

SPOTLIGHT

May 5 - 11, 2006

Constituent Assembly Challenges Ahead

Tourism : Emerging Hopes
May Day : Fight For Right

C.D.O. Regd No. 151/039-40
Printed at Regd No. 20/064/61

Other SAARC Nations..... US \$ 1.00
Japan..... US \$ 1.00
China/Korea..... US \$ 1.00
India..... US \$ 1.00
Hong Kong..... US \$ 1.00
Australia/New Zealand..... US \$ 1.00
USA/Canada..... US \$ 2.00



सुखी परिवारको लागि आनो लगानी

प्रयुक्त छ...

...परिवार वचत खाता

यस क्रमिक वचत खाताले भविष्यमा तपाईं र तपाईंको परिवारको आर्थिक आवश्यकताहरू पुरा गर्दछ। यस खातामा प्रारम्भिक निक्षेप रु २,५०० र न्यूनतम मासिक निक्षेप रु ५०० जम्मा गरि विभिन्न सेवाहरू पाउनुहोस्।

- ३% वार्षिक व्याजदर
- व्यक्तिगत दुर्घटना बीमा रु ५०,००० सम्म
- लक्ष्यको निक्षेपमा ५०% छुट
- निःशुल्क अन्तर शाखा कारोबार सेवा
- ई-बैंकिङ्ग सेवा

विस्तृत जानकारीको लागि नजिकैको नेपाल इन्भेस्टमेन्ट बैंकको शाखामा सम्पर्क गर्नुहोस्।



नेपाल इन्भेस्टमेन्ट बैंक लि.
NEPAL INVESTMENT BANK LTD.

w w w . n e p a l i b a n k . n p



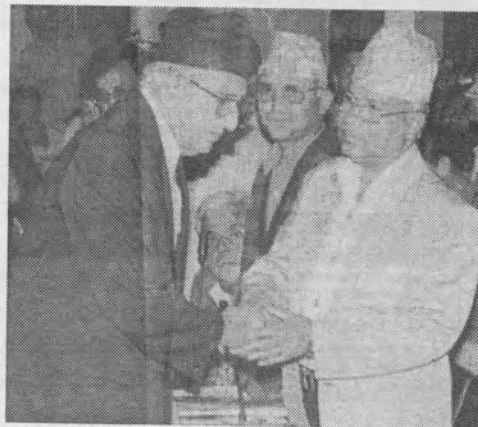
Truly a Nepali Bank

EARLY BIRD PRIZES
Win NPR 1,000
for first 8 minor Accounts

दरबार मार्ग ४४२८२२, ४४४५५३० सिपाडोल ६६५५६१६, ६६१२८३३ बीरगंज ५२३३१६, ५२५१७७ पुन्येक ५५२०३४६, ५५४७८५८ हनेपा ६६२४०१ न्युरेड ६३४२८५८, ६३३०३७४ वीरगंज ५४४५२३, ५४४५२४, ५४४५२५ तुटवल ५४९९९१, ५४९९९२, ५४९९९३ जीतपुर ५२०१९७ पोखरा ५४८९९९ मैरुवा ५४६९९१, ५४६९९२, ५४६९९३ गैरुवा ५४५५३०३ नारायणगढ ५३३९२१, ५३३९२२, ५३३९२३, ५३३९२४, ५३३९२५

CONTENTS

Page



COVER STORY : Challenging Task

By passing the proposal to go for the election to Constituent Assembly (CA) by the second meeting of the reinstated House of Representatives, the country has opened a new political course.

Page 12



TOURISM: Emerging Hopes

With the end of the months old political turmoil and the announcement of three-month long ceasefire by the Maoists, tourism entrepreneurs are hoping for better days ahead.

Page 10



FACE TO FACE : Richard Boucher

US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian affairs Richard A. Boucher spoke about the need for developing a mechanism in Nepal where people can decide the kind of government they want.

Page 22

LETTERS

3

NEWS NOTES

4

BRIEFS

6

QUOTE UNQUOTE/TRANSITION

7

OPINION : Dr. AB Thapa

8

MAY DAY : Fight for Rights

11

ENCOUNTER : Rabindra Nath Sharma

18

BOOK REVIEW : On Sociology

19

ARTICLE: Hari K. Shrestha

20

PROFILE : Amrit Gurung

24

SPOTLIGHT

THE WEEKLY NATIONAL NEWSMAGAZINE

Vol. 25, No 35, May 5, 2006
Baishak 22, 2063

Chief Editor And Publisher
Madhav Kumar Rimal

Editor
Sarita Rimal

Managing Editor
Keshab Poudel

Senior Reporter
Sanjaya Dhakal

Reporter
Thakur Amgai

Design and Layout
Jyoti Singh

Photographer
Sandesh Manandhar

Legal Advisor
Advocate Lok Bhakta Rana

Marketing
Navin Kumar Maharjan
Madan Raj Poudel
Bishnu Prasad Chaulagain

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

Cover Design : Digi-Tech Scanning & Pre-Press Pvt. Ltd.
P.O. Box : 1655, Jwagal, Kupondole,
Lalitpur, Nepal
Tel : 5551251, 5529530
E-mail : degiscan@wlink.com.np

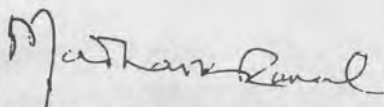
Distribution : R.B. News Paper Traders
New Road, Kathmandu, Nepal
Ph : 4232784, 2020247, 4244679
E-mail : rbnewspaper@hotmail.com

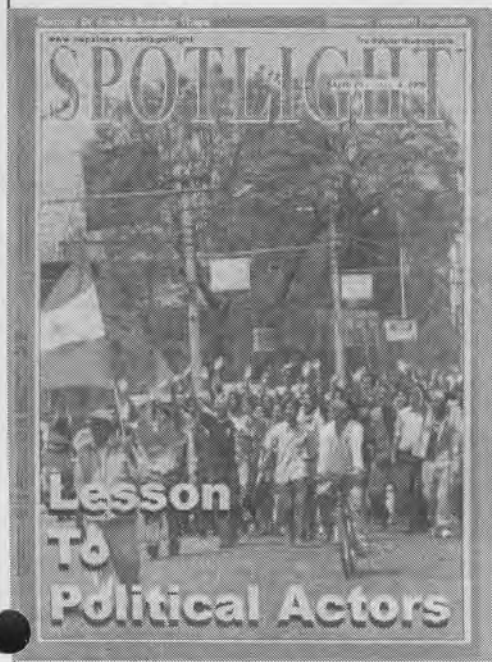
Printers : Printers World
Maitidevi, Kathmandu
Ph : 4423904, 4426520
E-mail : printerworld@wlink.com.np

C.D.O.Regd. No
151/039-40
Postal Regd. No
42/61/62
U.S. Library of Congress
Catalogue No. 91-905060

It seems Nepal's long forgotten communities have woken up and now would not tolerate any infringement upon their birthright to chart the course of their own destiny. The 'Dharnas' outside Singh Darbar by big crowds clearly demonstrate their Himalayan determination not to be thwarted again, not even by the leaders of the Seven Party Alliance. Like a burnt child who dreads the fire the people are very wary of the leaders of the SPA because of their dirty past. Since there is no option, at the moment, the SPA is being accorded the last opportunity by the people by virtue of their membership in the restored parliament. The SPA should not harbor any misconception that they are being rewarded for their participation in the peoples' struggles for restoration of democracy and election for the Constituent Assembly. The world knows they were lolling in the safety and comfort of their stately houses and palaces when the poor Nepalis were facing the batons, the tear gas cells and bullets and many made supreme sacrifices and thousands were badly hurt. Were it not for the Maoists, our good friend in the South, the Donor Community and the Palace, who all contributed their mite to bring about this situation, apart from the poor, down trodden millions of Nepalis, the SPA would still be in the wilderness licking the wounds given by their follies, misdeeds and self-centeredness. Nobody can afford to overlook even for a moment, that it is the people, only the people deprived and exploited for centuries, who must get all the credit and who only are entitled to restitution, indemnification and justice. And no one should have any illusion that they will take any more exploitation lying down. As such, the leader of the SPA must get wiser, not brawl over the spoils of the demise of autocracy but accomplish what they are mandated for. At the moment, they have only two priorities-one-make the House pass the proposal for the constituent assembly and two-bring the Maoists to the dialogue table and reach an understanding, which should not be too difficult for them if they get to the task sincerely and not be carried away by personal, partisan or any other interest. If they find the task too cumbersome or beyond their capabilities, they must take help of their mentors, and friends.

We have always emphasized that Nepal imperatively needs India's good will and sincere cooperation to solve her problems, and specially the Maoist insurgency. As everybody knows, the Maoist leaders always enjoyed Indian sanctuary and hospitality and consequently it can be safely assumed the Indians must have enough leverage on them. It is time to use it. The mission for which the Indians have been using the Maoists has been half - achieved. The other half they must try to achieve through more honorable means. And it is time Nepal's donor friends too opened their eyes and started seeing things in Nepal in their true perspectives. Nepal does appreciate their concerns and compulsions. But as a small, poor and weak nation also expects them to become sensitive towards her unavoidable vulnerabilities. As far as the Maoists are concerned, Nepalis are ready to welcome them back if they renounce violence and came over to rejoin their kiths and kins. Since end justifies the means, the Nepali people will forget and forgive them for what they have done. Prachanda and Baburam can fill the vacancy of honest and dedicated political leadership in Nepal. There has been a total famine in Nepal in this regard for a long time. And Nepal will not move forward without a leadership that is dedicated, honest and spotlessly clean. Moreover, they have also to safeguard the sovereignty and independence of the nation that seems to be at stake. Consequently, it is still no time for the poor people of Nepal to rejoice but to be ever vigilant that they are not taken for a ride again.


Madhav Kumar Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher



A Great Challenge

The cover story this issue was quite analytical of the present political scenario "POLITICAL UPHEAVAL: Lessons To Political Actors" (SPOTLIGHT April 28). As you have written the responsibility of the country has now shifted from the monarch to the political leaders. The people are closely watching the activities of the political leaders and they are ready to come to the streets again if the leaders do not act as per their voice. So, it is a great challenge as well as an opportunity for the leaders to regain their tarnished image in the public.

Pritam Shrestha
Naya Bazar

Do Not Repeat Mistakes

The Nepalese people have once again given opportunities to the leaders of the political parties to run the country "POLITICAL UPHEAVAL: Lessons To Political Actors" (SPOTLIGHT April 28). The people have not forgotten yet the misdeeds of these leaders in the twelve years they ran the country. The leaders ought to understand that the mass uprising is for the system and not for to ascend the leaders to the post. If they repeat the mistakes they committed in the past, the Nepalese people are not going to forgive them. People will rise against them, the same way they did against the autocratic rule of the king. They will be swept away along with the monarchy once and for all. So, the leaders ought to be careful. They cannot afford a single more mistake.

Prativa Khanal
Kalimati

Lessons To All

The recent mass uprising in Nepal is not only a lesson to the political actors of Nepal, but to all power centers throughout the world "POLITICAL UPHEAVAL: Lessons To Political Actors" (SPOTLIGHT April 28). One

very important thing is has taught to all who believe in the power of arms is that a peaceful demonstration is much more powerful than an armed rebellion. What could not be achieved from an armed rebellion in a decade after the loss of more than 10, 000 lives was achieved by a peaceful protest in only 19 days after the loss of about 19 lives. This fact should teach everyone who advocates 'war for peace'. Similarly, the other lesson this agitation has taught is the power of people. No one should underestimate the power of people. The international community was embarrassed by hastily welcome the King's earlier address to the nation calling the seven party alliance to recommend a name for the prime minister. The Nepalese people had not protested to ascend the leaders to the government only. The international community, particularly India failed to understand this. Likewise, the Royal Nepalese Army which was bravely fighting the Maoist insurgency for the past few years was also shaken by the mass uprising. So, this peaceful protest should be a lesson to everyone concerned.

Hari Nyaupane
Kalanki

Future Course of The Country

While the reinstatement of the House of Representatives has given a denouement to months of political instability in the country, it has also made the people a little confused about the future course the country will take "POLITICAL UPHEAVAL: Lessons To Political Actors" (SPOTLIGHT April 28). The people are happy to resume their works uninterrupted, but they are equally eager to know how the elections of the constituent assembly take place, how will the Maoists be brought to the mainstream politics and how their arms will be managed, among others. This is the time when the media should play a role by informing the public about the options and possibilities of the future course of the country.

Rudra Pradhan
Sanepa

Expedite Development Works

Life has return to normalcy throughout the country after the end of the years old turmoil in the country "POLITICAL UPHEAVAL: Lessons To Political Actors" (SPOTLIGHT April 28). With the beginning of the new political course, it is now possible to resume development works stalled since many years due to insurgency. While the leaders and intellectuals should keep themselves busy in discussing and implementing ways to reform the governance and political system of the country, others should focus on expediting the development works in the rural areas of the country. This is the most opportune time to do so because there are no major disrupting factors and the donors are very positive about helping Nepal. The Maoists, who used to disrupt the government funded as well as the donor funded projects, now have started engaging themselves in the development works. So, we should all utilize this time to construct infrastructure in our country.

Pradhyumna Sunuwar
Satdobato

Koirala Appointed New Prime Minister

His Majesty King Gyanendra has on the recommendation of the seven-party alliance (SPA) and in accordance with the Constitution of the Kingdom 1990 appointed Nepali Congress president Girirja Prasad Koirala as new Prime Minister. This was stated in a communiqué released by the Royal Palace Press Secretary on Thursday. A meeting of the SPA on Tuesday had unanimously nominated Koirala as the prime ministerial candidate. *Compiled from Rastriya Samachar Samiti.*

SAARC Leaders Congratulate Prime Minister Koirala

Prime Ministers of South Asian countries have extended congratulation to Prime Minister Girirja Prasad Koirala for assuming the top post of the country and expressed willingness to work with him for mutual benefit. Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has said that the assumption of Koirala to the high office of the Prime Minister of Nepal was a triumph of democracy and a tribute to the people of Nepal, who have displayed exemplary courage and resilience. In a congratulatory message sent to Prime Minister Koirala, Indian Prime Minister Singh has expressed the confidence that at this historic juncture, Nepal would benefit from Koirala's experience, wisdom and leadership. In the message, the Indian Prime Minister has also extended Prime Minister Koirala an invitation to visit India at his early convenience. Meanwhile Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz extended his heartiest congratulations to newly appointed Prime Minister Girirja Prasad Koirala stating that he was looking forward to promote the cordial ties existing between the two countries. "I remain confident that your understanding qualities as a statesman will guide Nepal on the course of economic and social development," Aziz has stated. Likewise, Prime Minister of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh Begum Khaleda Zia felicitated Girirja Prasad Koirala for his appointment as Prime Minister of Nepal, a press statement issued by Embassy of Bangladesh said Sunday. In her felicitation message, Bangladesh Prime Minister expressed hope that dynamic leadership of Koirala and with strong popular support of the people of Nepal the Prime

Minister of Nepal would be able to successfully guide the people of Nepal towards peace, stable democracy and economic prosperity. *Compiled from Rastriya Samachar Samiti.*

Constituent Assembly Election Endorsed

The House of Representatives (HoR) on Sunday unanimously endorsed the proposal to go for the election of the constituent assembly tabled by Prime Minister Girirja Prasad Koirala. Apart from the seven party alliance, the Rastriya Prajatantra Party and Rastriya Janashakti Party also supported the proposal. Discussion was held on Sunday on the proposal after the opening speech of Prime Minister Koirala, before passing the proposal unanimously. Prime Minister Koirala filed the proposal to go for election to constituent assembly on the first session of the HoR on Friday. The SPA reached to an agreement with the Maoists in last November to bring Maoists into mainstream of politics by holding the election of the constituent assembly. Earlier, Maoists announced protest programme immediately after the royal proclamation of reinstating the dissolved HoR, saying that election of the constituent assembly is a must to resolve the current political problems of the country. They later called back the decision after Prime Minister Koirala assured them in this regard. *Compiled from Reports.*

Election Of Constituent Assembly Is A Must : Professionals

Terming the House reinstatement as a "partial victory" of the people's movement, professionals from different walks of life stressed the need to continue the movement for taking the country to constituent assembly elections, as demanded by people on the street. Speaking at a function organized by the Confederation of Nepalese Professionals (CONEP) to mark the 117th May Day, they also argued that constituent assembly election was a must even for ensuring trade union rights and total democracy. Speaking at the programme, general secretary of CONEP Premal Khanal said the movement had just passed through the first stage and said that people should caution leaders to move to the complete victory. "Instead of celebrating victory, we need to caution leaders to address the desire expressed by people on the street," he added.

"This is not the time to celebrate victory on the street," said Anil Regmi, general secretary of Nepal Rangers' Association. Referring to House revival, Regmi added, "It is high time that we, from the streets, cautioned leaders to go for constituent assembly election." Hari Mishra of Nepal Ex-civil Servants Association asked all professionals to exert pressure to go for the election of the constituent assembly. On the occasion, CONEP president Shushil Chandra Amatya thanked all professionals for their support in making the people's movement a success. He also asked all professionals to dedicate themselves to service of the nation and its people. *Compiled from Reports.*

Party Leaders Warned Not To Deceive People

Participants of an interaction have warned that the party leaders, too, will be swept away along with monarchy if they try to deceive people in any way. Speaking at an interaction organised by the Everest Press Club in the Capital on Saturday, president of Maoist-affiliated trade union, All Nepal Trade Union Federation (ANTUF), Shalik Ram Jammakattel said, "People's movement will sweep away many party leaders if they try to deceive people." adding, "People will punish leaders for their misdeeds." He also accused parties for breaching the 12-point understanding by not consulting the Maoists before welcoming the royal proclamation. Speaking at the same programme, political analyst, Hari Rokka said, "If the parties compel people to launch another people's movement it will not only sweep away monarchy but also leaders." Rokka further said that the parliament should immediately take a decision on major issues raised by the people including an unconditional election to a constituent assembly and it should not go for more than seven days. Former NSU general secretary Gagan Thapa said it is for sure that the crowd belonging to the Palace is conspiring against the people. *Compiled from Reports.*

Eight Soldiers Killed, Nine Injured In Landmine Explosion In Gulmi

At least eight soldiers were killed and nine others were injured in a landmine explosion within the RNA barrack at Tamghas, the district headquarters of Gulmi, some 350 km west of capital, Kathmandu, on Saturday. According to officials, the

explosion took place at around 11:30 a.m. on Saturday as a group of soldiers were digging at the perimeter of the barrack to construct defense positions. The soldiers were new to the area and had just replaced the old battalion. The RNA officials said injured soldiers have been airlifted to Kathmandu for treatment. The incident has occurred just three days after the three-month-long unilateral ceasefire announced by the Maoist rebels. Over 13,000 people have been killed during the Maoist insurgency over the last decade. *Compiled from Reports.*

Army Men Kill 6 Civilians In Morang

Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) soldiers have shot and killed six innocent civilians and wounded two dozen others in Belbari area of the eastern district of Morang. RNA soldiers sprayed bullets on the local residents who had gone to protest in front of the security base camp in Belbari this afternoon after army men allegedly raped and killed a 22-year-old local girl, Sapana Gurung, Tuesday night, reports quoting eyewitnesses said. Six villagers died on the spot while at least 24 others received bullet injuries. The injured have been admitted to the BP Koirala Institute of Health Sciences in Dharan. Eight of them are in critical condition, medical personnel said. The six killed have been brought to the hospital for post mortem, but their identity has not been made public yet. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) in a statement this evening confirmed the death of six civilians but claimed that the security forces opened fire in self-defence as the crowd turned violent and tried to vandalise the security post. The statement also said there was "firing from inside the crowd". Report quoted coordinator of Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC)'s Biratnagar regional office, Som Raj Thapa, as saying that the army should have used teargas and blank shots as warnings but it instead opened fire, adding that this was a flagrant violation of human rights. *Compiled from Reports.*

RNA Pledges Assistance To Victims Of Belbari Incident

Eastern divisional headquarters of the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) here pledged to provide Rs 50,000 each to the families of those killed by RNA soldiers in Belbari on Wednesday. After a meeting among RNA officials, representatives of political parties, human rights activists and locals, it was also

informed that Rs 150,000 would be distributed to families of those injured in the incident. Six persons were killed while over five dozen others were injured when RNA soldiers, under the command of captain Pralhad Gurung, opened fire at locals protesting the alleged rape and killing of local woman Sapana Gurung, by RNA men. Gurung's family will also receive Rs 50,000, according to Lieutenant Colonel Tek Bahadur Chand, Spokesperson of RNA's divisional headquarters. Earlier, Morang District Administration Office had provided Rs 10,000 each to the families of those slain. Chand said that investigation into the incident was still underway. "We will make public the report and take action against any found guilty," said he. A four-member probe committee formed by RNA was scheduled to submit its report by Friday. However, locals expressing dissatisfaction over the RNA's committee, had demanded formation of an all-party probe committee. *Compiled from Reports.*

Nepse Posts 11.4 Points Growth

The index of Nepal Stock Exchange (Nepse) registered impressive growth of 11.4 points in its index over the week. According to data of Nepal Stock Exchange, the Nepse index opened at 331.88 points on Tuesday when the market opened after a 19-day general strike in support of pro-democracy movement of the country reached to at 343.28 points on Wednesday, when the weekly share market closed. The Nepse floor was earlier closed for 19 days as employees and brokers went on strike in support of the protest called by seven-party alliance (SPA). The strike by employees at Nepal Bank Ltd also hampered transactions at Nepse as halt in transactions in the central bank made them unable to clear and settle payment of traded shares. The report shows that a total of 47,949 unit shares worth Rs 24.56 million were traded over the week. According to experts, the restoration of democracy has improved sentiments of investors, promoting them to buy shares at higher prices. *Compiled from Reports.*

Gold Price Surges In Local Market

Price of gold in the local market surged by Rs 110 overnight to touch a record high level of Rs 15,050 (around US\$ 210) per ten gram in the local market Thursday. The price hike comes due to a rise in bullion prices in the international market. According to entrepreneurs, the price of gold in the

international market was recorded at US\$ 637.15 per troy ounce, at the time when local dealers set the bullion prices for the day. A group of gold dealers fix the local price for the day at around ten in the morning based on the prices of gold in the international market. The price of the precious yellow metal, in the international market, had, however, come down to US\$ 633 per troy ounce by late evening soon after China's Central Bank announced its decision to raise the one-year lending rate to 5.85 percent from 5.58 earlier. *Compiled from Reports.*

90 Percent Drop In Business Of Banking Sector

With all economic activities coming to standstill during the 19-day long general strike for the restoration of democracy in the country, the banking sector witnessed a sloth in its activities. Bankers said although it is difficult to estimate losses in exact figures, transactions dropped by 90 per cent. Report quoted Prithvi Bahadur Pande, chief executive officer (CEO) at Nepal Investment Bank, (NIB) as saying that there were no complications over deposits but LCs and guarantees were affected most. As no sale has taken place, companies are finding it difficult to repay bank loans, he said. The Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB), categorising this Jan Andolan as a 'special circumstance', should soften its stance on loan repayment. "This strike has given us a golden opportunity. The country has been highlighted in the international media. If things go well and peace prevails, the tourism industry would boom and prosperity is inevitable in the long run," Pande said. There is light at the end of the tunnel, he added. Radesh Pant, president of Bankers' Association of Nepal, said the bandh has affected the transactions seriously. There would be a repayment problem leading to less revenue generation, he said. "With donor countries supporting the movement, economic activities would gain in momentum. If we can restore peace in the country, there is a bright prospect for investment," he added. Kamal Subedi, manager, Development Credit Bank Ltd (DCBL), suggested that the government provide a tax holiday, as it has been difficult for banks to recover loans. The restoration of democracy would certainly attract foreign aid and investment and the inflow of remittance would also be good, he hoped. Democratic environment can lure more of the foreign money and trust, the bankers hoped. *Compiled from Reports.*



King Gyanendra administering oath of office and secrecy to the newly appointed prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala

HOURS AFTER WITHDRAWING THE BLOCKADE OF THE capital and all district headquarters, the CPN (Maoist) on Wednesday announced a unilateral ceasefire for three months with immediate effect. Issuing a statement on Wednesday, Maoist Chairman Prachanda said, the truce was for facilitating the ongoing "people's struggle" for a constituent assembly and a democratic republic "so as to lead the struggle to a historic conclusion" and for encouraging the parliamentary political parties to announce unconditional constituent assembly. The Maoists withdrew the blockade of the Kathmandu valley and other district headquarters on Wednesday considering the appeal of Nepali Congress President Girija Prasad Koirala to do so. Earlier, in a statement, Koirala has urged the Maoists to call off the general strike in the wake of the new political development of the country. The SPA selected Koirala for the post of Prime Minister of the reinstated House of Representatives (HoR). On Tuesday, the rebels had announced blockade of the capital and all district headquarters until there was an announcement of unconditional election for constituent assembly expressing dissatisfaction over the royal proclamation to revive the dissolved HoR instead of holding the election of the constituent assembly.

DEPLORING THE KILLING OF SEVEN CIVILIANS BY THE Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) soldiers in Belbari, Morang, on Wednesday, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) -Nepal has called for independent judicial investigation into the incident. "OHCHR-Nepal deplores the latest killing of seven unarmed civilians by the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA), in Belbari, Morang District, on 25 and 26 April, and calls for action to ensure that no further such killings occur," a press statement issued by the OHCHR said, adding, "OHCHR-Nepal is therefore calling on the civilian authorities to establish, at the earliest opportunity, a fully independent judicial investigation into the shootings at Belbari." It added, "This investigation should establish the facts of what occurred on 25 and 26 April, and make recommendations for accountability mechanisms for the punishment of those responsible, as well as measures to ensure that such violations are not repeated." The OHCHR deployed its teams to Belbari, Itahari and Dharan to begin investigations into these shootings, according to the statement. "OHCHR-Nepal has confirmed that one civilian woman was shot dead on 25 April by RNA soldiers, and that a further six civilians were killed on 26 April when RNA soldiers fired numerous rounds at demonstrators

who had gathered to protest the alleged rape and killing of this woman the previous day." More than 20 others are confirmed to have been injured in this shooting. Reacting to the clarification of the Ministry of Defence on the incident, the UN rights body stated, "OHCHR-Nepal has found no evidence to support the RNA account that shots were fired from among the demonstrators on 26 April or that civilians were armed or presented an imminent threat to the lives of members of the RNA." This is the second time in less than ten days that RNA soldiers have opened fire with live ammunition on civilians in the Eastern Region, following the shooting at demonstrators at Chandragadhi, Jhapa District on 19 April, which resulted in two fatalities and at least 13 civilians suffering bullet injuries, the statement further said. "It is essential, as part of Nepal's current transition, that a new ethos of accountability is established. The shooting of unarmed civilians is inexcusable, and it is vital in order to establish public trust in the rule of law that an appropriate investigation be completed and sanctions imposed on those responsible. Those under investigation should be suspended immediately," the statement quoted Ian Martin, OHCHR representative in Nepal as saying.

NEPAL'S TOTAL DEBT IN 2005 INCREASED TO RS 19.8 billion posting a heavy fiscal burden, states a latest report of the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Burgeoning debt servicing has been a serious concern given a sharp fall in recent years in foreign loan financing. "Security outlays has also increased to Rs 17.5 billion, accounting for about one fifth of total government spending," the ADB report stated. However, hike in domestic credit was found robust, encouraged by commercial banks' efforts to expand consumer loan volumes through attractive packages and heavy marketing. Commercial banks' liquidity tightened slightly in 2005, but remained ample, and their deposits rates showed no upward movement, staying well below inflation. The hike in the prices of petroleum products and daily consumer goods, the VAT rate, as well as civil servants' salaries contributed to increase inflationary pressures that registered at about seven per cent. In the meantime, revenue has increased by 0.75 percentage points to 13.1 percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) buoyed by an increased in the value added tax (VAT) rate from 10 per cent to 13 per cent and significant collection of dividends from Nepal Telecom (NT), a state-owned corporation. According to the ADB, report, overseas remittances rose by 17.6 per cent to \$1.1 billion in 2005, and contributed to offset the pronounced (41.1 per cent) decline in tourism receipts as well as the traditional trade deficit. Meanwhile, the ADB has set low GDP growth at two per cent for 2006 and 3.4 per cent for 2007.

AT A TIME WHEN THE COUNTRY IS PASSING THROUGH A difficult situation due to the flaring conflict of the country, an Italian national Antonio Peretti, has brought the Olympic torch from Italy to Makalu base camp wishing for the peace and prosperity in Nepal. He traveled from Tumlingtar to the base camp (5600 meters high), a distance of approximately 130 kilometers, with bare feet. According to tourism entrepreneurs, he set a new record by walking without shoes upto 5600 meters which will help for the publicity of Nepal internationally. Peretti has trekked in many countries including Brazil, Bolivia, and South Africa among others. Before visiting Nepal, he had visited Pope Benedict of Vatican city of Rome and Dalai Lama in Dharamshala to take blessing from them for peace in the country. He arrived here with the Italian Makalu expedition, lead by Mario Vielmo. He handed over the Olympic torch to Mario Vielmo at Makalu base camp. ■

“We will go to the constituent assembly at any cost. Now, even the king cannot stop it. Article 127 of the constitution will be scrapped. The king will not be able raise his head now.”

Sher Bahadur Deuba, president of the Nepali Congress (Democratic) and former prime minister, addressing a mass meeting in the open theatre.

* * *

“The agitation will not stop until the election of the constituent assembly is finalized.”

Amik Sherchan, president of the People's Front Nepal, addressing a mass meeting at the Open Theatre.

* * *

“This agitation’s commander is not Girijababu.”

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

* * *

“We are yet to see what response comes from the palace when an unconditional constituent assembly election is announced in the country.”

Shalik Ram Jammakattel, president of Maoist-affiliated trade union, All Nepal Trade Union



Federation (ANTUF), speaking at an in Kathmandu.

* * *

interaction organized by the Everest Press Club in the Capital.

* * *

“The controversial Rajparishad should be immediately scrapped.”

Ram Chandra Poudel, general secretary of Nepali Congress, in The Kathmandu Post.

* * *

“Nepalese themselves should decide on the future of the monarchy.”

Sita Ram Yochuri, politburo member of the Indian Communist Party, speaking at a face-to-face program at the Reporters' Club, during his recent visit to Kathmandu.

* * *

“The uprising will not only do away with monarchy but also sweep away SPA (seven party alliance) leaders.”

Hari Rokka, a political analyst, speaking at an

TRANSITION

APPOINTED: Girirja Prasad Koirala, president of Nepali Congress and supreme leader of the People’s Movement, as the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Nepal, by the King on the recommendation of the seven-party alliance (SPA) and in accordance with the Constitution of the Kingdom 1990.

K.P Sharma Oli as the Deputy Prime minister and Foreign Minister, **Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat** as the Finance Minister, **Krishna Sitaula** as the Home Minister, **Mahanta Thakur** as the Minister for Agriculture and Cooperatives, **Gopal**

Man Shrestha as the Minister for Physical Planning, **Prabhu Narayan Chaudhary** as the Minister for Land Reforms.

RESIGNED: Laxmi Bahadur Nirala, Attorney General of the Kingdom of Nepal, from his post

Dr. Shankar Sharma, vice-chairman, and Dr. Champak Pokharel, Dr. Bijaya Shrestha, and other members of National Planning Commission, from their posts.

Indira Prasain, the special consultant of the ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, from her post.

SUSPENDED: Prakash Koirala and Narayan Singh Pun, from general membership of Nepali Congress, for opening new parties, by the party

AWARDED: Bishnu Nisthuri, president of Federation of Nepalese Journalists, and Kabir Rana, coordinator of network of weeklies and fortnightlies, with the Tarini Prasad Koirala journalism Award of this year, by the award committee.

Bhakta Raj Acharya, with the ‘Image Life Time Achievement Award’ of this year, by Image Channel Pvt. Ltd.

Nepal's Water Resources And The World

By DR AB THAPA

Water is absolutely necessary for the very existence of human being who appeared on the earth some two to three million years ago in early Pleistocene. At present the population of the world is rapidly increasing. Similarly, the demand for water for use in agriculture and industries is also constantly rising, with the result that the availability of water is already critical to future developments in many areas of our world.

Of all the uses humans have for water, agriculture has always required the most. Even today, to produce 1 metric ton of grain takes some 1,000 metric tons of water—enough to fill up three average-sized houses. According to the UN, about 70 percent of all water withdrawals in the 1990s were used for agricultural purposes. Thus agriculture consumes more water than any other use.

Worldwide, hydropower represented 19 percent of the total energy generated in 1999, the most recent year for which data are available. In many countries, hydro electric power is the dominant source of electric power. In 1999 Norway derived 99 percent of its power from hydroelectric plants. Canada, the largest producer of hydroelectric power in the world, generated 340.3 billion KWh. in 1999. This figure constituted 60 percent of the nation's electric power. Hydroelectric-power generation in the United States increased from about 16 billion KWh in 1920 to 305.6 billion KWh in 1999. Although the United States runs a close second to Canada in the total amount of hydroelectric power produced, only 8 percent of the electric power used in the United States was generated by hydroelectric power plants in 1999. Nepal produced only about 2.2 billion KWh hydroelectricity in the year 2003 despite the fact that Nepal is one of the very rich countries in hydropower resources. Its hydropower potential is estimated at 83.28 million KW

World's Demand for Water

It is said that water shortages could also lead to international conflict as countries compete for limited water resources. In 1995 Ismail Serageldin, a top official at the World Bank, declared, "the wars of the next century will be over water." Political tensions over water often result when different nations lay claim to the same river, lake, or aquifer. According to the UN, more than 300 river basins and aquifers worldwide cross national boundaries, creating the potential for conflict.

The world's population grew enormously in the 20th century. According to UN estimates, 1.65 billion people lived on Earth in 1900. By 1999 the world's population had passed 6 billion people, and the UN estimates that it will reach 9 billion people by 2050. But the annual supply of renewable fresh water will remain constant. As the UN Commission on Sustainable Development noted, the amount of water

available to each person decreases as the population grows, raising the possibility of water shortages.

Water shortages will not come all at once in every part of the world. Just as the world's population is unevenly distributed by region, so is the annual supply of renewable water. Rainfall and snowfall are determined by uneven weather patterns and landscape, and as a result, some areas of the world get more precipitation than others.

For example, Canada is one of the largest countries in the world, with a total land area of about 10 million sq km. In the late 1990s Canada's population was about 29 million people. In India, by contrast, about 984 million people live in a total land area of 3 million sq km. Clearly India has a higher demand for water than Canada. But Canada has more water. According to the World Resources Institute, Canada's annually renewable water resources total 2,901 cu km per year, compared with India's 2,085 cu km per year.

The same holds true elsewhere in the world. Brazil has more renewable water than central and southern Africa. And the combined renewable water resources of Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt are less than that of Nicaragua alone.

This uneven distribution of water resources means that supplies in some parts of the world are already stretched thin. According to the UN, about one-third of the world's population lived in countries with moderate to high water stress in the late 1990s. Moderate water stress means that the country is currently using 20 percent or more of its annual renewable resources. Countries in this category included Germany, India, South Africa, Spain, and the United States. High water stress means the country is using 40 percent or more. Countries in this category included Egypt, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. By 2025 the UN expects that two-thirds of the world's population will live in countries with moderate to high water stress.

India's Demand for Water

Like in the USA, where agriculture accounts for 83% of the total water consumption, in India also the demand for agricultural water dominates the total demand for water. India has the second largest population in the world. There are plentiful rains over most of the country but they are concentrated in a few months. As a result, India is already experiencing water scarcity. Mr. Chaturbedi M.C. has claimed that by 2005 the total ground and surface water would be assigned to users and thus further irrigation would be restricted.

Nepalese Situation

Some years back studies were carried out in the Water and Energy Commission (WECS) to estimate the maximum potential demands for Nepal's surface water resources and to determine how those demands compare to the supplies available. The potential demand for surface water in Nepal

is in the order of 1200 cu. m/s. The available supplies of all the rivers at 80% probability factor could be considered to be very close to potential demand in the absence of regulation of runoff. Thus under such condition Nepal will not have any surplus. However, after the regulation of the runoff of all the rivers the available supplies could exceed our potential demand by almost 4 times. Despite such enormous surpluses, the dry basins like the Kankai, Bagmati, West Rapti would be experiencing water shortages even after the regulation

Nepal's Hydropower Potential

Our media, planners, politicians etc are never tired of telling that Nepal is the second richest country in the world after Brazil in hydropower resources. They chose to ignore even though they are repeatedly told that neither the Brazil is the world's richest country in hydropower resources nor Nepal is the second richest. There are a number of countries

even in our own neighbourhood such as China, India and Russia possessing far more hydropower resources by comparison with Nepal. China is the richest country in the world in hydropower resources. According to some recent data the hydropower potential of China is estimated to be about 676 million KW. Hydropower potential of Brazil is only about 365 million KW. Hydropower potentials of Russia, India, Peru, Colombia, Canada and Ecuador are 330 million KW, 300 million KW, 210 million KW, 147 million KW, 110 million KW and 93 million KW respectively. Technically feasible hydropower potential of Congo is 120 million KW. Thus the total hydropower potential of Congo should be far more than 120 million KW. Hydropower potential of Nepal is only about 83 million KW.

Dr. H.M. Shrestha had been conducting research works in the Moscow Power Institute of the former Soviet Union more than 40 years ago. His research works had culminated in establishing with a quite reasonable degree of accuracy the hydropower potential of Nepal to be about 83 million KW. As a result, his findings have been accepted without any reservation by everybody. In course of his daunting research works he had analyzed the maps of rainfall distribution and average surface run-off of the rivers flowing in Nepal. The typical profiles of Nepal's rivers were observed, and an empirical formula was derived that could be used for approximate evaluation of the power potentials of small rivers. The rivers were classified according to the sources of their feeding.

For the purpose of evaluation of the power potential, the rivers have been divided into two groups: (1) Big rivers with catchment area of more than 1,000 sq. km. (2) Small rivers, which have catchment area less than 1,000 sq. km. A total of 115 rivers were studied. Out of the total 115 rivers, the number of big rivers are 33. The rivers have been divided into basin wise also. The river basins are Sapta-Kosi, Sapta-Gandaki, Karnali & Mahakali, and southern rivers. Catchment areas of each of the above basins excluding the areas in Tibet are 27,300 sq. km., 31,600 sq. km., 47,300 sq. km., and 39,300 sq. km. respectively. Similarly the gross theoretical hydropower potential of each of the above mentioned basins are 23.35 million KW, 20.65 million KW, 36.18 KW, and 4.1 million KW respectively. According to Dr. Shrestha's findings the gross theoretical hydropower potential of all big rivers with catchment area exceeding 1,000 sq. km. is 72.45 million KW. The hydropower potential of small rivers, which have catchment area less than 1,000 sq. km., is only about 10.83 million KW. Thus, Dr. Shrestha established that the theoretical hydropower potential of Nepal is 83.28 million KW.

Awareness of the Water Resources Issues

There is almost a complete lack of awareness of various issues related to our water resource despite the fact that it is our country's greatest natural resource. Our media, planners, politicians etc, as explained earlier, are never tired of telling that Nepal is the second richest country in the world after

Brazil in hydropower resources. They chose to ignore even though they are repeatedly told that neither the Brazil is the world's richest country in hydropower resources nor Nepal is the second richest.

There was a funny incident that explains how little we know about the hydropower resources in general and the techno-economic limitations in transmitting electricity across a very long distance in particular. Certain section of media and planners were upbeat when one of the multinational hydropower developers proposed a deceitful plan to develop Nepal's abundant hydropower resources to export hydroelectricity to China, which is the world richest country in hydropower resources. Some of us might have been terribly shocked when that very multinational company was severely punished a few years later for its illegal deeds in its own home country. However, many of us might not have still realized that we were being deliberately misled. ■

According to some recent data the hydropower potential of China is estimated to be about 676 million KW. Hydropower potential of Brazil is only about 365 million KW. Hydropower potentials of Russia, India, Peru, Colombia, Canada and Ecuador are 330 million KW, 300 million KW, 210 million KW, 147 million KW, 110 million KW and 93 million KW respectively. Technically feasible hydropower potential of Congo is 120 million KW. Thus the total hydropower potential of Congo should be far more than 120 million

(Dr. Thapa writes on water resources)

TOURISM

Emerging Hopes

With the end of the months old political turmoil and the announcement of three-month long ceasefire by the Maoists, tourism entrepreneurs are hoping for better days ahead

By THAKUR AMGAI

Last week saw a couple of good news for tourism entrepreneurs. The streets and Thamel that had remained gloomy for weeks once again rejoiced with the reinstatement of the House of Representatives, followed by the withdrawal of the general strike by the seven parties and the Maoist's ceasefire.

"I am very happy that everything has opened after so many days and we can again move around freely," said Joseph, an Australian tourist, as he was sipping beer at a bar in Thamel. "Tranquility is a must for the tourists to come to Nepal. I hope the present environment will continue and we can visit Nepal again in fearless environments."

Joseph was one of the few tourists who had opted to stay back during the almost twenty days long strike. Most of the tourists had left the country during that time.

With the latest developments in the national politics, the tourism sector that was in the verge of displacement has seen new hopes. Travel agents have started receiving more enquiries, hotels have started receiving more bookings and more activities have been seen around the restaurants, bars and pubs.

However, the big question now is will this tranquility sustain? At a time when there are lot of confusions about what course the country will take in the future, tourism entrepreneurs are keeping their fingers crossed for peaceful landing of the decade long insurgency. Tourism entrepreneurs are optimistic of the future, but not assured.

"The major concern for tourism entrepreneurs now is whether Maoists will renounce violence permanently and come

to the mainstream politics," said Deepak Mahat, a leading tourism entrepreneur and former president of Trekking Agents Association of Nepal (TAAN). "The future of tourism sector will now depend on the safe landing of the Maoists. At present, there are enough reasons to be optimistic, but the prevalent confusion in national politics does not permit us to be assured. It

as unskilled youths and contributed largely in foreign currency collection. Tourist arrival had crossed half million in 1999, one year after the celebration of Visit Nepal Year 1998. With a view to promote and develop tourism sector institutionally Nepalese government established Nepal Tourism Board in 1997.

However, the number of tourist arrivals started plummeting as the insurgency escalated. The crisis was aggravated by tragic incidents such as the hijack of the Indian Airlines aeroplane and the Royal massacre.

Tourism entrepreneurs heaved sigh of relief during times of ceasefire when the tourist arrival used to increase temporarily. During the unilateral ceasefire called by the Maoists in the



Wandering tourists: Waiting for peace

still remains to be seen how the parties will address the Maoists and how the Maoists will react to that."

Considered the backbone of national economy, tourism sector had been suffering the brunt of violent insurgency in the recent years. Tourism entrepreneurs have been urging for a sustainable peace to both the warring parties. They had shown active participation in the peaceful protest during the recent people's agitation.

During its hey days, tourism provided employment to thousands of skilled as well

autumn season last year, tourist arrival had increased largely and entrepreneurs and employees alike had done a good business.

Economists say that development of tourism sector is the most appropriate way for the fastest development of the country. With more and more people traveling outside their country for holidaying purpose every year, Nepal has got a huge international market still unexplored. However, peace is imperative for the development of tourism. ■

MAY DAY

Fight for Right

Nepal's trade union workers celebrate the May Day with enthusiasm

By A CORRESPONDENT

At a time when the country's industrial sector has been passing through a very critical phase and almost all industries are in the verge of closure, Nepalese workers celebrated the May Day.

Dominated by communist dominated trade union organizations, the red flags with sickle and hammer covered most May Day parades. The demands of all the trade union organizations are that they want protection and pay.

Nepalese workers have been facing two major problems. First, the industrial laborers and workers should have job security and the second they have to fight and ensure their rights.

"We have restored the democratic process and now we have to work to strengthen the rights of workers. During the people's movement, the workers have

played a very important role," said Laxman Basnet, president of Nepal Trade Union Congress.

From banking sectors to other service sectors, participation of the workers was crucial to make the people's movement successful. "We will respect and recognize the role played by workers during the people's movement. After its formation, the new government will make certain positive decisions to provide relief to workers," said CPN-UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal. "We cannot ignore the role the workers played."

Industrialists argue that Nepal's labor law is in favor of the workers and guarantee their rights. "As long as certain clauses of the labor law are not amended, no body will come to invest in Nepal," said an industrialist. "Thanks to the insurgency and labor law, the cost of the production is higher in Nepal."

Following the reinstatement of the House of Representatives and formation of new government, the workers have heaved a sigh of relief as the royal regime was in the position to announce a new amendment in the Labor Law giving some more role to the management.

"I will assure you that this government will cancel all the laws introduced by the previous royal regime," said Nepal addressing the rally of workers and laborers. "The new government is People's government and it will not work against the welfare of workers."

With the intensification of Maoist insurgency and prolonging political instability, many industries have closed down and many others are in the process of closure. Whether it was Biratnagar Jute Mill, Nepal's oldest Jute Mill, or Everest Battery or Himal Cement Factory, a number of industrial units have already closed. Many star hotels including Hotel Yak and Yeti, a five star hotel, have already closed laying off thousands of workers.

After the decline of tourist arrivals, many star hotels have already closed laying off many workers, while many others have started demanding some sort of relief packages in tourists city Pokhara and capital Kathmandu.

After nearly four years of restricted rule, Nepalese workers celebrated May Day in the open atmosphere demanding better life and better working environment in the country. From the left leaning Trade Unions to democratic party affiliated trade unions, all of them have similar demands.

Following the restoration of multi-party democracy in 1990, Nepal's trade union started to flourish and they have found favorable environment to organize themselves for the betterment of their life. Despite closure of many industries over the years, the number of organized workers in Nepal is about 400,000. The number of workforce in unorganized sector is much higher than the workers of formal sector. ■



Workers: United we stand

Photo: Gorkhapatra

CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

Challenging Task

By passing the proposal to go for the election to Constituent Assembly (CA) by the second meeting of the reinstated House of Representatives, the country has opened a new political and constitutional course that could possibly lead the country to new phases of political instability. The major challenge for the newly appointed prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala and the reinstated parliament now, is to decide about how to hold the elections to CA and to formulate a new constitution that can accommodate varying opinions expressed during the agitation and guarantying the sovereignty of the people. By accepting the CA as an entry point, which will formulate the sixth constitution of Nepal, political leaders have already opened the Pandora's Box. The question now is that how new democratic constitution will be framed when Nepal's all traditional and modern institutions are badly shaken

By KESHAB POUDEL

Although members of recently reinstated House of Representatives unanimously passed the proposal to go for the elections for CA, a group of civil society members, backed by members of other indigenous community, linguistic groups, women, Dalits, party workers, film actors and students are yet to suspend their 'Dharna' (sit-in protest) demanding unconditional elections to a CA at the main gate of Singha Durbar.

From burning tire to disrupting the traffic, the demonstrations are coercing the members of parliament to decide what they want to do. It seems that the parliament endorsed not the free will but the coercive proposal of agitators. If this trend will prevail, rule of law will be mockery in the Kingdom of Nepal.

On April 28 and 29, the first and second day of the reinstated parliament, there was a big crowd of spectators outside the entrance of Singha Durbar. Just a kilometer away, pro-Maoist student organization was flaring their

universally discarded red flags with hammer and sickles and addressing a mass meeting of about 5,000 spectators threatening to use all necessary means to press their demand for democratic republic (Loktantrick Ganatantra).

These are indications of how populism is brewing in Nepal to coerce political and parliamentary process. As a saying goes, 'Extremism eats its mother', Nepal's political forces-internal and external- which have given birth to all kinds of extremisms, seem to be victimized one after another. After eating



Parliament in session: Crucial time

Photo: Gorkhapatra

all liberal forces in Nepal, it will direct towards our immediate neighbor.

Political leaders - who have promoted all kinds of extremism during agitations - are now struggling to survive from a new kind of extremism in the street. There are more powerful extremists outside the street who are waiting to destroy the show in street.

"The kind of street agitations shown in the street benefits nobody. These kinds of demonstrations neither help to foster liberal democracy nor pave way for smooth transition. We need support and cooperation of our neighbor India and other foreign friends including the US and the European countries for smooth transition of political process," said former minister Rabindranath Sharma. "Personally, King Gyanendra gave many troubles to me but institution of monarchy is still the unifying and stabilizing factor in Nepal. For the mistakes of individual King, I cannot blame the institution of monarchy."

From east to west, there is extensive presence of communists including the Maoists cadre who can create problems at any time with unmanageable consequences. Moderate Nepali Congress and other traditional political forces are in no position to outnumber them.

People are still law abiding. Can any political party think of burning tires, blocking streets, disturbing the educational institutions to get popular votes in its favor during the elections? It is unimaginable to many. This is the reason Nepal's politics entered into a new phase - which may appear miracles to other. Not to those who understand Nepal well.

"The reinstatement of the present parliament can be taken as a temporary and ad-hoc measure. It does not carry the latest will of the people which is due to be expressed in the elections through the

ballot. The present parliament is guided by street agitation in which silent majority did not have active role. Its real and determining role can be reflected only by elections. Soon this government will go into the elections - whether for parliament to work as a constituent assembly or a constituent assembly to carry on the task of forming the government too," said a political analyst. "Whatever might the title of that, it has to fulfill two obligations: to rewrite the constitution and to form a new government."

Constituent Assembly

In the 56 years long modernization history of Nepal, the country has already seen experiments of five constitutions. These constitutions include the Government of Nepal Act 1948, The Interim Government of Nepal Act, 1951, the Constitution for the Kingdom of Nepal 1959, Constitution of Nepal 1961 and Constitution of Kingdom of Nepal 1990.

The present constitution which was formulated following about two months long popular uprising in 1990 killing more than 150 Nepalese was declared void by announcing the elections to Constituent Assembly on Sunday.

This is not first time in the history of Nepal when the country expressed its commitments to hold the elections to Constituent Assembly. At similar circumstances in 1950, King Tribhuvan returned to Nepal with an announcement to hold the elections to Constituent Assembly.

Thanks to the series of political instability, the country could not hold the elections and the country went into parliamentary democratic set up making new constitution by a group of experts in 1959.

At a time when the country already has a democratic and workable constitution - the Constitution of Kingdom of Nepal, 1990 - with sovereign power vested upon the people, guaranteed periodical elections for the parliament, ensured fundamental rights for the people, independent judiciary and free press, nobody understands the rationale behind holding the elections for Constituent Assembly.

As they get political mandate from the street, the members of reinstated House of Representatives, from its very first day session gave an impression that very soon they have to face the elections, even though it is for Constituent Assembly, and seek support and mobilize the common people. So, nobody is there to defend the constitution and own it. Although Nepali Congress and CPN-UML were two major players of 1990, they decided to remain mum.

Role of Monarchy

Whatever was sought at the moment of agitation, it cannot convert that into favorable ballot. From now onwards, they have to keep the vast silent majority in the mind and try to win over their confidence through the elections.

"The silent majority of this country, no doubt, has a support to liberal democracy but at the same time it has a deep rooted monarchical ethos. At the time of elections, no political party can risk to denounce the widely respected institution



Koirala and Nepal: long live friend-

Photo: Gorkhapatra

of monarchy. So far as the mistakes of the King are concerned Nepal's history is full of that. Despite that, the habitual response of the people is to forget and forgive its mistakes and preserve it as a unifying force," said a political analyst. "The people play a decisive role either through the elections or in an unusual situation by rebellion. This time the political situation was boiled to a rampant defiance but it did not turn into a rebellion. The authority and the continuity of state survive with a bow down by the King."

One has to see in days to come whether the ground reality of this country is overturn. During 1979 referendum between Panchayat and Multi-party democracy to assure the people of Nepal a firebrand communist leader and former prime minister Manmohan Adhikary had a declaration in the mass meeting in Kathmandu that the institution of monarchy will be there as long as temple of Pashupatinath will be there.

However, his follower and comrade prefers republic." Our party has decided to go for the democratic republic in the forthcoming elections for the constituent assembly. We will decide the verdict given by the people whether they like monarchy or not," said CPN-UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal.

Late King Birendra was always assessed even by serious opponents that he was gentle as a person. So the prestige of monarchy remains in high estimation as it is not because the person in the thrown is clever and cunning.

Queen Elizabeth II, who has never gave any interview to the press, has shown how a monarchy can touch the heart of people. The queen is actually aware that the continued success of the monarchy depends on the careful nurturing of popular consent.

In her recent address, she said that she cannot lead in battle nor she can make law but she can give heart. Is it for that heart that the British people are carrying the burden of ancient institution of monarchy? Common people in Britain can hardly verbalize the rational behind preserving this

institution but no one can say anything to its emotional role. Some of highly developed countries of Europe like Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Netherlands and in the east Japan also retain monarchy.

"The role of monarchy is not to exercise executive or judicial powers but to symbolize the integration and unity of the nation. That is completely emotional role which has made an ancient and obsolete institution useful to this ultra modern situation. Nepal has miles to go to reach to that stage of development. In pluralistic society, radical opinions are certainly there but overwhelming majority of the people in Nepal have a deep attachment with the tradition and that is the strength, too, of this country to maintain harmonious nation," said the analyst.

Despite multi ethnic, multi-racial and multi-linguistic components, even elites from the neighboring republic democracy are justifying the role of institution of monarchy. "First, it is instructive to remember the awaked fact that the monarchy in Nepal as in Bhutan epitomizes order, continuity and tradition. There may be misgivings over King Gyanendra's dogged determination to play the benevolent despot and there is justified concern at the reckless ways of crown Prince Paras. However, it is sometimes necessary to separate the individual from the institution, a distinction that the British

were good at drawing in their dealings with Princely state," writes Swapan Dasgupta, in Indian daily pioneer. "India needs a buffer and for that role there is no alternative to the King."

Recently staged great upheaval has come out with a positive result as the King has bowed down before the public opinion and also learnt a lesson. Thus, he has enhanced the prestige of the institution.

Cause of Crisis

The present political crisis appeared following the unconstitutional act of King Gyanendra to dismiss the elected prime minister in October 2002 and appointing the prime ministers on his own undermining the fact that the constitution requires parliament to operate and elect prime minister. This inner ambition to rule the country with his decree cost him a lot.

The parliament was dissolved in May 2002 with condition to hold the elections. The dissolution was conditional as the elections could not be held and it was logical in law to make incumbent parliament functional by reviving it again. It should have been done on October 4, 2002 itself as the then prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba expressed his inability to hold the elections.

Unfortunately, King Gyanendra was wrongly advised to remove the prime minister and postpone the elections for indefinite period that was a serious derailment of constitutional process. This act even shaken the present constitution.

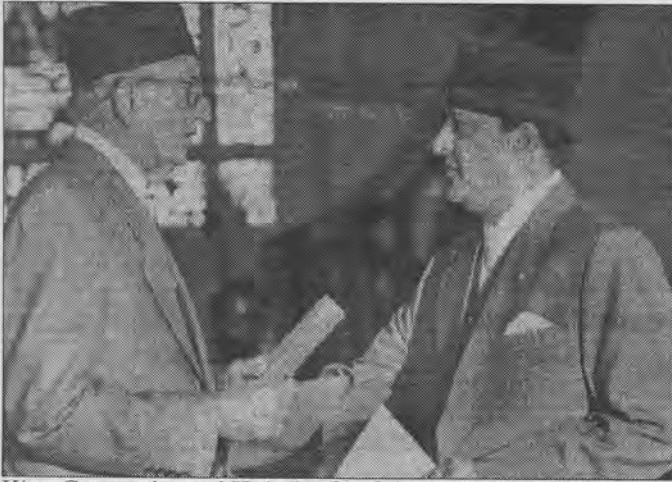
"Partly the prime minister was responsible and partly the King was responsible for that. Since that time polarization between the King and the parliamentary forces begun and entered into a prolonged political conflict. Whenever such conflicts occurred, elements- seen and unseen, came to fish in the trouble water," said the analyst.

From the beginning, the King expressed hollow over confidence and narrow vision as he had an illusion that tainted politicians of previous parliament would not be able to



Deuba: Searching for a role

Photo: Annapurna Post



King Gyanendra and Koirala: Confidence building Photo:

focusing on policy issues including the foreign policy matter. From organizing a Jamboree in Gokarna for consultations to violating his own commitments, King Gyanendra followed all the wrong practices violating the role of constitutional monarchy. King Gyanendra visited

mobilize a massive public opinion and create any serious threat to him. King's advisors failed to understand that whatever commissions and commissions are made the total credit or discredit would go to the King after the dismissal of elected government in October 2002.

In the process, King appointed three different governments led by former Lokendra Bahadur Chand, Surya Bahadur Thapa and Sher Bahadur Deuba before constituting the government under his chairmanship in February 1, 2005. He has tested so many politicians and ruined their political career.

King Gyanendra failed to understand the nature of politicians who go to the elections and renew their strength from the people, but King is never tested in such elections. If the public opinion compiles against the regime, its fatal blow is not upon King as a person but the institution of monarchy itself has to suffer.

Initially, the King declared to play a role suited to 'a 21st century monarch', but taking direct responsibility of the total governance proved his commitment wrong. Maoist insurgency, in fact, started against the multi party democratic regime, was in complete isolation internally as well as externally as long as parliament was functional. Till 2002, the King, the parliament and the international and community all had a unified stand against the insurgency. People of all walks of life tolerated all wrong practices followed by King. When elected government accountable to the parliament was functional, King gave number of interviews

the countryside and in a posture of political leaders waving hands and promising people which a monarch does not have organizations like that of political parties.

After the dismissal of the elected government, the conflict between King and parliamentary forces slowly and gradually put King into isolation. The insurgency got an opportunity to align with the parliamentary forces as well as the international communities. It was very peculiar polarization in Nepal that the agitation against the King's role got massive support from the insurgents who were branded as terrorist by even Indian and the US government.

Culmination of these crises reached into the climax on April 24 at the mid-night. When the whole country was in sleep, a sleepless King proclaimed that he would reinstate the parliament - which was made popular by continuous struggle for almost three years.

Now fractured constitutional process has come into operation through the parliament. The happiest moment for the parliamentary forces was on 24th of April. Now a count down has begun everyday as they have to produce results of these commitments which were raised during the period of agitation to fan fanatic sentiments of the people.

The King is now free from the accountability of governance and he and his crown prince can stay without power but with full respect as a unifying and emotional factor. A new account has opened for political parties and every

moment the vigilant public opinion is there to hold them responsible for their failings. This is a charm of democratic process in which no body is in the permanent hold of power and no body is immune from reprisal from people.

Boucher's Visit

US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Richard Boucher arrived here being the first international dignified visitor to Nepal following the formation of new government and reinstatement of the House of Representatives. United States has an important role to pressurize the King to restore democratic process in Nepal. "We will continue to provide necessary developmental and other supports to Nepal," said Boucher, who met prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala and CPN-UML leader Madhav Kumar Nepal.

Just a few hours before the arrival of US assistant secretary Boucher, the prime minister announced his cabinet including the members from seven political parties making CPN-UML leader K.P. Sharma Oli, deputy prime minister with foreign ministry portfolio. After the assumption of the post of Assistant secretary of State, this is Boucher's first visit to Nepal.

Country's Capability

The road ahead is very difficult, but Nepalese society has shown its own resilience and capability to face any kinds of political crises and popular upheavals. In the past over five-decade history, Nepal was able to solve all political problems through its own in-built capability.

The strength and capability of the country is judged not at the normal moment as it is done at the extra ordinary situation like the present one. One has to inspect very seriously some inbuilt and inherent capability of this small country between two powerful neighbors.

Having a long experience of self governance, overwhelming majority of Nepalese have very strong sense of patriotism and people oppose any move to degenerate its sentiments by outsiders.

There are resentments against inviting the leaders from Indian political parties as a great insult to the sacrifice of Nepalese people. "Inviting foreigners in the parliamentary rostrum, political leaders even dare to undermine the sacrifice of

Nepalese people in the popular uprising of 2006. Parliament members have committed a great insult to the sacrifice of Nepalese people. These two foreign leaders of Communist Party of India and Communist Party of Marxist Indian may be Nepal's friend but they should not have subjected themselves for Delhi to be used as the tool to humble Nepalese people by taking all the credits of mass moment or sacrifice of great Nepalese people," said Madan Regmi, chairman of Nepal China Study Center. "The Constituent Assembly (CA) is acceptable to everybody and it should be for Nepalese people and by the Nepalese people. The CA should be entirely for the purpose of protecting Nepalese sovereignty, independence and national integrity by Nepalese people."

Geo-strategically Importance

There are many factors helpful to maintain its uninterrupted independence and among them is its geo-political location. Nepal's independence and its stability are vitally important for both the neighbors, India and China. None of them can afford to provoke the other by undoing the position of Nepal.

Often, the geo-political position of Nepal is considered a handicap, but this position has an assurance that none of the neighbors can seriously destabilize Nepal because it will have spill over effects in their own country.

"All apprehension of their involvement in Nepal's present conflict has proved that this country is different from Afghanistan or Cambodia or even Iraq of recent times. The other positive side of Nepal's strength is the

greetings. There were no hue and cry and feast fighting as run in some disturbed parliament of this region," said a political analyst.

Deputy speaker of the House Chitralakha Yadav, a soft but dignified lady, was able to conduct the proceedings of the parliament smoothly. "I want to salute Nepalese people for sacrificing their life in the agitation for the sake of restoration of democracy and Nepal's prosperity," said Yadav.

The parliament session was convened when there was a major upheaval and nobody could sense that things would go so easily. Interestingly, the presence of people of civil society as well as a big crowd of common people on the way to parliament, dispersed peacefully.

From restoration of democracy in 1990 to intensification of Maoist insurgency in Nepal since 1996, it has reduced influences of Nepal's traditional institutions including monarchy, Royal Nepalese army and liberal democratic force Nepali Congress, which share democratic and other ideology with India. The situation is not that all liberal democratic forces combined together are not in a position to challenge the communist factions who are cadre based and stronger and ideologically close to Nepal's northern neighbors. This is the fact of Nepal's last 15 years of political development.

"By allowing an individual's presumed arrogance and hauteur to overwhelm their sense of judgment and distract their attention from India's national interest, they (Indian government) have allowed the institution of monarchy that has served as a bulwark against forces inimical to India for ages to be weakened to a point where the Maobadis have the gumption to repudiate even the most craven offer of reconciliation as was made by King Gyanendra on Monday night," writes Kanchan Gupta in his article in Pioneer, Indian Daily.

This is the resilience of Nepalese society and it is its strength to undergo this kind of upheavals which has destroyed many of the country in such crises. Let Nepal's strength be fostered and develop more by reconciliation and compromise between all, particularly political players of this country.



Agitation in Singha Durbar: Power Shift

"Some Nepalese media- which got chance to hide their real face by supporting the mass movement - have come to the real color and now they have already started introducing India as a sole decisive factor in the democratic movement of Nepal. This is a great shame and attempts to further humiliate the sacrifice of Nepalese people as well as minimize the support given by world communities and role played by international media and people from all over the world in support of Nepal and its democratic movement," said Regmi.

permanent and stable institution of monarchical self governance. Institution of monarchy itself has a root and Nepal was never colonized. Whatever might have been the form of government, democratic or undemocratic, Nepalese have expertise of running their own government by a law made by them. This habit of self governance has helped Nepal even today and that can be seen in the performance in the first day of parliament after the upheaval. There was live-telecast in which parliamentarians of different political parties who met in the agitation were exchanging smiles and

GIRIJA PRASAD KOIRALA

Championing Reconciliation

After taking the oath in record fifth time, prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala expresses determination to champion the ethos of national reconciliation

By KESHAB POUDEL

Following four years of continuous demands for the reinstatement of the House of Representatives, Nepali Congress leader Girija Prasad Koirala has emerged as a real leader when King Gyanendra, who reportedly was a die-hard opponent of the idea of reinstating the House of Representatives - announced his proclamation to reinstate the House.

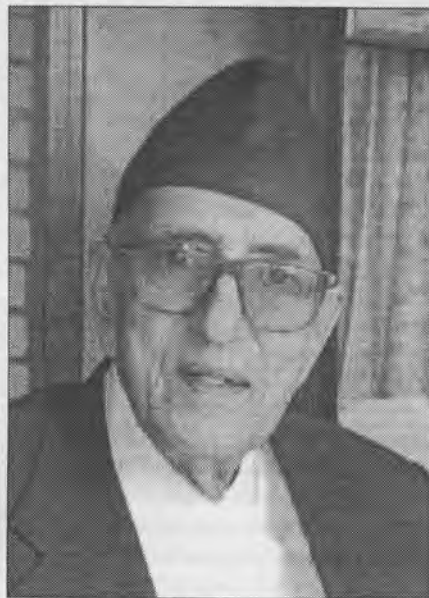
Refuge in a small 12 by 14 feet room provided by his nephew Dr. Shashanka Koirala at his home in Maharajgunj, Prime Minister Koirala lives in an upper flat sharing a common bathroom with other family members and his visitors. Unlike other leaders, Koirala has hardly shown any interest to boast his simplicity.

Known for his determination and organizational capability, prime minister Koirala demanded the restoration of dissolved house to solve the country's political problems. When parliament was dissolved, he went to the court to get it restored. The court could not go beyond the provision of the constitution to provide him the relief. Since then, he had been a relentless fighter to restore the parliamentary process.

As it was not possible to hold the elections due to Maoist violence, the restoration of parliament was the only option. Almost all political leaders of other parties including the party of the present alliance were time and again denouncing that Koirala's demand was obsolete. Whether UML, RPP or other factions, they were in record saying that the dissolution of parliament was a closed chapter. There were some constitutional lawyers including Bishwonath Upadhyaya, the chairman of drafting commission of present constitution, who supported Koirala's stand.

Precisely, their legal opinions were that the dissolution of previous parliament was stipulated by a condition of the elections within six months. As the elections could

not be held and the precondition was not fulfilled, the house could be restored. Constitution does not conceive a country without a parliament. Taking into account of the spirit of constitution, the King could reinstate the parliament as an act of necessity. Koirala does not know the constitution but what he perceives is its political importance.



P.M. Koirala: Call for reconciliation

"Throughout his political career, Koirala has been a dear-devil political activist. He is never considered as an ideologue or visionary as his mentor and ideologue B.P. Koirala. For almost 24 years after the death of B.P. Koirala, he continued his career as a relentless fighter. But unfortunately the vacuum created in his political career by B.P.'s death in 1982, remained vacant ever since. Such a situation has made him vulnerable to criticisms for lacking analytical mind and political vision all the time," said a political analyst.

Despite that, he maintained his faith upon the basic tenets of liberal democracy in his political career. At present the country is facing the greatest challenge in

its history. Being a towering and the foremost leader of the country, any of acts can influence the future course of the country. Four years ago, Koirala returned from Royal Palace feeling uncomfortable when King Gyanendra, who had just become the king, expressed some remarks against him. Now, when the King is facing stiff criticisms and there are demands in the street for Koirala not to take oath in Royal Palace, Koirala, who worked with all four Kings following the revolution of 1950 and working experiences with three, went to Royal Palace to fulfill the obligation.

"Koirala's over confidence or arrogance or any acts may destroy the entire historical achievement of this country. At times, a person holds such a crucial balancing power in his hands that may do or undo the course of history. Let Koirala find time to introspect and recall the basic tenets of his brother late B.P. Koirala and make a synthesis with the positive trends. Let Koirala be successful to pilot the country from this turbulent tide of history," said a political analyst.

Having very human and humble impression in his intimate contact, the vision he had behind the demand of reinstatement of parliament was undeterred and unchanged all throughout the agitation, which continued almost four years. That way, it was his lone stand in the beginning but he was successful to change the attitude of almost all including the King.

He was already a leader but this success has made him more than a leader. That is the most for a leader. There are many instances in history that popular uprising sometimes create autocrat under democratic guar. Perhaps, his apprentices under B.P. Koirala may not allow his to be derailed. Despite all his differences, Koirala still champions the national reconciliation propounded by B.P. Koirala.

"There is no alternative to national reconciliation. I want reconciliation between all the forces including democrat, monarchy and Maoist," said Koirala giving interview to a newspaper just a few days before the agitation.

At a time when he is leading a cabinet dominated by leftists extremists as well as extremists from his own party, it is not easy for him to keep all the flocks of seven political parties together. ■

“The Support and Cooperation of International Community is Essential”

— RABINDRA NATH SHARMA

Former minister and seasoned politician RABINDRA NATH SHARMA has been persistently stressing the need for unity between the monarchy and democratic forces since the dismissal of the elected government in October 4, 2002. But, his voice was completely ignored by King. For holding this view, Sharma was politically humiliated and punished. Sharma spoke to KESHAB POUDEL on various issues of present politics. Excerpts:

How do you see the present political situation?

Nepal has been passing through a very critical time. Following the Royal proclamation of April 24 and reinstatement of the House of Representatives, the country has entered into a new phase. Even parliament has already unanimously passed the resolution to hold the elections for Constituent Assembly. All these decisions are very important and will have major implications in the country's future.

How do you see the present political course? Is it heading towards the right directions?

I am a little bit confused about the role of political leaders who successfully led the people's movement. I am also worried about the way the movement is heading to the extent of anarchy. The leaders, mainly Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala has bigger role to play during this time of transition. First of all, there is a need to start a confidence building process between the King and Prime Minister Koirala.

What role should Nepal's friendly countries play?

International pressure also played a decisive role in bringing the political changes. The support and cooperation of international communities particularly India, China and the US is essential to bring this situation in the right track. Being a close neighbor, India has a major role to play. Nepal's neighbors', particularly India's support is essential to prevent any kind of anarchy in Nepal.

Didn't you perceive these kinds of situation would emerge in Nepal?

I had made every effort to pursue the King that confrontation between him and political parties will bring this unimaginable situation in the country. But, the King ignored my good suggestions. I opposed the move of King Gyanendra to dismiss the elected prime minister

Sher Bahadur Deuba on October 4, 2002. I issued the statement and I also pursued the party central committee to take the decision criticizing King's action. For my good suggestions, I was penalized by King. I paid heavy political price. Conspiracies were hatched to politically humiliate me and finish my political career. Despite such humiliation, I continued my efforts to develop certain understanding between the King and the political leaders. Whenever I met the King, I always pursued the need of reconciliation between King and parties but the King did not respond to it.

The role of the King made him very controversial. How do you see the importance of monarchy in Nepal?

As I have told you that I am a person who opposed all unconstitutional actions taken by King Gyanendra. Whatever personal role King Gyanendra has played to defame the institution, the institution of monarchy has still utility to provide stability and safe guard the independent existence of Nepal. You cannot equate King as a person with the institution. Institution of monarchy is still a factor of emotional integration of Nepal. Monarchy is required now, even as a symbolic, as it will integrate the nation. Nepal does not have any institution like monarchy right now to guarantee stability. Earlier, we condemned and criticized democracy for the bad action of individual political leaders so much that democracy itself was uprooted. We cannot make similar mistakes again terming the whole institution of monarchy bad for the wrong actions of individual King.

How do you see the debate on Constituent Assembly?

After endorsement of House of Representatives, the Constituent Assembly is now reality. I think there needs to be certain set conditions for the CA, in that which of the issues are going to be finalized by CA. The Constitution of Kingdom of Nepal 1990- which was formulated after a mandate given by 1990 people's movement, when more than 200 people sacrificed their life- has already settled the political issue that the people are the supreme and sovereignty lies upon them. It also settled the questions of parliamentary democracy, constitutional monarchy, human rights, rule of law and freedom of individual



and free press. These fundamental questions should be made conditions for the CA.

Many other intellectuals who participated in the people's movement argue that CA should be unconditional? How do you look at it?

I did not understand the rationale behind it. People participated and sacrificed their life in the people's movement for the sake of rule of law, democracy and supremacy of people and freedom of people. We have to keep these conditions in our mind. The movement was not unconditional. The intellectuals have to make it clear whether they will abide by the results of CA to introduce one party communist rule, scrapping democracy, limiting the freedom of media and putting the judiciary under control of executive? I don't think any individuals want these kinds of things. People's movement is not to replace from one form of autocracy to another form.

How do you see the parliamentary proceedings?

I am very upset about the way the parliamentary proceedings are taking place. They must abide by the supremacy of sovereign will of people as they came to street opposing the unconstitutional actions of King. In recent days, in the name of People's power political parties are violating the constitution and rule of law. This will not pay anybody. Since there is a constitution, they must obey it. The rights of the people need to be protected. Otherwise, the country will face another trouble and anarchy again. Democracy is a system where every individual has right to dissention. So everybody should be given chance to express his or her views. If this right is violated, it will be no more than the change from one kind of autocracy to another kind of autocratic rule.

BOOK

On Sociology

R Regmi, professor of sociology and anthropology, discusses elementary issues related to sociology

By A CORRESPONDENT

Sociology and anthropology is a new subject introduced in Nepal at higher education level. But it is one of the most popular subjects offered by Tribhuvan University. While the number of students taking sociology and anthropology at colleges continues to soar, there is a scarcity of the books written by Nepali scholars in this subject.

The Essential of Sociology

By Dr. Rishikeshab Raj

Regmi

Price: Rs.500

Pages: 516

Published by Sandeep Raj
Regmi, Baneshwor

Dr. Regmi is affiliated to the central department of sociology and anthropology, at the Tribhuvan University, since the introduction of sociology and anthropology as a subject in Nepalese colleges. Being a cultural anthropologist himself, Dr. Regmi is regarded as a well-known Nepalese scholar. Leading the department of sociology and anthropology for a long time, Dr. Regmi was also involved in the preparation of curriculum for sociology and anthropology at various levels.

Being a long serving department chief, Dr. Regmi has come out with a new book that discusses the essential elements of sociology and its technical terms. The book attempts to explain many concepts including the basic information on various topics to the students.

One can find many interesting features in his book, which is a reflection of his long experience in teaching and learning. In the process of simplification, the author has

made every effort to put the point of views and opinions regarding the sociology. From the interpretation of sociology in the theoretical points of view to Nepalese context, Dr. Regmi has elaborated all other terms giving the references of Nepal. In the first chapter, Dr. Regmi highlights the term sociology and relations of sociology with other sciences. The second chapter deals with sociology and its other aspects including the research methodology and research.

Unlike other books, Dr. Regmi has concentrated his efforts to offer the knowledge to the Nepalese students who are studying sociology and anthropology. From role of religion to the role of group and organization, the author deals with other matters related to sociology.

"I have endeavored to present principals, concepts and ideas of sociological knowledge related to the personal experiences of real people. Sociology is generally presented to students in such a way that this discipline seems remote, abstract and unrelated to our real life. I have tried to present this book with depth understanding of real life," said Dr. Regmi.

One of the aims of the book is to increase students' store of knowledge. Dr. Regmi includes up-to-date information as far as possible. "After realizing the need for writing such types of book, I have been working since many years. To assist students in developing critical thinking skills, I have organized the text around three basic sociological perspectives: the functionalist, conflict and symbolic perspectives," Dr. Regmi writes.

The book has been written to fulfill the demands of Nepalese students of higher education. Although the author has borrowed and taken various materials from different authors, he generalizes them to meet the demands of Nepalese students. It

seems that the author's goal is to teach various perspective not as competing arguments but as approaches each of which can contribute to the student's understanding of social phenomenon.

The book is divided into 14 different chapters. This book is very useful for the students of sociology to know the essence of the subject. To simplify the terminologies, Dr. Regmi has explained various complicated sociological terms in generalized explanations.

Maya Devi's Dream

Twenty six hundred years ago, child Siddhartha left the luxuries of his palace and went for meditation in quest of truth. Today, Nepalese youths are leaving their homes in search of an unknown future that has been deceitfully explained as a utopia by their mentors.

While, the leaders and more cunning comrades justify their activity as 'war for peace', the insurgents or the grass root party workers barely understand what they mean. Both the warring sides have failed to understand the cost of the war they are wedging against their own brethren and the subsequent tragedies.

Portraying these tragedies of war from the perspective of a mother, artistes of Arohan Theatre Group in collaboration with the M. Art Theatre are staging the show 'Maya Deviko Sapana' (Dreams of Maya Devi) at the Sama Theatre, at Gurukul premises.

The theme of the theatre revolves around the woeful expressions of Maya Devi, whose son Siddhartha (called Kale at home) deserts his mother to join the militia.

Maya Devi and Siddhartha are symbols. Thousands of Nepalese mothers and sons are facing similar fate. The most natural and sensitizing performance by the artistes blended with sound and light effects makes the show very effective and touching.

The use of war sounds – sound of a flying chopper, firings and explosions, gives viewers an experience close to real war.

The show is on every evening at Sama Theatre, Gurukul for a month. ■

A Pleasant Surprise: Declining Trends in Losses from Landslides and Floods in Nepal

By HARI K. SHRESTHA

The landslides and floods are the biggest natural disasters in Nepal, in terms of human life and economic losses. Systematic data collection on the effects of disasters is a relatively recent phenomenon in Nepal. A cursory glance at the disaster data may indicate that there are no significant improvements in the disaster mitigation activities. However, when the disaster data are adjusted for the changes in baseline, steadily declining trends can be seen in both the human lives lost and economic losses over a period of two decades. Increase in public awareness, which is due to continuous efforts of various agencies, seems to be the only reason for the pleasantly surprising declining trends.

Nepal faces a variety of natural and human activity induced disasters every year. Anecdotal disaster data of more than 100 years are available in Gorakhapatra, the national daily newspaper of Nepal; however, the data are incomplete. The available data of the last two decades show that the number of natural disasters like landslides and floods has increased due to various natural and man made reasons. In terms of human life and economic losses, the landslides and floods are the biggest natural disasters in Nepal.

Agencies in Disaster Mitigation

There are various governmental organizations (GOs) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Nepal that are working in parallel to reduce the effects of various types of disasters. The Department of Water Induced Disaster Prevention (DWIDP) is responsible for various activities to reduce damages from water induced disasters like landslides and floods. The Department of Narcotics Control and Disaster Management (DNCDM) along with the Central Natural Disaster Relief Committee (CNDRC) coordinate relief activities with the Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS), Nepal Police, Royal Nepal Army, and hospitals. The regional, district and local units of CNDRC, the District Administration Office, and the Village Development Committee play important role in the field level coordination of rescue and relief activities. Nepal Police and Royal Nepal Army mainly conduct rescue operations.

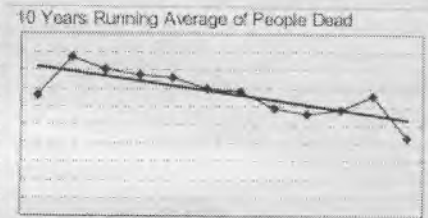
Various agencies working in the field of disaster mitigation activities have formed a network called DPNET to coordinate their activities and share their experiences. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has recently conducted various activities in Nepal to generate public awareness. The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) conducts various mountain environment conservation activities, including awareness generation on landslide disasters. Some NGOs like Lutheran World Federation and United Mission to Nepal are actively conducting public awareness enhancement programs, including publication of manuals on disaster mitigation measures.

Various factors that can result in the declining trends in losses from landslides and floods in Nepal were evaluated. One of the main factors that induce landslides and floods in Nepal is heavy rainfall in the mountainous regions. The 24-hours maximum rainfall values of several climatological stations located in the landslide prone areas of Nepal were analyzed to see if the declining trends are due to reduction in this value.

The population density, in terms of the number of persons living per square kilometer, in landslide prone areas of Nepal (MOPE, 2004) was checked to see if the apparent declining trends were due to the decline in the population density in those areas.

Trends indicated by raw data

A quick glance at the raw data of human life and economic loss seems to show that not much progress has been achieved in reducing the losses from landslides and floods in the last two decades, despite an increase in technical know how and enormous money spent on disaster mitigation measures. In average, 324 Nepalese die each year from landslides and floods. A 10-years average of the number of people dead from landslides and floods does not



impart much positive messages. Although there is a declining trend, the number of people dead continuously hovers above 300.

The records of economic loss from landslides and floods portray equally gloomy picture. In average Nepal is losing about 788 million rupees every year. A poor country like Nepal which has to rely on almost 60% of its annual budget on foreign aid and loans can ill afford such a major loss of resources. The frequency of years with economic losses approaching 1000 million Nepalese rupees is increasing.

A 10-years running average of the economic losses from landslides and floods in Nepal, in fact indicates a very disturbing trend of a gradual rise in economic losses with the passing of each year. It seems that all the works of disaster mitigation activities of various GOs and NGOs in Nepal in the last two decades have gone in vain.

Trends indicated by adjusted data

The depressing trends in losses in human life and economy from landslides and floods discussed above do not paint the whole picture. The base lines of the data have changed in the last two decades. The population of Nepal in 2002 is 50% more than the population in 1983. A loss of 300 people out of 15 million

populations is not the same as a loss of the same number of people out of 25 million. The

economic activities of Nepal in 2002, in terms of the total annual budget, are 900% more than the economic activities of 1983. The average market price of 1983 is much lower than in 2003; if adjusted for the current

market price, the cost of disaster events in 1980s will be higher and hence will show a different and in economic losses. The raw data of losses, however, ignore these changes.

Consideration of the changes in the base lines of the data paints completely different pictures. When the number of persons dead from landslides and floods is compared to the

number of persons living at that time, an unmistakable declining trend can be seen. The number of dead persons from landslides and floods per million living population in Nepal declined from about 25 in 1983 to about 10 in 2003, a 60% reduction. In a study conducted from 1990 to 1998 data, Nepal ranked third (35), behind Bangladesh (135) and

Afghanistan (62) in the annual number of persons dead from various disasters per million living people in mountainous Asian countries.

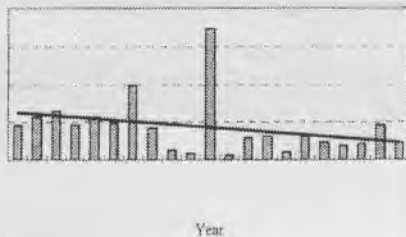
The total annual budget of Nepal in 1983 was about 9187 million rupees. In the same year the total economic loss from landslides and floods in Nepal was 2400 million rupees, a whopping 26% of the budget. The highest ever recorded economic loss from landslides and floods in Nepal is in 1993, when the total loss amounted to 4904 million.

However, that was less than 16% of that year's total annual budget. An economic loss of 2400 million rupees in 2004 would be roughly about 2.3% of the budget. If the annual

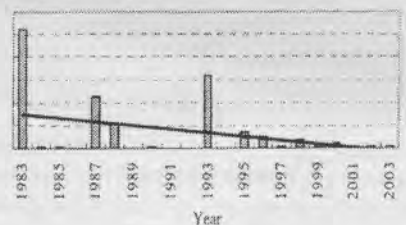
national budget of Nepal is taken as a measure of gross economic activities we again see a definite declining trend in the ratio of economic losses from landslides and floods compared to the gross economic activities of the nation.

The average inflation rate in Nepal is 8.3% in 1970-1979, 9% in 1980-1989, 8.6% in 1990-1999 and 3.2% in 2000-2003.

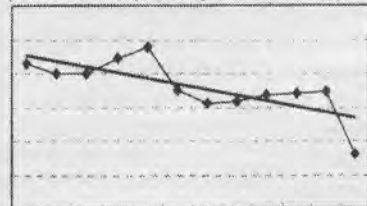
Number of People Dead (per million living people) from Landslides and Floods



Economic Loss from Landslides and Floods (as percentage of total annual national budget)



10 Years Running Average of Economic Loss (in 2003 market price, adjusted for inflation)



When the annual economic losses from landslides and floods are adjusted for the consumer price index of 2003, based on the average inflation rate, again, surprisingly, clear and consistent declining trends in annual economic losses emerge.

Possible Causes of the Declining Trends of Losses

The declining trends in the ratio of human life and economic losses will result if (a) the number of landslide and flooding events reduce, (b) the disaster data collection reduce, and (c) the population density and economic activities decline in the landslide prone areas.

The basic natural causes of landslides and floods in Nepal, namely the earthquake frequency, weak geology, steep topography and intense monsoonal rainfalls, have not changed much, and are not going to change drastically any time soon. Out of these natural causes, rainfall pattern is one factor that can change relatively rapidly. A check of

last 15 years' data, collected by Department of Hydrology and Meteorology, of 24-hours maximum precipitation, which is one of the leading causes of landslides and floods in Nepal, of some meteorological stations located in the hilly areas indicated a rising trend in the frequency of high intensity rainfall events. If the high intensity rainfall is any indication of the likelihood of trend in the number of landslides and floods in Nepal, then the landslide and flood events are increasing, not decreasing.

CNDRC has significantly improved its disaster data collection mechanism in the last two decades.** Standard data collection forms have been prepared and there has been consistency in collected data. The regional, district and local units of CNDRC, along with the district offices of NRCS, collect and report the disaster data more efficiently.

The local village development committees are more likely to report the disaster damage data to the district offices to obtain disaster relief fund. Access to remote areas, compared to two decades ago, is relatively better and hence the disaster data collection is easier. All these factors ensure that the declining trends of ratio of human life and economic loss with time are not due to reduction in data collection.

The Ministry of Population and Environment data indicates that the population density (persons per square kilometer) has increased in the landslide prone areas of Nepal in the last two decades, from 25 to 33 in the mountain areas and from 117 to 167 in the hilly areas. With the rise in population density there has been consequent rise in economic activities. The rapid rise in the number of micro-hydro projects in hilly areas of Nepal increased economic activities. According to a 1998 estimate, there are almost 1000 micro-hydro projects in operation in Nepal. The installation of micro-hydro projects in rural areas of Nepal is rising sharply after 1997. So, the declining trends in ratio of human life and economic loss are not due to lessened population density or lowering of economic activities in the hilly terrains.

(To be continued)

(The writer is associated with Nepal Engineering College and is currently a Doctoral Candidate at Ehime University, Japan.)

'United States Wants To Assure You That We Are With You And Here To Support You'

— RICHARD A. BOUCHER

RICHARD A. BOUCHER, assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asian Affairs, came to pay short visit to Nepal. Before leaving Nepal, Boucher addressed a press meet. Excerpts of the press meet compiled by **KESHAB POUDEL**:

On Meeting

I have met prime minister Koirala, members of parliament, government officials, party representatives, and leaders of civil society. It has been a very fruitful visit. In all my meetings, I stressed America's long standing friendship with Nepal and its people, and our interest in doing whatever we can to assist Nepal as it moves forward into what we all hope will be an era marked by peace and economic development. I want to repeat that commitment to all of you here this morning.

On his visit

I came here to see for myself the exciting developments in Nepal that have attracted the world's attention. Through their efforts for democracy, the people of Nepal have won a great victory for themselves and for future generations. Now it is up to the reinstated parliament, in close contact with the people, to lead the way forward to form an effective, responsive, and lasting democratic government, and to chart a way for forwarding to bring peace in your country. I have limited time. I want to see the political parties, political leaders and people who will play important role in the decision of future of this country. That's why I concentrated my time than anywhere else. I concentrated at the dynamic of the moment.

On Support

Look at the situation and make sure that we understand that more importantly we can do everything to support people of Nepal and political leaders of Nepal to move forward. We hear the very hopeful moment and a moment of promise. A lot of work needs to be done. United States wants to assure you that we are with you and here to support you to move forward. Political leaders have pledged that they would stay unified and committed to do whatever the people want them to do. We are fully supporting the task.

On Maoist

We are against any kind of take over in Nepal. We want to see all parties being involved in the political process of Nepal and respect the people's right to choose their own government. So, nobody can take over. Anyone who wants to give up violence and any one who wants to lay down their arms and become part of the political process should be allowed to participate. Ultimately, who gets the responsibility in Nepal's government should be the choice of Nepalese people. I don't think we can forget the history of the Maoist group. What they had done in

the villages and what they continue to do in the villages even during times of ceasefire in Kathmandu. They killed innocent people and extorted money and they forced people into forced labor. So they are not going to be removed from the lists of terrorists until they completely stop these things. It is not the question of what they say in the press and what they are doing temporarily. Whether they really stopped terrorist behavior or not is another matter. We can only be sure when they lay down their arms and join the political process and present themselves in front of the Nepalese people to accept their decision through the ballot. So, we are looking for this change of behavior. First of all, one can estimate how they failed in the political process. I have to think about that what they have done to a lot of villagers in the country and they would get many votes. It is not for me to decide but it is the people of Nepal to decide if they get chances to fair elections. It is important for the parties to invite in the political leadership carrying out the pledges and there are a lot of things they have to do in the present moment. They have to deal with the institution of government, constitution and how they are going to amend and change it and the constituent assembly and the whole process of ceasefire and disarmament, demilitarization. I don't have much fair what will happen in an election in which people of Nepal is given a chance to vote. But no body thinks they would stand for elections and if that does not work out and they have options to go back.

On monarchy

It is recognition at this point of time that the decision is with the people of Nepal. We have expressed ourselves that we are for ceremonial monarchy. We see some virtue in that. Many people here, too, see some virtue in that. Many others might not, but at this point of time, decision of the people of Nepal and their political leaders should work on how to deal with it. This is, they no longer think the statement from outside should decide rather the decision should be made from inside by the people themselves.

On US Military Supply

That would be for the decision of the government of Nepal. We want to support Nepal in political, economic and security areas. Each of these issues should be initiated by political leaders in government of Nepal. We will talk to them about how we can support in the political process, economic needs of Nepal and we will talk to them about what are the security needs of Nepal including the assistance to the army. As you know we have given assistance to the army in the past and we are quite prepared to do so in future. But in all these areas, the political or civilian leadership of Nepal have to tell us what they need and when they need it.

"Each of these issues should be initiated by political leaders in government of Nepal. We will talk to them about how we can support in the political process, economic needs of Nepal and we will talk to them about what are the security needs of Nepal including the assistance to the army."



On the Political Process

On disbarment, international community might play a role. Again, it depends upon how the process is set up and how the political leadership agreed to that. How political leadership and Maoist put together. Many countries around the world have been playing a role in the international communities in disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation process. International community will be very glad to help in that area. There are a lot of things we support for political progress whether to provide experts they need or any other support. We can also help institutions in Nepal. We can support political process as well as economic recovery and security situation.

On Maoist and Political parties

We support everybody working together, but unfortunately the King's actions of February 1, 2005 made it very difficult for the people of Nepal and leaders of parties of Nepal to work along with King and to get anywhere. Ultimately, the people have decided that the people got the role. Whether they still want the ceremonial role or other, it is the people of Nepal to decide. The main point I got here by talking to a lot of people here is that they want to make sure that the king is not able to interfere any more in the politics the way he had done. He will not be able to disband the government and takeover power. At the same time Maoists are going to lay down their arms and join the political process. What should be made sure is that they cannot interfere again in the political process by using violence and arms? That is why giving up their arms and demobilization is such an important part for the way forward. These people have to work together to achieve certain goal.

On Political Transition

The whole transition can go peacefully. I found a number of things as there is a lot of unity, there is a very strong commitment to the political parties to do what the people have asked for to make changes necessary in the constitution, to carry out a ceasefire with Maoists, to go forward with the constituent assembly and to let the people of Nepal elect people

who will decide what the shape of future constitution will be. Starting with political and economic programs will take back the country to track. This is the hopeful moment. I find the determination to stay together. This is very important part and we will always encourage them to stay together until they act swiftly on the things people demanded. It can only go peacefully if the Maoists decide to give up violence. They have opened the door for them and they have an opportunity. If Maoists are sincere, they can come through it.

On Coordination with India

On the question of coordination with India, we will coordinate with quite a few countries which find a lot of interest overseas in the situation in Nepal particularly in India. I will actually be in India this afternoon with my colleagues from National Security Council. We are talking with Indians about Nepal and a number of other things. We will continue to talk with India. As you know, we have got our own policy but it is important to deal outside the country to work together. That is why we intend to do so.

On Constituent Assembly

Constituent Assembly is the part of the process and somehow along the way what the political parties and leadership will decide. It is necessary in this time and that particular stage of evolution the political leaders have to decide. Comes down at the basic point not a particular definition of this or that mechanism the basic point is have the Maoists or will the Maoists gives up their arms? Will they give up violence and join the political process by building confidence with every one.

On the Role of Royal Nepalese Army

I think that the army is going to have very important role as the army has role to defend the nation. They also have to be able to implement and carry out the ceasefire. I wanted to check with the army and see first of all whether they are supporting the political process or civilian leadership in Nepal. I also talked to them about how they see their job in future. They said they would support when the civilian leadership want them to do so. So, it is good to see this and they are very clear on the public announcement and army is going to support the political process and they are going to respond the civilian authorities and army is going to defend the nation, if they had. I think these are very important commitment on the party of army which I hear myself. So it is one of the parts of the process which is committed by one of the players as to go forward. It is up to the civilian leadership to come out with the kind of ceasefire they want and kinds of rule they need to be respected during this period. The army, I will expect, will support that process and follow that rules. I expect that the Maoist and the government respect the ceasefire. ■

“We are talking with Indians about Nepal and a number of other things. We will continue to talk with India. As you know, we have got our own policy but it is important to deal outside the country to work together. That is why we intend to do so.”

AMRIT GURUNG

Singing For Social Cause

In the past fifteen years Gurung has contributed largely to popularise the Nepali folk melodies among the new generation

By THAKUR AMGAI

When three music fanatics got together to form a band in 1990, they had little idea that their brainchild would survive to become one of the most popular Nepali bands. They had decided to form a band merely out of impulse to satisfy their immediate appetite for music.

"There was a trend of opening bands in those days. And we simply got together to use our spare time in a creative and entertaining way," confesses Amrit Gurung, the only artiste affiliated with the band since the beginning.

However, fifteen years down the line, their band 'Nepathya' has become a favourite band of many. Addressed as the Most Earthy Band by critics, Nepathya is very well received in stage shows wherever it performs. Its songs and albums have become equally popular among Nepalese living in Nepal and abroad.

While Nepathya has seen nineteen faces come and go in the past fifteen years, the credit for the success and popularity of the band goes to Amrit Gurung, the guardian and the lead vocalist of the band. Starting from founders Deepak Rana and Bhim Poon, who are engaged in their own professions now, Nepathya has given platform to many talented artistes in its one and a half decade long journey. For this Amrit Gurung earns huge respect from the new generation artistes, too.

Born in Pokhara, a scenic city in the western Nepal, Gurung was a lover of nature and enjoyed solitude since childhood. "I was a good listener, but never a singer, then," he reminisces. "Instead I had passion for painting and aspired to become a good painter in future."

With a dream to become a painter, he came to Kathmandu to join the College of Fine Arts after passing high school. However, his parents wanted him to join the Armed forces and were not happy with his decision to take up painting as a career.

"I was compelled to abandon my plan to study fine arts, but I still satiated my passion by painting at home and teaching painting to school children," said Gurung.

He continued painting for some years after he formed the band, but abstained from it eventually. Instead, now he is a passionate traveller and photographer. "I travel a lot because, I want to be close to the nature and experience the ground realities of the rural Nepalese life," he explains.

A very altruistic Gurung seeks a social cause to perform a show. In the past five

years Nepathya has performed several shows under the management of 'Nepalaya' for various social causes. Through the 'SHANTI ko Lagi SIKCHYA' (Education for Peace) Tour 2002 and 2004, it has advocated for war free schools where children can learn and grow in a peaceful environment. Likewise, Nepathya performed along with other artistes at different places in the 'Travelling Peace Concerts' 2003 and 2005 calling all to make an endeavour to establish sustainable peace. The money raised from these concerts was used for social causes such as developing school infrastructure in the local areas where the shows were staged.

This year, Nepathya is performing at various venues such as Maiti Nepal and Bal Mandir for minorities under the 'Nepathya for All' series to provide them entertainment as well as raise fund for their welfare.

Nepathya has been a trendsetter in Nepali music in that it is the pioneer to blend folk melodies into youth friendly pop and rock format. From songs like 'Chhekyo Chhekyo, Deurali Danda, Hussu ra Kuhirole' to 'Chari Maryo Sisaiko Golile', the songs sung by Nepathya brings to life the old and about to be forgotten folk melodies of rural Nepal by blending them with modern technology and music. Till date folk melodies have remained the band's life force. Wherever Nepathya performs, audience look forward to such songs. Particularly in the foreign lands, audience become delighted by hearing the beautiful melodies of their hometown.

Nepathya has seven albums - its credit- Nepathya - 1991, Himal chuchure - 1993, Min pachas ma - 1995, Shringar - 1997, Resham - 2001, Bhedako Oon Jasto - 2003, Ghatana- 2005.

Nepathya from its Chekyo Chekyo days (early 90s) to Jomsome Bazaarma (mid 90s) to Resham (release 2001) to Bhedako Oon Jasto (release 2003) has maintained its consistency in the market. Its latest album 'Ghatana' (incidents of Nepal) portrays the pain and distress Nepalese are going through at times of war.



Gurung: Peace mission

SPOTLIGHT

The News
Magazine
Packaged
with
Up-To-Date

News
Views
&
Analyses
Our Readers
Deserve The Best



SPOTLIGHT

The National News Magazine

BALUWATAR, GPO BOX: 7256

TELEPHONE: (977-1) 4423127, FAX: (977-1) 4417845

Email : spot@mail.com.np



The Star is in Your Favor.

Choose Your Lucky Casino!



CASINO NEPAL
Soaltee Compound
Tahachal, Kathmandu
Tel: 4280588
Fax: 9771 4271244
rdt@mos.com.np



CASINO ANNA
Hotel de L' Annapurna
Durbarmarg, Kathmandu
Tel: 4228650
Fax: 9771 4225228
casanna@mos.com.np



CASINO EVEREST
Hotel Everest
New Baneshwor, Kathmandu
Tel: 4780925
Fax: 9771 4782284
everest@mos.com.np



CASINO ROYALE
Hotel Yak & Yeti
Durbarmarg, Kathmandu
Tel: 4438619
Fax: 9771 4223933
royal_royale8hotmail.com



CASINO RAD
Radisson Hotel
Lazimpat, Kathmandu
Tel: 4420311
Fax: 9771 4445525
casinorad@mail.com.np



CASINO TARA
Hyatt Regency
Boudha, Kathmandu
Tel: 4482517
Fax: 9771 4470722
casinotara@mos.com.np