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SPOTLIGHT

Jan. 20 - 26, 2006



India

China


Nepal Between Neighbors

Financial Ordinance : Risks and Rewards!
Maoists : Stepped Up Attacks

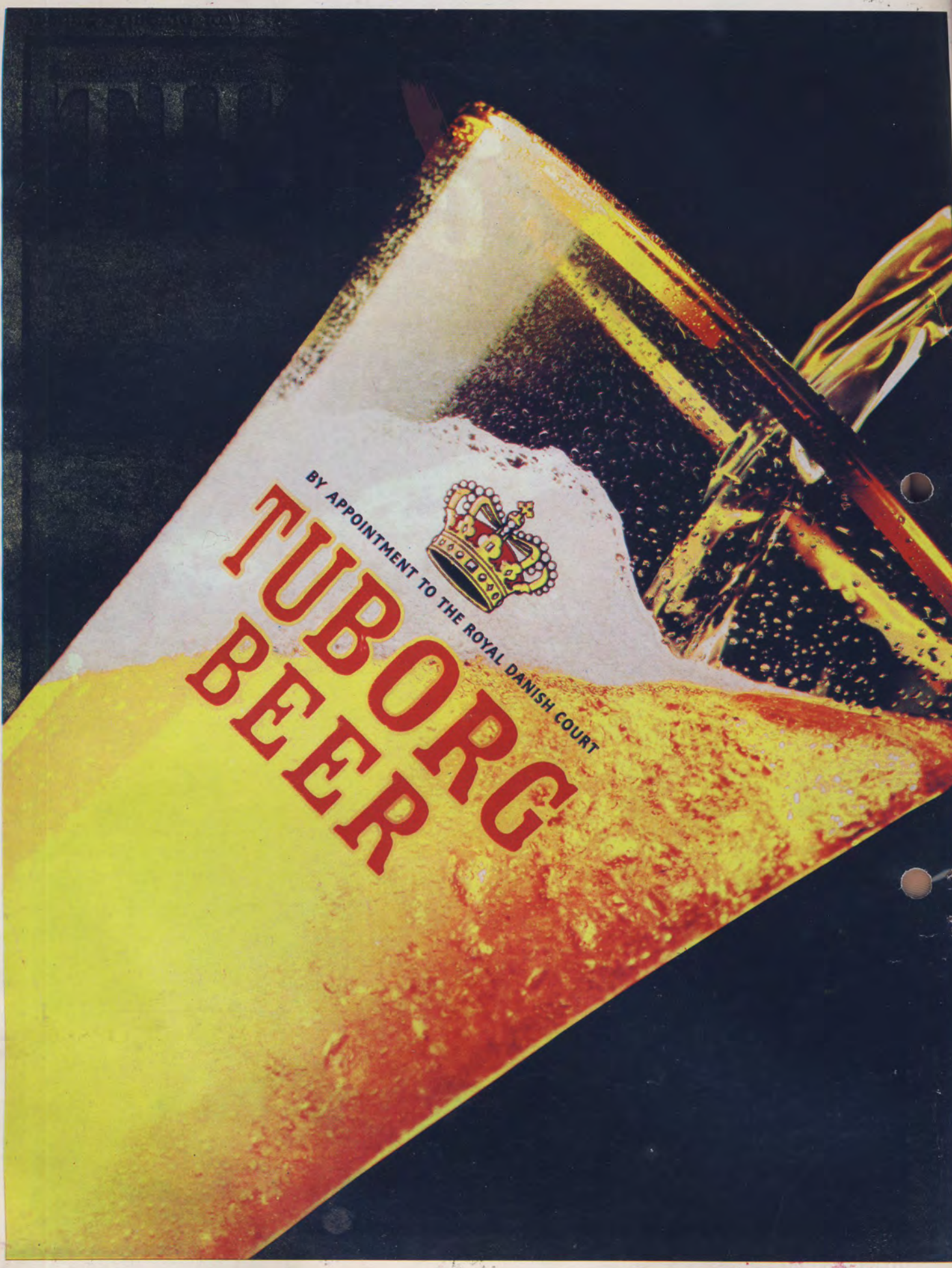
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TUBORG BEER



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COVER STORY : Nepal Between Neighbors

Only a peaceful and stable Nepal can assure the security concerns of its neighbors

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MAOIST ATTACK: Deepening Turmoil

The Kathmandu Post

Maoists attack security posts in Kathmandu. Government reacts by banning protest rallies

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INTERVIEW: Prof. Dr. Surya Subedi

UK-based Professor of International Law assesses the legal and political scenario and Nepal concluding only peaceful political coexistence could resolve the nation's crises

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SPOTLIGHT

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Prolonged political instability and growing violence in Nepal is a grave concern not only for us but also for international community including Nepal's two powerful neighbors. Everybody wants relief from violence, uncertainty and wants to see the revival of democratic process. But it seems elusive in the regional context when Nepal's internal issue is linked to strategic and security concerns of Nepal's neighbors. Nepal remained a peaceful buffer state during the whole British colonial period guaranteeing the stability in the region. Sandwiched between two major powers India and China, policymakers in Nepal, a small Himalayan Kingdom, have pursued a foreign policy merely to survive as an independent and sovereign nation. Unlike its two big neighbors, Nepal has very limited options in formulating foreign policy. This might be the reason Badamaharaj Prithivi Narayan Shah, founder of modern Nepal, aptly termed Nepal as a yam between two boulders. From Badamaharaj to first elected prime minister B.P.Koirala and late King Birendra—who were the three most important architects of Nepalese foreign policy—all pursued the foreign policy safeguarding Nepal's sovereignty and independence. At a time when Nepal's violent conflict and prolonged political instability seems to have no immediate solution, we decided to see why it is always difficult to live between two powerful neighbors in this week's cover story.

This is the irony of geo-political situation that every enlightened person in Nepal discuss about their neighbors' affairs but none of the people in the neighboring countries see problems of Nepal as serious enough to be included in their national agenda. Whether it is in peace or during hostile relationship with Nepal, the issue is left to their respective governments whereas this become life and death question of every Nepalese. Nepal has been a stable and, therefore, a peaceful country for a long time compared to other buffer states in the region. The peace and stability in Nepal helped both the big neighbors as it assured them of their security. During the British colonial period, the same was not the case with Afghanistan, which always remained unstable therefore, strained its neighbors over the matter of security. If Nepal follows the trend set by Afghanistan, it will be impossible to have same normal relations between two big powers bordering Nepal. As long as stability is there in Nepal, it assures the big neighbors of their security and, therefore, the normal relations between them. An unstable Nepal will definitely create tensions and imbalances between two adjoining regional powers. Perhaps keeping that fact in mind, Indian ambassador to Nepal Shiv Shankar Mukharjee in his televised interview desired peace in Nepal. Peace is not a grace or charity towards Nepal but it is in the very selfish interest of not only India but also China. Chinese statesmen and diplomats have also, all the time, been giving prominence to Nepal's peace and stability. But mere wishes have no meaning if they do not come into practice.

Because of the contradictions between thirteen government coalition parties in India, the contradictions in the statements of politicians and diplomats of that country also creeps in. One cannot wish peace in Nepal by instigating conflict between the regime and its opponents. A much used and misused 'China Card' was already there in the circulation. In the recent edition was 'India Card' available to opposition, too. This kind of grudges and grumbling do not promote required trust or confidence to maintain peace and stability. The reconciliation between the King and the organized political forces are necessary to resume the democratic process. Indian government, through its envoy and high officials, has often expressed this. Unfortunately, representatives of ruling parties of India come to Nepal and instigate seven agitating parties to fight against monarchy. They added the fuel recently predicting that the 'Loktantara' (which is being defined as a republic by India-educated scholars in Nepal) would be established within a month. A month has passed and nothing has come except the distrust and mistrust between King and the organized political parties in Nepal. If that kind of statement has any backing of the government in the south, one can very well guess how the other country interested in the security of Nepal would react. Such prophets and harboring of cold war are harmful not only to Nepal but they are equally harming their own interest in the region.

As Canadian prime minister Paul Martin recently said, "To the reticent nations including the United States, I had said there is such a thing as a global conscience. And now is the time to listen to it." Translating that spirit in our terms, one can say there is such a thing as a regional conscience and now it is time to listen to it. And in the regional context, both the countries need peace and stability to catch up with developed world. It is just stupid to remain fixated on contradictions while vast areas of cooperation and coexistence have been extended by global situations. Passing through a very critical and difficult time, Nepal's peace, stability and progress lies in the type of relations existing between two neighbors. If two big giants reconcile, the result will be peace, stability and prosperity in Nepal. If they are in mood for confrontation, no one can prevent chaos.

Keshab Poudel
Keshab Poudel
Managing Editor



Informative Story

The cover story this issue about the three trade agreements was very informative "SAFTA, BIMSTEC & WTO: Trade Tangle" (SPOTLIGHT January 13). It provided a detailed information and an shrewd analysis of the pros and cons of the trade agreements. Such stories are essential for the business community at present because at present there is very little awareness about the provisions of the agreements and without knowing about it we cannot benefit much from it.

Siddhartha Neupane
Thankot

Insightful Interview

The interview with speaker Tara Nath Ranabhat was very insightful "If This Constitution Is Scrapped, Nepali Congress Will Be The First Victim" (SPOTLIGHT January 13). As he has said, if we scrap off the present constitution and make a new one through the election of constituent assembly, it is the extremist communist parties that will benefit. It will certainly put democracy and individual freedom at jeopardy. The establishment of an autocratic regime, whether it may be the direct rule of the king or the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' as the slogan of the communist manifesto goes, might create peace in the country. But, such a peace where the fundamental rights of the people like right to expression, right to peaceful protest and right to press freedom are abandoned are not desirable in twenty first century. So, the leaders of liberal parties like Nepali Congress, whose base lies on common people with democratic mindset, should not advocate talk about scrapping off the present constitution. In the absence of a liberal constitution like the present one, their very existence might also end.

Narendra Pradhan
Patan

General Elections Is The Solution

I was convinced with the arguments of Tara Nath Ranabhat that the present

constitution should not be scrapped off "If This Constitution Is Scrapped, Nepali Congress Will Be The First Victim" (SPOTLIGHT January 13). The present constitution, provided that it functions well, has ample provisions for amendments and has enough room for the outlet of all crises. However, it has not been able to function lately because of the absence of House of Representatives. So, the quickest and safest solution to the present crisis is to hold the general elections to establish the House of Representatives. As the king has promised in several occasions that he is committed to hold the general elections within the next few years, I think, the political parties should cooperate with him and participate in the elections. That is the only way the sovereignty of the Nepali people can be returned to the people.

Hari Khanal
Naya Bazar

Everyone Should Think Of National Interest

The present situation of the country is such that the Maoists are trying to create trouble in the country and the government is trying its best to control it. It is using the security forces, the army as well as the police against

the Maoists. However, as the security personnel are not well trained on the issues of human rights and discipline, the general people are suffering. Security personnel do not harass the central leaders of political parties, intellectuals, lawyers and journalists fearing they would protest and create propaganda in the name of human rights and democracy. But, the general public, who seldom have their voice heard have to suffer from the rudeness and indiscipline of the security people. Likewise, the low ranking security personnel, who are deployed in the war, are also suffering. It is very unfair that the leaders as well as the high ranking security officials do not raise voice against the killings and sufferings of the common people and low ranking security personnel. They do not seem to be very courageous. Why can't they point their finger at the King and say boldly that he is the one who is ultimately responsible for the killings and attacks against innocent lives. I think they lack courage to do so, because they never took the responsibility of the deaths and damages during their reign. Leaders like Girija Prasad Koirala, Madhav Kumar Nepal, Ram Chandra Poudel, Sher Bahadur Deuba and Purna Bahadur Khadka were not held responsible for the death of more than 10,000 people who were killed in the course of the people's war during the time they were in government portfolios. Even the human rights activists, who are sternly criticizing the present government, did not raise strong voices then. Looking at all these activities, it compels me to form the opinion that everyone, whether it may be the human rights activists, intellectuals, journalists, lawyers or political leaders, who all vouch that they are working for the good of the nation and its people at public forums, are but working to fulfill their own vested interests for the short term. Have they ever thought what intellect means to intellectuals; Journalism to Journalists; Law and order to Lawyers; Human rights to rights activists; and politics to politicians? Shouldn't it all be for the prosperity and development of the country. All these professions are and should be affiliated to politics, but in good spirits, and not as a tool to fulfill their vested interests. They should not think about short term benefits to them individually. Instead, they should think and work for the long term needs of the country. Their profession and their identity can survive only if the nation survives.

Gyan Shrestha
Via Email

Bomb Exploded In The Residence Of Father Of Army Chief

Maoists have exploded bomb at the residence of Tej Jung Thapa, father of army chief General Pyara Jung Thapa. The bomb damaged the gates of the house in which Tej Jung Thapa – an elderly person of 86 years of age – lives alone. Security sources said no security personnel was deployed in his residence in Besigaun of Jorpati. Defense Ministry has issued a statement condemning the bombing and said it confirmed the Maoist strategy of targeting innocent and unarmed family members of security forces. *Leading dailies report.*

India Willing To Sell Electricity

India has agreed to sell 50 MW of electricity to Nepal in winter season to help latter overcome power shortage that has led to load shedding. On the other hand, India will buy reserve electricity from Nepal during monsoon season. This understanding has been reached at a meeting of officials of Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), Water Resource Ministry and Power Trading Corporation (PTC) of India. The meeting was held in New Delhi on Saturday. The rate for the electricity that will be exchanged has not been finalized yet. At present, Nepal is suffering from the shortfall of 90 MW of electricity and it is already getting 50 MW from India from eastern region. "(India) has agreed to provide us with electricity even by reducing load in its Farbisgunj sector," said a source. According to Nepali delegation, India will provide additional 50 MW of electricity from next year. Till the infrastructures for transmission are put in place, India will provide 20 MW beginning this year. India is upgrading its transmission line near Duhabi point and the process is expected to complete within two-three months. Nepal is expected to suffer from winter shortfall till 2012. Nepal and India have government-to-government understanding for exchange of power up to 150 MW at the rate of Rs 5.57. However, this is the first time Nepal is buying electricity from PTC on a commercial basis. *Kantipur daily reports.*

King Strolls Through Itahari Bazaar

King Gyanendra took an hour and a half long stroll through the streets of Itahari on Saturday (January 14) to the amazement of local people. Everybody was surprised to see the King walking amidst them like an ordinary passer-by. Soon, the crowds gathered around him. "King came to the busy market and started making conversations with the people," said Shambhu Pandey of Itahari. "We asked him for peace and he replied – 'yes, yes'" "There was no obstruction to talk with the King. We ran towards him. I told him that cooperation with parties, not the elections were the need of the hour," said a political worker Drona Sharma, adding, "And he nodded." *Kantipur daily reports.*

16 Maoists Killed In Syangja Operation

At least sixteen Maoists have been killed in a clash between them and security forces in Manakamana area of Syangja district, according to security sources. The security forces have been launching operation in the area after getting information of Maoist concentration there. They launched attacks from both land and the air. The security forces have claimed that they have taken under their control the base area of the 'Parivartan Smriti Ninth Brigade' of the Maoists in Chitrebhanjyang and Grihakot area of the district. *Leading dailies report*

'House Restoration Could Transform The Environment'

Sushil Koirala, vice president of Nepali Congress (NC), has said that the whole political environment could change if the House of Representatives is restored. Koirala added that the House restoration was a common demand of the seven party alliance. Saying that the alliance has not gone in favor of a republican order yet, Koirala said the forthcoming municipal polls were only a drama. *Leading dailies report.*

Germany Would Continue Its Assistance

Germany has urged the government and the Maoists to end the decade-long violence and strive for peace by getting together on the negotiating table. A German Embassy representative said Germany and the European Union were willing to mediate in the peace process if both the warring factions to conflict called for their mediation. "Political targets can be reached not with violence but with negotiations. Both the warring factions to conflict should find a way out of the ongoing crisis through dialogue," said Norbert Meyer, deputy chief of the mission at the German Embassy. Expressing concern over the termination of the four-month unilateral ceasefire by the Maoists, he said there is no military solution to Nepal's conflict and that the problem should be resolved sooner than later. Pointing out that the conflict should be resolved by the Nepalis rather than the international community, Meyer said Germany and the EU would mediate if their mediation was sought by the warring parties. Meyer made these comments while talking to The Himalayan Times at a poster competition on 'German language learning in Nepal' organized by Goethe-Zentrum on Saturday (January 14). He, however, said, "Germany was ready to help Nepal on its way back to democracy." Meyer was optimistic that peace will prevail in Nepal. "Sooner or later, peace will be restored in the country. The country should now be ready to meet the challenges of the 21st century," he said. Against the backdrop of international community 'cutting down' financial aid to Nepal considering its ongoing political situation, he said German would, however, continue its assistance to the country. "We will continue to provide aid to the country. As long as people benefit from our assistance, we do not feel the need to slash our grants," he said. *The Himalayan Times daily reports.*

Clash In Tanahun, 10 Maoists Killed

Ten Maoists have been killed in clashes between them and the security forces in Chitre and Ambote of Tanahu

district on Thursday (January 12). According to security forces, they also seized weapons including SLR, 303 rifles, socket bombs and so on from the site of incident. The Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) Public Relations Directorate stated that the clash, which started since Wednesday night, continued till Thursday afternoon. *Leading dailies report.*

RPP Knocks The Door Of Court

The Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) president Pashupati SJB Rana has filed a petition at the Appellate Court Patan demanding an interim order to forbid any group staking claim to its flag and election symbol. Rana went to the court along with his supporters on Thursday and filed the petition demanding that the court prevent dissident RPP faction from making claim over its election symbol and stop its interference. Rana has urged the court to issue necessary orders to the Election Commission (EC). This move followed after the pro-government dissident faction of RPP led by Kamal Thapa staked claim to the party symbol at the EC. Thapa was even elected by the 'special convention' participated by the dissidents as the new RPP president. *Leading dailies report.*

Wagle Dissatisfied Over NC (D) Appointments

A faction led by former party vice president Chiranjibi Wagle has expressed dissatisfaction over the appointments made by president Sher Bahadur Deuba. The faction has urged Deuba to 'correct' the appointments. "We organized the convention of unity and understanding but the appointments could not follow the spirit," said Wagle. He said that the faction is dissatisfied over stripping off all responsibilities from ex-general secretary Bijaya Kumar Gachchedar. "Earlier, there were two party officials apart from Deuba. After the convention, one has been retained while Gachchedar is left without any responsibility," he said. A few days ago, Deuba had re-appointed Gopal Man Shrestha as acting party president and appointed Prakash Man Singh and Bimalendra Nidhi as two general secretaries. *Kantipur daily reports.*

India And China Discuss Nepal Situation

The visiting Indian foreign secretary Shyam Saran discussed about situation in Nepal with Chinese officials during high-level talks in Beijing. Saran told media that he talked about Nepal situation with Chinese foreign minister Li Zhaoxing. According to reports, Saran informed Chinese leaders about India's concerns over the deteriorating political and economic situation in Nepal on the backdrop of its long and open border with the Himalayan Kingdom. Saran added that Chinese side told him their policy towards Nepal was guided by their long-standing faith in non-interference in internal matters of other countries. *Leading dailies report.*

NC (D) Results Out, 26 Central Committee Members Elected

The results of the election of central committee of Nepali Congress (Democratic) have been officially published. 26 central committee members have been elected. Among those elected include Prakash Man Singh, Pradip Giri, Chitra Lekha Yadav, Gopal Man Shrestha, Deep Kumar Upadhyaya, Dr. Minendra Rijal, Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat, Bimalendra Nidhi, Gyanendra Bahadur Karki, Amar Raj Kaini, N.P. Saud, Man Mohan Bhattarai, Bijay Kumar Gachhedar, Bal Bahadur KC, Chiranjibi Wagle, Purna Bahadur Khadka, Jeep Chhiring Lama and Bal Krishna Khand. Likewise, in the reserved seats for women, Uma Adhikari and Maha Laxmi Upadhyaya were elected. Dal Singh Kami was elected in the reserved seat for Dalit while Indra Bahadur Gurung and Bhisma Raj Angdambe were elected in the seats set aside for Janajati. Uma Kanta Chaudhary and Shiva Chandra Mishra were elected as Madhesi candidates. Jeevan Bahadur Shahi has already been elected unopposed representing Karnali region. In the vote count, Prakash Man Singh had led the tally securing 1192 votes out of 1472 votes that were cast. On the other hand, noted leaders like Dr. Narayan Khadka, Homnath Dahal, Sagar SJB Rana and Sarat Singh Bhandari lost the election. *Leading dailies report.*

NWPP Hold A Big Rally In capital

In its biggest show of strength in the capital following February 1, Nepal Workers and Peasants Party (NWPP) held a major demonstration in New Baneshwore on Tuesday (January 10) calling for restoration of parliament, boycott of municipal polls and revival of democratic process. Thousands of NWPP cadres and residents of Bhaktapur district marched for four hours in a well-managed manner into Kathmandu all the way from Bhaktapur. The NWPP march was marked by cultural processions and unique coordination of elderly people as well as children. "This rally is an answer to those who claim people are not with the parties," said Narayan Man Bijukchhe, president of NWPP. The demonstrators even brought traditional lunch boxes with them. "The restoration of House of Representatives through the constitutional interpretation by the Supreme Court is the most simple and appropriate way out of the current crisis," said Bijukchhe, addressing the rally. "The revived parliament would then form all-party government, which would, in turn, hold all section conference by inviting Maoists in order to form interim government. And such interim government would finalize constitutional reform or constituent assembly or other alternatives," Bijukchhe spelt out his roadmap. The NWPP workers even cleaned up the place after their mass meeting ended. NWPP is one of the partners of the seven party alliance. *Nepal Samacharpatra daily reports.*

Huge Cache Of Explosives Seized In Pokhara

Security forces have seized a huge cache of explosives from a residence in Pokhara. In a raid at a house in Nagdhunga, security forces uncovered 17 electric time devices; 10 meters of safety fuse; 135 detonators; seven socket bombs, 27 electric detonator and so on. Army has claimed that major incidents have been averted by the seizure. *Kantipur daily reports.*



Gorkhapatra

King Gyanendra meeting with common people in Itahari

DNA TEST, WHICH IS REGARDED AS MOST RELIABLE technique in dispensation of justice in criminal matters, has officially started in Nepal. The National Forensic Science Lab has started collecting blood samples for the DNA test from Sunday. The test is beginning one and a half years after equipment had been installed. "With the start of DNA test, we will move into a new age of justice dispensation," said Jeevan Rijal, chief of the lab. He said initially the test will be conducted to identify parents. The cost of conducting such test has been fixed at Rs 8000 per person. Until now, samples had to be sent to forensic lab in India for conducting such tests.

CAMPAIGNERS OF SAVE INDEPENDENT RADIO IN NEPAL have appealed to the UN Secretary General to send his Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression to observe the situation here. The campaigners have made this demand after reports that the government is preparing to introduce Broadcasting Authority Ordinance in the name of regulating independent radio, television and cable TV. The campaigners have also urged the UN Office of the Human Rights Commission, National Human Rights Commission and organizations including media missions to support their campaign.

A REPORT BY HUMAN RIGHTS MONITORING COORDINATION Committee has stated that the Maoists violated human rights and humanitarian laws even during the period of its unilateral ceasefire. Publicizing its report prepared after the field-visit of Ramechhap and Taplejung district, the committee accused the Maoists of committing inhuman acts. The Committee has stated that the Maoists committed 40 incidents of rights abuses during the period of unilateral ceasefire. They locked up houses of family members of those working in security services; engaged in looting and forcefully displacing villagers. "We urged the Maoist not to commit such inhuman acts during the period of their own ceasefire. We had to come out with the report publicly after the Maoists failed to pay heed to our appeals," said Subodh Raj Pyakurel, president of INSEC. There are 34 human rights organizations in the Committee. Pyakurel said that although the committee has studied and published reports of 28 incidents of rights abuses in last two years, there have been no improvements from both the Maoists and the state side.

TRADERS AND TRUCKERS HAVE SUSPENDED THEIR THREE- day-long strike in Tatopani point of Nepal-China border after the Home Ministry assured them of providing ID cards in order to facilitate their movement to and from the point. The traders had announced the indefinite strike after the imposition of compulsory provisions of visa for them to move into Chinese side. Traders were demanding that they be given facilities similar to those given to residents of bordering districts – who

can cross the border on the basis of ID card provided by Immigration Office. As per the latest government assurance, traders, truck-drivers, helpers and container entrepreneurs would be provided with such cards. The Home Ministry has decided that such cards will be provided on the basis of recommendations from Sindhupalchowk District Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Overseas Trade Association; and Trans-Himalayan Traders Association.

A GENERAL BODY MEETING OF THE TRIBHUWAN UNIVERSITY (TU) held on Wednesday (January 11) passed the "Rules regarding autonomous educational institutions or colleges under TU 2006." According to the TU information section, the rules are expected to make the dissemination of quality education by the educational institutions or colleges under TU more effective. The rules also aim at providing admissions to the maximum number of intellectually capable students in different higher education programs of the university. "It aims to make institutions or colleges financially sustainable, besides strengthening educational and administrative works by including all concerned stakeholders in the decision-making process of management of the institutions," said a statement by TU information section chief Prem Krishna Chitracar.

THE PROVISIONS OF BERNE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION related to copyrights and intellectual property rights protection will come into force in Nepal beginning today (January 11). After Nepal became party to the convention, it will now be assured of protection of intellectual property rights of its litterateurs, creators and artists even in the international sector. Likewise, it will also need to ensure the copyrights of foreign creators within the country. According to the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, the enforcement of convention will contribute to promotion and development of creativity and ensure financial and ethical rights of creators over their creations.

THE INITIAL DEVELOPMENTS IN 2006 HAVE SPURRED HOPES among the battered garment entrepreneurs. One of the biggest importers of the readymade apparels has agreed to give a huge order enough for the whole year to Nepali garment manufacturers. This importer alone orders 25 percent of the total garment exports from Nepal. Even those purchasers who had shifted towards India and China last year are beginning to renew contacts with Nepalese manufacturers. "If these contacts bear fruit, our exports will resume to previous level," said Kiran Sakha, president of Garment Association of Nepal (GAN). In 2005, following the expiry of Multi Fiber Agreement, Nepal's garment exports declined by 41 percent. In that period, around 50 factories were shut down. Meanwhile, due to sudden increase in orders, the garment industry is facing shortage of skilled workers. Most of the workers who were laid off have already left for work overseas. "At present, we need 10,000 workers to complete the orders," said Sakha. He called on the government to cooperate with favorable policies.



Rajdhani

Sister Nirmala, Superior General of Missionaries of Charity, visited Kathmandu last week

“We cannot afford to fight for democracy over and over again. So, this is our decisive battle. We want the King without any powers like that of Lord Pashupatinath.”

Girija Prasad Koirala, president of Nepali Congress (NC) and former prime minister, addressing a mass meeting in Janakpur.

* * *

“We don’t have to wait long to see the end of monarchy if it keeps going down the same line.”

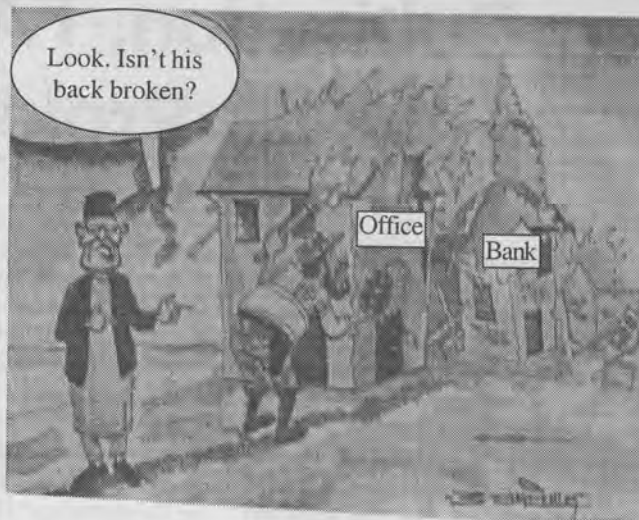
Madhav Kumar Nepal, General Secretary of the Unified Marxist Leninist, addressing a mass meeting in Janakpur

* * *

“It is a crime to pay tax to a government which is without representatives. Please lend your support to the stir by holding back tax payments.”

Gopal Man Shrestha, acting president of the Nepali Congress (Democratic), speaking at a mass meeting.

* * *



Rajdhani

“If the House of Representatives is restored, it will totally transform the present political environment.”

Shushil Koirala, vice-president of Nepali Congress (NC), speaking at a face-to-face program organized by the Reporters' Club.

* * *

“Election is not just a process of providing security and holding it. It

should rather give outlet to the problems dogging the country.”

Dr Ram Sharan Mahat, joint general secretary of Nepali Congress, speaking at an interaction program in the capital.

* * *

“We have been relieved of the factor that was obstructing us. The party (RPP) will now move ahead in the path of democracy with added energy.”

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

* * *

“The government is unperturbed.”

Kamal Thapa, Home Minister, stating that the government will continue with its plan to hold polls, reacting to media queries after Maoist attack in Thankot.

* * *

TRANSITION

ELECTED: Sher Bahdur Deuba as the president, and Prakash Man Singh, Pradeep Giri, Chitralekha Yadav, Gopal Man Shrestha, Balkrishna Khand, Bimalendra Nidhi, N. P. Saud, Bijaya Kumar Gachchhadar, Bal Bahadur K. C., Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat, Dr. Minendra Rijal, Chiranjivi Wagle, Purna Bahadur Khadka, Gyanendra Bahadur Karki, Man Mohan Bhattarai, Deep Kumar Upadhyaya, Amar Raj Kaini, Jeep Tsiring Lama, Mahalaxmi (Deena) Upadhyaya and Uma Adikari (from women’s quota), Dal Singh Kami (from Dalit quota), Indra Bahadur Gurung and Bhisma Raj Angdamba (from indigenous community quota), and Uma Kant Chaudary and Shiva Chandra Mishra (from Terai quota) as central working committee members of the Nepali Congress – Democratic, by the general convention of the party.

APPOINTED: Gopal Man Shrestha, as the acting president, Prakash Man Singh and Bimalendra Nidhi as the general secretaries, Jeevan Prem Shrestha as the Central Office secretary of Nepali Congress – Democratic, by the elected party president Sher Bahadur Deuba.

DIED: Govind Biyogi, senior journalist and president of editor’s society Nepal, at the age of 76.

RESIGNED: Senior journalist P Kharel and editor of Nepal Samacharpatra daily, Pushkar Lal Shrestha, from the posts of general secretary and executive committee member respectively of the Nepal Press Institute (NPI).

ARRIVED: Sister Mary Nirmala MC, the successor of Mother Teresa as the head of the Missionaries of Charity (MC) of Kolkata, in Nepal, to participate in various activities.

EXPELLED: Home Minister Kamal Thapa, assistant ministers Ms Roshan Karki and Bhuvan Pathak, Padma Sundar Lawoti, former ministers Durga Shrestha, Rajiv Parajuli and Jagat Gauchan, from the ordinary membership of Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) for six years, and Toran Bahadur Gurung, Pratap Ram Lohar and Brajesh Kumar Gupta, from the central working committee of the party, on disciplinary grounds, by the Party.

ELECTED: Kamal Thapa, as the president of Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) dissident faction, by a special convention of the party called by the dissident faction.

LEFT: Mani Lama, state minister for health, for Beijing, China, to participate in the international conference on Avian Influenza.

FELICITATED: Renowned artist Durga Baral, A.K.A. Batsayan, critic Mohan Raj Sharma and humorist Bishwa Shakya, by Juhi, a literary magazine.

Rice Cultivation, FAO And Sunkosi Project

By DR. AB THAPA

Nepal's economy is very much dependant on agriculture. Few industries that have appeared in recent years also rely mostly on agriculture based raw materials. Thus agricultural sector occupies the dominant position in our country's economy and it will continue to be so for a very long time to come in future also. Unfortunately we have not been paying adequate attention to increase our agricultural production.

The staple crop of Nepal is rice. In the past our country was exporting on a large scale rice to our neighbouring countries. Even until the mid 1980s Nepal continued to export rice. The volume of export used to be over 100,000 tons per annum. Now the situation has completely reversed. At present we have become a substantial net importer of food grains.

In recent years Nepal's demand for food grains is steadily increasing whereas the production has remained almost at the same level. Very recently it was estimated that Nepal is only 80-85 self sufficient in food grains production. The gap between the demand for food grains and its production is widening due to rapid increase in population. Growing dependence on import of agricultural products has serious adverse impact on country's economy and hence on country's trade and industry also.

The problem of growing food grains shortage in our country must be dealt with renewed vigour and determination. We should lay strong emphasis on our national plans to boost agricultural production. It can hardly be denied that for this purpose the potential for area expansion of the cultivated lands is virtually non-existent in Nepal. So it would be completely unthinkable to attain our future goals to achieve significant agricultural production increase without vast expansion of irrigation accompanied by improved farming practices. Nepal could use its vast water resources to boost agricultural production particular rice crop which is our country's staple. Development of the Sun-Kosi River would certainly be at the forefront because it has been regarded since almost a half century as the most attractive relatively large scaled project to uplift Nepal's agricultural production.

Rice Cultivation

According to one of the theories, the rice cultivation originated as early as 10,000 bc in Asia. Over the centuries it spread to all other Asian countries. It is said that the invading armies of Alexander the Great introduced rice to Greece and nearby Mediterranean countries around 330 bc.

In 1996 Asian countries produced about 90 percent of the 569 million tons of rice grown worldwide. China and India together produce about 55 percent of the world's rice. It is a significant agricultural crop in more than 50 other countries. About 96 percent of the rice grown worldwide is consumed in the countries where it is produced, with some exceptions. The United States, for example, exported about 33 percent of the 7.8 million tons it produced in 1996, and Pakistan exported about 27 percent of its 6.4 million tons, according to the FAO. In the same year, Thailand exported significantly more rice than any other country—5.2 million tons, or about 24 percent of its total production, while India exported 3.6 million tons, or about 3 percent of its production. The 25 major

rice-importing countries include Japan, China, Saudi Arabia, Kenya, Cuba, Mexico, and Canada. Some rice-importing countries buy rice on a regular basis, others buy when drought, floods, or other conditions reduce the yield of their own rice crop.

FAO Helps Nepal

The necessity of the irrigation development on a large scale in Nepal had been keenly felt since the middle of 1960s. Bearing in mind such necessity of large scale irrigation development, the experts of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Government of Nepal had carried out the First Phase study of the Sun-Kosi Terai Project in 1965 and 1966 to determine the possibility of irrigation development in the Eastern Terai Plain by diverting the abundant water of the Sun-Kosi River. The Interim Report on Feasibility Study of the Sun-Kosi Terai Project was submitted in October, 1969. The plan to divert the Sun-Kosi River into the Kamla River has been described in that report. The final feasibility report was submitted in October, 1972.

The feasibility report makes it perfectly clear that the people in Nepal are mostly dependant for their food supply and livelihood on a narrow belt of cultivated land in Terai. The potential new land for cultivation is very limited in Nepal. Thus, there is a need to raise agricultural productivity by intensification; i.e. by increasing the average cropping intensity. The Sun-Kosi diversion could help to provide sufficient water round the year to increase the cropping intensity as well as the per hectare yield, as a result, the agricultural production could be substantially increased. Apart from raising the agricultural production, the Sun-Kosi Project would be providing abundant power benefit and also help to save the life and property of millions in Nepal and India from the threat of the devastating future Kosi floods.

Project Area

The Terai Plain consists of the alluvial fans and the recent river deposit which are gently sloped from north to south. The elevations at the foot of the Churia Hills range from 150 to slightly over 200 meters. The plain has gentle slopes ranging from 1/1,000 at the foothills to 1/5,000 at the border line with India. The country's small streams and rivers have their origin in Churia Hills. However, they almost dry up during the non-monsoon seasons.

The Project area lies between the Kosi River and the Indo-Nepal border line at a distance of about 20 km to the west of the Birgung town. Similarly the Churia Foothill is the northern boundary while the Indo-Nepal border the southern. The project area is nearly rectangular in shape. The length is about 240 kilometers and the width varies between 20 and 40 kilometers. The total project area is about 8,500 sq. km. out of it in 1970s when the feasibility study was made the gross cultivated land, reclaimable land, non-reclaimable land (mainly river beds) and forests on flat land were 5,450 sq. km, 570 sq. km, 650 sq. km and 1,870 sq. km respectively.

The project area covers 8 districts of Terai. They are Parsa, Bara, Rautahat, Sarlahi, Mahottari, Dhanukha, Sirha and Saptari. The total population in the project area in early 1970s was about 1,770,000 whereas, according to the Statistical Book published in

1994 by the Central Bureau of Statistics it had increased to about 3,600,000.

Agricultural Studies

Extensive agricultural studies of the whole project area were made in course of the feasibility study. General reconnaissance soil survey of the Eastern Terai plain is one of them. The survey report gives the results of the reconnaissance soil survey covering the whole project area of 540,000 hectares in gross. It was revealed that about 80 percent of the entire area has good soils for irrigation farming belonging to Grade I, II and III according to the USDA standard. No alkalinity or salinity problems exist.

A special pilot farm was set up at Hardinath in Dhanukha district to conduct agronomic studies. Such studies covered cultivation of crops like paddy, wheat, sugar cane, maize, mustard, fodders and other vegetables. Tests were conducted to determine the irrigation water requirement, optimum sowing time, optimum use of fertilizer, selection of best varieties etc.

The River

The Sun-Kosi River is the biggest tributary of the Kosi River. The total drainage area of this river at Tribeni (near Barahachetra) is 17,960 sq. km. At this point all three main tributaries join and further downstream the river is called the Kosi. Hydrometric records covering the period between the years 1948 and 1967 showed that the yearly mean discharge of the Sun-Kosi River at Tribeni varied between 932 cu. m/sec. and 622 cu. m/sec. The estimated yearly mean discharge of the Sun-Kosi River (based upon the data at Tribeni) at the proposed dam site varies between 871 cu. m/sec. and 576 cu. m/sec.

The annual average sediment load of the Sun-Kosi River at Tribeni according to some studies is about 54 million cu. m. The annual average sediment load of the Kosi at Tribeni is about 119 million cu. m.

The Sun-Kosi Dam

The FAO had provided Nepal technical and financial assistance to conduct the study of the Sun-Kosi dam project for the agricultural development in the Terai Plain that had three main functions. They were capital formation needed for social investment through the increased income of farmers, sufficient food supply for the whole country, and increased employment in the Terai Plains. The Government of India had also investigated the Sun-Kosi dam site in 1940s. At that time India was exploring the possibility of building the Sun-Kosi dam primarily for controlling the Kosi River floods. The Indian survey team had favoured Kurule dam site on the Sun-Kosi River because it appeared geologically sound and allowed to have a big storage reservoir that extended in Dudh-Kosi and Sun-Kosi valleys. In all subsequent studies that followed thereafter the location for the dam at Kurule has remained unchanged. The site for the Sun-Kosi dam proposed in the FAO supported study is also at Kurule.

The Master Plan study of the Kosi River water resources was made in 1985 by JICA (Japan Government Agency) team. The Sun-Kosi River diversion for irrigating lands in the Eastern Terai had been identified as one of the top priority projects in the Master Plan study. That study too had adopted the Kurule as the appropriate location for the dam across the Sun-Kosi River to divert it into the Kamla River.

Water Right Issue

The FAO provided assistance to Nepal in revising the 1954 Kosi River Treaty. Dr. Dante A. Caponera, Chief, Legislation Branch of FAO, Rome was in Nepal in 1966. The Kosi Treaty was revised on 19th December, 1966. Nepal's full right over the Kosi River water has been very clearly explained in the revised treaty. The Article

4 (i) of the Treaty related with the water rights has been presented hereinafter:

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

In Conclusion

The size of the Sun-Kosi Dam Project is not too big despite the fact that this project could provide colossal benefit to our country. Nepal must divert its full attention to implement as soon as possible this project.

(Dr. Thapa writes on water resources)

"People's War" Hits Economy Badly: ADB

With more than 12,000 people killed and 100,000 displaced, 10-year long Maoist insurgency has not just had a human impact, it has also slowed the poor country's ailing economy, according to the Asian Development Bank (ADB). "If the conflict is allowed to continue, there will be a lot more social and economic losses. Many more lives will be lost and many more people will be denied the opportunity to improve their livelihood," Sultan Hafeez Rahman, Nepal's ADB country director told AFP. In the 1990s, Nepal's annual economic growth averaged around a healthy 4.9 percent but the escalating insurgency saw this drop to an average of 1.9 percent between 2002 and 2004. "Given that this conflict is persisting, and that there are chances it might actually deteriorate, Nepal could lose significantly more than two percentage points of GDP per annum," Rahman said. "This has very serious implications for not just total GDP and its distribution but also for reduction in poverty in the country." With 31 percent of the population living below absolute poverty line and with an average income of just less than \$300 a year, the troubled Himalayan Kingdom cannot afford this loss. Nepal needs to get economic growth and poverty eradication back on track, and this cannot happen without peace, the ADB official said. An ADB report focused on the fall in development spending in Nepal as a way of measuring economic decline and concluded that in a "high conflict" situation, Nepal could see a GDP growth loss of 10.3 percentage points in the next five years. If the conflict continues at its current level, the growth loss would total 8.3 points, according to ADB economists. "If you are looking at the GDP in per capita terms actually the results are much more stark because Nepal's population growth is two percent, so if the economy grows at two percent, lets say, then per capital GDP growth is zero," said Rahman, adding, "This is what happened last year." Remittances from overseas Nepalese workers have been a saving grace. "Remittances have helped but they cannot nearly offset investment numbers; the orders of magnitude are very different," he said. "The economic costs of people having died, and people having been displaced from their homes, people who have been handicapped, this takes away not just output today, but output in the future, potential output of the economy." The solution is simple, according to Rahman. A credible peace dialogue would restore investor confidence and boost markets. "Once this happens, I think that economic activity will tick back. In a very short period of time it can reach growth rates of six percent or more and if they are serious, over a time horizon of maybe 15 years, they can do as well in per capita terms as any South Asian country." THT reports ■

MAOISTS ATTACK

Deepening Turmoil

Fresh attacks by Maoists lead the government to further tighten security situation and ban public demonstrations

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

Soon after they announced 'climbing spine to smash the head,' Maoists have launched a series of violent attacks including in Kathmandu valley. Two weeks after they withdrew their four-month-long unilateral ceasefire citing lack of response from the government side, the Maoists have stepped up their violent attacks against government offices and security installations in Kathmandu, Bhairahawa, Pokhara, Nepalgunj and other cities.

Their attacks come after reports that they plan to 'climb the spine (meaning highways, supply routes and peripheral urban centers) to smash the head

(Kathmandu valley).' This despite their so-called pledge to work together with the seven political parties as stated in the 12-point agenda. The initial sense of euphoria generated by the 12-point is fast dissipating with the Maoists re-engaging in their violent modus operandi. Instead, their attacks have led the government to ban public demonstrations and rallies in the capital valley.

In the immediate aftermath of Maoist attack in security posts within the capital valley, the government has not only clamped night-time curfew but also banned the demonstration or gathering of any kind within the ring road area. Kathmandu and Lalitpur District

Administration Offices have separately issued notices clamping curfew within the ring road area of the two districts between 11 pm and 4 am everyday for indefinite period.

The Home Ministry has stated that that the Maoists are poised to take advantage of their 12-point understanding with the political parties to infiltrate their public demonstrations and unleash violence. The Ministry has appealed to the people not to take part in such gathering "as there are possibilities of such gathering turning violent due to Maoist infiltration."

Furthermore, the Ministry has called on the seven parties to suspend their scheduled joint demonstration in Kathmandu on January 20 and come for dialogue with the government instead. Similar prohibitory orders and curfews have been imposed in most of the city areas across the country.

However, the initial reactions by the political parties to the new decision are filled with anger. For weeks the political leaders have been claiming that they will demonstrate a major show of strength by bringing in half a million people in their rally on January 20. Strangely, even though the Maoists had committed themselves not to disrupt the agitation by the parties, their attacks could lead to total ban on demonstration (by parties).

Rejecting the government's call for talks and vowing to defy its prohibitory orders, Krishna Prasad Sitaula, spokesperson of Nepali Congress (NC), said, "There is no possibility of holding talks or dialogue with this unconstitutional government." He added, "We urge Nepali people not to fall under the trap of the government. We urge them to take part in peaceful agitation."

Thankot Attack

Keeping their promise to smash the head that is Kathmandu, armed Maoists unleashed a methodical violent attacks aimed at shaking the security foundation of the capital valley when, on Saturday (January 14), they killed one dozen police personnel posted at key installations at the fringe points of the valley.

The Maoists fired at police personnel busy in their roll-call routine at Thankot



Thankot police post: Aftermath of attack

The Kathmandu Post



Fallen policeman: Ruthless attack

Rajdhani

police post – at the gateway to Kathmandu valley – killing eleven police personnel including police inspector Mahesh Rawal. Simultaneously, in a separate attack, one police personnel was killed and many others injured when the Maoists attacked police post in Dadhikot of Bhaktapur district.

In the two incidents, 12 police personnel and one civilian have been injured. At almost the same time, the Maoists also attacked Thali police post in north-eastern region of the capital and bombed some ward offices in Kathmandu and Lalitpur city. Reports say dozens of armed Maoists in army combat dress stormed into Thankot post and sprayed bullets at a time when most of the 40 police personnel posted there were gathered for a roll-call routine. An unarmed traffic personnel Dipendra Niraula was also killed.

Witnesses said Maoists wielding modern weapons opened fire simultaneously at the municipality vehicle tax collection depot, traffic post, police post and sentries. An eye-witness police personnel informed that 15 armed Maoists in army-like uniform got off from a bus and barged into the police post even as around 30 Maoists in civil dress were already mobilized in the vicinity. Most of the police were killed when they were trying to flee or hide, reports said.

After inspecting the site of attack, Home Minister Thapa told reporters that the government is 'unperturbed' (by the incident). He said the Maoists undertook a cowardly act by mercilessly killing unarmed traffic personnel as well as

police personnel who were not holding weapons.

A few days ago, the Maoists had launched big attack against security agencies and government offices in Dhangadhi – headquarters of Kailali district in far-western Nepal. According to security sources, armed Maoists in separate gangs opened fire at military barrack in Boradanda, ward police office, district and zonal police offices, election office

and Nepal Rastra Bank office. Two policemen and one civilian were injured in the ensuing battle. Likewise, they also engaged in serial bombing in Pokhara and Nepalgunj.

Polls Under Question

Given the worsening security situation, the prospects for forthcoming February 8 municipal polls are dimmer with even the smaller fringe parties calling it into question. After Thankot attack, many leaders of smaller parties have started saying they are not assured about the security situation yet. Balram Thapa, general secretary of Democratic Nepal – a new party led by incumbent minister Keshar Bahadur Bista – said that they can

not take part in elections until and unless bigger parties and the Maoists are taken into confidence. "The developments of last week have created suspicions over the polls," he said.

Devendra Mishra, general secretary of Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP) – whose chairman Badri Prasad Mandal is also an incumbent minister – said that although his party has decided to go for polls, there is still terror among party workers.

On the other hand, the seven party alliance has stepped up their efforts to convince the citizens to boycott the polls. They are busy organizing door-to-door campaigns asking the people to stay away from the elections.

There seems to be a broad consensus against the holding of the polls as the Maoists have already shown what they are capable of doing to thwart it. Amid the environment of fear and terror, it would be useless to pursue with the poll agenda – even as free, fair and credible elections continue to remain the only viable way out of the present imbroglio. As Maoists seem bent on climbing the spine of the parties to smash the head, it, unfortunately, appears that the country is headed towards unprecedented intensity of violence and instability. That is, if the good sense does not prevail among the political actors sooner than later. ■

Govt. Spokesperson Reproaches Media

In a blatant criticism of media and human rights workers, the government spokesperson and the Minister of State for Information and Communication Shrish SJB Rana has complained the 'silence' by them over 'barbaric rights abuses by the Maoists'.

"They have killed police personnel who were having dinner, who were without arms. But what should we make of the silence by the media and rights workers on this sort of abuses," said Rana.

He also came down heavily against the seven parties for seizing "people's fundamental right" of casting vote. Rana said that while the political parties are busy threatening people not to cast vote, the Maoists – in a well-timed manner – launch attack in the capital. "What is this?" he asked.

Rana also complained that the media would soon be starting to criticize 'the security arrangements made by the government, which is duty-bound to provide security to people.' "In a next few days, they (media) will be raising issues that police have violated people's human rights by engaging in search of homes and vehicles," he said. "But who exactly is attacking our rights? Isn't it time for us to ponder on this issue," he said, speaking at a public program in the capital on Monday (January 16).

NEPAL

Between Two Neighbors

Sandwiched between its two powerful neighbors with domineering positions, Nepal, which has been passing through a very unstable political situation, faces challenges in formulating its foreign policy with the mere aim to its survival as an independent and sovereign nation. In formulating the policy within a very strictly limited space, Nepal's policymakers find it difficult to pursue balanced policy between two neighbors India and China - two strong military powers -, which are yet to settle their long-standing boundary disputes. As the interest of two neighbors increase in Nepal, it complicates Nepal's position. Past five decades of experiences have shown the relations between Nepal's two neighbors India and China determine and shape Nepal's prosperity and tranquility

By KESHAB POUDEL

In his recent official visit to China, Indian foreign secretary Shyam Saran reportedly told Chinese foreign minister his country's great concern over Nepal's current political upheavals and economic debacle.

According to Kantipur daily, Indian foreign secretary Saran reportedly put India's point of view on Nepal's recent political development saying that ongoing political upheavals and economic debacle in Nepal is a matter of great concern to India because of open

border and unique type of relationship existing between the two countries. Indian foreign secretary reportedly also informed the press that China showed its concern on Nepal saying that China has long standing policy not to intervene in the internal affairs of any country, - and their policy on Nepal is also based on same principle.

The reported remarks of Indian foreign secretary indicate that India's and China's views on Nepal's current political situation are guided by their own interests. Expressing concern over Nepal's political development, China, as usual, hinted that it is against any

outside intervention in solving Nepal's internal problem rejecting 'high stakes' in Nepal by any country. Chinese parameters and Indian parameters are clear.

However, this recent reported statement justifies what Badamaharaj Prithivi Narayan Shaha the Great, said more than two hundred years ago - "Nepal is a root between two boulders" - as still valid. It is the duty of two boulders to save the root, as the latter do not have any space to move about.

India, covertly and overtly, and China, quietly, always show concern about Nepal as both the sides remain suspicious about each



Nepal: Sandwiched between two giants

other in Nepal. Chinese envoy to Nepal Sun Heping's remark in eastern industrial town Morang sparked a furor in Indian capital New Delhi recently. His statement to build the road linking Tibetan Autonomous of China with Biratnagar through Kimathanka and his positive response to demands to open the office of Chinese consulate general in the town caused a major consternation in Indian minds. "We have given Kimathanka road the high priority. Among the 10 highways that links Nepal with China, this is the most important road," the Chinese envoy was quoted as saying.

On the issue of opening consulate general's office in Biratnagar, The Himalayan Times reported that Chinese envoy said the request to open a Consulate General's office at Biratnagar could be considered after consultations with the government. "If the proposal comes to the embassy, it can be negotiated with the Foreign Ministry of Nepal," said Chinese envoy Sun Heping.

Indian media reacted promptly communicating strong displeasure to Kathmandu. In his commentary published in The Indian Express, C. Raja Mohan, an international relations expert, writes the government of India has communicated its displeasure to Kathmandu over a plan to let China and Pakistan open consulates on the sensitive Indo-Nepal border. Pakistani Embassy senior official in Kathmandu declined India's new charge saying that they do not have any report about such request and said the official would be grateful if Indian newspaper disclosed the source of the news. India wants to unnecessarily drag Pakistan, he said.

Nepal gave permission to India to open Consulate General Office in Birgunj a few years ago. "In trying to pressurize India by threatening to draw closer to China and Pakistan, King Gyanendra might end up achieving the opposite- a hardening of Indian

position against him. While King Gyanendra might hope that this threat to draw in China and Pakistan would force New Delhi to soften its policies, the indicators are that the move could further undermine the limited support the monarchy enjoys in New Delhi," writes Raja Mohan, who is said to be close to South Block's mandarins.

Whenever India takes steps, China quietly follows their move. India and Nepal started to regulate the border issuing ID card in Terai. This was followed by Chinese request to enforce similar ID system in its border with Nepal.

Sandwiched between two domineering neighbors, Nepal's foreign policy challenges are the preservation of the country's independence and sovereignty since Nepal is militarily and economically too weak to assert the strong pressure from both the neighbors.

India is not alone to press Nepal on its security but there are many examples of Nepal succumbing to such pressures with China. In 1961, then King Mahendra signed the agreement on the construction of Kodari highway, a road project linking to Tibetan Autonomous Region of China, reportedly under pressure of China. "There has been some speculation that King Mahendra submitted to Chinese pressure on the road project (the evidence available indicates that he did not take the initiative) in the assumption that he could use this in bargaining with New Delhi," writes late American scholar Leo. E Rose in his article King Mahendra's China Policy. "If true, this is not how things worked out. The Indians proved unwilling to back down in the face of what they viewed as blackmail by Kathmandu, while the Chinese were unprepared to postpone construction of the road while Mahendra played games with New Delhi. Nepal had paid a high price in economic terms and in its relationship with India for this useless road."

If the recent indication by China to open consulate in Biratnagar is genuine, Nepal will have very difficult time to reject Chinese request.

"Nevertheless, there are choices to be made within this strictly limited framework, and the consistency displayed by widely different groups of decision makers over a long period is one of the more notable aspects of Nepal's history," writes Leo. E Rose in his book Nepal Strategy for Survival.

Despite the charges of Nepal's neighbors, particularly from south, Nepal has very limited space to play two neighbors against each other.

China's Policy

China is capable of implementing the foreign policy it desires as its government is of homogenous nature because of the communist party. If it decides to maintain friendly relations that could be implemented in actions also and if it decides to go hostile, it follows that with full vigor. In the last two hundred years, China, whether feudal, democratic or communist, maintained similar kinds of policy pursuing to see Nepal as an independent and sovereign nation. China's policy towards Nepal is guided to protect its independence - which will guarantee security and stability of Tibet Autonomous region of China.

"The way the security of Tibetan Autonomous Region was jeopardized when three Himalayan Kingdoms Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan were under British security umbrella, this threat is even today a sensitive issue. This is why Nepal remaining as an independent state is a most essential question for China's security interest. Nepal's living under Indian security umbrella is constant threat to China's security. Strong presence of Tibetan separatists in India, Nepal-India open border are two such issues which can not permit Nepal to join security umbrella of either country," writes Chinese scholar and associate professor at Henan University Wang Xui in his book Nepal's National Defensive Strategy and Nepal-China Relation. "China wants to see independent Nepal as guarantee to its security in Tibetan Autonomous Region."

Chinese mandarins do not openly express their views as Indian scholars do. As former Chinese ambassador to India Zhou Gang said the 'historic distrust' - the two nations are still locked in, a border dispute over which they fought a brief war in 1962- cannot simply be cast aside. "Until a trust mechanism has been established, it will be impossible to avoid clashes, and India will have its own interests foremost on its mind," said Zhou reported by Agence France Presse (The Himalayan Times, January 12) recently, responding to evolving cooperation between China and India on securing energy security. "The two nations had



Badamaharaj (from left) late King Birendra and Koirala : Three phases of foreign policy

much more strength on the world energy stage as a combined force."

Professor Wen Fude at the Institute of South Asian studies at Sichuan University, also cautioned the two nations would continue to ensure their own interests are looked after first. "It's hard to avoid rivalry between China and India for energy," Wen told AFP.

Despite the diplomatic efforts to improve the relationship with India, China is yet to change its policy regarding its security interests. Nepal continues to feel this Chinese concern in its northern border

Indian Policy towards Nepal

After independence, Indian foreign policy towards its neighbors are guided by security perceptions and this agenda dominates all other agenda including the commonalities of many cultural and religious things. After China's presence in Tibet, India's security concern has risen alarmingly high in all of its neighbors.

"India's relations with Nepal have been driven by its security concerns. India's security concerns were encapsulated in the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship, which were signed shortly before the Chinese takeover of Tibet in October 1950. The text of the articles and letters accompanying the treaty related to threats from a foreign aggressor (read China) and the joint response mechanism," writes General Ashok Mehata, a retired Indian army general to has in depth knowledge on Nepal's geo-strategic position, in his recent book the "Royal Nepal Army, Meeting the Maoist Challenge." "The Nepal Himalayas are fixated in the Indian security psyche as an impregnable barrier, Indian leaders have regarded the Himalayan divide as India's security frontier and Nepal as the strategic gateway to the Indo-Gangetic plains."

India continues to see the security vacuum in Nepal and its whole policy thrust is to fill that vacuum. "India justifies all means against Nepal to justify its ends. As Nepal's

northern neighbor is powerful, India seems to support, covertly, the violent groups in Nepal to coerce it," said a security analyst. "All overt and covert actions in Nepal are directed against China."

"Some of the concerns of the Indian state's national security component have directly impinged upon Nepal and India-Nepal relations. India's security concerns towards China and the fallout of internal security concerns towards China and the fallout of internal turmoil in Assam and Darjeeling may be recalled here," writes S.D. Muni, JNU professor and renowned Indian author on South Asia, in his book "India and Nepal, a Changing Relationship."

China has homogeneity in the political system but that is not the case with India, which has a government in the center consisting more than a dozen political parties of heterogeneous character. Besides, being a federal state, all states have their own political polarization. Combined together, India, in the word of V.S. Naipaul, is "a functioning anarchy."

Nepalese foreign relation experts see Indian foreign policy as having very big contradictions regarding its neighbors. Politicians of any ideology, civil societies and people in general are tolerant towards their neighbors. Politicians who have commitments to uplift the socio economic status of common people of Indian do not have grudges and grievances against neighbors. But the most decisive elements in the security and foreign policy infrastructures, especially regarding the neighbors, are too much secretive, non-transparent and without direct accountability to the people.

Critics in Nepal see that since its independence, this top heavy civil and military bureaucracy has prevailed over the politicians in the power. What one see as India's foreign policy about Nepal is the designed move by the bureaucracy.

What critics in Nepal argue is that the visionary politicians in power (in India) have minimum say and their sense of direction is lacking. They feel about India is that compared to them, China has better credibility in all countries in SAARC region except India.

Foreign policy has never been an election issue in India as it is a big country and there is nominal relevance of external affairs issue to the people. Foreign policy remains major agenda in internal politics of other countries and all other smaller south Asian countries have the foreign policy of both the neighbors India and China as their prime concern.

"The Himalayan Region occupies a strategic position between China and India. Although factors of tension and instability are always present in this region – because of unresolved territorial disputes and also political upheavals in Nepal – a new era in regional diplomacy is about to start as China takes steps to realize its priority for economic development in peaceful environment. As hinterland of the Himalayas, Tibet is at the forefront of China's strategy in this region," writes Thierry Mathou, a career diplomat and an associated political scientist with the Department of Himalayan Studies of the National Center for Scientific Research Center, Paris, France.

Nepal's Agenda

Badamaharaja Prithivi Narayan Shah, B.P. Koirala and late King Birendra are three legendary architects of Nepal's foreign policy. They are associated with the three decisive landmarks in Nepalese foreign policy. The first was sermon by Prithivi Narayan Shah and the second was the assertion of independence by B.P. Koirala. Late King Birendra gave Nepalese foreign policy a positive direction by assuring neighbors that Nepal would maintain peaceful relations with both of them.

The change with the continuity in the foreign policy is severe test in persistent because of apprehension of our neighbors against each other. Professor Surya Subedi says, "Of course, we have to maintain our political neutrality as well as political equilibrium with both of our neighbors. Both India and China, in my view, would like to see democratic and peaceful Nepal where people can compete and prosper. "These two countries have to compete with other western countries and economic giants. If they fight with each other, making Nepal an issue, I do not think they would be far-sighted leaders. So I think their interest lies in making sure that they do not have disagreements over Nepal.

Basic premises of foreign policy of Nepal were formulated during the period of B.P. Koirala. Its acid test was conducted during an incident in Mustang on which Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru overreacted by saying that any aggression against Nepal will be considered as an aggression against India. Prime minister Koirala taking the parliament in confidence corrected Nehru's statement and said Nepal has its own independence to decide its own security (See box). That continued the basic of foreign policy of the whole King Mahendra's period. Unfortunately, late King Mahendra was without democracy.

In addition, late King Birendra added landmark in the foreign policy by his proposal of Zone of Peace. Asserting the right, but with added declaration that Nepal would avoid any security alignment with one neighbor against other. (See box)

Now the country is at the critical stage to live with the historical legacy of the foreign policy in the foundation of which there is a guidance of Prithivi Narayan Shah the great, which was remolded by B.P. Koirala and, further advanced by King Birendra.

Whether in the ancient time or modern time, three main architectures of Nepal's foreign policy, King Prithivi Narayan Shaha the great, B.P. Koirala and late King Birendra, who set the foreign policy agenda, faced similar problems.

Whether the two big giants will reconcile or engage in conflict, the situation of other countries like Nepal will hinge on that. If they are reconciling, the result will be peace and stability that will pave the way for peace, stability and economic development. If they are in the mood of confrontation, there will be chaos and war.

The comments made by Canadian Prime Minister Trudo could be reformulated in Nepalese terms - who had observed that it was horrifying to live with two elephants. ■

Three phases of Nepal's Foreign Policy

1. The first phase of Bada Maharaj Prithivi Naryan Shah's

King Prithivi Narayan Shah stepped into the state of Nepali history at a time when the completely Indian subcontinent was in the ferment. He begins the chapter with the statement: This country is like root between two rocks. Here he shows his fundamental appreciation of the fact that a small nation such as Nepal, lying as it does between two great and relatively powerful nations, has a very delicate position to maintain. He also suggests that there is a need for a healthy fear of the British.

According to L.F. Stiller, S.J. in his book "Prithivi Narayan Shah in the light of Dibya Upadesh," it also shows an appreciation of the delicacy of the situation and the necessity of maintaining relations of friendship with power. "Maintain a treaty of friendship with the emperor of China. Keep also a treaty of friendship with the emperor of the southern sea," the King had stated.

2. Second phase of Nepal's Foreign Policy - B.P. Koirala's Assertion of Independence

Indian prime minister Jawahar Lal Nehru's statement of November 27, 1959 triggered the statement two days later by Nepali prime minister B.P. Koirala about Nepal's status vis-à-vis Indo Nepalese Treaty of Peace and Friendship. It was delivered to Pratinidhi Sabha (lower house of parliament) replying to Indian prime minister Jawahar Lal Nehru's statement on 27 November 1959. Nehru, in the course of his speech on international affairs in the Lok Sabha, had referred to Sino-India border trouble and in that context declared: "May I just repeat what we have declared that any aggression on Bhutan and Nepal will be considered by us aggression on India." Nepali PM Koirala, then, replied in the Nepali parliament: "Nepal is fully sovereign independent nation. It decides its external and home policy according to its own judgment and its own liking without ever referring to any outside authorities. Our Treaty of Peace and Friendship with India affirms this." Koirala added: "I take Mr. Nehru's statement as an expression of friendship that in case of aggression against Nepal, India would send help if such help is ever sought. It could never be taken as suggesting that India could take unilateral action. Is there any apprehension of aggression from any quarter? The answer is definitely no. We are at peace with everybody and we do not apprehend any danger from any quarter. I do not know the international status of Bhutan and its relations with India, but Nepal is an independent sovereign nation and there can never be any doubt about our sovereignty and independence. Our membership to the United Nations is an instance of sovereignty and independence."

On December 8, 1959 participating in the debate in Rajya Sabha in India, Indian prime minister Nehru said, "The prime minister of Nepal, the other day, said something on this subject and may I say that I entirely agree with his interpretation of this position? (A.S. Bhasin Documents on Nepal's Relations with India and China 1949-66).

B.P. was a person who lasted merely 18 months in power but allowed American residential embassy in Nepal opening door for super power of the world. During his tenure, he permitted Pakistan and Israel to have a residential embassy. The India-centric foreign policy was no more in his agenda. He was true to his commitment to maintain very good relations with democratic India and B.P. had very intimate and cordial relations with communist China in same way. He was sincere to the leaders of India as with the China. King Mahendra promoted the same independent foreign policy. Unfortunately, that was without the support of multi-party democracy.

3. Third phase of Nepal's foreign policy propounded by late King Birendra through the Zone of Peace

Late King Birendra through his Zone of Peace Proposal announced the new foreign policy directions. On February 25, 1975, King Birendra announced the Zone of Peace Proposal in a farewell address to the foreign dignitaries who had assembled in Kathmandu to attend his Coronation. He said, "We believe that only under a condition of peace will we be able to create a politically stable Nepal with a sound economy which will in no way be detrimental to any country. I also wish to declare that in making proposition for the zone of peace, we are not prompted out of fear or threat from any country or quarter. As heir to a country that has always lived in independence, we wish to see that our freedom and independence shall not be thwarted by the changing flux of time when understanding is replaced by misunderstanding, when conciliation is replaced by belligerency and war. Nepal will not permit any activities on its soil that are hostile to other states supporting this proposal and its reciprocity, states supporting this proposal will not permit any activities hostile to Nepal. (Department of Information). ■

“Peaceful Political Coexistence Is The Bedrock Of Nation”

—PROFESSOR DR. SURYA SUBEDI

“All political forces should come together and identify what are our non-negotiable national interests. Then you can work out the modality to achieve those national interests. Elsewhere, whenever there is any problem, people do not disagree on fundamental national interests – all political parties will have, more or less, similar views.”

Dr. SURYA SUBEDI is a well-known name in Nepalese law circle. Professor of international law at the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom, Dr. Subedi briefly visited his home country last week en route to Vietnam for which country he is a legal advisor. Despite living in the United Kingdom, Dr. Subedi has been paying close attention to the events taking place in Nepal. Chairman of Nepal Britain Academic Council – a council of scholars of two countries – he has written a number of books specializing in international relations. He also gave a talk program on his book on Nepal-India relations during his brief stay in Kathmandu. Dr. Subedi spoke with KESHAB POUDEL and SANJAYA DHAKAL on various issues of political and constitutional nature that are vexing Nepal currently. Excerpts:

How do you see the present political crisis in Nepal in the wider context of regional situation?

The crisis, as I see it, is the result of incapability of our political leaders to solve our national problems. There are different models of democracy. We can follow any model and strengthen our nation. The first and foremost thing is nation and national interest. All political forces should come together and identify what are our non-negotiable national interests. Then you can work out the modality to achieve those national interests. Elsewhere, whenever there is any problem, people do not disagree on fundamental national interests – all political parties will have, more or less, similar views. Unfortunately, in our country, I have not been able to see the degree of consensus and the degree of willingness to work in support of national interest. I find this frustrating.

There are two different opinions competing these days, - one stating that the present constitution can still function and another calling for constituent assembly. What are your views?

I am not opposed to the idea of constituent assembly – it is also a way out. However, the constituent assembly becomes relevant only when there is a complete political vacuum. We do not have that political vacuum. When there is a revolution; when a new nation is born out of colonial administration; when there is a break-up of a nation; when there is clear political vacuum then you need to have constituent assembly to prepare new constitution. Therefore, although I am not opposed to it, I have not supported the idea of constituent assembly. In my opinion, the basic framework of the present constitution is fine. It is, by and large, a democratic constitution. Of course, there are deficiencies in the constitution. There are many things that have to be improved but there is a way out from within the constitutional structure. My view is that the present constitution should be activated as soon as possible. We should make it fully functional. At the moment, the parliamentary and executive matters of the constitution are not fully functioning. I am not convinced why this constitution is an obstacle to nation building. Only when

something is an obstacle to nation building, do you need to change that one. For instance, in Sri Lanka, the Tamils were elected to parliament and they did their best to have that their demands met by the government. When they could not get anything, only then they decided to take up arms. Did the Maoists get elected to power? Did they try to see whether parliamentary system of government could deliver what they were trying to achieve? Without doing this, they decided to take up the arms and rise against the very democratic system. That is why, I think, the solution can be found through present constitution if all political forces are of the view that the only way to strengthening democracy is through parliamentary supremacy. Lets have parliamentary supremacy and lets give more power to the parliament. Genuine representatives of the people can be elected and once they are elected, they should have the ultimate say in the governance of the country. That can be achieved within the present constitution.

A section of people are demanding absolute monarchy while a section of parties are calling for absolute democracy. How do you see this tussle for absolutism?

Those who are arguing for absolute monarchy are not going to serve the national interest. Nor are the people who are in favor of abolishing the monarchy altogether. Because the monarchy is an institution with a long history in this country. We have to do what it takes to make sure that monarchy can be used for nation building and development of the country. The way the King has been governing the country since February 1 is not satisfactory. But that does not mean the institution of monarchy itself is not needed in the country. We need to separate the occupier of the throne from the institution of monarchy. No matter how the present monarch behaves, the institution of monarchy is part and parcel of Nepali national institution and Nepali psyche. So, on the basis of some events taking place within past one or two year, we cannot say that the monarchy is an obstacle to nation building.

Sandwiched between two major powers – India and China – how do you think the growing chaotic situation in Nepal will have implications in the regional scenario?

People have been talking about China card but I do not think China card is that effective. After all, if China is a good neighbor they will also like to see a peaceful, prosperous and democratic Nepal. Since we are a multilingual, multiracial and multicultural society, democratic path is the only path to prosperity. I think Chinese understand our aspirations and desire. And these desires can be met under the present constitution. Of course, we have to maintain our political neutrality as well as political equilibrium with both of our neighbors. Both India and China, in my view, would like to see democratic and peaceful Nepal where people can compete and prosper.



How do you assess the role of institutions created by this constitution?

I have said all along that the weakest link in the governance of our country had been our parliament. It should have played much more effective role. During the 1990s, the parliament was not that much effective. In a democracy, it is parliament that has to play the decisive role. My focus is how to make the parliament effective. First of all, make sure that elections are conducted in free and fair manner. Second thing, the parliament should be given the ultimate power in the governance of the country. That is what people's sovereignty means.

How do you see the role of international community?

Role of international community is an important one for a small nation like ours. There are three things that the international community is concerned about. One, the major powers of the world including the United Nations have a commitment to reduce poverty. To reduce poverty, they have concluded that a country should have a democratic, accountable and transparent government. They have an interest in making sure that wherever they give assistance, their money is used as wisely as possible, which would benefit the poor people. That is why they are saying that unless and until there is a democratic and transparent government, the funds given by foreign governments may not be used properly. Two, all these countries are, by and large, democratic countries and their taxpayers ask how the money provided by them is being utilized. They keep asking these questions in the parliament. For instance, in the UK, every now and then, MPs raise such questions about Nepal and other countries. Three, we now live in a globalized world with its own set of value systems. These values are democracy, rule of law, good governance and human rights. If you depart from those values, the international community will be concerned. Because once you say you are a part of international community, you have to subscribe to the values of the community. Otherwise, you could end up a pariah state.

What are your views on the escalation of political conflict?

In my opinion, the very idea behind democracy is the peaceful political coexistence. Nowadays, politics is based on consensus. In this country, I find it frustrating that people are not seeking such consensus. Having your rigid position is one thing but moving forward on the basis of peaceful political coexistence is the very basis of democratic governance, rule of law and civilization. This message should be conveyed to all the people and political forces

here. If you do not accept the existence of monarchy, they why do you expect the monarchy to accept your existence as a Maoist force. So, we need to accept the existence of all political forces and find some sort of a national consensus to move forward.

What do you think is the main obstacle to reaching this peaceful political coexistence?

I think all sides have made mistakes. For instance, look at their various 40-point or 75 point proposals, more than two-third of them can be included in any political manifesto of any party. This is a wish list. You have aspirations to build nation and you have listed a number of things that you want to achieve. And in order to achieve them you do not need to fight with other political forces. You need to bring other forces on board and move ahead. I think the problem in this country is not giving enough time for democracy to mature. Our experience with democracy was short-lived. In countries like UK, the system they have now has evolved through decades and centuries of hard work. They have gone through these phases of crises that we are going through. But here, people have not given enough time for democracy to work.

Who didn't give the time – the King, the Maoists or the parties?

I would say where we are today is the result of the Maoist rebellion. When the country had just embarked on the democratic path, the Maoists did not try to achieve what they wanted to achieve through parliament. The Maoist rebellion, which began some ten-eleven years ago, is the problem why we are in the present situation.

Do you say that they (Maoists) are foolish, then?

I would not necessarily say they are foolish. They are backward in their thinking. In today's world when Maoism has disappeared even from a country where chairman Mao once ruled, when communism has been basically discarded as an obsolete and outdated political ideology, we seem to be subscribing to that idea. We are part of the global village where there is marketization, globalization, economic liberalization, WTO etc. When even countries like China, Vietnam are following modern paths to development, we seem to be thinking backwardly and believing in communist ideology in today's world.

But the Maoists have gained strength despite what you call outdated ideology. How do you explain?

You can attract crowd very easily on the basis of cheap political slogans. Further, this country has remained a Least Developed Country (LDC) for a long time even though many other LDCs have graduated to developing or middle-income level. If the current situation continues, we will remain an LDC for long time to come. Once you have no equal opportunities in the country, no equal access to resources and no equal access to power, the disenfranchised and disillusioned people will be attracted to cheap political propaganda. But I think there are better ways of addressing the problems, which the Maoists want to address. The problems they have highlighted – some of them are genuine ones that should concern every Nepalese. But there are different ways of addressing those problems rather than through violence. I am opposed to achieving political ends through violent means.

Once again, how do you see the role of international community about the insurgency here?

Initially, I think, the international community did not have a good understanding of Maoist movement –

“Having your rigid position is one thing but moving forward on the basis of peaceful political coexistence is the very basis of democratic governance, rule of law and civilization. This message should be conveyed to all the people and political forces”

"We have two neighbors but I do not think the overarching objectives of these two neighbors would differ that much in today's world no matter what the internal political system in these two countries are. Actually, I would think, they would find it very strange if Nepal becomes an issue, which disturbs the evolving relationship between the two countries."

what they stand for and what their ultimate game was. Second thing, there is not much that the international community itself can do. It is our problem. The international community can assist us only when we have a sensible policy to move forward. They can be the positive force. When we ourselves do not have the sensible policy, the international community will have a limited leverage. Apart from India - which surrounds the country from three sides and which have, perhaps, more leverage - the international community, for example the United States - a faraway country no matter how powerful that country is, they have a limited leverage. So do the United Kingdom - they are a good friend of Nepal, a traditional ally and supporter of democracy. When democracy is in trouble, they try to help the government. But when the government itself cannot help itself, then the international community will be concerned about what is going on and how they can help. I think the international community has played a very encouraging role here. They have not, in my opinion, subscribed to the idea of constituent assembly. I don't think they would ever support the Maoist revolution or whatever you call it. They are firmly of the view that the country like ours needs both - the monarchy and the democracy. These two forces should go hand in hand. Experiences of so many countries have shown that monarchy and democracy can go together - known as constitutional monarchy. That is what they want to see in Nepal. I do not think they want to see any other force ruling the country.

How do you define the international community? We can see that even among the international community there are divergent views and interests.

When we say international community in the context of Nepal, we are talking about firstly our neighbors, secondly our traditional friends like UK, US, thirdly, the international organizations including the UN and fourthly, larger group of nations working as or under the auspices of UN or the EU. In our context, with the exception of few countries, most have committed themselves to respecting democracy, human rights, rule of law and good governance. These are the values that emanate from the basic documents of the UN. All 191 countries that are the members of UN have defined what the values of the international community are and they expect Nepal to subscribe to these values. Whether China or India or other nations are concerned about Nepal's political developments or not, their ultimate aim should be to make sure that Nepal remains firmly within that international value systems.

That is your suggestion what their ultimate aim should be. But, are you sure that their aim is the same?

Having said that all friends do want to make sure that international value systems are respected, they have their own national interest. India has its own interest vis-à-vis Nepal. China has its own interest vis-à-vis Nepal. So does the US, - as a global power they have global view of things. They would like to see Nepal firmly in the democratic camp so that this country can also participate in the international policy agenda. But their national interests can be reconciled with our own national interest provided that we have people in power with competence, knowledge and expertise.

But there is a general perception here that the national interests of our neighbors India and China

do not converge so far as Nepal is concerned. What do you say?

I do not think that is necessarily so. Both China and India are developing their relations in a way that will be economically meaningful to both of them. It is not the situation like the one in 1960s or 70s. Both are emerging global giants and economic power. They do not want to quarrel over Nepal. They do not want to have small differences spoil their emerging developing good relations. I think both of them would have some common understanding that Nepal should find its place and its people within the country should find resolution of political problems. And once we come up with sensible solutions, both of them will support. Yes, we have two neighbors but I do not think the overarching objectives of these two neighbors would differ that much in today's world no matter what the internal political system in these two countries are. Actually, I would think, they would find it very strange if Nepal becomes an issue, which disturbs the evolving relationship between the two countries. These two countries have to compete with other western countries and economic giants. If they fight with each other, making Nepal an issue, I do not think they would be far-sighted leaders. So I think their interest lies in making sure that they do not have disagreements over Nepal.

As of now, don't you think they have been competing in Nepal for sphere of influence?

Not to the scale that I have read in some newspapers. They do not have to compete. Yes, of course, you want to have some sphere of influence in your neighborhood. But I do not think they will go to that extent and compete for sphere of influence in Nepal. Because when you have very good relations with each other, why would you need to compete for Nepal. For instance, when Chinese premier visited India last year, they decided to sort out so many of their border problems. They are now working together for each other's economic advantage. If they want to emerge as global giants, they cannot compete with each other simply because they do not agree on how to handle problems within Nepal.

Recently, during the visit of Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran to Beijing, newspapers quoted him as saying that the Chinese told him they do not want interference in internal affairs of Nepal. Earlier he had said India had high stakes in Nepal situation. What do you make of that?

Although I have not read the press communiqué itself, they seem to have differences of opinion regarding Nepal. But, what I am saying here is that they cannot afford to quarrel on matter relating to Nepal. They have a bigger challenge - to compete and establish themselves in the international arena. When they are trying to compete and establish themselves as global power, these two nations cannot afford to go back to the situation of the 1960s and fight with each other. Nepal is not a serious enough issue for them to contest. So, their interest lies in seeing their nations prosperous. Of course, India has always pursued the policy of non-interference. And I do not think India will be foolish to intervene in our internal affairs. It is our own internal affairs and we are capable of resolving with it. But we should have a dialogue within our own nation to come up with solution. Then Indians would also keep quiet.

What is stopping us from having this national dialogue, then?



That national dialogue, I think, can come about when both sides or all sides show some flexibility. At the moment, I see the ball being in the court of the King. The King has to demonstrate some flexibility and preparedness for dialogue. And then we can see whether the Maoists or the seven party alliance are willing to negotiate. Those who are in power should demonstrate their willingness to negotiate with other political forces. I have not seen that willingness so far.

Why, do you think, there is no willingness?

I do not know what the mindset of the present King is. But, the only way forward for this country is through dialogue, negotiation and consensus. I am not sure what is stopping him from extending his friendly hands to the political parties, especially the constitutional forces of the country. The Maoists themselves have resorted to violent means to reach their political ends – which is not an acceptable means but if they are prepared to lay down their arms and if they are prepared to participate in parliamentary elections, have faith in multiparty system of government and have faith in constitutional monarchy, then I do not see why the King should hesitate to say lets have a broad national convention. Goodness, we can have a broad national convention tomorrow. Besides, if they refuse to participate in such broad national convention, they will be in minority, they will gradually lose their support and be isolated, outnumbered and they will disappear in no time. Therefore, somebody has to take the initiative for national reconciliation now. The initiative has to be taken by the King because he is in power now.

Why, do you think, is the King not taking the initiative? Despite so much pressure, internally and externally, what could be the reason behind his rigid stance? Is it due to some foreign backing or internal strength?

It is difficult to speculate. It is difficult to read the mind of an individual. We are not sure whether the King is willing or not. He took power on February 1st. Maybe he is working towards that situation. He wanted to see whether he can deliver better. You and I and many people had said that the political parties were not able to deliver. Perhaps, he wanted to see if he can deliver. We now know that one person cannot deliver. He needs other forces working with him. Perhaps that realization is coming within him as well. Lets see what the future holds. I am quite hopeful. If the King wants to make the institution of monarchy a permanent one, he must come to his senses and realize he needs cooperation of others.

Why are you so hopeful?

I am very hopeful because he is not an individual. He presides over an institution – the institution of monarchy.

The monarchy as an institution has a national interest. That national interest can be achieved by building an environment of political consensus. I think he will come around to accepting that reality. That is why I am hopeful.

Can he continue to not realize where his interests lie?

Indeed, that is what I am most surprised about. I am pretty hopeful that the time, perhaps, has come for the King to realize his past mistake that one person cannot develop this nation. It needs the support of the people. If he is prepared to lead the nation towards prosperity through national consensus, accepting peaceful political coexistence is must. The King has to accept the existence of seven political parties and if the Maoists are also prepared to accept monarchy as an institution, he should also accept the Maoists as political force and try to bring them on board for peaceful democratic governance of the country.

Do you think the King has become prisoner of his own advisors?

That is difficult to say because I have been trying to figure out what his actual advisors are like, what they might be advising him about and whose advice he listens to. You may give advice but at the end of the day, the decision lies in his hands. The decision he has taken, perhaps, was taken on the belief that democratic experience of the past 12-13 years was not able to deliver and perhaps he should have a go at it. We now know that one year has gone and there is no delivery.

The King has asked for three years. Only one year has passed. Don't you think we should probably give him time?

The strategy that is in place, what we have seen, makes us doubtful whether he can achieve. The strategy that is in place now doesn't convince me that he can deliver even in two more years. The people he has brought to power have no popular base. The people who are in power are not following sensible policy. For instance, there is vice chairman of council of ministers saying that democracy and monarchy cannot go together. I cannot accept that idea. The constitutional monarchy has worked in many countries quite well. It had worked in our country for ten years quite well. I don't see why it cannot work again. I am a firm believer that democracy and monarchy can go together. There is no either/or.

Often times, experts from outside try to prescribe their solutions without understanding the nature of conflict here. As a Nepali scholar based in UK, what do you have to say to such activities?

I chair an institution called Britain-Nepal Academic Council. There are so many scholars interested in Nepal and who visit here frequently. Through that council, we have tried to convey a positive message. Our struggle is not like a struggle in Sri Lanka, which is basically an ethnic struggle. We have not reached that stage. It is still a problem that can be solved through political means. There are problems in countries like Sudan that are deep-rooted ethnic and racial conflict in nature. Unlike theirs, ours is basically a problem of political governance. Political problems have political answers. We should find those answers and I am optimistic we will find them soon. Actually, whenever I come across any articles or newspaper reports presenting rather distorted picture about Nepal, I am the first one to write letter to the editor in order to give them more information. ■

“The strategy that is in place now doesn't convince me that he (King) can deliver even in two more years. The people he has brought to power have no popular base. The people who are in power are not following sensible policy”

IMPLEMENTATION OF BUILDING CODE

First Step

With the implementation of building code, the government has initiated a major step to avert the human catastrophe in the event of major earthquake

By A CORRESPONDENT

When a rally of children, women and other people passed through the street of Bhaktapur celebrating Earthquake Day on January 15, 2006, Tuicha Dulal, 80, a resident of Kamal Binayak - among a few remaining old people in Bhaktapur to have personally witnessed the devastation of Kathmandu valley during 1934 quake - became worried about the future of people living in his area as well as Kathmandu.

"If the quake similar to 1934 hit the valley again, I will die on the narrow street in search of safe place. All tall houses will collapse just like Dharahara and Ghantaghar," said Dulal, a former construction worker. "Most of the new houses in Bhaktapur and Kathmandu were erected haphazardly and they are inevitable to collapse. I am surprised to see the demolition of old houses in New Road areas, which were built as earthquake resistant, coinciding with the construction of weak houses."

Dulal is not a lone person fearing heavy loss of life and property in the valley in case of major earthquake. The message of the earthquake day is also clear as they are disseminating the information that following certain norms in building construction will protect the life and property of people.

There are only a few cities around the world, which is so prone to earthquake, like Kathmandu but it took nearly a decade to implement building codes. Despite threats of major jolts, only diplomats based in the valley and a few other Nepalese have earthquake survival kits ready in their home. Large number of people in the valley have not prepared themselves for the inevitable.

According to seismologists, Kathmandu suffers major earthquake roughly every 70 years and the last one was in 1934. "A quake of the same magnitude today would leave 40,000 dead and 100,000 needing hospital

treatment. Ninety-three percent of buildings in the city of about 2 million people do not meet building standards. Although a new building code announced three years ago make it mandatory for public structures, it is yet to be enforced effectively," said Amod Mani Dixit, general secretary of Nepal Society for Earthquake Technology-Nepal (NSET).

Thanks to the relentless efforts of Nepal Society for Earthquake Technology - Nepal (NSET), the government finally has implemented building code in the valley. Most buildings can be made earthquake resistant by investing a small amount of money to upgrade certain structures.



Kathmandu City: Tremors of fear

According to a study conducted by NSET, many government hospitals will collapse in case of major earthquake.

According to earthquake experts, two major factors combine to make Kathmandu particularly vulnerable. The soil of the valley in which it sits is a lakebed that produce high intensity vibrations during a quake. Geologists have identified an area of western Nepal from Pokhara to Deharadun in India as a seismic gap where energy has been building up for at least 200 years.

Recent earthquake in Pakistan and Kashmir has also sent a message around the Himalayan region that they are vulnerable for major earthquakes. "In Nepal's

Himalayas, the assessment says, there are areas of potential sources of earthquakes that could be as big as 8.3 or 8.4 Richter scale. It will be huge earthquake that could take place in our part at any time and at any day," said Dixit.

According to NSET, if the earthquake measuring similar to that of the quake of 1934 rocks the valley, it will result in the death of something 35000-40000 within one minute of shaking. There will be 40,000 dead in an earthquake, which could cause the level of shaking as what happened in 1934. 100,000 people will be injured. In terms of damage to infrastructures, 90 percent of the water supply pipeline could get dysfunctional, half of electricity supply could be reduced and 60 percent of bridges will be out of order. Besides, Telephone and mobile will go dysfunctional because their towers and buildings are located in earthquake hazardous zone and their buildings are not earthquake resistance. That will isolate the valley from rest of the world.

How to Minimize the Casualty

One of the ways to minimize the damage is through an effective mechanism in transmitting knowledge about preparedness. By celebrating annual earthquake day, the efforts have already been made to make aware general population and policy makers about the need to take steps to minimize the casualty. Mandatory building code is one of the major achievements.

"I assure that the building codes will be effectively executed at all levels. There is no question of lapses on that," said second vice chairman of the present government Kirtinidhi Bista. Although the program

organized in Bhaktapur, it was boycotted by locally popular political parties -which has strong political mechanism in Bhaktapur.

Similarly, the Ministry of Health has already developed a strategy for emergency preparedness and other government agencies have been taking similar steps. "The government will work out an emergency plan to cope with the major earthquake," said Home Minister Kamal Thapa.

Despite all these programs, the perception about the risk in larger population and decision-making is still lacking. More or less the earthquake preparedness has become only an issue for annual earthquake day celebration.

BUDGET ORDINANCE

Risks And Rewards!

The government is confident that its decision to reduce tariff will lead to rich dividends in the form of better VAT collection and

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

A When he unveiled the new budget ordinance on Saturday (January 14) in front of select audience at the hall of Ministry of Finance, the confident-looking Minister of State for Finance Dr. Roop Jyoti announced substantial reduction in the custom tariffs of over 130 import products.

Such a move for a country so heavily dependent on the custom revenue for its income and at a time when its economy is reeling under recession due to non-economic factors, could only have been called as an unwarranted risk.

However, Dr. Jyoti seems confident – perhaps a bit too much – that his decision would not result in decrease of revenue. The Finance Ministry estimates that the reduction in tariffs could result in loss of Rs 1.3 billion of custom collection in one year. This, however, will be offset by the decrease in smuggling, practices of under-invoicing and spur the compliance of VAT at retail level, the Ministry said. “This decision will not decrease revenue. Rather, the VAT collection will increase by 10 percent,” Dr. Jyoti claimed.

Even though it is pretty evident that the government considers VAT as the mainstay of its taxation system, conversely, some of the provisions in the ordinance raise doubts – like the scrapping of VAT on foreign employment agencies and rather imposing excise duty on them as well as scrapping of VAT on many other sectors.

The ordinance has cut down custom tariff rates of more than 130 import products – which has brought down the average custom tariff to 8 percent. Tariffs of raw materials have also been reduced in order to help the domestic industries.

Dr. Jyoti has also adjusted the duty imposed on petroleum products. Custom on petrol has been increased by Rs 4 per liter – but this would not affect the retail

price, Dr. Jyoti said. The increment of custom tariff on aviation fuel and kerosene will not be enforced until further notice, the ordinance states.

Custom tariff on products like electrical and electronic appliances, bags, clothes, computer and parts, cellular mobile



Dr. Jyoti: Confident of results

The Kathmandu Post

sets, watches, television etc have been decreased. In pharmaceuticals and foreign employment agencies, VAT has been replaced by imposition of excise.

Traders and businessmen have expressed happiness over the ordinance unveiled by businessman-turned-minister Dr. Roop Jyoti. Institutions like Nepal Chamber of Commerce (NCC), Nepal Overseas Traders Association and Nepal Trans Himalaya Traders Association have welcomed the ordinance. Entrepreneurs and industrialists, however, have given mixed responses.

Surendra Bir Malakar, acting president of NCC, said the ordinance would promote industries and trade expansion. Akhil

Kumar Chapagain, president of Overseas Traders Association, said the ordinance would promote clean trade and make VAT effective. On the other hand, Kush Kumar Joshi, vice president of Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), said that the ordinance would help in increasing imports.

The Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI), however, has criticized the new ordinance saying that it only focused on reducing custom tariffs. It complains that the government did not pay heed to their advices for maintaining at least 20 percent difference in the tariff imposed between finished goods and raw materials. Tariff for many goods that are manufactured

in Nepal has been reduced by 5 to 35 percent whereas the tariff for their raw materials has not been reduced in corresponding proportion, the CNI said. “This will erode our competitive capacity,” the CNI stated.

The CNI further added that by giving unlimited discretionary authority to custom official, chances for corruption have increased. It said such authority leads to weaker enforcement of VAT as well. It has, however, welcomed the decision to reduce tariff rate to 1 percent to import generators with capacity of more than 10 kw – at a time when Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) has imposed load shedding.

BOOK

On SAARC

The book highlights the importance of SAARC in South Asian region

Despite their common perception on many issues including trade and other matters which are beneficial to them, they are yet to benefit materialize them. Although they have recently endorsed the South Asia Free Trade Agreement, the countries in the region still have many differences on how to implement them.

Among the member state, India is the biggest sharing the borders with all six countries of the region. This is the reason India's role is very important to materialize the regional cooperation in real sense. From political to economic level, India and its neighbors have many disputes.

Just a few days after the execution of SAFTA agreement, India has put so many conditionality on transit treat with Nepal and the treaty is formally in the position of collapse. India's trade relations with Bangladesh and Pakistan are also not smooth as they have many disputes.

In such a situation, any academic exercise taken to highlights the problems within the SAARC region is commendable. Edited by Dev Raj Dahal and Nishchal N. Pandey, the new life within SAARC Region has made efforts to highlights the problems in the region.

"South Asian Countries share a common perception on many issues and a mutually beneficial aspiration to deal with various externalities. The policy areas are sufficiently dense and the common regional interest is widening the scope of cooperation. This lends high hope for the future of SAARC," writes Dahal and Pandey in their preface. "Moving Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) towards a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) will open the possibility for a free trade area by 2016. FTA is a useful tool for market

liberalization and structural reforms of the economy to complement multilateral efforts consistent with WTO under the WTO regime."

In the last two decades, all South Asian countries have made many efforts to minimize their differences and improve the relations between them but their continue to exist the trusts and distrusts among them. Although all South Asian countries share the border with India, all



New Life within SAARC
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the South Asian Countries have one or other kinds of problems. The relations between India and Pakistan dominate the regional environment. Since last few years, the Nepal and Bangladesh are also uncomfortable with India. India's security perception vis-à-vis its neighbors are creating more trouble.

"Many reasons exist for the uneven progress of SAARC: most have to do with intra-regional political tensions, and most involve India. The chronic tension, occasional conflict, and perennial absence of trust between India and Pakistan; the periodic hiccups in relations between India and her other neighbors- Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh; and so on," writes K.V. Rajan in his paper *Renewing SAARC*. India as the largest country with boundaries with all the other member states without doubt bears a disproportionate responsibility for the success or failure of SAARC as compared with the others: It is condemned to be both the necessary engine as well as the likely obstacle in the fulfillment of SAARC's potential."

Written by several other writes from the region including Dr. Prakash Chandra Lohani, Dr. Mohan Lohani, Nishchal N Pandey from Nepal and former foreign secretary of Pakistan Shamsad Ahmad, former foreign secretary of Bangladesh CM Safi Sami and Tshering Phuntsho of Bhutan and other experts from the region presented their points of view.

"The more things change, the more they remain same. This French aphorism perhaps best describes the institutional character of SAARC which since establishment in 1985 has been seeking change in our region in terms of poverty eradication and sustainable development, but the change is nowhere in sight," writes Ahamad.

Despite all progress and rhetoric of regional trade, the countries of the region have a long way to go before materializing the regional cooperation like other parts of the region. As long as there is growing distrust and mistrust between them, there is no possibility for regional cooperation to thrive. ■

Reviewed by Keshab Poudel

EXPOSITION

Metamorphosis

Three artists of different genre come together to bring out their creations in a common theme

By THAKUR AMGAI

Works of three artists Sunil Sigdel, Gopal Das Shrestha, aka Gopal Kalapremi and Saroj Bajracharya have decorated the walls and floors of the Siddhartha Art Gallery.

Saroj Bajracharya : Bajracharya's paintings attempt to search meaning to human life. Each of his paintings has a story behind it all revolving around changes that human feelings, opinion and experiences they go through. "Time is most powerful," he says adding "With the change of time, human feelings, experience and idea undergo metamorphosis."



saroj bajracharya

Large paintings with acrylic in water use variety of forms. There are small and large blocks scattered all over the canvases. Saroj says the blocks represent the time. And with the time, the human forms in part and full – distinct and

abstract represent the situations of happiness and distress.

Sunil Sigdel : Sigdel's paintings are a search for your existence and meaning to life. He extensively uses feminine forms in different postures. Sigdel says the feminine form is related to the emotional side of a being while, the masculine form is related to the logical one. And one certainly needs to stimulate the emotional side to search for a meaning to life. Sunil's paintings do exactly the same. The abstract paintings on Acrylic and on mixed media converse with the viewer to search the internal feelings of human beings. The series of paintings "Conversation Through Silence" works as the facilitator for viewers to converse with his innermost feelings.



sunil sigdel

His creation "Time Hole" on mixed media subtly expresses the metamorphosis of the feelings on the objects around you. He has used a piece

of wood that was a part of his grandfather's 'sandoosh' (a wooden box used to store valuables). "It was lying under the cowshed and I thought it would come to this use."

Simple and complex mathematical figures and formulae scribbled all over his paintings depict the random expressions of the human unconscious mind.

Gopal Kalapremi : Kalapremi, who is renowned for his rakus has come out with sculptures of different kind. This time, unlike in his previous exhibitions where he used to have sculptures under a common theme, the raku ceramic sculptures showcase a variety of forms.

Most of them are semi abstract human forms open to interpretations to the viewer. While, the other sculptures are a softer

expressions compared to his previous exhibition of broken plates – where he depicted the current situation of the country as heartrending, sculptures depicting the contemporary human



gopal kalapremi

faces show even more depressing situation of the country. Over two dozen human faces of various sizes lying on the sand-bed on the upper floor of the Gallery compels any viewer to think about the victims of the on going conflict and the political instability.

The exhibition of the three artists is worth viewing. The paintings and sculptures hold the attention of the viewers for hours - even the ones who normally do not appreciate art. ■



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YOGESHWOR AMATYA

Singer With A Different Taste

Amatya's songs give a different taste to the listeners

By THAKUR AMGAI

Students representing over one hundred different countries around the world including Nepal were excitedly waiting for an annual musical function at the St. Joseph's school in North Point, Darjeeling, India. The Nepalese team had prepared to sing a popular Nepali folk song "Pani Muni Dhungama Leu Lagyo". After rehearsing for several times they were anxiously waiting to perform the Nepali folk song among the audience representing all nooks and corners of the globe.

The show began. And with this, panic started to grip one of the performers of the Nepalese team. Never before had he faced a stage. In addition, this student of introvert nature suffered largely from inferiority complex.

The Master of Ceremony called the Nepalese team on the stage. But his feet were stuck on the ground. He almost collapsed but could not move ahead. After some minutes of waiting, the MC went on to call the next performer. The annual function that year went without a Nepali performance.

The event worsened the inferiority complex of this student. He was not only embarrassed for his action, but also felt guilty for punishing other performers for his cause. The distress kept this potential singer away from the stage for the next eight years.

Then, once in 1995, at a concert in Dhulikhel, he was heavily intoxicated - he says he does not remember singing. He sang the popular Nepali folk song "Aakashima Cheel Udyo Dhartima Chhaya" in a rap style. He collected huge applaud from the listeners that comprised mostly youths. 'Yogeshwor Amatya' instantly became a subject of gossip among the urban youths, but he would not know it as he seldom came out of the

cocoon of his family members and friends circle.

After some days, the Friday Supplement of the Rising Nepal, published a photograph and a feature about him. For some one whose singing horizons were limited to playing drums on the dining table and class room desks and strumming guitars under the poplar trees in his school, this was obviously a great achievement. "It was a shock, joy and happiness for me," he said.



After friends persuaded to record songs, he sang songs like 'Jaba Sandhya Hunchha' which was again well received by the audience. After three years, he came out with his first album 'Karai Karma' (In Persuasion).

In the subsequent years, Amatya started giving more songs of different taste to the Nepali audience. Youth listeners became great fan of his unique voice, the style of singing and the miming during stage performances. However, Amatya's stage fright did not wane off.

"I start panicking one week ahead of the stage performance," he says. "I ask five people to feel my heart beat before I go on the stage."

"However, once I go on the stage and the audience cheer and clap I forget all the nervousness and start singing. The applaud actually reenergizes me."

Amatya has a wide fanfare, particularly among the young generation.

However, he still does not feel very confident about his singing. Says, "I sing for self-satisfaction. It is a kind of therapy for my loneliness and inferiority. I express my joy and distress through my songs and I feel very relieved after singing."

He has over two-dozen songs on record, and almost all of them are popular in their own way. Amatya, who spends most of his time with his family, makes his appearance in a year or two, each time with songs of different tastes. His songs like 'Kattik Lageccha', 'Logne Manchhe Bhayara Runu Hunna Bhanchnan' and 'Kya Bore Bhayo' had quickly caught up among the youngsters immediately after their releases. Songs like "Laija Chari Mero Khabar" have also been well received.

Amatya is known for remixing folk songs in a rap style. While he has earned ample criticisms for doing this, the young listeners equally appreciate and follow his style. He explains, "Remixing does not mean distorting the originality of the songs. It is to revitalize the masterpiece creations that have been stored in the archives collecting dust. And that is just what I have done."

The songs he has remixed are popular Nepali folk songs like "Pani Muni Dhungama Leu Lagyo" and "Sindhuli Gadhi Ghumera Herda".

Amatya, who has spent most of his childhood in foreign land, says he takes great pride in being a Nepali. "I would rather eat only 'sag and bhat' (Rice and vegetables), but study in Nepal," Amatya remembers saying to his father when he was asked to go to England after passing high school.

Probably with love for his country and a sense of responsibility to do something for the ailing tourism industry of the country, Amatya, along with his like-minded friends ventured for a musical tour to Australia and Hong Kong. In addition to singing popular Nepali modern and folk songs, they called the foreigners and the Nepalis residing there to come back to Nepal for Holidays through the song "Nepal Herna Aau".

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