the treaty. Nepal succeeded in convincing India that both the treaties should be amended to protect Nepal's vital interest.

The Kosi and Gandak Treaties were binding upon Nepal. The Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties states that every treaty in force is binding upon the parties to it and must be performed by them in good faith. It requires the consent of both the signatories for changes and amendments unless there is a special provision for it in the treaty. Nepal succeeded in convincing India that both the treaties should be amended to protect Nepal's vital interest.

The Gandak Treaty was revised on 30th April, 1964. The Article 9 of the revised treaty is presented below:

"His Majesty's Government will continue to have the right to withdraw for irrigation or any other purposes from the river or its tributaries in Nepal such supplies of water as may be required by them from time to time in the valley. **For transvalley uses of Gandak waters separate agreements between His Majesty's Government and the Government of India will be entered into for the uses of water in the months of February to April.**"

The revised treaty is a big improvement over the previous one. However, the use of Gandak water for transvalley uses in the months of February to April has been restricted.

Further Revision of Gandak Treaty

Buri-Gandaki river is a major tributary of the Gandak. After the completion of the Buri-Gandaki Storage dam the dry season flow of the Gandak in the months of February to April might almost be doubled. Nepal must seek further revision of the 1964 Revised Gandak Treaty to drop the

Clause restricting the use of Gandak water inside Nepal in the months of February to April. We must further amend the Gandak Treaty before we take the decision to implement the Buri-Gandak Storage Dam project. After such additional revision

the Gandak Treaty would be on a par with the 1966 Revised Kosi Treaty in terms of complete recognition Nepal's right to use water of the Gandak and its tributaries. **1966 Revised Kosi Treaty**

The Kosi Treaty was revised on 19th December, 1966. Nepal's full right over the Kosi river has been established in the revised treaty. The Article 4 (i) of the Treaty related with the water rights has been presented below:

"HMG shall have every right to withdraw for irrigation and for any other purpose in Nepal water from the Kosi river and from the Sun-Kosi river or within the Kosi basin from any other tributaries of the Kosi river as may be required from time to time. The Union (it indicates India) shall have the right to regulate all the balance of supplies in the Kosi river at the barrage site thus available from time to time and to generate power in the Eastern Canal." ■



SUPPLY SYSTEM

Still Dysfunctional

The government has invoked Essential Services Act and imposed quota restrictions, but the supply system has not yet improved

By A CORRESPONDENT

Desperate situations call for desperate measures. The government under heat for failing to supply essential goods has resorted to clamping curfews in restive Terai region to transport fuel and essential goods. It has also invoked Essential Services Act and even imposed odd-even rule and quota restrictions to arrest the deteriorating situation.

This week, the government invoked the Essential Services Act, which allows the State to intervene even in private sector undertakings in order to ensure smooth and regular flow of essential services in the country.

According to the Spokesperson at the Home Ministry, Modraj Dotel, the Act

grants special authority to the government, whereby it can democratically intervene with different essential service providers including the private sector to uphold the basic rights of the people.

The Act specifies items such as essential goods, telecommunication, drinking water and fuel, among others, as essential services.

The ESA was invoked primarily to facilitate the smooth transportation of petroleum products as its acute shortage has thrown normal life out of gear across the country, particularly in the capital valley.

"By activating the Act through public notification, the government can now take tankers into its control and operate

them by hiring drivers of its own after paying compensation to tanker owners," an official at Supplies Ministry told The Kathmandu Post.

This decision comes in the wake of reports of tanker drivers refusing to transport fuel demanding more pay and more security.

In another attempt to facilitate the distribution of fuel in the capital, the government has also enforced odd-even rule and imposed quota restrictions.

Last week, the meeting of the Supply Management Committee of the government, decided to enforce odd-even rule beginning Monday to deal with the acute shortage of petroleum products.

The committee decided that odd-numbered vehicles (registration number) can obtain fuel only on odd dates (Nepali calendar) while even-numbered vehicles can obtain fuel on even dates.

The government has also resorted to clamping curfew in key highways in restive Terai region to ensure the transportation of tankers carrying fuel and essential goods.

Despite these extreme measures, the supply system has not yet improved. The serpentine queues in front of petrol pumps are commonplace.

The shortage cooking gas and kerosene coupled with daily eight hours of power outage has struck hard in the kitchens. While cooking gas stoves and kerosene stoves are becoming little of use, even electric heaters cannot be used due to load shedding in peak evening and morning hours.

The scarcity of drinking water has worsened with the load shedding which makes it impossible for people to draw water (by using machines) when there is no power.

Between November and April/May, Kathmandu valley faces acute shortage of drinking water as well as electricity.

"There is an all-out problems for consumers. They are the most victimized lot whose woes have never been addressed," said Jyoti Baniya, general secretary of Consumers Forum.

In recent days, even schools and hospitals have not been spared by the woes of scarcity. The lack of energy, particularly diesel fuel, has hit the schools hard as many of them are unable to utilize school buses to ferry students. Even hospital ambulances were forced to stand in queue to get fuel. ■



PM Koirala : Talking Geo-political realities

POLITICS

Geo-political Realities

By alluding the oil crisis to Nepal's geography, prime minister Koirala gives a political colour to it – rightly.

By A CORRESPONDENT

There has been no solution yet to the fuel crisis in the capital valley.

But at least the problem has been diagnosed, going by what prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala said last week.

According to Koirala, the landlocked geography of the country is

the major cause of the crisis.

He made a veiled reference to this in his inaugural speech at the donors' consultation meeting.

Koirala attributed the country's economic hardships to its landlocked ness.

Reports have it that he was forthright in private conversations at

family gathering at Baluwatar.

The prime minister even dropped the suggestion that the diplomatic channel would have to be used to pull the country out of the present crisis.

Clearly, Nepal's landlocked ness has to do with its practically India-locked geography.

The former Indian ambassador Shyam Sharan used to phrase it the other way round. "Nepal is not India-locked, but India-open", he would say.

Many in Nepal however have the feeling that Delhi still has a closed mindset over Nepal – a legacy it inherited from the British colonial rulers.

Having seen through a number of crises in dealing with Delhi in his 60 years of politics, Girija Prasad Koirala knows this better.

That is the reason; he believes that Delhi holds the key to the April elections.

But the current fuel crisis, if continued for long, could affect the polls.

It will make the transportation of election materials and officials difficult. Campaigning will be hit as well, as candidates would be constrained to travel in their constituencies.

More important, the rising discontent over the fuel shortage has the potential to spark a fire in the street making the polls impossible.

So, the oil crisis does not seem to be an economic one alone. Nor is it linked with the Terai agitation alone.

Prime minister Koirala's



Oil Crisis : Landlocked curse

reference to the land-locked ness as a cause of the present crisis will work or not is difficult to predict at this point of time.

If the past is any guide, Koirala has the ability to make a proper diagnosis, but he lacks the wisdom of prescribing the right medicine to cure the ills. ■

KP BHATTARAI

Birthday Party

The 64th birthday party of former prime minister has left some interesting messages

By A CORRESPONDENT

King Gyanendra made news – one more time. The occasion was the birthday party of former prime minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai.

Bhattarai used his 84th birthday bash as an occasion to bring people from all walks of life together.

SPOTLIGHT/February 28, 2008

The beleaguered monarch was one of them. Expectedly, it made headlines. So did the octogenarian leader's reiteration on the need of monarchy for "the next three centuries".

What did not make headlines was no less interesting – politically.

The ambassador from the

influential southern neighbour, Shiv Shanker Mukherjee, was conspicuous by his absence at the monarchist Nepali Congress veteran's birthday-luncheon.

But his Chinese counterpart in Kathmandu, spent a good one hour at the Rato Baithak of the Himalaya hotel.

He was seen sharing the lunch table with the UML general secretary, Madhav Kumar Nepal.

Pakistani ambassador, Sohail Amin, was also at hand to wish Bhattarai a happy birthday.

MKN was one of the two top leaders of the leftist partners of the governing seven-party alliance attending the party.

The other was CP Mainali of the United Left Front.

Former prime minister Surya Bahadur Thapa too was conspicuous by his absence. But not his bete-noire during the two's panchayat heydays, Kirtinidhi Bista.

As Bhattarai cut the birthday cake, UNMIN chief Ian Martin spared time to be beside him, before rushing to the Yak and Yeti Hotel to make a presentation at the donors' consultation meeting. ■



KP Bhattarai: A new message

ELECTION PROCESS BEGINS

What Next?

Even though candidates are not very sure whether the election will be held or not as the violence continues to disrupt the poll process, 2191 persons of various political parties and independent candidates have filed their nominations papers for 240 seats for Constituent Assembly. Despite the beginning of the election process, average Nepalis are still worried about the situation of the country and their concern is whether the election will be held and whether the country will have peace. The question remains what next?

By KESHAB POUDEL

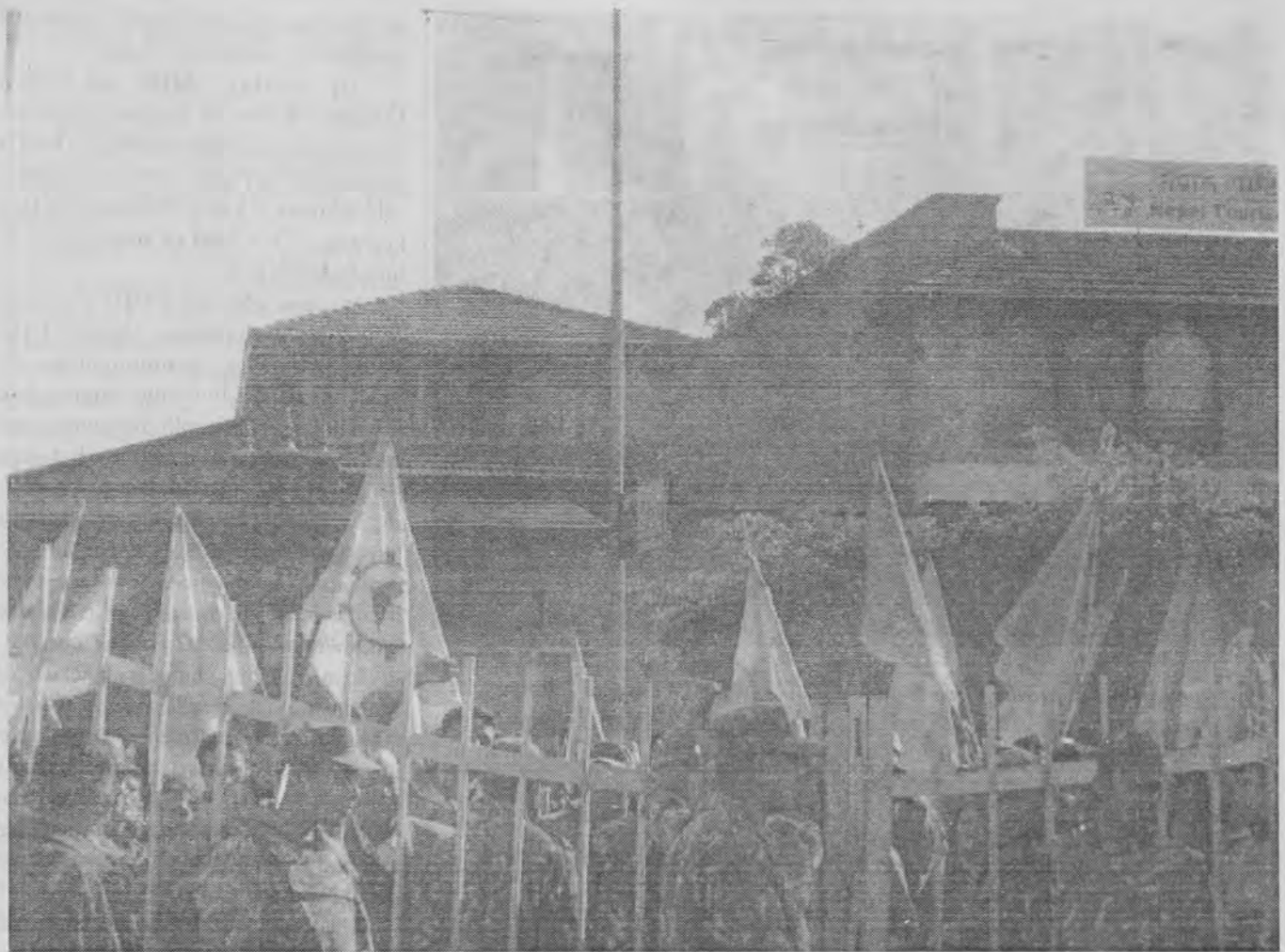
Followed by a huge crowd of supporters, candidates of four major political parties Nepali Congress, CPN-UML, CPN-Maoist and RPP filed their nominations on February 25 for the election for Constituent Assembly.

CPN-UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal and CPN-Maoist leader Prachanda arrived at the City Hall at the heart of Kathmandu and filed their nomination along with their ten other colleagues (for ten constituencies of the

capital district) and hundreds of supporters. Prakash Man Singh, son of Ganesh Man Singh, led the 10 Nepali Congress candidates of Kathmandu.

Similarly, RPP leader Jog Mehar Shrestha led the procession of RPP candidates contesting from Kathmandu. As the political party leaders and their workers came to file nominations, general people have continued to face all kinds of difficulties due to lack of essential commodities.

Although most of the hilly region, which were used to be tense during the last two local elections and parliamentary elections because of Maoist threat remained calm, the violence this time affected the election process in more than a dozen district in the plains of terai. According to police, two were killed and over 600 injured when clashes broke out after protesters tried to bar candidates from filing papers. Under a banner of United Madhesi



Party workers : Waiting for election

Democratic Front, an indefinite agitation has been going on in terai. Even the situation in eastern hill were tense particularly in Panchthar, Ilam and Taplejung.

Even if election is not held, a noticeable phenomenon, however, could be the fact that almost all political parties have fielded their candidates in constituencies in terai where Madhesi uprising is in full strength.

Nepali Congress and UML had their large number of candidates of Madhesi origin - so is the case with the Maoists also. This fact indicated that the United Madhesi Democratic Front (UMDF) does not have the sole dominating position in terai. UMDF may have a substantial number of activists behind it but other national parties don't have the dearth of persons to carry their banners in that region.

Whatever might be the fate of

election, this itself is a self evidence of competitive political strength of different political parties. If elections are held, the result will expose the reality.

As thirty-nine parties have already filed the closed-list of nomination papers for proportional representation based election and 33 have filed the same for first-past-post-system, the first phase of election process has already begun.

"There is no question to postpone the election. We will not bow down to UMDF's irrational demand," said CPN-Maoist leader Prachanda, who filed his nomination from Kathmandu 10 constituency. "Foreign reactionaries including some from bordering Indian states are making every effort to disrupt the process of revolutionary transformation."

Given the violent situation in southern plain and boycott called by regional parties, average Nepali is

worried about the situation of Nepal. The important question is what could be the role of major parties who are running the government and what could be the reaction from both of our neighbors. What response the world community will have in the crisis of Nepal?

"After the elections, the process of forming new democratic Republic Nepal will begin. No force can stop us from doing this," said CPN-UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal, who filed his nomination from Kathmandu 2 and Rautathat 1 constituencies.

Home minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula who has been leading failed negotiations with UMDF too stressed the need to hold the election on schedule. "There is no other option except to conduct the election as the CA is the only means to bring about durable peace and political stability in the country," said Sitaula.



UML Leaders : Tought Contest

Major political parties have begun the procedure of election by filing nomination papers even though candidates are not very sure whether the election will be held or not? Everybody is left to reach to a conclusion according to his/her intellect and wisdom.

The situation looks further uncertain when Surya Bahadur Thapa, a very experienced player in politics, has declared that his Rastriya Janashakti Party (RJP) will boycott the election expressing solidarity with Madhesi parties.

There came another meaningful move a few days later when another politician of similar caliber and leader of RPP-Nepal Rabindranath Sharma declared that his party, too, will boycott the election. Though both have commonalities in political ideology – being in right from center – there are several differences which have kept them apart.

Drama after Drama

At a time when the situation is becoming more fluid, the government and leaders of agitating parties from terai continued efforts to find the political solution. Just a day before the filing of the nomination, the leader of Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) Upendra Yadav was flown to capital from Birgunj on government helicopter to take part in

polls (on the evening of February 24). However, the overnight meeting held at prime minister's residence could not bring any result.

Home minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula, one of the key players of Baluwater, blamed UMDF leaders for failure to sign any understanding. "When we were on the final stage of signing agreement, UMDF leader Sarbendra Nath Shukla and Upendra Yadav added new demands," Sitaula told the press.

UMDF leaders accused government of showing apathy towards their demands. "We have sacrificed everything for the negotiation but it is the government which has shown complete apathy towards us," said Yadav. "We spared all the night sitting at the sofa in prime minister's residence."

Terai's Demands

One of the major demands of UMDF is to create whole Madhesh as a single province with the right to self determination. Seven party alliance has rejected this demand arguing that this will disintegrate the nation.

"I cannot fulfill the demand creating whole Madhes as a one state no matter what power on this world forces me to do so," said prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala recently. CPN-Maoist leaders

are openly accusing Nepal's southern neighbor for meddling in terai.

"By inviting UMDF and Nepali Congress leaders in Embassy premises for negotiations, India has shown how it is meddling in Nepal's internal affairs," said minister of Local Development Dev Gurung. "This kind of interference is unacceptable to us."

At a time when the UMDF's demand for single autonomous region of the whole terai was denounced by all moderate parties in politics arguing that it would inevitably split the country and create a serious disharmony between people of hills and the plain.

At a time when Nepalese politicians have been talking about separating the provinces for particular ethnic groups like Madhesis, it is pertinent here to note the judgment of India's Supreme Court.

In a petition related with leader of Maharashtra state, Raj Thackeray, who led a Maharastrian sentiment and extremist movement against north Indians particularly persons from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh – Indian Supreme Court warned that balkanization of country would not be allowed.

The court said, "We can understand what is happening. We will not allow/permit Balkanization of this country." The bench headed by chief justice of India K.G. Balkrishnan said, "this is one country and we will not accept son of soil theory."

"In South Asia, such divisive movements had led to a most violent and hostile situation. The spilt of India into two as India and Pakistan on the basis of religion had gone through a dreadful blood bath in which tens of thousands died and much larger number of people were displaced from both the countries on a sentimental issue of religion," said a political analyst. "After less than twenty five years, Pakistan was split again into two and its eastern territory emerged as an Independent Bangladesh. It also passed through a very serious bloodbath and displacement of families from one side to another".

"Though on a smaller scale, India has also been occasionally facing such

sentimental and irrational hostilities between communities some time in Assam and some time in Punjab, Gujarat and Maharashtra. Kashmir has its own pathetic story of continuing bloodbath. Sri Lanka is facing the same thing," said the analyst.

Despite such recent history, the political leaders here continue to raise demands. "As the government has already declined to accept our demands, we will wage the struggle for one Madhes one Pradesh. There are no other alternatives to us," said Rajendra Mahato. "We will not allow Pahadis to rule us."

This kind of regionalism and sentimental demand is very new in Nepal. "Nepal was immune from such violence and bloodbath till the emergence of a violent operation on the cover of Maoists. After sacrificing many values and established institutions, Maoist uprising was liberated from that violent operation. Now the next phase of operation is going through the cover of Madhesis. Anybody who has idea about Nepal must have been amazed by this sudden uprising in terai unnerving anybody who has some familiarity with Nepal," said the analyst.

The analyst observed, "People in general had no support of extreme communist doctrine in the past but the whole world was surprised to see a Maoist upsurge in this country. This influence couldn't last at least in terai at



Prachanda : From bullet to ballot

present, soon after the Madhesi operation. In due course of time, this Madhesi upsurge may not have lasting influence. One has to go into the depth of the conflict which has its continuation since long. One has to take into account all the variables of internal as well as external politics. Previously, under the Marxist indoctrination, it was told to the people that the country was passing through the class struggle based upon economic stratification. Now the Madhesi uprising is explained as a conflict between people with different

origins of hill and terai."

"A heinous operation is going on against Nepal. Unfortunately, politicians in Nepal are ill-informed about broad spectrum of conflict going on in this region. They lack experiences as well as will and character to meet the challenges of the situation. Instead of resisting and countering malicious designs under the changed facets, they find convenient to be used as an instrument to promote that," said the analyst.

Politics in Nepal at present has many catchy jargons for the people but in reality it has become completely amoral and value-free. Rightists are not necessarily on the right side and leftists are not necessarily on the left side. Similarly, persons who are on the lead role raising regional and racial issues are not necessarily convinced with that. "Big players under the cover remain in anonymity and they use their instruments one after another according to their convenience. Despite all these things Nepal has its own inbuilt geo-political advantages which cannot be undone without dangerous consequences to the region," said the analyst.

Therefore, despite filing the nominations, it is beyond the capability of internal players to predict whether there will be peaceful election or another postponement ■



PM Koirala (Center) : Priority for election

"We Should Give Political Parties Sometime To Work Out Their Differences"

- Liqun Jin

Asian Development Bank (ADB) Vice President of Operations Liqun Jin was recently in Kathmandu at the invitation of the Government of Nepal to participate in the Nepal Donors Consultation Meeting. Prior to joining ADB, Jin was the vice minister of Finance of the People's Republic of China (PRC). In that capacity, he served as Alternate Governor for the PRC at ADB, the World Bank Group and the Global Environment Facility. Excerpts of his viewpoint delivered at a press conference organized by Jin before wrapping up Nepal visit:

How do you see the over all situation in Nepal?

The Constituent Assembly election scheduled for April is a vital step forward. The Government has demonstrated its commitment to the reform and development agenda and must continue with efforts to maintain a conducive environment to move the country towards lasting peace.

What are the areas for new development?

Our resident mission is considering a lot of packages in the pipe line. We will support all those packages in pipe line. Basically we have two kinds of programs, one is directly targeted at the poorest of the poor and another is infrastructure project, which may help in the economic development in the long run.

As ADB is said to be evaluating Country Strategy Program, do you have any plan to modify it?

One part of the fine tuning might be identification of project operations in this country. We have some projects in pipe line. Because of political situation, a lot of projects are never materialized. Now it is time to go back identifying viable project operation.

How do you see the possibility of participation of private sector?

Private sector business people are still worried in this country but I have seen some positive signs, for example, half a million tourists came to this country last year. This is a clear indication of the general confidence in the peace process from the western countries and from the neighboring countries that may help to build a private sector operation.

How will the ADB support the private sector?

My idea is to support any private sector operation which can help medium enterprises to

go forward. This is my personal view and I have yet to discuss this with our colleagues. We can attract private sector in the development of the hydro power with help of the government as the government can set some rules and regulations with regard to the environmental protection and resettlement of the people. We can also attract foreign investors to invest in 100 or 200 MW projects. That would be very positive for the country like Nepal. It will also help strengthen the bilateral relations between India and Nepal.

How can generating power change the situation in the country?

If you can generate power, you can sell hydro power to India and that may help to generate revenue to buy fuel. It could be very good cooperation. I know that recently remittance in Nepal has increased sharply. Overseas workers send remittances from countries like Malaysia and the Gulf. India's economic progress will give direct benefit to the labor of Nepal. I look at the hydro power resources development as a very good opportunity in developing your country and enhancing social and bilateral relations between Nepal and India.

At a time when Nepal is going through an acute shortage of power, do you have any plan to support new power projects?

We are open to any proposal. International community has long been concerned about the development of hydro power basically on environmental front. So ADB has been very cautious in dealing with hydro power projects. With the increase on the global concern on climate change, you may find there is change in the sentiment.

What is your impression about Nepal's hydropower?

In Nepal you have so many hydro power resources. If you can tap even ten percent of electricity potential, this fuel shortage will be greatly limited as your government can generate resources to buy the fuel and will find easier to cope with the situation. We need to pay attention toward eco-environmental balance to protect the flora and fauna when developing hydro power. It could be done. I am very much confident that Nepal can develop hydropower resources and at the same time improve environment.

How were ADB's programs affected by the conflict in the past?

If you can tap even ten percent of electricity potential, this fuel shortage will be greatly limited as your government can generate resources to buy the fuel and will find easier to cope with the situation.

We have worked with government and local people to mitigate the impact of conflict on implementation of the project to the extent possible. I cannot say our projects were not affected at all. Of course, they were affected but through our joint efforts we have minimized the effects on ADB financed projects. Even under the conflict situation, we still managed to improve implementation and monitoring of projects because the people who are benefited came as the strongest supporters.

How optimistic are you about future programs in Nepal?

Now, I believe the peace process will go ahead because all of the parties concerned are fully aware of the high stakes all of them have in this process. I talked to the leaders of CPN-Maoist and they told me they are deeply committed to the seven party coalition and they are deeply committed to the peace process. It is very much encouraging.

What is your impression about peace process in Nepal?

I am confident that the people will go ahead and push forward peace. I think anyone who disturbs this process will be unpopular in general public. Five or ten years ago, everyone visualized the benefits of this kind of process. I was very much impressed when I addressed the meeting when all the political parties represented in the government and opposition were sitting there under the same roof. This is a huge progress. I am very much moved and I was very much touched. More we strengthen the peace process, more the people will get benefits.

Do you see any possibility for participation of private sector in investment?

One of the most important things for the private sector investment is the political stability. Private sector is always comfortable when they see the political stability and when they can see the government can implement economic policies without major disruptions. They can take commercial risks but they cannot take any political risk. Now we are reasonably sure that the peace process will move forward and the government can implement its economic policy without any major disruption.

As Nepal is still facing unstable political situation, how can the private sector will invest in Nepal?

Who knows out of these more than half a million tourists, there may be some private sector people who came here looking for business opportunities. Of course, out of these half a million people, there are a lot of business people who wanted to take a look. I think the interest has increased in investing in Nepal. I don't downplay the difficulties involved but we should give



political parties sometime to work out their differences. Even in a big family, if seven brothers are fighting for some time. Do you think we can expect them smiling at each other overnight? I don't think it is easy. I was impressed by the atmosphere here in Nepal when all the parties are sitting under the same roof. They don't have any animosity with each other and they were talking about each other.

How do you see the agitation in terai?

As I said, we are seriously concerned about the situation in terai and we urge government to address the problem. I look at this issue in different perspective. The peace process and seven parties coalition makes it easier for the government to deal with some of the remaining issues and that is the key. You have successfully handled many issues. Terai issue is an important issue for seven parties to work together in the interest of this whole nation. I do believe that if economic development and growth can go forward on basis of stability, the government will be capable to deal with all these issues. ■

I am confident that the people will go ahead and push forward peace. I think anyone who disturbs this process will be unpopular in general public.



NDCM: Development in Focus

DONORS CONSULTATION

Promises And Commitments

Nepal's development partners promise to support the country generously provided there is peace, stability and election

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

The two-day (February 21-22) Nepal Donors Consultation Meeting (NDCM) adopted a festive atmosphere with over 100 representatives of bilateral and multilateral donor agencies participating in a development discussion with the government.

In the absence of biennial Nepal Development Forum (NDF) meeting, which could not take place in 2004 due to political instability, the government had called this NDCM as a platform for sharing ideas and experiences and discussing development agenda for Nepal – ahead of a full-fledged NDF planned to take place in the fall of 2008 once there is an elected government in place in Kathmandu.

Since day one, the donors had stressed on the need to take the peace

process to logical conclusion by having the twice-delayed election on time.

The donors stressed that while they are willing to play their role in the development and post conflict reconstruction, all that would hinge on the restoration of peace through the election of Constituent Assembly (CA).

“Inclusive and credible elections are critical for the peace process and for development progress. We support the full participation of women, Dalits, Janajatis, Madhesis, religious minorities and other excluded groups across the country. A representative Constituent Assembly that will debate and agree on a new constitution will realize a long standing promise to the people of Nepal, and can help ensure that all Nepalis have a stake in the creation of a new and

inclusive state,” said Liqun Jin, vice president of Asian Development Bank (ADB), who addressed the NDCM on behalf of the development partners.

The donors have admitted that there are still formidable challenges and obstacles before the ‘peaceful, prosperous and just Nepal.’ “These include exclusion, rising inequality, limited access to often poor quality services and increasing social disruption and instability, particularly in Terai,” Jin said.

At the end of the two-day conference, the donors committed to support in improving rural infrastructure, water supply and sanitation, health sector, education and strengthening of financial management to combat corruption.

Donors' Concern

The government officials say that the NDCM meeting was fruitful in that the donors were able to express their concerns in a frank and forthright manner.

“I must say that the conference was very productive. The donors did raise some concerns. One was about the election – whether it will be held on time or not. The other was about the post election phase. They appeared concerned about the government’s plan after the elections are over. Then they raised the issue of implementation and about the need to combat corruption,” said Dr. Jagadish Chandra Pokharel, vice chairman of the National Planning Commission (NPC).

In an attempt to allay the fears and apprehension of the donors, the Prime Minister himself assured them of timely election.

“The Constituent Assembly is the place from where every problem facing the nation can be resolved. I want to assure the international community that the election will be held on schedule. Nobody needs to doubt it,” PM Girija Prasad Koirala told the opening session of the NDCM.

PM Koirala while thanking the

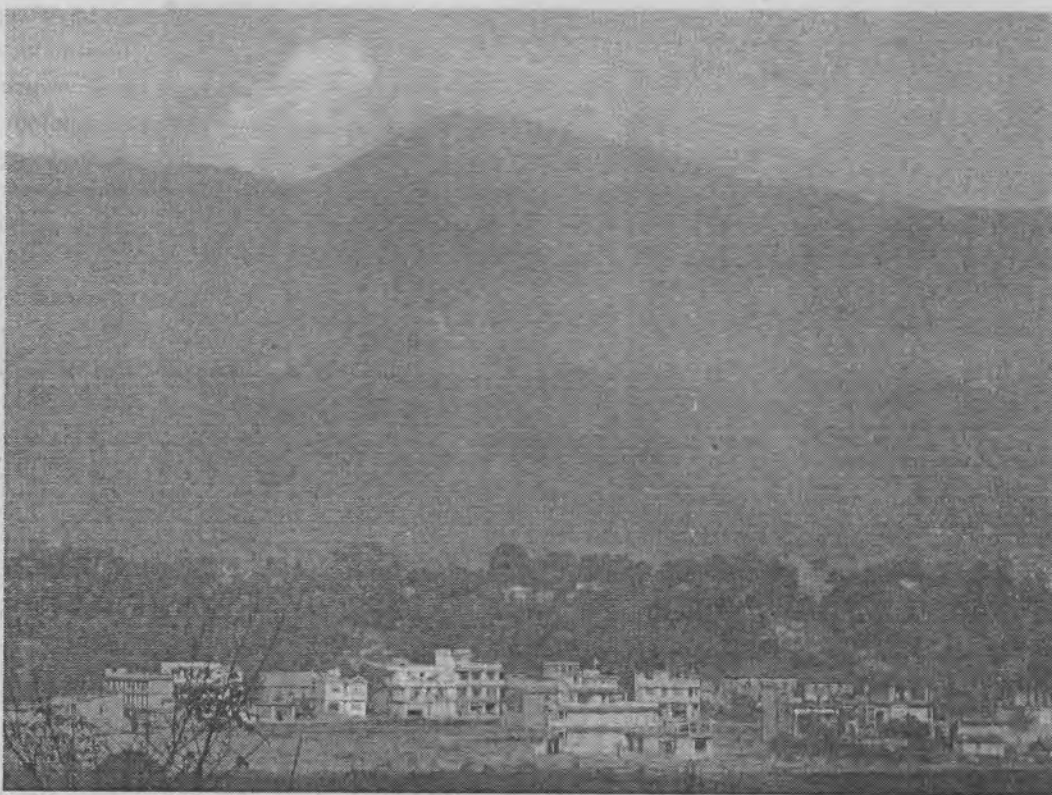
international community for their support towards the struggle of people of Nepal for establishing democracy, asked them to be considerate about the specific needs of a landlocked country like Nepal.

In the clearest indication of growing apprehensions among the donor community, the participants issued a joint statement ahead of the conference and expressed grave concern over the threats to peace and development in Nepal, especially in Terai, and called for a peaceful solution.

"The international community expects a peaceful and democratic

process of change. However, we note with grave concern the situation in the Terai, and we fully support efforts to address the current situation," a joint statement issued by the participants of the Nepal Donors Consultation Meet said. The statement further reads, "Nepal's future depends on its political leaders working together to take the country through these difficult times; implementing commitments and agreements made, supporting the rule of law, pushing forward with vital economic reforms that will create jobs, and delivering the development gains that only peace can provide."

"In all of this, we remain fully committed to helping the people of Nepal build the New Nepal they so desperately want, and so deeply deserve," they said. The donors also stressed that it is vital that the political leadership move ahead with implementation of agreements for the inclusion of all excluded groups in the civil service, the security forces and elsewhere, and discussions on the future of the armed forces in line with existing



Urban-rural divide: Need to arrest inequality

agreements. "We also look forward to a New Nepal where human rights are respected, and impunity for past and present abuses is ended. Children's rights should be addressed, and the orderly discharge of minors from cantonments, properly supported, should proceed without delay."

Purpose of NDCM

Addressing the NDCM function, Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat said the meeting was organized to apprise the donor communities about peace process and development priorities of the country.

"We proposed to hold a broader donors consultation meeting to exchange views on Nepal's peace process and immediate development priorities. At the same time we are also holding this meeting also to express our gratitude to international community for the moral support extended to us two years ago when the people of Nepal were rising against autocracy and for the cause of inclusive democracy. In this sense, this meeting is not a full-fledged NDF

meeting. For our development partners, this is also not a pledging meeting. We are here to communicate to each other face-to-face on issues that Nepal is grappling with today," said Dr. Mahat.

Vice president of Asian Development Bank (ADB) Liqun Jin also welcomed the opportunity to jointly review achievements, plans and implementation challenges.

"This is a critical moment in the country's history. A moment where centuries of exclusion and disadvantage can begin to be reversed. A moment which calls for the strongest leadership and vision. The successful implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Accord and subsequent agreements is vital to move the country towards lasting peace," Jin said.

Positive Assessment

During the NDCM, the government as well as the donors both also positively assessed some of the progresses made by Nepal during this difficult period.

"A recent report shows that Nepal's child mortality rate declined sharply by



PM Koirala (left) with ADB vice president Liqun Jin: Talking development

48 percent to 61 per 1000 births in ten years. In the same period, infant mortality rate declined from 79 per 1000 births to 48. There has been similar improvement in maternal mortality rate and total fertility rate. While this is largely due to reforms implemented in these sectors, it is also due to pragmatic funding approach adopted by our development partners," said FM Dr. Mahat.

"The most notable of our achievements has been the reduction in the number of people living below absolute poverty. The Nepal Living Standards Survey 2004 showed that poverty level declined by almost 11 percent point in a period of eight years. Remittance income, increased public investment in rural areas with emphasis on infrastructure building and social sector, expansion in micro finance coverage and urbanization has been attributed for this feat. But no less is the contribution of economic reforms and higher growth rate achieved in the last decade," he added.

The ADB's vice president Liqun Jin also commended the progress in poverty reduction and the attainment of 90 percent enrolment in primary level

education.

"Development partners wish to recognize that Nepal has achieved notable development progress and pursued sound macroeconomic management in recent years. Poverty has been reduced from 42% to 31% over the past decade, with a significant contribution from Nepalis working abroad. Annual deaths of young

children, and mothers in childbirth, have been reduced by a half and more than twice as many cases of TB are now being successfully treated. In education, almost 90% of Nepali boys and girls are now enrolled in school, one of the highest rates in the region. During the last decade, seven remote districts were connected by roads, and 2.6 million Nepalis, mostly in Terai, received citizenship. The government has also maintained macroeconomic stability: fiscal deficits have remained modest, inflation has remained broadly stable and foreign exchange reserves have increased significantly. Despite huge challenges, and lost opportunities, these positive achievements during a period of conflict should be recognized and indeed are a measure of what might be achieved in the context of a secure peace," Jin said.

All in all, the officials believe that the donors are more than willing to support the country if they are able to hold election and restore peace. The donors have indicated that they will be generously supporting the post conflict reconstruction and make pledges for aid during the forthcoming NDF. ■



Development partners: Partnership for prosperity



School students: Violations of their right to education

UN ASSISTANCE

Broad Support

The government signs Country Programme Action Plan document with UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA

By A CORRESPONDENT

The Government has signed the Country Programme Action Plan documents with UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA for a grant assistance of US\$ 190.59 million. UNDP (US\$ 94.38 million), UNICEF

(US \$ 68.21) and UNFPA (US\$ 28 million) are providing this grant assistance for the next three years in support of the Government Interim Plan (2008-2010).

“Under the broad framework of the United Nations Development Assistance

Framework (UNDAF), the Country Programme Document and Action Plan of all three UN agencies put emphasis on peace and development for an inclusive society, responding to national priorities that are currently identified in the Government’s three-year Interim Plan.” states a press release by UN.

Krishna Gyanwali, Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Finance expressed his sincere appreciation to the efforts of the UN organisations coming together in the spirit of harmonization for continued support to the socio-economic development of Nepal. “This is a great initiation towards ‘One UN’ reform agenda”, he said.

As per the Country Programme Action Plan signed this week, the UNDP will be implementing its programme towards achieving increased access to and participation in constitution building and free and fair electoral processes; programmes, strategies, policies and systems that promote post-conflict recovery; increased capacity of government at the national and local level to manage resources and deliver basic services in an inclusive and equitable manner; responsive and accessible justice systems to promote gender equality, social inclusion and the rule of law; enhancement of employment and income opportunities; access to financial services, especially for youth and excluded groups; and mainstream energy and environment issues into national and local development plans and reduce risks of natural hazards.

Likewise, the UNICEF will be working towards decentralized Action for Children and Women; Social Policy ; Child protection (from violence, abuse and exploitation); Education; Health and nutrition; Water, sanitation and hygiene; and HIV/AIDS.

The UNFPA Programmes are based on the principle of realization of human rights including reproductive rights and to have access to information and to basic reproductive health services. The programmes are in the sectors of Reproductive health; Population and development; and Gender. ■

BOOK

Interim Constitution

UNDP publishes a book on Interim Constitution in both English and Nepali language along with introductory materials

By A CORRESPONDENT

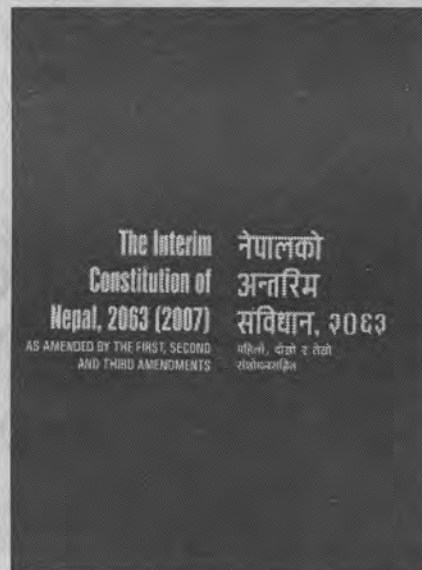
Promulgated just a year ago, the Interim Constitution of Nepal is a first constitutional document which was amended three times in the course of one year of its promulgation. As it was amended so quickly, its earlier copies have become incomplete.

In the constitutional history of Nepal, it took about three decades for third amendment in the previous constitution of Nepal which was abrogated in 1990 after the promulgation of the Constitution of Kingdom of Nepal 1990, which was not amended till it was abrogated by the announcement of this interim constitution.

This book not only provides the constitution, it also includes introductory materials in both language side by side.

"We have produced it in the form of bilingual version: in book form the Nepali appears on the right and the English on the left hand page. This will help readers of the English who also understand Nepal to be sure of the meaning. We hope it will also be helpful to translators of future constitutional document. The text of the Interim Constitution is preceded in this book by a brief introduction to the Interim Constitution, and also by a simple Guide to the Interim Constitution, intended for members of the public who want to understand something about the document but for

whom the original text is too time-consuming to read. Maybe some people will be able to tackle the full



**The Interim Constitution of
Nepal 2063 (2007)**

**As amended by the first,
second and third
amendments**

**Published by: United
Nations Development
Program, UN House
Pulchowk**

**Coordinated and Prepared:
by Jill Cottrell, Surya
Dhungel, Kedar Bhattarai
and Basanta Subba**

Price: Undisclosed

Pages: 327

document after reading the "Simple Guide," writes the authors.

At a time when all the people have been talking about the need to have Constituent Assembly to make the new constitution for Nepal, this book will certainly give an idea about the evolutionary process of Nepal's constitutional history.

In the last five decades of Nepal's process of modernization, this interim constitution is the fifth constitution in the row. But, only a few people understand how frequently Nepal's constitutions were victimized for political gains.

Although this is basically a book composed of Nepalese and English translated version of Interim Constitution of Nepal, it gives broader perspective on Nepal's constitutional history and various political phases.

After the revolution of 1951, all the sides agreed to write the constitution through the elections of Constituent Assembly. However, three previous constitutions were drafted on the basis of political understanding between the King and political parties.

The final agreement between the political parties and the king was reached after the successful People's Movement of 2006. The parties promulgated the interim constitution to go for elections for Constituent Assembly.

In the introductory chapter, the authors talk about Nepal's history of constitution as well as the content analysis of the interim constitution and its article.

With the involvement of renowned persons having expertise on constitutions like Jill Cottrell and Surya Dhungel, this book is very different than others. For foreigners who like to know about Nepal's five decades of history of constitution, this book gives insights. ■

“The pains of land-locked countries are unique. We have faced the pain. I appeal to our donor countries to also consider our unique sufferings.”

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, addressing the Nepal Donors Consultative Meeting.

“The seven parties have agreed that the right of one single Madhes province cannot be fulfilled.”

CP Mainali, leader of Leftist Front, informing of the decision of seven parties.

“We will continue our agitation to establish the rights of Madhesi people.”

Mahantha Thakur, chief of Terai Madhes Loktantrik Party, vowing to continue agitation.

“Our party is against the idea of single province in Madhes, which is not objective.”

Ram Bahadur Thapa aka Badal, a senior leader of Maoists.

“The monarchy will survive for 300 years.”

Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, former senior leader of Nepali Congress (NC), talking to reporters after hosting a party to celebrate his 84th birthday.

“For our development partners, this is also not a pledging meeting. We are here to communicate to each other face-to-face



on issues that Nepal is grappling with today.”

Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat, Finance Minister, addressing the Nepal Donors Consultative Meeting.

“This is a critical moment in the country’s history. A moment where centuries of exclusion and disadvantage can begin to be reversed. A moment which calls for the strongest leadership and vision. The successful implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Accord and subsequent agreements is vital to move the

country towards lasting peace.”

Liqun Jin, vice president of Asian Development Bank, addressing the Nepal Donors Consultative Meeting.

“There is no caste-based discrimination within Nepali Army. Each and every community of this country has equal right on NA.”

General Rookmangud Katawal, Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Nepali Army (NA), talking to reporters in Chitawan, where he visited the residence of one NA soldier belonging to Dalit caste to have a lunch.

TRANSITION

BREAVED: Acting general secretary of Legislature Parliament Manohar Bhattarai by his father at the age 82.

EXTENDED: The deadline for filing the closed-list of candidates under proportional representation based election, by one day (February 24), by the Election Commission (EC) at the request of the government.

BOYCOTTED: The submission of list

of candidates for Constituent Assembly (CA) election, by major parties of Terai.

LEFT: Liqun Jin, vice president of Asian Development Bank (ADB), after completing a brief visit to Nepal, to take part in Nepal Donors Consultative Meeting.

FILED: The closed-list of candidates for proportional representation based election at the CA, by 37 political parties, at the EC.

PASSED AWAY: Narayan Singh Pun,

former minister and leader of Nepal Samata Party, while undergoing treatment in a hospital in New Delhi, India. He had recently undergone kidney transplant surgery but suffered from infection subsequently. He was 59 years old.

Bruce F. Henderson, former chief executive of Rastriya Banijya Bank (RBB), in the United States, where he was receiving treatment for cardiac ailments. He was 76 years old.



NEPAL-INDIA DEVOTIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL

Pious Recitals

Anuradha Poudwal, India's prominent singer, sings devotional songs captivating the audience of Nepal

By A CORRESPONDENT

For quite a long time, the Kailash, regarded as the abode of lord Shiva, was rocked by slogans and violent chanting. However, Kailash's atmosphere was mesmerized by devotional music this week. Even Shiva and his followers might have heaved a sigh of relief hearing the soothing voice of India's prominent singer Anuradha Poudwal, who completely captivated a huge crowd in Pashupati area on Saturday.

As soon as Anuradha Poudwal started to sing songs dedicated to lord Pashupatinath, the whole atmosphere of Pashupati area turned into a devotional ground. Even Lord Pashupatinath, who is celebrating annual Shivaratri festival next week, seems to have found a time to relax.

From old to young and men and women, fakir and foreigners, all enjoyed the two hour long devotional sings of India's singer Anuradha Poudwal. For Nepalese, who share so many religious and cultural commonalities with India, Poudwal reminded what common

cultural heritage the people of both the countries share.

With the help of Nepal's renowned classical singer Nupur Bhattacharya, Poudwal began her concerts by singing Nepalese devotional song Shambha Shada Shiva, a song dedicated to lord Pashupati.

After this music, India's renowned singer Poudwal charmed the audience with a two-hour dose of devotional music in her flawless voice. From devotional music dedicated to lord Shiva to Rama and Goddesses Vaishnavadevi, Poudwal completely held the audience spellbound.

Organized by Indian Embassy, Indian Cultural Center and B.P. Koirala India-Nepal Foundation and managed by Kalbhairav Event and Management, this was the consecutive second year when such concert was organized.

At a time when people have been stressing the need to initiate programs to enhance the understanding and commonalities of culture and religion between the people of both the countries,

this concert proved as an important milestone.

The presence of a large number of audience at the religiously common shrine of Hindus of India and Nepal showed that there is a need to have more programs like this concert, which also provided Nepalese devotional singers to present their talent.

"After the establishment of Indian Cultural Center a year ago, more programs related to cultural importance between the two countries are being presented," said Indian ambassador to Nepal Shiv Shanker Mukherjee.

Nepal's Batuk Raj Mishra infused more spirituality into the air with songs like Aaj Mero Gai Herne Palo and Mero Krishna. Another renowned singer Bhattacharya sang her beautiful devotional numbers.

Although many have made contributions to make the event successful, Gopal Bagley, Counselor, Indian Embassy, who himself is a deep lover of classical music played a key role to bring together Nepalese and Indian artists in Kailash like in the last year.

"For this time, we requested Ms Poudwal, which she kindly consented," said Gopal Bagley, Counselor of Indian Embassy. "This kind of program is always important to enhance the understanding at the people to people level."

Poudwal who visited Nepal back in 1995 also expressed her satisfaction about her performance in front of lord Shiva. "It is my good luck to be able to come here to sing in Pashupati area. My first devotional song album was launched in an international religious convention in Kathmandu by Shri Shankaracharya," Poudwal said. "This was a very beautiful initiative to bring together devotional singers and musicians together."

One can see many ups and downs in the political and bilateral relations between the two countries. But there is no fluctuation in the religious, and cultural relations at people to people level. ■

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