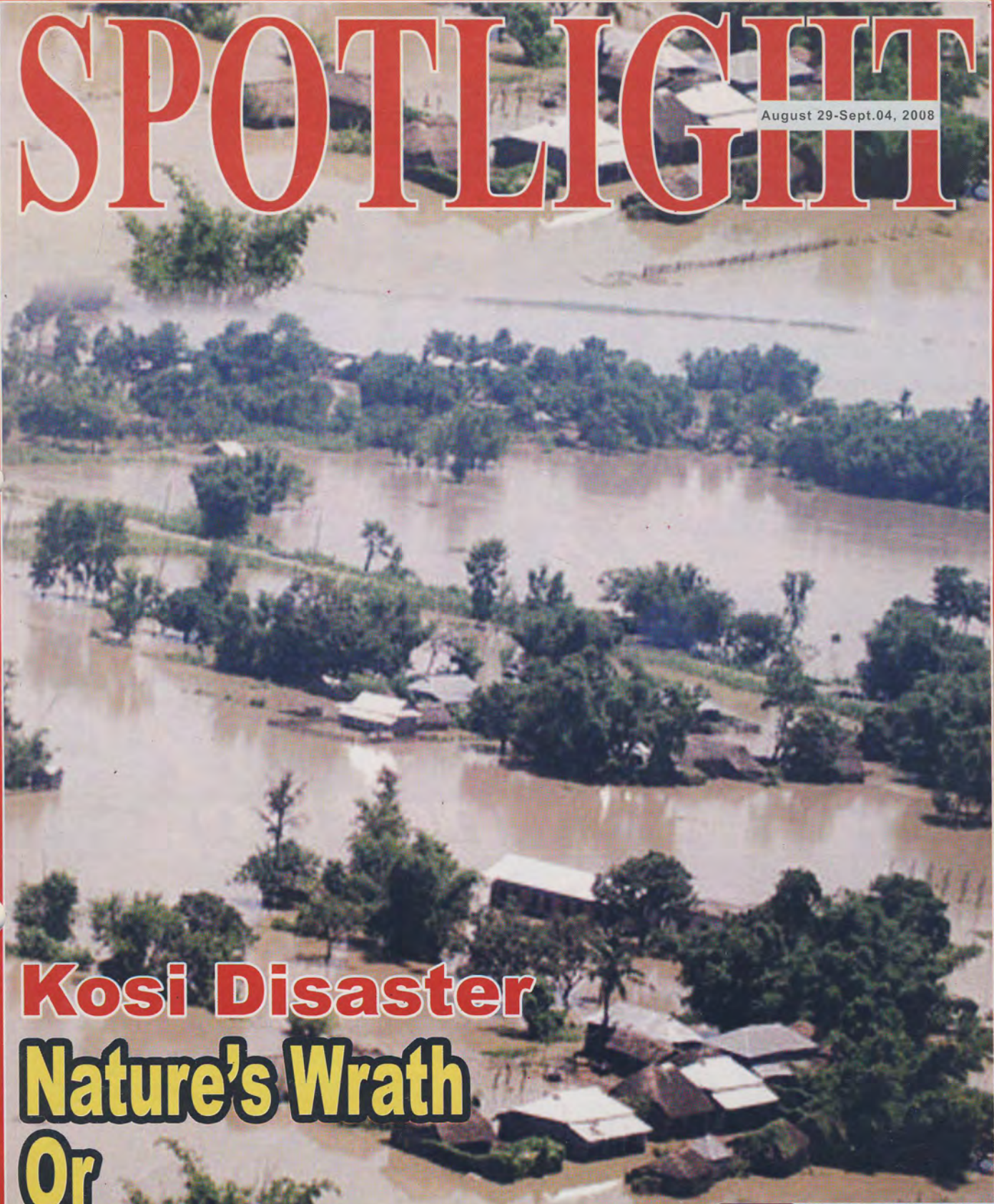


SPOTLIGHT

August 29-Sept.04, 2008



Kosi Disaster Nature's Wrath Or Height Of Negligence?

INSIDE

Economy: Thorny Road
Politics: Shaky Start
Beijing Olympic: Curtain Down

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- **Nima Rumba**
Singer/Actor



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Kosi Disaster: Nature's Wrath Or Negligence? The disaster struck by Kosi has unleashed untold tales of miseries. Who is responsible? And what are the lessons?

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POLITICS: Shaky Start The new government has been formed but the initial signs are not rosy for Prachanda

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Organized Syndicate The Kathmandu metropolis is gradually witnessing the emergence of dangerous organized crime syndicate

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SPOTLIGHT

THE WEEKLY NATIONAL NEWSMAGAZINE

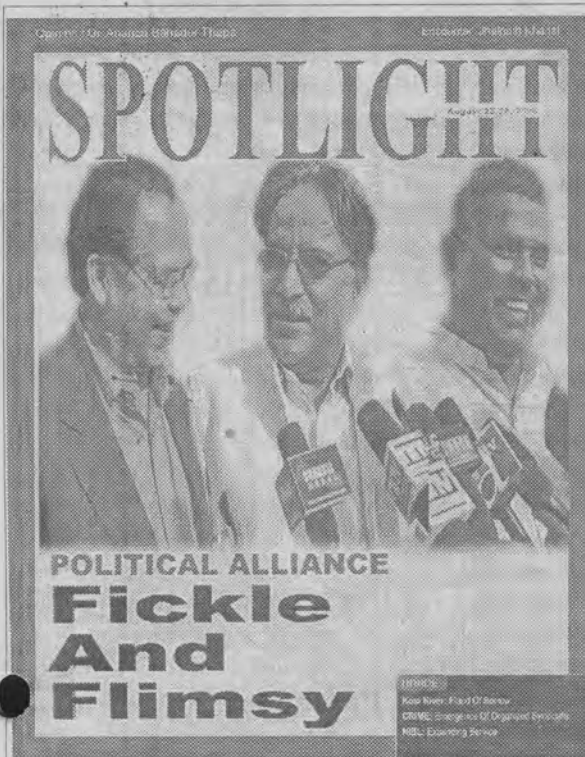
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After being elected as the prime minister, Maoist leader Prachanda decided to go to China on his first official visit. This has created furor in India's South Block whose officials had made every effort to stop Prachanda from visiting north as a guest to the closing ceremony of Beijing Olympic. After getting to power, Maoists seem to have realized that that piggy-back-politics neither helps them nor their country. For other parties including the CPN-UML and Nepali Congress, they have not seen the rodeo where the rider is thrown off the shoulders by the bulls in a very short time. CPN-UML which backed the Maoist alliance is yet to join the government and Congress decision to oppose Maoist government indicates that they still prefer to play on other's tune. Nothing could be more demoralizing and disastrous for the poor country than the self-oriented character of senior Nepali politicians who don't want to learn from their past experiences. Instead of opposing prime minister Prachanda's recent visit to Nepal's friendly country China, these leaders should have backed him. Their charisma with the local people is gradually dying and if they don't mend their manners, will completely evaporate very soon.

CPN-Maoist formed the government but they have yet taken the complete reins of the government in their hands. Even though some of their senior politicians have tested the pleasures of unearned income and must have fallen a prey as is demonstrated by their fight for power but there are still some untested persons in Maoists. For the Maoists their obduracy not to give up their militant character does not only generate great misgivings about their overall intentions but also creates apprehensions that they might not fit in to rule the country in a democratic set up. They must realize that the days of one party government or regimented administration can be started only on the Mars. And they must know how long they would have to wait for that. So, we would like to advise them to come down to solid earth. They have a big responsibility to shoulder? Will they take up the challenges?

Kosi flood has devastated a large segment of land washing away property of billions of rupees. Kosi treaty is regarded as an unequal treaty imposed upon Nepal by her big neighbor India. Thanks to this treaty, Nepalese cannot have control over Kosi barrage and its water. Had the gates been opened earlier, thousands of Nepalese would not have to face the grim situation like present. As new Maoist government, which promised to cancel all unequal past treaty with India, has already set some new tradition, they are expected to raise this issue with India.

Madhav Kumar Rimal
Madhav K. Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher



Weak Govt, Again

Whatever political leaders claim, this government seems to be very weak and unstable. Your cover story (Political Alliance: Fickle and Flimsy Spotlight August 22-26) rightly pointed out the weakness and strength of this three party coalition government. The way CPN-UML, one of the major components of three party coalitions-boycotted the oath taking ceremony disclosed how this government is going to be like.

Suman Lama
Via E-mail

one likes it or not, Maoists are the biggest political party of Nepal. CPN-UML leadership must realize this. It is in the interest of every Nepalese to support CPN-Maoist party to strengthen its base.

Suresh Karna
Birgunj, Via email

Poverty Problem

Your cover story (Bane of Poverty August 15-21) revealed many important aspects of Nepalese society. It is an undisputed fact that rampant poverty is main reason behind the girl trafficking in Nepal but many NGOs have been taking this issue as a human rights-related problem. I don't think anybody prefers to leave village and their own place as long as they get enough opportunities for employment. If there is enormous economic opportunity back home, no girl will leave their house. Unfortunately, the persons involved in the anti-trafficking drive are ignoring this important fact. Instead of focusing on curative measures, the government and international donor agencies should focus their program on preventive method by introducing many schemes for economic development.

Mitthu Rana
Via email

Business of NGOs

In the name of anti-trafficking campaign, some NGOs have been doing business. Some anti-trafficking NGOs are opposing the liberalization of employment act to give more opportunity to women and girls. I don't understand what is wrong in sending girls and women for foreign employment through legal way? I know if the government amends the law to pave the way for women employment, these NGOs will lose lucrative trade of so called anti-trafficking campaign.

Uttam Aryal
Via email

Wrong Basis

The cover story Political Alliance: Fickle and Flimsy August 22-26 was very biased as the intention of the writer is guided by vested interest or interest of Nepali Congress. The observation is biased in the sense that the writer declares the alliance as weak and unstable. Why so much hurry to describe this new government as unstable? We cannot expect these kinds of one-sided observations in a prestigious news magazine like Spotlight. I hope you will give justice to all your readers by writing objective and impartial story.

Nirmal Hamal
Paris, France via email

Elected Govt

I am very proud to see the elected Maoist communist government in Nepal. Nepalese Maoists have shown that they are patriotic, democratic and anti-reactionary party which can uphold the genuine people's democracy in Nepal. After reading the statement of Maoist leader Prachanda', I came to realize that we should give Maoists one decade to rule the country

so that they can transform Nepal. For the first time in last few years, Maoist leader Prachanda stressed the need to protect Nepal's independence, sovereignty and national integrity. Unlike his predecessor former prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala- a power hungry politician who sacrificed Nepal's interest - comrade Prachanda has shown guts to withstand against foreign power.

Kailash Shrestha
Via-email

Marx Is Alive

Although many see the ideology of Marx, Lenin and Mao as outmoded and out of context, CPN-Maoist leader Prachanda has proved that this ideology still has great utility in Nepal. After forming three party alliance government with support from major communist forces, Prachanda has shown that he is an undisputed communist leader in Nepal. The utility of CPN-UML is no more left in the country. Following the forthcoming election for parliament, CPN-UML will totally lose its utility as a major communist force of Nepal. Whether



Koirala Directs Party Leaders To Prepare For Strong Opposition Role

Nepali Congress (NC) president Girija Prasad Koirala has said his party will play the role of a strong opposition in the Constituent Assembly. He said this during an informal meeting of the party's central working committee held at his Maharajgunj residence Wednesday (Aug 20). Koirala, who is set to be elected as the leader of the NC parliamentary party, also directed the party leaders to prepare for the opposition role. NC leaders said the meeting also reviewed the defeat of the party's candidate in the recent prime ministerial election. At the meeting, some leaders said the party should react more strongly to the 'decision' of the Maoist central committee to mobilize the People's Liberation Army (PLA), along with state's security agencies, for the security of Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal. It was the first meeting of NC leaders after the party faced a jolt in the election of the prime minister last Friday. *Compiled from reports*

PM Dahal Left For China

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda left for China, Saturday (Aug 23), to attend the closing ceremony of Beijing Olympics. He led an 11-member delegation including his wife Sita Dahal, Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Minister for Information and Communication, and government officials. Earlier, the first meeting of the newly formed cabinet held

on Friday night named Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Minister for Information and Communication, as the government spokesperson. During the absence of PM Dahal, Finance Minister Dr. Baburam Bhattarai will carry out the duty as acting PM. The cabinet has

also endorsed the common minimum program, code of conduct, norms and methods of operating the government and formation of political coordination mechanism – the four bases signed by three alliance partners on Thursday. *Compiled from reports*

Support Pours In From All Quarters For Flood Victims

After the government's call for support to the floods victims of Sunsari, relief aid continues to pour in from national and international communities. The European Commission announced a total of 1 million Euros (Rs 103 million) as the humanitarian aid for victims of Koshi floods Friday. Food aid and nutritional support will be provided to the victims through the fund, which will be channeled through the European Commission Humanitarian Aid department, ECHO, under the responsibility of Commissioner Louis Michel. This assistance will target up to 50,000 people displaced by the floods, who will receive emergency food aid and the most vulnerable will benefit from nutritional support through the World Food Programme, a statement by EU said. Similarly, the secretaries and staffs of the ministry of peace and reconstruction also announced to lend financial support. The secretaries will give their three-day salary while other staffs will spare their one day's earning. The staffs of the home ministry contributed over Rs 100,000 and Nepal Telecom contributed Rs 3 million to the prime minister's trust for natural calamities.

Additionally, the chief election commissioner and election commissioner extended support equal to their three-day's earning to the prime minister's trust for natural calamities. In a press statement, Non Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) said it has contributed Rs 7 million for flood victims. NRNA chairman Dr Upendra Mahato and Arun Ojha personally had contributed Rs 5.1 million and Rs 300,000 respectively. Padma Shree Foundation contributed Rs 10,000 and Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN) contributed Rs 50,000 to the flood victims. Nepali Congress and Sadbhawana Party also took separate initiative to raise money for the flood victims. Chinese envoy to Nepal handed over US\$ 50,000 to the prime minister today as part of supporting the flood victims. *Compiled from reports*

PM Prachanda Visits Flood Affected Areas

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' Wednesday (Aug 20) inspected the flood-hit areas in Sunsari district and assured the displaced people that the government would take necessary steps to support the affected people at the earliest. Prachanda among the leaders of major political parties, also met senior officials of the security and administrative bodies to acquire information about the damages and rescue efforts. Displaced people asked PM to rehabilitate them as soon as possible. Scores of people have been reportedly missing after floods inundated dozens of VDCs in Sunsari when the Saptakoshi River breached the dam over it gushed into the villages on Monday. Locals claimed hundreds of people have gone missing. The District Natural Disaster Relief Committee has mobilized several teams for rescue and relief operation of flood-hit people. Meanwhile, the Home Ministry has urged for national and international aid to help victims of flood in eastern Nepal. The Ministry has said that the break in the embankment in Saptakoshi has fully displaced 35,000 people of 6000 families. The Ministry has added that the flooded river has inundated four VDCs including Sripur, Haripur, Laukahi and Western Kushaha. One thousand houses have been swept

away and 3000 damaged. *Leading dailies report*

Nepal Proposes Bilateral Treaty With US

Nepal has proposed for a bilateral trade treaty with the United States in order to extract duty free market access to the country, which is its second largest trading partner. A delegation of Nepalese officials led by chief secretary Bhojraj Ghimire made the proposal to the American officials at the Office of US Trade Representative in Washington DC on Wednesday (Aug 20). According to sources at the Ministry of Commerce, the Nepalese side have forwarded two proposals. The source said that Nepal has sought the duty free access to its readymade garments and other products either based on the multilateral agreement of Hong Kong Ministerial of WTO or based on bilateral trade treaty. "Since it could take a long time to go through multilateral agreement, we have stressed on bilateral treaty," said the source. According to a statement by Nepali Embassy in the US, the American officials sounded positive towards addressing issues related with trade and investment through creating a mechanism for regular talks. Both sides agreed to carry forward the talks on the issue. They also agreed to explore ways to better use provisions of General System of Preferences (GSP) facilities accorded by the US. The US has been providing market preferences to African and Caribbean countries through bilateral treaty. Nepal has now made similar initiative. Following the termination of Multi Fiber Agreement (MFA) in January, 2005, Nepal's garment export has continued to plummet with ninety percent of factories forced to shut down. The US occupies 80 percent market for Nepali apparels. *Kantipur daily reports*

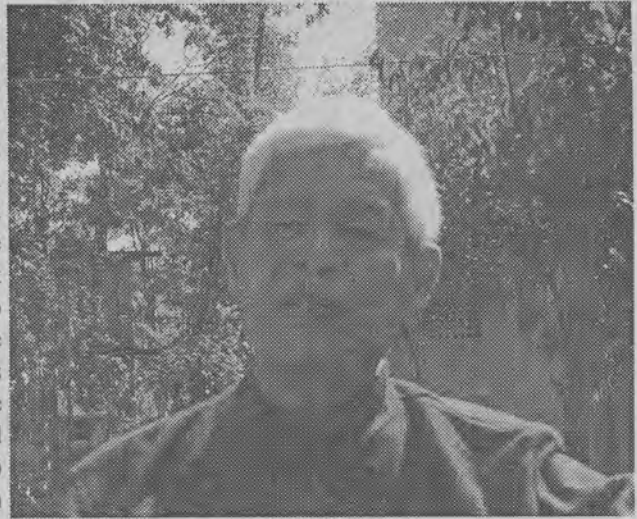
PM Meets Army Chief, Directs Officials

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Tuesday (Aug 19) met Nepal Army (NA) chief Rookmangud Katawal and discussed the latest security situation in the country. The issue of integration between the Maoist People's Liberation

Army (PLA) and NA also figured during the meeting held at the PMO in Singha Durbar, it is learnt. The meeting between the PM and NA chief came amid controversy over the decision of the Maoist central committee to involve the PLA for the PM's security. CPN-M's main ally in the government, Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) and the opposition party Nepali Congress have raised serious objection to the decision. Meanwhile, PM Dahal has directed senior government officials to work earnestly. Stating that the first duty of the government will be to provide relief to the people and end impunity, PM Dahal sought the cooperation from the bureaucracy. He also sought to reassure the officials by saying that he doesn't intend to harbor any prejudice. "Nobody will be discriminated on the basis of their belief. If you have any prejudice, you should also abandon that in order to make the government successful," he told the government secretaries. *Compiled from reports*

NEA Plans 15 PC Hike In Power Tariff

Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) has proposed an increase of electricity tariff by around 15 percent to gradually recover accumulated losses, reduce loss and create fund for hydropower development. According to a report unveiled during the NEA's 23rd anniversary, NEA incurred a loss of 25.15 percent in the fiscal year 2007-08, which stood at 26.71 percent the previous year. Arjun Kumar Karki, managing director of NEA said, "NEA earned Rs 15,405.03 million from sale of electricity in 2007-08, which is 6.61 percent higher than last year's figure. It earned Rs 655.24 million as other income." NEA has incurred a net loss of Rs 1,312.16 million after deducting interest, foreign exchange loss and provisions. However, it earned a profit of Rs 314.19 million the preceding



year. Accumulated loss by the end of 2007-08 has reached Rs 7,133.77 million. The power demand has been growing at the rate of 11.31 percent. But NEA hopes the load shedding, which reaches up to 40 hours a week in winter, could be scrapped by next five years. *Compiled from reports*

RPP-Nepal Leaders Split To Join RPP

Over five dozen leaders and cadres of the Rastriya Prajatantra Party Nepal (RPP-N) are preparing to defect their party to join Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP). The defectors include former president of the party Rabintra Nath Sharma and another influential leader Rajeshwor Devkota. They have accused party president Kamal Thapa, who was home minister during the direct rule of then King Gyanendra, of being speaking in favor of CPN (Maoist). Thapa, in the recent days, had been advocating in favor of Maoists alleging Nepali Congress of putting hindrance in the process of forming the new government. His party voted for Pushpa Kamal Dahal during the election of prime minister but it had boycotted the presidential election. RPP-N was the only party to support constitutional monarchy during the constituent assembly elections. RPP leaders have also confirmed that the defectors will join their party for which the party will organize a formal function later today to welcome them. *Compiled from reports*



Nepal Anubrata Samittee felicitated four CA member of Marwari community Rajendra Kumar Khetan (left), Madhu Sudan Agrawal, Srawan Kumar Agrawal and Diwakar Golcha

NEPAL'S SLIM CHANCE OF BAGGING an Olympic medal ended after Deepak Bista lost his bout to China's Jhu Gao. In the bout that was played for bronze, Bista lost 6-2 to the Chinese player. Gao completely dominated the Nepali taekwondo ace with his aggressive display. Earlier Friday (Aug 22), Bista crashed out of the group stage of Beijing Olympics after being defeated by Saei Hadi of Iran. Bista lost to the former world champion 7-0 in the category of under-80 kg event. For the preparation of the Beijing Olympics, Bista had done a special training in Korea.

RAGHAVLALBAIDYA, JANAKPURAPPELLATE COURT judge, has been appointed Attorney General. President Dr Ram Baran Yadav appointed him Thursday (Aug 21) at the recommendation of Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal. Baidya had resigned from the position of appellate court judge on Thursday. He said that he was appointed not because he is close to Maoists. Baidya vowed to work in fair manner when carrying out his responsibility as the chief legal advisor of the government. Former Attorney General Yagya Murti Banjade had resigned immediately after the election of the new Prime Minister.

PRIME MINISTER PUSHPA KAMAL DAHAL and industrialists and entrepreneurs Thursday (Aug 21) discussed additional assistance and relief packages for the victims of the Koshi barrage inundation. PM Dahal met with the office bearers of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Nepal Chamber of Commerce and Confederation of Nepalese Industries who promised to extend relief assistance to the Saptakoshi flood victims through the PM's relief trust. "The Prime Minister had called the industry and business community to deal with the flood problems facing eastern Nepal where thousands of people have been affected," said Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industries President Kush Kumar Joshi. Emerging from the meeting, Confederation of Nepalese Industries President Binod Chaudhary said they would do their best to help the flood victims.

IN RESPONSE TO A REQUEST FROM United States Ambassador Nancy J. Powell, USAID's Office of Foreign

Disaster Assistance (OFDA) has authorized the immediate release of \$50,000 to provide emergency relief supplies to the victims of the flood in eastern Nepal. Save the Children, in partnership with the Nepal Red Cross, will use the U.S. disaster assistance money for local purchase and transport of relief supplies, including blankets and shelter for the Nepalis who lost their homes in the flooding of August 18, 2008. The Koshi River broke through a retaining wall and flooded 8 villages in Sunsari District, forcing as many as 50,000 Nepalis to flee their homes. The Nepal Red Cross and Save the Children have already started distributing emergency relief supplies prepositioned for disaster relief by OFDA to Nepal. By using the U.S. disaster assistance funds for local procurement, relief officials can

quickly get the most urgently needed supplies to the Nepalis who need it the most. "The key is speed and flexibility in meeting the immediate relief needs of the villagers," said an USAID official. "The people in Sunsari need help now and this money will help us provide that immediate help." The U.S. is prepared to provide additional assistance if needed, according to the USAID official. The \$50,000 of U.S. disaster assistance is intended not for long term development but immediate relief for the victims of the flooding in Nepal.

NORWAY HAS ALSO INVITED NEWLY elected Prime Minister Puspa Kamal Dahal for a visit. Visiting Norwegian Minister for Environment and International Development Erik Solheim handed over a formal invitation letter to Dahal on Tuesday (Aug 19) during a meeting. Solheim revealed this during a press conference organized before his departure Tuesday afternoon. PM Dahal had visited Norway few months after his party CPN (Maoist) joined the peace process. The Norwegian minister praised Nepal's peace process as the most successful one. "Nepal could achieve success in peace process as it is owned and led by Nepali people and leaders," he added. Speaking about his meeting with Dahal, he mentioned that the PM's priorities were to lead the peace process to logical conclusion, writing an inclusive constitution and speeding up development activities. "We stand ready to support in these priorities," he said. Solheim said that Norway was supporting Nepal in the areas of hydropower, education and environment. "We are also ready to support Nepal in peace process by sharing experience of other countries," he added. He stressed that the government should work towards taking Nepali Congress (NC) into confidence in major decision making. "Likewise, the NC also should not be obstructive in its approach," he said. Expressing commitment to support the flood victims in Nepal especially those displaced by the floods in Koshi River caused by the collapse of the dam, he said the government or the United Nation must take leadership in delivering the Norwegian support to the victims. ■

NEW CYCLE OF KOSI FLOOD DISASTER

▪ - AB Thapa

Scientists have established a long time ago that the Kosi river used to flow about 120 km away to the east from its present position some 200 years ago. There was a gradual lateral shifting of the Kosi channel to the west until it was confined at its present position about 50 years ago between two embankments running parallel on either sides of this river. Similarly the scientists have also said that in future the direction of the lateral movement of the Kosi will be reversed. Such lateral movements from west to east, unlike the previous east to west movement, would be accompanied with far greater loss of life and property. *Is the present shifting of the Kosi channel to the east really the beginning of new cycle of Kosi flood disaster?*

Horrifying News

All local newspapers are publishing the news under the headlines "Kosi Changes Course". It is reported quoting concerned government agencies that the Kosi is continuing to erode lands and now it is flowing through settlements some 1.5 km off the original

course. Given the extent of damage to the embankment, it would be daunting task to bring the river back to its original course. All those involved one way or other in Kosi study might not have been surprised at this news. It was predicted since a long time that sooner or later the Kosi river channel would shift to the east in the course of one of the very high floods. But the news that the Kosi has changed its course at a time when the flood discharge is just one lack eighty thousand cusecs is a horrifying surprise. Twice in the last 60 years flows exceeding nine lacks cusecs had been recorded. In 1968 the Kosi barrage structures were easily able to cope with flood discharge over nine lacks. Lack of timely repair maintenance of spurs and closure of most of the barrage gates to divert water into the irrigation canals might have to a great extent helped to trigger off the shifting of the river course advancing the timing of the start of a new cycle of Kosi flood disaster. However, as pointed

out in several past studies, the basic cause for the present shifting of the Kosi is the rapid rise of the river bed upstream of the barrage. There is a grave danger that if Sunsari is now hit by a big Kosi flood comparable to 1968 flood there would be a total devastation of the whole region. It should be noted that the biggest floods of the Kosi river are at the very end of the monsoon period. The 1968 big Kosi flood was recorded very late on 5 October.



It was predicted since a long time that sooner or later the Kosi river channel would shift to the east in the course of one of the very high floods. But the news that the Kosi has changed its course at a time when the flood discharge is just one lack eighty thousand cusecs is a horrifying surprise.

Rivers of Sorrow

There are two rivers in Asia, which were known in the past as the river of sorrow. The Kosi River that flows from Nepal to India was known as the "Sorrow of Bihar", whereas the Huang Ho River in China (also called the Yellow River) was known as the "Sorrow of China". Both rivers have similar maximum discharge. These two rivers were named "River of Sorrow" for having caused widespread suffering of a very large population of the country over a too long period. At present the Kosi and the Yellow River have nothing in common. The Yellow River is already completely controlled whereas the Kosi still remains totally unregulated.

The Kosi river, as explained earlier, shifted from east to west over 120 km in the last 200 years. In the past about 8,000 sq. km. of lands have been laid waste in Bihar alone as a result of the sand deposit. In course of

shifting, many towns and villages were wiped out, and heavy losses of property, cattle, and human life were inflicted. Fortunately the embankments built few decades ago temporarily helped to check the lateral shifting of the Kosi. But at present the detention basin upstream of the barrage at Hanumannagar might be almost full of sediments. It does now appear, as evidenced by the most recent incidence of shifting of the river away from its present course, the embankments might have already become completely ineffective to control even relatively moderate Kosi floods.

The Main Culprit

Kosi river has abandoned its present course when its discharge is slightly over normal monsoon season flow. It evidences that the predominant cause of shifting of the Kosi river course is the accumulation of sediments on river bed.

Kosi rising in the Himalayas and emptying into the plain at Chatra after traversing the mountain region, brings with her every year an enormous quantity of sediments estimated at 120 million cubic meters

Kosi rising in the Himalayas and emptying into the plain at Chatra after traversing the mountain region, brings with her every year an enormous quantity of sediments estimated at 120 million cubic meters along with 52 billion cubic meters of water.

along with 52 billion cubic meters of water. The annual volume of Kosi sediment is about 5 times greater than that of Sutlej at Bhakra, and two times greater than that of Nile at Aswan.

Various studies done on Kosi so far come to one common conclusion - the Kosi carries enormous load of sediments that it is unable to transport far beyond. The river, therefore, deposits huge quantity of sediments. In this process of building up an inland delta, the river shifted over 120 km from east to west during the period from 1736 to 1954.

Mechanics of Channel Shifting

Considering the Kosi behaviour, renowned scientists Leopold and Maddock stated (1954) that a braided stream (like the Kosi) will tend to shift laterally at a rate dependent on the rate of accumulation of materials being deposited. As one course becomes higher than possible adjacent paths, the river would shift.

In 1941, Sir Claude Inglis, Director, Water Research Station, Poona identified the problem of Kosi as being due to an excess charge of the sand that Kosi waters carry.

In 1956, Sir Claude Inglis, who was then invited to advise the Govt. of India on Kosi, cautioned that any action that leads to flood level just downstream of the gorge being raised would reduce the attraction of the right bank at that point which may well lead to the Kosi being captured by the left bank and the development of an easterly river course possibly on an alignment approximately with the 1731 course (laterally about 120 km away from its present course).

Why Kosi Embankments Became Ineffective

In 1966 a study of the delta cone of the Kosi river made by Prof Gole CV Dr. Chitale M. appeared in the "Proceedings of the American Society of Civil Engineers". The study explains that the delta building of Kosi was still incomplete. The authors have cautioned that the existing measures (embankments) may be short lived and for effective control of the river, it

would be necessary to adopt soil conservation measures and to construct storage reservoirs.

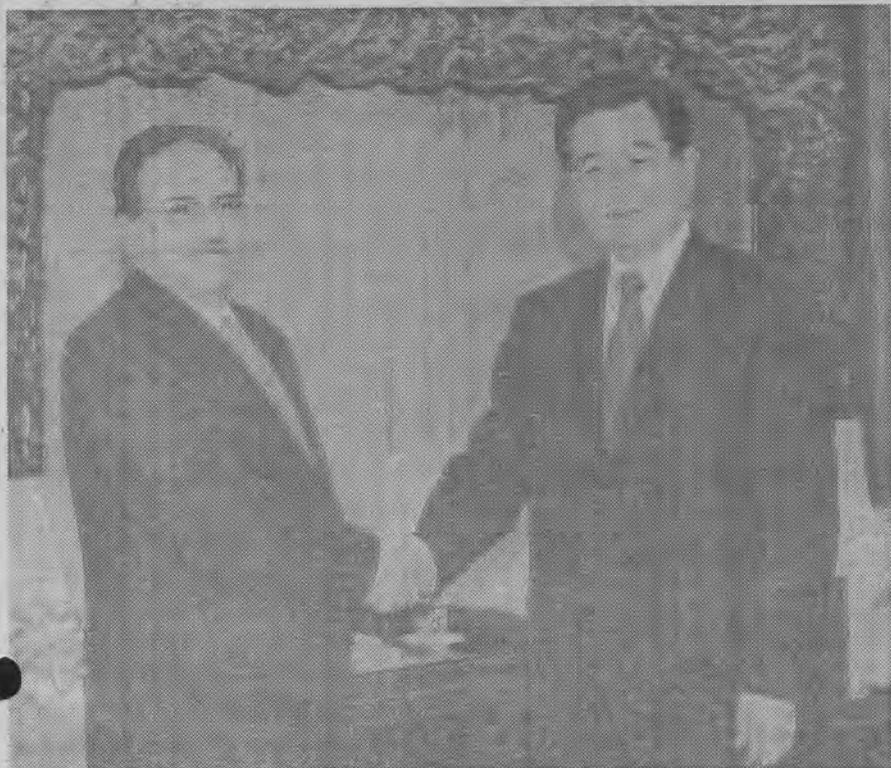
The outline of the present Kosi embankments with a barrage at Bharda (near Hanumannagar) was drawn up by Dr. K.L. Rao, who later on became the State Minister for Irrigation and Power in the Central Government of India. He has explained that the embankments would provide relief only for a limited period. Finally storage dam would be needed.

Chinese Experience

In the past China was suffering great losses over a long period from Yellow river floods. After 1950s China built storage dams to control Yellow River floods. The river has been completely regulated. The Yellow river dams have helped to save, as of 1990 about 50 billion US Dollars.

In Conclusion

Resolution of Kosi flood problems is an enormously great challenge for Nepal as well as India. Nepal must not hesitate in very near future to constitute a panel of few internationally renowned experts to advise periodically our government on Kosi problems ■



PM Prachanda and Chinese President Hu : Friendship

NEIGHBOURS

Flexing Muscles?

The games the big neighbours play threaten to plunge Nepal into a shaky ring

By SUSHIL SHARMA

Some called it storm in a tea cup. To others, it is a storm in the making. Whatever it is, the visit of prime minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda to China has created an unprecedented stir.

The former Maoist rebel leader returned home from a four-day Beijing sojourn on Wednesday amidst newspaper headlines about Delhi's resentment.

Prachanda was, in the eyes of China, a leader of "anti-government forces" for ten years of Maoist insurgency in Nepal. To India, the "anti-government" leader was leading "a terrorist outfit".

The "anti-government" or "terrorist

leader" signed a 12-point pact in Delhi three years ago on his way, finally, to the seat of government in Nepal.

Tables have apparently turned now.

The first thing he did immediately after occupying the first floor of the executive chief in Singh Durbar was to ink a cabinet decision on a visit to China "to attend the closing ceremony of the Beijing Olympics".

President Hu Jintao was quick to appreciate the gesture. "Prime minister (Prachanda) has come to the Beijing Olympics' closing ceremony within a week after being sworn in."

"This fully demonstrates the great attention Nepal attaches to its relations

with China and the profound friendship with the Chinese people," Hu said after holding talks for half an hour during what has been described as "a courtesy call".

The Chinese president said, "we highly appreciate that."

Prachanda said in Beijing later, with an unmistakable tone of pride, that the first decision of the as yet-incomplete cabinet was on his visit to China.

Prachanda's decision and Hu's appreciation came despite suggestions from the Indian leaders, according to senior Maoist leader C.P.Gajurel, "to not hurry to visit China so early."

As a veteran politician put it, "it was a clear snub to India." Reports from Delhi seemed to corroborate this. Said the headline of a Delhi-dated front page story of the Kantipur daily on Wednesday, "India dissatisfied with (Prachanda's) China visit".

The report quoted sources as saying that the prime minister Man Mohan Singh has himself taken exception to the visit.

Now, all eyes are focused on the fallouts, as the two big neighbours flex their muscles on the Nepalese ring. ■



Indian PM Dr. Manamohan Singh: Worries



Oath taking : Shaky start

CABINET

Shaky Start

The Prime Minister unveils the nine-member cabinet by inducting four ministers each from Maoists and MJF while UML opts out on prestige issue

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

Moments before the first elected government of the republican Nepal was to take formal shape in terms of cabinet formation, a major ally of the ruling coalition pulled out on Friday (Aug 22).

The Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) had already nominated its members for the new cabinet and they had even dressed up in national dress to take part in swearing in ceremony.

However, the refusal by the Maoists to provide second position to UML team leader Bamdev Gautam in the cabinet, unraveled the whole exercise.

"We cannot join the government without our honors," said Jhal Nath Khanal, general secretary of the UML.

Likewise, another senior leader of UML has said that his party will not join the government until and unless the Maoists agree to provide second position in the cabinet to them.

Bishnu Poudel told journalists that his party cannot join the government in the current situation. "Frankly speaking, the Maoists have tried to put their minister Dr. Baburam Bhattarai in second position in the cabinet after Prime Minister. This is not acceptable to us," said Poudel.

"If the Maoists do not agree to our demand, we will not join the government. It is as simple as that," he said.

He accused the Maoists of trying to breach the precedents and traditions in trying to provide second position in terms of seniority to a Finance Minister instead of Home Minister.

Earlier, the UML had nominated its senior leader Bamdev Gautam to lead the party in the cabinet by assigning him Home Ministry along with deputy prime ministership.

It had also nominated Poudel as Water Resource Minister, Ashtalaxmi

Shakya as Industry Minister, Kiran Gurung as Forest Minister and Gopal Shakya as Youth and Sports Minister.

New Cabinet

However, despite the UML refusal to attend the swearing in ceremony, the Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda went ahead with the ceremony as he had to depart for China visit on Saturday and had to have his cabinet by then.

As such, the cabinet was formed adding four members from the CPN (Maoist) and four members from the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) Friday evening.

Eight new ministers took oath of office and secrecy from the Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal in presence of President Dr Ram Baran Yadav and other heads of constitutional organs at Rashtrapati Bhawan.

Four new ministers from the Maoists included Dr Baburam Bhattarai (Finance), Ram Bahadur Thapa Badal (Defense), Dev Gurung (Law, Justice) and Krishna Bahadur Mahara (Information and Communication).

Likewise, ministers from MJF include party chairman Upendra Yadav (Foreign Affairs), Bijay Kumar Gachhadar (Works and Transport), Jay Prakash Gupta (Agriculture) and Renu Yadav (Education).

The new cabinet faces a number of political as well as socio-economic challenges. Dr. Bhattarai, a student of political economy, has taken charge of Ministry of Finance at a time when the country is in deep economic crisis.

Likewise, Badal, who was known as the person who handled military planning of Maoists during armed rebellion has become the Defense Minister in charge of state military. Mahara is donning the old cap of Ministry of Information.

From MJF side, its shrewd coordinator Upendra Yadav has become the Foreign Minister responsible for deepening the country's relations with the international community at a time when it needs the foreign support – both moral and physical – for national reconstruction, among others. ■



Dr. Bhattarai: Time to keep promises

NEW GOVT

Old Challenges

The new government faces the same old problems – supply disruption, inflation, power cuts, insecurity, strikes etc.

By SANJAY DHAKAL

The communist ideologue and an expert on Marxist political economy, Dr. Baburam Bhattarai – a senior figure of the Maoists – has donned the cap of Finance Minister.

But as the Shakespearian saying goes “Weary lies head that wears the crown,” the head of Dr. Bhattarai is set to be beset with a number of problems in the coming days.

In the past, Dr. Bhattarai had been a vehement critic of the liberal economic policies followed by the state. With himself in the hot seat, what course he follows remains to be seen.

At a time when Nepal is passing through the sensitive transition and is staring at the urgent need of reconstruction, Dr. Bhattarai will do good not to pique the donors by rolling back reforms, which can cut off the foreign aid on which Nepal’s current economy depends – whether one likes it or not.

A year ago, reacting to the budget prepared by then government, Dr.

Bhattarai had said that a country can never prosper by begging – referring to the huge foreign aid commitments. “Have you seen any beggar become rich?” he had questioned then.

Now Dr. Bhattarai needs to answer the question himself.

Immediately after he became the finance minister, Dr. Bhattarai is facing the problem of presenting a new budget. Due to political instability, for the first time in the modern history of Nepal, the government failed to present full-fledged budget in mid-July this year.

One and a half months have already past since the start of the new fiscal year 2008/09. The government had brought a supplementary plan to tide through this interregnum. The new government needs to bring out a new budget at the soonest.

Here, too, Dr. Bhattarai will face an uphill task. Earlier, he had been saying that Nepal needs to present a bigger budget to bring about faster development.

He had suggested bringing out budget totaling over Rs 300 billion – at a time when National Planning Commission has been urging the government to make the budget lesser than Rs 200 billion in total.

Such expansionary budget, according to experts, can trigger spiraling inflation – worse, at a time when the country is already witnessing over 11 percent inflation. Besides, Dr. Bhattarai has been backing what he calls ‘leap-frogging’ growth of economy at 20 to 30 percent. How possible is that also remains to be seen.

Soon after he became the finance minister, Dr. Bhattarai had said that the first job of the government will be to provide relief to the people.

The government, he said, will introduce policies and programs to provide relief to the people. In his interaction with the officials of the Finance Ministry after he took oath as minister, Dr. Bhattarai said that his party wants to introduce economic revolution after the new constitution is written.

“For the time being, the people are in desperate need of relief from poverty and hunger. And the main responsibility to provide them with relief rests with this ministry,” he said.

Dr. Bhattarai’s hands will also be tied due to coalition politics. Even though the Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) leaders refused to take oath as ministers at the last minute citing hierarchy reasons, the current government will have to be based on the Common Minimum Program (CMP) signed by the top leaders of three parties – Maoists, UML and Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF).

“We have prepared four bases for the new national coalition government. We have finalized the CMP, code of conduct for ministers, norms and methods of operation of government and formation of political coordination committee,” Jhal Nath Khanal, general secretary of UML, told journalists.

The CMP has laid emphasis on writing the constitution within two years, and consolidating national interest, among others. Signed by Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, UML general secretary Jhal Nath Khanal and MJF coordinator Upendra Yadav, the CMP covers all the major issues from restructuring of state, implementing inclusion, providing immediate relief to the people and socio-economic transformation. ■

Kosi Flood Nature's Wrath Or Height Of Negligence?

With the breaching in the eastern embankment and changing of its course towards east, Kosi river, which originates in Tibetan Autonomous region of China, and Nepal's Himalayas, has threatened the lives of tens of thousands of people living in Nepal and India. Although rescue and rehabilitation operation conducted by Nepali Army has saved the lives of thousands of people who have been temporarily rehabilitated in different shelters, their future is uncertain. Although Kosi river, one of the mighty rivers of the world, has the history of changing its course frequently, it is yet to be revealed whether the destruction of embankment this time was a result of gross negligence on the part of technicians or just an unavoidable natural occurrence

By KESHAB POUDEL

"Had the Nepali Army's helicopter not rescued us on time, we would have been buried beneath the sand of Saptakosi river somewhere else in Indian or Nepalese territory," Ali

Minya, a resident of Western part of Kusaha district. "Nepali Army's helicopter lifted us when we were stranded at the top of the roof of our submerged house," said Minya, 45, who

was among the people who were settled at the temporary relief center in Inaruwa, district headquarters of Sunsari district 400 miles east of capital Kathmandu.



Rescue efforts: NA soldiers on duty

Photo : Nepal Army

Thanks to the NA's efforts, hundreds of people have already been airlifted and thousands of people received dry food and drinking water at temporary shelters built across the Kosi's embankment.

NA has a long experience of rescue operation at the time of natural calamities. This is the latest one when NA's personnel have been launching their work day and night.

"The river swept away our houses, crops, cattle and everything," said Deven Yadav, 65, a resident of Laukahi village Development Committee. "As our land and house are already covered by sands and boulders, it seems virtually impossible for us to go back again," said Yadav, a displaced living in a temporary shelter in local school.

Along with changing its course, the

river has also inundated densely populated human settlements. Even after the diversion of river in its original shape by repairing embankments, it will take decades to make those lands cultivable again.

According to experts, the Kosi river was notorious for shifting, flood devastation and sand deposition over a vast area in north Bihar and Nepal. In the past, the river created havoc in Nepal and India.

Devastation of flood

The devastation is so huge that it will take months to assess the damage. "As the river has completely damaged the house holds and buried the land, we need to search alternative ways to support the people," said Durga Prasad Bhandari, chief district officer of Sunsari

district. "We are successful in rehabilitating a large number of displaced population temporarily and we are also receiving relief materials from different agencies."

According to initial report, the flood has washed away crops worth of Rs. 300 million in Sripur, Haripur, Paschim kushaha and Laukaha VDCs mostly affected by inundation.

According to the Home Ministry 40,378 people of 7102 families have been displaced. It informed that 5500 hectares of land, 12 km of black-topped road and 13 km of seasonal road have been destroyed by the flood.

It said that people of Haripur, Sripur Jabdi, Laukahi and Western Kusaha VDCs of Sunsari district have been fully displaced while those of Narsingh,

Basantapur and Ghuski VDCs of the same district have been badly affected by the inundation. The infrastructures of these VDCs including roads, schools, irrigation, drinking water system and local factories have been devastated.

According to district agriculture office, paddy worth of Rs.180 million, vegetables worth of 24 million banana crops worth of Rs 4.5 million and jute crops worth of Rs 20 million were damaged by the swollen river. Fish farming worth of Rs. 25 million was washed out.

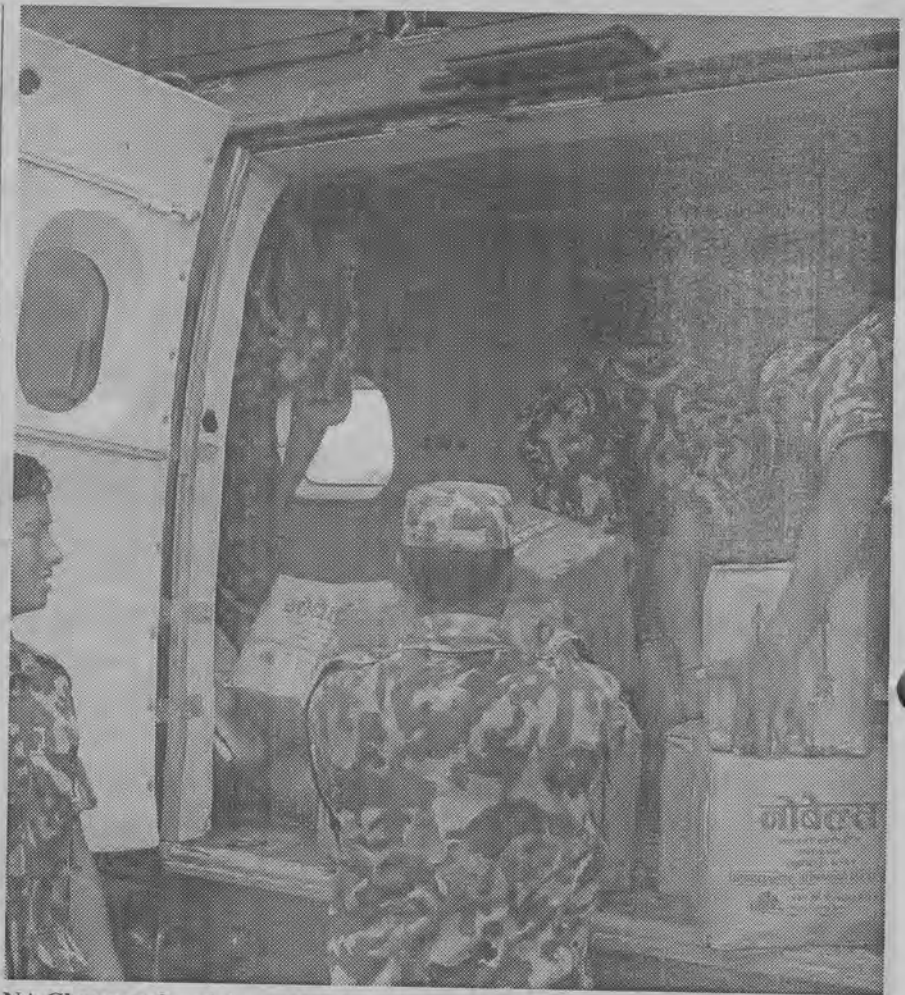
The renovation of destroyed embankment has already begun. According to Anil Pokharel, deputy director of Irrigation Department, the renovation work has begun. The office said the flood damaged 2064 hectares of cultivated land in Haripur, 1892 in Sripur, 860 hectares in Paschim Kushaha and 776 hectare of cultivated land in Laukahi.

"The river has buried most of the cultivable land in Haripur and Sripur. The land will no longer be fertile even if the river ebbed back to its original course," said Sarbajit Yadav chief of district agriculture office.

Negligence or Natural

Unlike in the past, there was no huge rainfall in the catchments areas of Kosi and the level of water at the time of breaching of the eastern embankment was below 150,000 cusec meter. Then, how the embankment was damaged suddenly triggering havoc in eastern Nepal? Is it natural or negligence? Given the news reports published in various newspapers, it seems the technicians failed to carry out their duty.

Nepalese officials and Indian officials indulge in the blame game. Nepalese officials blame Indian technicians for not repairing the embankment beforehand while Indian officials accuse Nepalese side of failing to provide security to their technicians. They demanded the full security to their staffs to start the



NA Chopper: Supplying material Photo : Nepal Army

renovation works and even forwarded the idea of using the trained Indian army personnel to start the early renovation works.

"It is sheer negligence of the technicians who always undermine the renovation works," said Bhutani Sada, 66, of Shreepur village development committee citing the recent report of sacking of half a dozen officials from the Kosi project by Indian government.

Along with washing out residents and land, the flood also washed out about 12 kilometers road of East West high way cutting off eastern region from rest of the country by road. Even communication line was cut off due to damage in optical fibers.

The Road Department has already declared that it will take months to repair

the road. Now the possibility of road link is being searched by installing Belly Bridge at Barahachhetra to restore the traffic between eastern Nepal and rest of the country.

Blame Game

A high-level Nepal government team that inspected areas devastated by the flood in Kosi river, has held India responsible for the havoc.

"The devastation took place as the Indian side did not carry out repair and maintenance work on the Kosi barrage and the embankment along the river, thereby violating the Nepal-India Kosi agreement," said Khom Raj Dahal, Deputy Director General of the Department of Water Induced Disaster Prevention to the media.

"India is entirely responsible for repair

and maintenance work and operation of the barrage, as per the bilateral agreement signed in 1954. More than 60,000 people were displaced when at least four villages were completely under the flood due to the collapse of Saptakoshi embankment," said a senior Nepalese official.

"Every year in the past Indian side used to do at least some maintenance work. But this year they did not carry out the repairs," Dahal said. "This was the main reason why the Kosi breached the embankment and submerged about 10,000 hectares of cultivated land and villages."

Indian side used to contact the Regional Directorate of the Department of Irrigation (DoI) in Biratnagar. The DoI plays a facilitating role as and when requested by Indian teams. "But this year they did not contact the DoI regional office" Dahal added.

However, the Indian officials blamed Nepal authorities for the disaster. "The Indian technical team mobilized required resources and has remained in readiness to carry out the required work to strengthen the embankment but it was prevented from reaching the site. As a consequence, thousands of people in



Rescued victims: Nowhere to go

Photo : Nepal Army

Nepal and India have been forced to suffer a calamity that could have been avoided," said a press release issued by Indian embassy.

Mobilization of Army

At a time when concerns are growing about the need to take immediate steps, Indian officials are reportedly circulating the idea to call on trained Indian Army personnel to start the emergency reconstruction works arguing that civil authority doesn't have such capability to immediately start the large scale reconstruction work.

According to a report published in Gorkhapatra on August 23, Indian delegation led by high level experts and engineers recommended secretly the need to mobilize trained army expert to immediately start renovation work to contain the loss of life and property.

According to them, it is impossible for civil authority to start the reconstruction work. According to Nepali officials, Indian side has not disclosed their suggestion publicly. Indian officials reportedly forwarded this proposal to New Delhi and are awaiting



Flood victim : Cooking food at road

Photo: Chandra Shekhar Karki, Kantipur

response. According to Gorhapatra, the government owned newspaper, the Indian high level technical team which recently visited the flood sites include the engineers of Ganga Flood I.P. Kumar H.S Chaudhari.

In his visit to flood affected areas, Nepal's Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives Jaya Prakash Gupta, however, demanded that the Kosi renovation works be carried out under India's central government and not under the Bihar state. "This is the responsibility of India's central government. Deputy prime minister and foreign minister Upendra Yadav will pay his visit to India shortly and discuss this matter with India's central leaders." (Gorkhapatra, August 25).

In his recent inspection to the flood hit areas, prime minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda referred the Kosi agreement as a historical blunder and suggested the need to sign new agreement.

Kosi's History

Kosi river is bounded on the north by the ridge separating it from the Tsangpo (Brahmaputra), on the South by the Ganga, on the east by the ridge separating it from the Mahananda and on the west by the ridge separating it from the Gandak/Burhi Gandak.

According to water resource expert Dr. A. B. Thapa, Kosi river rises at an altitude over 7000 meter in the Himalayas. The Kosi, though little known outside, after its debouch into the plains is the third biggest of the Himalayan rivers, being next only to the Indus and Brahmaputra. The Kosi catchments comprise the Himalayas in the eastern parts of Nepal and Tibet. It can be divided into two distinct parts, on lying in Tibet across the great Himalayan range and other to the south of it in Nepal.

The total length of the Kosi river is



President Dr. Yadav : Listening woes

720 km draining areas of 92,538 sq km in Tibetan Autonomous Region of China, Nepal and India up to its confluence with the Ganga at Kursela. Kosi occupies 30,800 sq km in Tibet, 41,233 sq km in Nepal and 20,405 sq km in India.

In order to provide an immediate relief, the Kosi project comprising gradient control by Hanumanagar barrage near Bhimnagar and river confinement by marginal embankments was implemented. The river observations have, however, now revealed great danger to which the

developed countryside outside the embankments will be exposed in future.

Experts predicted long time back that the need to study the time frame of the likely breaches in the embankments and their possible locations so that suitable strategy to avoid any sudden catastrophe can be evolved and put in practice in time. However, all ignored such warnings.

Agreement on Renovation

A high level Indian delegation led by senior engineer has already reached to the site. Higher level Nepalese, and

Indian delegation agreed, on Thursday, the need to start the construction work soon.

The renovation work will start in three phase. First, they will try to divert the river from eastern flank to its natural course in west. To prevent the further damage on embankment, they will construct more spurs. By the beginning of next monsoon session, the work to renovation will complete.

Bihar's Trauma

In Bihar, the Kosi River is wreaking

havoc in Supaul, Madhepura and Araria districts. India's Union Railway Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav made an aerial survey of the flood hit areas.

According to Indian news agency ANI's report on August 25, Railway Minister and former Bihar chief minister Lalu Prasad Yadav will brief Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh on Bihar floods and will also ask him to visit the flood-affected areas in his state.

"In a noble gesture, Lalu has made available the services of the Railways to

carry food supplies and relief material free of cost in the flood-affected areas. During his meeting, he will inform the Prime Minister about the calamity and the failures of the State government presently run by the BJP-JD-U combine," the news report says.

From Nepal to Bihar, the Kosi devastation has created intensive debates about how it happens. It is yet to know whether it is natural or negligence. ■

“Efforts Aimed At Immediate Relief”

-Umesh Mainali

During our meetings also, INGOs and organizations under UN have shown full commitment for help. Friendly countries have given positive signs and Nepalese business communities and common people too are responding to our call.

As Kosi river continued to wreak havoc in the eastern part of Nepal destroying thousands of hectares of land and scores of settlements, home secretary **UMESH PRASAD MAINALI** spoke to **RABINDRA MISHRA** of BBC Nepal Service regarding the rescue and rehabilitation works being carried out in the affected areas. Excerpts:

How is the rehabilitation and relief operation going on?

After the destruction of embankment, the Kosi has changed its course. People living in all the four village development committees are affected. Most of them have been displaced. We have built 25 camps to provide shelter to affected population. We have already sent medicines, teams as well as foods and cloths.

It is reported that the people displaced by floods cannot be rehabilitated again in their original houses, what do you do to those displaced?

We are concentrating efforts of immediate relief and rehabilitation. Most of the areas are still inundated and there is no possibility of immediately taking them back to their original place. Thus, I am not in a position to say what would be their future.

There are also reports that many people from across the border in India are also coming for shelter. What plans do you have for them?

For immediate relief, we have not made any discrimination against any individual. We are treating all the displaced population, wherever they come from, equally. According to our estimates, about 5000 people displaced from India are currently living in our shelter.

What would you do to those displaced from India?

On the humanitarian ground, all the displaced will receive similar relief materials. We are in the process of registration of displaced population. Only after completion of this, we have to decide about them.

What is the number of affected population and displaced population?

There are about 70,000 displaced population and some displaced are living in their relatives' homes and some are living in temporary camps. Our estimate is that Kosi flood affected 150,000 people.

As the number of displaced population is so high, the government will need to spend huge amount of money to help them. Do you believe the government is in a position to provide the needed money?

We have been issuing public appeals for support. Our donor communities and local people have shown much enthusiasm to provide necessary support to the victims. During our meetings also, INGOs and organizations under UN have shown full commitment for help. Friendly countries have given positive signs and Nepalese business communities and common people too are responding to our call.

From the recent incident in Kosi, do we need to learn some lessons when building dams elsewhere in the country?

We need to take lessons from this. We have reports that many other such dams are also facing similar problems of regular maintenance. ■



Nepali Player Deepak Bista (Right) : Loosing battle

BEIJING OLYMPICS

Nepal's Effort

Disturbed by politically motivated actions, Nepalese athletes had faced uncertainty even over their participation let alone aiming to achieve any medal

By A CORRESPONDENT

For eight Nepali athletes and officials, returning to the country after taking part in the Beijing Olympics itself became a matter of pride.

Politically motivated groups led by former president of Nepal Olympics Committee Rukma Sumsher J.B.Rana had made every effort to stop Nepalese delegation from taking part in the Beijing Olympics.

After International Olympic Committee's decision to back the present Nepal Olympic Committee led by Dhruva Bahadur Pradhan, Rana's group organized demonstration at Tribhuvan International Airport and made every effort to stop the delegation from going to Beijing.

Despite all these anti-national activities and discouraging trends, Nepal's Olympic squad, though it was dominated by officials, had taken part in the Beijing Olympic participating at the inaugural and closing ceremony

program.

First elected president Dr. Ram Baran Yadav's last minute decision to cancel his visit to attend inaugural ceremony had sent a chilling message to Nepal's northern neighbor. But the newly elected prime minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda turned the course by accepting the invitation of Chinese Olympic Committee to take part as a guest in closing ceremony.

Four male and four female athletes had represented Nepal. Among them two each took part in athletics and swimming, one each in taekwon do, judo, shooting and weightlifting.

The performance of all the players was dismal except weightlifter Kamal Bahadur Adhikari who broke his previous national record.

Marathon runner Arjun Kumar Basnet completed the Marathon in 2:23:09. Out of 76 athletes who completed the race, Basnet finished 45th.

Swimmers Karishma Karki and Prasiddha Jung Shah just bettered their personal marks. The Judoka Devu Thapa survived just 22 seconds.

One hundred meter runner Chandra Kala also failed to improve her position. At a time when even the country like India with such a high economic growth has won just one gold and two bronze medals and all other south Asian country except Afghanistan returned with empty hand, it was virtually beyond imagination for Nepalese players to make real difference.

Passing through an unstable political situation, the country has done virtually nominal preparation for Beijing Olympics. Divided on the political affiliation, there was no one to cheer the players and encourage them to do their best.

Nepal has been taking part in Olympics since Tokyo Olympics in 1964 but it has not won any medal yet. Unlike in the past, when Nepal usually sent a small squad, the situation has changed now as there are a handful of athletes taking part in different disciplines, which for a small country, is itself a prize.

"We were unable to concentrate our efforts to prepare our athletes.

After sudden registration of new Nepal Olympic Committee by Congress-backed home minister, our participation was virtually suspended. The government had done everything to stop our delegation.

Then government issued a letter to withhold our account and everything. The whole mission was to stop Nepal's participation," said Sitaram Maskey, vice president of Nepal Olympic Committee and Sports Council. "We are proud to say that we were able to put our squad together in Beijing."

Mired by political controversy, Nepal's sports bodies are divided on the basis of political ideology. There is a tendency to completely change guard in Sport Council and sports institutions whenever there is a change of government.

Every one claims that they want to make the sports sector free from political interference but everybody loves to interfere in sports. This is the reason why there are always disputes and controversies on the issues of leading international committees and leading the squad. ■



Closing ceremony: Best show

BEIJING OLYMPICS

Curtain Down

Despite initial phase of politically motivated moves to disrupt the Beijing Olympics 2008, China has successfully held the game showing its economic might to the world

By A CORRESPONDENT

Although Tibetans living in exile in various parts of the world were made to make every efforts till last minute to discredit the Beijing Olympics, China has successfully organized the game showing to the world its all round development and economic miracle.

Chinese have shown that if a country has determination and will, there is nothing impossible for it. Organizing the best Olympic Games in its history, they have shown Chinese people's determinations.

As soon as Olympic Torch Rally

began from Athens, Tibetans living in exile had launched massive campaign to disrupt the torch rally wherever possible. From Indian capital New Delhi to many European capitals including Kathmandu, there were almost daily demonstrations.

However, the Chinese torch rally completed its tour giving message to the world about the peaceful rise of China.

When the world witnessed the sports gala demonstrated at the inaugural and closing ceremony in Beijing, the people forgot such issues

as they were captivated by the display of artistry and technology.

One of the most important features of Beijing Olympics was the rise of China as the number one sports power house.

Chinese athletes have shown their strength in all the sports discipline from the very beginning.

Chinese showed their presence in all the competitions. International Olympic Committee chief Jacques Rogge described the games as truly exceptional in a lavish closing ceremony at the Bird's Nest Stadium, which culminated in the handing over of the Olympic flag to Boris Johnson, the mayor of London which will host the 2012 edition.

China not only topped the gold medal count but a near flawless organization meant the controversies that marred the build-up largely slipped into the background.

United States won the largest number of medals but China secured highest number of gold medals and, thus, stood first. With the investment of more than 40 billion dollars on the games, China reaped handsome reward.

More than 40 world records and 100 Olympic records were set. It also gave birth to two icons - Michael Phelps and Usain Bolt. Phelps, with his unprecedented eight gold medals and seven world records, and Bolt, the fastest man of the earth winning three gold medals with three world records made the headlines stories.

Whatever happened, the Beijing Olympic Games will be remembered in the history as one of the best and well organized games. ■

BOOK

Trekking Trail

Although Gauri Shankar trekking area is one of the most fascinating mountain regions, it is not yet widely known

By A CORRESPONDENT

With the existence of places with natural beauty and cultural diversity, Nepal can gain a lot of benefits from tourism as it can be important component for the community development activities.

However, it is still confined to few areas and community is yet to get enormous benefits. Tourism not only generates employment but also contributes to enhance economic condition of the rural people.

With an objective to exploit the benefit of tourism, Eco-Himal, the society for Ecological Co-operation Alps-Himalayan, has been working with local grass-roots organizations on a range of social, ecological and cultural development projects aimed at bringing long-term benefits to the people of the Himalayan region.

Within the framework of promoting sustainable tourism and training, in 1996, Eco-Himal set up the Rolwaling Eco-tourism Project in the little visited areas of the holy mountain of Gauri Shankar.

Written by prominent scholars from foreign countries, this is a first book which focuses within the framework of Eco-Himal's Rolwaling Project. This book highlights important areas and opportunities available in the Rolwaling region. Along with discussing the issues of natural conservation, five authors, Patricia

**The Gauri Shankar
rekking Area (Including
Rolwaling)
An Eco-Himal
Publication
Financed by: Eco Himal
with partial support from
the Austrian Development
Co-operation
By: Patricia East, Susan
Hoivik, Max Petrik, Sara
Shneiderman and Mark
Turin
Published by: Mandala
Book Point, Kantipath,
Kathmandu, Nepal
Pages: 124
Price: Price undisclosed**

East, Susan Voivik, Max Petrik, Sara Shneiderman and Mark Turin, all of them who lived Nepal for several years doing their research, discuss all important components regarding the trekking potential of the region.

Although Rolwaling is one of the most beautiful trekking routes of eastern Nepal adjoining Mt. Everest, it is yet to be popular destination for trekkers. Currently about 1500 tourists visit the Gauri Shankar area each year. According to the authors, most come here as organized tour groups which adhere to the 'take noting but photographs, leave nothing

but footprints' principle of minimal impact.

Thanks to the implementation of Rolwaling Ecotourism Project by Eco-Himal, one can see the changes. For the individual tourist, it was virtually impossible to trek there earlier as there were no hotels and restaurants along the trekking route. Now the situation has completely changed. Eco-Himal's project not only trained local population on hotel management and lodge management but also opened the trekking routes where tourists can enjoy local culture and nature.

After opening up Nepal for the foreigners five decades ago, millions of tourists from different parts of the world have already visited Nepal's various trekking zones and climbed numerous mountain peaks.

But, there are still some interesting and adventitious areas which are yet to be seen by many. Faced with increasing impoverishment, many people are forced to seek employment elsewhere, usually as unskilled laborers. Income from tourism could help improve living conditions and reduce rural out-migration.

For those who want to visit the Rolwaling area, this book provides detailed information on trekking routes as well as an in-depth introduction to its rich culture and history. This book is very important for those who want to know about eco tourism.

As a country known for its mountain peaks as well as cultural and bio-diversity, we must promote the experts who make important contribution by writing about different aspects of Nepal. ■

Suggestions to Nepal Government

- Dr. Tilak Rawal

About four months after the successful holding of the historic constituent assembly polls, many important political developments, albeit belatedly and amidst controversy, have taken place. The historic first meeting of the CA on May 28, 2008 declared Nepal a republic, which was gracefully accepted by the monarch who is reported to be quietly spending time in Nagarjun, after securing permission from Nepal Government to stay there. Despite being the largest party, the CPN Maoist failed to get their candidate, Ramraja Prasad Singh, elected as president basically because of their failure to garner support mainly from CPN UML, which along with MJF supported NC candidate, Rambaran Yadav. His election to this largely ceremonial post is the result of an alliance forged between the three parties, which accused the Maoists of betrayal and breach of trust: Maoists publicly voiced their opposition to G. P. Koirala becoming the president and also decided not to support Madhav Nepal of UML despite assurances of support, as expressed by UML stalwarts, till the end. This period also marked the end of a relationship that existed between Koirala and Parchand ever since the signing of the deal in Delhi. Koirala, who wanted to be the first head of state of the republic, had good reasons to be unhappy with the Maoist leadership and Maoists antagonism, it is said, stemmed from Koirala's reluctance to shed power in favor of the largest party in the assembly. A large majority of Maoists and others believe that Koirala's cooperation could have helped timely formation of a Maoist led consensus government and thus not requiring one more amendment to the

often amended interim constitution that introduced majoritarian provision for the formation of government.

MJF got its candidate, Paramanand Jha, elected to the post of vice president. Mr. Jha's decision to take oath in Hindi created some confusion and unrest as the student wings of major political parties took to the streets in a violent fashion in protest of the act at several places in the country provoking counter protests by the youth wing of MJF in its strongholds. Good sense, however, prevailed in the leaders of major political parties who without wasting much time played a major role in bringing to a halt this episode of protest that was beginning to flare along racial lines.

As happens in politics here and elsewhere too, the political scenario began to change gradually in favor of the disappointed Maoists, after the electoral debacle for the two posts, when UML and MJF began to incline slowly towards them in matters of government formation under Maoists leadership. When efforts failed to rope in NC as a partner in the government, a new alliance between the three parties was formed to support Parchanda for the post of prime minister, brushing aside NC and its tantrums related to defense portfolio. Ending four months of political stalemate, the CA on August 15, 2008 overwhelmingly elected Maoist chairman to the post of prime minister of this republic. Parchanda bagged some 80 percent of the votes cast, the rest going to NC leader Deuba who got votes of members belonging to his party and one independent member Babban Singh. Some eight days after Parchand took the oath in Nepali national language wearing

business suit and a cap, the three parties in alliance announced their candidates for ministerial positions



along with the conquered portfolios. However, only eight ministers, four each from Maoist and Forum, took the oath as UML decided to stay away at the last minute raising questions of hierarchy in government formation. The UML proposed candidates, neatly dressed in national costume, instead of proceeding to the president's office for the oath went to the party office for serious discussion. UML has made it clear that they will not join the government if their candidate, Bamdev Gautam, is not given second ranking, currently given to Baburam Bhattari, in the government. Maoists so far have shown generosity in the distribution of ministries, mainly to UML, and people would like to see the ranking issue resolved quietly after the return from Beijing of prime minister who is there to participate in the concluding ceremony of the Olympic Games. The beginning definitely has not been pleasant one. People rightfully want the government to begin paying serious attention to problems affecting their day to day life. Side by side with the new constitution drafting work, measures will have to be taken to bolster growth and provide relief mainly to the hard hit low income people.

Serious problems of economic nature are faced by countries all over the world. Rising inflation levels have been a

problem that countries are fighting hard to contain. While high growth countries like China and India, facing the highest level of inflation in sixteen years at 12.44 percent, are fighting hard to check inflation even at the coast of economic growth, low growth economies such as US and Japan also have shown concerns to rising price levels. In fact, a stagflationary scenario, combination of low growth and rising prices, is emerging in these countries. In Nepal, authorities have the delicate task of simultaneously executing inflation taming and growth inducing policies that generally work in opposite direction. On the inflation side, frontal attack will have to be made on improving the supply of essential commodities and in regard to growth productive investment will have to be emphasized. The object should be to take growth to a double digit level and lower inflation to a single digit level from the current high of more than 13 percent. A ban on road blockages on lame excuses, abolition of syndicate system in the transportation sector mainly in the Far Western and Mid Western region and doing away with bands that interfere with economic activities are expected to go a long way in getting rid of supply bottlenecks thereby reducing the prices of items in question. A pragmatic blend of monetary and fiscal policy and its successful execution is the need of the hour. Rising fuel and commodity prices has attracted the attention of world bodies and resourceful countries that have pledged significant amount of assistance to help poor countries combat this problem. As usual and very justifiably conflict torn low income countries of Africa have begun to receive meaningful assistance. It may be mentioned that Sub-Sahara Africa has higher per capita income than South Asia of which Nepal is a conflict-devastated poor country probably with the lowest level of growth and the highest level of inflation in the region. With a proper level

of well demonstrated honesty and integrity, there is no harm in receiving anything from fuel to food from bilateral and multilateral donors to ameliorate the deplorable condition of the people.

It is written and spoken umpteen times by many a people that Nepal has not been able to benefit from the remarkable growth of the two economies on our north and south. Notwithstanding still weighty economic problems in India and China, they can meaningfully help us in different areas. In addition to seeking more grants and greater level of their participation in developing our infrastructures, efforts should be geared toward improving our trade (export) with these countries. Everyone should be clear that the existing composition of commodity export can not abridge the

both countries. The idea should be to learn from our past mistakes and move pragmatically without getting our selves indulged in trading accusations. That said, Nepalese would always expect both its huge neighbors to be generous and magnanimous in dealing with Nepal. The task before the government is Himalayan but a sincere effort on our part can ensure influx of resources at this point of time when the resourceful institutions and countries are willing to help us with their inputs provided there is an environment and capacity to absorb resources. Ministry of finance and Foreign Affairs should work hand in hand to mobilize resources needed for harnessing water resources, development of infrastructures, tourism and to enhance agricultural productivity.

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huge trade deficit of around Rs. 70\80 billion with India and ever increasing deficit with China. The idea, therefore, should be to diversify into production and export of non-conventional items such as hydro power to India and service, through tourism, to China. Whether we like it or not, we have to work in close cooperation with India in several fronts, the notable one being the water front. In harnessing water resources, the two nations will have to be extra careful in avoiding the recurrence of unpleasant situation such as the recent collapse of the Koshi embankment that resulted in loss of human lives and colossal loss of property including standing crops in

Let the new ministers be divided into two groups, group one concentrating more on political issues such as drafting of a new constitution and group two focusing more on resource mobilization for development, which should clearly spell policies and strategies to be adopted in the short, medium and long run. In the very short run, the new government is expected to improve the supply of a wide range of items such as fuel, foodgrains, drinking water electricity to tame supply side induced inflation that has inflicted serious injury on the day to day life of us Nepalese.

Dr. Rawal is political economic analyst and member of CA. ■

“First and foremost is the protection of national sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. If Nepal does not exist, then there is no meaning for anything else including the republic. But we have to strengthen the national unity based on full equality among people from Himal, Pahad, Terai and Madhes.”

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda,' in his first message to the countrymen, after being elected the PM.

“The people are in desperate need of relief from poverty and hunger. And the main responsibility to provide them with relief rests with this ministry.”

Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, Finance Minister, after taking oath of his office.

“We have prepared four bases for the new national coalition government. We have finalized the CMP, code of conduct for ministers, norms and methods of operation of government and formation of political coordination committee.”

Jhal Nath Khanal, general secretary of UML, told journalists, on Thursday, a day before UML was set to join the Maoist-led government.

“Hierarchies and roles are important. We will not join the government losing our self-respect.”

Jhal Nath Khanal, UML general secretary, on Saturday, a day after

Republican Oath Taking



Janabhawana

the UML opted out of Maoist-led government citing reasons of hierarchy.

“The Maoists ditched us at the last minute.”

Bamdev Gautam, who was nominated by UML to head the party's team in the government as deputy prime minister and Home Minister, reacting to the Maoist refusal to provide second position to him in the cabinet, which led to UML withdrawal from the government.

“For full emotional unity, next

leadership has to be chosen through the 12th general convention.”

Arjun Narsingh KC, spokesperson of Nepali Congress (NC), conceding that through two NC parties have united, the full emotion unity has still not happened, in Kantipur.

“Nepal could achieve success in peace process as it is owned and led by Nepali people and leaders.”

Erik Solheim, Norwegian Minister for Environment and International Development, at a press meet in Kathmandu.

TRANSITION

FORMED: The cabinet has been formed adding four members from the CPN (Maoist) and four members from the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF). They include Dr Baburam Bhattarai (Finance), Ram Bahadur Thapa Badal (Defense), Dev Gurung (Law, Justice) and Krishna Bahadur Mahara (Information and Communication) from Maoists and Upendra Yadav (Foreign Affairs), Bijay Kumar Gachhadar (Works and Transport), Jay Prakash Gupta (Agriculture) and Renu Yadav

(Education) from MJF.

SWORN IN: The eight new ministers took oath of office and secrecy from the Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal in presence of President Dr Ram Baran Yadav and other heads of constitutional organs at Rashtrapati Bhawan.

LEFT: Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda, for Beijing, China, to attend the closing ceremony of Beijing Olympics. He led an 11-member delegation including his wife Sita Dahal and Minister for Information and Communication Krishna Bahadur Mahara.

NAMED: Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Minister for Information and Communication, as the government spokesperson, by the cabinet.

APPOINTED: Raghav Lal Baidya, a judge at the Appellate Court, Janakpur, as the Attorney General of Nepal, by President Dr. Rambaran Yadav, as per the recommendation of Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda.

RETURNED: Erik Solheim, Norwegian Minister for Environment and International Development, after completing his brief visit to Nepal.



PHOTO: Bikash Ramiyar - Kantipur

PAINTING

Amalgam- 2008

Participated by renowned Nepalese and foreign artists, the exhibition displayed interesting art works

By A CORRESPONDENT

Every artist has his or her own way of creating. Some prefer to paint on nature but other choose the social theme and trauma. Some paint on abstract and others choose figurative way. However, all art involve the creative imagination of artists.

At a time when the country has been passing through transformation of political order, the observation made by various artists are interesting to watch. Of course, their themes are varied. There are social problems and challenges as well as the beauty of nature and social upheavals; the artists have covered all

the areas.

Some paintings tell the trauma of human beings, others express the tragedy. Paintings exhibited at the wall of Siddhartha Art Gallery combine all kinds of imagination of artists.

Organized by Siddhartha Art Gallery, AMALGAM- 2008 is the first of its kind of art exhibition where one can see the art works of internationally renowned Nepalese and foreign artists under one roof.

It offered a lot of choices for the art lovers to see and read the observation of various artists' imagination and their

perfections in explaining the themes.

From Shashi Shah and Shashikala Tiwari to Kiran Manandhar, Ragini Upadhyay- Greela, Govinda Dangol to Uma Shanker Shah, the paintings of the entire topmost Nepalese artists were depicted in the exhibition.

Nepalese artists in the exhibition include Asha Dangol, Ashmina Ranjit, Batsa Gopal Vaidya, Bhairaja Maharjan, Binod Pradhan, Birendra Pratap Singh, Chirag Bangdel, Dil Bahadur Chitrakar, Durga Baral and Lina Tamrakar.

Other artists include Govinda Dangol, Gyanmani Ray, Hare Ram Joju, Jasmina Rajbhandari, Jwala Shah, Kailash Shrestha, Kiran Baniya, Kiran Manandhar, Laxman Karmacharya, Madan Chitrakar, Manish Lal Shrestha, Kukesh Shrestha, Naryan Bohaju, Pradip Bajracharya, Pramila Bajracharya, Rabindra Kumar Shrestha, Ragini Upadhyay-Greela, and Ratan Rai.

The exhibition also includes creations of SC Suman, Sanjeev Maharjan, Seema Sharma Shah, Shreejan Rajbhandari, Shyam Lal Shrestha, Sudershan Rana, Sujan Chitrakar, Sunil Sigdel, Sunita Maharjan, Sunita Rana, Sushma Shakya, Ujjwal Kundan Jyapoo, Uma Shanker Shah and Vijay Thapa.

Along with Nepalese artist, there is also presentation of international artists. They include Celia Washington (UK), Gea Karhoff (Netherlands), Mike Karajniak (USA), Nan Mulder (Scotland), Pemba

(Lhasa), Prakash Chandwakar (India), Soshana (Austria), Wendy Marston (Scotland) and Yuki Shirai (Japan).

Inaugurated by eminent writer and educationist Dr. Abhi Subedi, the exhibition gave opportunity to all the art loving people of unprecedented show.

Thanks to the efforts of Sangita Thapa of Siddhartha Art Gallery, so many artists could be brought together.

Govinda Dangol's Ganesh and Shashi Shaha's horses and Ragni Upadhyay-Greela's paintings spoke volumes of political and social transformation. Kiran Manandhar's abstract painting in acrylic and Uma

Shanker Shah's paintings presented varieties of themes.

The exhibition will continue till August 31. ■

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