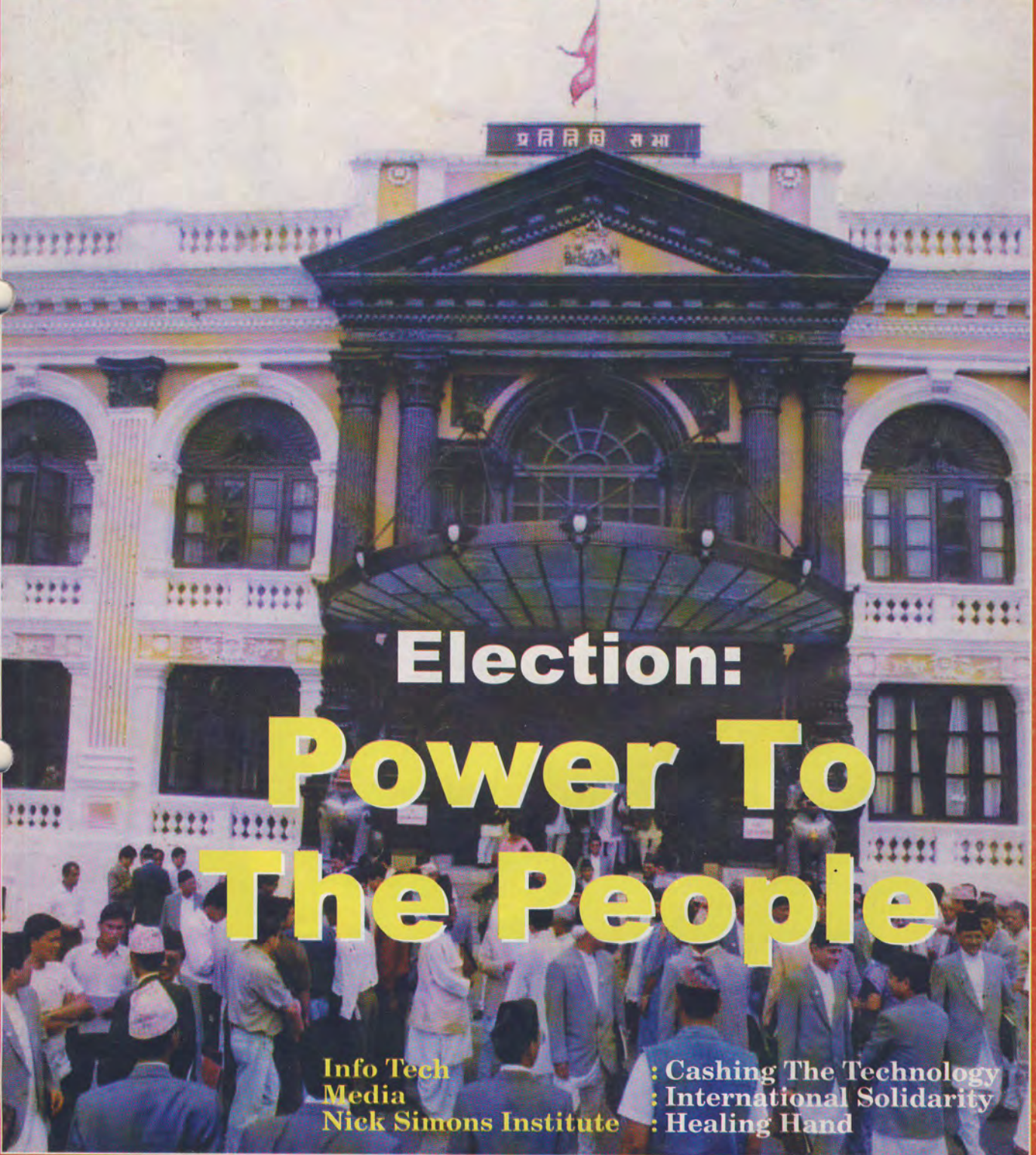


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The National Newsmagazine

# SPOTLIGHT

Mar 31- April 6, 2006



Election:

# Power To The People

Info Tech : Cashing The Technology  
 Media : International Solidarity  
 Nick Simons Institute : Healing Hand

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# CONTENTS

	Page
LETTERS	3
NEWS NOTES	4
BRIEFS	6
QUOTE UNQUOTE/TRANSITION	7
OPINION : Dr. A.B. Thapa	8
ENCOUNTER: Pashupati SJB Rana	16
NICK SIMONS INSTITUTE: Healing Hands	17
ECONOMY: Lessons From Pakistan	18
MAOIST VIOLENCE: Continuing Attacks	19
VIEWPOINT: Dr. Som P. Pudasaini	20
NEPAL-INDIA WRITER'S CONFERENCE: Cultural Unity	21
REVIEW: A Handbook For Elections	22
BHOTE KOSHI: Power Transfer	23
PROFILE : Kamala Shrestha	24



**COVER STORY : Power To The People**  
Only through the credible election can the power be shifted from the King to the people

Page 12



**Info Tech: Cashing The Technology**  
Gradually, the 21st century technology are being used for performing simple everyday purposes

Page 10



**MEDIA MISSION: International Solidarity**  
The team of international media professionals visit the country and lend crucial support to Nepalese journalists in their quest for democracy and freedom

Annapurna Post

Page 11

**SPOTLIGHT**

THE WEEKLY NATIONAL NEWSMAGAZINE

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**Chief Editor And Publisher**  
Madhav Kumar Rimal

**Editor**  
Sarita Rimal

**Managing Editor**  
Keshab Poudel

**Senior Reporter**  
Sanjaya Dhakal

**Reporter**  
Thakur Amgai

**Design and Layout**  
Jyoti Singh

**Photographer**  
Sandesh Manandhar

**Legal Advisor**  
Advocate Lok Bhakta Rana

**Marketing**  
Navin Kumar Maharjan  
Madan Raj Poudel  
Bishnu Prasad Chaulagain

**Editorial Office**  
GPO Box 7256, Maitidevi, Kathmandu  
Tel (977-1) 4423127 Fax: (977-1) 4417845  
Chief Editor's : 4435594,  
E-mail : spot@mail.com.np  
Internet : www.nepalnews.com/spotlight

**Cover Design : Digi-Tech Scanning & Pre-Press Pvt. Ltd.**  
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Lalitpur, Nepal  
Tel : 5551251, 5529530  
E-mail : degiscan@wlink.com.np

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**T**he ongoing violent conflict has already destroyed the parliament in the country. Now adding to the woes, another serious conflict between the constitutional forces has emerged. As long as parliament was there, from the King to political parties all were against terrorism. The tragedy, at present, is that among constitutional forces, the home minister has come to the extent of issuing warning to deal with political parties of the previous parliament as accomplices of terrorists even as leaders of political parties are prepared to join hands even with devils to destroy the "despotic rule." All sounds and fury of bringing the Tsunami-like political upheavals were tackled at the very root by shadowing deals with the centers of destabilization of this country. Apprehensions are there that almost all political players of the country are forced to deal against the national interest. Ultimately, the country and its unfortunate people will be the greatest losers.

Elections are an opportunity as well as challenge. This game is always played between rival political forces. In the past age of tribalism, rival forces used to enter into war and bloodshed to establish control. Democracy is a civilized form of conducting the conflicts and election is the most civilized way to settle disputes. It does not permanently put forces into the power nor does it permanently throw them away into the oblivion. Periodically held elections are an opportunity as well as challenge. To accept this challenge is not to surrender or submit one's dignity and interest. It depends upon the political characters how to preserve one's dignity and interest supreme in the clash during the elections. Matured democracies do not have a problem about the use and utility of an election but in a premature democracy like our, politicians always talk of unfair and rigged elections. However, instead of exposing evil by participation, mere denouncement does not give any substantial basis to believe. In the past three elections of the parliament (held after 1990), none of the elections were immune from the allegations of unfairness. Even the election during the premiership of Krishna Prasad Bhattarai was denounced by the opposition as unfair.

Democracy is a game of dialogue and elections. Dialogue – which involves two or more conflicting views that goes to the people for elections, is different than monologue. The people are always there to judge and the logic and persuasion can be used to win them. What we have in our country at present is all kinds of angry outburst and non-compromising monologues. What we need now is a quality of persuasion to create a congenial atmosphere for meaningful dialogue and by that a compromise and reconciliation. Whether King or political parties, nobody have to sacrifice their dignity in the process of national reconciliation. We believe that the national reconciliation propounded by B.P. Koirala is evergreen Mantra of all Nepalis.

At a time when country's major political forces are heading towards showdown, we strongly believe that these kinds of clashes are in nobody's interest. Sooner political players of all the sides realize this, better for the country as well as people of Nepal. Although Nepal's foreign friends from western democracies including the US as well as Nepal's northern neighbor China are also stressing for the reconciliation between Nepal's political forces, all play seem to have been handicapped from taking a bold decision by looking at the interest of the country. Never in the history of the country, is Nepal's national interest at such a vulnerable point than before. More the political players involve in the conflict, more the country has to sacrifice. Democracy does not suggest rife but it is a process of patience and tolerance. Although some senior ministers in cabinet including Home minister Kamal Thapa is trying to denounce political parties to create more rift just like some political leaders on the opposition side are engaging in provocations, we believe that the institution monarchy – which is the factor of stability and national integrity- and liberal democratic forces have many inherent elements for unity. King Gyanendra and leaders of liberal democratic forces must come out of the surroundings of extremist elements – which are inimical to both. ■

*Keshab*  
**Keshab Poudel**  
Managing Editor



## Lesson For Maoists

The Maoists and other extreme communist forces should learn a lesson from China and Russia about how any political ideology and system can flourish or perish depending upon their timeliness "CHINESE STATE COUNCILOR TANG'S VISIT: Peace Mission" (SPOTLIGHT March 24). The gradual transformation of the two countries from a strict communism to capitalism shows that this is an era of multiparty democracy and absolute classless society or the dictatorship of the proletariat exists only in theory. There was a time when armed revolution would have swapped the proletariat to bourgeoisies and vice-versa, but

now when the people are much more aware, freedom is their first demand. It is quite clear by now people prefer freedom to any materialistic prosperity at the cost of freedom. So, the Maoists should give up their policy of establishing a communist dictatorship in the country and come to the mainstream politics.

*Tirtha Rana*  
Butwal

## Friendly Concern

I read the cover story this issue about the visit of the Chinese State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan and found it very analytical and informative "CHINESE STATE COUNCILOR TANG'S VISIT: Peace Mission" (SPOTLIGHT March 24). The Chinese state councilor has expressed his concern towards the establishment of peace in Nepal. By visiting Lumbini, the birth place of Lord Buddha hours after he landed at the Kathmandu Airport, he has symbolically expressed his concern for peace. At a time when the major political forces in the country are polarizing and locking horns with each other, such a visit should teach them a lesson and inspire them to reconcile with each other for the common cause of the welfare of the nation and the people.

*Pratima Shakya*  
Asan

## Not Much Achieved

While you have tried to convince the readers that the visit by the Chinese

State Councilor Tang to Nepal has become fruitful in the mission of achieving peace in Nepal, the visit, in my opinion, did not leave any significance both in the bilateral relations between the two countries or Nepal's path ahead "CHINESE STATE COUNCILOR TANG'S VISIT: Peace Mission" (SPOTLIGHT March 24). From such a high-level visit of one of the superpowers of the world, something concrete and decisive should have been achieved. Instead, the councilor, like all other international leaders and missions visiting Nepal has repeated the rhetoric of reconciliation and dialogue. It neither provides a clear roadmap for Nepal nor clarifies the position of the Chinese government towards Nepal's current situation. It is certainly not the Chinese State Councilor, who is to be blamed. To sign a treaty about the exemption custom tariff for 1500 products, such a high-level visit is not required. It could have been done at ministerial or secretarial level. Nepali diplomats should have meticulously prepared for the visit, so

some concrete decision could have come from the visit.

*Nirmal Bantawa*  
Maharajgunj

## Irresponsible Media

I am glad to know that the Maoists have called off the indefinite blockade of the highways "BLOCKADE WITHDRAWN: Short Relief?" (SPOTLIGHT March 24). However, I would like to point out how international media has done injustice to Nepal and its people in this context. Earlier when the blockade was called, the news got wide coverage in international media both print and electronic. People were well notified of the blockade because of which people who were traveling to Nepal for various reasons made necessary adjustments. However, the news of the calling off of the blockade got a very poor coverage in the international media. Many people are still unaware of the fact that the blockade has been called off. Instead, they are already well-notified of the general strikes called by the parties and the Maoists on the first week of April. Because of this, people wanting to travel to Nepal are still putting it off or canceling it. I am not aware why the international media did not cover the news of the calling off of the blockade widely, but I know that this is not just on part of Nepal and Nepalese people. I guess tourism entrepreneurs and workers in Nepal are suffering very much from this irresponsible coverage in the international media. If this is done systematically, such acts are very condemnable.

*Saurav Dahal*  
New York  
Via Email

## Write More Songs

I am very pleased to read about poet and lyricist Nagendra Thapa "NAGENDRA THAPA: Evergreen Prose" (SPOTLIGHT March 24). I am very inspired by his songs and would like to request him to continue writing so that we can hear more of his beautiful lyrics in songs.

*Resham Subba*  
Dharan

## “Understanding Is A Clear Roadmap For Peace”: Koirala

A day after Home Minister Kamal Thapa gave a hard-hitting statement against the second agreement between the parties and the Maoists, Nepali Congress (NC) president Girija Prasad Koirala has said, on Saturday (March 25), that the understanding is a clear roadmap for peace. Talking to party activists in his hometown of Biratnagar, Koirala said that it is the responsibility of democrats to bring in ‘non-democrats into the mainstream.’ He said that full and honest implementation of the pact would lead to peace restoration in the country. He, however, condemned the ever-increasing violent activities of the Maoists. He reiterated that restoration of parliament was the only way out of the present imbroglio. Koirala added that a constituent assembly after the reinstatement of parliament will restore peace and democracy in the country. He ruled out talks with the King before the rights or people are restored. Koirala urged all to participate in the agitation. *Leading dailies report.*

## Parties Trash Minister Thapa’s Warning

Trashing the warning of Home Minister Kamal Thapa that the state would be compelled to treat parties like it does the terrorists if the parties stick to their understanding with the Maoists, the leaders of seven parties have dared him to do so. NC leader Arjun Narsingh KC said, “The parties will stick with their understanding with the Maoists. Let the state do what it can.” Likewise, Pradeep Gyawali, leader of Unified Marxist Leninist (UML), said that the parties were steadfast on the agitation aimed at ushering in constituent assembly. He, however, conceded that increasing violent activities by the Maoists were obstructing the parties’ agitation. Earlier, Home Minister Thapa had blasted ‘the second understanding between the parties and the Maoists that was hatched in New Delhi, India.’ “The so-called agitation from April 6 is the Maoist agenda. By shouldering it the parties have proven that they have fallen into the well-laid trap of the Maoists,”

Thapa said on Friday, adding, “The state wishes to see the parties differently from the Maoists. But these understandings will compel the state to treat them also like terrorists.” Thapa urged the party leaders to initiate talks with the King and restore peace and democracy. “The agreements between the parties and the Maoists can never bring in peace. They are only aimed at further destabilizing the country.” *Leading dailies report.*

## Acharya Warns The Country Could Disintegrate

Senior leader of NC and former deputy prime minister Shailaja Acharya has warned that if good sense doesn’t prevail soon, the country trapped between two kinds of extremism could head towards disintegration. Expressing utter dissatisfaction over the understanding between the parties and the Maoists, Acharya said the survival of NC was endangered as it had shouldered the agenda of the Maoists. Saying that the operators of the constitution had been unsuccessful rather than the constitution itself, Acharya warned there could be a huge bloodshed if the country goes for the constituent assembly. Stating that interference from various foreign power centers had further spoiled the situation, she called on the NC to return to its centrist origin. *Nepal Samacharpatra daily reports.*

## Soldiers Beat Up Villagers, Probe Ordered

Following the murder of a Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) soldier by the Maoists, a group of army men assaulted over 150 villagers of Bichwa VDC of Mahendranagar. One dozen villagers are in serious condition. On Wednesday, RNA soldier Ramesh Bista had been shot to death by the Maoists in the village. Angered by the incident, the army men summoned villagers to the Sinhapur Post where they were badly beaten. They were accused of providing food and shelter to the Maoists. Meanwhile, chief of the post Daman Bahadur Ghale has said that the RNA has taken the incident seriously. “The incident occurred without any knowledge

of senior officials. Injured will be treated and the guilty ones will not be spared.” Ghale told journalists. *Leading dailies report.*

## More Items Exported To India Under Tax Net

Nepali products like vegetable ghee, jute products and fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) like noodles will now invite a four percent duty while being exported to India. According to a highly placed source at the Indian embassy in Kathmandu, a decision has been made to bring all imported products to India at par with the excise duty being charged on Indian products in the same categories. Chandi Raj Dhakal, president of Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) said, “Under the trade treaty signed by the two government in 2002, Nepal is to get preferential treatment from India. The recent development does not adhere to the commitments.” The source at the Indian embassy said that “the current widening of the net” is part of the Indian budget plans and it does not violate the trade treaty between Nepal and India. “Products that are being exported to India are subject to the four percent incise duty which is to be levied on all imports to India from all countries,” the official said. “Nepali agricultural products that are being exported to India would now find it more difficult to compete in Indian market,” Dhakal said, adding that the recent pronouncement will mean a disaster for Nepali industries. He even accused the Indian side of politicizing the issue. Another industry watcher, on conditions of anonymity, expressed doubts over the motive and timing of the Indian announcement. He hinted at the possibility of this step being part of India’s desire to “coerce Nepal” into agreeing to some of the new clauses of the transit treaty between the two countries that is due for renewal by April 6, when the three months’ extension expires. The Indian decision is in sharp contrast to recent Chinese decision to waive custom tariffs completely on 1550 Nepali goods being exported to China. *The Himalayan Times daily reports.*

## Nepal Arrested, Taken To Kakani

A day after seizing communication equipment from his residence, police personnel arrested Madhav Kumar Nepal, the general secretary of the Unified Marxist Leninist (UM), and took him to Kakani camp of Armed Police Force (APF). Nepal who had been under house arrest since January 19 was presented with a letter stating that he was being put under preventive detention for 90 days on charges that he "spread confusion against the government." On Thursday, teams of police also searched residences of Nepal's two brothers Binod Nepal and Saroj Nepal and confiscated their computer and phone. The Kathmandu District Administration has produced a letter accusing Nepal of sowing confusion against the government by gathering people in public places. His actions, the letter argues, could affect the 'sovereignty, integrity, public peace and order.' Meanwhile, political parties have condemned the action of the government terming it as yet another example of growing authoritarianism. The meeting of the seven party joint agitation coordination committee has asked the government to immediately release Nepal and hand over the seized equipment. Students in several campuses in Kathmandu organized rallies protesting Nepal's arrest and equipment seizure. In

front of Amrit Science College, enraged students torched a government motorcycle. A sit-in program was also held in Maitighar Mandala on Thursday afternoon to protest Nepal's arrest. *Leading dailies report.*

## SC Upholds Terrorist Tag

A bench of Supreme Court (SC) has quashed a writ petition demanding revocation of terrorist tag from the Maoists. The court said the petitioner who appealed against the government's decision two and a half years ago to term the Maoists terrorists could not produce evidence to prove that the Maoists were a political party. The three judge full bench comprising judges Khil Raj Regmi, Gauri Dhakal and Badri Kumar Basnet issued the verdict on a writ petition that was filed by a Maoist sympathizer Taranath Ghimire a year and a half ago. Likewise, a separate bench comprising judges Regmi, Dhakal and Balram KC, upheld Section 9 of the Terrorists and Disruptive Activities (Control and Punishment) Ordinance of 2005 that authorizes the government to clap a person in preventive detention for up to a year without prosecution or trial. Regmi and Dhakal upheld the provision of the Ordinance but KC differed. Justices Regmi and Dhakal said that the Act does not contradict the Constitution as statute allows taking anyone into preventive custody if anyone construes a threat to the sovereignty, integrity or

the law and order situation of the country. Differing on this point, Justice KC said the provision contravenes the Constitution inasmuch as law is concerned with terms of punishment. *The Himalayan Times daily reports.*

## AG Introduces New Strategy To Strengthen Govt. Cases

Attorney General Laxmi Bahadur Nirala has said that his office has introduced a new strategy to strengthen the cases of the government in the courts of law. "Now on, no government authority can submit any reply in court without consulting us," he said. Previously, different government authorities used to submit their clarifications in courts and ask the Office of Attorney General (OAG) lawyers to defend the cases. "The government authorities were working in a wrong manner," Nirala said. He said he has discussed the matter with ministers and secretaries and the government authorities concerned have agreed to strictly implement the new strategy. "Any reply by any government authority to any court of law would be forwarded only after the consent of government lawyers," he said. Currently, the government "is losing about 80 percent of the cases." "This happens because we cannot defend the government properly," said Nirala. *The Himalayan Times daily reports.*

The advertisement for Nepal Telecom features a large, stylized graphic of a mobile phone on the left and a smaller one on the right, connected by a series of overlapping, semi-transparent circles that create a sense of motion and reach. The background is dark with a light, textured pattern. The text 'WIDE REACH' is prominently displayed in large, bold, white letters across the top. Below the phones, the Nepali text 'नेपालीको मोबाइल नभस्ते मोबाइल' is written in white. At the bottom, a dark banner contains the slogan 'UNMATCHED SERVICE >> UNMATCHED PRICE >> UNMATCHED COVERAGE' in white, bold letters. The Nepal Telecom logo is visible in the top left corner.



**Crown Prince Paras attending a reception in Paris, France**

Photo: Department of Information

### **CROWN PRINCE PARAS ATTENDED THE RHINO**

Presentation Ceremony at Vienna Zoo in Austria on March 22. Addressing the ceremony, Crown Prince said that the two beautiful rhinos have found a comfortable, safe and friendly home away from home in Vienna. "This also reinforces Nepal's commitment to conservation of rare species, including through the propagation of viable gene pools outside Nepal," he said. "We take this opportunity to bring to your attention the fact that the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC), which I have the privilege to chair, is committed to realizing the goal of conserving biodiversity through people's participation, coupled with building a bridge between economics and ecology. Embarking on a mission of delivering 'conservation with a human face', KMTNC hopes to benefit from its association with the Schoenbrunn Zoo and other like-minded institutions in Austria." Crown Prince Paras also spoke about the bilateral relations between Nepal and Austria. "Nepal and Austria share many commonalities. We are both largely mountainous countries and we are both landlocked. Our peoples have learnt ways to survive in harsh conditions through centuries of practical indigenous knowledge. Our landscapes provide major attractions for mountaineering and tourism. Rich in water resources, our mighty rivers are the lifelines for the millions living downstream. Nepal also shares with Austria common concerns in safeguarding the fragile, vulnerable ecosystem of the mountain environment, promoting sustainable development of the rugged terrain and easing the living conditions of mountain communities." He added, "Just as the Republic of Austria is strategically located at the crossroads of Central Europe, the Kingdom of Nepal, too, is situated at the crossroads of Central and South Asia. Both of us have maintained warm and friendly relations with all countries in the world. We are pleased to mention here that our august father has recently proposed that the Kingdom of Nepal be utilized as a transit point between India and China, the two emerging economies of the world. We believe that this will play a catalytic role in bringing our two neighbors even closer, thereby promoting regional peace and prosperity." The Crown Prince said, "But the contrast lies in the fact that if Austria belongs to the developed world, Nepal is still a developing nation. Far too many of our people live in poverty; far too many suffer from inadequate health care, education opportunities and access to basic public services. This has had adverse socio-economic ramifications. Sadly, this sorry state has resulted in Nepal being plagued by insurgency, over the past few years, resulting in the loss of thousands of precious human lives and the destruction of infrastructure erected with huge investments. As a result, our development efforts in all spheres, including conservation,

have been badly disrupted. Efforts towards finding a peaceful solution through dialogue are afoot. The people of the Kingdom of Nepal harbor a deep sense of amity and friendship towards Austria and her people and we are appreciative of the cooperation we have received from Austria over the years. With Austria hosting the Presidency of the European Union, we are confident that it will further deepen cooperation and understanding between the European Union and Nepal."

### **AS THE AGITATION ANNOUNCED BY THE SEVEN PARTIES**

approaches, the government has strengthened the security arrangement within capital valley. In a press statement issued on Saturday, the Home Ministry has informed that security patrolling and checks have been intensified along with search operations. The additional measures are in view of possibility of infiltration by Maoists into the valley. The Ministry, has appealed to the public to bear with the inconvenience. The Ministry also urged people to bear with the inconvenience caused. In case of any suspicious or untoward activity, the Ministry has requested people to ring 4211208 of the Ministry's control room, 4412780 of the Police Headquarters, 105 of the Valley Divisional Headquarters of the RNA or 100 of the Valley Police Control Room in Kathmandu. In cases outside the valley, people should contact the nearest security body, the Ministry said.

### **WRAPPING UP THEIR FIVE-DAY VISIT TO NEPAL, THE**

delegation of six British parliamentarians led by Sir John Stanley returned home on Friday. Talking to reporters prior to their departure, the team emphasized the need for dialogue between the King and the parties to restore democracy, human rights and security. Expressing disappointment at not being able to meet with the King, the British MPs said they found the human rights and security situation deteriorating in the country. The team will present its findings to the British government.

### **THE INDIAN OIL CORPORATION (IOC) IS GOING TO**

refund the custom duty dues amount to Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) within March. Although there is an agreement between IOC and NOC whereby the former has to refund the custom duty imposed on petroleum products it sells to NOC, the refund has not been made for the last three years. The outstanding dues have, thus, reached to Rs 1.12 billion. When NOC buys petroleum products from IOC, the price it has to pay includes the custom duty imposed on Indian market. And when the product reaches Nepal, the Nepalese consumers are made to pay custom again. Since March marks the end of fiscal year in India, the IOC has indicated that it would clear all the dues. The government of India, in fact, refunds IOC the total amount of custom duty on the petroleum products supplied to Nepal, which, in turn, will be provided to NOC. At present, NOC has dues amounting to billions of rupees to IOC. This refund will provide it with a big relief.

### **WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF MAKING THE GOVERNMENT**

procurement, service and contract well-managed, transparent and corruption-free, the government is preparing to introduce Public Purchases (Government Procurement) act soon. The cabinet is reported to have approved the draft of the act recently. The draft had been prepared with the help of the Office of Accounting General and a US organization called International Law Institute. Till now, the government offices have been conducting their purchases based on Financial Regulations. Donor organizations had been pressing the government for such act stating that the existing financial regulations were not adequate and effective to deal with the whole gamut of government procurement, tenders and similar activities. Likewise, the new act is being introduced also in reflection to the government's commitment in the International Convention against Corruption. ■



“The agenda of the parties are the agenda of the Maoists. The government will treat such programs as the programs of the Maoists.”

*Kamal Thapa, Home Minister, talking to journalists at a program.*

\* \* \*

“If you dare, then declare us all Maoists and take action.”

*Arjun Narsingh KC, spokesperson of Nepali Congress, in response to Home minister Kamal Thapa's comments that the recent seven-party-Maoists agreements are the agenda of Maoists, speaking at an interaction program.*

\* \* \*



The Kathmandu Post

*Surendra Bir Malakar, newly elected president of Nepal Chamber of Commerce, in Aajako Abhayan.*

\* \* \*

“The King is committed that there should be reconciliation among the constitutional forces.”

*Mani Lama, State minister for health, in Jana Bhawana.*

\* \* \*

“The conspiracy to widen the differences between the king and the parties is aimed at denying the king even a

constitutional status that is well-accepted by the parties.”

*Pashupati Shumsher JBR, president of Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), in an interaction program at the Reporters' Club.*

\* \* \*

“The advisors of the king have done a great favor to the Maoists.”

*Prakash Chandra Lohani, co-chairman of Rastriya Jana Shakti Party (RJP), commenting on the wrong advices given to the king, in Agenda.*

\* \* \*

“Declare us terrorists if you can, but remember that the biggest terrorists in the country are those embezzling the state treasury and acting against the interest of the people.”

*Lila Mani Pokhrel, leader of People's Front Nepal (PFN), speaking at a party's program.*

\* \* \*

“Gone are the days when tax could be raised using batons (physical force).”

## TRANSITION

**AWARDED:** Janak Prasad Humagain, with the ‘Saraswati Samman’, Purna Prakash Nepal with the ‘Itihas Shiromani Babu Ram Acharya Shodh Samman’, Shambhujee Baskota with the ‘Narayan Gopal Sangeet Samman’, by Lunkaran Das Ganga Devi Chaudhary Sahitya-Kala Mandir.

**Mukesh Malla**, with the ‘Gehendra Man Amatya Art Critic Award’ of this year, by ‘Spectrum’.

**LEFT:** Speaker Taranath Ranabhat, vice chairman of National Assembly Ram Prit Paswan and secretary general of Parliament Secretariat Surya Kiran

Gurung, for Colombo, Sri Lanka, to attend the meeting of Speakers of SAARC parliaments.

**Sher Bahadur Deuba**, former prime minister and president of Nepali Congress (Democratic) for the United States.

**Chandi Raj Dhakal**, president of Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FNCCI), for Germany and Belgium, to participate in the program ‘Feasibility of Regional Economic Co-operation between Europe and South Asia’.

**HONORED:** Kiran Manandhar, senior artist, by Nepal Art Society, for his achievement of the ‘Privileged Artist Visa’ by the French government.

**APPOINTED:** Prem Bahadur Bhandari, as the spokesperson of the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) Thapa faction.

**RETURNED:** A team of six British parliamentarians led by Sir John Stanley, after completing a five-day visit to Nepal.

**RELEASED:** Hridayesh Tripathi, general secretary of Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Anandidevi) and Gopal Man Shrestha, acting president of Nepali Congress (Democratic), from detention, at the order of Supreme Court.

**ELECTED:** Surendra Bir Malakar, as the president of Nepal Chamber of Commerce.

# Media, Misinformed Public And Water Resources

By DR. AB THAP

Policy makers, planners and media of our country are in need to have a better understanding of the problems related to our water resources development. There are endless possibilities to use our vast water resources to achieve great successes in all round development of our country. However, we must be able to evaluate well enough the strength, weakness, opportunities and threats that underlie the development of our water resources if we are to succeed in exploiting them to the benefit of our people.

Unfortunately, at present there is a great deal of confusion about what the approach should be in taking the decisions to select any of our water resources projects for implementation. We have almost completely failed to take into consideration the techno-economic aspects of water resources development. It need not be explained that the techno-economic matters are the most important consideration in taking the decision to implement any of the major water resources projects.

It should be noted that the radio and TV journalists, like Mr. I. Lohani, K. Pokhrel and few others, are doing their best to generate public awareness of the issues related to our water resources development. Media can certainly play a very big positive role in helping to guide the policy makers and planners to take right decisions by pointing out their mistakes. However, we should not forget the fact that the role of the media can be equally harmful if it drowns out the voices of those expressing their discontent over wrong decisions.

Nowadays people are too accustomed to take anything the media says at face value. People seldom care to listen to what an individual says specially on serious matters. But it was not the case in early years. There used to be a swift public reaction even when a single individual ventured to raise important issues. The Kulekhani dam safety problem can be regarded as a typical example.

## Kulekhani Dam Safety

In 1970s the construction of the Kulekhani High Dam Project was about to begin. I had horrible suspicion that the geology of the Kulekhani dam site area could be problematic. I published an article about that in the newspaper "The Rising Nepal". Some other local and foreign newspapers also carried partially the content of my article shortly thereafter. The media was very quick to cover the news about the Kulekhani dam. That news was very seriously taken up by the World Bank and the government. It is said that extra concrete grouting works and other measures were taken up to protect the river bed and the terraces just adjacent to the dam to ensure safety. Despite such limited measures, few years after the completion of the Kulekhani dam the news came out all of a sudden that very wide cracks have already developed over an wide area adjacent to the intake structures on the right bank. It appeared that the Kulekhani dam was on the verge of collapse.

The misgivings I had about the poor geological conditions turned into the most grave reality. Dr. John Cooper and Mr. Deepak Gyawali from WECS had visited the Kulekhani dam site to spend the weekend. They were shocked to find that the Kulekhani dam was at the risk of being washed away. We got full reporting from them. It was feared that at any time in near future a very big portion of the right bank terrace along with

the intake structure could slide and plunge into the reservoir setting in motion a huge big mass of the reservoir water to overtop the dam. In a similar type of Vajont dam incident in Italy, the loss of life was significant even though the dam was left standing after the overtopping because it was a concrete dam. However, the whole project was rendered useless after that incident. In case of the Kulekhani dam made of earthen core the whole dam body would have been completely washed away after the overtopping.

Leading experts from the USA, Australia and Japan were called in for consultation shortly thereafter. On their recommendations works such as the clearing of large volume of weathered materials, anchor bolting of huge masses of rocks to prevent sliding into the reservoir, provision of underground drainage system were carried out. Nepal was guided all along by the advice of the donor agency. Their timely assistance helped to preclude the possibility of Nepal being hit by a big disaster.

## Diversion Away From Critical Problems

It has to be stated regretfully that nowadays our media are often not seen to be truly concerned to address even the most serious water resources related problems. They don't care to report to caution the public even when the decision makers proceed to strike a deal to part with the enormous downstream benefits to accrue to our country from the mammoth Karnali High Dam Project.

The huge hydropower potential of the most attractive 4100 MW Upper Karnali Project is going to be completely lost. This project would be replaced by a small 300 MW project against the clear-cut recommendation of the feasibility study report prepared with the assistance of the World Bank. The media in any other country would have vigorously reacted by raising alarm in the strongest possible terms against such decision detrimental to vital national interest. But our media are not yet seen to be bothered.

At present we are allowing a private developer to build the West Seti High Dam Project. A new type of dam is proposed. The dam design is based on technology not yet fully tested for very high dams. We are turning a blind eye to downstream benefits thus our country would be deprived of our right to get a fair share of the benefits to accrue to India from the use of the regulated flow of the West Seti. Laxmanpur barrage, Saryu canal and many other structures built near the Indo-Nepal border are the extension of the West Seti Project.

## How Strange!

It is quite clear that the completion of the construction of the West Seti project is sure to be accompanied with widespread submersion of the Western Terai. Unfortunately our media are now too busy in holding interviews and debates on India's river linking project though it primarily concerns the downstream riparian countries. Moreover, the river linking project has not yet been even properly conceptualized. In this way our media on one hand are drumming up support for the campaign against the river linking project and on the other hand they have remained strangely silent on West Seti High Dam issue. It is an irony that this type of attitude of our media that tries to keep in dark the public about the negative impact of the West Seti project by diverting the attention away from that project is indeed helping the cause of India's river linking plan.

**Nepal Drowning Its Own Citizens**

It might appear utterly unbelievable that Nepal is going to drown a very large number of our own citizens living in the Western Terai. Unfortunately it is a bitter reality. The 230 km long Saryu Canal taking off from the Girjapur Barrage already built in India across the Karnali River is the extension of the West Seti Storage Dam Project. At present we are about to take the final decision to grant permission to a private developer to build the West Seti Storage Dam Project to generate electricity completely disregarding the fact that the regulated flow of the West Seti River would play havoc in the Western Terai to the east of the Karnali River. The middle and lower reaches of the Saryu Canal run very close to our border. Extremely objectionable type of river crossing structures have recently been built completing ignoring the fact that they would result in widespread perpetual submergence affecting a vast area of Nepal's Western Terai. Already serious flooding problems have been experienced even though those structures are not yet in operation. The flooding situation would be extremely grave once those structures would be in use after the Saryu Canal, that draws regulated flow of the West Seti, starts to operate.

The submersion of lands in southern Terai of the western Nepal resulting from the structures built in India has emerged a problem of immense concern for the safety of our people. Four districts of the Western Terai are going to be seriously affected. Few years ago the flooding was limited to Banke district along the banks of the West Rapti river. Subsequently it extended further east to Kapilabastu and Rupandehi districts.

**How the Submersion is Caused**

The total length of the Saryu canal running almost parallel to Indo-Nepal border is about 230 km. In the original design the barrage across the Saryu River was at a location about 328 meters to the south of the railway bridge at Nanpara. Later, the design was modified and the location of the barrage was shifted 10 km to the north from the original site. The longitudinal gradient of the Saryu Canal has been reduced to a minimum. It is only one meter on a stretch of 9 km. The adoption of such extremely mild slope permitted the alignment of the canal to be pushed as far as possible to the north very close to Indo-Nepal border specially in its middle and lower reaches.

Normally underground siphons are provided to deliver canal water across a river. The river flow would not be obstructed if such siphons are built. A much higher average slope of the canal is required for the operation of this type of cross drainage structure, which has to operate under pressurized condition. A free flow hydraulic regime needs to be maintained at the river crossing if the average gradient of the canal is to be drastically reduced. For reducing the average slope of the Saryu Canal an altogether a different type of structures has been devised, which at first glance drives anybody crazy. Barrages have already been built across the rivers to

elevate the river water to such a level that would allow free passage of canal water across the river into the canal taking off from the other side of the river. The contentious Laxmanpur Barrage is one of such structures devised to deliver the West Seti water drawn from the Girjapur Barrage across the West Rapti River. It need not be mentioned that the Girjapur Barrage would help in future to draw the regulated Karnali River water also into the Saryu Canal to extend the coverage of lands under year round irrigation.

It would be necessary to maintain all the time pond water upstream of the barrages above certain fixed level to keep the Saryu Canal running at desired capacity. Thus the pond would always be full, with the result that a sizeable area of lands in Nepalese territory would remain perpetually submerged. When the river is in flood, the water would be spreading out onto the lands that were never before regarded prone to flooding.

The Saryu Canal is expected to cross innumerable small rivers and drains in its way. Embankments and dikes are needed to train these drains and small rivers for the protection of the Saryu Canal. These river training structures would also result in flooding inside Nepal where the canal route is close to the border.

**In Conclusion**

It is hoped that our media would not fail in future to bring impartially to public notice those wrong decisions that are detrimental to the development of our water resources in the interest of Nepalese people.

*(Dr. Thapa writes on water resources)*

**नमस्ते मोबाइलबाट पिक अपर समयमा हुने अन्तरदेशीय टुङ्ग कलमा विशेष छुटको अवधि थप**

लभ्नु हुने मिति: १९८० वैशाख १५ गतेदेखि सुरु

संख्या	मिनेट	दर
देशीय टुङ्ग कल	१ मिनेट	१००
देशीय टुङ्ग कल	१ मिनेट	१००
देशीय टुङ्ग कल	१ मिनेट	१००
देशीय टुङ्ग कल	१ मिनेट	१००

**नेपाल टेलिकम**  
सर्वोत्तम सेवा

## CAN INFO TECH

# Cashing The Technology

This year the technology show reveal the practical usage of modern IT tools

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

**D**o you feel bored to go to the grocery store every so often to replenish the vanishing stocks in your refrigerator? Do not worry. The new technology has arrived in Nepal also whereupon you can order the goods you need from the comfort of your house by placing electronic orders via the internet connection.

Muncha.com was one of the most innovative stalls at the recently held 12<sup>th</sup> Computer Association of Nepal (CAN) Information Technology Show 2006. The stall showcased the fusion of tradition and modernity to inform the visitors how they can make use of 21<sup>st</sup> century technology to perform the mundane tasks like shopping for groceries.

"You can just log on to our site and place orders. We can provide you every kind of grocery items, essential goods and electronic gadgets. You can just type on the quantity of certain goods you need, give your address and wait for our delivery at your doorsteps," said Tika Kandel of muncha.com. From rice and pulses to oils and toiletries and from sarees and suits to exercising machines, you can order practically everything you need in your house. "And if you need same goods in regular periods of time—say once a month, you can just indicate that when you place order and there will be no need to go through

the whole procedure every time you need something."

Muncha.com has been engaging in this sort of e-commerce for five years now. Till now, however, their major clients include Nepalese living abroad. "They frequently place orders for gift items and presents during special festivals like Dashain, Mother's Day etc for their relatives living in Nepal," said Kandel. Although only 300,000 people in Nepal currently use

internet and very few of them are knowledgeable in e-commerce, Kandel believes the market will grow in the coming years.

Other attractions at the IT show this year was the launch of Nepali software programs. Now the people who do not understand English can easily use programs like Windows in Nepali. This program priced at Rs 250 is extremely helpful for the Nepali-speaking majority population. The program was launched by Unlimited Numedia Private Limited in cooperation with Microsoft company.

Likewise, Nepalinux program priced at Rs 100, provide Nepali-speakers with the Nepali-language computer operating system.

These apart, the show presented all kinds of solutions to hardware and software problems. Ipods, mobile set computers, laptops, electronic gadgets, copiers, faxes, printers etc were on the display. Even solutions like accounting software called Swastik Quick Accounting and Red Hat's global learning services were presented at the show.

The huge number of visitors and stalls show the growing attraction and expansion of IT industry in the country in spite of slowdown in other economic sectors. In a world that is increasingly based on knowledge economy, progress in IT industry is key to all round economic progress.

The IT show 2006 was participated by 110 companies including four Indian ones. There were 180 stalls showcasing various IT products and services. During the week-long show that ended on March 28, the CAN IT 2006 hosted international IT seminar on March 24-26 on issues like IT infrastructure, software development, use of ICT in socio-economic development, use of e-commerce, e-governance and so on. ■



Stall of Muncha.com: Practical use of technology

## MEDIA MISSION

# International Solidarity

The mission of international media professionals lend a crucial support to Nepali journalists who are facing difficult times

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

A high-profile media mission consisting of 12 international organizations wrapped up their 8-day-long study tour to Nepal expressing full solidarity with the Nepalese journalists and raising concerns about their safety and freedom.

In a statement released after their 8-day-long study and interactions, the mission said, "We are gravely concerned with the continued systematic attacks, threats of disappearance, intimidation,

publications. The 17-member mission consisted of 12 international media organizations including ARTICLE 19, Free Voice, International Federation of Journalists, International Freedom of Expression Exchange, International Media Support, International News Safety Institute, International Press Institute, Reporters sans Frontières, South Asia Press Commission, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters and World Press Freedom Committee.



Media mission at a press meet: Expression of solidarity

Annapurna Post

harassment, sexual abuse in custody, and arbitrary detention of media practitioners by the security forces, specially in the districts, and demand that all such incidents cease immediately."

At a press conference held at the end of their tour, Jesper Hojberg, the director of International Media Support, said the anti-terrorism legislation must not be used to curb freedom of expression and to detain media practitioners arbitrarily. It urged the government to abolish one-door advertisement policy and stop exerting pressure on commercial entities to refrain from advertising in independent

During the visit, which was the continuation of the international advocacy mission that visited Nepal in July last year, mission members held extensive consultations with media workers, professional organizations, leaders, ministers, officials and even Maoist representatives.

"The mission is a part of international solidarity to the struggles of the Nepali journalists for the restoration of press freedom and democracy," said Bishnu Nishthuri, president of Federation of Nepalese Journalists. He added that such visits will encourage and inspire Nepalese

journalists to fight for their right as well as the right of people to get information.

In their statement issued at the end of their visit, the international mission - despite the claims of Minister of State for Information and Communication and Home Minister that the government was committed to press freedom - said they noted that an alarming number of cases of harassment, intimidation, illegal detention, torture, restrictive directives, destruction and seizure of equipment, and attacks on media houses by all parties to the conflict. The mission also criticized the Maoists for not respecting the press freedom and harassing media professional while in work fields.

"Of particular concern is the increasing involvement of the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) and armed police forces in press freedom and freedom of expression violations, as well as interference in the media sphere," their statement noted, adding, "Proposals for a broadcasting authority and the creation of a media council through new media ordinances will further endanger the survival of the independent media and freedom of expression in the country, as these will reportedly introduce highly restrictive provisions against independent media, placing curbs on freedom of expression and press freedom in contradiction to the principles of the 1990 Constitution of Nepal."

The mission also raised objection to the government admission "to supporting an alternative journalists' association" as unacceptable interference in media. "The refusal of the government to respect freedom of expression and press freedom erodes 15 years of development for the media community in Nepal, as well as undermines democratic and economic progress and the chances of a peaceful resolution to the conflict in the country."

The mission also asked the international community to continue to address the violations of press freedom and freedom of expression in Nepal, and seize every opportunity to promote these rights.

The Mission visited Pokhara, Surkhet and Birtamod and met with local civil authorities and representatives of the local media. ■

## ELECTIONS

# Transferring Power To The People

With the dismissal of elected government led by Sher Bahadur Deuba in October 4, 2002 and postponement of the elections of the House of Representatives, Nepal's political crisis had entered into a new phase with deepening political crisis widening the gap between country's major political forces - monarchy and organized political parties. In absence of elected parliament, the power has centralized to the King resulting in the experiments of various forms of nominated unaccountable governments in the last four years. The February 1, 2005 resulted in the rise of extreme rightists and extremist communists in the center-stage of politics concentrating more power in the hands of the King. As the elections of parliament is the only way to transfer the power from the King to the people, political forces must agree to hold credible elections so that people are made powerful and the king is made powerless but with full prestige

By KESHAB POUDEL

*Leaders of opposition political parties are pressing King Gyanendra to transfer the power he retained following the dissolution of House of Representatives and dismissal of the elected government led by Sher Bahadur Deuba in October 4, 2002 and new step taken on February 1, 2005.*

The King stepped in the politics in a vacuum of power in the parliament but political parties are yet to accept the fact that holding a credible election of

parliament is the only way out to transfer power to the people.

Following the dismissal of the elected government led by Deuba on the ground of its inability to hold the elections of the House of Representatives on schedule, the power has shifted from the parliament to the King - who is now exercising extraordinary constitutional power appointing the governments on his own wish. In the last four years, the King has already experimented with four governments. As long as the parliament is not reconvened through the fresh

elections, the King will continue to exercise similar power in future.

"The way out of the present political stalemate is to have the parliament with all the legitimate powers that the constitution has provided. If the election is held, all these powers which the King has been exercising for the last four years will automatically shift to the parliament and the King will remain ceremonial as the constitution has prescribed," said a political analyst.

The question is how to convene the parliament then. The valid way to convene the parliament is through the



**Parties' agitation:** Election not on agenda

TKP

elections or through reinstatement by the King as ad-hoc temporary measure. Without holding the elections, however, one cannot have the parliament with the backing of the common people - but political parties are not yet in a mood to participate for elections.

#### Unnecessary Deadlock

Although the leaders of organized political parties are demanding the transfer of power to the people, their arguments do not give any reason to believe that they are genuinely concerned for such transfer. Had they really been interested to strengthen the power of people, they should accept the challenge of holding the elections of parliament.

Instead of convening the parliament with sole aim of transferring power to the people, political leaders are demanding the reinstatement of House of Representatives to pave the way for holding the elections of Constituent Assembly - which, they claim, will decide the fate of monarchy. By pressing such demands, the leaders of organized political parties are serving the interest of extremists even as the King delays the process transfer of power.

"There is no question to take part in the elections held by the government nominated by the King," said vice president of Nepali Congress Sushil Koirala. "Only through the holding of elections for Constituent Assembly by the reinstated parliament can provide the

way out of present political crisis," said Koirala. "The new constituent assembly will decide the fate of everything including monarchy."

Even his party boss and former prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala, whose commitment to make people powerful is unquestionable, is pushing unrealistic demands toeing lines of junior Koirala.

Koirala's statement is creating more political trouble extending the tenure of first vice chairman Dr. Giri and his team. "How could the King reinstate the parliament in accordance with the advice of Koirala duo which will ultimately decide his own fate?" asked an analyst. "This is sheer foolishness."

So far as the reinstatement of parliament is concerned, it could be a short and stopgap political arrangement only with a certain goal. Such parliament will not have the same support from the people as previous and, therefore, it will not have the similar strength as elected parliament. Any political arrangement made under the discretion of the King will not have the same legitimacy and command the same respect as elected parliament.

If there is a broad agreement, such (reinstated) parliament could be used to find out a leader to form an ad-hoc government to hold an election of parliament on a schedule agreed by all. Beyond that this kind of reinstatement of parliament would not be considered

as the true and up-to-date opinion reflections of the people.

At a time when political parties are launching the agitation aligning with Maoists and King Gyanendra is leading the government consisting of all previous extremists hardliners of erstwhile Panchayat period, the possibility to develop political understanding is very deem. First of all, leaders of political parties must change their present uncompromising stand and speak the political language with due respects to the institution of monarchy. These kinds of attitude will force hardliners in King's camp to change their tone.

"If political parties will not break their alliance with Maoist, we will deal them as par with the Maoists," said Home minister Kamal Thapa, whose recent statement is also causing more harm to the process of reconciliation. Thapa, who is a cool and calculating politician - has a personal history of playing a crucial role in destabilization of political process in Nepal. In between 1995-1996, he was a major player pulling three coalition governments out of power including two governments led by former prime ministers Lokendra Bahadur Chand and Surya Bahadur Thapa. "Revival of House of Representatives is impossible and seven parties are guided by foreign influence," he said last week.

Thanks to Home Minister Thapa, there are now three factions in the pro-monarchist Rastriya Prajatantra Party. Just a year ago, home minister Thapa provoked RPP leadership in the extent to destabilize the government of Surya Bahadur Thapa paving the way for the first split. Finally, a few months ago home minister Thapa broke RPP taking a faction of leaders and workers with him. Thapa's action neither strengthens the base of monarchy nor helps to stabilize political process.

"First vice chairman Dr. Tulsi Giri and home minister Kamal Thapa are hatching dangerous conspiracy against all political parties preventing the possibility of reconciliation between the King and the political parties," said RPP leader Pashupati Shumsher Rana in an interaction organized by Reporter's Club.



**Parliament building:** Waiting for new representatives

For the reinstatement also, a political understanding is needed between the King and the political parties of the previous parliament. As insisted by Nepal's foreign friends, reconciliation is the urgent need of the country. And this only can make the King as respectable and non-controversial as the constitution has perceived - powerless as it has made him.

"As long as this interim gap continues like the present one, extremists and opportunists of extreme ends will have a louder voice whether it is in the street or it is in the government. Extremism is in nobody's interest. It is not in the interest of the King nor it is in the interest of Army as both these institutions need cover and protection of popular institutions like the parliament and the government accountable to it," said an analyst. "Once the parliament convenes, the King will be without power but with enormous respect. To

make him powerless, why couldn't there be a national consensus to hold the elections within three months if not in three weeks."

Thanks to the extremists in the opposition political camp, first vice chairman Dr. Tulsi Giri, who is known for his well homework and analytical capability, and home minister Thapa have ample reasons to rejoice as they will easily confuse the King by interpreting the statements of political leaders.

Even in recent public gathering of media persons, Dr. Giri gave wrong prescription without showing

the positive side of the first phase of functional constitutional monarchy and multi-party democracy when three national elections and two local elections were successfully held.

"King Gyanendra is wrongly advised by first vice chairman Dr. Giri that the reconciliation between the King and political parties will not solve the present crisis citing the previous phase of cordial relationship between the King and the political parties when Maoist insurgency was launched. Dr. Giri overlooks a fact that the institution of monarchy was not at frontal attack both internally and externally then. Slogans were directed against prime ministers and political networks of the prime minister were there to explain to the people at the grass root all over the country. Now the situation has changed. Persons like Dr. Giri, Thapa and Tanka Dhakal, who have been making every accusation against the leaders of organized political parties - are

not currently under attack as the King himself has to face that. Previously, prime ministers were there as shields in defense of the King," added the political analyst.

Of course, Maoist problem was there but constitution or monarchy were not in controversy. There was no single session in the parliament that debated against the constitution and constitutional monarchy. Dr. Giri - a person who was for a long time in political hibernation in India - is unaware of that situation.

One of the senior most civil servants working with B.P. Koirala and Dr. Tulsi Giri has recently made his observation on Dr. Giri. "Dr. Tulsi Giri, who was very close to B.P. Koirala used to say that I am ready to follow Sandaju (B.P) up to the ditch but I will not accompany him inside the ditch," observed Kumar M. Dixit, who served as secretary to prime minister B.P. Koirala in 1960. "Even King Mahendra told his son Birendra never to appoint Tulsi Giri as a prime minister. But, he was active from the reign of King Birendra to King Gyanendra." (See Kantipur 25 March, 2006)

#### **Elections of Parliament**

The past four years of experiences have shown that lack of parliament is the source of all political problems giving role to conspirators, opportunists and unaccountable people in the corridors of power. Interestingly, the leaders of political parties - who are supposed to play role in parliament - seem to be in no mood to shorten this interim gap.

"There must be a parliament and the election of the parliament is only way to settle the political problem. To hold the elections, a conducive atmosphere for the participation of all political parties should be created," said former attorney general and senior advocate Motikazi Sthapit, who had served three prime ministers continuously after the promulgation of the constitution.

"Only through the parliament, the power will be transferred to people," said Sthapit who has given his opinion on several controversial matters including in the Mallik Commission Report. Instead of taking the notice of populist side, which demanded severe punishments to



those high-level officials and politicians (many ministers in present government) indicted by the Commission, senior advocate Sthapit was the person to advise the King as well as prime minister what the law was.

Although institution of monarchy-which is the factor of stability and national independence - shares many common interest with liberal democratic parties, both the institutions are yet to start negotiations on the basis of their common interest.

"We need to start the negotiations so that the process of activation of constitution will begin and elections of parliament are possible," said Nepali Congress Shailaja Acharya. "Our party is centrist party and we must maintain equidistance with communists and rightists."

Extremists are not a dependable friend of monarchy and liberal political parties but both of them are currently trapped in the vicious circle of extremism pushing the country into unstable and more anarchical phase.

The recent political development of Thailand proves wrong the arguments given by extremist monarchists that a constitutional monarch is weak and it does

not have any political role to play. Despite no constitutional power, how the monarchy in Thailand is regarded as a respected and influential institution at the time of crisis, gives ample evidence of this fact.

When parliament was functional and there was conflict among political parties, they all eyed the role of the King. There are many instances in the past when political leaders expected some role from the King in ending the political stalemates.

Under the active monarchy and without shield of parliament, all political forces have weakened. The King is compelled to appoint rightist extremists in his cabinet and liberal democratic forces are compelled to align with extremist communists. King Gyanendra and leaders of liberal democratic parties know that extremists are not serving their interests but they have no immediate option as both of them heavily rely on them.

"Our party is heading towards the wrong way siding with the communists," said Shailaja Acharya. "As a centrist party, we were effective in our own space," said Acharya.

More the extremists are given the roles to play; more it will prolong the life of ad-hoc arrangement like the present one weakening all internal political forces. Whether it is for reconciliation or transfer of power, the parliament is necessary. If there emerge political understanding between monarch and political parties, nothing is impossible including the revival of the House for temporary purpose to form a government to hold the fresh elections or holding the elections under a credible government without reinstatement the previous one.

"The best way to settle the present political crisis is to hold the elections for the House of Representatives by forming all party government representing the previous parliament. The time is running out and the King must reach out to the political parties," said RPP chairman Rana. "Only new elected parliament will have the mandate to run the country towards any direction."

For this Nepali Congress leadership, in particular, and seven party alliance, in general, too, have to change their tone and stand to pave the way for negotiations. The King also must direct his nominated ministers not to go beyond

the limit by engaging in provocations and incitements.

"The reconciliation between the King and the political parties is necessary to bring the peace in the country and to hold the elections," said second vice chairman Kirtinidhi Bista. At a time when his entire cabinet colleagues are speaking the provocative statements, Bista's language of reconciliation, too, is meaningful.

Whether one likes it or not, the present political crisis is the result of lack of elected parliament. Once the election is held for parliament with credible arrangements, the power will automatically shift from the King to the people. The only way to weaken the King requires a functional parliament. ■



**British MPs visit parliament with Speaker Ranabhat: Parliament represents people's power**

# “Dr. Giri And Thapa Represent Two Dangerous Trends Of Present Rule”

— PASHUPATI SJB RANA

RPP Chairman PASHUPATI SHUMSHER RANA has had a long innings in politics. Following the breakaway of his party a few months back by home minister Kamal Thapa, Rana is facing a crucial time to protect his party intact. Rana spoke to a group of reporters recently in a face to face program organized by Reporter's Club. Excerpts:

## On Reconciliation between Constitutional Forces:

Nepal's present crisis is crisis of confidence. For this to be resolved, there is a need for a genuine reconciliation between the King and the political parties. I have not seen such genuine efforts. When ministers are themselves spoiling the situation, there is very little hope for reconciliation. At a time when even Nepal's foreign friends are stressing the need for reconciliation between the King and the political parties, people like home minister Kamal Thapa are pushing the political parties to the extreme by threatening to treat them like Maoists.

## On Government's Initiative:

If the government sincerely wants negotiations with parties, it must seriously take initiatives. It is just hypocrisy to call the parties for talks while putting their leaders in prison without any charge. How can we believe in the sincerity of the government when some of its ministers are terming the political parties as terrorists? At a time when many countries of the world are pressing for reconciliation between constitutional forces, home minister Thapa is trying to break it.

## On RPP's Stand:

RPP believes that there requires dialogue and negotiation between the constitutional political forces to overcome the present political crisis. For this there require an all party government with mandate to hold the elections for the House of Representatives. This government will initiate the negotiations with the Maoists.

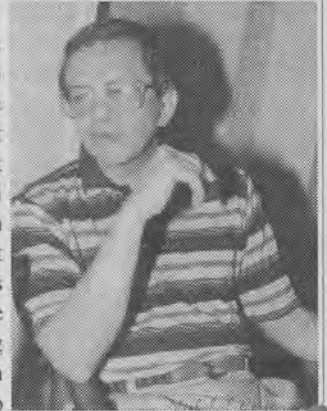
## On 12-point Agenda:

I don't think the 12-point agenda is enough to end the Maoist violence in the country. Our party supports the agenda, which expresses commitment to democracy and peace. But, we oppose the clause to put Royal Nepalese Army under international observation. We will welcome any step that will bring peace and stability in the country. The party and Maoists still have to do a lot of things to prove that their agenda will bring the peace. Maoists have to show that they are prepared to abandon the violence.

## On Role of Kamal Thapa:

Persons like first vice chairman Dr. Tulsi Giri and Home minister Kamal Thapa do not want to see reconciliation between the King and the political parties. Dr. Giri has openly expressed his view opposing the exercise of multi party democracy. Kamal Thapa is more dangerous than him as Thapa speaks the words of democrats but his actions show otherwise. His recent irresponsible remarks will widen differences between the King and the political parties. I don't think the ministers are genuinely concerned about

the need for reconciliation. Persons like Kamal Thapa does not want to see a political solution and bring the country back in the track. Dr. Giri and Thapa represent two dangerous trends of present rule. The remarks of Dr. Tulsi Giri that the reconciliation between constitutional forces alone cannot solve the present political crisis is dangerous. Dr. Giri knows that the reconciliation between the King and the political parties will shorten his tenure. So he does not want to see reconciliation. Nobody wants to give up power and privilege.



## On Madhav Nepal's Arrest:

I don't see any rationale behind putting CPN-UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal and other leaders in detention for such a long time. These actions will not create proper atmosphere for negotiations as well as reconciliation. The ministers of the present cabinet have nothing to do with the institution of monarchy and political process. They don't have any stake. This is the reason they are working and speaking whatever they like. How can one hold the negotiation when such a large number of politicians are in detention. This will give a message to the world as an authoritarian regime.

## On Performance of the Government:

The performance of the present government is totally unsatisfactory. Despite willingness of the King to improve the situation, ministers are unable to deliver the commitment expressed by him. There is anarchy-like situation in the country and ministers have been doing whatever they want.

## On RPP-Thapa:

There is no question to recognize the faction led by Thapa. Home minister Thapa misused all state machinery to capture our party. Genuine RPP members are with us and only goons are with him. It is not a political party but a group of opportunists.

## On The Way Out:

The only way out of the present political crisis is the reconciliation between the constitutional forces. I think it is still possible in our country. Those who are opposing the reconciliation are very few in numbers. Since the last four years, our party continues to demand the reconciliation and dialogue. We firmly believe that solutions of any nature should be found under the basis of constitutional monarchy and multi-party democracy. Our party is wholeheartedly committed for constitutional monarchy and multi-party democracy. Monarchy is Nepal's stability and unifying factor. We must defend this institution. We hope others, too, realize the importance of constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy. ■

# NICK SIMONS INSTITUTE

## Healing Hand

An American family aims to support hundreds of people living in remote parts of Nepal

By A CORRESPONDENT

In the quest to give peace to departed soul of their son, Nick Simons, the couple Jim and Marilyn Simons of New York has already visited Nepal half a dozen times since September 2003. >From Dadeldhura of far-western region to Mustang and Tansen of western region, and Jiri of central region, this couple has traveled wide and far to witness the conditions of Nepalese people living in rural areas. After their visit, they identified health as an area, which needs a lot of attention and which can bring a lot of improvement in people's lives.

Nick Simons Institute (NSI) – a memorial to their late son Nick Simons- has been founded in Kathmandu with an aim to facilitate high quality health care training, to provide retention incentives for rural health care workers and award scholarship for health care leaders.

Despite certain progress in health care system, the access to health services remain very poor in Nepal as the country has high infant mortality rate as well as maternal mortality rate. More than 575 mothers die out of 10,000 mothers at the time of delivery and more than 100 children die before completing five years.

The distribution of health care workers is very much unequal. The urban areas like Kathmandu has highest prevalence of doctors whereas the remote parts of Nepal do not have such manpower where hospitals and health posts are staffed by unskilled workers.

After their young son late Nick Simons, who came to Nepal in 2002 and

worked here for brief 9 months, tragically died in July 2003 in Bali Indonesia, the couple wanted to support Nepalese living in remote parts.



Simons couple: Large-hearted

the NSI has been founded with a team consisting of eight prominent persons including Dr. Mark Zimmerman, a renowned American physician with more than two decades long experience in Nepal, as an executive director to carry out care training and support through a network of partner institution and programs.

Surrounded by harsh geographical situation and other difficulties, smiling faces of Nepalese were what inspired Jim and Marilyn during their visits. "Wherever we went saw people with happy smile," said Marilyn Simons.

"We will be very satisfied if our small efforts can bring changes in the rural parts of Nepal providing much needed basic health services," said Jim and Marilyn who have provided Rs.380 million to establish NSI in memory of their son.

"We want to reduce the gap in urban and rural sector in terms of health services," said executive director Dr. Zimmerman. By supporting the establishment of NSI, Jim Simons and Marilyn Simons have shown that they can contribute to save the lives of poor people as

In their quest to do something in accordance with the wishes of their beloved son, Jim and Marilyn Simons came to Nepal two months after the death of their son to explore the funding of a memorial in his name.

Following their first trip, they committed to fund Patan Hospital's new Maternity Ward Block, at a cost of US\$ 2 million. This contribution did not satisfy them. The couple want to do more in health sector through improving the basic health systems.

Headed by former foreign minister Dr. Bhek Bahadur Thapa,

wished by their beloved son late Nick Simons.

राष्ट्र निर्माण हाम्रो लक्ष्य

# बजेट कल

स्वस्थी मूल्यमा अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय ट्रेक सेवा  
(हाम्रो राष्ट्रियता बाहेक)

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(नेपाल दूरसंचार क. लि.)  
ब्यापार, वाणिज्यपाल विभाग  
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## HIGH ECONOMIC GROWTH

# Lessons From Pakistan

Nepal can learn many lessons from Pakistan, which is on a high growth path

By KESHAB POUDEL

**D**ifferent people in Nepal have different opinions about Pakistan. Following the royal takeover in February 1, 2005, some Nepalese linked Nepal's situation with that of Pakistan as it too had gone through similar political course as Nepal had in the past.

Ruled by fractured and chaotic political parties, Pakistan's economy was virtually in the process of bankruptcy when the new military regime of general Pervez Musharraf took over the power.

Interestingly, only a few Nepalese have noticed what economic miracle Pakistan has performed in Asia - as it is next only to China to have a sustained high economic growth rate. According to recently published article in Newsweek (Promises Pakistan March 27, 2006), Pakistan has reduced the poverty by 7 percent between 2001-2005 achieving + 8 percent growth. Last year Pakistan GDP Growth rate hit 8.4 percent, the world's second highest after China.

Just a couple of years before Nepal, Pakistan had restored full-fledged parliamentary democracy but major political parties of the parliament entered into constant conflict and rivalry among themselves, which ultimately destroyed that system. In the ensuing chaos, the power went to General Pervez Musharraf absolutely since 1999.

After 1999 coup, Pakistan had lost an image and goodwill and it suffered international sanctions including military and economic. After the military took over, both the prominent leaders of the parties suffered prosecutions and humiliation from the state and leaders of both the parties Benajir Bhutto and Nawaj Sharif are living in exile even now.

But 9/11 terrorist attack in the USA came as a turning point for Pakistan and

it started getting all kinds of support from western countries mainly from the United States. The new situation eased its return to stability. General Musharraf held an election in which both the major parties were sidelined. Having the efficiency of a military rule, General Musharraf was able to provide an effective and clean governance, too. It brought a miraculous result.



**Musharraf:** Leading the high growth

"Last year, the country's GDP growth rate hit 8.4 percent, the world's second highest behind China, following two years of solid 6 percent growth. This year the economy is predicted to expand by nearly 7 percent. After years of instability, with the government and military trying to distract people from their economic woes by waging jihad in Kashmir and railing against neighboring India, a true middle class is now developing. In many ways, the country has become the world's most surprising economic success story," writes Ron Moreay in his article in Newsweek.

These developments have two major lessons to a country like Nepal. If regime is determined to follow the political process, the elections pose a challenge as well as opportunity to the opponents of the regime. In Pakistan's case, two major political parties of previous parliament ignored participating in the elections. The result was both these parties lost with new forces emerging to establish their credentials.

The way the economy of Pakistan is booming, the new political parties may claim to have their leadership role in it. The way previous parties have lost their touch with the people, in due course of time that may confine them into history only.

The other lesson is that even an unpopular beginning of a regime can have a reformed image if efficiency and good governance can be brought into action. All claims in the beginning may prove to be a tall talk if no positive results follow the takeover. In Pakistan's case, General Musharraf made tall promises and he has been able to exhibit the results also.

The lesson to western democracies, too, is that the sanctions which they had imposed upon Pakistan would not stop it to achieve such high growth. To pacify domestic populist opinions, they some time impose destructive sanctions which goes against the people but not against regime.

Like in Pakistan, the regime here is determined to go into an election. If this situation continues, it is almost sure the previous political parties will be excluded from the mainstream. After boycotting the elections, big parties gave opportunity to unknown political outfits to hold the position in 52 municipalities in the country and next year, there may be a parliament without representatives of previous major parties.

However, as the country's GDP growth forecast is about 2.8 percent, the regime is unable to give competent and clean governance. But one thing is certain that the country's major parties will be excluded from the mainstream. While with high economic growth and stable political situation, Pakistan is moving ahead ignoring country's two prominent leaders of political parties. ■

## MAOIST VIOLENCE

# Continuing Attacks

Even as parties decide to launch their decisive phase of stir, the stepped up violence by the Maoists is disturbing their strategy

By A CORRESPONDENT

**E**ven after reaching a second understanding with the Maoist leaders in New Delhi, India, the Maoists have continued to step up their violent activities across the country unleashing a wave of fear and terror, which is undermining the parties' announced decisive stir that is set to begin from April 6.

Concerned by the stepped up attacks, the meeting of the Standing Committee of the Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) held early this week has asked the Maoists to declare ceasefire and stop all kinds of violent activities.

Stating that their increasing violent activities were terrifying the people, the UML pointed out that it was adversely affecting the peaceful agitation of the seven parties. The statement issued after the meeting stated that the violent activities were negatively affecting the scheduled programs of agitation by the seven parties. The meeting was chaired by acting general secretary Amrit Kumar Bohara.

Likewise, addressing his party cadres Biratnagar, NC president Girija Prasad Koirala also asked the Maoists to abide by 12-point understanding – which, he said, could form the roadmap for peace if honestly implemented.

Last week, the Maoists stepped up attacks opening fire at busy markets and exploding bombs elsewhere. In a busy market in Kalaiya – headquarters of Bara district – on Thursday (March 23) morning – a policeman Shiva Kumar Thapa was killed while a journalist S.P. Shrestha and a health worker Bhikhari Prasad Saha were injured. The Maoists opened fire at a gathering of people reading newspapers at Bharatchowk in Kalaiya. In a separate incident, two passengers were injured

when a passenger bus fell into roadside mine planted by the Maoists in Nepalgunj-Kohalpur road section.

Likewise, the Maoists raided Uurlabari – a busy city of Morang district on Wednesday. Six people including two police personnel, three Maoists and a civilian were killed in a clash between the raiding Maoists and security personnel. Four security personnel and a civilian were injured in the incident. According to security forces, the Maoists attempted, in vain, to loot the money by opening fire at a vehicle carrying cash from Rastriya Banijya Bank at Uurlabari Bazar.

Two days after withdrawing blockades and announcing second understanding with the seven political parties, the Maoists attacked Area Police

Office in Birtamod, Jhapa killing nine police personnel. Armed Maoists entered into the city in the morning on trucks and opened fire and hurled bombs once they reached in front of police and traffic office. Twenty-two police personnel were injured in the incident. Three Maoists and one elderly lady were killed in the crossfire. In a separate attack, one police personnel was killed when the Maoists opened indiscriminate fire at a police post in Bhanu Chowk in Dharan on Tuesday.

In Lalitpur, two persons including a security guard and a staff were seriously injured when a Maoist hurled a socket bomb into the premises of King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation in Jawalakhel on March 21. Crown Prince Paras is the chairman of the trust. Meanwhile, at least 21 Maoists were killed in an operation conducted by Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) in Darhechowk area of Dhading district on Tuesday (March 21) morning. Acting on a tip-off that a large number of armed Maoists were camping in the area since two days, a team of RNA's Ranger Battalion raided the Chautara hill-top and washed out the insurgents, according to RNA. ■

## SLC EXAMINATION

# Test Begins

Over three hundred thousand students appear for the annual test this year

**T**he annual School Leaving Certificate (SLC) examination started this year across the country from March 27. According to Office of Controller of Examination (OCE), 332181 examinees will appear for the test this year – more by around 20,000 students compared to previous year.

Around 16,609 exam controllers and 45000 security personnel have been mobilized for the conduction of examination. Around 994 exam centers have been fixed across the country – mostly in urban areas and district headquarters. Chief of OCE Gajendra Lal Pradhan has appealed to all concerned

to let the annual test be conducted in a peaceful atmosphere.

This year also the SLC examination is beginning under the shadow of violence and insecurity. All the exam centers have been moved to district headquarters or urban centers for reasons of security. Just last week, Maoists exploded a bomb in Mahendra Multiple Campus in Nepalgunj on Sunday morning while students were busy taking their tests. Around 300 students of Intermediate level were busy taking tests when the bomb exploded. Campus chief Sitaram Raj Bista said that the explosion petrified the students. ■

# Nepali Politics: the Mainstream Parties and the Maoists on the Move

By DR. SOM P PUDASAINI

The seven-party alliance (SPA) and the CPN (Maoist) signed a second statement on 19 March 2006 reconfirming their commitment to the 12-point understanding reached between them on 22 November 2005, which was said to be a roadmap to peace, prosperity and democracy to be achieved through an election to a constituent assembly and by fighting against an autocratic monarchy. Top leaders of SPA, however, were reluctant to sign the statement jointly with the Maoist leadership in view of the international pressure and their own lack of full trust on the Maoists. Also, it is rumored that the SPA wanted to protect their parties from being branded "terrorists" and face possible banning by the government if they entered into joint statement and actions right away. The move is probably pragmatic as the "slow and steady wins the race".

The insurgent's total commitment to peace and multiparty democracy is still a suspect. The USA has openly advised the parties to break the 12-point agreement with the Maoists. Even India, which has tacitly supported the understandings by allowing the SPA and the Maoists to conduct negotiations in the vicinity of New Delhi, is reported to have advised the parties not to be hasty in trusting the insurgents.

The Chinese State Councilor, Tang Jiaxuan, equivalent to a Deputy Prime Minister, during his March 16-18 Nepal visit had advised all the "constitutional forces in Nepal" to appropriately settle the current difficulties "through dialogue" maintaining national independence, sovereignty and unity. This was also the first time that a high ranking Chinese official met three top leaders of agitating mainstream parties- Girija Prasad Koirala of Nepali Congress, Sher Bahadur Deuba of Nepali Congress (D) and Amrit Bohora of UML.

While the SPA and the Maoists have now been able to protect the spirit of the 12-point understanding, they have yet to travel an arduous road before they reach a full understanding towards peace and stability in both letter and spirit. Nevertheless, salvaging the understanding in spite of pressures, confusions and attempt to widen misunderstanding has created a space for them to move ahead. Among others, one of the difficulties now lies in the fact that the parties want to go for a constituent assembly election by reinstating the House of Representative dissolved four years ago but the Maoists insist on an interim government resulting from a national political conference. They have agreed to continue consultations to resolve differences.

The immediate benefit of the signed statement was the withdrawal of the 20-day blockade of cities imposed by the Maoists on 14 March and the indefinite Nepal bandh called to begin from April 3. In spite of the patrolling by security forces to secure supplies and movements, the blockade was beginning to cause shortages of petrol and kerosene in different places, raising prices and scarcity of necessities; including vegetables and fruits; and affecting movements of people and goods. The Maoists had felled trees and piled stones on roads and highways or dug them in many places. Farmers had started to suffer waste and losses as they could not transport perishables such as milk, vegetables and meat to markets. The

movement of about 350,000 students soon appearing in the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) examination would have also been affected causing further pain to the already stressed examinees and their guardians.

The Maoists agreed to withdraw their blockade in return for the four day general strike and non-cooperation movement by the SPA beginning April 6 to mainstream fragmented movements for a decisive knock against the "royal regime". The parties and the Maoists have also urged the international community to support their efforts to resolve the 10-year old conflict and attain progressive reform in the country. The government ministers are reported to be threatening the SPA to impose curfews if they went ahead with the strike and will not respond to the "Made in Delhi" statement. However, the people will have to bear again the brunt of the strike and government's repression to foil it, including a loss of Rs. 4 billion in those four days.

Political mainstreaming of the Maoists is widely seen as a preferred choice for lasting peace and political stability. The efforts of the SPA to attract the Maoists towards peaceful resolution of the ongoing conflict deserves due support from all those interested in peace, prosperity and stability in Nepal. They must, however, present a clear roadmap to inclusive polity, good governance, conflict resolution and intra-party democracy to win full trust of the people towards their movements.

The Maoists must sincerely abandon violence, extortions and abductions and commit to competitive politics. However, they are likely to strike hard leading up to the general strike and beyond if one looks at the attacks they have intensified in the recent days, including around Kathmandu such as Dhading and Kavre, and their commitment to the general strike.

The monarch and royal government may be wise to initiate dialogue with the mainstream political parties and the Maoists to resolve the crisis. The SPA and the Maoists should not shy away offering a genuine safe landing to the king as their 12-point understanding is against "autocratic monarchy" not against a "constitutional" one. Too confrontational approach on the part of any will lead to further bloodshed against the wishes of the masses desirous of peace and development.

However, the king is likely to watch how the political events unfold in the coming weeks, including the impact of the general strike. He may then indicate his next moves in his Nepali New Year 2063 message on April 14; which may include dates for the parliamentary election as per his February one roadmap or a clearer call for dialogue or the continuation of a confused status quo. ■



(Dr. Som Pudasaini has served as the Representative of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Sri Lanka and Yemen and Country Director for Maldives. Please e-mail any comments at [spudasaini@yahoo.com](mailto:spudasaini@yahoo.com))

# NEPAL-INDIA WRITERS CONFERENCE Show of Cultural Unity

Nepali language is another area, which binds Nepal and India closer

By KESHAB POUDEL

No two countries in the world have so many similarities as Nepal and India. From language to culture, literature to religion and ethnicity to geography, both the countries have many points of unity. In terms of political relations, Nepal is trying to copy the democratic system like in India.

Being the only Hindu monarch, Nepalese King is given special privileges in many Hindu temples in India. Similarly, high-level religious persons like Sankaracharya are given direct access to Nepal's monarch.

At democratic level, most of the liberal democrats of Nepal share same democratic ideals and values as Indian democrats. The relations between Nepalese and Indian liberal democrats remain close.

countries," Indian ambassador to Nepal Shiv Shanker Mukherjee.

Lil Bahadur Chettri, Indra Bahadur Rai, Lakkhi Sundas and other prominent Indian figures of Nepali language have been living from east to western parts of India. Nepali language is recognized in the eighth schedule of Indian constitution as one of the sixteen languages recognized as national language.

The contributions of Nepali-speaking Indian citizens have been immense in the development of Nepali language. "Our history of Nepali language is incomplete without counting the contribution of Nepalese speakers of Indian origin," said nationalist poet Madhav Prasad Ghimire.

Despite commonalities in so many areas, both the countries are yet to exploit these factors in maintaining the relationship at various levels.



Writers' conference: Meeting of minds

Whatever the nature of relations both the countries have in state-to-state level, both the countries have time-tested cordial and friendly relationship existing at people-to-people level.

In recent years, Nepal and India have tried to explore traditional relationship existing between the two countries. In a similar initiative at a program organized by B.P. Koirala India-Nepal Foundation and Embassy of India, the two-day fourth conference of Nepalese authors of Nepal and India was held this week where writers discussed their issues of common interest, challenges and opportunities.

"Since we share so many things, our relations have also evolved on this basis. Nepali language binds the people living in the two

The areas of differences are very few compared to the areas of commonalities but the points of unity and commonalities seem to have been ignored while the areas of differences remain highlighted.

In recent years, however, Nepal and India's traditionally strong binding factors are gradually weakening. Monarchy is under constant attack and liberal democratic forces have been reduced as a part of seven parties alliance.

Like all other languages spoken by small number of people, Nepali language is also struggling for its survival. This kind of interactions between the people of Nepal and India will have many positive impacts. ■

## Japanese Assistance for Waste Management

THE EMBASSY OF JAPAN in Nepal has decided to extend a grant of US\$ 4226 to Kathmandu Metropolitan City Office, for the implementation of The Project for Transportation of Solid Waste Management Compactor Provided by City of Matsumoto from Matsumoto City to Kathmandu City in Japan's fiscal year 2005 under the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Projects (GGP) scheme of the Government of Japan, according to a press release issued by the Embassy. A grant contract to this effect was signed and exchanged today between His Excellency Mr. Tsutomu HIRAOKA, Ambassador of Japan, and Mr. Padma Raj Regmi, Chief Executive Officer, Kathmandu Metropolitan City Office. The grant will be utilized for the transportation of the solid waste compactor vehicle provided by Matsumoto City, Japan, which is the Sister City of Kathmandu, to Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC). KMC will bear the terminal handling charges at Tokyo and Kolkata ports, and clearing charges at Birgunj. The Project is expected to contribute to the Kathmandu Metropolitan City's (KMC) aim to replace the existing garbage collection tractors with the more efficient compactor vehicle, which can easily ply on the narrow roads of Kathmandu City and collect approximately two tons of garbage in a single trip. The compactor is expected to provide services to about 10,000 Kathmanduits by plying two trips per day. During the signing ceremony, which was held amid the celebrations for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and Nepal, Japanese ambassador Hiraoka expressed his hope that the project will contribute towards addressing the solid waste management issue in Kathmandu. He also expressed hopes that the compactor will support the "Clean Kathmandu Valley (CKV) Project", a study carried out by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in cooperation with the concerned authorities of His Majesty's Government of Nepal to formulate Action Plans on solid waste management for the five major cities of the Valley. ■

## BOOK

# A Handbook For Elections

A comprehensive guidebook on anyone interested in electoral system and democracy

**H** Elections are central to a democratic system. In Nepal, the last participatory elections were held in 1999. After that neither the elections to the House of Representatives nor the elections to local bodies like Village Development Committee (VDC), municipalities (barring the elections held in February 2006 that was boycotted by the major political parties) and District Development Committee (DDC) could be held.

The absence of elected representatives in the seats of governance has created a vacuum in which all kinds of elements have flourished. The deteriorating situation of democracy in the last three years is ample proof how the system degenerates in the absence of regular elections.

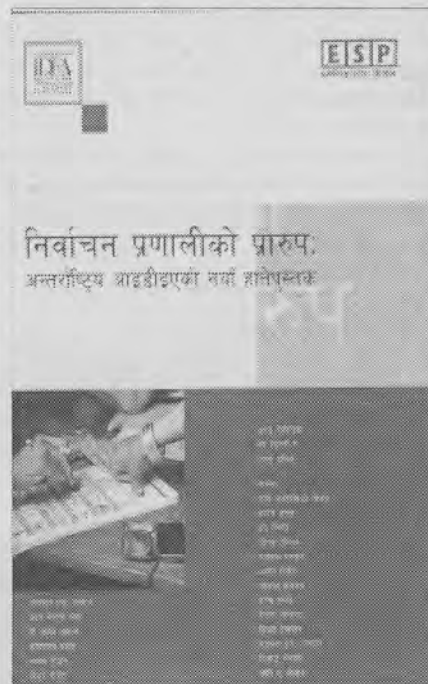
Quite evidently, the lack of elected parliament is the cardinal reason why unaccountable persons are governing the country. And it is due to the absence of elections that the constitution is not becoming fully functional.

Being the lifeline of democracy, elections that are free, fair and participatory are of utmost importance. For a country like Nepal that is suffering from violence, killings, political and constitutional conflicts, such elections could provide a healing touch and start a process of normalization.

With the objective of familiarizing Nepali people, officials and policy-makers about various types of electoral systems that are practiced in different parts of the world, Enabling State Programme (ESP) of Department for International Development (DfID) has brought out a translation of a handbook on electoral systems that was first published by International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA). With the technical and editorial

input of a team of translators and experts from Rural Development Foundation, the book has been released recently.

Since 1990, Nepal has been following the British Westminster style of parliamentary democracy in which elections are held on the basis of first-past-the-post (or winner take all) system in which the candidate securing majority of votes cast wins the poll. However,



*Title: Nirbachan Pranaliko Prarup (Framework of Electoral System)*

*Published by: International IDEA, ESP*

*Translated into Nepali by: Udaya Nepali Shrestha, Prof. Krishna Khanal, Krishna Man Pradhan, Madhav Poudel and Bidur KC (Rural Development Foundation)*

there are other many different kinds of electoral systems in practice like proportional and mixed electoral systems where voters can elect candidates on the basis of order of preferences.

The book is a useful guide to researchers, professors, political scientists, students, politicians and administrators to obtain knowledge on different electoral practices and weigh the pros and cons of each of these practices.

The book is divided into different chapters that deal with issues like concept of electoral practices, their usages, methods, relevancy and rationale.

The book elaborates on how the specific electoral practices ensure that the government is accountable to the voters. It defines in detail different electoral practices and how they are being exercised in different countries.

Another invaluable aspect of the book is the case studies. They show how the electoral systems work in different settings, different cultures and different countries. These case studies offer possibilities of sharing the experiences of various countries that pursue different electoral practices.

By translating the book into Nepali language, the ESP and RDF have done a commendable job. The translation is good and easily understandable though the jargons used in some places are difficult to comprehend for ordinary readers.

As the book has been published at a time when Nepal is passing through extremely difficult stage with democratic institutions remaining derailed, it shows the commitment and goodwill of international organizations like ESP-DfID to help the country get back to democratic path.

Besides, at a time when the country is engaged in debates on constitutional amendment or even replacement, the thoughts and experiences of various electoral practices could provide a basis for discussion to initiate reforms on our own electoral practices to better represent the ethnic, gender and regional diversities of the country for the sake of healthy and inclusive democracy. ■



## BHOTE KOSHI

# Power Transfer

### Major American investor exits from Bhote Koshi power company

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

In a first-ever instance of big finance acquisition in the country, a Nepali partner of a prominent foreign-invested power company has bought out the majority shares held by American investor.

Himal International Energy Private Limited (HIEPL) has announced the acquisition of majority shares in Bhote Koshi Power Company Private Limited. The deal was completed on March 24, according to a press release issued by BKPC.

The BKPC was a flagship foreign investment company in Nepal with investments from major US power companies like Panda. In the last few years, the company had run into troubles regarding what they called 'short-payment' by the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA). The domestic turmoil in the country, too, were having adverse impact on investment and security situation.

Although they took great pains to explain that the exit of the major American power company Panda and MCNIC from Bhotekoshi Power Company is not due to the domestic situation of Nepal, the timing cannot be overlooked.

"The HIEPL now holds the shares of Panda of Nepal, owned by Panda Global Holdings, a Dallas-based Energy Company and MCNIC, owned by DTE Energy. Both companies are divesting as per their strategy of exiting out of all global businesses and concentrating on the US domestic energy markets," states the press release of the BKPC.

Panda and MCNIC, which owned 75 percent of the shares, have sold their entire holdings to the HIEPL. Now the HIEPL holds 85 percent of the BKPC shares with International Finance Corporation (IFC) continuing to hold 10 percent and Harza company of US continuing to hold 5 percent.

"Panda is leaving because they have chosen to remain in domestic US market particularly in ethanol and bio-diesel. The board of DTE that bought MCNIC, too, had instructed to sell all foreign equities.

Therefore, their exit does not signify anything to do with Nepal situation," said Siddhartha Rana, new chairman of BKPC. Rana also said that their experience in closing the deal of this volume has shown that Nepal is not a 'failed state as is discussed in cocktail parties.' "We still believe that located as it is between India and China, Nepal represents an invaluable piece of real estate," Rana said, adding, "And this deal has also further



**Bhote Koshi power station: In Nepali hands**

highlighted the case for attracting FDI in the country. There is always two sides to the coin of FDI - the ease with which one can enter and the ease with which one can exit. This deal has shown foreign investors the ease with which they can exit - a crucial point for attracting them in the first place."

John Zamlan, representative of Panda of Nepal, "We are leaving with a bit of sadness as BKPC was one of the best examples of foreign investment with most successful five years of operation. Our exit fits with our strategic decision."

Highlighting why the HIEPL bought out the shares, Rana said, "Nepal's potential in energy sector has been greatly talked about

in the past. This is a major step towards our future endeavors in energy business." Sujeev Shakya was named as the President of the Company. Dr. Sandip Shah continues to be the General Manager of the Company.

Haiman Xia of International Finance Corporation (IFC) said, "The transfer of majority ownership of BKPC from the original foreign partners to the local partner is a positive and timely development for Nepal."

The deal marked the beginning of acquisition finance in Nepal. Sujit Mundul, CEO of Standard Chartered Bank, Nepal - which was the financial advisor and lead arranger of the acquisition finance of this deal - expressed his "joy over beginning of a new era of acquisition finance in the country."

According to Sujeev Shakya, president of BKPC, the deal involved the transaction

of share values of \$22 million. The BKPC has the total investment of \$98 million - \$29 million in equity and \$69 million in debt.

After the acquisition, the BKPC now plans to go for Initial Public Offering (IPO). "It is our intention to go public so that a large number of Nepalese will own this company," said Rana, adding that the company also intends to enter into a social contract with local stakeholders. "We intend to gift certain quantity of share to 10 VDCs of Sindhupalchowk where the project is located so that the people there will also have ownership," he said. The company plans to go for IPO within a year at the earliest. ■

# KAMALA SHRESTHA

## Folk Queen Of Her Times

Shrestha was a popular folk singer during her active years

By THAKUR AMGAI

**B**ehind the under-construction multi-story complex of National Cultural Center – popularly known by its previous name National Theatre, stands a building – old and crumbling. Flakes of paint crumbling from the walls and the carvings on the windows and doors. Dilapidated musical instruments and furniture lying here and there fills the dark-damp rooms and corridors. Seated in one of these rooms, Kamala Shrestha recalls her old days – the days of struggle.

“Who might have struggled like us in the music industry?” says Shrestha. “It was the time when people joyfully listened to the songs from Radio and in the cultural functions, but looked down upon the same singers in society.”

The new generation engrossed in the ‘pop’, ‘rock’ and ‘hip-hop’ culture or in particular the young lady singers privileged with the liberty to choose a career of their choice and pursue their passion unobstructed might know little about Kamala Shrestha and the hurdles the female singers of those days went through.

However, the National Theatre, the old studio at Radio Nepal, and the dabalīs in Kathmandu are well acquainted with Kamala Shrestha and her melodious voice. Her life has gone a similar transformation that these historic institutions have gone through. The days when Kamala Shrestha used to be a top folk singer, a celebrity wherever she went, and even the members of the Royal family stopped their conveyance in the middle of the cavalcade to smile at Shrestha walking on the street, are only in memories now. Just like the way National Theatre is displaced by other halls equipped with advanced technology, beautiful songs of the old age have been displaced by the ‘rock’, ‘pop’ and other genres of the new generation.

However, without the large number of songs, particularly folk duets, that Kamala contributed to Nepali music industry through her relentless perseverance, the heritage of Nepali folk music would not have been so rich. Although, behind the center stage at present, Shrestha has created an identity that will remain immortal in the history of Nepali music.

Shrestha’s singing career began in early 1960s when she sang the song ‘Nepali Janatako Rahar, Hararara Gudne Bho Motor’ in chorus. It was the time when the construction of east-west Mahendra Highway was the talk of the town. Ustad Bhairab Bahadur Thapa, who had noticed a flair for singing and a melodious voice of Shrestha at the Department of Cottage and Small Industries took her to Radio Nepal to sing the song.

After she passed the voice test singing a Hindi song, Shrestha started singing more songs in Radio Nepal. With songs like ‘Gharbeti Nani Anganima Deuna Malai Bas’, ‘Sohra Barsha Pugisake Phool Magmagaunchha’, ‘Ek Phera Hasera Bolidiye Po, Yo Dil Dinechhu Rakhidiya Po’, ‘Khoji Pani Deu’, among others, Kamala Shrestha soon became a household name in Nepal. Most of the songs she sang in the early days, however, could not be recorded. The first song she recorded was ‘Ma Sapana Bhari Chhu’

composed by Gopal Yonjan. Over the years she has sung over 400 songs and performed at various functions of the National theatre, Royal Nepal Academy and others. Now, in her early fifties, Shrestha has spent more than two-thirds of her life at the National Cultural Corporation.

In 2024 B.S., she won the best female vocal award at the Nationwide Annual Singing Contest at Radio Nepal singing the song ‘Naugediko Mero Mala Timi Kahan Khasyo Ki’ written by Yadav Kharel and composed by Natikaji. Later she was honored with the ‘Chalchitra Samman’ in 2050 and ‘Shubha Rajyabhisek Award’.

Shrestha was born in 2009 B.S. in Mahabouddha, Kathmandu, Shrestha would listen to songs from the Radio and mimic it for herself in her early childhood. After she grew older she became affiliated with cultural associations like ‘Nasa Khala’ and ‘Kala Kendra’ and would perform songs in the dabalīs in various functions.

She was so obsessed to singing and cultural performances that she would leave anything aside to participate in them. “Once my father was very ill. I had to go for a performance in Kala Kendra. Everyone had asked me not to leave the sick father for the performance. I went for the performance despite the situation. When I came back from the performance my father had already died,” Shrestha recounts her poignant story. ■

## ADB DG Visits Nepal

ADB is concerned about the adverse impacts of Nepal’s complex security and political situation on its development and poverty reduction efforts, a senior ADB official said during an official visit.

Kunio Senga, Director General of ADB’s South Asia Department, arrived in Kathmandu last week for a five-day visit to Nepal, during which he held high-level consultations with the Government and other donor agencies on the situation in Nepal and the reform and development agenda.

During his talks with the Government Senga said ADB recognizes that Nepal is passing through one of the most difficult periods in its history and expressed concern about the disruption in basic service delivery to the poor, the lack of job opportunities and state of basic infrastructure. However, he was pleased that the Government had taken some difficult reform actions, according to a press release issued by the ADB.

Senga visited agriculture, water supply and rural infrastructure projects funded by ADB in Pokhara and Tanahu districts. “I was struck by how local communities are actively participating in development activities and that there is still development space in Nepal,” he said.

He expressed satisfaction that the performance of ADB’s portfolio had improved in 2005. However, he added that ADB’s future assistance to Nepal will be subject to a conducive environment for carrying out project work.

“It is my fervent hope that peace and stability would return to Nepal because it is very difficult for one country achieve its development and poverty reduction objectives rapidly in the current environment,” he said.

ADB is dedicated to reducing poverty in the Asia and Pacific region through pro-poor sustainable economic growth, social development, and good governance. Established in 1966, it is owned by 64 members - 46 from the region. In 2005, it approved loans and grants for projects totaling \$6.95 billion, and technical assistance amounting to \$198.8 million. ■

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