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MEDIA POWER

Politics : Role of Monarchy
 Culture : Indian Film Fest
 Article : Rabi Jung Pandey

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BY APPOINTMENT TO THE ROYAL DANISH COURT

TUBORG BEER



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SPOTLIGHT

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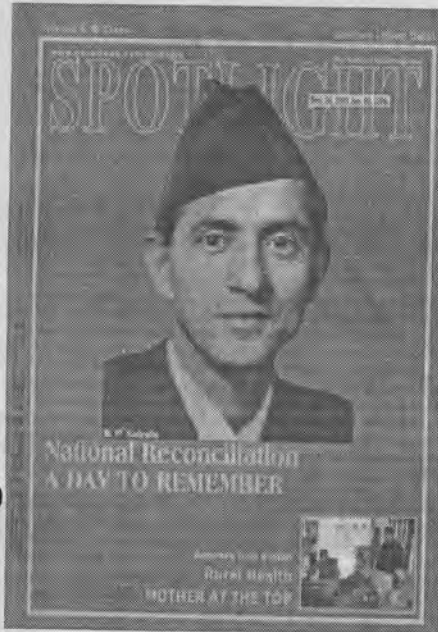
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All the events of the past few weeks have shown that the country would have to wait for a long time to see the revival of elected bodies through the democratic process. As the widening of distrust and mistrust between the legitimate political forces - the King and the political parties - continues, the current political situation would prolong where governments are made and unmade in mysterious circumstances. Any move to hold the election or reactivate the present constitution will be taken as hostile action. Unfortunately, a liberal democratic like Nepali Congress - whose very survival is dependent upon the popular support - has also joined a camp to oppose the move to go to the people. In the present crisis, except Nepali Congress (NC), no other forces need elections. The royalists oppose elections because they do not want to share their power with elected representatives. The communist parties never had any firm commitment towards the liberal democratic process. Even for external elements, it will be difficult to sway the democratically elected representatives. Delay in the resumption of election process is a matter of genuine concern for European countries and the United States. Maoists withdrew their unilateral ceasefire after accomplishing the mission to push Nepali Congress to the extreme camp. As we had long feared, events foretell that Nepalese people may not have elected representatives and they may not see the resumption of democratic process for a long time to come. Major victims of the withdrawal of unilateral ceasefire are the citizens' right to vote and choose their own representatives. Situated in very important geo-strategic position in the Himalayas dividing two major powers of Asia, Nepal does not seem to have any easy way out from this instability and political conflict.

The country has been passing through a crucial period without elected parliament and elected bodies at the local level. Parliament - which is supposed to represent the latest public opinion and is a legitimate institution to ventilate the public opinion - ceased functioning after October 4, 2002. There is no legitimate institution to express day to day opinion of the people except the media even though the court still has basic paraphernalia of a democratic society such as right to equality, press freedom and remedy of *habeas corpus* and there are constitutional organs including the Supreme Court following the dictates of the constitution. But the most significant element of democracy - the public opinion - has no way to get into decisive position. This very peculiar situation is being prolonged and aggravated in which neither the people are consulted nor the King seems to be in "proper terms." None of the Nepalese forces are gainers in this stalemate. In such a critical period, only hope for ventilating the popular opinion is left with the media but the media in Nepal, too, seems to be in a peculiar position. Outwardly everything seems normal but Nepal's realities are quite different than others. This week we have decided to see the role of media power in the ongoing crisis and their limitations.

Keshab
Keshab Poudel
Managing Editor



Reconciliation is a Must

You have rightly argued in your cover story this issue that the agenda of reconciliation theory propounded by B. P. Koirala three decades ago is equally relevant today "NATIONAL RECONCILIATION DAY: A Day To Remember" (SPOTLIGHT December 30). History has shown that grave national crises cannot be resolved by confrontation, but by reconciliation. It is ridiculous why the big players of the national politics do not understand that. After all they are digging their own ditch by being stubborn in their agendas.

Deepak Shrestha
Pulchowk

Be More Flexible

The political parties, the King and the Maoists all should be more flexible in their respective stances if they are to resolve the crisis facing the country "NATIONAL RECONCILIATION DAY: A Day To Remember" (SPOTLIGHT December 30). On the eve of the national reconciliation day you have done a commendable job by covering the issue of reconciliation. It is already proved that reconciliation is the only way out of the any conflict. Your arguments in the story are very convincing and you have raised a very pertinent issue once again by urging the parties to the conflict for reconciliation. The longer these forces put off the agenda of reconciliation, the further the situation of the country will deteriorate and the people will suffer more. If they do not understand this and act in time, the people will rise against all traditional and modern power centers. So, it is high time the power centers think about the power of mass uprising and take sensible steps.

Rabindra Pradhan
Patan

Plausible Story

You deserve applaud for covering a field report about the rural maternity and infant health in this issue "RURAL HEALTH SERVICES: Power In The Parliament Empowered People At The Bottom" (SPOTLIGHT December 30). The information carried in the story is very positive and it is good to know that the situation of maternity health is improving at the grass root level through social mobilization. You should carry more of such field reports in order to provide the readers with ground realities. At a time when the mainstream media is obsessively focused on the issues of national politics, it is becoming more and more elusive to find the ground realities of the basic issues concerning the grass root people. Pertinent problems of the people have been overshadowed. It is the responsibility of the media to cover such issues even at times of political instability.

Rudra Thapa
Maharajgunj

Reciprocate Ceasefire

It is an irony that even as the Maoists, who are rebelling against the

state apparatus to set up a new regime, have announced truce for more than three months now, the government- instead of reciprocating the ceasefire and creating a conducive environment for negotiations- is busy spreading propaganda that the Maoists ceasefire is fake. "NATIONAL RECONCILIATION DAY: A Day To Remember" (SPOTLIGHT December 30). Being the guardian of the country, the King should have taken the initiative for reconciliation. Instead, the government under the chairmanship of the King himself is showing a stubborn attitude by showing least flexibility to its agenda. The people in the government and the advisors of the King should have understood that the rescue of the country from the present crisis is not possible by bypassing the political parties and the armed Maoists. No matter what cards they play, it is not possible to bring back normalcy in the country without including the big political parties and the Maoists in the nation building process. And to do that they should pay heed to their demands and show some flexibility. While the parties and the Maoists have been saying that they are ready to let go some of their stances, the King's government does not want to abandon any of its stances. The people's sufferings cannot be addressed by this modus operandi. It is never too late to start a good thing. So, the King, as the guardian of the country should take steps for reconciliation with the parties and the Maoists by reciprocating the ceasefire and summoning the Maoists and the political parties for dialogue formally.

Bikranta Neupane
Kalimati

Too Little Reading Matter

I am regular reader of SPOTLIGHT. It gives an overview of the national issues in a very palatable language and objective viewpoint. But, lately I have noticed that there has been too little reading matter in Spotlight. I request the editorial team to increase the reading matters in the forthcoming issues.

Deepesh Shrestha
Via Email.

RPP Heading Towards Split

The Rastrriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) moved one step further towards split after top leaders of the party began slinging mud at each other. A day after he sacked vice president Padma Sundar Lawati, RPP president Pashupati SJB Rana, on January 1, said that the RPP leaders who joined the government as ministers are actively seeking to split the party. "There is no use of special general convention," Rana said hitting at Lawati who has already called special convention. "After he could not digest the democratic path taken by the party, (Lawati) saw the party as being direction-less," Rana accused. On the other hand, Lawati has vowed to bring new party leadership after the special convention on January 16 and 17. Lawati claimed that Rana ousted him from his position 'without so much as giving a chance for explanation.' Within RPP, president Rana leads a faction that is calling for correction of February 1 step whereas the faction led by Lawati have welcomed the royal move. The party has already allowed its district-level units to discuss and decide whether they want to take part in the forthcoming polls or not. *Kantipur daily reports.*

Load Shedding Begins

Power-starved Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) is imposing daily load-shedding of three and a half hours beginning Monday (January 2). Every consumer would now face load-shedding in evening or morning at least once a week. The NEA has said that the load-shedding would continue till the onset of monsoon. The dried up rivers and the falling level of water in the Kulekhani reservoir has led to this situation, the NEA said. Most of the hydro projects in Nepal are run-of-the-river type and the snow-fed rivers generally dry up during winter season leading to cut down of capacities. According to NEA, it faces shortfall of 70 MW to 170 MW during winter. The demand of power stands at 600 MW whereas the supply is only 470 MW. Although the total installed capacity is 609 MW, the actual generation is lesser during the dry season. In Kathmandu valley, the load-shedding will be imposed on two phases

— one between 5:30 pm and 7:30 pm and another between 7:30 pm and 9:00 pm. *Kantipur daily reports.*

UN Urges Govt To Reciprocate Truce, EU Supports UN Call

Two days before the unilateral ceasefire of the Maoists was set to expire, the United Nations (UN) General Secretary Kofi Annan urged Nepal government to 'reciprocate' the ceasefire. "The secretary general is seriously concerned that fighting could escalate in Nepal after the four-month-old unilateral ceasefire declared by the Maoists expires on January 2, 2006," a spokesman for Annan said in a statement on December 30. "In the interest of peace and the welfare of civilians throughout the country, the secretary general, therefore, reiterates his strong appeal to the government of Nepal to reciprocate the ceasefire and to the Maoists to extend its unilateral ceasefire," the statement urged. "The UN stands ready to assist in the realization of this objective should the parties so desire," it added. Likewise, the European Union (EU), on Saturday, reiterated its call to King Gyanendra and the government to announce a ceasefire to build the necessary confidence required for a political solution to the conflict. The EU also urged the Maoists to extend their truce permanently and unconditionally. "Presidency of the EU notes and supports the UN Secretary General's call on the government of Nepal and the Maoists to agree to a mutual ceasefire," an EU statement said. "Extending the present unilateral ceasefire will be an important step towards permanently renouncing violence and participating in a peace process in which the Maoists put their arms verifiably beyond use and rejoin the democratic mainstream," it said, adding, "The Presidency supports the Secretary General's offer of assistance." Saying that the EU has 'consistently' urged the King to reach out to the political parties to develop a common agenda for a full return to multiparty democracy, the EU also called on the Maoists to announce an unconditional ceasefire. *Compiled from reports.*

Koirala Urges Maoists To Give Another Chance To The King

Nepali Congress (NC) president Girija Prasad Koirala has urged the Maoists to extend their ceasefire and give another chance to the King. "I ask the Maoists — extend ceasefire and give another chance to the King. It is up to them (King's government) to accept it or not," Koirala said, addressing a program in Lalitpur organized to mark the National Reconciliation Day. Koirala accused that the King and the army kept on provoking the Maoists to break the ceasefire. He said that the door for national reconciliation could open if the King revived the constitution. Every year on December 20, NC marks National Reconciliation Day in memory of the return of its illustrious late leader B.P. Koirala from exile in India. Koirala also urged the Maoists to allow displaced persons to return home and hand over looted properties, as per the 12-point understanding. Likewise, Koirala said that he was not quite assured about the 'ultimate objective' of both the Maoists and the institution of monarchy "when it comes to embarking on a peaceful future," reports *The Himalayan Times* daily. He, however, claimed the "feudal force was on its way out." He said the "main concern" was that both the political forces were armed and that "those with arms cannot be taken simplistically." "If I were to tell a truth, I am not assured about the motive of both the Maoists and the King. The rest of us caught in the crossfire. What is also true is that the King, too, may not benefit if he does not make amends," Koirala said in front of thousands of party workers. Reinforcing the need to strike reconciliation between the institution of monarchy and the political forces, Koirala said the efforts initiated at bringing the Maoists to the mainstream were undertaken with a view to bring the rebels in the ambit of reconciliatory politics. *Leading dailies report.*

Pact With Maoists Endanger Congress Existence: Shailaja

Senior leader of Nepali Congress (NC) Shailaja Acharya has said that the NC has endangered its survival by entering into

parties-Maoists pact. Speaking at an interaction at Reporters' Club, Acharya said NC was shouldering the agenda of the Maoists. She claimed that the nation itself could be endangered if the NC abandoned its middle-path and identity. She added that the King's steps had pushed the country in such crisis. She urged the King to revive the parliament. Acharya also disagreed with the demands for constituent assembly. *Leading dailies report.*

Two Projects Registered For Carbon Credit

Nepal has made a claim in the world carbon credit market. The Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) Executive Board of UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has recently registered two of Nepal's projects on biogas support program, which will give the nation a total of Rs 36.5 million annually. After undergoing a lengthy procedure of application and tough competitions, Nepal's projects—"Project 0136: Biogas Support Program Nepal (BSP-Nepal) Activity I" and "Project 0139: Biogas Support Program Nepal (BSP-Nepal) Activity II" are now registered list of projects as small-scale CDM project activities, as per a decision made on December 27. Authorized participants at Activity I are the Alternative Energy Promotion Center (AEP), Maiya Gautam and Suk Man Tamang, whereas those of Activity 2 are AEP, Min Prasad Gautam and Madhu Prasad Simkhada. "It is a historic success and a milestone in Nepal's status in the world carbon credit market," said Jivan Acharya, a research officer at Winrock International, which provided technical assistance by preparing all the necessary documents. It is estimated that the projects will reduce around 94,000 metric tons of CO2 equivalent per year. "It is almost sure that the countries are ready to send us money. The Community Developed Carbon Fund of the World Bank has shown interest in purchasing carbon credit from these projects," he said. "The government will get the money. It should be used to support biogas plans." *The Himalayan Times daily reports.*

Seven Parties Appeal People To Boycott Polls

The seven agitating political parties have issued a joint appeal urging all Nepalese citizens to peacefully boycott the forthcoming municipal polls on February 8. The parties have termed the elections as a ploy to eyewash domestic and international community in order to strengthen the autocratic regime. The joint appeal is signed by top leaders of the seven parties including Girija Prasad Koirala, president of Nepali Congress (NC) and Madhav Kumar Nepal, general secretary of the Unified Marxist Leninist (UML). The parties have vowed to conduct door-to-door campaign to convince people to boycott the polls saying it would only reinforce authoritarian regime and not resolve any of the problems facing the nation. The parties have also warned that any of its leaders or workers found taking part in the poll process – as candidates or backers or campaigners – would be expelled from the party for five years. The parties have blasted the government for failing to make any effort towards peace. *Leading dailies report.*

Govt. Can Consider Postponing Civic Polls, Says Giri

Dr. Tulsi Giri, vice chairman of the Council of Ministers, said if the political parties come with a positive attitude, postponing of municipal polls could be considered. He added that first and foremost, the parties should make their stance clear and only then the government may agree to postpone the municipal polls. Speaking at the mass meeting organized in Birtamod of Jhapa on Wednesday (December 28) the political parties must be clear in their motive whether they want dialogue to postpone the municipal polls or postponement of municipal polls for dialogue. "I won't say much about this right now," Dr. Giri said, adding, "However, the government can sentence the political leaders to jail if they try to disrupt the municipal polls. We can term them fanatics and send them to jail if they start talking too much." Nepali Congress (NC) president Girija Prasad Koirala had some days ago said there was a

possibility of talks with the King if municipal polls were postponed. Dr. Giri said if the nation is led by the King, Nepal's fate won't be 'as that of Sikkim' and the nation won't have to 'accept dependency.' "Everyone must know why the King made the move of February 1. The King himself is a supporter of multiparty democracy and has urged everyone, time and again, to restore peace in the nation and strengthen democracy. In this situation, some political parties are wrongly saying there is autocratic regime in the nation," Dr. Giri said. He blamed the political parties' leaders for making inconsistent remarks. Meanwhile, police arrested 12 students from Birtamod for waving black flag at Dr. Giri. *The Himalayan Times daily reports.*

No Program Of Killing Or Abduction: Maoists

Maoists have clarified that they do not have any program to kill or abduct candidates and poll officials during the forthcoming municipal polls. According to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Maoists have clarified that their announcement of action to disrupt the municipal election "should not imply that the cadres have been instructed to abduct or kill the contestants." A few days ago, Ian Martin, chief of OHCHR in Nepal had issued an appeal asking the Maoists to clarify what they meant by "people's action" and "special action" against candidates and poll officials. *Leading dailies report.*

RNA In Thawang

The Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) has started its operation in Rolpa district. According to Public Relations Directorate, RNA has seized weapons from the Maoist fortress of Thawang on Sunday. The army has said the operation is a regular one. "Regular operation is going on at local level," said deputy director of the directorate Umesh Bhattarai. "The operation continues." Meanwhile, a Maoist company commander Bibas Thapa has been killed in Dang. *Kantipur daily reports.*



Crown Prince Paras graces function by Armed Police Force

Gorkhapatra

KING GYANENDRA AND QUEEN KOMAL REACHED ITAHARI, Sunsari on Sunday (January 1) beginning their informal tour to hilly districts of eastern region. The royal couple will be staying at the eastern regional division headquarters of Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) and visiting other districts on the region in order to take stock of the situation there.

THE COMPULSORY IDENTITY CARD SYSTEM HAS BEEN enforced for people staying in border regions for their travels to and fro Nepal-China border points beginning January 1, 2006. President of Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) Pashupati SJB Rana marked the beginning of the system by receiving his ID card in Tatopani, Sindhupalchowk. In fifteen districts, local people will be provided with ID cards by the local Immigration Offices. People from other districts would need to obtain visa to visit Chinese border areas including Khasa.

THE FIRST ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ROYAL NEPAL Army's Human Rights Cell – RNA Human Rights Report 2061 – has come out with a listing of Maoist atrocities and army's clarification on accusations of rights abuse, extra-judicial killings, disappearances and the like against it. The report has recorded 10,725 abductions and 72 killings by the Maoists during the last six months of the year. It also recorded 65 cases of explosion; 40 cases of extortion and looting; and 30 cases of threatening by the Maoists. Citing an Informal Sector Service Center (INSEC) source, the recently released report stated the country has already incurred financial losses worth \$ 1095 million due to the Maoist conflict. The report has stated that the Maoists have destroyed 1825 VDC buildings; 35 telecommunication towers; 420 post offices; 540 police posts and six hydro-power plants till date. The fresh data in the report stated that 4404 Maoists, 371 army men, 142 APF personnel, 297 civil policemen, 15 personnel of the National Investigation Department and 579 civilians were killed within a year after the ceasefire was broken on August 27, 2003. The report says that the RNA released 2145 people taken into custody, handed over 751 to the police and civil administration for legal proceedings. One hundred and forty-nine are still in custody till April 13 last year. It said the RNA has given

clarification on 717 out of 1367 cases of disappearances listed by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), while investigation is still going on into the rest 650 cases. RNA has punished at least 100 army men found guilty of rights abuses, it said.

READYMADE GARMENTS – THE TOP EXPORT PRODUCT of Nepal – registered a decline of 41 percent in 2005 compared to the previous year. The exports of garment to the United States came down drastically after the expiry of Multi Fiber Agreement (MFA) on January 1, 2005, which denied preferential access to LDCs. According to Garment Association of Nepal (GAN), garments amounting \$ 50.7 million were exported in 2005 compared to \$ 85.7 million in 2004. Over 80 percent of Nepalese garments are exported to the US.

AROUND 14000 CHILDREN WERE ABDUCTED IN THE last ten months due to internal conflict in the country. And sixty of them were killed. According to a report prepared by Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Sector (CWIN), between January and November of 2005, 60 children were killed including 16 girls of the total abducted. Security forces had arrested 22 children. Most of the abducted were given 'training' by the Maoists before they were let free. Around 144 children were injured, the report adds.

A MEMBER OF NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (NHRC) Sudip Pathak has said that the commission was seeking audience with the King soon. He said that the NHRC team would urge the King to announce ceasefire, reports Kantipur daily. "We are in dialogue with responsible officials of the government," Pathak said, adding, "The NHRC will soon meet with the King. The commission is confident that there will be ceasefire." He also predicted possibilities of government holding talks with the Maoists. He urged the Maoists to extend their ceasefire and communicate with the government for peace process. Meanwhile, Pathak has lamented "the continued intimidation, kidnapping, extortion and curbs by the CPN-Maoist," something which reflects very poorly on the 12-point agenda signed by the alliance, reports The Himalayan Times daily. While Pathak criticized the parties for lacking consistency, UML leader Sahana Pradhan shared view with him on the issue, although she said that 12-point understanding 'came as a flicker of hope.' Outlining seven conditions, including public commitment to give up violence, Pathak said the government could be made to open talks with the Maoists. Referring to the visits undertaken by the NHRC to the eastern part of the country, he enumerated instances of as much as 84 people reported dead during the last six months while the extortion and kidnapping has not come to an end even after the signing of the pact. "We have report from 36 districts which enumerates cases of kidnapping, extortion and intimidation. Over 300 teachers have been abducted. This does not leave any room for optimism, although we insist that efforts must be taken to improve the scenario," Pathak said at Reporters' Club on Wednesday. People displaced from their homes have not been able to go back home since the situation has not changed, he said. "The Maoists have not even allowed NC general secretary KB Gurung to go to his home." ■

“If I were to tell a truth, I am not assured about the motive of both the Maoists and the King. The rest of us are caught in the crossfire. What is also true is that the King, too, may not benefit if he does not make amends.”

Girija Prasad Koirala, president of Nepali Congress (NC) and former prime minister, addressing a gathering in Lalitpur.

* * *

“(Dr. Tulsi) Giri and people like him do politics sitting on the King’s shoulder, while we do politics carrying King on our shoulders.”

Taranath Ranabhat, Speaker of the dissolved House of Representatives, in Jana Bhawana.

* * *

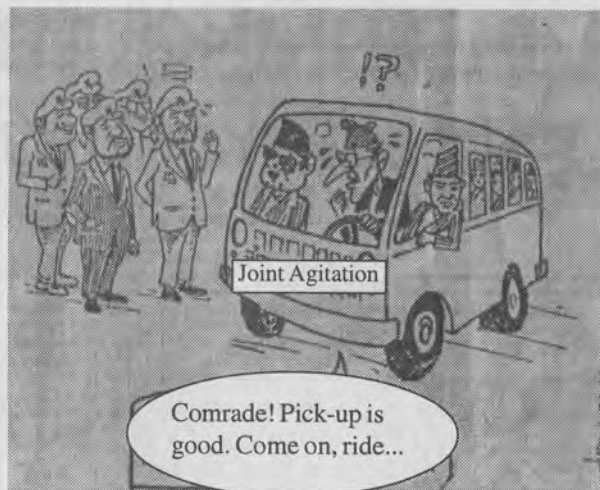
“Nepali Congress has been adopting the policy of Constitutional Monarchy since its inception. The institution is required to give the country stability. The country will disintegrate into pieces if Limbu, Tharu and Terai residents start demanding separate states.”

Shailaja Acharya, leader of Nepali Congress, speaking at a face-to-face program, at the Reporters’ Club.

* * *

“To participate in the so-called elections is nothing but to accept the roadmap set by the King.”

Krishna Sitaula, spokesperson of Nepali Congress (NC), speaking at



Bimarsha

an interaction program organized in the capital.

* * *

speaking at a program organized in Sindhuli.

* * *

“Neither can Maoists defeat the Royal Nepalese Army, nor can the Royal Nepalese Army defeat the Maoists. The three forces should be ready for dialogue. Violence can further rise if talks are not held.”

Sudeep Pathak, a member of National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), speaking at a program in Pokhara.

* * *

“We will not topple (Pashupati Shumsher) Rana, the general convention that will take place soon will automatically replace him.”

Padma Sundar Lawati, former vice president of RPP, speaking at an interaction program.

* * *

“I want to urge NC president not to put any condition for dialogue.”

Kamal Thapa, Home Minister, reacting to reports that NC president Koirala said the doors for talks with the King could open if the latter withdrew municipal polls, speaking at a mass meeting in Birgunj.

* * *

“Whenever our colleagues from the party become minister they demand for general convention.”

Pashupati SJB Rana, president of Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP),

TRANSITION

APPOINTED: Udhhab Upadhyaya, as the acting chief editor of Gorkhaptra daily, by the government.

SACKED: Padma Sundar Lawati, from the post of party vice president of Rastriya Prajatantra Party, by the party president.

NOMINATED: Parshuram Khapung, as the spokesperson of RPP, by the central committee of the party.

ELECTED: Ganesh Gurung, president of Nepal Institute of Development Studies, as the chief of CARAM-Asia, by meeting of the association held recently in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

PROMULGATED: ‘National Park and Wildlife Conservation (Fifth Amendment) Ordinance 2062’, by the King, in accordance with the constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990.

APPOINTED: Dr. Pawan Kumar Ojha, Bipulendra Chakraborty, Tahir Ali Ansari and Rajendra Koirala, as judges of the Supreme Court (SC), by the King, as per the recommendation of the Judicial Council.

Laxmi Bahadur Nirala, as the Attorney General of the Kingdom of Nepal, by the King in accordance with the constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal, 1990.

PLANNING PROBLEMS: Kosi River Development

By DR. AB THAPA

The Kosi River is posing a serious threat to life and property of millions in Nepal and India. As a result, the resolution of the Kosi flood problem has become a matter of the utmost importance. The Kosi development to resolve the flood problem has emerged as the greatest engineering challenge because it involves the construction of a dam perhaps the highest in the world on one hand and on the other it could result to a serious adverse impact on environment if the whole project is not planned with great caution. Downstream river bed degradation consequent upon the construction of the high dam could be one of the problems that would have far reaching adverse environmental impact.

Why Kosi Dam Needed

Solution to the problem of keeping at bay the Kosi flood disaster had been found a long time ago. Dr. A.N. Khosla, a prominent scientist in the field of hydraulic engineering and then Director General of Irrigation, Power, Flood Control and Navigation in the Government of India, had given his opinion in 1940s that storage dams would be needed to control the Kosi river for averting the flood disaster. On his leadership field survey works started immediately after the Second World War in 1946 while India was still under the British rule. The study recommended that a high dam would be needed to control the Kosi river floods. Surprisingly, in 1950s the idea of building the Kosi high dam was abandoned and in its place embankments were built on both sides of the river. It is not difficult to perceive that the embankments were built to confine the Kosi river within a certain fixed perimeter. It was only a temporary solution. Ultimately a storage dam would be needed.

Proposed Kosi Dam Highest in the World

The height of the Kosi dam proposed by India in 1940s was 269 meters. At that time the world's highest dam was the 221 meters high Hoover dam on the river Colorado built in 1936 in the United State. Thus the proposed Kosi dam not only topped in height the Hoover dam which was at that time the highest in the world but very significant is the fact that the proposed Kosi dam exceeded the latter dam in height by a very big margin of almost 50 meters. It clearly allows to consider that even at that time India must have realized that the height of the Kosi dam should be raised to a maximum possible extent to be constrained only by technical limitations.

Gravity type concrete dam had been selected for the Kosi river. The dam height had been stretched to an

extreme limit for this type of dam even based on the global experience of the dam planning as of now. Even up till now there are only two concrete dams in the world only slightly exceeding the proposed Kosi dam in height. They are the 285 meters high Grande Dixene gravity dam built in the Switzerland in 1961, and the 272 meters high Inguri arch dam built in the former Soviet Union in 1980.

Kosi Dam Must Be Still More High

Recent studies of the Himalayan region provide a whole bunch of information very useful for planning high dams. Such information were extensively used for detailed planning of the Karnali high dam. The Karnali studies carried out at an enormous cost by a consortium of renowned consulting firms of several countries under the aegis of the World Bank in close consultation with the governments of Nepal and India have greatly helped to realize that compared to the earlier perceptions the magnitude of the problems to be actually encountered in dam planning in the Himalayan belt would be far more serious and also complicated. This has been amply reflected in finalization of the design of the Karnali high dam.

By comparison with the recalculated height of the Kosi dam based on the recent Karnali project study, the originally proposed Kosi dam height would have been very much on the lower side. It is quite possible that India might have realized even at that time that the height of the proposed Kosi dam must be further raised for an effective flood control but at that time the high dam technology was not yet fully developed to allow to increase further the Kosi dam height. It was already a very bold decision go up to a height of 269 meters. The technology of embankment type dam better suited to fragile geological conditions was not yet well developed to be applied to dams of this height. So we should not be surprised if India had taken the decision not to build the Kosi dam project in immediate future due to technological limitations. Thus under such circumstances the building of embankments on either sides of the river would have been at that time the only option left for the Kosi flood relief in near future.

Downstream Degradation Problems

Sediment flow across the dam would be virtually blocked after the implementation of the Kosi high dam. Thus only the clear water would be discharged from the reservoir during the flood seasons when the reservoir is full. It is certain that the Kosi river bed downstream of the dam would be eroded and the coarse river bed materials would be carried and deposited

on the lower reaches of the river where the bed slope of the river is relatively mild. The shifting of the river bed materials further downstream could result to severe flooding. Such adverse phenomena have been observed after the construction of several large storage dams in the past. The lower reaches of the Kosi are already prone to frequent flooding after the completion of the embankments. The flooding situation would be extremely grave if the Kosi river bed suddenly rises due to piling up of the coarse bed materials carried from the upper reaches.

There is a low-lying plain in the mid-fan area along the eastern side of the Eastern Embankment of the Kosi. It extends from Supaul to the west of Simri-Bakhtiarpur. This area already remains water-logged during a substantial part of the year. The surficial sediments of the area are silty muds with high organic content. It is regarded that the seepage of water from active Kosi River, which is at higher level by comparison with the adjoining areas, is the cause of water-logging.

The southernmost part of the Kosi fan is drained by north-south flowing groundwater fed streams which join the meandering Kosi River flowing eastwards at the bottom of the fan. Even at low flood discharges these streams merge into the Kosi river and result to flooding in adjoining areas on the fan. At peak floods, the Kosi submerges large parts of this plain.

Colorado River and Hoover Dam

Colorado River is in the southwestern United States. It is the major source of water for the surrounding region, which receives very little rainfall. People depend on the Colorado River for irrigation, but they also use it to generate hydroelectric power and to supply water to urban areas. The Colorado River system, including the 2,330 km long Colorado River and its tributaries, drains an area of 637,000 sq km. The Colorado River basin's total runoff is approximately 700 cubic meters per second.

Hoover Dam is situated in Black Canyon on the Colorado River near Las Vegas, Nevada on the border of the states of Nevada and Arizona. At the time of construction it was a major engineering achievement. The massive dam is 221 m high and 379 m long at the crest. The reservoir formed behind the dam, Lake Mead, is one of the largest artificially created bodies of water in the world. It covers an area of 603 sq km and its shoreline measures 885 km. The hydroelectric generators of Hoover Dam, which are capable of supplying nearly 1.5 million kilowatts of power, provide electricity to Arizona, Nevada, and southern California.

Construction of the Hoover Dam began in 1931 as part of the Boulder Canyon project and was completed in 1936. Originally named after President Herbert Hoover, the dam was later called Boulder Dam, but in 1947 its initial name was restored.

Serious degradation phenomena had been observed in Hoover Dam of the USA. Below the Hoover Dam clear water caused severe degradation of the river bed. Within six months of the closure of the river diversion gates in 1935 the bed was lowered by from 2 to 6 feet over a distance of 13 miles. By 1947 the river bed in the 77 mile canyon reach had been lowered between 6 and 14 feet. Owing to the exposure of rock ledges the river became stable. However, at Needles, about 130 kilometers

away, the river bed rose by 6 meters necessitating the construction of very; expensive flood control structures.

Nile River and Aswan High Dam

Nile River, located in northeastern Africa, is the longest river in the world. From its principal source, Lake Victoria, in east central Africa, the Nile flows north through Uganda, Sudan, and Egypt to the Mediterranean Sea, a distance of 5584 km. From its remotest headstream in Burundi, the river is 6,695 km long. The river basin covers an area of more than 3,349,000 sq km.

To raise water levels for irrigation in the 20th century, several dams were built across the Egyptian Nile. The first dam on the Nile, the Aswan Dam, was built in 1902 and heightened in 1936. The Aswan High Dam, completed in 1970, impounds one of the world's largest reservoirs, Lake Nasser. Construction on the mammoth dam began in 1960. By mid-1968 construction was essentially completed. The last of the 12 Soviet-built turbines was installed in 1970, and the dam was formally inaugurated in 1971. The dam has a generating capacity of 2,100 megawatts of electricity.

Aswan High Dam is located near the city of Aswan. The dam is about 6 km upstream from the much smaller Aswan Dam. The High Dam has an embankment 111 m high that extends 3,600 m across the river. Named in honor of Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser, Lake Nasser covers an area more than 480 km long and 16 km wide. The water is used to irrigate farmland. During the rainy season the dam also controls the yearly flooding.

Although the Aswan High Dam has provided many benefits to the area, it also has caused problems. The formation of Lake Nasser inundated many villages along the Nile in both Egypt and Sudan, forcing thousands of people to relocate. Farmland along the Nile is becoming less fertile and productive because it no longer receives the fertilizing silt from the river's floodwaters.

Annual summer flooding of the Nile once deposited rich sediment along its banks, creating fertile farmland. However, the Aswan High Dam now controls the flooding, drastically reducing sedimentation and fertility. The dam's environmental impact has been profound, as stretches of the river above the dam have become clogged with silt, and decreased flooding has led to increased erosion and greater salt content in the soil and water of the delta. Local communities and ancient sites in Egypt and Sudan were either submerged or relocated because of the dam.

After the construction of the Aswan High Dam nearly all sediment deposited in the reservoir. Despite the fact that the capacity of the Aswan Dam reservoir is very large, the releases at Aswan during high floods exceed 350 million cu. m. per day. As a result, serious downstream degradation problems have been faced, which led to lowering of the water depths over the sills of the navigation locks provided to bypass the dams built across the Nile River. It greatly hampered river navigation. A special project was undertaken to resolve this problem. A 55 km long spill channel has been built to divert Nile water. The channel diverts excess flood water from the reservoir to Toshka Depression located in the desert west of the Nile when the water level in the reservoir reaches certain height.

(Dr. Thapa writes on water resources)

MONARCHY

A Symbol of National Unity

Attracting large number of people, King Gyanendra shows that the institution of monarchy in Nepal symbolizes the emotional unifying factor

By KESHAB POUDEL

At a time when the country's major political parties are organizing nationwide campaigns against the monarchy, King Gyanendra has also attracted a large crowd of people of different castes and ethnic groups in Taplejung, eastern hilly district of Nepal.

Institution of monarchy has a long history in Nepal and it is an established emotional unifying factor in religiously, culturally and linguistically divided society. This is what one can see in his recent visit to eastern part of Nepal.

Although Maoist withdrew four-months-long ceasefire, it made a little difference to the people who gathered in district headquarters to meet the King.

At a time when the top leaders of Nepali Congress seem to be frustrated by their more than half-a-century old commitment for constitutional monarchy, interestingly, vast majority of its mass following still have the same faith in the constitution of monarchy.

Only recently, the only popularly elected remaining person in the parliament Speaker Taranath Ranabhat had rightly expressed the voice of silent majority of Nepali Congress. "The difference between the active monarchists like Dr. Tulsi Giri and constitutional monarchists like us is that we do politics carrying King in our shoulder whereas people like Giri and his followers do politics climbing on the shoulder of the King," said Ranabhat.

Like the Speaker Ranabhat said, the first preference of the monarch would instinctively be upon the shoulder of the popular forces but its varied linkages and accesses make it sometime

unreasonable. The experiences of other countries of the world - whether developed or underdeveloped - shows that the institution of monarchy has the power of emotional integration of the people.

The communist prime minister Hun Sen of Cambodia - who helped to overthrow monarchy in his country - is now a diehard supporter of the institution. When old King Narodom Simhanook wanted to abdicate the institution of monarchy, he opposed the King's move saying that there was no such provision in the Constitution.



King Gyanendra in Itahari: Meeting people

was commenced recently, King Jahir Shaha was given the seat above the elected president Hamid Karzai. These incidents show that the continuing popularity and legitimacy of monarchy is very much evident in war-ravaged countries.

"The institution of monarchy is a stabilizing force and it maintains continuity of power and authority of the state. Once a country is destabilized and monarchy is removed, there have been very few instances of stability returning," said a political analyst.

"But, at least for today's Nepal, a monarch can do more good than harm. Nepalese national unity or identity is often endangered because of her heterogeneity of ethnic groups, languages, religions and so on. The King is Nepalese advantage, now. Nepal enjoys much more stability and peace than many other developing republican states. One of the reasons is that Nepal is a monarchy. But, at the same time, there

is some possibility that the Nepalese King is exploited for the purpose of ultra-nationalism and statism," writes Masayuki Tanigawa, a Japanese scholar in his article the "Rationale for the Kingship in Nepal." "A monarch is also important in such a state where people do not have a long experience of democracy; and immature political parties are self centered and likely to ignore national interests."

At a time when the country's major political parties are trying to discredit Nepal's long established institution, Speaker Ranabhat rightly defended the role of monarchy showing that it is safe and popular on the shoulders of popularly elected parties rather than in the company of persons who climb his shoulders. "Constitutional monarchy is our strength and essence and our party cannot imagine the country without monarchy."

In his three-weeks-long visit to eastern region, King Gyanendra, who is in the process of gaining maturity as a monarch, will realize the forces of his choices.

Although Jahir Shaha, King of Afghanistan, was overthrown more than two decades ago by the communists, the present government with the backing of republican United States brought King Jahir Shaha back during the two crucial phase of political transition - as a stabilizing force.

Former King Jahir Shaha is still symbolized as the emotional unifying legitimate factor in Afghan politics. The present republican constitution of Afghanistan recognizes King Jahir Shaha as the father of nation. The constitution was promulgated in his presence.

Similarly, when the first session of the elected parliament of Afghanistan

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MAOIST TRUCE WITHDRAWAL

The Great Game

After calling off the unilateral ceasefire by Maoists, the fate of 12-point pact and municipal elections has become uncertain - giving relief to the government

By KESHAB POUDEL

The government - which was facing international pressure and embarrassment for not reciprocating the ceasefire with the Maoists - has heaved a sigh of relief following the withdrawal of four-months-long unilateral ceasefire by the Maoists on January 2, 2006.

"Maoists have shown their unilateral ceasefire was not directed towards restoring the peace as perceived by international community and seven agitating political parties. Maoists' ceasefire was aimed at regrouping and storing more weapons and logistics to unleash more violence," said Home Minister Kamal Thapa, responding to the queries of media. "There was no question to reciprocate since the violence was launched by the Maoists not by the government."

The withdrawal of unilateral ceasefire - which was announced to preempt King Gyanendra's visit to the United Nations General Assembly (in September) and his move to internationalize his cause of February 1 move - pushes the political course into a new phase as the fate of forthcoming municipal elections and 12-points understanding signed between the Maoists and seven party alliance become uncertain.

From the very beginning, some powerful senior ministers in the cabinet were not in favor of holding the elections of any kind knowing fully well that once the elections are held, their power will shift to the popular will.

Not only the opposition parties including Maoists, King Gyanendra's announcement to hold the elections had shocked even some of his powerful cabinet ministers. There was a virtual consensus among external power, royalists and seven parties-Maoists alliance to stop the municipal elections at any cost.

Maoist leader Prachanda, who reportedly reached the 12-points understating with seven parties in New Delhi India, in his statement, clearly spells out that his party will not allow holding of any kind of elections. "The party would target those backing farcical municipal elections," said Prachanda.

If the election of any kind is held, it will challenge ministers of the present cabinet, Maoists and other unseen powerful external elements. In real terms, the election is required for Nepali Congress, a liberal democratic party, to test its legitimacy and popularity.

Unfortunately, NC also joined the chorus of communist outfits calling for complete boycott of the forthcoming municipal polls.

At a time when the government was under pressure from international community including the European Union and United Nations to reciprocate the unilateral ceasefire, the termination of four-months unilateral ceasefire has given them relief.

The big losers of the present political crisis could be the seven agitating political parties. If the Maoists launch violent actions to disrupt the polls, the seven parties will have to either break the tie or be morally responsible for it. The seven parties are trapped now in others' agenda.

Home Minister and security forces have cautiously reacted on their coming operation. "Royal Nepalese Army would continue to play its role. It would continue to provide security to people and should it confront any hostility, it will act in self defense," said Brigadier General Nepal Bhushan Chand to The Himalayan Times.

"We are the main loser of unilateral withdrawal of ceasefire by Maoists. We have carried the Maoist agenda in the last four months," said a senior member of Nepali Congress. "We have annoyed all forces for no political gain."

Following the withdrawal of unilateral ceasefire, the 12-points understanding is in crisis as it was signed aimed at restoring peace in the country and bringing the Maoists to the mainstream multi-party politics. Although leaders of seven political parties reaffirmed their commitment on the 12-point pact in a meeting of seven parties recently, they clearly are in serious crisis.

"Even after the withdrawal of unilateral ceasefire by the Maoists, our understanding with the Maoists will continue. Our alliance with the Maoists on 12 points agenda will continue to work," said CPN-UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal. "Had the government reciprocated the ceasefire announced by the Maoists, the country would have had a long lasting peace. The government is responsible for the failure."

As unpredictably as they announced the unilateral ceasefire, the Maoists withdrew it. Despite pressure of international communities, United Nations, civil society and seven agitating political parties with whom Maoists signed the understanding, they decided to go for all-out war with the government forces.

"We know that the Maoists are not trustworthy forces since they utilized previous two ceasefires to accumulate the money and prepare for next major assault," said Home minister Thapa, who was one of the government negotiators in the earlier failed peace talks with Maoists.

Although the National Human Rights Commission's recent report indicated that the stray killings, extortion and abduction of civilian population continued unabated even during truce, there was a certain level of relief in the rural parts of the country in the last four months.

Following their withdrawal, the first international reaction came from Nepal's southern neighbor India - which has major stakes in Nepal's law and order situation. Indian government termed the termination of the ceasefire as unfortunate decision. "We have consistently called upon the Maoists to abandon violence, accept the discipline of multi-party democracy, and work for a political settlement that contributes to the political and economic prosperity of Nepal," said Indian foreign ministry spokesman (The Himalayan Times).

Soon after the withdrawal announcement, Maoists have already carried out serial explosion of bombs in Bhairahawa, Pokhara and other parts of the country sending a message of the kind of violence they will initiate and their steps to disrupt the poll.

Strengthening Anti-poaching

In support of the anti-poaching efforts in Nepal, WWF Nepal program and Vaidya's Organization of Industries and Trading Houses (VOITH) presented a Bolero Camper 4WD vehicle, equipped with a Motorola Mobile Communication set to the Royal Chitwan National Park.

At a time when the poaching-related incidents have gone up, the handover of the 4WD with the communication set will help improve the mobility, speed and efficiency with which anti-poaching operations in Nepal's first and foremost national park can respond to a crisis.

"This is a small efforts on our part to contain poaching in the Royal Chitwan National Park," said industrialist Suraj Vaidya of VOITH. "We are very happy to be a part of anti-poaching program."

This partnership by VOITH and WWF, the global conservation organization, is an important beginning for corporate Nepal to join hands with the cause of conservation to safeguard rich natural biodiversity.

"We are happy to say that VOITH contribution to the anti-poaching program will encourage others also," said Dr. Chandra Guring, country representative of WWF-Nepal.

In a separate function, Dr. Tirtha Man Maskey, Director General of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation has been awarded with the prestigious Duke of Edinburgh, Conservation Medal 2005 in recognition of his outstanding contributions and commitment to conservation in Nepal.

MEDIA POWER

At

A

Critical Juncture

The country has been passing through a very critical period without elected parliament and elected bodies even at the local level. When it was functional, parliament – which is supposed to represent the latest public opinion - was the most powerful and legitimate institution to ventilate the opinion of the people. As that institution has ceased to function since October 4, 2002, there is no legitimate institution to express day-to-day opinion of people except media. Sandwiched between the conflicting interests and some seen and unseen manipulation through coercion of state power and money power, one of the challenges facing Nepali media now is how it can avoid distorted, perverted and polluted stories and feed accurate information necessary for political leaders and citizens who are actively working together to create and recreate better democratic society

By KESHAB POUDEL

When three private television channels broadcast news, views and other programs, every evening they reach the houses of at least one million of population. The footprint of government-owned Nepal Television reaches throughout the country.

Similarly, every morning tens of thousands of copies of privately-run

broadsheet dailies knock the doors of urban households and more than five dozen FM radio stations owned by community and private sectors air their programs covering even rural parts of the country. Run by the government, the Radio Nepal's Medium Wave covers over 70 percent of the country.

New communication media like electronic e-media is also hitting the rooms of urban households with varied

information. For the urban population, the foreign news channels like BBC, CNN and half a dozen Indian news channels give additional news and views from wider perspective. Even then, the quest of people to get fair, impartial and objective news is yet to be fulfilled and information provided by these media often leave the people confused.

Following King's February 1 move, media is clearly divided into pro-



Newspapers and magazines: Media in transition

establishment and anti-establishment sides. Pro-establishment media see there is a full-fledged democracy in the country but the private sector media sees not democracy but absolute autocracy. Common people need to read a couple of newspapers representing the establishment and anti-establishment sides to clear their mind.

The country still has the basic paraphernalia of a democratic society such as right to equality, press freedom and remedy of *habeas corpus* and there are constitutional organs including the Supreme Court following the dictates of the constitution. However, most significantly, the public opinion has no way of getting into decisive position. Governments are made and unmade by mysterious machinations ignoring the popular mood of the people and many a times have been seen as imposed upon the supreme organ, the monarchy.

"A very peculiar political situation is being prolonged and aggravated in which neither the people are consulted nor the King seems to be in "proper terms" and none of the Nepalese forces are the gainers in this stalemate. In such a critical period, only hope for ventilating the popular opinion is left with the media but the media in Nepal also seems to be in peculiar position. Outwardly, everything seems same as everywhere

but Nepal's realities are quite different than others. Media, too, is sandwiched between conflicting interests. Through some seen and unseen manipulation through state power, money power and notorious agencies, what comes to the light is much distorted, polluted, and perverted information. Things do not come out about the heartbeat of the common people as a public opinion. In such a situation, persons employed in the media sector have been made merely wage earners," said a political analyst.

Of course, media reaches to the country's large population and has become a major power in formulating and molding the public opinions but its credibility and impartiality is a matter of debate and controversy. All agree that media cannot be sectarian or partisan. If it becomes so, it would be no more than propaganda units.

According to the World Bank Consultations with the Poor study, which studied 20000 people in 23 countries, it has been found that what most differentiates poor people from rich people is a lack of voice - the inability to be represented. It is the lack of voices; it is the lack of the ability to express themselves.

"This is somewhere true in Nepal as media imposes the voices from top to bottom. The failure of the news media is

to ensure that a citizen gets adequate and accurate information necessary for self-governance. Compared to other democracies, Nepalese media persons have more obligations for giving expressions and opinions of the people. Instead, what they are doing is molding the opinion in a propaganda style," said the analyst.

Everyone gains if majority of people have chances to improve their lot, taking part in the opportunities afforded by free speech and free press. Media experts argue that the government, news media and informed citizens form the necessary triad for democracy, which can only work with active, informed citizens who have reasons to trust the information that they get from the news media.

According to Ellen Hume, Director of the Center on Media and Society at the University of Massachusetts in Boston, an independent media sector serves four vital roles in a democracy. First, it is a watchdog on the powerful, holding them accountable to the people. Second, it casts as spotlight on issues that need attention. Third, it educates the citizens so they can make political choices. Fourth, it connects people with each other, helping to create the social "glue" that binds civil society.

At a time when marketing values have replaced news values because of media owners thinking in terms of consumers rather than citizens, the role of media is becoming more controversial. Now big business houses have their own patronized mouthpieces. These new publications express more what the investor needs than what the public mood is. Some allege that media in Nepal molds the public opinion the way financier decides and give full publicity to a piece of propaganda.

"Media has become, by and large, a biased platform which is, in itself, not a correct way of encouraging pluralistic as well as diverse opinion- an anti thesis of what we call democracy," said Yubaraj Ghimire, editor of *Samaya* - a leading Weekly News Magazine, having a long experience of working as a professional journalist in India's leading newspapers and magazines. "Media, no doubt, has wide powers anywhere that is why

restrain and correct application is something which we should rationally think about. Media has to be accountable and cease to be instrument in the hands of vested interest."

"There are government media and its allies in the private sectors which see King as a repository of all virtues of patriotism and nationalism and support everything he does. Countering it in the same platform and manner, there are some private sector media who believe they are free to write anything in the name of democracy. This is what the journalism should not be," editor Ghimire added.

After the promulgation of new constitution in 1990, investment by private sectors in the print media industries poured in. In initial phase, business houses invested in broadsheet dailies, weekly magazines and they later invested money in television and radio.

According to Press Council Nepal report 2004-05, a semi-government agency responsible to monitor the media

activities, there are 22181 newspapers including 307 dailies, 21 bi-weeklies, 1559 weeklies and 294 fortnightly, five Television Channels and 60 FM private radio stations and one government controlled Medium Wave radio. Kathmandu district has the largest number of newspapers - 757 registered newspapers but only 211 are published including 26 dailies and 170 weeklies.

Who Controls Nepalese Press?

With the increase in the investment in media, the financial resources needed for its operation has assumed key role. The situation is now such that the one who controls purse controls the media. There are large number of persons of clear thinking, convictions and dedications, too, but they are not in a position to go against the discipline of either the state or money power.

As government's coercive power continues to block the advertisement to the private radio, television and broadsheet dailies through the one-

window policy, private sector media have no option other than to go for private industries for advertisement. This is where media's independence and freedom are compromised.

"Despite Royal regime's attempts to control, media is able to present itself as a powerful entity. February 1 action took away almost all fundamental rights the citizens of this country enjoyed since 1990, but it is because of the courage of independent media the fight to regain the civil liberties is still being effectively fought by them," said Dhruva Adhikari, senior journalist and president of Nepal

Press Institute (NPI). "The role of media is to ensure the citizens' rights to have adequate and accurate information and private media is perfectly doing these things now on matters of public interests and concerns."

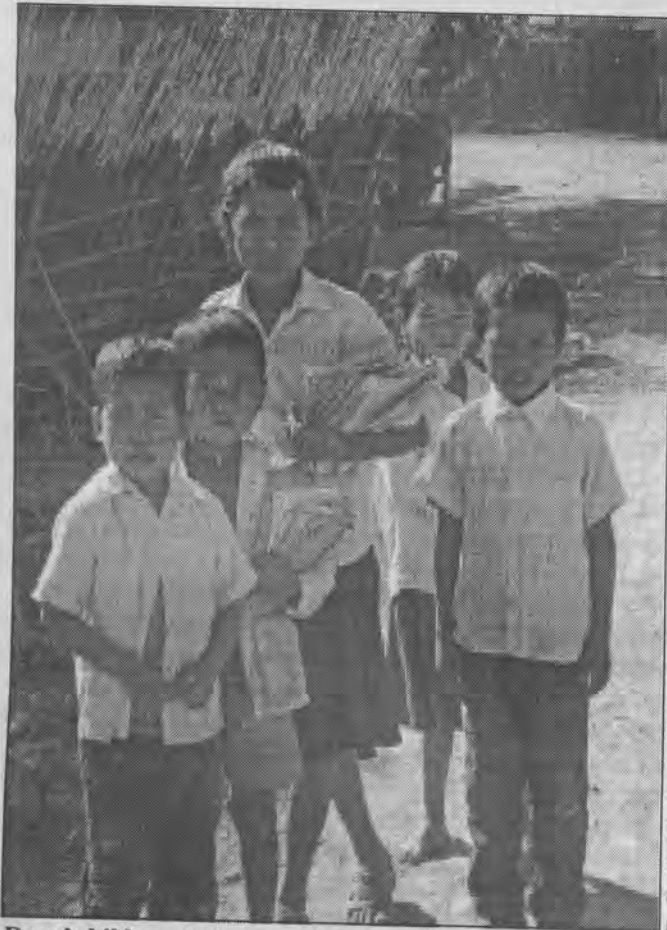
Till some years back big financing needs were not the major problems for private sector media industry as they were mostly confined in publishing small size dailies and weeklies with limited influences and power. Persons dedicated to the profession of journalism had been able to manage economics in small size publications. In the last few years, the mode of publication has changed, industries and business houses now run newspapers and magazines - which are more attractive and have wide readership.

Most popular private dailies of yester-years like Commoner, Motherland, Samaj had ceased their publication, as they were unable to increase their investment. Most popular weeklies like Samikchhya and Bimarsha have also suspended or revamped their publication. Their editors are still known as career journalists but they are rarely seen even as contributing columnists in the newspapers. The fact is that they did not have monetary support to survive. These papers had survived even in the dark period of the Panchayat rule but it is amazing that in a more open period of multi-party democracy, they were unable to continue.

"To call a spade a spade is the primary duty of the media, which it has been carrying out despite all attempts by Royal government to severely control the countries' independent media," said senior journalist Adhikari.

Role of Media

Media in Nepal has now mixed role. The private media and government controlled media, some allege, molds the public opinion the way their owners decide and gives full publicity as a piece of propaganda. The government-owned media including Radio, Television and newspaper publish what they deem necessary to defend the government and private-owned Television, Radio and newspapers give news following the interest of their investors.



Rural children: Voiceless citizens

"The role of media cannot reverse from the national politics. As national politics is severely polarized, so is the media. Media is divided into two camps—anti and pro-establishment with both sides and camps using all means advancing their own causes more than merely professionally," said Manaranjan Josse, consultant editor of People's Review weekly and senior journalist renowned for his expertise in writing on issues of international relations focusing on regional matters. "Anti-establishment media survive through the revenue generated by advertisement and backed by few advertisement agencies—which are controlled by foreigners particularly Indians. Since media is a very crucial power, this is equally important and lethal like the Maoist," said Josse.

As more the media divides, more there would be distortions. Average person in a society buys several newspapers and magazines everyday and watches a couple of channels to verify the reality and formulate the opinion between the lines. This is the tragic situation for the buyers and viewers.

Even persons in the government as well as opposition often complain that their views have been distorted. "I can say Nepalese media are free but not fair. I think the media needs to be free and fair," said Dr. Tulsi Giri, first vice chairman of the government headed by King Gyanendra recently in his press conference.

Media Power and Responsibility

Media is powerful and with power comes responsibility. If media can give you the power to make friends, it can also give you power to create enemies. If it can improve your professional and financial life, it can harm someone else's. If you can use media to improve society, you can also use it to hurt society. And media can be misused to restrict choices instead of increasing them.

"Although the evolutionary process of Nepalese media is too short, media has made a lot of progress in the last one and a half decade. Being a powerful medium to mold the public opinion, media has much responsibility towards society, and it must take care to

disseminate the factual and correct news based on facts. Since media person is a positive power, he has certain responsibility towards society," said Rajendra Dahal, editor of Himal Khabarpatrika. "We must equate media power and responsibility. In the past, we have also followed Helicopter journalism sensationalizing certain issues but media has also learnt from its past mistakes."

Chief of news and current affairs of Kantipur Television Tirtha Koirala said, "Nepalese media has lost its own destiny in the surface of political debate. These kinds of reporting confuses not only common Nepalese but also the foreigners who are much concerned about Nepal." Koirala added, "Our reach has increased by many folds but we are yet to be responsible and accountable."

duality is that in a developing society, press as an institution would play constructive and educative role," said former attorney general and advocate Badri Bahadur Karki. "In some other democratic constitutions like that of India, press freedom is included in the rights of freedom of speech and expression of an individual. These are not considered as separate right like that in Nepal."

"This right of fourth state was misused to discredit the elected parliament and breed hatred against political parties and leaders. They failed to distinguish between the system of democracy and political parties. The media launched almost like a hate campaign against the young institution," said Karki.

Media is a powerful tool as it can create rumors to destroy the institution and society but it can also help to



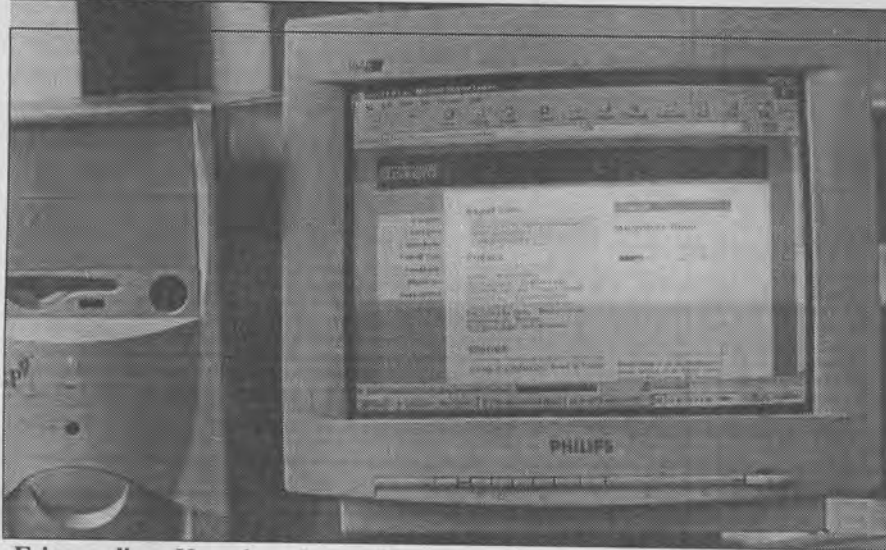
Supreme Court: Guardian of freedom

Fourth Estate

Framers of the Constitution of Kingdom of Nepal 1990, in true sense, had recognized the media as the fourth estate giving constitutional safeguards to the press. In a critical period like now, only hope for ventilating popular opinion is left with media but even it seems to be under stress now.

"Our constitution has conferred separate and distinct right of freedom of press and publication according distinct rights to the citizen in addition to traditional freedom of speech and expression. Only justification for this

minimize the conflict, clash of interest and create conducive environment for harmony and cooperation between different political forces in society. "Media should not be guided under the pressure or coercion of any kind. That goes against the essence of independent press and brings counter productive results. A controlled, guided or coerced press misguides and confuses people and, thus, harms society. The difficult task of media is to strike a balance between sanctions against the arbitrary rule, in one hand, and sanction against anarchy and chaos, on the other," added Karki.



E-journalism: Up and coming medium

The opinion builders have double-edged roles to maintain balance between two extremisms. Perhaps, it is this, which justifies its title as a fourth state.

When there was functional elected parliament, the media was too hostile against the elected prime ministers and

ministers promoting to bring a draconian law in the name of anti-corruption. Media, knowingly and unknowingly, carried the news and views discrediting the elected representatives.

"If it is not free, it can't be fair. It must be free from all pressures including

the control of owners and donors. If it is not free, it has no role to play in molding. It needs to have free access. Known by prefaces - free press and independent judiciary - the words free and independent are not prefixed to any other institutions like the executive and legislature. One cannot call independent government, as the government is government," said Karki.

In absence of elected parliament and locally elected bodies, media remains the only power to carry opinions of the people. In this situation, media has very important role to play but everyone asks the question whether media has been able to fulfill such a great responsibility that lies upon it?

In the last, there is a moral question - which is the secret of democracy that is applied to free press and service to the people - that is commitment to the freedom of press lies in the heart of the persons serving it. If people do not have commitment towards the freedom of press, it causes the death of democratic society, too.

विद्युत ग्राहक महानुभावहरूलाई

विशेष अनुरोध

विविध कारणहरूले गर्दा केन्द्रीय विद्युत प्रणालीमा विद्युत उत्पादन भन्दा माग बढेको हुन जाने देखिएकोले नेपाल विद्युत प्राधिकरणले विद्युतको माग तथा आपूर्तिमा सन्तुलन गर्न माग व्यवस्थापन (Demand Side Management) कार्यमा विशेष जोड दिएको छ। यस कार्यको लागि ग्राहक महानुभावहरूबाट आवश्यक सहयोगको अपेक्षा गरिएको छ।

निम्न उपायहरू अवलम्बन गरेमा विद्युत आपूर्ति र मागको असन्तुलनमा कमी ल्याउन सहयोग पुगनुका साथै यसबाट ग्राहकहरूको विद्युत खपतमा कमी आई विद्युत महशुलमा पनि बचत हुन जानेछ।

- (१) साधारण चिम (GSL Lamp) को तुलनामा CFL चिम प्रयोग गरेमा करीव ८०% सम्म विद्युत खपत कम भई महशुल बचत हुने भएकोले CFL चिम प्रयोग गरौं।
- (२) साधारण ट्युबलाइटको सट्टामा Energy Efficient Slim Tube Light (मसिनो ट्युबलाइट) प्रयोग गरौं।
- (३) ट्युबलाइटमा साधारण चोकको सट्टामा Electronic Choke प्रयोग गरौं।
- (४) साधारण विद्युतीय उपकरणहरूको सट्टामा Energy Efficient विद्युतीय उपकरणहरू (हिटर, राइस कुकर, पानी तान्ने पम्प आदि) प्रयोग गरौं।
- (५) बेलुकी ५:०० बजे देखि १०:०० बजेको पिक समयमा न्यून मात्रामा विद्युत खपत गरौं।
- (६) उक्त पिक समयमा वाशिङ्ग मेशिन, गिजर, इलेक्ट्रिक आयरन, भ्याकुम क्लिनर आदि जस्ता बढी विद्युत खपत हुने उपकरणहरू प्रयोग नगरौं।
- (७) कोठामा कोही नभएको बेला वा अनावश्यक रूपमा टि.भि., पंखा, वत्ती हिटर आदि प्रयोग नगरौं।

नेपाल विद्युत प्राधिकरण

TRADE

New Course

The New Year brings new challenges as the country ventures into SAFTA as well as BIMSTEC with the promises of new avenues

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

The year 2006 could be an exciting one as far as trade is concerned. Beginning January 1, 2006, the enforcement of the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) has official begun.

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multisectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) will also come into force from July this year.

These apart, post Hong Kong Ministerial, LDCs like Nepal can hope to benefit more from the multilateral trading regime provided by the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The seven member states of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) will be implementing SAFTA – which has the potential of becoming the world's largest free trading bloc given the huge population in this region.

As per the provision of SAFTA, the member states will need to bring down custom tariffs. Nepal, too, will need to cut down its tariff by at least 10 percent goods that are not in the Sensitive List.

Already there are reports that the government is preparing to substantially bring down tariffs in the upcoming economic ordinance, which could hurt revenue collection by as much as Rs 2 billion. Nepal will need to cut down tariff by August, 2006 as per SAFTA commitments. In the second phase of tariff slashing, Nepal would need to cut them by at least 30 percent within next two years and within 2016 it will need to bring them down between 0 to 5 percent.

There are two categories within SAFTA – LDCs including Nepal, Bhutan and Maldives and developing countries including rest of the member states. According to officials, Nepal has

prepared separate list of Sensitive products for two categories of states. Its Sensitive List for LDCs has 1300 products while that for developing member states has 1355 products.

On the other hand, BIMSTEC provides unique opportunity to Nepal to further its trade towards East Asia. BIMSTEC member states include Thailand, Myanmar, Nepal, India, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

For the first phase of the enforcement of the free trade pact, the BIMSTEC member states have reached an understanding on the framework related to 'trade in goods.' Recently, the 10th meeting of the Trade Negotiation Committee (TNC) of the regional grouping was held in Kathmandu.

The BIMSTEC member states do not only wish to open trade in goods and services but also investment and technical cooperation.

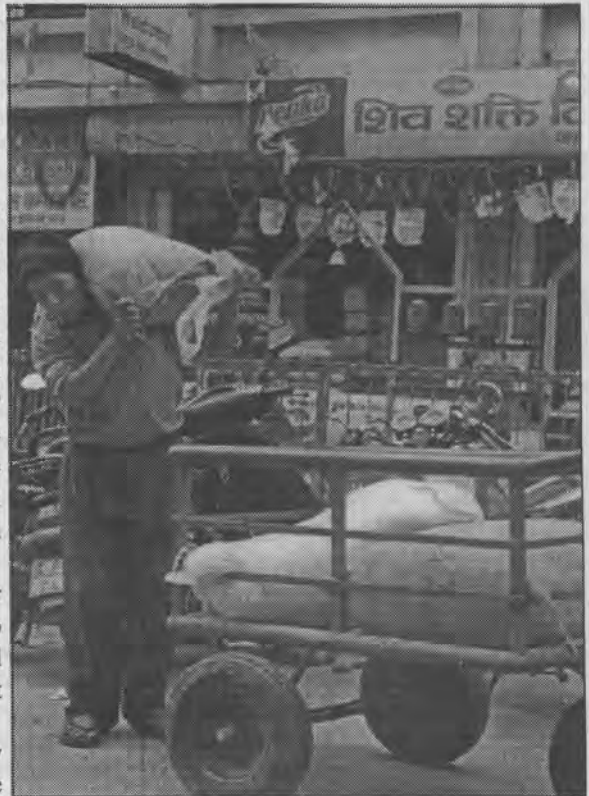
These apart, the new promises made by the developed countries at the recently concluded Sixth

Hong Kong Ministerial of WTO also could help in improving the international trade scenario for Nepal. The developed countries have agreed to allow 97 percent of products from LDCs duty free and quota free access to their markets. If garment is included in this 97 percent, Nepal stands to benefit greatly. It has seen a drop by 41 percent in the exports of readymade apparels to the United States in 2005 after the Multi Fiber Agreement expired.

Likewise, the commitment to simplify the Rules of Origin by the developed countries and their promise to extend technical cooperation could also turn out to be beneficial.

Unfortunately, the internal scenario within the country is not as rosy as these regional and international prospects. For consecutive months, the rate of inflation has been increasing with fears growing that it could soon touch double-digit.

The economic growth has stagnated with contraction of investment and decrease of agriculture production. Following February 1, the government has lost many foreign



Trade activities: Will they increase?

assistance commitments. The revenue growth is not as expected.

On the other hand, unproductive expenditures are likely to increase. The municipal elections and fears for escalation in conflict could increase security expenditures. The resumption of full-fledged conflict could further dampen the business confidence and tourism potentials. The feeling of gloom setting in could ultimately unravel the prospects that lie ahead. ■

"The Plan Will Have Short Term, Middle Terms And Long Term Strategy On Water Resources Development"

— BINOD KUMAR SHAHA

Assistant Minister for Water Resources, BINOD KUMAR SHAHA, was former member of dissolved House of Representatives. Shaha was elected from Dailekha district as a CPN-UML candidate. Following the October 4, 2002 move of King Gyanendra, assistant minister Shaha left the party. Shaha spoke to KESHAB POUDEL on various issues relating to water resources and the recently announced load shedding. Excerpts:

As Nepal Electricity has already announced the load shedding program, how long will it last?

As you know, the government does not want to see load shedding but we don't have any other option. This load shedding was not an implication of the last few years but is the result of visionless policies of past 12 years. Since the past policymakers have not proposed any power projects to meet the future demands of electricity, it is inevitable to have load shedding.

Do you mean load shedding will continue for many more years?

Since the rainfall was very poor last year and there is inadequate water accumulated at Kulekhani reservoir, I don't think it will end before the onset of monsoon. The construction of hydropower project is time consuming. It will take many years to see the relief from load shedding. We know the country will face many difficulties but we don't have other options. If the plans move accordingly, there will be surplus power by 2010 in the country.

Don't you have any plan to import power to maintain supply?

We are also considering importing power to reduce the load shedding. The government is serious about it.

You have recently assured the industrialists in Birgunj that the interruption of power supply in the industries will end soon. What is the basis in your statement?

The construction of Parwanipur sub-station as well as 132 KV Pathlaiya- Parwanipur transmission line is also going on smoothly. The project will complete by end of April. After the completion of the project, the power supply in Birgunj will improve.

What future programs do you have to meet the requirement of energy?

First of all, we are working to complete the middle Marsyangdi project in next one and half years. For long term and cheaper power supply, we are working to develop upper Tamakoshi project. We are in the process of constructing the access road to upper Tamakoshi. We are searching financier to construct this project. I think Upper Tamakoshi will be our major hydropower project. We are in the process of making its detailed design. We

are also finalizing the Chamelia project of Darchula district. Along with them, we have hydro power projects like Upper Trishuli, Upper Karnali of mid-western region, Kulekani III, Kabeli, Heba and Mewa of eastern region.

Do you think Kulekhani III project will start soon?

Since it is one of the viable projects, this is a priority of the government. As there is no need to construct the access road, it is not difficult to start the construction. Being a project with the capacity to supply peaking power, Kulekhani III is our main priority at present.

What is the status of power exchange with India?

Nepal and India do not have any power trading agreement but we are sharing the power under power exchange programs. Currently, Nepal imports about 40-50 MW power from India under the exchange program.

How many points are there between Nepal and India to exchange power?

Nepal is currently exchanging power from, Biratnagar in eastern region, Nepalgunj in mid-west and Kanchanpur of far western region.

What is happening with the Butwal-Sunauli transmission line?

We have signed agreement with India for the construction of the transmission line but it is yet to take off.

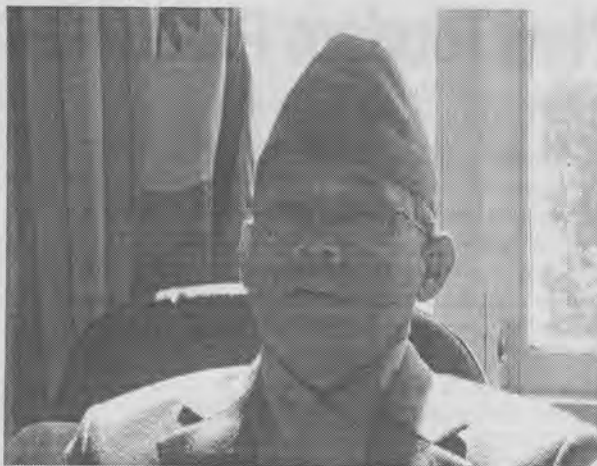
What is the policy of this government regarding the hydropower development?

We are in the final stage of announcing two ordinances under the energy reform program. They include Electricity Development Management Ordinance 2062 and Regulatory Commission Ordinance 2062. The Electricity Development Management Ordinance will pave the way for the unbundling of Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) into three different entities including Generation, Transmission and Distribution. This Ordinance aims to encourage the private sector giving many long term and short term benefits to them. Under this ordinance, a private developer will be given waiver of income tax up to 15 years of generation of electricity. There are also provisions to waive VAT on the equipment imported to construct the power plant. There are many other such facilities included in the ordinance.

As it has already been delayed for couple of years, what is the state of middle Marsyangdi project now?

Problems are there but we have made much progress in the construction of the project. If it goes as per schedule, the project will be complete by August 2007.

"Since the rainfall was very poor last year and there is inadequate water accumulated at Kulekhani reservoir, I don't think it will end before the onset of monsoon. The construction of hydropower project is time consuming. It will take many years to see the relief from load shedding."



What mechanisms do the second ordinance has introduced to establish National Regulatory Commission?

The regulatory commission will be autonomous and independent body, which will take care of all matters related to the electricity including tariffs. The unbundling of NEA will begin after strengthening regulatory commission. We hope that the establishment of regulatory body will facilitate the private sector.

What is happening to Upper Karnali project as the NEA and India's National Hydropower Commission (NHPC) had already signed understanding on the project a couple of years ago?

We have already asked NHPC to start the construction of the project in accordance with the understanding. The NHPC is said to be studying our proposal. We are yet to receive any concrete response from India. If NHPC will not start the construction, we will do it on our own. We are waiting for reply from them. We will give first priority to NHPC. If NHPC does not respond to us, we are considering constructing this project on our own.

For a long period of time, West Seti project is so lingering. Do you think the construction of West Seti will start soon?

Since China's bank has agreed to invest in the project, the construction will begin after completion of certain formalities. Since Power Purchasing Agreement has already been signed, I don't think there is any more hindrance there. This is one of the most viable projects for peaking power supply. In economic terms, it is beneficial to Nepal.

What are other sectors of reform?

After the announcement of ordinance, the government will issue license just to one area either in transmission, generation or distribution. The ordinance will end the monopoly of generation, transmission and distribution. Under the reform program, only one license will be given to one company.

How viable is it to unbundle a small NEA which has capacity of generating just 600 MW of electricity?

Unbundling is not related to size. Since we are unable to run Nepal's biggest public utility effectively, the

unbundling will open new opportunities. In the process of power reform, other stakeholders and experts have suggested that it is necessary to unbundle the NEA. Our unbundling process will begin stage by stage.

What are the new things in the National Water and Energy Strategy?

The strategy was developed keeping in mind Nepal's future demand of water and energy. This will help to identify the long term and short term projects for irrigation and energy.

As you know eastern development region needs more energy but there is no power plant there. Do you have any plan to construct the hydropower project targeting the eastern region?

We are planning to start Kabela project in eastern region. The government is negotiating with the World Bank on its financial issues. We want to use the money of Power Development Fund in the Kabela project. So far as I know, the Bank is positive on the construction of the project. This project is in the process of pre-qualification. In the Heva-mewa project, a private party has shown interest.

What is happening in Kosi high dam project?

Under the agreement between Nepal and India, investigation process is going on. After the investigation and study, then the issues of Kosi Highdam will be finalized. Nepalese and Indian technical teams have been doing various kinds of studies including topography.

What about the forthcoming Nepal Water Plan?

The government has already endorsed Nepal Water Plan, which discusses the long term, short term and middle term plans and programs in the water resource sector. This plan is an integrated broader strategy of Nepal's water resource management. We will see this as a guideline for water resources mobilization in future. This plan covers 10 to 14 plans. This is prepared under the various guidelines of water resources program.

What will be the main implications of the plan?

It will draw the line on how to move ahead for the implementation of water resources projects. We will have short term, middle terms and long term strategy to move on water project. It is a visionary plan.

How much electricity Nepal is getting from Tanakpur?

We are now getting about 18 MW electricity from Tanakpur. We are making efforts to secure 25 MW electricity from Tanakpur.

Do you have any new irrigation projects in your hand?

In irrigation sector, we will start Integrated Water Resources Management Project (IWRMP). This project will be run under the World Bank's support. Another important project is Shikta Irrigation Project. With a capacity to irrigate 36,000 hector of land in mid-western region; this project will change the fate of people living in the area. The government has already sanctioned Rs. 350 million rupees for the project. The construction of the project will begin in second week of March. ■

"We have already asked NHPC to start the construction of the project in accordance with the understanding. The NHPC is said to be studying our proposal. We are yet to receive any concrete response from India. If NHPC will not start the construction, we will do it on our own. We are waiting for reply from them."

Promotion and Marketing of New Tourism Products

By RABIJUNG PANDEY

Together with centuries old festive events amid exquisite architectural glories of the pagoda and stupas as cultural heritage, Nepal is equally rich in magnificent landscape and range of snow capped lofty mountains with natural flora and fauna. It has been evident that Nepal has attracted visitors predominantly by these natural and cultural beauties together with variety of trekking and mountaineering options. It will be customary to say that the magnificent diverse landscapes have bestowed to the rapid growth of tourism in terms of both their diversity and distinctiveness.

Despite immense potentialities for tourism growth and market, Nepal still lacks the regional equivalence in tourism development and income distribution. Tourism concentration in few areas and in few popular trekking routes has restricted the market, causing economic disparities among peoples of inherent destinations.

Realizing the fact that like any other economic activity, tourism has also considered to be managed by both public and private sectors in accordance with sound marketing principles in order to make it more productive. Effort on marketing has not simply tried to inform prospective tourists about what Nepal can offer, but also has induced potential tourists to visit the country. This is the reason why efforts on marketing is taking place with proper planning, understanding it as part of the overall tourism planning process, and as it relates to development of tourism product.

While on following the overall marketing process for the Nepalese tourism products, still there lie more opportunity for further improvements in the overall marketing management process that need to be followed by the national tourism organization (NTO) and tour operators. Still, much attention need to be focused on some activities, that includes, establishing the marketing objectives; formulating the product based marketing strategy; preparing and implementing the promotion program; and providing tourist information services. Looking at the present trend followed by other tourism developed countries and their NTOs, it gives feeling that marketing planning done for both international and domestic tourists or a combination of these are planned in a scientific manner or in a holistic approach.

In many countries, tourism at present has been identified as the most promising industry and effort has also seen to be made to attract more tourist adding new tourist products and services. For this reason, the best practices from these countries can be learned as lessons for further coordination and better understanding to put emphasis on the facilities and products developed in Nepal by various development programs including that of Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Program (TRPAP). Such practices simply does not help country to cope to receive the regional up ward trend but also facilitates to develop further coordination and make the overall marketing planning process more efficient.

His Majesty's Government of Nepal looks more determined to augment tourist arrivals by conducting liberal policies to attract more tourists and encouraging more private sectors to come forward in this venture. The futures of Nepalese tourist market will increasingly dependent upon the contentment that could cater to visitors with safe, clean and attractive environments for the use of the facilities and services provided. The scale nature and geography of attractions will continue to be particularly dynamic as more existing events, techniques and venues are utilized. Hence, it has been increasingly recognized that the maintenance of high quality environment, including

out look of the area, hygiene toilets and facilities and safe handling is crucial to accomplish visitor satisfaction. The land of diversity Nepal has a vast opportunity to diverge tourists on attractions, many of which are still to be explored. Divergence and extension of tourism sector activities all over the country need more endeavor to stimulate tourists to visit the place. Moreover, the international tour operators should be well conversant about the new product, so that they could launch it in their forthcoming package. In addition, locally tourist standard accommodation facilities have to be developed, and the most salient feature is that the local entrepreneurs should be encouraged.

Mid and Far western Regions of Nepal have various attractions including numerous snow ranges, alpine valleys, lakes, national parks and a multitude of distinct cultures. By way of contrast, these regions are most sluggish in terms of socio-economic development that tourism could have yield.

Among the conspicuous reasons why these regions are least visited by tourists include - the marketers who are not paying much interest to promote these sectors; very few entrepreneurial activities that are found to exist because of lack of infrastructure and promotional activities; and moreover, much of the places in the west remain unexplored. In addition, eight of the existing fourteen summits in the world, which exceed an altitude of 8000 meters including Sagarmatha (Mt. Everest), Kanchanjunga, Lhotse, Makalu, Cho-Oyo, Dhaulagiri, Manaslu and Annapurna lies in east and central part of Nepal.

The lack of external promotional activity could be justified by analyzing the tourists arrivals within the country. Tourism that is the highly competitive industry, where it is a case of survival of the fittest, the other giant neighboring countries appear to be the regions' winner.

However, Nepal has yet to capitalize the uniqueness the country possesses, especially the natural attractions of the mid and far western regions which can be designated as: River tourism, Rural tourism, Cultural tourism, Pilgrimage tourism, Forest and Wildlife tourism. Attention has to be given that attraction industry has been looked-out as one of the most exciting and challenging sectors in the tourist industry all over the world. The lesson from Europe and North America has to be learned where the main growth in international tourism is because of efficient marketing planning process followed by both NTOs and private sectors and the higher numbers of attractions available in the regions.

Attractions that are the prime components of an area's tourism product, must perceive, develop, and manage to meet the demands, needs and interest of the visitor with proper marketing procedures. TRPAP has done some efforts to promote its newly developed products and services directly taking part in the international event markets such as ITB in Berlin (March, 2005) and WTM in London (November, 2005) simply to facilitate the local tour operators to market these products and services. It has to be understood that with the advancement of technology, the concept of mass tourism has found to bring revolution in the field of tourism industry. However, there could have been many reasons to travel, but choosing a destination would be due to efficient and effective marketing means, which could provide positive benefits to both tourists and the local communities and ultimately contributing for regional development.

(The author is director of the Tourism for Rural Poverty Alleviation Program. The article is courtesy of TRPAP-Rural Tourism Feature)

TOURISM

Random Days

The on again, off again growth in tourism sector is likely to continue

By A CORRESPONDENT

With the decision by the Maoists to call off their four-month-old unilateral ceasefire, the possibilities of tourism sector sustaining the short-period of growth it had recently observed have vanished.

The year 2005 was forgettable for the tourism sector. After the royal steps of February 1 and the spread of political uncertainty, upheavals and conflicts, the tourists decided to stay away from this scenic mountainous country.

It was after the Maoists announced unilateral ceasefire in September that the arrival of tourists registered a healthy growth. Even so, the overall arrival of tourists in 2005 was less by 3.8 percent compared to the figure in 2004.

Even during the ceasefire period, incidents like Nagarkot killings and Hotel Yak and Yeti strike had sent negative message.

Despite brief periods of increases, the overall arrival of tourists in 2005 registered a slight downfall compared to 2004. The year saw 2,77,000 tourists coming to Nepal – down 3.9 percent from 2,88,000 in 2004.

The arrival of Indian tourists, however, increased. Compared to 86,328 Indians who visited Nepal in 2004, 93,430 of them came here in 2005 marking an increase of 8.2 percent. This data was revealed by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Civil Aviation. The arrival of tourists from third countries decreased by 9.1 percent from 202,000 in 2004 to 1,83,000 in 2005.

The arbitrary trend of growth and decline in Nepalese tourism sector has continued since 1999. After the record arrival of nearly half a million tourists in 1998 and 1999, Nepal began to witness the drastic turn of events that were so quick and regular that the tourism industry was virtually made to bite the dust.

It all began with the hijacking of Indian airlines airplane from Kathmandu to Kandahar in December 1999. That was followed by strikes in hotels and anti-India riots in December 2000 due to Hrithik Roshan episode. These events virtually crushed the handsomely growing arrival of Indian tourists.

The bizarre royal massacre in June 2001 and subsequent escalation of armed conflict and incessant political turmoil has never let the sector raise its head again.

It has been rule, rather than exception, that tourism arrivals grew during the brief spells of peace marked by ceasefires – only to go downhill as soon as the truce was broken. Unfortunately, the truce is again broken this time and the tourism entrepreneurs fear another ugly turn in their profession.



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BOOK

History and Administration

Shrestha's book highlights that Nepal is one of the few nations with recorded history stretching for more than 25 centuries

M Although Nepal has more than 2,500 years-long recorded history of administration, governance and development, only a few people know about it. The historical evidences show that no country in the South Asia had such a long experience like that of Nepalese people in self-governance.

There are many lacunae in the history of Nepalese administration but the modern administrative unit has been evolving for more than 25 centuries. The present administrative apparatus is the result of this evolution. From centuries, there was a need to have recorded system for any administrative or political decision. Monarchies in Nepal, whether in the Kirat, Lichhivi or Shaha period, followed the rules and regulations in appointing and nominating administrative positions. There is hardly any case of use of arbitrary power.

Many books have already been written but only a few authors have made efforts like that of author Shrestha to detail the evolution of Nepalese administration citing historical perspectives.

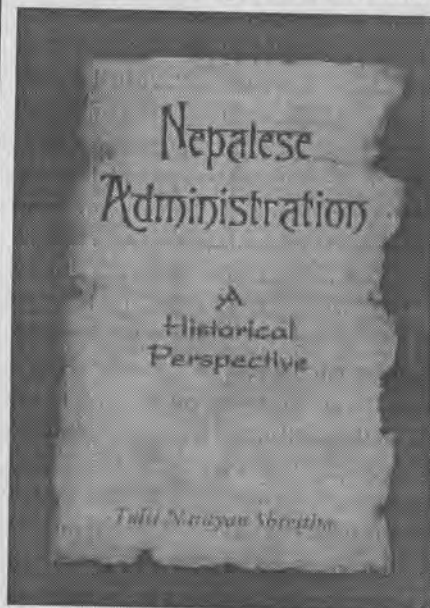
"Nepal is one of the nations having a long recorded history of administration stretching for more than 25 centuries. This book deals with the multi-dimensional aspects of the Kirat and Lichhivi administration systems of ancient Nepal, different facets of Malla administration of medieval Nepal and the various dimensions of administrative systems of pre-Rana and Rana period of modern Nepal," writes Shrestha.

Citing almost all books published in various period of time including in Nepali and other languages, author Shrestha tries to explain various historical evolution and phases of administration in Nepal.

The bibliography put in the book shows how extensive and objective the author's arguments are about the evolution of historical development of Nepal. Having

a long experience in teaching public administration and doing research, author Shrestha has come up with an insightful book full of evidences. One can read about the entire process of historical evolution in this book. From Kirat period to Lichhivi, and from Malla period to Shaha period, the book includes all historical phases of Nepalese administration. This book is useful to researchers as well as other persons wishing to know how Nepal's administrative system evolved.

For general readers having no idea about Nepal's history of administrative evolution, this book is equally helpful. The book argues that Nepal's evolution as a nation has a long history with its own system of self-governance. This is one of the important messages the book carries.



Nepalese Administration
A Historical Perspective
 By: **Tulsi Narayan Shrestha**
 Published by: **Ratna Pustak Bhandar,**
Kathmandu, Nepal
 Price: **Rs. 395.00**
 Pages: **264**

From recruitment to punishment, promotion and job distribution, Nepalese administrative systems had set their own courses. Some of the present institutions like finance, revenue, home and foreign affairs also have long history.

Some Highlights

- Juddha Sumsher opened the Nepalese Embassy in London and made contact with Germany, Italy, Netherlands and Finland.

- Hitler even sent Mr. Flichner for helping Nepal to survey mineral resources. Germany, Italy, Netherlands and Finland even decorated then Maharaja Prime Minister of Nepal with their respective medals. Hitler presented a car to King Tribhuvan.

- Jung Bahadur asserted his military power over his brother Dhir Shumsher by reprimanding and imposing a fine of Rs.10,000 upon the latter on charges of highhanded-ness in promoting two officers of his command without ratification of prime minister.

- The pocket allowance of the King in 1858 was merely Rs.4, 800.00 per annum while the Maharaja Prime minister had limitless amount of such allowances

- When Kapadar Kalidas Khadka was sent to capture the Reign of Lamjung in 1772 A.D., Prithivi Narayan Shaha instructed him to spend Rs.10 to Rs.12 to destroy the enemy boats assuring him to clear the amount at the time of audit.

- The amount of taxes collected from the people of Banepa, Bode, Chaukot, Dhulikhel, Khadpu, Nakdesh, Nara, Panauti, Sanga Madhayapur (Thimi) etc on the occasion of the marriage ceremony of Prince Ugra Malla was Rs.15372.

- Jaya Prakash Malla, the King of Kathmandu, after the brutal murder of the Chief minister Sambhu Bha asked the pramanas (ministers) to recommend a moolkazi.

- Lichhavi ruler Amsu Verma had entrusted the responsibility of maintaining Matingaon temple renovated by the government to the local panchali and had also allotted the plots of land to it for this purpose.

- The San Makwan branch of the Kirats ruling over Kritadesh had also some sort of government under which the Kings were elected from among the members of the ten San Makwan families.

INDIAN FILM FESTIVAL

Remembering Uniting Factors

Nepal and India share many cultural and religious similarities and Hindi films remind them

By A CORRESPONDENT

“Jub Pyar Kiya to Darna Kya (When you are in love, there is nothing to be afraid of).” This is an all-time popular song of Mughal-e-Azam, which once again reminds one of Nepal and India’s long-running list of common tastes in music, culture and entertainment.

Being a close neighbor of India, Bollywood films have greatly contributed to transform Nepalese society. As language based on Devanagari, Hindi films are popular in Nepal for decades. Nepalese people see their cultural and religious similarities through Hindi movies.

Hindi films thrive in Nepal through people to people efforts and business contacts. At one time in the past, film owners made a lot of money showing Hindi films in the valley, as they were the only source of entertainment. These days Nepali films and even Hollywood flicks have gained ground in urban centers.

Realizing the need to recognize the importance of areas linking Nepal-India, Embassy of India and B. P. Koirala India-Nepal Foundation is scheduled to organize Indian Film Festival in January-March 2006.

Six films of different period and generation are chosen for the Indian film festival. Mughal-e-Azam, Chaudhavi Ka Chaand, Pyaasa, Bobby, Hip Hip Hurrah and Garam Hawa. All the films were popular and widely reputed at their time.

The film festival will begin from Dharan as the city was revived from verge of collapse following the construction of B.P. Koirala Institute of Health Sciences under Indian cooperation.

The festival will begin at Dharan in Ganesh Talkies on 7th January 2006 and will continue there on 9th and 10th January. It will be held in Janakpur in 14-16 January, in Birgunj 20-22, January, in Pokhara 20-22

February, in Nepalgunj 24-26 February and Kathmandu 3-5 March.

From every aspect, the stories and incidents presented in Hindi films resemble with the Nepalese environment. This is the



Poster of a Hindi film: Ties that bind

reason there is no dearth of fans of Indian films in Nepal. From Mechi of east to Mahakali of west and Kathmandu valley and Pokhara valley, Indian cinema has established itself as a popular means of entertainment.

For the early generation, Prithivi Raj Kapur, Raj Kapur, Dilip Kumar, Balraj Shahani, Sammi Kapoor, Devananda Madhu Bala, Sadhana, Mala Sinha, Sadhana, Babita were the name of their time. Then came the time of legendary actors like Rajesh Khanna, Sharmila Tagore, Mumtaz, Utpal Dutta, Amitabh Bachchan, Rekha, Jitendra, Dharmendra, Maushami Chattarji, Rakhee, Hema Malini and so on.

Despite the introduction of Nepalese film, the new generation of youngsters also equally favor Hindi films and their actors.

Shah Rukh Khan, Amir Khan, Salman Khan, Rani Mukherjee, Kajol, Akshaya Kumar, Aishwarya Rai, Madhuri Dixit and Kareena Kapoor are well-known heart-throbs.

“There is no need to explain the cultural similarities between the people of India and Nepal. Through the film festival, we want to remind basis of our long relations,” said Indian ambassador to Nepal Shiv Shanker Mukherjee. “We have chosen best films of different time.”

The films chosen to display at different places represent different generations. The old generation will enjoy

watching the Mughl-e-Azam, Chaudavin ka Chaand and Pyasa. The middle-level generation would enjoy Bobby and Hip Hip Hurrah.

“The films were chosen representing the various stages of India film industry,” said Gopal Baglay, Counselor, Press, Information and Culture. “We hope Nepalese people will like them.”

Political and diplomatic relations have their different dimensions, as there will be regular ups and downs. So far as the religious and cultural relations between the two countries are concerned, they are virtually smooth. Evolved and developed in the course of centuries of interactions, Nepal’s cultural and religious relations with India are unbreakable and undistinguishable. The film festival is just a part of it.

DHANENDRA BIMAL

Words of Memories

Bimal writes songs that are easy to understand

By THAKUR AMGAI

Bimal would probably have not been a song writer had he not entered Radio Nepal. "Radio Nepal gave me a platform without which I would probably have not been a song writer at all," says Bimal. "I would probably have taken some other business."

Born in Kathmandu in 1981 (Bikram Era), Bimal had a moderate childhood. His parents aspired to make him a medical doctor. He did not know he had a flair for writing in his childhood.



Bimal: Tireless effort

However, after the demise of his father when he was quite young, the responsibility of the family fell on his shoulders.

"I could not give continuity to my studies because of the demise of my father. I had made a turn in the course of my life after I confronted the responsibilities of the family," Bimal says.

Deprived of his ambition to become a doctor, Bimal started looking for a job. He terms this turn of course as 'unfortunate'.

While the entry to Radio Nepal deprived him of his ambition of becoming a doctor, it opened new avenues for him. He came into contact with singers and musicians in the environment of Radio Nepal. Famous musician Ram Thapa encouraged him to write songs. Encouraged, he wrote a song "Sapana Bhani Nathani Deu," which was

composed by Ram Thapa and sung by Manoj Gurung. This was his first song on record. He was merely in his post teens then.

"I felt very embarrassed when the first song was aired from the Radio," he recalls. "I had never thought I would write a song. Actually it was musician Ram Thapa who encouraged me to write songs."

In the subsequent months and years, he started writing more songs and they started becoming more popular. This genre has brought Bimal this far where the audiences know him by his songs. And now Bimal says he feels that being recognized as a lyricist has added responsibility to him.

Prominent singers like Bhakta Raj Acharya and Prakash Shrestha have lent their voices in his songs "Ankhama Kehi Ash Thiyo" and "Yastai Chha Yahanko Reet" respectively. These are evergreen songs that share the sentiments of the common people. While he had been writing songs since the past twenty-five years, he is widely known through pop songs like 'Mehendi Lagau Malai' and 'Gori, Kali, Sani Mori Je Bhane Ni Hunchha' sung by Nalina Chitrakar.

The greatest achievement he has made as a lyricist is his recognition. "People know me as a song writer and refer to me through the songs I have written," says Bimal.

Bimal writes songs in the fresh ambience of morning. His songs are easy to understand and tell realities and sentiments of life that touch a wide spectrum of audience. His song 'Ke Magchhau Bhani Kasaila Sodhe, Ma Magthen Balapan' sung by Yashoda

Parajuli recites the sentiments of every person about his/her memories and longing of the innocent childhood.

"I write according to the taste of the audience," he says. "The satisfaction of the audience is my satisfaction." He has more than 250 songs to his credit. He considers himself to be a writer who writes as a hobby. He has not brought out any album so far. By profession, Bimal is a program producer and an administrator. He has also written songs for a number of feature films.

Bimal is not satisfied with the existing trend in which song writers are overshadowed in the music fraternity. "Lyricists are the most victimized groups in music fraternity whether it may in commercial terms or in getting credit. While broadcasting or staging any songs, the name of the lyricist is most neglected and often missed to announce," says Bimal. "Likewise, even in stage programs a singer or a musician can use his skill commercially by singing the song. However, the lyricist who has actually first created the song gets nothing. It is unfortunate."

"There is no environment of commercialization for lyricists. Even today there is no situation for a song writer to earn his living by writing songs."

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