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जिउ जिन्दगी रमेर



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FACE TO FACE:
Maoist Leader Prachanda and Congress Leader Govinda Raj Joshi speak about various relating to CA



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SPOTLIGHT

THE WEEKLY NATIONAL NEWSMAGAZINE

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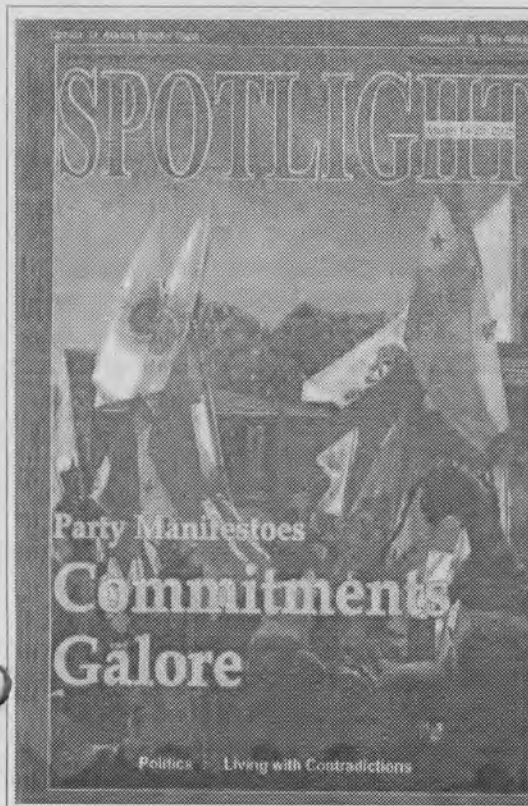
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As the zero hour to the elections narrows down, patriotic Nepali hearts have started beating faster. In a situation when the overwhelming majority of the uneducated mass has not yet been taught about the historic importance of the constituent assembly and the procedure of proportional representation and how important it is to pick honest representatives who will chalk out the destiny of the nation, it is but natural that patriotic Nepalis become panicky. With the reins of the government in the hands of the politicians whose loyalty to the nation has been irrefutably and irretrievably eroded by their granting of citizenships to millions of aliens and other servile behaviors, apprehensions that if they are returned to power and attain constitutionality, the very sovereignty of the nation will be greatly endangered are, indeed, well founded. To avoid this tragedy, we have been emphasizing on the change of the government but to our great frustration we have very miserably failed in our mission. But as the proverbial silver lining in dark clouds, we are still harboring some hopes that some savior will definitely emerge to save our dear motherland from destruction. The total failure of the government to maintain law and order in the country and the increasing lawlessness in recent days when candidates in the elections are being killed, do not bode well for peaceful elections. Such incidents do generate serious misgivings that the political parties who fear they might cut very poor figure in the elections will definitely try to disrupt the polls. Since this illegal government of satellite politicians should not be permitted to stay in power for long, all honest and patriotic Nepalis must come forward to foil the attempts of the miscreants to mar the polls. Even more important is to try to send new faces to the constituent assembly. The corrupt leadership has to be weeded out totally. We have to give a very clear message to all those politicians who have planted themselves as our rulers that they are not, at all, wanted any more. Instead, we must try to create a new atmosphere in the parliament by electing more women, dalits and janjatis to the constituent assembly. If we fail in our attempt and the same old faces return to power, even god may not be able to save this nation.

Madhav Kumar Rimal
Madhav K. Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher



Comparative Analysis

The analysis on election manifestoes of all major political parties (March 14-20) was interesting to read. I agree with you that all political parties need to concentrate their efforts now to implement their commitments expressed in the manifestoes. Given their past records, political parties have hardly shown their interest to work in accordance with their manifestoes. Just writing the statements full of jargons and rhetoric is not going to work, what is important is how the parties will implement it.

Jagat Shrestha
Via email

Since Nepal has diverse ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups, it will not be easy for the CA to accommodate all of their demands. I agree with you that Nepal is in a position now to open Pandora's Box. I don't understand why all political forces in Nepal have been preaching the CA polls as if it is panacea for all the political and other problems. Actually, what Nepal required was peaceful atmosphere and harmony among all communities to survive as an independent nation. After the election, the country's centuries old practice of harmonization will suffer and the country may head towards a long journey to instability and chaos.

Sunita Limbu
London, Via-email

Totally Biased

After reading the analysis on CA Poll: Opening Pandora's Box, I found that you are too biased against the Constituent Assembly. At a time when the people are enthusiastically taking part in the election activities to write a constitution through their own representatives, you are opposing the idea of writing the constitution by elected members. It seems that you are favoring status quo with Hindu monarchy. I completely disagree with you that CA poll will open the Pandora's Box. This is very historic and right time to canvas in favor of CA polls. I hope you will also contribute by writing articles in favor of CA polls. As Nepal's monarchy is very much a pro-Indian institution, the removal of monarchy from Nepal giving equal opportunity for all the religion will help to reduce Indian influence. This is the reason; it is also a duty of patriotic Nepalese to promote the cause of CA polls.

Surendra Rai
Perth, Australia Via- email

Businessmen Attacked

Businessmen are under constant attack from criminals for the last few years. With the upsurge of Maoist violence in 1996, the business communities have remained victims of extortion and kidnapping. Although business communities have made several attempts in the past to highlight their plights in organized way, nobody listened to them and the attack against the communities continued to rise. The analysis Business Community Under siege (Mar 07-13) tried to explore the problems faced by Nepalese business communities. As the spate of attacks, abductions and extortions increase, the business community has been feeling the worst phase of insecurity and uncertainty. This is a very bad news and the government should work to give relief to the business communities.

Gokul Khatri
Via email

Where Is ISF?

Although the government has been talking about the need to establish industrial security force for a long time, it is yet to implement it. In every country, there is a separate force to look at the industrial and business sector but Nepal is yet to have such battalion to protect the industries. Businessmen and industrialists are main tax payers of the country. This is the reason they also need security protection. When the general police force is unable to provide security to the industrial sector, the best way will be to set up industrial security force.

Surendra Singh
Simara Via email

CA Is Reality

Whether one likes it or not, the election for Constituent Assembly is a reality now. The only question is: how will the newly elected members manage it. One of the major challenges of the CA poll is to draft a constitution.



PM Wishes For Unity After CA

prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala on Saturday laid stress on the need for a coalition government even after the upcoming Constituent Assembly (CA) elections, slated for April 10. Addressing an interaction with artistes at the PM's official residence at Baluwatar in the capital on Saturday (Mar 15), he added that the unity of the Seven Party Alliance (SPA) must be kept intact for the next ten years to institutionalize democracy. PM Koirala called on all political parties to focus on healthy competition during the CA polls stating an atmosphere favorable for elections cannot be created without assistance from the parties. Only the elections to the CA will bring about political stability and development in the country, he reiterated. At the interaction organized by Nepal Cultural Association, renowned artistes Hari Bansha Acharya and Madan Krishna Shrestha requested the political parties to create a free and fair atmosphere for the April polls.

Compiled from reports

Rana Accuses Maoists Of Trying To Disrupt Polls

Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) chairman Pashupati Shumsher Rana has accused the Maoists of trying to create hurdle in the constituent assembly election process by obstructing the election rallies of other political parties. "Activities of the Maoists are intended to disrupt the election," Rana said at an

interaction organized by the Reporters Club Friday (Mar 14). "They should come out of war mentality." The RPP chief, who was prevented by the Maoist cadres from attending an election publicity program in his constituency in *Sindhupalchowk last Saturday, met* Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala in Baluwatar Friday morning asking the latter to do something about "Maoist highhandedness". According to Rana, the Prime Minister said he was aware of the violent activities of Maoist cadres and that he was determined not to allow activities that would affect the polls. Hinting at a policy change, Rana said the RPP is not a pro-monarchist party and that it will accept federal republic if that is the verdict of the people. He even claimed that his party is going to do better than the Maoists in the election, securing third place, after Nepali Congress and UML. "RPP will be the third largest party. Either NC or UML will be in the top position." *Compiled from reports*

Gold Price In Historic Height

Gold price touched historic high of Rs 20,835 per 10 gram — over Rs 24,300 per tola (11.664 gram) — in the domestic market on Friday, the closing day of the week. If the current bullish trend continues, soon the price will cross Rs 25,000 per tola in the domestic market, according to the gold traders. Due to the huge price rise in crude prices that touched the historic high of \$110 per barrel, slow down of US economy, weak global stock market and further weakening of dollar has been pushing the price of gold up in the last months. The price of oil is up by 256 percent in the past five years. In the international market also, Gold has hit a new milestone Friday, rising to \$1,000 an ounce for the first time. The price of gold has jumped nearly 20 percent since the start of the year after rising nearly 32 per cent in 2007. Lower interest rates — and the prospect of more rate cuts by Fed — bringing the dollar's value down makes dollar-based commodities like gold cheaper for foreign buyers. The weak currency has also made gold more attractive because the metal is a hedge

against inflation, according to experts.

Leading dailies report

India To Support Nepal's Bid For Fair Polls

India Thursday (Mar 13) said that it would fully support Nepal in its bid to conduct the April Constituent Assembly polls in a free, fair and peaceful manner. Indian Ambassador to Nepal Shiv Shankar Mukherjee informed that talks had been held between high-level representatives of both countries to put border security on high alert during the polls and mentioned that the Indian government would control any criminal activity aimed at disrupting the April 10 polls. While not dismissing the possibility of the armed agitating groups in the Terai creating obstructions to peaceful elections, Mukherjee added that he was optimistic about the ongoing efforts to bring the armed groups to the negotiating table. When asked if the talks would be held inside the Indian embassy, he said he would welcome talks no matter where they were held if they ended positively. At the program, Mukherjee also awarded certificates to the students who received Indian Golden Jubilee scholarships.

eKantipur reports

No Link Between Naxals And Nepali Maoists: Indian Home Minister

The Indian government Tuesday made it clear that there was no connection between India's Naxalites and Nepali Maoists. "There is no connection between the Naxalites and Maoists of Nepal," Indian official news agency PTI quoted Home Minister Shivraj Patil as telling the Lok Sabha, the lower house of the Indian parliament. The Indian Home Minister's clarification was in response to the concerns raised frequently by the main opposition, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), over the alleged connection between Nepali Maoists and Naxalites who have been waging armed movement in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and a few other states. Indian media reports say the BJP leadership had met with Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh recently and conveyed its worry that the connection between Nepali Maoists and Naxalites

could pose a threat to India's national security. The CPN (Maoist) leadership has long been denying allegations of forging working relation with the Naxalites, especially during the armed conflict here, even as the two sides shared common ideology.

Nepalnews.com reports

New UN Chief In Nepal Assumes Office

The newly appointed Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator of the United Nations System's Operational Activities for Development in Nepal and the Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Robert Piper joined his office in Kathmandu on Tuesday (Mar 11). Piper called on Minister for Foreign Affairs Sahana Pradhan Tuesday to present the Letter of Credentials. He had arrived in Kathmandu on Monday. Prior to coming to Nepal he was the UNDP Director of the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund and Senior Advisor on UN Reform in New York. Beginning his career at AusAID, Piper has assumed positions of increasing importance in a number of countries and UNDP headquarters including Thailand, Cambodia, and Fiji. From 2005 to 2006, Piper worked on the Tsunami Recovery process serving as Chief of Staff to the UN Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, former US President Bill Clinton. He also worked as UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Serbia, Kosovo, from March 2002 to July 2004. "I feel privileged to be taking up this assignment at such a historic time. Perhaps more than ever in our 40-year history in Nepal, the UN's development and humanitarian organizations has a critical role to play in lending our expertise, energies and resources to the government and people of Nepal. Peace and development are the two sides of the same coin," he said taking over the charge of Nepal. Piper, an Australian national, is a political science graduate and a Yale University World Fellow 2004. Mathew Kahane, left Kathmandu in February after completing his tenure here. *Compiled from reports*



CEC Cautions Against Obstruction Of Election Rallies

Amid reports of Maoist cadres obstructing other parties from holding election rallies and even resorting to physical attack in some places, the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Bhojraj Pokharel has cautioned against such tactics. "Everyone has the right to campaign for the election. I hope no one obstructs such campaigning from now onwards," he told reporters after meeting with UN official at EC, Thursday (Mar 13). The Maoist cadres obstructed Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) and Rastriya Janashakti Party (RJP) from campaigning in Sindhupalchowk and Dhankuta districts, respectively, and also attacked UML leaders in Ramechhap district. Meanwhile, issuing a statement, EC has said, "The Commission has seriously noted reports of obstruction, beatings and intolerance against party candidates and workers of different political parties in various parts of the country." The EC has reminded that each and every political party has the right to campaign for election by remaining within the election code of conduct. It has also asked authorities to take action against those found engaged in such activities. The EC has also designated 49 government secretaries and first class officers to monitor the CA election and assigned them with specific districts for the purpose. It has also decided that candidates cannot use motorcycles, jeeps, tempos in course of campaigning for election. *Compiled from reports*

WB Unhappy Over NT's Activities

The World Bank (WB) has expressed its dissatisfaction over the role played by the largest telecom service

provide Nepal Telecom (NT). In its report submitted to the Ministry of Information and Communication, the WB has noted the unnecessary delay in providing inter-connection facilities by the NT to other private sector telecom companies; creation of unhealthy competition; its refusal to allow other companies to make use of optical fiber; and its cross-subsidy on internet service, which has affected other Internet Service Providers (ISPs). A mission of WB, which visited Nepal last week, also submitted a written report to the Ministry suggesting the functions for the telecom regulatory authority – the Nepal Telecom Authority (NTA). As the government is planning to privatize the NT, the WB has advised the government to look for NT's strategic partner. In Nepal, the WB has provided loan assistance of \$28 million for the telecom sector assistance project. It has said that the project is only 'partially satisfactory' as it has not yet attained its objectives. *Nepal Samacharpatra daily reports*

An UNMIN Staff Found Dead

Fifty-year-old Russian national Evgeny Alexandrov allegedly committed suicide by hanging himself with a nylon rope in a rented-house at Kapan Saturday (Mar 8) evening, police said on Sunday. Alexandrov, who was working for the Russian Airlines company, was hired by the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) as an engineer "for air service support in Nepal," the police said. The police suspect that he was depressed by the loss of his friends during UNMIN helicopter crash at Ramechhap on March 3. DSP Bikash Khanal at the Metropolitan Police Circle, Maharajgunj, said Alexander left a suicide note in Russian, in which he apparently held himself responsible for his death. Six foreigners, working for the helicopter company, had rented the two-storey house from Dipak Khatri and had been living there for more than a year. Three of them died in the helicopter crash. As one of his friends saw him hanging at round 6:30 pm Saturday, he reported to the UNMIN who, in turn, reported the matter to the police. *The Himalayan Times daily reports* ■



Rajendra Khetan (left) at a program held to mark Khetan Group's involvement in Coca Cola Nepal

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION will deploy a 110-member election observer team for the constituent assembly elections in Nepal scheduled for April 10, EuAsiaNews reported Saturday (Mar 15). The Election Observation Mission (EOM) will be led by Jan Mulder, member of the European Parliament. He will officially launch the EU EOM in Kathmandu March 18, the EU's executive body announced here on Friday. The mission will consist of 40 long-term observers who will be deployed March 22 and over 60 short-term observers, who will be deployed in the main parts of Nepal around election day. In addition, there will also be a core team of 10 EU experts. The mission will stay in Nepal for an overall period of 10 weeks. "The elections for the Constituent Assembly are a cornerstone in the peace process in Nepal. The Constituent Assembly will provide the Nepalese population with a forum to carry forward democratic reform in the society," said EU Commissioner for external relations, Benita Ferrero-Waldner. The EU's election mission to Nepal will cost 2.9 million euro (about \$4.51 million).

PROTESTING THE 'CRACKDOWN' BY Chinese authorities in Lhasa, a number of Tibetan refugees marched to the UN office complex in Pulchowk on Saturday (Mar 15) to stage a demonstration. However, police intervened and detained one dozen refugees. The refugees subsequently gathered in front of Metropolitan Police Range, Lalitpur. The detained refugees were later released. Tibetan refugee community in Kathmandu have been holding protests against Chinese 'crackdown' in Bouddha area also.

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCHDOGS HAVE expressed deep concern over the recent disruptive activities during the election campaigning of political parties. Issuing separate press statements Friday (Mar 14), National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR-Nepal) called upon the parties to respect the rights of all others participating in the constituent assembly. NHRC said its attention had been drawn by the attack on Dev Shankar Poudel, the CPN-UML candidate in Ramechhap, by Maoist cadres, and the obstruction created by Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) cadres in the election rally of Nepali Congress leader and minister Sujata Koirala in Sunsari-5 this week. NHRC urged all sides to cooperate in conducting the April 10 election in a in a fair and peaceful

manner. Similarly, OHCHR-Nepal described the physical attacks on political cadres in Ramechhap, Chitwan and Dhankuta districts as serious impediments to creating an environment conducive to free and fair elections. "OHCHR-Nepal is urging all political actors to respect the political rights of all others participating in the Constituent Assembly election process," the statement said. Head of OHCHR-Nepal, Richard Bennett, said he was in contact

with the Maoist leadership, which had assured him that they were investigating the Ramechhap incident. "Other incidents, such as that in Arghakhanchi district on 25 February, still need to be probed. Respect for the unobstructed right to participation will be essential for the success of the CA elections and to the long-term success of the peace process," Bennett said.

AROUND 281 OUT OF 100,000 MOTHERS die untimely during the postnatal stage in Nepal, according to the statistics made public by Federation of Safe Motherhood Network (FSMN) Saturday (Mar 15). Similarly, FSMN also released statistics that point out 3 infant deaths every hour and one maternal death every four hours. The MMR, which has reduced in the past few years, is still the highest in Nepal among the South Asian countries. FSMN President Dr Arju Deuba Rana said that the MMR can be reduced significantly by social awareness. FSMN also indicated that lack of awareness about health facilities and weak access of the general public to the existing health facilities is responsible for the high MMR in the country.

THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SPORTS has decided to close down schools for two weeks during election. In order to provide school premises to be used as polling centers and to free teachers from their daily routine – since they will be deployed for election – the schools will be closed from April 2 to 15. The Ministry has asked the schools to complete their annual tests before the holidays. The Ministry has also advised the schools to adjust the extra two-week holidays with regular annual or winter holidays.

THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF) has warned that prolonging case against the Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) governor will have long-term effect on country's overall economy. A senior delegation of IMF, which recently visited Nepal, opined that Nepal's ability to maintain economic achievement amid difficult situation was a good sign. But the delegation said the protracted case against governor would have negative effect. The delegation also felt that in absence of the leadership, the NRB was not able to play effective role in monetary policy, financial sector reforms and regulatory jobs. The IMF has advised Nepal to exercise special strategy to tackle inflation. The IMF is helping Nepal in financial sector and poverty reduction. The delegation met with Finance Minister and other senior officials. ■

Quickest Cheapest and Easy Way to Solve Power Shortage Crisis UPPER KARNALI DEVELOPMENT IN STAGES

• Dr. AB Thapa

The Upper Karnali project is uniquely suited to serve the best to resolve our present power shortage crisis. This project can be developed at an astonishingly low cost to produce abundant firm energy during the dry months when our demand for electricity is the highest. Initially this project can be developed at the cost of only about US \$ 150 million to produce in dry months firm energy two and a half times more by comparison with the energy generation of the Marshyangdi project. In future the firm energy generation can be doubled by providing new structures at an additional cost of about US \$ 100 million.

Deepening Power Shortage Crisis

At present our country is reeling from deepening power shortage crisis. It is not just the prolonged countrywide daily load-shedding that has made the life of our people miserable. Worst of all, our industry, commerce, tourism and every other sphere of economy have already started to be badly affected. Needless to say that we are heading for a big economic disaster. Our country will greatly suffer if we failed to address satisfactorily the present power shortage problems without much delay. Unfortunately, the present power shortage crisis is getting worse and worse. There are not as yet good signs to be assured that we are going to overcome our present difficulty of power shortage in foreseeable future.

There is a great urgency to identify at least one medium-sized hydropower project comparatively cheap at the price and which can be implemented within a very short period to minimize the adverse impact of growing power shortage. It is attempted to explain in this brief article how under present circumstance the implementation of the Upper Karnali Project in stages can be the best choice to resolve the present deepening energy crisis.

Why Upper Karnali?

The topography of the Upper Karnali project has a unique feature that provides an excellent opportunity to dispense with the need for costly structures like the high dam to generate electricity on a moderately big scale. The narrow hill, that separates the upper and lower courses of the Upper Karnali flowing in directions opposite to

one another, acts just like a high dam. The cross-sectional width of the hill is only slightly over 2 kilometers. Thus the Upper Karnali Project waterway starting from the intake of the headrace tunnel to the end of the tailrace will almost be the same in total length as the one needed for a purely high dam project. In case of the Karnali Chisapani high dam the total length of the waterway is also about 2 kilometers.

Very High Hydropower Potential

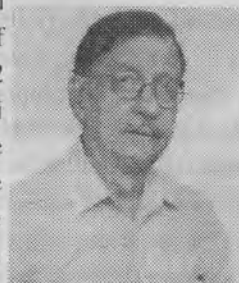
The Karnali river makes a big loop in its lower reach near a place called Asare. From here the river flows in the south-east direction for about 25 kilometers, after that the river makes a complete reversal in its direction. The river comes back to a point just two kilometers away from its earlier position 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.

Development in Stage

The Upper Karnali hydropower site can be developed in the following 4 steps. We can implement the whole project in one go or in more than one stages depending upon our demand for power and availability of funds:

(1) Without a diversion structure (2) Weir (without gates) (3) Barrage (with gates) (4) High dam.

While drawing a plan to implement the hydropower project at Upper Karnali site, we should not let the conclusion of the past pre-feasibility study that the high dam alternative and the first three alternatives are mutually



exclusive slip our memory. Thus, it would be desirable to give preference to the alternative involving less investment.

Cheapest and the Quickest Option

Diversion of the Karnali with or without a weir is certainly the cheapest option to generate electricity. We would be able to implement such project within a short period particularly the one directly drawing the Karnali water without building a diversion structure. The proposed project can be planned to generate almost 100% firm energy. It can greatly help to minimize the power shortage constraint badly affecting the smooth supply of electricity during the dry seasons. The power station will be able to produce exclusively firm energy in contrast to other hydropower stations already in operation in Nepal that generate electricity

mostly in monsoon season whereas they are able to produce far less electricity during the dry seasons when the demand for electricity is the highest. There can

be one major disadvantage in adopting this type of plan to draw water for power generation without building a weir. We may not be able to draw the entire dry season flow of the river. We might have to leave behind a significant proportion of the dry season flow of the river to control the entry of the sediments into the power conduit.

Diversion Without a Weir

We can partially use the dry season flow of the Karnali to generate electricity by drawing water into the headrace tunnel without building a weir. The 90% probable discharge of the river at Upper Karnali site is about 100 cumecs. We might be safely able to draw for power generation about 50 cumecs flow during the dry season, and the rest of the flow will keep the river channel clear by sluicing out the sediments away from the vicinity of the power tunnel intake. However, the whole plan must be tested in a physical model. Department of Irrigation had conducted with the help of **delft hydraulics** of Netherlands at the Asian Institute of Technology Bangkok, Thailand in 1992 the model test to build an intake structure to draw water directly from the Kosi river at Chatra without building a barrage or weir. Water drawn directly from the Kosi is first used for power generation; thereafter it is used for irrigation. The topographical condition of the project

at Chatra is quite unfavourable. Sediments drawn through the intake into the desanding basin are dredged and pumped back into the river. It is not possible to flush out the sediment under gravity because the river bed level is higher than the bottom of the desanding basin. In case of the Upper Karnali the sediments can easily be flushed out under gravity into the Karnali from the desanding basin located at the far end of the headrace tunnel.

Electricity Generation in Dry Season.

The total installed capacity of the Upper Karnali project (without a weir) could be about 60 MW if we want to use only up to 50% dry season flow of the Upper Karnali. Such hydropower station will be able to produce electricity in dry season about two and a half times more by comparison with the generation of the Marshyangdi

Hydropower project, which is now in operation. Similarly the installed capacity of the Upper Karnali (with a weir) could be about 120 MW if we want to use 100% dry season flow. Such hydropower will be

able to produce in dry season electricity five times more by comparison with the generation of the Marshyangdi project.

Project Cost and Construction Period

According to the 1989 pre-feasibility study report conducted with the financial assistance of the World Bank the cost of the 240 MW Upper Karnali project was estimated at US \$ 250 million. This cost is exclusive of transmission and approach road costs. The present cost of the above proposed 60 MW and 120 MW alternatives of the Upper Karnali project based on 1989 pre-feasibility estimate exclusive of transmission and approach road costs could be about US \$ 250 million and US \$ 150 million respectively. It can roughly be said at this stage that it will take about 3 years to complete the construction of 60 MW alternative whereas 4 years for the 120 MW.

Compatibility with Mega Upper Karnali

Upper Karnali high dam project and other three above described alternatives are mutually exclusive. Thus, instead of a high cost barrage type alternative, it would be desirable to select for implementation one of the two low cost alternatives to minimize loss arising out of closure of the project if we foresee that the high dam project will be implemented within the life time of the barrage type alternative. ■

According to the 1989 pre-feasibility study report conducted with the financial assistance of the World Bank the cost of the 240 MW Upper Karnali project was estimated at US \$ 250 million. This cost is exclusive of transmission and approach road costs. The present cost of the above proposed 60 MW and 120 MW alternatives of the Upper Karnali project based on 1989 pre-feasibility estimate exclusive of transmission and approach road costs could be about US \$ 250 million and US \$ 150 million respectively.



Erasing wall paintings: Too little, too late?

CODE OF CONDUCT

o Serious Violations

Parties have flouted the code of conduct angering the Election Commission and rights bodies

By A CORRESPONDENT

In the last one month the Election Commission (EC) has already issued three statements asking the political parties to erase the paintings and remove banners, which are violations of the election code of conduct. The parties made some efforts to erase the paintings but that was that.

In Ramechhap district, Maoist workers physically assaulted UML candidate Dev Shankar Poudel as he was heading to Priti VDC for campaigning.

In Okhaldhunga, Bal Krishna Dahal, an NC candidate was attacked by Maoist workers who obstructed him from campaigning in remote Patalekheta village.

The Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) president Pashupati SJB Rana was obstructed by Maoist-affiliated Young Communist League (YCL) cadres from campaigning in Sindhupalchowk district.

In Chitwan, two RPP workers were abducted and later released by pro-Maoist workers from Divyanagar area.

The YCL cadres stopped workers of

Rastriya Janashakti Party (RJP) from entering into Dhankuta district for campaigning. The RJP workers were also looted by the YCL cadres.

On March 16, a delegation of Election Commission (EC) officials led by Chief Election Commissioner met with Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala.

Top on their agenda was their concern over growing animosity among major parties during election campaigning in the field.

They also expressed serious apprehension over the continued violation of election code of conduct.

"The election code of conduct has been prepared with the consent of all the major parties. They must abide by what they have committed to," said chief election commissioner Bhoj Raj Pokharel.

The violations have also drawn the attention of United Nations Mission in Nepal. "If left unchecked, these are bound to hamper the election and the freedom of voters," said Ian Martin, chief of the UNMIN.

Other rights bodies, too, have come

up with strong statements denouncing the violations of code of conduct.

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR-Nepal) have called upon the parties to respect the rights of all others participating in the constituent assembly.

NHRC said its attention had been drawn by the attack on Dev Shankar Poudel, the CPN-UML candidate in Ramechhap, by Maoist cadres, and the obstruction created by Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) cadres in the election rally of Nepali Congress leader and minister Sujata Koirala in Sunsari-5 this week.

NHRC urged all sides to cooperate in conducting the April 10 election in a fair and peaceful manner.

Similarly, OHCHR-Nepal described the physical attacks on political cadres in Ramechhap, Chitwan and Dhankuta districts as serious impediments to creating an environment conducive to free and fair elections.

"OHCHR-Nepal is urging all political actors to respect the political rights of all others participating in the Constituent Assembly election process," the statement said.

Head of OHCHR-Nepal, Richard Bennett, said he was in contact with the Maoist leadership, which had assured him that they were investigating the Ramechhap incident.

"Other incidents, such as that in Arghakhanchi district on 25 February, still need to be probed. Respect for the unobstructed right to participation will be essential for the success of the CA elections and to the long-term success of the peace process," Bennett said.

"The (proper) environment cannot be created through security measures alone and will require the cooperation of all political actors during the election campaign. In this regard, OHCHR also notes that various political actors have reportedly been instructing their cadres to take control of polling booths on election day. The Office calls on political actors to pledge now to respect all political and civil rights, particularly the right to life; right to participation; freedom of opinion, expression and access to information; right to peaceful assembly and freedom of association; freedom of movement; freedom from intimidation; and freedom from discrimination," the OHCHR-states. ■



NEIGHBOURS

Tibet Worries

Nepal braces for unpredictable implications with alarms rising in its northern neighbour over the 'sensitive' Tibet

By SUSHIL SHARMA

“**T**hese activities not only disturb normal life of Chinese citizens in Nepal, they also have bad influence for the social stability in Nepal especially in the period before constituent assembly elections.”

Thus said spokesman of the Chinese embassy in Kathmandu in reaction to the demonstrations by Tibetans in the Nepalese capital.

In comments to BBC, spokesman Shan further said China “thanks the Nepalese government for its close support and cooperation and the commitment to a one-China policy.

The Chinese praise for Nepal’s handling of the Tibetan protests contrasts

the muted criticism of western governments and open condemnation of non-government groups over “the excesses against peaceful demonstrators”.

Interestingly, the country which has been playing host to Dalai Lama has also come in for Beijing’s praise.

The French news agency AFP quotes **Prime minister Wen Jiabao as saying**, “We appreciate the position and the steps taken by the Indian government in handling Tibetan independence activities masterminded by the Dalai clique.”

“The Tibetan issue is a very sensitive one in our relations with India,”

The Chinese have similar Tibetan

concerns in Nepal.

Even as more than 100 refugees were detained in India while attempting to march to the Chinese border dozens were arrested in Nepal in separate demonstrations in Boudha and Pulchowk.

India did not allow large-scale public protests for fear of embarrassing Beijing.

It is clear that the risk of embarrassing Beijing was thought worth not taking for the ever expanding business and, more importantly, security interest.

Nepal is in even more vulnerable position. Say China watchers, “no Chinese delegation visiting Nepal fails to remind the Nepalese government their government’s sensitivities over Tibet.”

There has been a considerable increase in the number of such delegations after a pro-democracy movement ended the absolute royal rule two years ago.

Said a senior foreign ministry official, “they continue to express concerns over the activities of the Tibetan which they consider hostile to China.”

The scale of protests by the Tibetans in Kathmandu is believed to have alarmed the Chinese authorities.

They have not lodged an official protest. But they are pushing hard to crack down on the demonstrators. The Nepalese government has obliged.

The Nepalese state-run media largely downplayed the coverage of protests in Lhasa. They instead gave prominence to the Chinese government’s version of the events.

Said editor of an independent daily, “Chinese diplomats expected us also to follow the suit.”

Opinions may differ on the handling of the Tibetan activities by the Nepalese government.

But there can hardly be two opinions on growing Chinese interest and stake, given the fluid political situation in Nepal.

Said a commentator, “the Chinese linking the fresh Tibetan protests with the constituent assembly elections in Nepal is something that needs to be carefully watched and analysed.” ■

CA ELECTION

The UN Connection

UN secretary general Ban Ki Moon is unlikely to visit Nepal to watch the constituent assembly elections, according to the authorities.

By SUSHIL SHARMA

The prime minister, Girija Prasad Koirala, wants the UN secretary general in Nepal to be a witness to "the momentous event". He has conveyed the message through the UN chief's special representative, Ian Martin.

But highly placed sources ruled out such a visit. "It simply can not take place at such a short notice", they said.

Some media reports said that the secretary general's Nepal visit for the CA

elections was as good as confirmed. Sources termed them "too speculative".

If Ban Ki Moon were to come, he would be the most important onobserver of the April 10 elections.

The Election Commission said that more than a hundred thousand national and international observers are expected to observe the April 10 constituent assembly elections.

Five hundred of them will come from ten international groups including the



Moon : Will he visit ?

European Union and the Carter Center.

A lot more international groups were interested, but they could not manage time. Said a top official, "once-bitten twice-shy" – in an obvious reference to the twice postponed polls. ■

REMITTANCE

EARNING HIGH

The flow of remittances rose by 18 percent in Nepal,

By A CORRESPONDENT

As the numbers of Nepalis working going abroad increase, so as the annual income from the remittances.

According to the recent statement by the government, the flow of remittances rose by 18 percent in Nepal, during the first half of current fiscal year 2007-08 and touched the total amount to Rs 57 billion as of mid-January 2008, reports The Himalayan Times daily.

Nepal had received Rs 48.26 billion during the same period in the previous fiscal year. Similarly, the largest remittance-recipient developing

country India's private current transfers grew by 30 percent in the first half of 2007. According to a report - Remittance Trends 2007, the flow of remittance globally continues with a robust growth with developing countries taking lead as major recipients.

The growth of remittances to developing countries remains robust because of strong growth in Europe and Asia. The worldwide flows of remittances are expected to reach \$318 billion in 2007. Of the total amount, remittances sent home by migrants from developing countries are expected

to exceed \$240 billion in 2007, up from \$221 billion in 2006 and more than double the level reached in 2002. This amount reflects only officially recorded transfers-the actual amount including unrecorded flows through formal and informal channels is believed to be significantly larger, states the report.

Money sent in home by millions of migrant workers worldwide has already outstripped the global development aid and for many countries, remittances are larger than foreign direct investment (FDI), and in some cases, larger even than official development aid.

The report further states that the recorded remittances are more than twice as large as official aid and nearly two-third of FDI flows to developing countries. Remittances are the largest source of external financing in many poor countries. Also remittances have been less volatile than other sources of foreign exchange earnings in developing countries. ■

CA ELECTION

The Day of Reckoning

Although the election campaigning is in full swing and the candidates of different political parties are knocking the doors of voters, there are still some elements of uncertainty about the election for Constituent Assembly, which has been scheduled for April 10. As election campaigning is reaching the households, large numbers of candidates have been receiving threats in terai as well as in hill from armed groups and Maoists, respectively. Thus, the possibility for the postponement of the election has not completely vanished yet. At a time when all major internal and external players, particularly, Nepal's friendly democratic countries from the west, United Nations and India, Nepal's close neighbor and world's largest democracy as well as its northern neighbor China, have come out openly in favor of elections, the election, at least in surface, seems to be a reality

By KESHAB POUDEL

For octogenarian prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala, Saturday (March 15) was a hectic day. From early in the morning till early evening, prime minister Koirala held discussions with Ian Martin, chief of UN Mission to Nepal, Indian Ambassador, French Ambassador, a gathering of film actors and finally the chief election commissioner Bhojraj Pokharel.

In all these meetings, prime minister Koirala's main agenda was to make the

election successful. Whether one likes it or not, the country is now heading towards the election process.

Just a day after his meeting with foreign diplomats and high level election officials, who also raised the question of deteriorating law and order situation including threat to candidates and voters, Maoist cadres opened fire at the mass meeting organized by Bal Krishna Dahal, Koirala's personal secretary and candidate of Nepali Congress from

Okhaldhunga district constituency.

Amid constant concerns expressed by Nepal's friendly countries and commitments expressed by prime minister Koirala and seven party alliance, it shows that the election for CA is now going to be the reality.

But, no one can predict what is cooking beneath the surface, which can make a lot of difference. Political pundits argue that since the momentum is going in such a fast mode, it is very difficult to



Political workers: Building excitement

reverse it back as stakes for all the internal and external players are quite high.

"Please go to your constituencies to campaign. Don't have doubt about the election. Since all the forces are backing me, I will hold the election at any cost," said Koirala to his party's central committee member Sunil Kumar Bhandari and Laxman Ghimire who went to prime minister's residence on Saturday. "Girijababu was determined to hold the election. I saw confidence in his face."

Along with Koirala, other leaders of seven party alliance, too, have been speaking in similar tones. "If we are unable to hold the election on April 10, we will lose all our legitimacy to govern

the country," thundered CPN-UML leader Madhav Kumar Nepal speaking to journalists at TU Teaching Hospital where he went to meet his party candidate Dev Shanker Poudel who was attacked and injured by Maoist cadres in Ramechhap district.

Despite some threat and physical attacks against party candidates, the ground situation has changed suddenly all over the country.

Maoist leader Prachanda has already addressed a number of meetings in his two constituencies in Rolpa - 2 and Kathmandu-10. Similarly, CPN-UML leader Madhav Kumar Nepal recently visited his two constituencies in Kathmandu-2 and Rautahat.

Nepali Congress leader and former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba is now in his home town Dadeldhura and Kanchanpur to address the mass meeting and meet the people.

Despite the hurdles created by local leaders, Sujata Koirala, daughter of prime minister Koirala, is launching campaign in her constituency in Sunsari. Former home minister and Nepali Congress leader Govinda Raj Joshi, despite the threat of Maoists, has been visiting his constituency in Tanahun.

Rastriya Janashakti Party leader Surya Bahadur Thapa and Rastriya Prajatantra party leader Pashupati Sumsher Rana, who were threatened by Maoists, are now in their home constituencies in Dhankuta and Sindhupalchowk districts, respectively. "Whatever cost I have to pay, I will stay in my home constituency to encourage my voters to take part in the election," said Thapa.

International Players

Similar assurances have been coming from Nepal's friends from western countries and two neighbors. In his discussion with prime minister, Indian ambassador to Nepal Shiv Shanker Mukherjee reportedly assured the PM that India will provide all out support to hold the election.

In his recent visit to Nepal, Chinese Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs He Yafei had said that China supports Nepal's peace process and said he was happy to see the process is nearing completion.

Chinese officials have already made it clear that they want to see Nepal at peace and prosperous. "Nepal needs to keep in mind our security interest and sensitivity in Tibet," said a Chinese official. "Nepal can make relations with any country and have any system but not at the cost of China's security."

Not only Nepal's two neighbors, Nepal's friends from west have been expressing their strong support to make the CA election possible.

Although it is yet to be publicly announced, it is reported that the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon is coming to Nepal for a short trip to back Nepal's peace process.

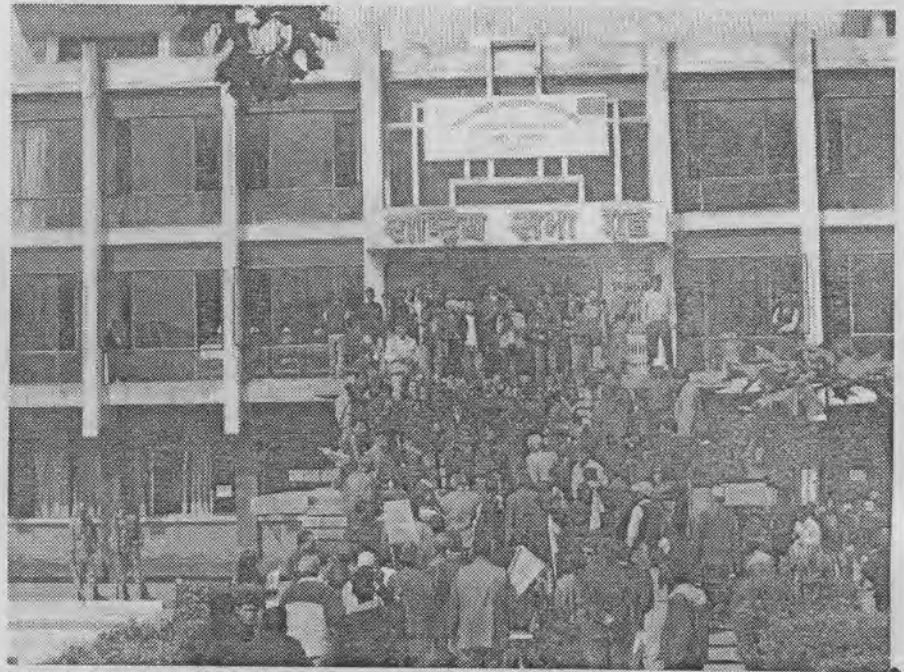
The backing of international players is understandable. Since the last couple of years, all international players had been advocating election here.

Like most elections, the CA still has elements of uncertainty. In the last five decades, Nepal has experimented with a number of constitution but they all failed to bring stability in the country. What happens after CA, therefore, is still unclear.

Initiated under India-mediated tripartite agreement between then King, Rana and Nepali Congress in New Delhi in 1951, the Constituent Assembly emerged as a consensus agreement. It again emerged as consensus point for the second time when seven party and Maoists inked a deal once again in New Delhi in November 2005.

"All of us must work to hold free, fair election for CA, which will draft the new constitution," said prime minister Koirala. "If we hold the election in free and fair manner, all of us will be winners."

Although Koirala made similar commitments last year, he postponed the



District election office in Kathmandu: Poll atmosphere

election at the last minute. If Maoists create the situation like in the past, prime minister might repeat his last action. As all the major players have placed all their stakes in the election, it has become

the question of prestige, legitimacy and moral obligation for all.

"Whether one likes it not, election is going to be held as it is required for major political parties to prove their legitimacy. If the election cannot be held, it will be failure of all parties," said a political analyst. "In case election is postponed this time, a large following of these parties and their sympathizers would lose their face while their leaders would lose their moral authority to rule the country. The parties will also lose their legitimacy."

"Nepal's neighbor and largest democratic country will also lose its face and legitimacy. In case the election is postponed again, all the forces of political stability will be losers except the anarchists and miscreants," the analyst said.

Security situation

From Sujata Koirala in eastern Sunsari constituency and Kamala Dhungel, NC candidate from Mahottari constituency no 1 in terai to NC leader Arjun Narsingh KC's constituency in Nuwakot 1 and CPN-UML leaders' constituencies in hill, one of the challenges all these candidates have been facing is that of law and order situation.

"Without strong security apparatus, both voters and candidates cannot be assured of free and fair election. Security



UML flag: Election time

situation in terai is very weak and much so for women candidates and voters," said Kamala Dhungel.

"Within a week, our supporters have received threats and were obstructed at three different places. They don't allow candidates to reach to the voters. We are campaigning at gun point and armed threats and the people in rural areas are not in a position to come out freely from their houses. I am surprised to see enthusiasm in women voters who are prepared to defy such threats. I am surprised to find that security officials still feel that strong directives for providing security are not yet given from the top. Threats, abductions and killings are reported almost on daily basis," said Dhungel who has been facing threats from armed groups of terai.

CPN-UML candidate Dev Shanker Poudel is in hospital for treatment following physical assault by Maoists in Ramechhap. Nepali Congress candidate Bal Krishna Dahal had a close shave after being attacked by Maoists in Okhaldhunga on March 16.

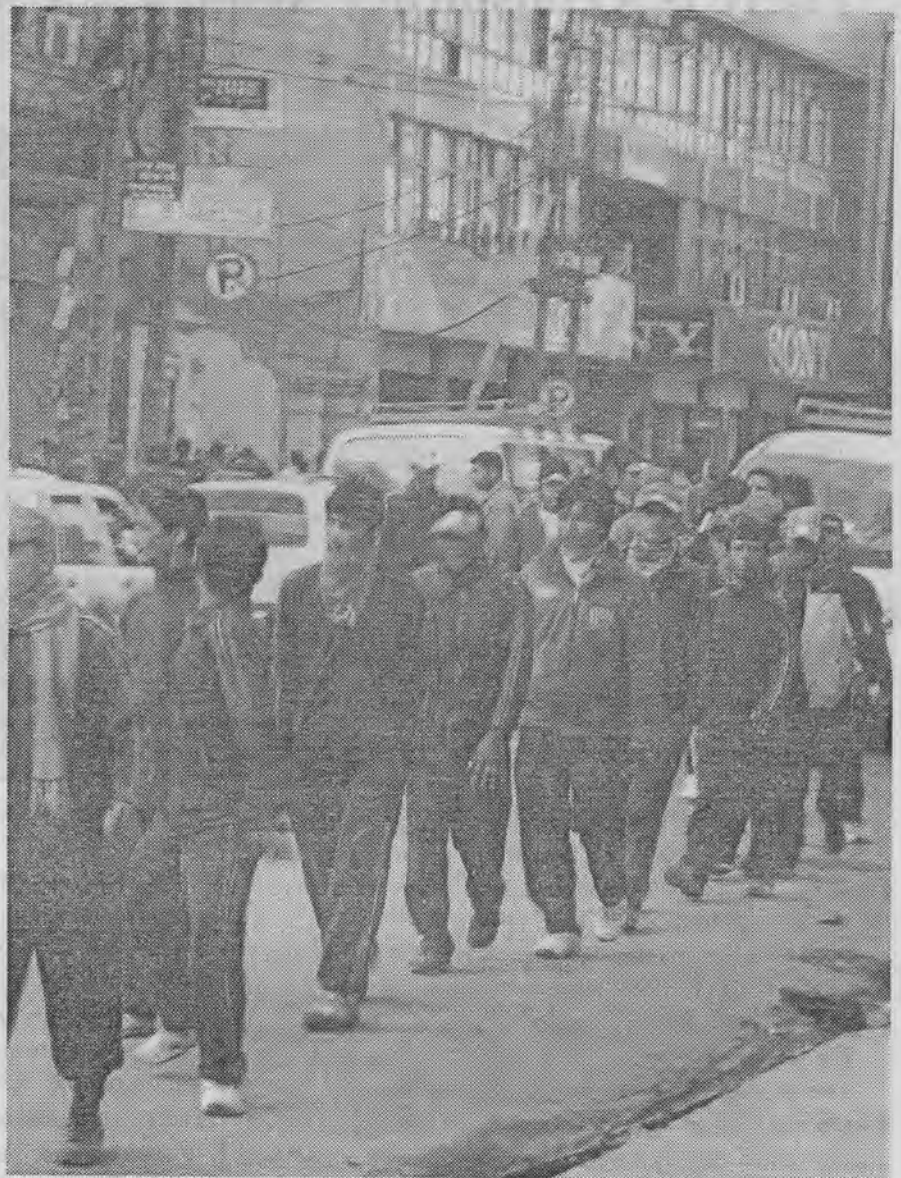
Despite threat to the candidates, the campaigns are in full swing and enthusiastic voters are taking part in the election process with gusto.

Issue of Political Structure

After publication of election manifestoes by all the major political parties, basic characteristics of future political system has been laid down though it will not be binding for elected members of Constituent Assembly. Parties have presented a blue print before the people. All have opened their card now.

Country's major political parties, particularly those in the seven party alliance, have proposed similar structures with president and prime minister. CPN-UML and CPN-Maoist have forwarded different system of government but both of them want elected executive.

They have also proposed the legislative bodies and structures for federal government. Till now, Rastriya Prajatantra Party Nepal is the only party, which pursues the constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy. At a time when all political parties are going from one extreme to another, there



Maoist cadres: On the move

is no party which clear-cut ideas on centrist ideology.

Rumors of Postponement

But, there are powerful groups, which still believe that the election will be postponed at the last minute on the ground of security and Maoists will create a situation favorable to that. These kinds of rumors will be there till the last minute. So far as the violence and insecurity are concerned, that has been there for long.

Enthusiastic people particularly in the hills see election as a festival. Elections are not new for Nepalis. The first elections were held for local government in 1949.

"Federalism, inclusiveness should be

tested by the popular opinion of the country through the election. One of the weaknesses of the society is skepticism. All these preparations are done and all political parties have announced their manifestoes with responsibility. To hold the election is not as difficult as it will be to manage the Pandora's Box that will be opened," said the analyst.

Whatsoever has come out yet as an outline of the future model of constitution may have to undergo practical test. All high sounding jargons of federalism, inclusiveness, gender etc may have to be reoriented under a pragmatic deal between newly emerged heterogeneous groups and interests ■

“There is a conspiracy Against CPN-Maoist workers”

-Prachanda

CPN-Maoist chairman PUSHPA KAMAL DAHAL aka Prachanda has been visiting his own constituency in Rolpa district addressing various mass meeting. Maoist leader Prachanda addresses various mass meeting in Rolpa and Dang district: Excerpts

On forthcoming elections for Constituent Assembly?

There are still many challenges before us and it is impossible to hold the elections in normal way.

On present political situation

Major political parties which took part in the parliamentary politics in the last twelve years are responsible for the present political mess. In the name of so called constitutional monarchy, parliamentary parties encourage feudalism, anarchy and corruption.

On violent activities of Yong Communist League

Our party workers are peacefully participating in the elections campaign and CPN-UML and NC are disseminating wrong information about YCL and its cadres. Our party workers have not attacked any one till now. Nepali Congress and CPN-UML workers have been violating the code of conduct by attacking our workers.

On recent violence

The incidents of these places were publicized to create hostile atmosphere against CPN-Maoist. Our workers are peaceful and they have not barred any body from visiting their constituencies.

On Maoist position in CA

Our party will win the majority in the coming elections. Since CA is and republican is our agenda, people will vote our candidates in Constituent Assembly to write a republican constitution for New Nepal. The CA polls would be held under any circumstance and the seven parties faced many challenges in this regard. Maoists would work together with 'nationalists' and republican forces for the CA polls.

On left unity and alliance in the elections?

We have made every effort for left unity. However, CPN-UML rejected our proposal under the pressure from United States of America. We want to be more flexible and reasonable in seat adjustments.

On Nepali Congress and CPN-UML

Along with CPN-UML, Nepali Congress some monarchist are doing conspiracy to keep ceremonial monarchy in the



country. I have made all efforts to convince political parties to contest elections jointly with a single party manifesto.

Conspiracy by monarchist

Monarchist are still doing conspiracy against the CA poll. I have received information about a conspiracy to assassinate political leaders to disrupt the upcoming Constituent Assembly (CA) polls. Various groups who were behind the attacks on political leaders and cadres in Terai have entered the capital with a similar motive to assassinate politician leaders and cadres. If monarchist conspire against the CA, it will benefit to people and monarchist will have to pay price.

On Response of People

People want to see the new Nepal under the leadership of Maoist party. No one can defeat us in the coming future. Wherever I visited, people gave me warm response.

On announcement of President of New Nepal

We are very clear that there will be republic Nepal after elections. So, our party has announced me as a candidate of president for New Nepal. We have already made it clear that we want president directly elected from people.

On Anti-CA poll

All activities aimed at disrupting the CA polls would be foiled. In the coming days "there could be some important political assassinations. I don't think the assassination would fulfill their objective. However, it'll accelerate the destruction of feudalism and victory of the Nepali people and create a favorable environment for the conduction of the Constituent Assembly elections. ■

Maoists are creating problems for all of us

-Govinda Raj Joshi

GOVINDA RAJ JOSHI, central committee member of Nepali Congress, is a candidate of constituency no 1 of Tanahu district. Joshi is now in his constituency in a door to door candidate. Joshi spoke to **SPOTLIGHT** on overall election situation in the country. Excerpts:

As your party has moved from monarchist to republican, how do you compete with other two major communist parties with similar slogans?

Whatever the political stand may be, Nepali Congress is still regarded as a centrist party with democratic credentials. For the voters of Nepali Congress, they don't have other alternatives as they cannot vote for communists.

Do you think Nepali Congress will secure majority?

If our voters will be allowed to go to polling booth, our party will secure majority. But, the question remains: whether the Maoists will allow them to go or not.

Do you mean Maoists are still creating hurdles in your constituency threatening voters not to vote other parties?

Maoist cadres are roaming in villages threatening Congress supporters not to attend the mass meetings and campaigns. They are threatening our followers not to give us shelter in their houses.

If that is the situation, how have you been campaigning?

Being a politician having experience of more than 35 years in Congress politics, I cannot give up my stand. Despite facing all kinds of difficulties, I have been visiting the villages and visiting from house to house.

Have Maoists disrupted your election programs?

As I have a strong support base in my constituency, Maoists are unable to disrupt them. If they had strong support, they would not have allowed me to go to village.

How about the safety of candidates?

Although the government provides some police security to candidates, I have to manage my security on my own.

What is your impression about the election campaign?

The election campaign is in full swing. Candidates are in door to door campaign. We don't have any difficulty with CPN-UML but Maoists are creating problems for all of us.

How do you see overall situation of Maoists in your district?

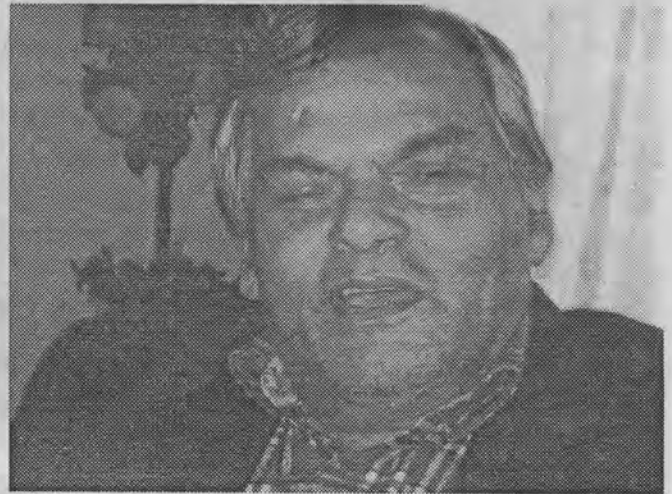
Maoists are not so popular. People are still afraid of their past. Despite signing peace agreements, they are still extorting money and threatening local people.

What about the election code of conduct?

To be very frank, Maoists are openly violating the election code of conduct.

Haven't you complained to election commission?

All the political parties are complaining but there is no one to take action.



As a central leader of Nepali Congress and former home minister, how do you see overall popularity of your party?

I have already mentioned that our party's popularity has not shrunk. If we can provide basic security to our voters, they will come to vote for us. The situation is similar in all the places.

Who is your competitor?

Our main competitor is still CPN-UML. Interestingly, Maoists are now coming to challenge the vote bank of communist. In communist slogan, Maoists are already ahead than CPN-UML.

How many VDCs have you visited?

I have already visited almost all of the 16 Village Development Committees in my constituency. I plan to visit the houses of my voters as much as possible. This is good opportunity to interact with the people.

After watching closely the Maoist strategy from ground, what would be their response in case they lose?

In that case, Maoists will try to sabotage the election. Maoists will issue threat in villages just a day before the election. In that way they will make efforts to bar voters from coming to the booth.

It means your sympathizers will not retaliate the Maoist threat?

After visiting my constituency in the last one month, I have seen that gradually psychological terror has gone from voters but they are still afraid of the past atrocities committed against them by Maoists.

Even in the presence of international observers, can the Maoists dare do so?

Observers cannot reach remote parts of Nepal. If Maoists decide to apply that kind of pressure, they can certainly do that. ■



Political activism: No debate on economy

FEDERALISM

Missing Debate

Even as parties have put forth federalism as a panacea to development ills, economists have called for larger debate on its viability

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

Almost all the major political parties have presented their election manifestoes for the forthcoming Constituent Assembly (CA) election.

And most of them have proposed federal structure in the 'new Nepal.'

The Maoists have gone ahead and even divided the country into eleven autonomous state committees and two sub committees on ethnic and geographic lines.

Nepali Congress (NC) and Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) have also backed the federal restructuring of the country. But they have not given any number of such state federal units.

Even parties like Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) have favored federalism – amid the whipped up political fervor of new Nepal.

What has been blatantly missing in this whole episode is how the country's economy will be reshuffled to fit with their respective ideas on federalism.

Already a resource-scarce country, how Nepal will divide its resource among its federal units is anybody's guess.

None of the parties have clearly put forth the nature of relationship between the center and the federal units – much less their economic relationship.

There is a popular refrain among the parties that the elected Constituent Assembly (CA) will decide the issue. However, they have not thought it necessary to tell people what they have in mind regarding this crucial issue.

According to Professor Bishwambher Pyakuryal while the parties raised demands for federalism, they had not paid any attention towards the existing resources and how to use them under federal structure in future. He said that in the last fiscal year \$125 million of revenue was generated from the center while only \$12 m was generated from local level. He pointed at the imminent economic non-viability

of federal units. Adds economist Dr. Raghav Dhoj Pant, "This is the time for the parties to come forth with their ideas on how to divide the federal units and what their fiscal relations should be. They must make it clear before the election."

Apart from the issue of resource distribution, the country also needs to clearly decide how the natural resources will be exploited and how their benefits divided. The country will need to assess the issue of building big hydropower projects.

But even the Finance Minister has been publicly regretting the lack of debate on economic issues. "Economic issues must be brought to the center-stage of debate to usher in development and prosperity," he has been saying constantly.

he existing economic disparity has compelled most people to back the position that federalism will help end it. In fact, according to a recent study conducted by economist Dr. Shankar Sharma, there is still big disparity in growth rate between capital and rest of the country.

Even in the conflict-ridden period of last one decade, the capital valley witnessed a handsome two digit growth of over 10 percent. "But places like Biratnagar and Janakpur region wallowed in 2.5 percent growth as most industries including pashmina, carpet, garments and service sector like banks were concentrated in Kathmandu," said Dr. Sharma.

These facts certainly call for serious restructuring of economic regime. But whether outright federalism is its answer has not been debated too well.

"It is good to build on our own experience as a unitary state. It has always been a functioning system. There are some lessons learnt; and efforts could be made to reform it. Some interventions at the constitutional level to respond to some of our problems could be necessary. But most of the problems of devolution of power could be handled through an enhanced local self-government system," writes constitutional analyst Bipin Adhikari (SPOTLIGHT Mar 14).

Such healthy debates on the pros and cons of federalism – particularly economic federalism – would do well at a time when the nation is headed towards the CA polls. ■



SLC EXAMINATION: Iron gate

SLC EXAMINATION

Smooth Beginning

As the country is on the midst of election for Constituent Assembly, about 400,000 students quietly appeared in the School Leaving Certificate Examination (SLC)

By A CORRESPONDENT

Nepal is a country where the number of illiterate person is over 40 percent and women illiteracy is still higher, and only ten out of one hundred students complete the tenth grade examination.

For all the parents from rural parts of Nepal to urban areas there is huge investments involved before putting them in the final examination of SLC.

In the last few years, school

enrolment continued to increase in the country. Thanks to the various initiative and incentive given by the government, the number of students continuing their education up to the high school continues to rise.

Although the number of school drop out continues to decline, large number of students leave the school after completing primary level.

As such, the importance of SLC

examination is always high.

At a time when the country's election campaign for Constituent Assembly polls is heating up, students from various parts of the country appeared in this year's SLC exam.

According to Controller of Examination, Harka Prasad Shrestha, the first day (March 17) of examination passed peacefully except a small incident in Sunsari where police used force to control the mob.

Known as a gate way to higher education, people take the SLC in high regard. From students to parents, all see SLC examination as the most important part of the school education.

This year, 379377 students have appeared in the examination. Highest number of students appeared from Kathmandu Valley with 39,000 students.

Despite the change in the curriculum and education level, Nepal is yet to adjust its education system with global pattern. In many other parts of the country, the education level has been upgraded to 12 class.

For the first time 112 students from Open School- 38 boys and 74 girls – from Rautahat, Sunsari, Banke, Kailali and Kaski districts are also appearing in the SLC examination. These students prepared for the exams through different means such as radio, television and newspapers.

After the government decision to allow foreigners to appear in the SLC, two Pakistani students also appeared in the SLC this year. Although the approach of SLC examination system is still traditional, this is an examination in which students test their education up to tenth grade. ■



Prachanda: Left March

ELECTORAL ALLIANCE

Left Out

The leftist political parties have not forged electoral alliance even though the debate refuses to die down

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

If one goes through the statements made by responsible leaders of big communist parties in the past one week, one is most likely to get confused.

The leaders have, at once, blown hot and cold – made friendly gestures and inimical rhetorics with equal ease.

Most interesting have been the war of words between leaders of Maoists and UML.

“The UML is ready for alliance. But they have to make realistic proposal,” claimed UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal. According to him, the Maoists came with proposal demanding 60 percent of seats for themselves.

For a party that had won 30 percent of popular vote in the previous election,

coming close second to Nepali Congress (NC), the UML general secretary was understandably angered by the proposal.

While continuing to attack Maoist for its extremist politics, UML leaders have not, however, ruled out alliance with them. “At local level, we can have alliance,” said Nepal.

But the ‘local level’ apparently did not include constituencies in the capital valley – which has been the traditional UML stronghold. Even Kathmandu 10 constituency, from where Maoist chief Prachanda is contesting, has not been able to bring the two parties together.

“We have sympathies for Prachanda. We wish he will win from Rolpa. But Kathmandu is our stronghold. There is no question of giving that up,” a UML

candidate Krishna Gopal Shrestha told reporters recently.

On the other hand, the Maoist leaders have made no bones about their wish to strike electoral alliance with the UML.

Dismissing claims that the Maoists want to enter into such an alliance because they fear huge defeat in the election, the Maoists have pounced on the UML leadership terming them everything from ‘traitors’ to ‘anti-communists.’

In so doing, the Maoist chairman Prachanda even dug up the graveyards to denigrate the UML leadership. After his overtures to the UML failed to entice the latter to forge electoral alliance, Prachanda, addressing an election rally in Siphel of Kathmandu recently, accused the UML of selling out Mahakali river (referring to the controversial Mahakali Treaty with India signed over a decade ago) and ‘betraying’ the Nepali people at crucial moments (referring to the UML decision of joining Sher Bahadur Deuba-led government after October 4, 2002 step by King Gyanendra).

“What do these parties think of the people? Nepali people are not fools. They know who are traitors,” he said.

Prachanda claimed that his party had broached the issue of leftist electoral alliance not because it feared defeat in the election but because it wished to institutionalize republic.

He also added that UML used to win the election in the past by putting itself forward as a communist party. Now the original communist party has come forth and there is no need to go for make-believes, he said.

Another senior leader of the Maoists, Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, even went to the extent of accusing that the UML was ‘opportunist.’

Strangely, despite their venomous attack, both Prachanda and Dr. Bhattarai are still making comments saying that the door for forging electoral alliance with the UML is open.

As less than a month remains for the Constituent Assembly (CA) election, the Maoists and the UML leaders know it very well that the door is closing very fast. Otherwise, as another leftist leader Amik Sherchan has recently said, the egos of the ‘big parties’ might kill the alliance before it is born. ■



Election Commission: All eyes on it

UNMIN

Polls In Focus

The UNMIN chief has said that int'l community will have no sympathy on those still clinging to violence

By A CORRESPONDENT

At a time when a number of armed outfits in Terai have continued to threaten that they will use violence to disrupt April elections in the region, a top UN official has said that the international community will no longer have any sympathy to those groups who will try to pursue their grievances by using violence or resort to disrupt the polls.

"Efforts to reach* out to those with grievances should continue, but the international community will have no sympathy with any group, which carries out acts of violence in pursuit of its grievances or in attempts to disrupt the electoral process," said Ian Martin, the chief of the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN), at a press meet on March 12.

Martin has said that the focus now should be on ensuring that the election

takes place in an environment that enables all parties to campaign and organize freely anywhere in the country, and allows the people to cast their votes in accordance with their free will and conscience, without intimidation or infringement of their rights.

Martin said that UNMIN will strengthen its arms monitoring to ensure full respect of peace agreement and arms monitoring agreement during the election so that the two armies will be restricted in their designated locations and their weapons monitored.

"In the area of arms monitoring, having completed the registration and verification of the cantoned personnel of the Maoist army, UNMIN is now in discussion with the Nepal Army and the Maoist army, including through the Joint Monitoring Coordination Committee, on ensuring full respect during the election

period for the commitments of both sides under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the arms monitoring agreement, beginning with the restriction of the two armies to their designated locations and the monitoring of weapons. We have been in discussion with the leadership of the Maoist army on strengthening monitoring in the cantonment areas. We have also been in discussion with the Nepal Army on ensuring compliance with the procedures for carrying out permitted activities under the agreements. The strict adherence to such commitments is important for preserving the integrity of the monitoring regime and maintaining the political confidence it promotes. At the same time we are seeking the cooperation of the Maoist army and the Government in arrangements for the earliest possible orderly discharge of those required to leave the cantonments after verification, especially minors," said Martin.

He also expressed worries about the continued violation of election code of conduct. "If left unchecked, these are bound to hamper the election and the freedom of voters," he said.

"It is now imperative for all democratic forces to work together to make the election a successful democratic exercise. This requires respect for the principles of fair play and equal political space for all, and the wisdom to look beyond short-term party interests and to work for the common good. This election will be scrutinized more closely than ever before in Nepal by national and international observers," he said.

The UNMIN has dispatched over 100 election advisors from central to local level. "As we speak our electoral advisers are being deployed to the regions and districts around the country. The last batch of the advisers will be in their respective districts within this week," he said.

"The Election Commission has repeatedly emphasized that election security is a vital part of the process, and this has also been emphasized by the United Nations Electoral Expert Monitoring Team, which is currently carrying out its fourth visit. The political cooperation which is essential to security must include the willingness of political actors to refrain from calling for the premature release of those who have been properly arrested." ■

BOOK

Himalayan Mountain Cults

Anthropologist Gabriele Tautscher discusses various aspects of Tamang community living in highlands of Nepal

By A CORRESPONDENT

With diversity in religion, culture and geography, Nepal is a unique country in all sense but is renowned globally for the snow-capped Himalayas that stretch along its northern border to Tibet.

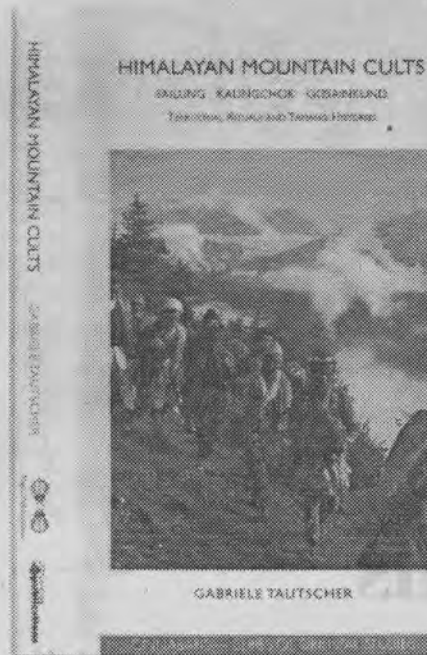
The life and culture south of Himalayas are very much interesting as well as diverse as it has its own religious values and practices. There are more than five dozen different linguistic and ethnic groups living in the mid-hills and river valleys but only a few studies have been done to highlight the life and culture of these people.

Living between two great religions, Tibetan Buddhism in north and Hinduism in south, the people of mid-hills have their own distinct culture, religious practices and identity. This is what this book is all about.

"Despite this mountain image, the largest part of Nepal consists of the lower, densely populated regions known as the Middle Hills. This is an area of intensity, cultivated valley and skillfully traced hillside," writes Tautscher in her preface.

The present book is an anthropological study on the history and formation of these communal feasts and rituals on Sailung (Thulo Sailung, Sanu Sailung), Kalingchok and Gosainkund, lying in the central Middle Hills of Nepal.

This is the first-of-its-kind book which deals about the various aspects of life and rituals of Tamang community and their practices. As a widespread and biggest ethnic group, Tamang has their



Himalayan Mountain Cults Sailung, Kalingchok Gosainkund Territorial Rituals and Tamang Histories

By: Gabriele Tautscher
Published by: Vajra Publications
and Ev-K2-CNR Publication
Bergamo, Italy
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Fund for Scientific Research
Vienna, Austria
Price: Rs. 700.00
Pages: 203

own way of living which distinguishes them from rest of Tibetan of northern mountain and Hindus of South. These people have their own sacred mountains and related pilgrimages far and near where they pay respect to their gods.

The mid-hills of Nepal is home of Shamanic beliefs of local Himalayan

society as well as Buddhist and Hindu rituals. The rituals practiced by Tamang community of mid-hills show their complex relations with Buddhist and Hindu religion.

"These festivals and rituals too, outline the complex interrelation between the Shamanic beliefs of a local Himalayan society and the political religious structures of the powers in Buddhist Tibet and the Hindu Kingdom in the Kathmandu Valley. The major protagonists of these three festivals described- Sailung, Kalingchok and Gosainkund- are the Tamang people, the largest and most widespread Tibeto-Burmese speaking ethnic group in Nepal," writes author Tautscher.

The three places the author describes in his book are most important religious pilgrimage sites of Tamang. Tamang community regards the lakes situated in the high mountains like Sailung, Kalingchok and Gosainkund as most sacred places.

"Every possible and imaginable perspective has its necessary place in spatial dimension. If this applies- as it does above- to the sacred geographies of the Tamangs of Nepal, it also applies – and to a greater extent – to the task of ethnographic writing. Indeed, beside the meanings usually attributed (report, analysis, interpretation and so on, its constant task appears to be that of offering a perspective (whatever it may be) within the limited and bi-dimensional space of a volume," writes Martino Nicoletti in his foreword.

As an organization working to uplift the life of hilly people and people living in Himalayan region, Eco-Himal has made tremendous efforts to bring out many important aspects of life and culture of this region. By supporting the publication of this book, Eco-Himal has reaffirmed its commitments.

Thanks to author Tautscher's intensive study and field visit, this book gives enough materials regarding the life, culture and religion of Tamang community. ■

“There should be coalition government even after the CA election.”

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala calling upon all the political parties to cooperate in conducting the constituent assembly polls in a peaceful manner and continued unity after election, while unveiling Nepali Congress's election manifesto.

“When original communists have come, there is no reason to vote for the fake ones.”

Maoist chairman Prachanda, criticizing Unified Marxist Leninist (UML), at an election rally in Kathmandu.

“If they (Maoists) are proud of their muscle strength, they should join sports. Maybe they can bring some medals.”

Khadga Prasad Oli, UML leader, at a program in the capital.

“Activities of the Maoists are intended to disrupt the election. They should come out of war mentality.”

Pashupati SJB Rana, president of Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), who was recently obstructed by Maoist workers from campaigning in his constituency in Sindhupalchowk.

“Everyone has the right to campaign for the election. I hope no one obstructs each campaigning from now onwards.”



Bhojraj Pokharel, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), talking to reporters.

“There is no connection between the Naxalites and Maoists of Nepal.”

Shivraj Patil, Union Home Minister of India, addressing Lok Sabha, the lower house of the Indian parliament, in PTI.

“Efforts to reach out to those with grievances should continue, but the international community will have no

sympathy with any group, which carries out acts of violence in pursuit of its grievances or in attempts to disrupt the electoral process.”

Ian Martin, chief of the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN), at a press meet.

“We have unveiled a manifesto by which a Madhesi person can one day hope to become president of Nepal.”

Jaya Prakash Gupta, leader of Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF), unveiling the party manifesto.

TRANSITION

APPOINTED: Robert Piper, as the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator of the United Nations System's Operational Activities for Development in Nepal and the Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

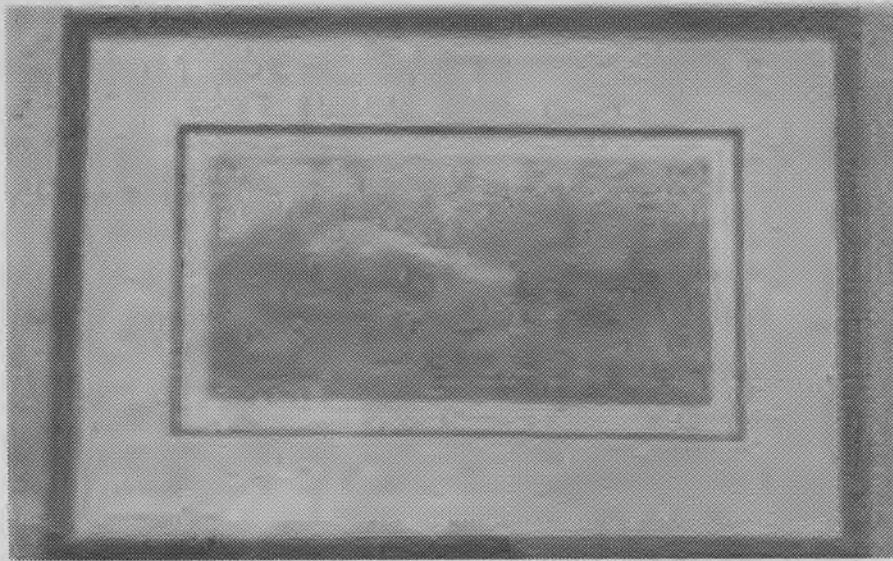
SCALED: Gold price touched historic

high of Rs 20,835 per 10 gram — over Rs 24,300 per tola (11.664 gram) — in the domestic market.

DEPLOYED: 110-member election observer team, by the European Commission, for the constituent assembly elections for April 10. The Election Observation Mission (EOM) is led by Jan Mulder, member of the European Parliament.

DECIDED: The Ministry of Education and Sports has decided to close down schools for two weeks during election.

ATTACKED: Dev Shankar Poudel, UML candidate for Ramechhap district, and Bal Krishna Dahal, Nepali Congress candidate for Okhaldhunga district, physically assaulted by pro-Maoist workers, in separate incidents in two districts.



EXPOSITION

A New Form

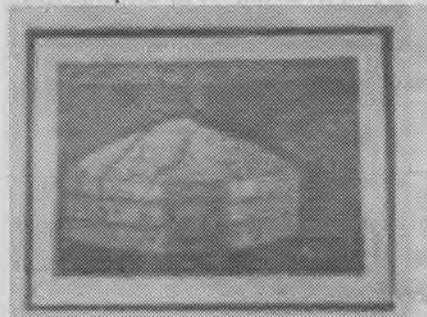
Beverly Thompson, a Canadian living in Nepal, finds a new passion in the ancient technique of etching

By A CORRESPONDENT

With the diverse landscape, Nepal is a fascinating place for the artists and poets who can enjoy the beauty. From Himalayas to hills and from plain lands to rivers and green forest, the composition of Nepal's landscape has its unique character. This is what many artists try to capture in their canvas and paper. Every body wants some kinds of perfection in the combination of various flora and fauna with natural colors and settings. Having stayed for more than six years in Nepal, Canadian artist Beverly Thompson encountered a number of places and settings when traveling to different parts of Nepal. This is what she has produced by using the etching form of painting. Although it is one of the oldest forms of art work, only a few artists

in Nepal have chosen this medium to express their creative desire.

A Canadian artist has proved that this can be a very good medium of work to describe things vividly. Exhibited at Park Art Gallery in Lazimpat in a banner of Alfresco,



artist Beverly Thompson's second collection includes the landscape of Nepal. With the support of chemistry, she has successfully printed the Nepali landscape. Unlike other forms, one can get all the details in the print from

etching. There are rare chances of missing the reality. There is complete perfection in the etching method than in normal printing. Based on her experiences of trekking to various parts of Nepal, her prints are mostly landscape of various sites which includes the Himalayan peak as well as the diverse element of nature. It is impossible to catch all these details of nature in other forms of painting. This is very complex technique.

This is the reason one needs have some sort of training on this. For artist Thompson, it took two years to learn this complex technique. First of all, an artist needs to sketch a drawing on paper. Then, it is traced into wood, copper or most commonly used zinc plate.

The plate drawing is then etched with a needle to create simple marks. Despite high quality in the etching forms, only a few artists have shown patience to follow these practices.

From drawing a sketch to painting various colors, the process is very complicated. According to artist Thompson, one can get all the details in the etching which has a different effect than in paintings. Unlike other paintings, etching gives artist versatility. Once a sketch is made, the artist can produce the paintings as much as she can. In her works, one can find good combination of paintings and colors.

It is not easy for artist to draw the landscape as it is always in the changing mood. Landscapes change from time to time and from season to season. Artist Thompson has shown how the combination of art and science can go together. The exhibition will be held until March 26. ■

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