

Opinion: Laxmi Thapa

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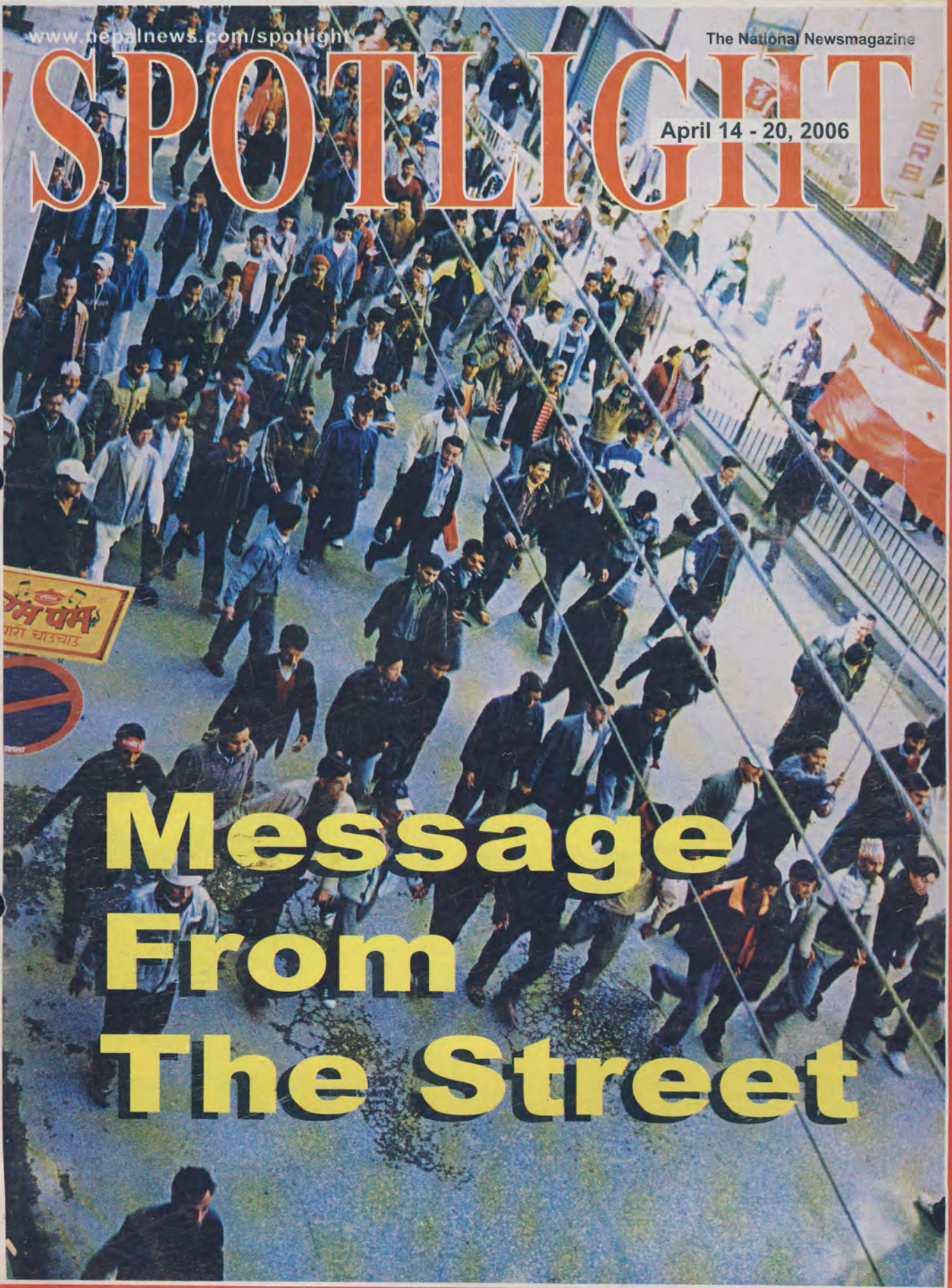
The National Newsmagazine

SPOTLIGHT

April 14 - 20, 2006

Message From The Street

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COVER STORY : Message from the Street

The recent demonstrations have again proved that pro-constitutional forces are still the prominent power in the country.

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WHF SILVER JUBILEE : Call for Religious Harmony

The silver jubilee Anniversary of the World Hindu Federation (WHF) concluded with a call to protect and promote Hindu religion.

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ENCOUNTER : Richard A. Boucher

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs
Richard A. Boucher spoke about the need for reconciliation between the constitutional forces.

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SPOTLIGHT

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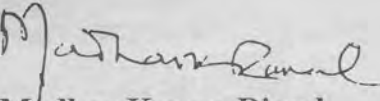
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The bandhs and the uncontrolled violent agitations exacerbated by the imposition of curfew and repressions by the government are proving to be very ominous for the country and all concerned – the people, the King the government, the politicians, the civil society, the human rights activists, Nepal's foreign friends and even the agitators themselves. This is a time when no body can afford to lose his cool and reason. This is a time when no body should be carried away by emotions and chimeric greener pastures. And this is the time when every Nepali who has the guts to call himself patriotic has to be able to rise above all other considerations and work to pull the country out of the fire. We have not forgotten that we did pass through somewhat similar situation only sixteen years back when Kathmanduites had agitated against the system. Many of us are aware how late King Birendra was being pressurized to compromise the sovereignty of the nation at that time. We also know that most of the political leaders of the day, at that time, seemed to possess a clean image and patriotic character and consequently did command spontaneous public support. After they became the rulers they totally exposed themselves as corrupt and self-centered and lost the hardwon regard of the people, it has become difficult for us to believe that they will be able to carry them again. The people, specially, the Kathmanduites, are completely disillusioned with the unscrupulous leaders and seem to be looking for new leadership. In the conspicuous absence of political leadership, the learned community – the teachers, technocrats, doctors, lawyers etc of Nepal - the backbone of Nepal's independence and sovereignty - must judge the situation most dispassionately and act and lead the community in a manner that will contribute to safeguard the nation's independent existence. As it is, the leadership of the agitation seems to be gradually slipping into the hands of the extremists. The agitation, however, this time seems to be centered against one individual – the King. The intelligentsia, the Kathmanduites and all those who are fanning the fire must be able to foresee and realize the consequence if something unthought of did happen. We all love our country and we all must unite to stop it from being derailed. We don't want any external and non-national agency to interfere in our domestic affairs. We do need the institution of monarchy in the overall interest of the nation. Yes, the constitutional monarchy. And we have all the time, advocated for the constitutional monarchy in the multi-party democracy. We have always maintained that the clock cannot be turned back and one has to move forward all the time. We have been emphasizing, in no uncertain terms, that King Gyanendra must always listen to wiser counsels and shun sycophancy. And King Gyanendra has unequivocally committed himself to abide by the constitution and remain a constitutional monarch. But, something seems to have gone amiss. Situation in the country seems to be going from bad to worse. As the agitation goes on gathering momentum, new sections of the society are joining the fray. This trend has to be arrested most expeditiously. Since repression only strengthens the resolve of the protestors to resist, saner and peaceful measures must be found to control the situation. It is true that the security forces are working under great stress. They have to maintain their patience and restrain themselves. That's what they are expected to do in such crisis.

King Gyanendra is facing all round criticisms and pressures. Even the number one power of the world seems to be sympathetic towards the agitators. They even pretend to be oblivious of the fact that King Gyanendra is fighting violent terrorism which is their prime priority all over the world. The latest warning given to King Gyanendra by Richard A. Boucher, The U.S. Asst. Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs in his recent interview on CNN has not made things easier for the King, although it has not come as a surprise. That the Americans can afford to ignore all their commitments when their own interests come in the way is not a new phenomenon. The way they have been giving a blind eye to the anti-Nepal activities of the Maoists from their sanctuary in India in clear violation of President Bush's commitment to fight global terrorism has not pinched their conscience. That such statements would directly bolster up the morale of the terrorists has not bothered them. At this critical juncture Nepal expects from them, a good friend, outright cooperation to fight terrorism. All other things can come later. Instead Nepal is being denied even a bit of understanding and sympathy. We do hope the U.S. would respect Nepal's sensitivity and desist from making statements that might work as a direct encouragement to the terrorists.


Madhav Kumar Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher



Important Issue

I enjoyed reading the article about transit economy this issue "TRANSIT ECONOMY: From Land-Locked To Land-Linked Nation" (SPOTLIGHT April 7). At a time when the attention of the mainstream media is diverted to the coverage of agitation and political issues, it is laudable that Spotlight raised a vital issue for national economic development in the long run. I hope to see similar coverage in the forthcoming issues of Spotlight.

Ajaya Thapa
Naxal

Bright Prospects

The plan to develop Nepal as a transit point between the two economic giants- China and India is something that all Nepalese look forward to "TRANSIT ECONOMY: From Land-Locked To Land-Linked Nation" (SPOTLIGHT April 7). It will bring a positive transformations in the livelihoods of not only the people en route the transit, but all the Nepalese. However, there has been little groundwork towards the construction of infrastructure for developing Nepal as a transit point. At a time when the state's attention is focused on curbing the insurgency and getting rid of the political unrest, this vital issue is not prioritized in government's agenda. So, we should all advocate and pressurize the government to give due attention to such vital issues that largely affects the nation's economy and ultimately the socio-political state of the country.

Rudra Ghimire
Maharajgunj

Analytical Story

The cover story this issue about how Nepal can be developed as a transit point between China and India was very

informative and analytical "TRANSIT ECONOMY: From Land-Locked To Land-Linked Nation" (SPOTLIGHT April 7). It is good to know that the National Planning Commission is serious and has started some ground works to develop Nepal as a favorable transit point between the two countries. There are, as you have written, a lot of possibilities for Nepal's economic boom if we can properly utilize the high economic growth rates of the two countries bordering it. If Nepal lags behind in its aspiration to become a transit economy it will suffer a lot as it is sandwiched between two economic giants. There are few options to Nepal for an economic revolution. Considering these reasons, it is imperative that the government as well as the business fraternity do their parts to expedite the plan of making Nepal a transit point between China and India.

Kreepa Shrestha
Narayansthan

Informative Story

I read the cover story about transit economy and learned a lot about the prospects and developments towards making Nepal a transit point between

India and China "TRANSIT ECONOMY: From Land-Locked To Land-Linked Nation" (SPOTLIGHT April 7). Countries like Hong Kong and Singapore have benefited a lot by being transit point of trade between other countries. Nepal also has similar prospect of being developed as a transit nation between India and China. Both India and China have said that they are more than willing to help Nepal to become a transit economy between the two countries. However, the Nepalese authorities do not seem as enthusiastic as they should have been. Instead, they seem to be dependent on China and India to formulate strategies and develop infrastructures for them. No matter how cooperative the neighbors are they cannot do anything if we do not become active and take initiatives to develop ourselves as a transit economy. It is a very favorable time for us to do something when both the countries are very cooperative for the economic development of Nepal.

Kedar Shrestha
Patan

Take Parties Into Confidence

Apropos your story on current political confrontation, I opine the polarization of the constitutional forces is ensued by the King and his coteries "POLITICS OF CONFRONTATION: A Dangerous Brinkmanship" (SPOTLIGHT April 7). It is the responsibility of the King to take initiatives for reconciliation and dialogues, when his people agitate with some demands. As the guardian of the country he should be able to take all the political parties into confidence. There is no doubt that more the rift between the parties and king widens the more it is dangerous for the sovereignty of the nation. Therefore before it is too late, the king should take immediate steps to rectify his mistake in the past and do whatever necessary to bring the parties to dialogue and end the current conflict.

Prerana Hamal
Nardevi

Curfew Continues In The Capital, People Defy Curfew Orders

The government has imposed day-time curfew in parts of Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, Lalitpur and Kirtipur for the third day on Monday with a view to thwart opposition rallies and meetings. On Saturday, curfew was imposed between 10:00 in the morning till 9:00 in the evening. The opposition parties had planned a massive rally at Basantapur of Kathmandu on Saturday. On Sunday, curfew hours were extended by two hours (from 7:00 a. m. to 8:00 p. m.) On Monday, curfew has been reduced to seven hours (between 11:00 a. m. to 6:00 p. m.). Perhaps for the first time in the country's history, thousands of people took to streets defying the curfew orders in the capital and other parts of the country. Opposition leaders, activists and common people organized demonstrations in various parts of the capital from Sunday defying curfew orders. Police resorted to baton-charging, fired tear gas shells and even fired rubber bullets to control the crowd in the capital. Hundreds of activists were arrested over the last two days while dozens others were injured during clashes. *Compiled from reports.*

Half A Million People Take Part In Pro-Democracy Rallies

At least half a million people took part in pro-democracy rallies across the country on Chaitra 26 (April 8) on Saturday calling for restoration of peace and democracy in the country. Huge rallies were taken out in nearly 50 out of 75 districts in the country including Bardiya, Dang, Dhanusha, Biratnagar, Udaypur, Kailali, Banke, Chitwan and Parsa. People chanted anti-king slogans and asked the royal government to resign. They were carrying flags of Nepali Congress, CPN (UML) and other parties of the seven party alliance that had called a four-day nationwide general strike (April 6-9) to push for its demand of "an end to autocratic monarchy" and restoration of total democracy. Employees of the state-owned corporations including those working in the public utilities joined in the pro-

democracy movement across the country. The opposition has extended its general strike on Monday and has said the protest programmes would continue until people's rights are restored in the country. *Compiled from reports.*

19 People Killed In Maoist Attacks In Butwal And Kapilvastu

At least 19 people, including three security personnel, fourteen rebels and two civilians, were killed during overnight Maoist attacks at key security installations at Butwal and Kapilvasu in the western region on Friday. According to the Ministry of Defense, rebels mounted attacks on the Ramnagar barrack of the army, Royal Nepalese Army training center, Ilaka Police office and Regional Police Training Center at Butwal and the district police office of Rupandehi. The rebels also attacked and destroyed several government offices including Land Revenue Office, District Forest Office, office of Taulihawa municipality, among others. The rebels set free over 100 inmates after attacking the district prison of Kapilvastu. *Compiled from reports.*

No. Of Domestic Air Travelers Goes Up: CAAN

The number of passengers traveling by domestic airlines has increased by 17 percent compared to last year, the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN)—a regulatory body—said. Over one million passengers traveled by domestic air service while around 127,000 passengers traveled by international flight to and from the Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) in the first 11 months of 2005, CAAN said. CAAN was able to earn revenue worth Rs 1.40 billion from domestic airlines. Nepal has signed air service agreements with 35 countries after the adoption of the open sky policy of the government, officials said. *RSS news agency reports.*

24 killed in Malangawa clashes, army chopper crashes

At least six policemen, six rebels and two civilians were killed during

overnight clashes at Malangawa—the district headquarter of Sarlahi on Wednesday. Thousands of rebels attacked the district headquarters and set on fire key government offices during their raid. They freed over 100 inmates from the district prison and took CDO Bodh Raj Adhikari and a number of security personnel into custody. The authorities say an Army chopper—that had been sent to aid the fighting security personnel—was found crashed two km west of Malangawa. They said the MI17 chopper – with ten security personnel on board- crashed due to 'technical error.' Reporters were denied to reach the site of the crash while the RNA said an investigation was underway. In a statement issued on Thursday, Maoist chairman Prachanda claimed that his guerrillas gunned down the chopper. He claimed that it was one of the most spectacular victory attained by the rebels in the decade-old insurgency. All ten RNA personnel including pilots died in the incident. Over a dozen policemen were injured during the overnight clashes. The situation is now under control, officials said. *Compiled from reports.*

Nepali Economy To Grow By Around 2 Percent: ADB

While developing Asia and South Asia is expected to grow at the rate of over 7 percent, the growth of Nepali economy is expected to slow down further to 2 percent in the year 2006, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) said. According to the Asian Development Outlook (ADO) launched on Thursday, given the conflict, political instability, decline in paddy production, low industrial production, contraction of tourism and sluggish public and private investment, Nepal would continue to remain the exception in 2006 and 2007, the report said. Nepali economy may grow to around 3.4 percent in 2007, according to the Manila-based bank. "Nepal has missed the pace itself with strong economic performances recorded in the region," said Sultan Hafeez Rahman, country director of the ADB in Nepal. "Nepal should formulate policies

that will link the country with India and China, besides giving stronger focus to development, accelerating reforms and engaging more with donors and international community to turn the situation in its favour," he added.
Compiled from reports.

Amnesty International Expresses Concern Over Increase Violence

Amnesty International today urged the government to rein in the security forces, saying it feared an increase in violence over coming days. "Rather than justifying the use of excessive force, the government should be ensuring that the police and army act within the law to protect people's lives," said Purna Sen, Asia-Pacific Director at Amnesty International. "Restricting peaceful demonstrations by ban orders and curfews and arbitrarily arresting hundreds of people only enflames an already volatile situation."

Three people were killed and many more were injured by members of the security forces over the weekend in attempts to control the sometimes violent demonstrations; and the Home Minister has made a veiled threat warning that the government could take stronger action against protestors. Observers in the country noted that the number of protestors and security forces out on the streets appears to be growing, and that both sides are increasingly resorting to violence..

"The government must order immediate and impartial investigations into all allegations of the misuse of force or firearms by the security forces," said Purna Sen. "Victims and their families deserve justice and compensation."

Six Security Men Killed In Maoist Ambush

Six security personnel including five soldiers of Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) were killed when a vehicle they were traveling in fell into an ambush laid by the Maoists in Surunga of Jhapa district. They were transporting School

Leaving Certificate (SLC) questions papers to the schools there. Two security personnel and two civilians were also injured in the attack. The SLC tests were later resumed in schools in Surunga after four hours of delay. In Sindhupalchowk, an RNA soldier was killed and seven others injured in a clash with Maoists at Ek Kilo of Lamosanghu-Jiri road section.
Leading dailies report.

Buses Stopped From Coming To Kathmandu

Thousands of passengers were stranded after police stopped buses from traveling to Kathmandu from places such as Pokhara, Narayangadh, Baglung, Syangja, Udayapur and so on. Around 100 buses that were bound to Kathmandu from Itahari were told to go back where they came from. Earlier, the Home Ministry had appealed to people to avoid/postpone unnecessary travel to Kathmandu in view of general strike and agitation.
Leading dailies report.

Koirala Appeals For Participation In Agitation

On the eve of the four day general strike by the seven parties, Nepali Congress (NC) president Girija Prasad Koirala issued an appeal urging people to take active part in the agitation. He has said that the agitation is aimed at ending autocracy and establishing the supremacy of people. He urged people to take part in agitation despite possible repression by the government.
Leading dailies report.

Maoists Warn Actress Manisha Of Physical Action

Concluding that her recent campaigning in the municipal polls proved that she is anti-people, the Maoists have warned 'physical action' against Bollywood actress Manisha Koirala – the niece of Nepali Congress (NC) president Girija Prasad Koirala and daughter of incumbent minister Prakash

Koirala. The sister wing of Maoists called All Nepal People's Cultural Organization has threatened Manisha of action if she does not correct herself. "This time we are only warning her. If she does not agree, we will be forced to take physical action," said Ganesh Bhandari, central member of the organization and the president of the organization's Bheri-Karnali regional committee. Bhandari added that they would take action against Manisha in Mumbai, India – where Manisha is based – itself. Speaking at a press meet in a village in Bardiya, Bhandari said that the committee has banned all films acted by Manisha. In a statement issued after the press meet, the Maoists have said they would confiscate reels or CDs of movies of Manisha from video parlors if they keep it. Bhandari said that although this decision (to boycott her films) applies only to Bheri-Karnali area, they would make it nationwide soon. They have also asked cable companies to stop broadcasting materials featuring Manisha. The renowned Bollywood actress Koirala had campaigned in favor of election during the February municipal polls.
Nepal Samacharpatra daily reports.

US Calls for Restoration Of Democracy

The spokesman of U.S. Department of State Sean McCormack in his recent statement said, as a friend of Nepal, we must state that King Gyanendra's decision fourteen months ago to impose direct palace rule in Nepal has failed in every regard. The demonstrations, deaths, arrests, and Maoist attacks in the past few days have shown there is more insecurity, not less. The King's continuing failure to bring the parties back into a process to restore democracy has compounded the problem. The United States calls upon the King to restore democracy immediately and to begin a dialogue with Nepal's constitutional political parties. It is time the King recognizes that this is the best way to deal with the Maoist insurgency and to return peace and prosperity to Nepal.



King Gyanendra granting audiences to Sadhus and Santas at the WHF Silver Jubilee Anniversary

Photo:- GP

THE UNITED STATES HAS CONDEMNED THE government's "detention of opposition political party and civil society activists in advance of political demonstrations scheduled for April 6-9." A statement issued by the embassy on Wednesday reads: "The arrests and harassment of pro-democracy activists violate their fundamental civil rights. The United States calls on the Government of Nepal to release these and other detained activists who have been held for voicing their opposition to autocratic rule in Nepal." Reiterating that dialogue between Nepal's legitimate political forces — the King and opposition political parties — is the "only effective way to return Nepal to democracy and address its Maoist insurgency", the statement, however, adds that, "Such a dialogue is not possible in a climate in which the freedoms of speech and assembly are suppressed." The statement further adds, "We also urge the political parties and civil society to take steps to ensure their planned demonstrations in the coming days remain peaceful.

AFTER THE UNITED STATES AND THE UNITED NATIONS, the government of Japan and European Union have also expressed concerns over the ban on peaceful assembly in the Nepali capital and arrest of hundreds of demonstrators. In a statement issued on Thursday, the Japanese government expressed regret over the arrest of political party and civil society activists and demanded restoration of freedoms guaranteed by the constitution. Similarly, the European Union heads of mission in Kathmandu condemned the ban on peaceful protests in large areas of Kathmandu and the consequent arrest of many democratic party leaders, members of professional and other civil society organizations prior to demonstrators. "These actions go against the freedom of assembly and freedom of expression stipulated in international conventions to which Nepal is signatory," said the statement issued by the Embassy of Finland, on behalf of EU, in Kathmandu on Thursday. During a regular press briefing in New Delhi on Thursday, a spokesman of the Indian Foreign Ministry emphasized on the need for cooperation among constitutional forces in Nepal, not confrontation. "These actions by the government in Nepal are counterproductive. We urge the immediate release of those arrested and a return to the path of dialogue and reconciliation," he said.

THE EU HEADS OF MISSION IN KATHMANDU CONDEMN the ban of peaceful protests in large areas of Kathmandu and the

consequent arrests of many democratic party leaders, members of professional and other civil society organizations prior to the demonstrations planned for 6.-9. of April. These actions go against the freedom of assembly and freedom of expression stipulated in international conventions, to which Nepal is signatory. The EU Heads of Mission believe that the Government's actions further aggravate the atmosphere of confrontation in the country and are not conducive to constructive national dialogue for peace.

THE VOLUME OF FOREIGN TRADE HAS INCREASED BY 20.4 percent in the first six months of the current fiscal year to reach Rs 120.42 billion compared to the same period previous year. During this period, imports increased by 22.5 percent to reach Rs 87.91 billion whereas exports increased by 15 percent to reach Rs 32.5 billion, according to Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB). Due to huge growth in imports compared to exports, the trade deficit has increased by 27.3 percent to reach Rs 55.41 billion. Of the total foreign trade, trade with India has increased by 30 percent (Rs 76.95 billion) and that with third countries increased by 18.5 percent (Rs 43.47 billion). Trade with India occupies 63.9 percent while that with third countries occupies 36.1 percent. Because of increasing receipt of remittances, the consumption of goods have increased, the NRB report adds.

THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION (WHO) HAS SAID with only 15 doctors for 10,000 people on an average, Nepal has the smallest number of health workers in the world. In his message on the occasion of the World Health Day Friday, regional director of the WHO Samlee Pilanbangchang said the world relies on the health workers for all kinds of treatment and called for policies that help in the management of the health sector. In his message on the occasion, Minister of State for Health and Population, Mani Lama, said the government is arranging 150 doctors, who have studies in government scholarships, to work in remote areas each year. Assistant Minister Niksha Shumsher Rana said the government has appointed some 20,000 health workers to provide urgent health services in the hills and the terai.

DOZENS OF PERSONS INCLUDING JOURNALISTS, DOCTORS and lawyers were arrested from demonstration organized by professional organizations on Wednesday. They were later released. The security forces detained leaders and activists of seven parties. Over 200 leaders and workers including around a dozen of central leaders were detained. Among those picked up include Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) leaders Keshav Badal, Subas Nemwang, Bhim Rawal, Raghu Pant and Gopal Shakya. Of them, Nemwang, Rawal and Shakya were later released. The Nepali Congress (Democratic) leaders who were arrested and later released in the day include general secretary Bimalendra Nidhi, spokesperson Dr. Minendra Rijal, central members Manmohan Bhattarai and Indra Bahadur Gurung. NC leader Sunil Bhandari was also arrested. Security personnel also searched houses of many political leaders. Meanwhile, following the arrests of lawyers, the Supreme Court, in response to habeas corpus petition, ordered the authorities to produce over a dozen lawyers including president of Nepal Bar Association (NBA) Shambhu Thapa, vice president Sher Bahadur KC and general secretary Madhav Baskota in court. It is the first time that the SC has held a hearing the same day of filing of a habeas corpus petition. The NBA had announced boycott of court proceedings on Wednesday in protest to the arrest of lawyers. ■

“**T**he steering of the agitation is not in the hands of the seven parties. It is in the hands of the Maoists.”

Kamal Thapa, Home minister, addressing a press conference in capital to update the national and international journalists of the situation in Nepal.

* * *

“**T**he pass you are provided is not for reporting. It is for limited mobility so that your work is not obstructed.”

Shrish SJB Rana, minister for Information and Communications and the government spokesperson, clarifying the reason for not issuing curfew pass to the private media houses at a press conference in Kathmandu.

* * *

“**T**he King has ample strategies to weaken us.”

Chandra Bhandari, youth leader of Nepali Congress (NC), in Jana Astha.

* * *

“**T**he countdown of the King’s reign have begun.”

Prakash Man Singh, leader of Nepali Congress (Democratic) in Bimarsha.

* * *



TKP

“**T**he general strike is solely the agenda of seven parties. We welcome anyone who support it.”

Arjun Narsingh K.C., leader of Nepali Congress, speaking at a face-to-face program at the Reporters’ Club Nepal.

* * *

“**T**he agitation has reached new heights. It will not stop until we achieve the agenda of Constitutional Assembly through the revival of the parliament.”

Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat, leader of Nepali Congress, speaking at a face-to-face program at the Reporters’ Club Nepal.

* * *

“**T**he government should be responsible for the escalating violence. The King should immediately start initiatives for a dialogue with the parties.”

Surya Bahadur Thapa, president of Rastriya Jana Shakti Party and former prime minister, issuing a press release.

* * *

“**T**here is no possibility of formation of a single front of the Maoists and the seven parties as yet.”

Yogesh Bhattarai, leader of the United Marxist-Leninist (UML) and former president of All Nepal National Free Students Union (ANNFSU), in Jana Astha.

* * *

TRANSITION

ACCREDITED: **Madhu Raman Acharya**, Nepalese permanent representative to the United Nations, also as the ambassador to Venezuela, by the King in accordance with the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal, 1990

RETURNED: **Radha Krishna Mainali**, minister for Education and Sports,

from Brisbane, Australia, after participating in the three-day meeting of the Education ministers of Asia-Pacific region

LEFT: Senior Reporter **Sanjaya Dahal** to USA as an IVP guest.

Yangkila Sherpa, minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, for Washington D.C., USA, to participate in the sixth Annual Conference of the World Travel and Tourism Council

Ramesh Nath Pandey, minister for Foreign Affairs, for an official visit of United Arab Emirates and Qatar.

AWARDED: Artist **Hare Ram Jajeju**, with the ‘Fine Arts Award’ of this year, by Pokhrela Youth Cultural Group

Jaya Narayan Jha ‘Jigyasu’, with the ‘Parbati Memorial Award’ of this year, by Parbati Memorial Library.

The Great Defender Of Nepal: Bhakti Thapa

By MRS. LAXMI THAPA

Historian Narahari Nath was able to trace a cluster of very important original letters from the King to Bhakti Thapa. Those letters have been published in the HIMBATKHANDA. Later, Mahesh Raj Pant had also published them in the journal PURNEMA. Those letters cover the period between 1789 and 1814. They provide description about some of the most important events that have taken place in that period. If we read carefully any of the recently written Nepal's history books of that time, we would not fail to notice that the bibliography of those books is laden with references to those letters published in the above two journals. Those letters provide extensive information about the critical role played by Bhakti Thapa in establishment of modern-day Nepal.

Sino-Nepal War

Bhakti Thapa joined the unification campaign in 1789 at a time when further advance of the Nepalese force to the west was completely blocked for more than two years by then powerful kingdom of Jumla. It is said that Jumla had collected an army of twenty-two thousand men to face the Gorkhalis, a force far superior to anything the Gorkhalis could put in the field at that time. In the first major military operation itself Bhakti Thapa had demonstrated his exceptionally brilliant skill in launching a very successful operation under the most adverse condition that was sure to astonish anyone. He changed the strategy of the predecessors and led an attack on Jumla from the difficult north route. The result was a swift victory and the life of many people was also saved.

Within a very short period of just two years from 1789 to 1791 the western boundary of the Great Nepal had extended nearly as far as the Sutlez River (now India). Bhakti Thapa had played crucial role in such rapid expansion of the Great Nepal. At that very time Nepal was attacked by China from the north. During that period China was ruled by the most powerful Emperor Chiang Lung of the Manchu Dynasty.

Among the Manchu emperors Kang Hu Shi and Chiang Lung are considered to be the most influential. Emperor Kang Hu Shi ruled China from 1661 to 1722. He was contemporary with the Louis XIV of France, Peter the Great of Russia and Aurangzeb of India. Similarly, Emperor Chiang Lung ruled from 1736 to 1796. During his reign countries like Burma, Korea were under the influence of China.

Nepal in Great Danger

Chinese invasion was directed straight towards Kathmandu. The main attack was centered on Kyrung which is almost to the north of the Kathmandu valley. The Chinese attack was anticipated well in advance. As a result, Nepal had withdrawn most of its troops and commanders from the west to defend the capital Kathmandu against the Chinese invasion. It was the most critical period in the history of the newly born Great Nepal.

The existence of the Great Nepal was in great danger. The country was under the threat of falling apart. In many

areas the rulers of the old regimes, who were disgruntled at the creation of the Great Nepal, had begun to stir up unrest. According to *sainikithas of Nepal* Bhakti Thapa stationed in Kumaun virtually single handedly succeeded in quelling the unrest fomented by the rulers of the old regime in the vast western regions which were very recently merged into the Great Nepal despite the fact that he was made supreme commander and administrator of the vast territory stretching from Chepe-Marshyangdi to almost Sutlez River only in 1794. The *sainikithas* describes that Bhakti Thapa was constantly on a move from one end of this vast region to the other end to prevent the Great Nepal from falling apart.

Nepal and China realized that it would not be in the interest of either of the countries to prolong the war. A compromise solution was found to resolve the disputes that led to outbreak of the war. The fighting ended. According to Stiller there was no real winner. Immediately after the signing of peace treaty with China, Bhakti Thapa headquartered in Kumaun (now India) became the governor and chief commander of the whole region from the Chepe-Marshyangdi to almost the Sutlez River (in India).

Britain Suspicious About Nepal's Motives

Chinese invasion must have come as a terrible shock to newly emerged Great Nepal. Government in Kathmandu must have got into a panic. At that time Nepal prayed to British India for help to mediate between Nepal and China. But Britain virtually turned a deaf ear.

The process of expansion of the Great Nepal was too rapid. It was natural for the British Government to be greatly alarmed. So British rulers might not have in reality any intention of helping Nepal. We can draw such conclusion from the circumstances surrounding the visit of the Kirkpatrick to Kathmandu in 1793. British governor general in India had agreed to send Kirkpatrick to mediate in Nepal-China dispute. Kirkpatrick did not even set out for Nepal until after the war had been successfully terminated by the Nepal-China agreement. The governor general was requested not to send Kirkpatrick since the war had been amicably concluded. Surprisingly the governor general was seen adamant on sending a man to Kathmandu. So Kirkpatrick visited Kathmandu for no specific official purpose. The intention of Kirkpatrick's visit could hardly be anything else but to watch closely Nepal's speedy preparation for the next phase of the unification campaign that had officially led to the emergence of Bhakti Thapa as its head.

During the visit Kirkpatrick found that Nepal was trying to reinvigorate the attack in the west. The circumstances under which the visit of the Kirkpatrick to Kathmandu took place clearly shows that the British rulers in India were all the time watching Nepal with great suspicion. At that time British rulers in India were adopting every possible method to enlarge the territory under their control. The way new territories were brought under the British control and ruled

had provoked even the British public. British Parliament had gone completely against it.

Anglo-Nepal War

The process of expansion of the Great Nepal had spread like wild fire across the Himalayan region. So it was natural for the British to be greatly alarmed. The Great Nepal was seen all along as a threat to British rule in India till the end of Anglo-Nepal War of 1814-16.

The British actively began preparation for the war from the time when F.R. Hastings-Earl of Moira landed in India as Governor General and Commander-in-Chief in 1813. The actual declaration of war against Nepal is recorded as 1 November, 1814, though the war began from middle of October. The decision to declare war had been made six months earlier so the territorial dispute appears to be only a pretext. British force had marched into Nepal across a frontier of more than 1500 km to attack at several points at the same time. The eastern British flank was moving north from the Teesta area whereas the farthestmost western flank from the Sutlej river area. It was virtually a modern type warfare extended over a period of three calendar years and necessitating to protect the entire region bordering the enemy held territory. The British invasion force, in comparison with Nepalese, had absolute superiority in cavalry, pioneers, and at least the superiority of 10 times in infantry and 100 times in artillery. They also had the advantage of maneuverability in movement.

In early months of the war the initial British invasion was completely beaten off. British offensive ended in complete failure. Nepalese force stationed within the shelter of the fortress were not only able to defend their position against an invading enemy many times superior in strength but they even shocked them by their dreadful counteroffensive that used to be accompanied by big losses on British side. The British rule in India was at a risk of falling apart. Unfortunately at that time the Sikhs and Marathas did not join Nepal in liberating the whole of the South Asian Continent from the grip of the European domination.

After the initial defeats the British changed their strategy to avoid their casualties. They started to deploy long range guns to level our fortifications. This strategy paid off. The British were able to advance quickly into the territory under our control. They even used elephants to carry heavy guns across the mountains. So the ability of the Nepalese force to defend the territory under their control was steadily declining. They were forced to pull back. There was breakdown in control and command system.

Towards the middle of the 1815 Amar Singh Thapa, chief of the Nepalese force fighting in the western front was confined within a small area of the Malaun fort. The fate of Nepal was going to be in the hand of the Governor General Lord Hastings, unashamedly imperialistic and who became famous for having established the British Empire in India more firmly than before. At that time there could not be any room for doubt in his intention either to eliminate Nepal completely and bring it under the British rule or to turn it into a vassal state like so many other states under that category in British India. He could be forced not to take any such decision detrimental to the honour of Nepal only if he perceived that

such action could pose serious threat to the continuance of British rule in India. The Deothal Battle could not be anything else but a clear message of threat on behalf of Nepalese people to the British warning them not to take lightly the determination of Nepalese people to protect the honour of their country.

Prelude to Deothal Battle

Towards the sunset of the April 15th evening Bhakti Thapa and the army units under him arrived at the Malaun fort from their station at Surajgarh without being noticed by the British army units scattered around the Malaun fortress. The subsequent events help to explain that he might have come to persuade Amar Singh Thapa on behalf of all the brave commanders prepared to sacrifice their life for the country to pursue more aggressive methods to deter the enemy from overrunning the motherland. He might have even advised him to pull back from the Malaun to regroup the army units spread all across the Garwal and Kumaun to go to a completely new type of offensive.

The Battle

The following day in the morning Bhakti Thapa at the age of 74 led a most daring counterattack against the British force entrenched at Deothal. Historians have presented the description of this battle at great length. It was 3.15 a.m. when a force of just about 400 under Bhakti Thapa marched out of the Malaun fort, to a slow but steady beat of a drum. The British column under Thompson had taken position at Deothal on reverse slopes. The cannons of 6 pounders were properly concealed. There were two Indian battalions, the Grenadiers companies of the Light Battalions and some 1000 Irregulars. The British strength was up to about 3,500 troops and weapons.

Bhakti Thapa and his followers in the counterattack appeared to have vowed to fight to the death. Bhakti Thapa had even handed his infant grandson in the custody of the Amar Singh Thapa just before going to the battlefield. Bhakti Thapa laid down his life in the battlefield. Every one who fought from the Nepalese side was either killed or wounded.

Needless to say that the British commanders were thoroughly shaken by the bravery of Bhakti Thapa in the Deothal Battle. Bhakti Thapa became a legend even in the eyes of British historians. One of the historians CB Khanduri writes quoting various contemporary British historians "The euphemism of the BRAVEST OF THE BRAVES had been used by Napoleon for Marshal Ney, whose bravery during the retreat from Moscow in 1812 was one of the highest. BRAVE LES BRAVE, said Napoleon of him. British then used this citation for the Gurkhas during and after the Anglo-Nepal War. Such was the bravery shown by Bhakti Thapa that the next legend of the Bravest of the Braves had been created on the day - 16 April, 1815 at Deothal."

The Great Defender of Nepal

"Until there was life in the body of Bhakti Thapa Nepal's territory was in a state of great expansion. Soon after his death the Great Nepal crumbled." This is an excerpt from the *sainikitihas* which is based on the book "Vikramjit Hasrat, History of Nepal (Punjab: V. V. Research Institute, 1970)".

(Thapa writes on History)

WORLD HINDU FEDERATION SILVER JUBILEE Call for Religious Harmony

The silver jubilee Anniversary of the World Hindu Federation (WHF) concluded with a call to protect and promote Hindu religion

By A CORRESPONDENT

Once again the World Hindu Federation (WHF) has proved that it is an organization of various religious sects. In its recently concluded Silver Jubilee Anniversary at Birgunj, a southern trade city, the WHF reiterated the commitment to enhance the glory of Hindu religion around the world.

Representing various religions from different parts of the world, the participants at the conference highlighted Hindu religion's greatest character like tolerance and inclusion of all religions.

Although Nepal is the only Hindu Kingdom and Nepal's King the only living Hindu monarch of the world, Nepal has a long history of religious harmony and tolerance. From Muslims to Christians and Buddhist to Sikhs, all religious groups respect the King as their religious guardian.

No parts of the world have such a practice and tradition like in Nepal, where Buddhists worship a Hindu monarch. Less than a kilometer away from Royal Palace, there are two Muslim Mosques.

Inaugurated by King Gyanendra in Birgunj, Shankaracharyas, Sadhus and other religious and other persons from various parts of the world stressed the need to protect the Hindu religion.

"The Kingdom of Nepal, the fountainhead of Hinduism, has, since time immemorial, provided ascetics and mystics with the spiritual ground for meditation. Siddhartha Gautam, the founder of Buddhism, is a son of this land. Buddhism later spread far and wide, including India, China and Japan, and Lord Buddha came to be revered as the proponent of peace, a fact we should take pride in. Janaki is also a daughter of this soil. Having never faced any kind of discord in the name of religion,

Nepal can be taken as a paradigm of perfect harmony between religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence. While holding all religions in high esteem, we firmly believe in the good virtue of creating a peaceful environment. This is also an outstanding attribute of Hinduism. Nepal is not only home to Vedic sages and Buddhist philosophers. According to scriptures, Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, meditated on the banks of the holy



King Gyanendra addressing WHF anniversary: For harmonious relation

Bishnumati River and Emperor Bharat, son of Rishabhdev, considered the first *Tirthankar* of the Jain sect, meditated on the banks of the Kali Gandaki River in Nepal. So it can be surmised that the strong religious pillars of all four sects, namely Vedic, Jain, Buddhist and Sikh, were bonded in Nepal, thereby paving the way for the spontaneous development of the Omkar Parivar," said King Gyanendra in his inaugural speech. "The holy land of Nepal, which has the distinction of having sacred places like the Pashupat, Baraha, Ruru and Mukti Regions and is also referred to in the Puranas, is a common site

of pilgrimage for all. The people of Nepal and India enjoy similar culture and tradition, with the age-old affinity and affection fostered by shared religious beliefs complementing one another. Common perspectives have been developed in a number of issues. The deep sentimental relations between the Hindus of the world has augmented and inspired the advancement of fraternity amongst Hindus all over in the 21st century."

"Based on humanistic ideals, the Hindu culture, which espouses the precept "*Sarve bhawantu sukhina sarve santu niramaya*" or "Let every human being be happy and free of disease; let every individual's well-being be ensured", is dedicated to the good and peace of all. These ideals must be incorporated into our way of life, as inscribed in the great religious epic The Bhagawat Gita," said

King Gyanendra. "There are many instances where, for peace, many sages have sacrificed their lives. To establish permanent peace in the true sense is the need of the day. Let us all pledge to dedicate some of our time towards this noble cause. The holy Vedas also lay special emphasis on peace and humanism." The Hindu religion touches every aspect of our lives. To this day, it continues to occupy the pride of place it had acquired during ancient times. We are confident that, like in the past thousands of years, its future is eternally secure because its ideals and philosophy have not been distorted. We believe that religion leads an individual on the path of righteousness. Hinduism endorses reincarnation and purity of the soul. Our religion teaches us that no

matter how difficult a task may be, we must pursue to execute it with a sense of dedication and dutifulness since our good deeds in this world ensures our well-being in the next. At the same time, it also inspires us to view life in a positive manner," said King Gyanendra.

The two-day conference discussed the various issues including the need to unite Hindus around the world. "Our conference was very successful as the Hindu's expressed their willingness to work together for a broader interest of Hindu religion," said General Bharat Keshar Simha, president of the World Hindu Federation. ■

WOMEN'S COMMISSION

Two Years After

Women leaders are all set to end gender discrimination after the reconstitution of the National Women Commission

By THAKUR AMGAI

Within a month of the constitution of the National Women Commission for the second time, it has announced various new strategies to address the women issues in the country. Chaired by energetic woman leader Bandana Rana- who previously chaired the Sancharika Samuha and was affiliated to various other social organizations- and comprised of leaders of various fronts, the commission has new challenges ranging from drafting the operating procedures of the commission to bringing out and implementing strategies to end social injustice ensued by gender discrimination.

Despite such challenges Rana expressed her strong commitment for a revolution with an objective of a just society with gender equality. "The main role of the NWC is to act as a catalyst," said Rana addressing an introductory interaction program organized by the commission at its office. "It basically suggests the government to formulate strategies for social justice based on gender equality and pressurize for its implementation."

While, the commission has a huge responsibility of advocating as well as working to end the social discrimination and empowering women, it also has a difficult task of overcoming the internal differences. The first commission, which was constituted in March 2002 under the presidentship of Dr Durga Pokharel, had not been able to function properly because of wide differences among the members of the commission.

The tenure of the commission ended bitterly after a wrangling among the members of the commission. To make the situation worse, the vacant commission was never filled until recently due to the political unrest, leaving the problems of women in destitution. Nepalese government formed the Women's Commission in an initiative to address the women issues more effectively after expressing commitment for achieving

gender equality in fourth Women's Convention of the member states of UN in Beijing in 1995.

Coincidentally, the erstwhile president Pokharel is the departmental minister in the present cabinet. During her tenure as the president of the Women's Commission, Dr Pokharel had publicly expressed her discontent with her colleagues at the commission and revealed that she was facing hurdles to implement her programs because of them. The present president Bandana Rana was one of the members she had differences with.



Introductory Program of the Commission: A good start

Photo:- Annapurna Post

The speculation now is, will a shadow of the past relation between the president of the commission and the departmental minister hover over the functioning of the present commission.

"Personal grievances won't matter," chairperson Rana says. "After all our objective is the same – the end of social injustice ensued by gender discrimination."

"The commission formed earlier could not function properly because the commission was formed with representations from various political parties," said state minister for Women, Children and Social Welfare Dr Pokharel. "The issues they raised used to be the agenda of their parties rather than genuine women issues."

In the recent years, a lot of programs are targeted for social justice. Through donor

agencies, a lot of money is poured for such projects.

"The expenditure in health and education has doubled in the last three years. Most of this amount is used for girl education and reducing maternal mortality rate," said Dr Shankar Sharma, vice-chairperson of National Planning Commission. "870 million rupees is used for scholarships now compared to 120 million three years ago," he said. "All Dalit students and seven lacs more girls are getting scholarship in primary education."

However, the programs are not giving out the targeted results as expected. The newer dimensions of women issues ensued by the ongoing the conflict could be one reason for the failure in expected results.

State minister Pokharel points out at a systematic failure. Expressing her anger over the patriarchal society. "Women are systematically discriminated earlier through bondages in religion and now through the laws," said Dr Pokharel. She also revealed that there are 22 articles in the Constitution

137 Acts that are discriminatory against women. She urged all women to work together to end such psyche in the society. "I urge all women to vote for women candidates whichever party they may represent when the elections happen," she said.

Planners point out at the economic situation as the cause of gender inequality. "Gender equality will not be achieved until and unless women own their properties and have access to economic activities so that they can earn and spend on their own," said Dr Sharma.

As the old adage goes, 'well beginning is half done', the commission has done a laudable job by promptly announcing its strategies. President Rana informed that the commission would hold other interaction meetings with functional organizations. ■

SEVEN-PARTY AGITATION

Message

From

The Street

The recent demonstrations have again proved that pro-constitutional forces are still the prominent power in the country. Despite their internal differences, the King and all political parties combined together are capable of providing the people an opportunity to elect their representatives to decide their fate and assume the responsibility of the government. The agitation called by seven political parties and overwhelmingly supported by professional organizations and common people living in various parts of the country including the capital has shown their strong faith towards liberal democracy

By KESHAB POUDEL

“I *t was the best of the times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the season of light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us....”* what prominent English novelist Charles Dickens described in his great novel “A Tale of Two Cities” in 1861 reminds the consequences of current political turmoil and uncertainty faced by Nepal.

The bloody acts and angry opinions expressed by the people in the streets of capital Kathmandu and other parts of the country in the past one week showed the season of lights as well as that of darkness. The massive participation of common people and professionals like lawyers, teachers, doctors, engineers, journalists, civil servants and employees of different organized sectors under the call of constitution abiding seven political parties showed the sign of hope and wisdom, as it seems to end autocratic rule and give people their rights to exercise their sovereignty.

A scene of young people fighting hand to hand with police in the street burning tires and destroying public property reveals the sign of despair and darkness. Despite some disappointing things, the recent demonstrations have indicated that pro-constitutional forces are still prominent power in the country. Till now, the situation guarantees that the agitation is still under the command of organized political parties.

Although some tragic bloody incidents took place in Gongabu, where dozens of people were injured and altogether four people were killed in



Road blockade: Sign of violence

have been dislodged from power due to the dissolution of the parliament and the completion of tenure of local bodies and no signs of immediate elections. Maoists are trying to establish a political legitimacy through their ten-year long insurgency. This is a bizarre situation created by their own acts of omission and commission. In such a situation, no one can challenge

police firing, the demonstration is more or less peaceful. In some places the police also used the excessive force to quell the demonstrations.

At a time when the peaceful agitation was in the process of gathering massive support, a mysterious bloody incident occurred in Gongabu. Security personnel posted to guard the residence of the newly promoted Assistant Inspector General (AIG) of Police Rup Sagar Moktan reportedly fired bullets indiscriminately towards the agitators. The firing not only injured dozens of demonstrators, but also instigated Armed Police forces deployed on the other side to control the agitators to take combat position and open fire at the agitators suspecting that Maoists had opened fire from the mob.

Despite efforts by some elements to create anarchy and violence, the leaders of agitating parties have shown restraint. "This is our peaceful agitation. There is no infiltration Maoists in the demonstrations. I don't care whatever they say, but this is purely a demonstration organized by the seven-party-alliance. There is no collaboration with Maoists," said Congress leader and supremo of seven-party agitations Girija Prasad Koirala to BBC. "The government is trying to discredit the spontaneous

response of common people saying that the Maoists are infiltrated in our agitation." When Koirala defends his cause criticizing the Maoists, the present regime, which has been fighting the Maoist insurgency, interestingly the government severed Koirala's telephone lines.

Pattern of agitation

Almost all political agitations in Nepal in the past five decades have similar nature. History has shown that such agitations, backed by students and youths, conclude only achieving certain political objectives. The student agitation of 1979 pacified after a referendum was called and the People's Movement of 1990 ended only after a change of the political system. Even after the restoration of democracy in 1990, almost every elected government has faced one or the other kinds of political agitations.

As elected governments with bases of nationwide grass root organizations, those governments fought addressed the agitations politically and administratively. Following the dissolution of parliament and local bodies, all the forces are now defenseless. Monarchy, army and police are without a shield crying and defending legitimacy. Political parties

the legitimacy of others and the people are left without any legitimate leadership. Thus the country and the people have been compelled to face the situation finding no visible and easy solution.

The incidents in the past few days have shown that, the agitation is not completely peaceful as claimed by the leaders of the agitating parties. Groups of demonstrators in Kirtipur, Banepa, Chitwan and other areas openly challenged the call of leaders of agitating parties. If the agitation goes under the command of unruly mob, it will create more unruly situation. Maoists leaders have already claimed that their cadres are supporting the agitation called by seven parties. "We have asked our party workers to take part in the demonstrations actively," said Krishna Bahadur Mahara, spokesperson of the Maoists.

The recent interviews and statements given by Maoist leaders have already put the constitution abiding seven political parties in defensive. "The present indefinite general strike is our own program and the Maoist does not have to do anything to it," said CPN-UML leader K.P. Sharma Oli. "The people are provoked because of over suppression by the Royal regime." Instead,



Police and agitators: Eyes to Eyes

government agents have infiltrated in our agitation to discredit us.”

Home minister Kamal Thapa and other cabinet ministers, however, argue that the agitation launched by seven parties is violent and supported by Maoist. “We have credible evidence of Maoist involvement,” said home minister Kamal Thapa.

Initially the seven parties called for a four-day general strike and nationwide demonstrations in these four days. Later, they prolonged their program for indefinite period. It seems that the mob is not under their political command. Thus, the common people are under a great stress and uncertainty over the future.

“Demonstrations are launched in the streets, but the faces and age-groups of the demonstrators are same everyday. How long this crowd will continue to be in the streets is difficult to predict. Unless some other mechanisms come into play this show may go into diminishing effect. Agitations serve their purpose till it follows certain political programs and discipline. Otherwise it may turn into an anarchy which will bring more repressive and authoritarian elements in the power to prevail in the leadership,” said a political analyst. “It is high time to conclude the agitation and learn the lesson which has been imparted by it. The New Year’s Day is an opportunity to give a new turn to a conflict ridden politics of this country.”

As usual the message of King would be waited all over the country with great anticipations. “The impending new year must begin with compromise and peace,”

said former prime minister Surya Bahadur Thapa. “The political deadlock and agitation have already pushed the country into chaos and it is gradually heading out of control. There are ample possibilities to reach into a political consensus.”

This is the last of the opportunities for King Gyanendra to people’s traditional respect to the institution of monarchy. If he fails to address the present situation fairly, the institution as well as the King will not be able to command similar reverence in future.

“To bear the responsibility of the state is certainly not a popular job. Therefore, the monarchy in Nepal has ruled through via-media. The role of monarchy is very crucial at the moment of vacuum. But, this vacuum should not prolonged long. The King needs to

arrange mechanisms for transfer of power to the elected representatives of the people soon,” said an analyst. The present interim government is now working at the cost of the popularity of monarchy. Sooner it is dismissed, better it is for the future of monarchy.”

The election is the only foreseeable option left for the King to transfer power to the people’s representatives. But to hold a credible election at the current situation is a big challenge. So, it is necessary for the King to appeal to the nation and particularly the political activists in a persuasive and accommodative language.

The expressions of the beneficiaries of the interim arrangement with the King are more harsh and provocative in the utterances. The experiences in the last few years must have enlightened the King that restraint must be maintained to accommodate all his critics in the street.

“It is not the King but political leaders who are responsible for bringing the present situation. Political leaders have made an alliance with terrorists to go to the power and political parties are responsible for creating the present problem,” said Shrish Sumsher Rana, state minister for Information and Communication and spokesperson of the government.

At a time when restraint and peace is required, the government media, ministers and pro-government elements



Mass Demonstration: Peaceful style

are trying to exploit the situation pushing the constitutional political forces are in the brink.

Because of the role of functionary of the state, thousands of people have come to the streets criticizing the government. Most of the critics - who are now taking part in the street agitation - do not have any personal contact with the King. Therefore, their prejudice is not against the person. It is the state authority that makes the person unpopular. Whoever holds the state authority, they have to face similar kinds of slogans and criticisms.

Before dismissing the elected prime minister in October 4, 2002, successive prime ministers used to be a target of civil society members, students and opposition leaders. From former prime minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai to Ganga Prasad Koirala, late Man Mohan Adhikary and Sher Bahadur Deuba, they faced similar kinds of condemnation from their critics in the street. Unlike other leaders of organized political forces, the monarchy cannot take such risk for long period.

Leaders of all political stakeholders are on trial now. The fate of the country and countrymen depends upon their wisdom and the actions they take within this short period.

Objective of the Agitation

The agitation should not sideline the objective for which it was launched. The objective of the agitation was to bring



General strike and curfew: Paralyzing daily life

people into the power through the constitutional means and election is the only legitimate way to transfer power to the people. But the elections should be held in an atmosphere of trust and confidence. Although the present regime held the elections of municipalities in line with its own agenda, it failed to lure major political parties and consequently the much-needed international legitimacy.

"Any call for elections with credible assurances of impartiality and a fearless environment would be an opportunity as well as a challenge to the political parties and they should accept it as a repository of the faith of the people," said a political analyst. "Instead of

rejecting the calls for elections, they must demand the assurances of fearless environment and impartiality with the king. Nepal has proved its capacity to hold a free and fair election a number of times in the past."

The recent massive response of people for a peaceful agitation all over the country has proved wrong the misconceptions that the atmosphere of the country is not favorable to a popular participation.

If the common people, professionals and political activists from all over the country defy curfew order and come out into the streets spontaneously braving the harsh shoot-on-sight orders, why cannot such mass be mobilized to hold a popular election.

"Election is a right to the people to express their sovereign will. No force whether it is King or political parties should have the role of obstructionists. Let the people take up the opportunity of elections. Let them examine the progress of all competing political parties and choose one of them to rule while others can play the role of an effective opposition," said an analyst.

Let 2063 be the year of decision of the people, let this occasion be available to the people to express sovereign will. It has become very popular to advise for dialogue for dialogue. A mere dialogue has no significance. It is the action to be performed that people expect. ■



Members of Civil Society: Peaceful dissidence

“This Is Purely An Agitation Organized By Seven Political Parties”

— K.P. SHARMA OLI

Senior CPN-UML leader K. P. Sharma Oli rejected the government charges that there is any infiltration of Maoists in their agitation. Addressing a press conference, former home minister Oli claimed that their agitation is peaceful. Excerpts:

On Maoists Infiltration

The Royal regime is trying to discredit our peaceful agitation. You can see the nature of participants. Doctors, lawyers, journalists, students, teachers, civil servants and common people of varying age groups are spontaneously supporting the agitation. Despite repression of the government, people are joining our agitation. It is only propaganda of the royal regime to say that our agitation is backed by Maoists.

On Role of Seven Agitating Parties

This is purely an agitation organized by seven political parties. Maoists have

nothing to do with it. From the very beginning, we have made it clear that this is going to be a peaceful agitation.

On Growing Violence

Because of repressions, people revolted against the state. The regime does not have any respect to the rights of the people. The present regime believes that the demonstrations can be suppressed by imposing curfews and deploying thousands of security personnel in the streets. The agitation is peaceful except in some place where the police indiscriminately opened fire at the crowd. In Gongabu, the police fired a shot aiming to kill people. This royal government is responsible for all the violence.

Objective of Agitation

One of the objectives of the agitation is to establish total democracy or Loktantra in Nepal. Our agitation is

directed towards the end of active monarchy. Our agitation will end once sovereignty is handed over to the people. People are supreme.

On Response

We are getting overwhelming response from the people of all walks of life. Despite all the repressive actions, common people are coming to street against the oppressive royal regime. The agitation has also intensified in all parts of the country. From rural parts of the country to the urban centers, people are coming to the streets to express solidarity to our movement. ■



“Leaders Of Seven Political Parties Have Already Lost Their Grip On The Agitation”

— KAMAL THAPA

Home Minister Kamal Thapa –who is arguing that the leadership of present agitation has gone to the Maoists– expresses that he will not allow the situation to go out of control. Home minister Thapa also stresses the need to begin a meaningful dialogue between the constitutional forces.

On the question of Leadership

Although the political parties claim that their agitation is peaceful, we have recorded number of violent incidents in various parts of the country. We have credible evidence that the leadership of the agitation is on the hands of the Maoists terrorists. Leaders of seven political parties have already lost their grip on the agitation.

The face of agitators

When you see the faces of agitators, you can see many new faces there. I think Maoists workers are taking part in the agitation. Only Maoists can take these kinds of actions and resort to vandalism. Whatever the leaders of seven political parties may say, Maoists are taking the leadership of present agitation. I have been saying this for quite a long time as police have arrested number of Maoists guerrillas and workers from the (Kathmandu) valley.

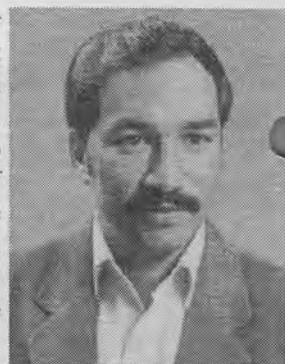
Use of Forces

We are trying to use as minimum force as possible. Police are only trying to contain the violent activities in the street. We are not opposing any kinds of peaceful demonstrations. Police are

using their power just for their own defense. There are no cases of excessive forces used by police. ■

On the Report

Soon after the announcement of four days general strike by seven agitating parties, we received ample credible information that Maoists are making efforts to destabilize the city centers by supporting the agitation of seven political parties. In the course of time, all the arguments are proving right. ■



ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

Supporting The Disadvantaged

Asian Development Bank is supporting a program to help disadvantaged households in Nepal

By A CORRESPONDENT

Despite the efforts of the government and donor agencies to lift up the life of rural disadvantageous population, there remain a large number of disadvantaged people of rural parts of the country below the poverty line.

Although Nepal has achieved certain success in reducing the level of poverty in Nepal in the last decades, it is still rampant in the rural parts of Nepal. Trapped in dreaded conflicts, most of disanatigious population have no options other than to live in a situation below poverty line.

In the last few decades, Asian Development Bank (ADB) has been playing an important role in the area of poverty alleviation supporting different kinds of development works carried out in various parts of country.

ADB is undertaking an innovative project that will help the most disadvantaged households in Nepal to effectively participate in and benefit from rural development projects through a US\$685,000 technical assistance grant.

Poverty in Nepal remains concentrated among the rural poor and women, and various disadvantaged ethnic and caste groups. While there has been some progress in addressing gender-based discrimination, there has been considerably less progress in addressing caste- and ethnicity-based exclusion.

Conventional methods have not always been sufficient to reach the most disadvantaged groups. Often, their time is consumed with trying to meet survival needs, and are thus kept from participating in mainstream development programs.

“Unless the most disadvantaged households receive specific assistance,

these households may not be able to improve their living conditions until their children start working and become independent of them,” says Marzia Mongiorgi, an ADB Project Economist.

The project, financed by the Poverty Reduction Cooperation Fund, from the Government of the United Kingdom, involves a package of activities aimed at accelerating the socioeconomic status of disadvantaged groups, and the removal of sociocultural and financial constraints that keep them from participating effectively in rural development programs.

The project will establish a household development grant that will provide \$350 equivalent to 1,000 selected

in-kind to allow them to engage in basic economic activities, such as livestock raising, microbusiness, and small-scale agriculture.

The project will also conduct confidence building, skills development, and job training to improve the households’ capacity to decide on matters relating to their family members’ lives and develop livelihoods in the long term.

The project complements an ADB loan approved in December 2004 for the Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women in Nepal, which aims to facilitate a process of economic, social, legal, and political empowerment among poor women.

The project’s total cost is estimated at \$805,000, with the Government financing the balance of \$120,000 equivalent. The Department of Women Development of the Ministry of Women, Children, and Social Welfare is the executing agency for the project, which is due for completion in January 2008.



Disadvantaged women group: Learning skills

households over two years. Half of the grant, to be given during the first year entirely in-kind, is designed to allow the members of the households to participate in community activities and social mobilization and awareness programs by paying for the social cost involved.

The other half will be provided during the second year either in cash or

ADB, based in Manila, 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 technical assistance totaling \$5.8 billion and \$198.8 million, respectively.

My Sojourn In The United States

By MADHAV KUMAR RIMAL

Morality and politics are like the two poles — The North and the South. They can never coexist and go along together. Politicians do always profess morality in public but can seldom practise it. And they never feel embarrassed when caught in its breach. Whether in poor countries or rich, politicians are tarred with the same kind of brush. This dawned on me as a revelation during my recent sojourn in the great country — the United States of America. The greatness of the United States does not lie in its being big or wealthy or powerful. The wisdom and farsightedness shown by its Founding Fathers by enshrining in its constitution the moral and human values of life that not only try to ennoble its citizens but also guarantee equality and justice to all human beings are the real basis of its greatness. Even this great country cannot always produce men who do rise above themselves to lead their country by meticulously abiding by their constitution in letter and spirit. Since affluence and power beget arrogance, the statesmen and politicians of this great country also easily fall prey to a tendency to circumvent the laws of the land to further their personal or partisan interests.

Since my stay in that country became exceptionally long, I tried to utilize this opportunity to study American behavior and also to share mutual experiences with old American friends. All the American friends and well wishers of Nepal I met or contacted with seemed greatly concerned at the prevailing political turmoils in the Himalayan Kingdom. But, it was quite evident to me that they were blissfully ignorant of the reality regarding the Maoist insurgency in Nepal. Since they had to believe their own government's version about what was happening in Nepal, their misconception had, indeed, a very sound basis. Their government's erroneous policy of looking at Nepal's problems through Indian eyes has kept them in the dark about the troubles and aspirations of nearly twenty seven million poor Nepalis. India does have a stake in Nepal and they have been trying to pressurize the Nepalis to give in to them for the last six decades. The dogged resistance by the Nepalis have impelled the Indians to seek the aid of the Americans and the British. The Americans could not deny the Indians as they have much greater and more significant interests in winning their good will. And the British, despite hundred's of year of strong bonds of friendship with Nepal, had to tow the American line due to reasons every body is aware of.

And, thus Nepal is made to face a very strong pressure from this powerful triumvirate. Nepal's inability to convincingly brief the American friends and their government has made it easier for their diplomats to openly interfere in Nepal's internal affairs and paint a misleading picture about Nepal's policy towards India. My detail briefing did contribute to clear the misconception of many Americans about the real reasons for Maoist insurgency, India's domineering behavior and the role of monarchy as the binding force for national unity in Nepal. They do think, as a smaller and weaker neighbor, Nepal has to learn to live with her situation. Even quite bigger and affluent countries too, they say,

have to bear the unqualified domination of their mightier neighbors. Nepal can considerably lessen and minimize the scope and opportunities of the leverages India enjoys against her. Not that Nepal does not have any vantage point. If Nepal cannot put its own house to order and fritters away the powerful advantages she commands, she is only to blame. Some Americans very candidly charged Nepali statesmen for their failure to exploit the strategic situation Nepal occupies in the fragile politics of South Asia. Even though very small and not of great consequence in global context, Nepal can play an influential role in regional politics and should not be side-lined. They think she needs to overhaul her policies and mechanisms in order to command more credibility and respectability. This is one thing King Gyanendra cannot afford to defer to do for long.

The, long stay in the United States also provided me opportunities to study the behavior of the American politicians and statesmen from very close quarters. The U.S. is not only the Mecca of job seekers and fortune hunters but, as the richest and mightiest country, is also the leader of the world and champion of democracy, political morality and human rights. As such, it has taken upon itself the sole responsibility of policing the world, ridding it of poverty, disease, political turmoils and terrorism. Since the United States is committed to defend and support democracy all over the world, democratic governments get top priority to win their favor and friendship. And after what the terrorists did to their country on 9/11, they have pledged to root out terrorism from the face of the world. But, by virtue of being the number one country in the world, they themselves can avoid strict observance of these principles in order to meet other pressing exigencies. President Bush's recent nuclear deal with India could be taken as an example. That Bush could sign a nuclear deal with India, a nation with nuclear weapons and a non-signatory of the N.P.T and a potential nuclear threat to regional peace, is sure to generate mistrust and misgivings in the commitments of the United States to safeguard non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Many Americans think that the U.S. Congress would definitely like to probe into the deal before ratifying it. Bush's supporters are confident that the favorable Congress would not deny the endorsement. But that it might set a bad precedent and squeeze the U.S. in subsequent deals besides overlooking the moral justification might also pose a big hurdle. That the biggest leader of the world should ignore all moral considerations to further its narrow interests and thus erode its image may induce the Congress to withhold the confirmation. As demonstrated by the Congress in the Dubai Ports World deal the Congress might refuse the confirmation of this nuclear deal.

As the only person who has pledged himself to root out terrorism wherever it might be, Bush's condoning of India's blatant encouragement to the Nepali Maoists to mount insurgencies against the small but friendly neighbor from their territory is another naked violation of his global commitment which is sure to impair

his image and that of his country. Had Nepal been able to exploit this unabashed violation of global commitment to fight terrorism, perhaps, the Maoists would not have been able to establish themselves as a power to reckon with. This scribe did try to educate his American friends and associates about the reality of the Maoist rebellion in Nepal which has, cleared their misconception to some extent. The small number of Americans are, quite perturbed to know the duplicity of their government. They even suggested that this fact must be brought before not only the peoples of the United States, but also to the peoples of the world through the United Nations.

It was very disheartening to see politicians in this big country too behave the same way as in any other developing country. My whole concept of American integrity got a rude shock to find politicians and statesmen in high places succumbing to temptations and illegal gratifications. This has contributed to strengthen my belief that affluence cannot and will never be able to change human nature. That the greatest melting pot of the world – the United States – should still be plagued by racial discrimination was another unpleasant experience. And it was more galling to see students from poor developing countries being subjected to great harassment on account of higher tuition fees in comparison to American students. How can a country like the United States take recourse to such discouraging behavior against the poor students from the third world? Isn't it denying them opportunities to higher technical and more specialized education which they need most urgently to improve the lot of their poor nation? It is very despairing to know the great country still practicing racism against non-whites and minorities. It may not be very frequent but one does come across cases of racial discrimination. Many do believe that the official lethargy after the hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans last year was because the city was overwhelmingly non-white with an overwhelming non-white poor living there. Since it is impossible to establish the veracity of the allegation, the readers have to make their own judgment.

The decision to invade and demolish Iraq ignoring most of the allies and the world even the United Nations has turned out to be a nightmare for George W. Bush. People are comparing it to Vietnam fiasco. The colossal amount of money being wasted in Iraq could have changed the face of many poor countries of the world. It could greatly improve the lot of many poorer sections of American society. And the uncalled for loss of nearly three thousand precious lives of American young men and women and the massacre of more than fifty thousand Iraqis have not contributed to enhance Bush's image. Bush has antagonized most of the Muslim nations of the world and the hundreds of millions of Muslims living in friendly Muslim country where the governments have good relations with the United States. The popularity and job approval rating of president Bush has gone down to one of the lowest. On top of all these granting the operations of six major U.S. ports to Dubai based Arab company owned by United Arab Emirates, the Dubai Ports World, has only helped to create fissures in his own ruling party. Even the Republican members of the

Congress criticized the government of compromising national security. The opposition to the move became so intense that Bush had no option but to request the Dubai Ports World to withdraw. And this proved to be another set back to the President.

President Bush's first visit to South Asia must have been precipitately arranged as its repercussions would be far reaching and might also prove to be inflammable. The nuclear deal that he signed with India overlooking the important fact that India was not a signatory to the N.P.T has not only violated his country's earlier commitments but placed the U.S. in an embarrassing situation. Bush has called it a "strategic Alliance". Indeed. But, perhaps Bush has not been able to visualize the possibility of a "counter strategic Alliance." Moreover, he must also be oblivious of the fact that breaking the global understanding unilaterally for fostering strategic alliance is apt to strike at his already low credibility and also pose a potential nuclear threat not only to the region but to whole world as well.

That the Supreme Court of the great country can be swayed by partisan feelings and act contrary to its high moral standard is hard to believe. Since the justices of the Supreme Court too are appointed by the Chief Executive, it is but natural that the Judges hold some kind of soft corner for their benefactor. It should not be that way. But it often happens. When George W. Bush was elected President in 2000, many believed that it was not the verdict of the people but the verdict of the Supreme Court that gave him the Presidency. As such, many Americans believe that the authority to appoint Judges to the Supreme Court should rest on an independent commission whose structure must be most unambiguously defined in the constitution. Then only people can have unflinching faith in the Supreme Court.

As things are at present and if no miracle happens in the next twenty months, the Republicans are sure to give way to the Democrats in 2008. Since President Bush is known as the Richman's president, his tax cuts have benefited the upper richer class at the cost of the poor. The cuts in Medicare and Medicaid and flip flop policy on social security has again hurt the poorer section. The violations of human rights in Abu Ghraib and Quanta namo Bay, sending detainees to European countries for obtaining confessions through torture and twisting of democratic behavior impinging on personal rights and liberties of the citizens have blemished the democratic image of the United States. Facing acute isolationism Bush has pushed the country towards a huge federal deficit from a comfortable surplus status. Mounting national debts coming to near nine trillion dollars and the Juggernaut problems of Iraq and Afghanistan which will keep on leeching billions on the federal budget, nobody knows for how long, are sure to pose, insurmountable problems for the next president. A large number of Americans complain that the leadership of the U.S. government was never so weak with subordinates dominating the scene. Bush, now a lame cluck president with colleagues, who, many think, have taken him for a ride, is now facing a dilemma whether he will be able to secure an honorable place in history. ■

“Nepal Is Headed In Decidedly The Wrong Direction”

— RICHARD A. BOUCHER

In an interview with senior CNN correspondent Satinder Bindra in New Delhi, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Richard A. Boucher urged King Gyanendra to restore democracy and protect civil liberties during the ongoing protests. Below is a full transcript of that televised interview.

How has this been like, Ambassador, your first trip here? Any big surprises? Or you've just sort of settled in real fast?

I think I've settled in fairly quickly. With a country like India, there's always a lot of stuff you just don't know, and so you go back, do your history, talk to your staff, and... I picked it up. I know the issues, I know where we want to go. I just don't always know the history. Sometimes, the Indian side... they're frank, they tell me how to do things, and...

Ambassador, grave concern in South Asia, that Nepal is headed to perhaps becoming a failed state. How do you read it?

Well, I think we have a lot of concern, along with the countries of this region, that Nepal is headed in decidedly the wrong direction. The steps the King took a year ago to eliminate democracy and to try to run the country, they haven't worked, and they're not working, and they're not going to work. The steps he's taking now to arrest people, they're not working. There needs to be a restoration of democracy. The political parties need to be able to stay together, move together, but then have a democracy, run the country democratically. And the Maoists really have to abandon this fight. Because they're doing horrible things. They're killing people, they're going into villages, and they're bombing people. There may be a partial cease-fire in the country now, but there's still horrible things happening out there. The only way to solve this is for politics to come back and democracy to come back.

How can you engineer a political solution there? What do you have to do? What does the U.S. have to do?

Well, I think first we have to work with others, and many people have some influence in the situation, as many of us that can talk frankly to the King, talk to the political parties... There are many things we can do to support political parties during this difficult period and to discourage the King, to withdraw some of the support that we've put in that direction.

But more specifically, your message to the King?

My message is restore democracy.

Would you agree to having the Maoists join part of the political mainstream? Would you agree to have the Maoists become part of any future government in Nepal?

I don't think that's a choice for us. We're not going to decide the future government of Nepal. We want it to be chosen democratically. The parties that are violent should abandon the violence, and stop the horrors, and then move into the political mainstream. They can contest power through a political way. If they win, they win. If they don't, they don't.

Now you've been thinking about restoring arms supplies to Nepal. Is that something that has been finalized? Or is the thought process...

No, there were some erroneous reports on that. We have not been thinking about restoring arms assistance in Nepal. We are not looking at any change in our policy of not providing lethal aid from the United States to Nepal.

Mr. Ambassador, how do you see the future there? How are you going to work with India to do something there, because recently hundreds have been arrested?

We've got to work together with India, neither one of us can do this alone. There are other countries that have a lot of influence. I think the first step is for the international community to work together. The message is very clear. We all need to deliver it, and the King needs to listen.

If these protests continue over the next few months, then what? How do you see the situation?

Well, we'll deal with the situation as it evolves. I think there's always more things we can do to continue essentially the same policy, and make the



King understand that half is not working, of making clear to everyone that restoring the political process is the only way for Nepal to find a better future.

When all these protests happen – tear gas is fired, hundreds of politicians are arrested – what do Nepalese diplomats tell you when you express your concerns? What are they promising? What are they thinking of doing?

You know at this point, they laid out a course, which is basically the continuation of the present course – more elections without real participation, more efforts by the King to manipulate the political situation. That's just not working. It's not going to work. It's not the right thing, and it's not working. Really, the only thing is to restore political parties and democracy.

Ambassador, has the nuclear deal been a harder sell than the Administration first thought, at least in Congress?

I think we understood how difficult some of these questions are. It's not easy to define how this deal works with the Non-Proliferation Treaty, how it works with the traditional system, and what it really means for India and its future. We've tried to help people understand those things. But, there are a lot of serious questions there, we knew that, we knew there were serious questions. A lot of people early on sort of started to say no; now we've had a lot of people start to say yes. So you know, that's politics. We'll see how it works out. We're still confident. We're still optimistic that this deal will pass our Congress, that it will pass the Nuclear Suppliers' Group, but we all have to do our part, and we'll try to get there.

What are you doing to convince the fence sitters?

Part of it is laying the facts before them, letting them see what India's nuclear power program is, letting them see the important role that nuclear power has to play in the development of the Indian economy. Letting them see the benefit, what effects this will have on our relationship, on India's ability to produce power without putting more pressure on the oil markets or polluting the air more. So, getting the facts out, talking to people who have questions and answering their questions.

Is there anything India can do to make this an easier sell in Congress?

There are about four or five pieces that have to be put together. India has to do its part, and has indeed started to do its part.

But be specific. What can India do specifically?

Well, we're negotiating a bilateral nuclear agreement with India. So, once

Congress authorizes the trade, the framework will be in there. It can be in place soon afterwards, whenever possible, for that trade to occur. So we need to have a good negotiation, quick negotiation... India has started talking to the International Atomic Energy Agency, because many people want to know what's the nature of the safeguards that will be applied. So India has begun that by sending a top official to Vienna this week. There are a lot of pieces that we both have to do, and we're both trying to get them done.

One of the specific provisions in the legislation that's been tabled in Congress is that should India conduct another nuclear explosion, then the President has the authority to call the entire deal off. Now that's caused a lot of concern here in the Indian media. What do you make of it?

I think, first of all, India does have a moratorium on nuclear testing that they've

adopted, that they've continued, and that it expects to continue. So it shouldn't be much surprise to know that's an important element of this deal.

But India wants the right to have possibly in the future another test, if they need to...

I know. You know, the fact is that all the major nuclear powers have called a moratorium on testing. We continue to do it. We expect India to do what other countries have done. And it just makes clear in the law that that's the expectation of Congress as well.

What's it going to take from the Administration in the next few days? What's the strategy? Next few days and weeks, what's the strategy? We can keep this short, if you want.

A lot of hard work. Patiently answering all the questions. Pursuing all the pieces of the deal that need to be put together. ■

A Positive Spin

New training methods make for happier elephants at Royal Chitwan National Park

Is there an alternative way to train a domestic elephant to learn faster, be more obedient and decrease a risk to people? The answer is yes, according to the 'positive reinforcement' training being discussed and demonstrated at Royal Chitwan National Park.

Starting March 28, a week-long program for *mahuts* of national parks and private elephant holders arranged by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation of His Majesty's Government of Nepal and the Terai Arc Landscape Program of WWF Nepal is taking place at the Elephant Breeding Center at Sauraha, Chitwan. The training is being conducted by Ms. Tuire Kaimio, one of the most famous animal trainers in Europe. The Finnish national is sharing her experience of 'positive reinforcement' with Nepali mahuts.

"This training method is the fastest known way to make an animal learn various tasks, including very complex routines," says Tuire. "It also motivates animals to work and improves its relationship with people."

In positive reinforcement, the young trainee elephant is rewarded for every correct action. The reward can be anything from a piece of banana to a gentle touch. As the name suggests, the elephant is not subjected to force or punishment. It learns very quickly and is willing to work, because it experiences no pain or fear during the training. Food rewards are needed only during the training period – once the task is learned, the elephant will work without it.

"One of the benefits of positive reinforcement training is that it considerably improves the safety of the mahuts as well as other people involved with elephants," observed Helena Talkaranta, a freelance journalist on assignment from WWF Finland who is leading

the training team. "If an elephant has painful memories of training, it may attack people at some point."

Dr Tirtha Man Maskey, former director general and co-chair of IUCN Rhino Specialist Group, agreed with Helena and cited incidents from the past when mahuts were killed by elephants. Positive reinforcement has garnered good results from various parts in the world. In many African countries, elephants used in tourist safaris are trained in this way. In recent years, elephant training facilities in India, Thailand and Sri Lanka have also embraced this method.

"This new training method will lend a new lease of life to the 1,500 year-tradition of elephant training in Nepal," said Dr Chandra Gurung, Country Representative of WWF Nepal. "Handling animals with love and care will help spread a better message about Nepal internationally, especially among tourists." During the course of the week, Tuire will observe the mahuts in order to develop training methods for specific tasks that elephants need to carry out in Nepal. "In the past we had to use force to train elephants but now I am happy to learn this alternative," says Budhan Chaudhary from the Elephant Breeding Centre. "There will be a better future for both the elephants and for the people if we can use the positive reinforcement method with our traditional expertise."

The first phase of the training concludes on 5 April 2006. Based on the outcome of this training, a follow-up session will be scheduled. Finland has been supporting conservation efforts in Nepal for the past three years through the Terai Arc Landscape Program. ■

(Courtesy: WWF Nepal)

BOOK

On Transit State

The book analyzes how Nepal can be a transit state between two of its powerful neighbors

At a time when the countries from around the world are coming to grab the economic opportunity in Nepal's two neighbors India and China, Nepal cannot remain idles. Sandwiched between two growing economic powers India and China, Nepal has tremendous potentials to serve as a transit point for Nepal's two neighbors.

Although India and China have still to go a long way before developing their relations based on mutual trust, the warming up of the relations between these two has shown that the country likes Nepal must prepare a long term strategy and plan.

"It is no secret that economic integration is very much in the larger interest of traders and businesspersons. Nepal has been an entrepot or a gateway for India-China trans-Himalayan trade since as early as during the reign of King Narendra Dev the Licchivi period. In the 7th century A.D., King Pratap Malla Kathmandu obtained privileges for the Newar Merchants to gain virtual monopoly over the lucrative trade between India and Tibet alongside minting coins for Tibet. The towns of Banepa, Pharping, Bhaktapur, and Bhimphedi were prominent trading towns and business in those areas resembled the high and lows of the prosperity of the empires on the north and on the South," writes Nishchal N. Pandey, executive director in his preface. "Presently, the data for Indian exports to China indicates that a few primary products dominate exports. During the year 2004-05, export of a single item i.e. iron ore accounted for 45 percent of India's exports to China. Keeping into consideration the longer term perspective of achieving new heights in Indo-China trade in the year to come, the Indian export basket has not been

diversified especially manufactured items and processed products."

Based on a seminar papers, the book is compilations of various articles written by many experts. In the article, Nepal as a Transit State: Emerging Possibilities, Tara Dahal sketches detail picture of Nepal highlighting the concept of transit states. "Nepal had played her role of



*Nepalma Rajtantara Ra
Dalharubichko Sangharsha (*
*The struggle between monarchy
and political parties in Nepal)*

By: Surya Thapa

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Pages: 351

transit of culture, civilization and economy in the yesteryears. Nepal always has that potential which is being realized once again. This potential will again link the upcoming major economies of the two most populous countries of the world. There is no doubt that Nepal will benefit from the vast potential of the two economies," writes Dahal. "The time is ripe that through the vision of a transit economy, Nepal could lift her position from that of an unstable economy to a stable one. Nepal wishes to see that upcoming transit routes would serve as a modern Silk Road that will connect China with rest of South Asia through Nepal. It should be structured in such a way that it becomes more capable of coping with the realities of the changed world context at the bilateral, regional and global level."

In his article Transit Economy: An opportunity to Revive Past Glory, former envoy and president of Council of World Affairs Keshav Raj Jha discusses how Nepal was benefited in the previous centuries by using the country as a transit point. "Nepal has played her role of transit of culture, civilization and economy in the yesteryears. Nepal always has that potential which is being realized once again. This potential will again link the upcoming major economies of the two most populous countries of the world. There is no doubt that Nepal will benefit from the vast potential of the two economies," writes Jha.

There are difficulties of where we are right now and where we intend to be but the idea that essentially we are thinking about a more prosperous future no matter how difficult things might be there is something that is commendable. ... So what I am trying to argue here is, the real problem in going to this new kind of economy, a new kind of world, we are thinking of is a very great challenge. But it is really conceptual. We are not really landlocked, It's time to unlock our ideas," said former minister of water resources and resources economist Dipak Gyawali in his conclusion remarks.

This is very interesting books to know about how Nepal is turning from land-locked to land linked. ■

EXPOSITION

Show Of Japanese Ceramics

Nepalese art lovers thoroughly enjoyed the exhibition of Japanese ceramics at the Nepal Art Council Gallery

By A CORRESPONDENT

The Embassy of Japan, in cooperation with Nepal Art Council held an exhibition of "Japanese Contemporary Clay Work" in Kathmandu from March 22 to April 2, 2006 on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and the Kingdom of Nepal. The exhibition was sponsored by The Japan Foundation.

H.E. Tsutomu Hiraoka, Ambassador of Japan and Rt. Hon'ble Kirti Nidhi Bista, Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers, who is also Chairman of Nepal Art Council, jointly inaugurated the exhibition on Tuesday, March 21, 2006 at Nepal Art Council, Babarmahal.

Japanese ceramics are internationally famous and highly acclaimed, as they have been frequently introduced and exported to abroad through overseas shipment trading since 17th century. In 1946, the world of Japanese ceramic arts came alive again after the war. It was characteristic of the postwar period that new movements developed through the formation of large schools and of other groups of craft artists. Each of these groups was engaged in creating its own ways of thinking about ceramic art. Some stressed traditional techniques, others creativity, but to all the production of non-functional work was a major shock that unsettled thinking about crafts.

Following these developments, the production of huge ceramic works and installations became a conspicuous trend in Japan by the latter half of 1980s. Neither their creators nor the critics felt that the conventional term for work in clay, togei, quite fit; instead, they borrowed the English term 'clay work'. While the literal meaning could cover all possible work in clay, in

Japan it was applied only to large-scale, three-dimensional pieces in clay and to installations. Works that used clay as an expressive medium in some way, without firing, was also designated clay work.

The exhibition of Japanese Contemporary Clay Work showcased the work of Japanese artists in this field. The distinctive, individualistic works in the exhibition were both essentially contemporary as well as reflective of age-old Japanese sensibilities.

Both of our peoples share values of contemporary art and traditional culture found in Japan and Nepal in different forms. Clay Work is one of the highlights of them. Art loving Nepalese people who visited the exhibition enjoyed Japanese Contemporary Clay Work displayed. ■

BOOK LIST

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RUKMINI DEVKOTA

Hard Working Entrepreneur

Barely literate Devkota is a living example of what hard work can do

By KAMALA PARAJULI

What cannot hard work do? There is opportunity everywhere for hard working people. Rukmini Devkota is a living example. She has already proved that even if one is barely educated, hard work pays. Inspired by self-employment, Rukmini invested Rs 5000 in hosiery in the early 1980s. Now her hosiery has capital worth Rs 3 million.

Born in 1960 in Palpa, she got married in 1983. She says: "In hilly areas, girls were not educated properly. I did not get much formal education. But I could do simple reading and writing. When marriage proposals came, I wished I could marry someone who might not be rich, but someone who was understanding. I got what I wanted. I married a simple and understanding officer. He also wanted me to do something in life."

She made up her mind to work after her marriage. She realized that with her husband's limited income it was not possible to run the household properly.

"I was determined to work. However, I could not decide on the occupation I would like to pursue. Nor was there any money. When there is a will, there is a way. I borrowed Rs 5000 from my kith and kin. I chose an occupation that I could sustain with the capital I had. At that time, a sewing machine could be purchased at Rs 5000. I bought that machine at installment by paying Rs 2500. I bought threads worth Rs 1000, and spent the remaining money on other things. I started sewing sweaters. I did not have the money to open a shop. We just had a rented room. I kept the machine in a corner of my room and started to work. I had not taken any special training. Nor had I seen good knitted stuff. But I had started the work, and there was no turning back.

Initially, I made caps, socks and baby sweaters and sold them in the market. The woolen stuff was consumed in the market quite well. Gradually the demand increased. I was encouraged and I produced more stuff with new designs," she says.

What can't hard work bring about? Rukmini's hard work paid dividends. Her enterprise, which started in a corner of a rented room in Dangadhi, gradually found place in the hill and plain areas of the far-western region. Her small-scale industry, which had just Rs 5000 worth of capital, now stands at three million rupees after two decades. These days, Rukmini is known as a successful entrepreneur in the Dhangadhi market.

"Security arrangement for those doing night duty is not good. A nurse looks after many patients. A nurse on night duty must take care of the whole ward of patients, numbering up to 60. Sometimes in a drunken stupor, personal attendants of patients try to harass nurses sexually. Sometimes in fits of anger, they throw oxygen cylinders at nurses. If something happens, nurses are the soft targets upon whom they vent their anger," says Haridevi.

Her industry has 32 regular staff, half of them women. Especially, victims of conflict and domestic violence and physically challenged women are working with her. Now she has many big machines, more workers and the working house is big.

On the issue of the remuneration of her workers, she says: "The remuneration varies from Rs 2000 to Rs 11000. There is also a provision of overtime allowance. Still, we have not been able to meet the market demand."

When she compares her present financial status with that in the beginning

of her marriage, she says there has been a dramatic change. She says: "Now my children have grown up. Their education is good. They have a house. There is an enterprise and recognition in society. As I have taken up the financial and domestic responsibility, my husband has been able to dedicate himself fully to political and social activities. Now I think if one has firm determination, he or she can do anything." From her factory, she earns Rs 25000, after deducting wages, house rent, monthly costs and so on. "This net income is my true dividend."

Rukmini has not received any training related to her enterprise so far. However, her dedication and hard work and zeal have brought her to this point of success. She is proud of her occupation. "Over one dozen women who were trained in this factory have opened their own enterprises in Tikapur, Joshipur, Attariya, Kanchanpur and Dadeldhura. Even here I have given employment to 32 people. Moreover, I give priority to the victims of conflict and domestic violence and physically challenged women. I have found success

and prestige in this undertaking. I have also found happiness and satisfaction here."

Rukmini Devkota not only uplifted the living standard of her family, she also became an emotional and physical support for people like us. When we rushed to her in times of trouble, she always loved and helped us. She always supported women in distress. She has become a guardian to those who have no one in this world. When I am worried or in trouble, I go to her place. It is like my maternal house," says Parbati Chaudhary of Dhangadhi.

Thousands of people are loitering around, carrying their certificates of formal education, because of unemployment. This is the situation of our country. A woman of firm determination, Rukmini, though only literate, has been able to provide employment to others as well. She is a source of inspiration in Dhangadhi. She has been spreading the message that women should be economically independent. ■

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