

SPOTLIGHT

Nov. 28 Dec.04,2008

C.D.O. Regd. No. 157/039-40
Postal Regd. No. 20/064-65

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Europe.....
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China/Korea.....
ME/Israel.....
Hong Kong/Taiwan.....

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Other SAARC Nations.....
Asean Countries.....
Japan.....

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Nepal.....NfS.
India.....IRS.
Bhutan.....NU.



SACOSAN III

Regional Initiative For Sanitation

INSIDE

- Mukherjee's Visit
- Politics: Living With Instability
- Food Aid: Joint Action
- Economy: Remittance In Red!



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- Suraj Singh Thakuri
TV Personality/Director

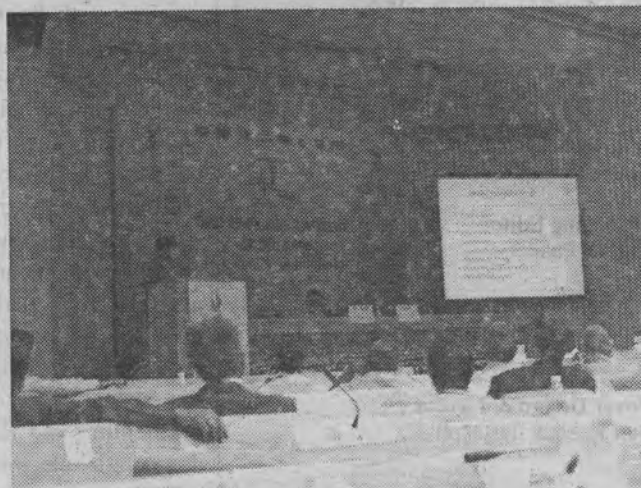
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SPOTLIGHT

THE WEEKLY NATIONAL NEWSMAGAZINE

Vol. 28, No. 12, Nov. 28, 2008
Mangsir 13, 2065

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Ph : 4232784, 2020247, 4244679
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Printers : Pioneer Offset Printers (P.) Ltd.
Dillibazar, Kathmandu
Ph : 4415687, Fax: 977-1-4438650

C.D.O.Regd. No
151/039-40

Postal Regd. No
42/61/62

U.S. Library of Congress
Catalogue No. 91-905060

The spate of visits to Nepal by dignitaries of friendly countries might be generating very high expectations in the hearts of about twenty five million poor Nepalis. Even if this is not the first time such dignitaries are visiting Nepal that it is happening in a totally new political scenario of a new republic with the chief executive from the extremist communist party, the Maoist, cannot be over looked as insignificant. Whether Nepal has achieved substantially from such visits and whether such visits have contributed to solving bilateral problems need no clarifications as they are quite self evident. That the process has continued is gratifying. Nepal's friendly countries do seem much concerned about the glaring poverty and backwardness in Nepal and are providing grants and loans. Had all the grants and loans been properly utilized, Nepal perhaps, could have emerged as an affluent country by now. But the obvious dearth of honest and patriotic leadership has not only failed to take the country ahead but the decade long violent struggle has pushed the country decades back. Even sixty years after the end of the century old Rana autocracy and two decades of parliamentary democratic rule, the second richest country in water resources can neither provide potable drinking water nor electricity even to the people of the capital city. Simply because the political leadership has been unimaginably anti-national, totally incompetent and outrageously corrupt. The emergence of the extreme communist political party, the Maoist, had generated high expectations amongst the poor people. But, in a very short time, their short sighted and out dated policies, their familitism and their preference for the personal and partisan interests over the nation's have only created all round gloom and frustrations. As long Nepal does not produce patriotic politicians who can rise above personal and partisan interests and think only in terms of the nation and the people, the nation cannot move forward. And unless, Nepal's closest neighbor and friend-India- decided to help Nepal sincerely, there would be no succor for the millions of poor Npalis. Sixty years of history is witness how India has always tried to stand by Nepal. But all the time it is the Nepalis who have failed to make the best use of India's largesse. The demise of the two and half century old monarchy has ushered Nepal into such a turbulent political conundrum that peace loving knowledgeable Nepalis are getting quite apprehensive at the possibility of disintegration lurking on the horizon. Instead of assuring the Nepali statesmen and politicians about India's unflinching cooperation to solve the long standing issues, the Indian dignitaries should teach our politicians how to behave patriotically that the country comes first and the absence of integrity in the statesmen no nation can move for ward. Susta or Narsahi can wait resolution for a few years if they could wait for centuries. But, as we are, we may not last long if we don't find honest politicians with integrity and patriotism. Since we believe our friends and donors are not trying to pamper the corrupt statesmen and politicians but sincere in their concern for the millions bellow the poverty line. We do exhort our good friend India and all other friendly countries to stop supporting corrupt and narrow minded politicians and help the poor Nepalis find honest and patriotic leadership so that they can move forward shoulder to shoulder.

Madhav Kumar Rimal
Madhav K. Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher

US Polls

It was very interesting to read interview of Marcela Sandova. She has shown a true spirit of democracy saying that once the elections are over, we forget our bitterness of elections campaign. Nepalese too have to learn this culture or culture of tolerance and patience. However, there is nothing like this when every democratic values and norms are openly violated by all political forces including oldest Democratic Party Nepali Congress. In Nepal, power is more precious than the value of democracy.

Shanta Shrestha
Via email

incomplete as it failed to highlight the role of trekking agencies in identifying the new areas for tourists. The recent resurgence is not only the result of particular case but it is a result of investment made by the previous government to develop new places. For instance, the Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Project has identified some good areas and developed new trekking pockets. Similarly, Nepal Tourism Board has played all important roles to market Nepal's product. One must give thank to all who have made this journey possible. It is unfortunate to say that Nepal's political leaders are trying to sabotage this achievement by allowing their student leaders to do whatever they want. The time has come for political parties to think constructive and more powerful peaceful ways to press the government.

Sumita Shakya
New York
Via email

Long Cut

After reading your cover story Load Shedding, I came to realize that Nepal will have to face power cut for a long time to go (Cover Story Power Shortage: Darkness Rules November 14-20). I agree with your argument that Nepal needs power for itself so that the country can be relieved from the present perennial power shortage. I don't understand the reason behind Nepali political leaders harping the slogan of exporting 10,000 MW power to neighboring country. If they don't have power for themselves, how can they call to develop export oriented power plants. I would like to request Nepalese political leadership to identify their priority first. Who is their priority: domestic market or neighboring market.

Ballav Khadka
Via email

**Heavenly Place**

Being a tourist who has traveled to Nepal more than dozen times since 1988, I find Nepal as a heaven. It's beautiful Himalayas, mountain, culture, friendly people always inspire me to come. Your cover story Resurgence of Tourism (November 21-27) is very interesting. As soon as the news of restoration of peace spread throughout the world, people started to come to Nepal. I agree with you that there is possibility of resurgence of tourism in Nepal. Provided peaceful atmosphere, tourists will visit Nepal. It is very unfortunate to say that in the name of students, certain thugs are disturbing the peace. I don't understand whose interest are they serving? I have doubts that they are working in the interest of Nepali people. I would like to request you that please identify the enemy of the state and discourage people who follow terrorist model like calling general strike and such other things. You must stop bandha and chakkajam.

Andrew John
Montreal, Canada via email

Happy Situation

Like the president of Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN) Prasiddha Bahadur Pandey, all of us are very happy to see resurgence of tourism in Nepal. After a long time, tourists started to come to Nepal. This is a good indication. At a time global recession is gradually hitting the world and Nepal may too have to face serious consequences, the upsurge of tourism may help Nepal. We must tap this right opportunity and work to keep the present pace. I agree with you that resurgence of tourism is a peace dividend (Spotlight Resurgence of Tourism November 21-27). All of us need to work hard to carry on this positive trend. Tourism remains a backbone of Nepalese economy and it has supported Nepal for a long time to earn foreign currency.

Junior Karki
Via email

Trekking Side

Your cover story (Resurgence of Tourism November 21-27) is



Koirala Spits Venom At Prachanda

Former prime minister and president of Nepali Congress (NC) Girija Prasad Koirala has vowed that he would not allow the army integration to take place referring to the continued militant behavior by YCL cadres. Citing the example of the recent killing of two youths, Koirala said that the national army must be protected from politicization. "They are killing people and burying them. In such a situation, I cannot allow the integration to proceed," he said, addressing the NC's Janajagan campaign at Nepalgunj, Saturday (Nov 22). He also accused the Maoists of not paying attention towards writing new constitution. He also hit at Maoist chairman and prime minister Prachanda. He said Prachanda was trying to cross a river 'in a boat with a hole.' *Leading dailies report*

Six Killed In Bus Accident

Six people are reported dead when a microi bus skidded off the road and plunged into the confluence of the Trisuli and Marshyangdi rivers near Mugling in Dhading district Friday (Nov 21) afternoon. According to initial reports, around 20 people have been injured. The bus with registration number Na 3 Kh 5236 was heading to Narayangarh from Pokhara. The bus was half immersed in the river. Police and local villagers have started rescue operation at the incident site while the injured have been taken to a nearby hospital for treatment.

According to witnesses, the bus rolled several times before it fell into the river.

Compiled from reports

Minister Proposes 800

Districts

A m i d discussions over the method

of implementing federalism in the country, a minister has come up with a plan to divide the country into 800 districts – up from current 75 district format. Minister for State Restructuring Gopal Kiranti has presented what he calls as draft proposal on restructuring of the state. "I have presented this proposal in my capacity as the Minister for State Restructuring," said Kiranti who is also a Maoist leader. However, the front page of his draft proposal has a picture of hammer and sickle in the background. He said he would take this proposal to the cabinet for discussion and decision. He has proposed four development councils and 14 autonomous state councils. *Compiled from reports*

Transport Fare Decreased

The government has ordered the transporters to reduce their transport fare in view of decreasing price of petroleum products. On Saturday (Nov 22), the government decided that the transport fare in petrol-run vehicles will be reduced by 7 percent while the fare in those run by diesel will be reduced by six percent. The government decision came after the transporters dragged their feet in reducing the fare themselves while student unions had threatened to launch agitation if they did not reduce the fare. Meanwhile, transporters have said the decision to reduce fares is unacceptable for them. They have called for what they call as 'scientific price adjustment system' first. *Leading dailies report*

Youth Bodies Accuse Each Other For Promoting Anarchy

Youth leaders affiliated to various political parties have accused each other of promoting anarchy and criminal activities that are becoming the order of the day. Speaking at the Reporters Club in Kathmandu Thursday (Nov 20), president of Nepali Congress affiliated Nepal Tarun Dal, Mahendra Yadav, declared that if the culprits of the Dhading murder case are not brought to justice, his organization would launch demonstrations to topple the current government led by the CPN (Maoist). He said the Prime Minister should resign on moral grounds. Yadav also described the Maoist youth wing, Young Communist League, as a "gang of criminals" and added that Home Minister Bam Dev Gautam failed to control these criminals. Speaking at the same function, YCL chief Ganesh Man Pun reiterated that his organization had no hand in the murder of two youths from Syuehatar, Kathmandu, and claimed that attempts are being made to intensify demonstrations against Maoists and terrorizing the public life on baseless allegation of murder. He claimed such allegations were motivated by the vested interest of Nepali Congress. Chief of the CPN (UML) affiliated Democratic National Youth Association (DNYA) Ajambar Rai warned of dire consequences if YCL did not dismantle its paramilitary structure immediately. The YCL, he claimed, has been promoting culture of impunity in the country. President of Maoist student wing, All Nepal National Independent Union (Revolutionary), Lekh Nath Neupane warned to resorting to violent resistance if baseless allegations continue to pour on them, saying his party has come from a 10-year long war. President of Nepal Student Union Pradip Poudel said his union will begin nationwide demonstrations against Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal which he said would compel the PM to resign. President of All Nepal National Free Student Union, affiliated to UML, Ram Kumari Jhakri, said the Maoists, despite leading the

government, are behaving as rebel group.

Compiled from reports

Invest In Education, Kalam Tells Nepal

Investment in education sector is essential for rural development without which achieving national development is impossible, said visiting former Indian President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam. Addressing the 14th convocation ceremony of Kathmandu University in Dhulikhel, Kavre Tuesday (Nov 18) morning, Kalam who is also referred to as 'Missile Man', urged the KU graduates to pay attention for development of rural areas of Nepal. Citing the instance of India's project for developing 6000 villages, he suggested Nepal to launch similar projects to 4000 villages. Kalam also stressed the need on focusing on promoting education, mountaineering and tourism for faster economic development of Nepal. He further suggested completion of the constitution making process within the given timeframe so that the nation could concentrate on economic transformation. Addressing the same function, Prime Minister and chancellor of the university Pushpa Kamal Dahal urged the students and the university to join hands with the government in achieving the dreams of prosperous and peaceful Nepal. He said the young students must serve in their full capacity for betterment of the nation and the people of this country and sought assistance from the private university in meeting the objective of the government to make all Nepalis literate within the next two years. A total of 1,378 students who completed PhD, MPhil, Masters and Bachelors degree from the university received the convocation felicitation on the occasion. Meanwhile, the former Indian President called on President Dr Ram Baran Yadav at Shital Niwas, the presidential palace. Improving relations between the two countries, peace process and other issues of bilateral interest were discussed during the brief meeting, it has been learnt. Emerging from the meeting, Kalam told reporters that he felt "extremely happy" meeting Dr Yadav and described the meeting it as "cordial". He said that during

the meeting he wished for prolonged peace in Nepal and said Nepalese people.

Compiled from reports

Peace Minister Finds Armed Groups Positive About Talks

Peace and Reconstruction minister and coordinator of the government's talks team, Janardan Sharma, said that he found the Terai insurgent groups positive about the dialogue process. Speaking to reporters at the ministry, Sharma said the attitude of the leaders of the rebel groups whom he met recently was positive and that they showed readiness to sit for meaningful dialogue with the government. Security of their talks team members was one of the immediate concerns of the rebel groups, Sharma informed, and added that the government is ready to guarantee their security. He said he would brief the Council of Ministers on Wednesday about the preparations for talks with the rebel groups. According to him, formal talks with the armed groups will start "very soon". On Monday, Minister Sharma had met the members of the talks team of Madhes Rastra Janatantrik Party, a front of six armed groups, at Kunauli area in India, near Saptari district. The previous night, he had met the talks coordinator of Madhesi Virus Killers, Gaurav.

Compiled from reports

Killing Of Youth Sparks Protests

The government has assured to fulfill the demands of protesting locals and kin of the two youths from Syuchatar, Kathmandu, who were found dead in Dhading after being abducted by Young Communist League (YCL) cadres a month ago. At a meeting with the members of a struggle committee of the



relatives of the victims, Nirmal Panta and Pushkar Dangol, on Thursday (Nov 20), Home Minister Bam Dev Gautam said government is ready to form a judicial commission to probe the murder case and initiate action as per probe report. Talking to reporters after the meeting held at Armed Police Force (APF) headquarters in Swayambhu, Gautam said that apart from constituting a high-level probe commission the government is ready to consider other demands raised by the committee including compensation to the families of the two youths, jobs to one member of each of victim family, martyr status to the two and strict control on the unruly activities of YCL and other youth groups. Chiefs of Nepal Police and APF were present during the meeting. Even as the Home Minister assured to meet the demands no agreement was reached at the meeting. The government has formed a team comprising the chief district officer of Kathmandu and police officials to hold talks with the struggle committee, which has declared that its protest programs would continue unless there is clear commitment from the government to meet the demands. Protests snowballed in Kathmandu from Wednesday, a day after the dead bodies of the two youths were found buried at Bhorlephant Bagar in Dhading. Normal life in the capital city was paralysed today due to a shutdown strike called by the CPN (UML) to protest the killing of the two youths. UML has said the victims were its cadres.

Compiled from reports ■



Devotees Performing Puja at Pashupatinath Temple on the occasion of Balachaurdashhi

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER and Home Minister Bamdev Gautam discussed the issue of Kalapani border dispute with the visiting Chinese military delegate on Thursday and told them that the issue could be settled through the trilateral understanding among Nepal, India and China. The Chinese delegation led by Major General Ei Hujeng called on DPM Gautam at Home Ministry and they discussed issues including border management, military assistance and so on. The Kalapani border dispute has been going on between India and Nepal since 1960s. Located near Darchula district in northwestern Nepal, the area is a point where borders of Nepal, India and China meet. "The discussion did take place on border management," said Home Secretary Gobinda Kusum. The Chinese delegate also called on Defense Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa 'Badal' on Thursday (Nov 20).

UNDER PRESSURE TO MEET the ambitious revenue target, the government is adopting stricter hand in collecting house rent tax and income tax. According to Revenue Secretary Krishna Hari Baskota, the government needs to adopt strict method in order to collect the targeted Rs 142 billion as revenue this fiscal year. He said that the government has given till mid-February for the people to voluntarily disclose their income and pay tax on flat rate. He added that the authorities will now be strict in collecting house rent tax.

THE GOVERNMENT HAS DECIDED to dissolve the Social Welfare Council (SWC). A cabinet meeting held at Singh Durbar

Wednesday (Nov 19) took the decision to this effect after concluding that it has not been able to "work properly" due to rampant corruption inside it, according to government spokesperson and Minister of Information and Communication Krishna Bahadur Mahara. Minister Mahara said that plans for reconstituting the council have been put on the shelves for the time being. SWC was responsible for the promotion, facilitation, co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation of the activities of the non-governmental social organizations in Nepal. The cabinet meeting also approved a draft of law on finding the whereabouts of missing persons and decided to table it at the legislative parliament for discussion. If endorsed by the parliament the law will pave the way for formation a commission to find the status of missing persons. Similarly, the cabinet decided to form a nine-member Administration Restructuring Commission (ARC) under the Minister of General Administration. According to Minister Mahara, the commission will comprise Dr Mahindra Narayan Mishra (expert in Public Administration); Achyut Raj Rajbhandari (former secretary); Bijaya K.C (former member of Public Service Commission); Bal Krishna Prasain, (former secretary); Rajendra Bahadur Singh (former Additional Inspector General); Mukti Rijal (expert in good governance); Sitaram Mandal (legal expert) and Dambhar Bahadur B.K (education expert). The meeting also decided to make few political appointments — Bhesh Raj Kandel as the chairman of Nepal Telecommunication Authority (NTA), Uddhav Bahadur Karki as the General Manager of Udaypur Cement Factory and Bidhya Nath Nepal and Dr Bhagwan Koirala as members of the Board of Directors of the newly built Civil Servants' Hospital. Compiled from reports

THE PRIVATE SECTOR ENTREPRENEURS have expressed their inability to implement the recently revised minimum wage for workers claiming they can do so only after increasing productivity. "We are not in a position to pay minimum wage fixed unilaterally by the government," said Kush Kumar Joshi, Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI). The government recently fixed the minimum wage at Rs 4600 per month and at least Rs 90 a day. Joshi said that the FNCCI is holding talks with trade unions over this issue and would reach a conclusion after November 24.

THE VISITING FORMER PRESIDENT of India APJ Abdul Kalam advised Nepal to develop herbal business. Then, the herbal companies here can join hands with the big bio-pharma companies of India, for mutual benefit, he said. He also said that the creativity of the people of Nepal should be put to best use for its development. The former president returned home, Tuesday, after completing two-day visit to Nepal. He also addressed a convocation ceremony at Kathmandu University

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER OF INDIA, Pranab Mukherjee, is arriving in Kathmandu on November 24 for a three-day official visit. "The visit is part of ongoing high-level bilateral interaction between the two countries. The visit will provide an opportunity to discuss the entire gamut of our extensive bilateral relationship with Nepal," a statement issued by the Indian Embassy said Monday. This will be the first high-level political delegation of India to visit Nepal after the declaration of republic in Nepal. ■

IS NEPAL INTENDING TO LEGITIMIZE CONTENTIOUS LAXMANPUR BARRAGE?

Dr. AB Thapa

Few years ago India had completed the construction of the Laxmanpur barrage across the West Rapti river near the Indo-Nepal border.

Ever since a vast area of lands inside Nepalese territory are being flooded almost throughout the monsoon season every year when the West Rapti river discharge is high. There was a widespread condemnation against the construction of the Laxmanpur barrage. Politicians, social workers, various NGOs never failed to express their solidarity with the people of the Banke district who are the victim of India's decision to build the Laxmanpur barrage. Press and TV reporters were regularly

covering the news how thousands of Banke district farmers each year are forced to abandon their homes to find shelter in the distant forest lands when village after village are in the grip of the West Rapti flooding consequent upon the Laxmanpur barrage.

Nepal Going to Legitimize Laxmanpur Barrage

All major political parties represented in present constituent assemble had denounced the Indian government's action to build the Laxmanpur barrage as a direct violation of the international law. Parliamentarians and representatives of the NGOs had been demanding that the Laxmanpur barrage should be demolished. Despite all these Laxmanpur barrage related controversies, Nepal government is now going ahead to legitimize the construction of the Laxmanpur barrage by being a party to fulfillment of the Indian Government's

ultimate objective of maximizing the irrigation coverage area inside India by adding into the Laxmanpur reservoir the regulated flow of the West Seti river. After the completion of the West Seti storage dam project, the regulated flow of the West Seti drawn into the Saryu canal from the Girjapur barrage would be fed into the Laxmanpur barrage reservoir.

Will our government have a moral right to denounce the construction of the Laxmanpur barrage, which has led to widespread submergence of Nepalese territory, if it itself is a party directly supporting that project? How about the plight of the Banke district people once the

Ever since a vast area of lands inside Nepalese territory are being flooded almost throughout the monsoon season every year when the West Rapti river discharge is high. There was a widespread condemnation against the construction of the Laxmanpur barrage. Politicians, social workers, various NGOs never failed to express their solidarity with the people of the Banke district who are the victim of India's decision to build the Laxmanpur barrage. Press and TV reporters were regularly covering the news how thousands of Banke district farmers each year are forced to abandon their homes to find shelter in the distant forest lands when village after village are in the grip of the West Rapti flooding consequent upon the Laxmanpur barrage.

huge Saryu canal drawing 360 cumecs water from the Girjapur barrage, which is about 50% more than the dry season flow of the Kosi, would be fed into the Laxmanpur barrage reservoir?

Construction of the West Seti project is going to preclude the chance to find satisfactory settlement over Laxmanpur barrage dispute with India. People of Banke district affected by Laxmanpur barrage would be consigned to lead a miserable life for ever.

Google Sattlite Pictures

The direct link between the West Seti project and the

Laxmanpur barrage is not a closely-guarded secret. Anyone can log on Google Internet satellite picture to see himself that the broad Saryu canal starting from the Girjapur barrage, which has been build to tap the Karnali as well as regulated West Seti flow, empties into the Laxmanpur barrage reservoir.

The decision to implement the West Seti project should be postponed until our government reaches an agreement with India to resolve the Laxmanpur barrage submergence problems. West Seti storage dam project is vital for boosting India's agriculture production. There is a great demand in India for the regulated flow of the West Seti. Thus the West Seti project gives our country enormous leverage in future negotiations with India to settle the submergence problems consequent upon the Laxmanpur barrage reservoir. We

would be betraying our country if we decide in haste to implement the West Seti project

What a Great Surprise!

It is a great surprise that on this very important matter of life and death of thousands of Banke district peasants our NGOs, press and other media

are now completely silent. The silence of media could be wrongly interpreted to imply that our NGOs, press and other media are not truly concerned for the plight of the Banke farmers. Their sympathy for the sufferings of the Banke farmers was nothing more than crocodile tears. They are more interested to please the multinational company eager to make fortune implementing the West Seti project.

Genuine Right of Banke Farmers

It might not be long that the farmers of the Banke district would be knowing the true nexus between the West Seti dam project and the Laxmanpur barrage. They would find out that the interest of foreigners takes priority over their right to own and live peacefully in their ancestral homes. It is hoped that the NGOs, press and other media will not ignore the sensitivity of the Laxmanpur barrage problems. People of the Banke district should be assured

that the entire country supports their just cause

West Seti Dam Failure

At present our country is heading for the implementation of the West Seti storage dam project. This project will have a concrete faced gravel fill type dam which could be the highest dam of this type in the whole world. The dam will impound a vast storage reservoir. It will be about 1,500 million cubic meters in volume. Needless to say that the failure of the West Seti dam would result to a colossal loss of life and property. It still remains unanswered who would be held responsible for failure of the mammoth West Seti dam, which is proposed to be built by a private developer perhaps even without being thoroughly examined by a competent panel of experts on behalf of the government. Let us not forget

It is a great surprise that on this very important matter of life and death of thousands of Banke district peasants our NGOs, press and other media are now completely silent. The silence of media could be wrongly interpreted to imply that our NGOs, press and other media are not truly concerned for the plight of the Banke farmers. Their sympathy for the sufferings of the Banke farmers was nothing more than crocodile tears.

that slight negligence resulted to failure of the Malpasset dam near Frejus in Southern France. Similarly Italy was hit by 261 meters high Vajont dam disaster. Our own Kulekhani high dam was on the verge of collapse through oversight of geological problems.

Nepal Would Forfeit Water Right

Nepal would forfeit forever its right to benefit in perpetuity from the regulated flow of the West Seti if agreements are not signed in advance between the governments of India and Nepal on the benefit sharing issue. Our full right to ownership of waters stored in storage reservoirs to be built in our country is guaranteed by widely accepted international practices. Moreover, India too is willing to buy water from our country. It would be quite unfortunate if our decision makers under the pressure of some multinationals turn a blind eye to it.■



PM Dahal (Left) Indian External Affairs Minister Mukherjee : Significant visit

NEIGHBOURS

'Goodwill Visits'

As Nepal's peace process increasingly becomes shaky, outside world grows wary prompting a series of 'goodwill' visits to the Himalayan nation

By SUSHIL SHARMA

The successive prime ministers of Nepal after the royal regime collapsed three years ago have each visited India twice. Girija Prasad Koirala in less than two years. Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda in little over two months.

But it has been more than a decade since an Indian prime minister came avisting Nepal.

Understandably, therefore, the Indian external affairs minister Pranab Mukherjee made big headlines and long soundbytes despite what the officials said was "a routine goodwill visit" early this week.

On the day Mukherjee arrived, British minister for international development also came for a four-day visit. Danish foreign minister was due to arrive the day Mukherjee left Kathmandu. A UN special rapporteur is also on a Nepal tour.

But clearly, the Mukherjee visit

overshadowed them all.

He is the most senior Indian leader to visit Nepal after an alliance between the former Maoist rebels and the mainstream parliamentary parties brought down the royal regime. And, ultimately, got rid of the monarchy.

The alliance had its foundation in the 12-point accord signed in Delhi three years ago.

Much water has flowed down the Bagmati and the Ganges since then.

The widening rift between the signatories of the accord has threatened to send it in tatters – and throw the peace process into the dustbin of history.

According to sources, Mukherjee's primary mission was aimed to ward off that threat.

It is not known what transpired in the exclusive meeting he had had with the prime minister Prachanda and finance minister Baburam Bhattarai without aides from either side.

But in formal talks with them, Mukherjee made it clear that India wanted to see the signatories of the 12-point Delhi accord keep the spirit of the then camaraderie.

Said an insider, "Mukherjee said that such a spirit was still needed to keep the peace process reach its logical conclusion."

The "logical conclusion" would mean that the Maoist combatants' issue is resolved for good and the new constitution is put in place.

Such a logical conclusion is unlikely as long as the rift between the Maoist communist party and the main opposition Nepali Congress continued.

On arrival at the Tribhuvan airport, Mukherjee publicly offered Indian assistance but seemed to advise against involving any other party in the peace process, going by what a senior official said. According to him, "Mukherjee said that the peace process had all along been Nepali-owned and should continue to be so."

Interestingly, less than two weeks after the Indian external affairs minister's sojourn in Kathmandu, his Chinese counterpart is set to engage the Nepalese officials at Shital Niwas and Baluwatar in what the officials would expectedly call a "routine goodwill visit". ■



NRB : Under pressure

GLOBAL RECESSION

Remittance In Red!

The IMF points that the ongoing global recession could hit Nepal's remittance income

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

In recent few years, remittance has become the single most important pillar of Nepal's economy.

Growing at around 30 percent on average every year, last year alone Nepal earned nearly Rs 100 billion from remittance earning through banking channels.

However, the growing remittance earning could face the heat from the global recession, which is hurting not only South East Asian countries like Malaysia but the falling oil price could also affect Gulf states like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE – which are the traditionally most favorite destinations

for Nepalese workers.

Addressing a press conference in Kathmandu, Sunday (Nov 23), Brian J. Aitken, deputy division chief, Asia and Pacific department of IMF, said, "Remittances remain the primary source of foreign exchange and they have been growing very rapidly. What we expect is there will be slowdown of that growth rate. And if it occurs it will take place over several years."

But he pointed that economic situation of India will have far more bearing on Nepal than the global recession.

"Nepal is fairly isolated from the

global economic situation. But the main shadow is probably the slower growth in India," he said.

Aitken, however, downplayed concerns that donor assistance for Nepal could also be decreased due to slowdown in economies of western countries.

"I don't see any slowdown in donor pledges. And I certainly do not expect any over the next year or two. Governments may reassess their pledges but they certainly haven't done so in case of Nepal," he said.

Aitken had led an IMF delegation, which had come to Kathmandu, to evaluate the budget prepared by the new government.

Budget concerns

The delegation has concluded that the budget, particularly its revenue target, is ambitious and could jeopardize the budget's stability if they are not met.

"The recently approved budget is ambitious. The higher revenue forecast accommodates a sizable rise in budgeted recurrent spending. The government has taken impressive steps in an effort to achieve its revenue target, and revenues remain buoyant at this stage. But there is still a risk that if the planned revenue fails to materialize the sustainability of the budget could be threatened going forward," states a press statement by the IMF delegation.

The statement adds that Nepal's macroeconomic situation is good but subject to risks. "Foreign exchange reserve levels are strong. Maintaining the exchange rate peg – which has been critical in keeping inflation low and stable – will require a fiscal policy that recognizes the limited resources available. Budget policy should be designed to support this



IMF Team : Remittance in red

environment and provide a foundation for growth going forward.'

It says that the average year on year inflation could increase to

around 11 percent. The inflation rate, however, will follow the Indian trend largely because Nepali rupee is pegged with Indian rupee.

The IMF delegation also stated that the biggest short-run concern is rapidly growing real estate prices. "Given the large exposure of the financial sector to real estate, a decline in real estate prices would have negative effects on banks and ultimately on output growth," it said.

"The licensing of new banks and finance companies is straining supervisory soundness. Nepal is severely over-banked, with some 160 licensed deposit-taking institutions. The aggressive lending practices of many of these institutions expose their depositors to excessive risk. This underscores the urgency of significantly ramping up the Nepal Rastra Bank's regulatory enforcement," the statement adds. ■

UK'S MINISTER INTOWN

Friend In Need

Mike Foster, British minister for International Development, assures UK's continued support to Nepal's development

By A CORRESPONDENT

Although his visit was shadowed due to high profile visit by Indian external affairs minister Pranab Mukherjee, British minister Mike Foster's agenda was clear as he lent his hand to support Nepal's development activities.

Being a traditional friend of Nepal, British government always comes to rescue Nepal whenever the country is in crisis. "The UK is committed to work with the new government. I am looking forward to a discussion on the peace process and eradication of poverty," said British minister Foster

upon his arrival for four day visit to Nepal.

British government is largest bilateral development partner of Nepal annually contributing more than billions of rupees for Nepal's development and peace building process. Foster stressed the need to chalk out priority for development and peace.

"We are considering increasing the support in near future," said the British minister. Along with visiting other parts of Nepal, Foster also visited flood affected areas in eastern Nepal.

"How Nepal adapts to climate

change and how it manages its water resources will not just affect its development. It will also have huge implications for 500 million



people, who live in the Gangetic plains," said minister Foster.

As six months have already passed since the elections for Constituent Assembly and only two more years left to draft the constitution, Nepal's development partners have been expressing concern over the delay. At a time when Nepal's constitution making process seems to be no body's agenda, British minister also discussed the matter with prime minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal and other political leaders.

"All the parties should work in harmony to facilitate the constitution-drafting process, which in turn will ensure peace and prosperity for the people," said minister Foster. ■

SACOSAN III

Accepting

Sanitation

As Human Rights

Eight countries of South Asian Region have variations in the level of economic development and geographical size but all these countries have one thing in common in terms of sanitation coverage. Over 1 billion people in South Asia are still without improved sanitation services. Globally 1.2 billion people practice open defecation, two thirds - 778 million in South Asia. In Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan and India, poor sanitation stands as a major obstacle in the fight to reduce child mortality. In this bleak scenario, the commitments expressed by political leaders and civil society members have raised certain hope. Despite differences and disputes on political issues, political leaders, civil society workers and officials agreed, during the third South Asian Conference on Sanitation (SACOSAN III, which was held in New Delhi, to accept the access to sanitation as basic rights. However, it remains to be seen how the leaders of the region will translate their commitment to actions and make differences in the lives of over billion population

KESHABPOUDEL

(reporting from New Delhi, India)

When ministers of eight south Asian Countries declared that the sanitation and water is basic right of every citizen, there was rejoice and happiness among all the stakeholders taking part in third SACOSAN meeting.

"It took us more than a decade for political leaders of South Asia to recognize sanitation as a basic right. This is a major achievement for the people living in region," said Barbara Frost, Chief Executive, Water Aid UK.

"The time is now to see the implementation of the resolution."

After three day long seminar, all were satisfied with the outcome. "We welcome this resolution which recognizes sanitation and water as basic rights. It is



SACOSAN III Conference : Historic decision

a major step forward,” said Jon Lane, executive director of Geneva-based Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council.

From the very beginning of the SACOSAN III, civil society members and grass root workers actively worked to make this happen. In a declaration of the Pre-SACOSAN Meet, they too declared, “Access to sanitation is not only a development imperative; it is also a human rights law. For better health outcomes, sanitation requires water supply in close proximity.

Organized by Freshwater Action Network South Asia (FANSA), WaterAid and the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC), Pre-SACOSAN Civil Society Meet opened the way to accept sanitation as a basic

right.

Inaugurated by Indian Prime Minister Dr. Man Mohan Singh, political leaders of all eight South Asian countries agreed to recognize the sanitation as a right of the people.

Significantly, the declaration commits member states (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka) to strengthen regional collaboration and promote independent monitoring.

Despite the official declaration that the governments of region accepted sanitation and water as a basic right and expressed commitments, many still have doubts over the implementation of the commitment looking at their past behavior.

According to WaterAid, Nepal

scored a very low number compared to other three countries India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. Nepal has not made any good progress in various sectors. The estimated diarrhea child death in 2008 is 9,870 in Nepal.

“Of course, our pace of progress is slow but there are ways to make it more effective. This government is fully committed to address the lacunae in the areas of universal coverage of sanitation,” said Bijaya Kumar Gachhedar, Minister for Physical Planning and Works. “We are in the process of finalizing a sanitation master plan and urban water supply and sanitation policy. The master plan will be a basic conceptual guiding document for achieving the national sanitation target for sanitation for all by 2017.”



A Garbage crises : Making unhealthy

South Asian Situation

Among all South Asian countries India has achieved high economic growth rate with an average of eight percent in the last six years. However, its state of sanitation coverage is not much different than other countries whose economic growth are very inconsistent.

According to WaterAid, a London-based INGO, universal access targets have been set in the region and changes made, yet governments are still failing to act with the urgency required. At the current rate of progress, the 2015 MDG target for sanitation will not be met in South Asia until 2043.

Others too show the bleak scenario in the region regarding the state of sanitation. "Even as I stand before you, in the next 15 minutes, 10 children in India

would tragically die of an avoidable cause like diarrhea. And many more if we take the South Asia region as a whole. I am sure that all present here feel a spontaneous sense of sadness, shame and even outrage and that with all the knowledge, technology and resources that we as societies and governments have at its command, this loss in precious lives continue to challenge political leaders, planners, program implementers, civil society and most of all the families that have to bear the burden of this loss," said Kanin Hulshof, representative, UNICEF India.

"In the field of sanitation, this region has registered progress. Open defecation, the riskiest sanitation practice has dropped from 66 percent in 1999 to 49 percent in 2006 and yet one in two people in this region still defecate

in the open- a practice that is taking its daily toll in diseases, deaths, absenteeism from school impacting learning, loss of productivity and exposing young women to risks of violation of privacy and violence," said Hulshof in his key note address.

WaterAid points that the poor progress in the sanitation sector has serious health implications for South Asia. Out of 2.5 billion people worldwide living without access to adequate sanitation, one billion live in South Asia. Globally, 1.2 billion people practice open defecation, two thirds – 778 million – in South Asia. In Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan, poor sanitation now stands as a major obstacle in the fight to reduce child mortality.

Strong political leadership is urgently

needed to address this crisis. In Dhaka in 2004 and in Islamabad in 2006 the governments of South Asia came together, reviewing progress and making commitments to act. WaterAid believes that these commitments must be met a priority and further action must be taken. WaterAid writes one million children have died from diarrhea in South Asia in the two years since the last SACOSAN conference. This is the true cost of poor progress.

According to government data, Bangladesh has coverage of 88 percent and Nepal, India and Pakistan have coverage of 46 percent, 44.5 percent and 44.5 percent respectively. Bangladesh has already declared that it will provide universal coverage of sanitation by 2010. However, India has declared it will achieve universal coverage by 2012. Nepal has planned to achieve universal coverage of sanitation by 2017.

A report - which was prepared by World Health Organization and UNICEF for Third South Asian Conference on Sanitation - reveals some good progress. According to report, use of improved sanitation has increased from 18 percent to 33 percent in 16 years meaning that



A Latrin : Making clean

almost 300 million people gained access during the same period.

However, the bleak scenario is that over 1 billion people were still without

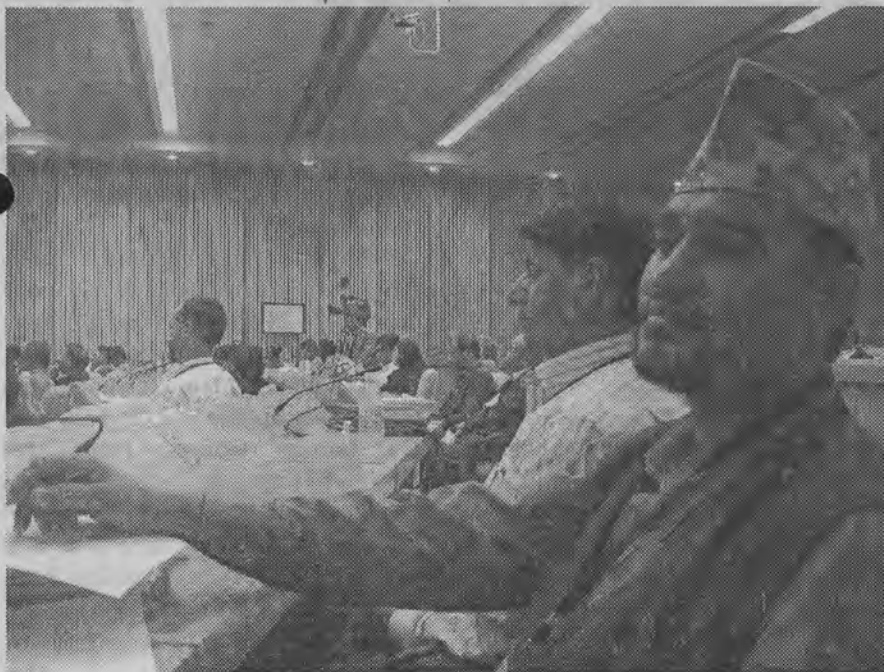
improved sanitation services.

One of the challenges is growing disparities between urban dwellers and rural folks. The report says that 57 percent of urban dwellers are likely to use an improved sanitation facility compared to 23 percent rural dwellers. The report predicted that at the current rate of progress, in 2015 these countries will reach sanitation coverage of 41 percent falling 18 percentage points short of the target.

Nepal's Situation

State of Nepal's progress in sanitation is not rosy as it is claimed by the government. The recent report published by WaterAid shows Nepal's failure to achieve progress towards universal access. Nepal's progress against MDG target is dismal. As South Asia's three countries India, Pakistan and Bangladesh have made certain progress, Nepal's progress can be termed poor.

"Of course, we are unable to meet



A Nepali delegate in SACOSAN III : Sharing knowledge

some of our targets and we are still far away from achieving the progress. But, we have achieved certain good progress. One cannot ignore the fact that Nepal has made rapid progress in sanitation coverage. Sanitation coverage had reached 46 percent by 2007 and water coverage had reached 78 percent. The growth trend of sanitation coverage and increasing hygiene and sanitation achievements indicate that Nepal is on

the track to achieve the MDG target,” said Suman Kumar Sharma, joint secretary at Ministry of Physical Planning and Works.

But according to Umesh Pandey of NEWAH, the declaration is historic for a country like Nepal which still has a long way to go to meet its target. In terms of realizing Sanitation as basic human rights, SACOSAN III was historic.

“WaterAid Nepal has been

advocating sanitation as basic human rights for quite a long time. We need to ensure that SACOSAN III declaration is translated into real action both in policies and practices,” said Sanjaya Adhikary, country representative of WaterAid Nepal.

The lesson from third SACOSAN is that Nepal needs to do hard work to meet the target to provide universal coverage of sanitation by 2017 two years after the MDGs’ meet. ■

“As Sanitation Is Now Accepted As Basic Human Rights, Govt Needs To Take Steps To Implement It”

- R. MURLI

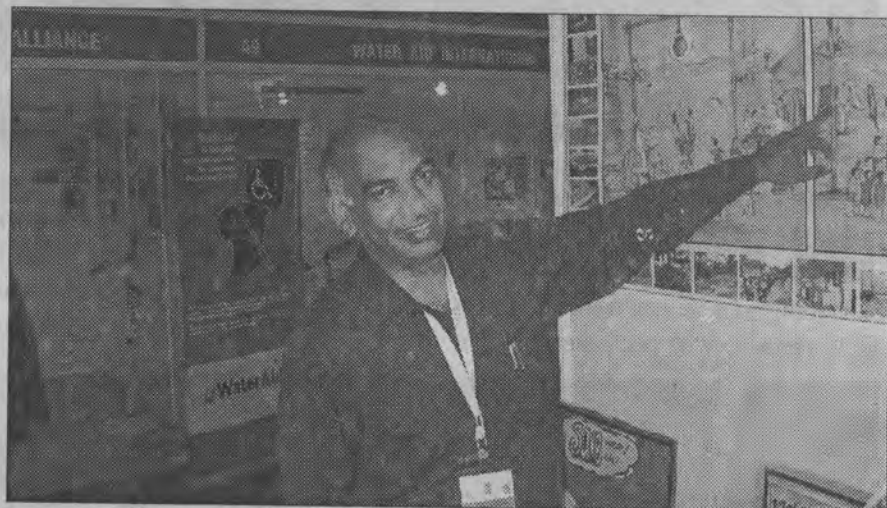
After declaration of SACOSAN III, R. MURLI, convenor of FANSA, a civil society activist praised the declaration recognizing access to sanitation as a human rights is historic. MurlI spoke to SPOTLIGHT on various issues. Excerpts:

How do you see the recent SACOSAN III ministerial meeting declaration?

Being a member of civil society pursuing to recognize the sanitation as a basic human rights, it is a moment for joy for all members of civil society. Even Pre-SACOSAN meet organized on 16-17 November, 2008 in New Delhi by FANSA, WaterAid and Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) in its declaration states that the access to sanitation is not only a development imperative, it is also a human rights firmly grounded in international human rights law.

Are you satisfied with SACOSAN III?

Yes. Despite certain reluctance to make water and sanitation as basic human rights, the ministers of the region have taken very bold steps. As sanitation is now accepted as basic human rights, the government needs to take steps to implement it.



What is the role of civil society?

Members from civil society have given very valuable input to ministerial meeting. The declaration of the Pre-SACOSAN Civil Society Meet has given many things to learn from.

In what areas have the SACOSAN meeting been helpful?

In all areas, these kinds of meeting can play important role. Thanks to SACOSAN meeting, we are able to bring sanitation as a political agenda. Despite such an important issue related to human, politicians always ignored this agenda. Now it is gradually emerging as a main political agenda. It is in itself a major achievement.

Do you believe that the political leaders will implement their commitments?

They don't have other options. As a civil society organization, we will watch their work and press them to implement their commitment if necessary.

Who do you blame for not giving sanitation proper priority?

Although Mahatma Gandhi said sanitation is more important for human dignity and independence, politicians have not paid due attention to it as it required. As pressure is growing from grass root workers, I don't think politicians are now in a position to ignore it. ■



INFLATION: Ride Of Concern

INFLATION

Ride Of Concern

The year on year average of the inflation reached ten percent

By A CORRESPONDENT

The year-on-year wholesale price inflation for the first two months of the current fiscal year stood at 10.3 percent compared to 11.1 percent a year ago, Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) report says.

The central bank said such moderation was mainly due to the decline in the price of cash crops and fruits and vegetables under agricultural commodities group in spite of a high increase in the price of imported commodities.

According to the new macro economic report of the bank released recently, the index of agricultural commodities, domestic manufactured commodities and imported commodities

increased by 0.7 percent, 15.8 percent and 24.0 percent respectively in the review period as compared to 16.6 percent, 7.8 percent and 4.5 percent in the corresponding period last year.

Of agricultural commodities, the price index of pulses, food grains, livestock production and spices increased by 22.2 percent, 21.5 percent and 13.3 percent and 10.0 percent respectively and the price index of cash crops and fruits and vegetables declined by 23.2 percent and 22.1 percent respectively.

Similarly, the price index of construction materials and food-related products increased by 24.5 percent and 21.8 percent and those of the imported

commodities such as petroleum products and coal, price index went up by a whopping rate of 39.2 percent on a year-on-year basis in mid-September 2008.

The overall yearly salary and wage rate index rose by 9.2 percent. Wages of agricultural, industrial and construction laborers increased by 19.5 percent, 2.7 percent and 8.9 percent respectively in the review period.

In the first two months of 2008/09, the government budget surplus stood at Rs.3.4 billion compared to a surplus of Rs 2.6 billion last year. During this period, the government expenditure increased by 40.4 percent to Rs.15.6 billion compared to an increase of 13.5 percent the previous year due to a rise in the growth of recurrent expenditure, freeze expenditure and principal repayment expenditure.

On revenue side, the government managed to increase its revenue generation by 17.5 percent to Rs.14.6 billion compared to an increase of 15.4 percent last year, contributed by a high rate of growth of income tax, customs duties and VAT. The foreign trade also showed positive growth during this period, NRB said, In the first two months of this fiscal year, total exports rose by 36.1 percent in contrast to a decline of 3.1 percent in the corresponding period of the previous year.

Of the total exports, exports to India rose by 12.2 percent and by 82.0 percent to other countries. Similarly, total imports rose by 43.3 percent in the first two months compared to 8.1 percent increase last year.

The overall BOP recorded a deficit of Rs. 2.1 billion in the first two months. Previous year had registered a deficit of Rs. 2.7 billion. Despite surge in trade deficit, significant increase in travel receipts by 40.1 percent and workers' remittances by 73.9 percent led to current account surplus of Rs 454.1 million in the review period, NRB report said.

The gross foreign exchange reserves stood at Rs. 215.4 billion in mid-September 2008, a rise of 1.3 percent compared to the level as at mid-July 2008. Net foreign assets (NFA), after adjusting foreign exchange valuation gain/loss, declined by 1.2 percent (Rs 2.1 billion) in the review period compared to a decline of 2.0 percent (2.7 billion) in the previous year, NRB said.

In the first two months of 2008/09, domestic credit expanded by 4.3 percent mainly due to an increase in private sector credit by 5.9 percent. Deposit mobilisation of commercial banks increased by Rs 19.6 (4.6 percent) billion in the first two months of 2008/09 to touch total deposit of Rs 441.1 billion. ■

POSTAL SYSTEM IN NEPAL : INEFFICIENT AND UNRELIABLE

-By *Abhushan Gautam*

Unsatisfactory budget, unforgiving landscape and unsteady government. As if Nepal didn't already have enough on its share of hardships, a recent news article in Kavre Times, a local Nepali newspaper, outlines another major problem that has been hindering the functioning of aid organizations in Nepal- its inefficient and unreliable postal system.

According to the article, a letter mailed March 26 to the office of NCEF(Nepal Children Education Fund)'s sister branch Campaign for Education (CE) in Kathmandu had not yet reached the office even two months after it was registered. Sent from Banepa, which is only about 12 miles out of Kathmandu, the letter contained important documents concerning applications for CE scholarships. The scholarships applications, now on hold due to the late delivery of letters, were supposed to be forwarded to NCEF, USA after they had been processed.

The common story is, now, heard almost everywhere in Nepal. Recently, a gender expert with an INGO, Nilima, had to face a similar but an unfortunate incident. She was expecting an invitation letter for her participation in an important workshop in Japan. Thanks to the inefficiency of the post office, as she blames, the incident cost her an important once-in-a-life-time opportunity. All these events bear a strong testimony to the tarnishing image of postal services in Nepal.

Nonetheless, it may seem remarkable enough to know that Nepal's postal network encompasses one general post office, four regional offices, 70 district offices, 807 area post offices and 3,130 extra departmental post offices- all of which provide mail services- throughout

the country. Besides the district and regional post offices, 444 area post offices and the GPO also provide financial money services like money order services and postal savings bank service. However, as misleading the figures might be, the actual working scenario is completely different. Occurrences of un- and mis-delivered letter and post-mails are frequent, due to sheer volume and, perhaps, higher expectation of service. The state-run

The common story is, now, heard almost everywhere in Nepal. Recently, a gender expert with an INGO, Nilima, had to face a similar but an unfortunate incident. She was expecting an invitation letter for her participation in an important workshop in Japan. Thanks to the inefficiency of the post office, as she blames, the incident cost her an important once-in-a-life-time opportunity.

postal system has been facing quite a solid competition from more efficient services and the Internet. It seems as though, Nepal Department of Postal Services just doesn't have enough resources and manpower to deal with the influx of post mails.

Although, postal service officials agree that unpleasant incidents "might happen", they won't admit their ineffectiveness. "We have been providing invaluable service to the general public, but our services are never recognized. And our small mistakes are exaggerated and overstated," says Kishor Jung Karki, a senior postal official. This might be an expected response, but one that is unlikely to convince thousands of customers who consider

the postal service to be full of malice and corruption. The longest line there is always for those waiting to get the stamps on their letters/parcels cancelled as it is widely believed that post office employees "re-cycle" stamps while your letter/parcel ends up in the waste bin.

Despite the limitations, the postal service has something new to boast about- the EMS (Express Mail Service)- the courier service started by the GPO in 1997. Since its instigation, the service has

been a success story due to its low tariffs and reliability. For instance, 1 kg parcel delivery to USA can cost you only Rs 1,350, using EMS while the same service can cost a staggering amount of near Rs 5,000 using DHL or comparable services. In its four years of operation not one customer has claimed compensation from EMS, implying its extensive delivery success and customer satisfaction. But, as EMS is still limited to 26 countries only, one still has to rely on other commercial courier services to send packages and documents to most destinations like Africa, West Asia, Europe and the Americas.

To remain on the topic, the most daunting task for the postal service is making its distribution system more

efficient. Kathmandu and Lalitpur districts pose the greatest challenge to an efficient distribution system given their burgeoning population density, and unplanned residential constructions. "We cannot improve the distribution system unless city mapping is done properly, but otherwise we are well equipped and have enough human resources to work smoothly," says Postal Services Director Rajendra Prasad Sharma.

The 12,000 postal service workers on contract with the extra-departmental post offices are the lowest in the postal service hierarchy here, and they receive virtually no incentives. They have no income other than their meager salaries and their jobs pivot on the caprice of officials at the district post offices. "There's no initiative for postal services workers. They aren't provided training and the scope for promotions is limited. They aren't motivated to provide world class service," says Shree Dhar Gautam, Chief Post Master at the GPO.

In order to encourage efficiency of the postal services, seven years back, the government had introduced a new legislation that limited lateral entry from one class of administrative services to the another to only 10 percent. Since then, a clarion call for an autonomy in the postal services is gradually leveling up. In fact, an amendment to the Postal Service Act that provides greater freedom to the postal sector has already been drafted. This would ensure better mobility of resources and maintain competition with the private sector. For other organizations, online application system and provision of Laptop to area coordinators seem to be some of the other viable options. Regardless of the complaints received from the customers so far, the 'emotional attachment' of using good old-fashioned letters has kept the postal services on its heels so far. The optimism for an improvement in postal delivery is pounding inside the heart of every post-fanatic and the postal department itself should be doing everything it can to maintain that flicker of hope. ■

GREEN NEPAL PARTY

Against Familitism

Green Nepal Party (GNP) calls to stop Maoist from imposing dictatorship

By A CORRESPONDENT

At a time when Maoists are heading towards the road to one party dictatorship, GNP calls the Maoist not to resort to utopian dreams.

In a press conference organized on 23 November, GNP said grabbing power with a call of 'New Nepal,' the Maoists are trying to take the country towards one party dictatorship. Trying to thrust a polity discarded by the world would be nothing but treason against the nation. This will only upset the political, economic, social and religious foundations of the country. Nepal and her people will never accept it. Taking sanctuary in a foreign country, the Maoists waged a decade-long violent struggle against the tiny poor country. This uncalled for war has not only demolished the valuable infrastructures donated by friendly countries but pushed the country back by a few decades. The policies and directives of the Maoist led government now are further vitiating the situation. The over 600 strong constituent assembly of a poor small country like Nepal has outdone even the United States and a continental country like India. How could the politicians in power agree to such a suicidal proposition? A country which survives on alms cannot bear the burden of such a gigantic constituent assembly. The inherent motives of the Maoist to choose such a gigantic constituent assembly through proportional representation could be nothing but achieving their sinister objective by totally destroying the economic structure of the country and pushing it to total anarchy. In such a perilous situation, all the patriotic forces of the country must come together to save her from impending disaster. It must be our one and only commitment. The country has already borne the authoritarian rules of the Ranas, the Thakuris, and the Koiralas, which has enveloped the country in total darkness. The people can no more take the Maoist familitism. The bigger political parties are looking at the aliens and waiting for their turn again. But Green Nepal Party, with very limited resources, has come out in the open to reeducate our people to save the country and the people from disaster. At this terrible juncture, Green Nepal Party exhorts all patriotic forces to join hands with them to save the country from the impending doom.

The GNP also humbly request Nepal's donor, well wishers and friendly countries to come to Nepal's rescue and save identity and sovereignty.

The problems the country is facing that need immediate resolution are enumerated in the following:

Increasing corruption: Not one action has been taken against corrupt officials. Rather it is being institutionalized under patronage of political parties. Sister organization of bigger political parties resort to loot and corruption with impunity but the government shields them.

The government under the Maoist leadership has added familism to existing Nepotism and favoritism.

Excerpt the women, Dalits, the Janjatis and the Adivasis members, all other members must forgo their allowance as the country cannot bear the burden. It is against all financial regulation to dole out ten lacs to every member of CA. Neither is it moral and ethical.

The Maoist must restore the looted property of the people immediately to their rightful owners. Compensating the victims from national exchequer is not only against the rule but anti national also. It is nothing but rewarding the criminals.

The Maoist combatants cannot be integrated in the Nepali Army. They must be accommodated separately. The sky rocketing prices are killing the poor people and the scarcity and adulteration are aggravating their miseries. Government must control all these at once. Illegal deforestation and pollution of all rivers and pond must be stopped. Environmental pollution, if not checked, will adversely affect the people's health.

A country rich in water resources suffers from acute shortage of potable drinking water. There is no irrigation. Paucity of power and load shedding, which are making the lives of the people miserable, are the glaring reflection of the inefficiency of the government.

The armed groups in different districts are creating unrest that must be stopped. The unauthorized activities of sister organizations of the Maoist must be stopped without delay. Else, the country will be embroiled in a civil war. Foreign interference must be discontinued immediately. ■



Koirala (Centre) PM Dahal (Right) : Growing differences

POLITICS

Living With Instability

Whatever the nature of political system, Nepalese people have to develop a habit to live with political instability

By KESHAB POUDEL

This government has completely failed to maintain law and order, return seized property and rein in the terror. I am giving wake up call to save the democracy," thundered former prime minister and Nepali Congress leader Girija Prasad Koirala, addressing rally of his party workers.

Although the three party governments under the leadership of Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' is yet to complete its honeymoon period, Congress leader and former Prime Minister Koirala, who sacrificed everything to woo the Maoists during his tenure as a prime minister, has already started to rock the chair of prime minister Dahal.

"We have to launch the final decisive war to establish People's Republic of Nepal as this peaceful means will not fulfill our aim," said Mohan Baidya 'Kiran', senior Maoist leader who presented a counter proposal against PM Dahal's proposal.

"If Maoists take this kind of stand openly declaring to establish People's Republic through force, the days for the Maoist led government will come to an end," said CPN-UML leader K.P. Sharma Oli.

Whatever Maoist leader Prachanda claims, former prime minister Koirala, Maoist leader Baidya and CPN-UML leader K.P. Sharma Oli have indicated that there is no sign for politically stable government in Nepal even if they have support of two thirds majority in the Constituent Assembly.

Whether one likes it or not, politically stable government is not written in the fate of Nepalese people. Whatever the political system they will have, people of Nepal have to live with the course of political instability, said a political analyst.

Even in Panchayat system when Monarchy was projected as the main power center, no prime minister survived for more than two years. Similar was the case with the 15 years of multi-party

democracy and constitutional monarchy when no government survived its full tenure.

Former prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala is the longest serving prime minister of that era when he headed Nepali Congress government for three years. Even when his party held the absolute majority in 205 members of parliament, his chair was shaken by his party colleagues Ganesh Man Singh and Krishna Prasad Bhattarai just a couple of months after its formation.

Nepalese had seen many drama of rise and fall of the government following the curtailing of the prime minister's constitutional rights to dissolve the House of Representative by verdict of Supreme Court in 1996. There were five governments in five years period. The era of King Gyanendra's direct rule too had incidents of frequent change in the government. He appointed four different governments but

no government lasted for more than a year and political instability was the rule.

Political parties launched agitation against monarchy and removed the institution of monarchy hoping to bring political stability in the country. "From now on, no Nepali has to wage war against authoritarian monarchy," declared former prime minister Koirala when newly elected Constituent Assembly abolished the monarchy.

However, Koirala is now asking people again to side with him to remove other kinds of communist authoritarian rule in the country. Sandwiched between Asia's two major power India and China, it seems that political stability and democratic development is not in the fate of Nepal.

Nepal will have live with political instability and a political system without value. There will be frequent strikes and bandhs and changes of governments. Koirala's recent call indicates that the process of changing the government has already begun and another phase of political instability is on its way.

Nepalese have been leaving with instability with certain period of relieve and again the anarchy and political crisis for the last five decades. As Nepal lies between two tectonic plates unstable situation, this is what seems to be a regular phenomenon for politics of Nepal also. ■



Maoist Leaders : Divided house

CPN MAOIST

Red Wrangle

The cadres' convention of the Maoists turns into ideological battleground with two senior leaders presenting different proposals on party's strategy and tactics

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

For the first time since he launched the People's War in 1996 and steered his party through insurgency to reach the pinnacle of power, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal better known as Maoist chairman Prachanda has faced a serious challenge to his policies within his party.

In a measure of the seriousness of the challenge, this time his challenger is none other than his former mentor Mohan Baidya 'Kiran.'

Prachanda's political proposal of consolidating what he terms as transitional competitive federal democratic republican system before marching towards People's Republic was challenged by Kiran's document that argues in favour of immediately setting out for People's Republic through the People's Revolt. Kiran argues that the ground situation is ripe for this march right away.

The strategy of both the leaders, interestingly, is the same – the People's Republic, which other parties regard as nothing but Maoists' aim of establishing totalitarian communist regime. But their tactics remain different.

This debate consumed the entire discussion at the National Convention of Cadres, which started from Friday last week in Kharipati.

As the cadres remained divided over the two documents, the convention delegates presented their opinions to the leadership. Following that, the party held a central committee meeting on Tuesday. As the meeting prolonged, the convention could not conclude on Tuesday. It is slated to be held on Wednesday.

Till the time of this article going to the press (Tuesday night), it was unclear what conclusion the convention would reach. However, many leaders were of the opinion that these debates would drag on till next party general convention, which is expected to be held sometime next year.

The Tuesday's central committee meeting held at Kharipati, Bhaktapur, which was aimed at merging the two papers presented by party chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' and party's organizational department chief Mohan Baidya 'Kiran' as per the suggestions by party cadres, ended in the evening without doing so.

Talking to reporters, party spokesperson Krishna Bahadur Mahara said the central committee decided to leave it to the national cadres' conference to decide on the political proposals. He said the CC was positive about presenting a single political document at the conference. "The national conference will give a clear message of unity," he said.

"The central committee made very positive exercise on forming integrated documents," he said.

However, another Maoist leader Dinanath Sharma has said that chairman Prachanda's document will be presented at the conference on Wednesday after incorporating suggestions and recommendations.

Earlier, downplaying the importance of the divided opinion within his party, party chairman Prachanda had put on a brave face while addressing the inaugural session of the convention.

Amid the tabling of two different political reports at the conference, Prachanda said that the conference will further consolidate the Maoist party. He also said there was no alternative to the Maoists for developing the country.

"After three months of the current government, there are some suspicions if this government is able to deliver. But there is no alternative. Only this revolutionary government can ensure better future," he said. He also said that the attention of both domestic and foreign power centers were on this conference of the Maoists. He said that dreams of some regarding split in the Maoists will never materialize.

The convention itself had started on a shaky note. Although it was scheduled to begin from Thursday (Nov 20), the preceding central committee meeting had dragged on as it was beset with fierce discussions. The convention had to be put off by a day after the committee made prolonged effort, in vain, to go to convention with a single document.

Reports in media widely pointed at division within the central. The news reports said that those supporting the party chairman included senior leader Dr Baburam Bhattarai, People's Liberation Army commander Nanda Kishor Pun, deputy commander Chandra Khanal, central secretariat members Barshaman Pun, Hisila Yami and Top Bahadur Rayamajhi while Dev Gurung C.P Gajurel, Netra Bikram Chand, Hari Bhakta Kandel backed Kiran. ■

Book

Rabindra Nath Sharma

Death of Veteran Politician

Veteran politician Rabindra Nath Sharma dies at the age of 78

BY KESHAB POUDEL

Former prime minister and Rastriya Janashakti Party leader Surya Bahadur Thapa once termed late Rabindra Nath Sharma as a Chanakya of Nepali politics. Former prime minister Thapa's observation has some valid grounds.

During his active tenure as a politician, veteran politician late Sharma showed his unique character of political maneuvering. After 1995 mid term polls and revival of House of Representative in 1996, Sharma emerged as a king maker. Within a one year period of time, he placed two former Panchas, Lokendra Bahadur Chand and Surya Bahadur Thapa as prime minister in coalition governments backed by CPN-UML and Nepali Congress, respectively, one after another.

Frank and politically cultured, Sharma's political decline began after CIAA's indictment against him after the King Gyanendra's takeover of 2002. Sharma, who died as a staunch monarchist till his last leg of political career when the monarchy was in the process of abolition, had opposed King Gyanendra's move to dismiss elected prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba.

For this opposition, he had to pay heavy price. Politically, he was very much unstable. Although he led the role to unite all former Panchas after the political change of 1990 under a party named Rastriya Prajatantra Party. But, the party was born as a twin led by two former prime minister Surya Bahadur Thapa and Lokendra Bahadur Chand and Sharma was with Thapa.

He even split RPP and formed RPP-Nepal after King Gyanendra's direct rule. As his health deteriorated, Kamal Thapa took charge of the party. Just a few months ago, Rabindra Nath Sharma again joined RPP led by Pashupati Sumsher Rana.

Though he personally suffered much due to actions taken under King's direct rule, Sharma defended the institution of monarchy as a factor of stability for



Nepal. Whatever one can say about him, he died as a patriot Nepali worrying about the future of Nepal.

After the formation of Maoist-led government, he had visualized very complicated and difficult future for Nepal and its neighbours. Death of Sharma is a loss to Nepal when the country has been passing through a major crisis. ■

CRISIS IN OM HOSPITAL

Anarchy Rules

Om Hospital, Nepal's renowned private nursing home with modern facility, is forced to suspend its service thanks to unreasonable demands put forth by its staffs

By A CORRESPONDENT

Nothing seems to be safe now. Whether it is hospital, schools or industry, no body can predict when some one will put forth unreasonable demands and press the management to fulfill them or face closure.

After a dispute in Industry over the issue of take over of Colgate Palmolive factory by Nepali industrialist, some so called trade unionist with backing from political parties presented unreasonable demands resulting in the closure of Om hospital.

Recently Himal Media was under the attack from trade unions. workers of ruling party threatened the Banepa representative of Himal media to quit the media or face the direr consequences. Two weeks ago, Chief Executive Officer of Himal media Ashutosh Tiwari was attacked by some persons while he was on the way to office.

With all kinds of modern facilities available, Om Hospital provided medical service to tens of thousands of people. From a lower and middle class to high class, the service provided by Om Hospital was affordable to all.

However, due to negligence of the government, the non medical staffs of the hospital finally compelled to close down the hospital.

After the formation of Maoist-led government three months ago, the private investment is gradually facing a threat. The Om Nursing Home's experience is one part of the story. After the closure of the hospital, many people have suffered. ■

“There are many who are dreaming that the Maoists will split. I want to tell them to stop dreaming that. With this (national convention), the Maoists will emerge more unified.”

Prime Minister and chairman of Maoists, Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda,' addressing the inaugural session of the National Convention of the Cadres, in Kathmandu.

“They are killing people and burying them. In such a situation, I cannot allow the integration to proceed.”

Girija Prasad Koirala, former prime minister and leader of opposition Nepali Congress (NC), addressing the party's Janajagran campaign in Nepalgunj.

“The Maoists must soon behave. Otherwise, the future of ruling coalition will be compromised.”

Jhal Nath Khanal, general secretary of the Unified Marxist Leninist (UML).

“The killings and cooperation cannot go hand in hand.”

KP Sharma Oli, senior leader of Unified Marxist Leninist (UML), warning that continuation of Maoist atrocities could lead to



review in its decision to be a part of the government.

“The law and order situation has improved a lot because of this government.”

Bamdev Gautam, Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister.

“The people of Nepal have beautiful minds. Beautiful minds can lead to creativity.”

APJ Abdul Kalam, former president of India, talking to journalists in Kathmandu.

“There is no involvement of Young Communist League (YCL) in the killings of those youths.”

Ganesh Man Pun, chief of Maoist-affiliated YCL, ruling out their hand in the abduction and murder of two youths of Kathmandu.

“The YCL is promoting the culture of impunity.”

Ajambar Kangbang Rai, chief of UML-affiliated National Democratic Youths Federation (NDYF), accusing that the YCL had hands in the murder.

TRANSITION

ARRIVED: Pranab Mukherjee, Minister for External Affairs of India, on a three-day official visit to Nepal.

RETURNED: APJ Abdul Kalam, former president of India, after completing two-day visit to Nepal.

DECREASED: The transport fare, by the government. The fares in diesel-run vehicles has been reduced by six percent while fares in those running from petrol will be reduced by seven percent.

FORMED: A nine-member Administration Restructuring Commission (ARC), by the government, under the Minister of General Administration. The commission will comprise Dr Mahindra Narayan Mishra (expert in Public Administration); Achyut Raj Rajbhandari (former secretary); Bijaya K.C (former member of Public Service Commission); Bal Krishna Prasain, (former secretary); Rajendra Bahadur Singh (former Additional Inspector General); Mukti Rijal (expert in good governance); Sitaram Mandal (legal expert) and Dambar Bahadur B.K (education expert) as members.

APPOINTED: Bhesh Raj Kandel as the chairman of Nepal Telecommunication Authority (NTA), Uddhav Bahadur Karki as the General Manager of Udaypur Cement Factory and Biddhya Nath Nepal and Dr Bhagwan Koirala as members of the Board of Directors of the newly built Civil Servants' Hospital, by the government.

PASSED AWAY: Rabindra Nath Sharma, former minister, leader of Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) and founding chief of RPP-Nepal, at the age of 78 after suffering from diabetes and kidney ailments.



ART

Painting of Nature

Six women artists have shown a way to paint the nature

By A CORRESPONDENT

Nature has capacity to attract everyone. For artists, the nature is universe where they can find everything. From changing face of nature to transformation of season, the nature always shows the way.

This is what six prominent women artists have. At an exhibition organized at Park Gallery in Lazimpat, the paintings exhibited at the wall show what the nature is all about in the imagination of these artists.

As it is said nature is universe, it includes everything from water, to tree, River mountain and all its surroundings. Six women artists have shown this imagination

through their fine works of painting.

Although different artists have shown their own way of painting nature and its surroundings, there are more paintings showing the landscape and life of people in different positions.

Newly emerging artist, Reeta Manandhar, who is known for her work on portrait, too has tried to explain the nature. Her collections include paintings of both traditional Nepali and western musical instrument. She uses natural colour to shown harmony in her work.

Another new artist, Neera Joshi Pradhan's paintings has also its own qualities as she depicted the nature

in her signature style. Pradhan's collection of petals looks at the most beautiful part of a flower.

The artists have their own ways in using the colors to suit the nature. Artist Rajbhandari's paintings depicted the color like that of autumn. Her paintings have created the picture like that of motion. She tried to give effect of entire nature through her paintings.

Some artists chose figurative others chose abstract form to paint the nature. Artist Aditi Sandhu Chakraborty has tried to capture the essence and color of the various seasons. The perfect expression and elaborate detailing make Mandira Malla's art interesting. She has captured feeling of a young Kumari who is in perfect mood of joy and happiness. There is also felling of awkwardness in the portrait.

Like all other group exhibition, there are also bundle of paintings related to the nature. Pramila Bajracharaya has presented collectors of figurative landscapes as she has used various colors without any proper outline to create buildings.

From abstract to figurative, six women artists chose various ways to express the nature. What one can see in their work is perfect harmony with color and their imagination.

The perfection of theme of nature and use of colors make the paintings more perfect and there is complete harmony between the color and the imagination. The exhibition will continue till December 12. ■

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