

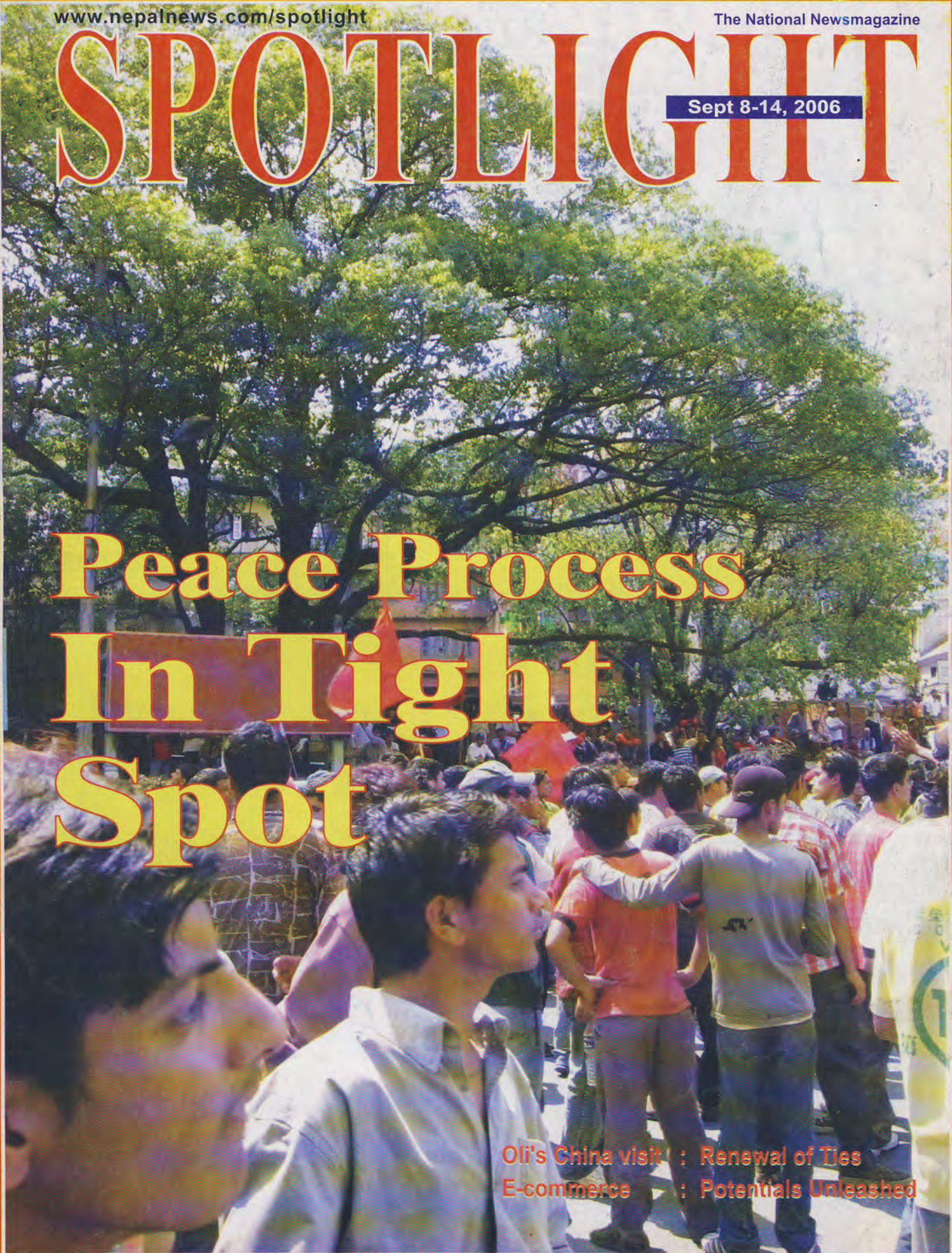
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The National Newsmagazine

SPOTLIGHT

Sept 8-14, 2006

Peace Process In Tight Spot



Oli's China visit : Renewal of Ties
E-commerce : Potentials Unleashed

C.D.O. Regd No. 151/039-40
Postal Regd No. 22/065-04

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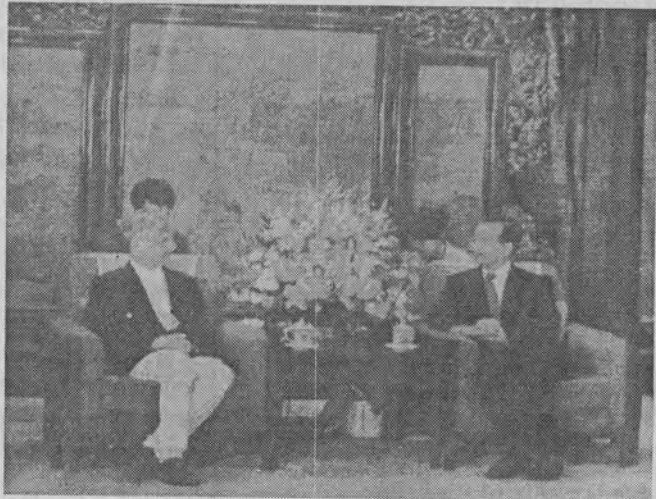


COVER STORY : In Tight Spot

Gorkhapatra

As Maoists raise their rhetorics against the government and threaten urban revolt, the delicate peace process seems to be in a tight spot

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OLI'S CHINA VISIT: Renewal of Ties

Gorkhapatra

Beijing gives its support and assures of cooperation to the new political dispensation in Kathmandu

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INTERVIEW: Rabindra Nath Sharma

An RPP ideologue, Sharma evaluates the current political imbroglio

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SPOTLIGHT

THE WEEKLY NATIONAL NEWSMAGAZINE

Vol. 26, No 5, September 8, 2006
Bhadra 23, 2063

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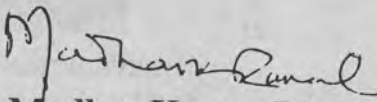
Cover Design : Digi-Tech Scanning & Pre-Press Pvt. Ltd.
P.O. Box : 1655, Jwagal, Kupondole,
Lalitpur, Nepal
Tel : 5551251, 5529530
E-mail : degiscan@wlink.com.np

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
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

Political scenario in Kathmandu is getting muddled. Hopes of lasting peace are gradually evaporating. This trend has got to be arrested without delay. If the self-centered politicians seem to be girding up their loins for confrontation, the people who are the real sufferers, in any case, must not let that happen. After all, it is their power that gives strength to the politicians. If they refuse to respect the interests of the common man, the common man must know what he must do. It seems a few months of being in power has made them totally forget their discredited status, which was restored by the people's movement and they are there because the Maoists faltered. Even some of the constituents of the Seven Party Alliance government do not approve of many of the policies the government has enunciated. The utter failure of the drafters of the interim constitution to give the country a constitution that would have paved the way for an early election to the constituent assembly has raised the specter of suspicion whether it was premeditated. There is hush-hush rumor all around about the intention of the government. The purposely prolonged life of the reinstated House of Representatives has strengthened the misgivings of the people that the government has started working under some kind of extraneous influence. All those forces that actively aided and abetted the insurgency of the Maoists with sanctuary in friendly Indian territory for more than a decade, now seem to have realized their blunder and are keen to sideline the Maoists from Nepali political arena. But perhaps, they are again making the same kind of mistake by backing a wrong horse. How can they still shut their eyes to the obvious truth that the Maoists are the strongest political force in Nepal and would never be sidelined by anybody? Sooner or later they are bound to come to the center stage. All those who are scheming to keep the Maoists out of Nepal's active politics should instead use their energy and resources to convince them to take to peaceful ways by giving them their due. The people of Nepal too have learnt many bitter lessons. They have made supreme sacrifices and got nothing in return. Instead, they have become refugees in their own country. Indeed, the same undeniably exposed politicians are again eating the cakes and taking it home too. If the people want their miseries redressed, they must wake up and exert. They must understand and realize too, their own strength. Not only that, they must use it constructively to achieve their objectives. If they keep on relying on politicians who have taken them for a ride, time and again, they will never see better days. Because, these politicians are not their own masters. Therefore, no one can deny that we ourselves must only become our own good friends. All those whom we consider friends exploit us and only serve their own interests. Events in other parts of the world must open our eyes. We must neither be swayed by others nor permit any one to pressurize us. The Maoist leaders, too, must have learnt their lessons. Without caring for the means, let us work together to achieve our objectives through our own efforts. And this demands that all the Nepali people must shed their differences and work together if we want to live a decent and dignified life and get rid of the looming danger dangling over our heads like the "Damocle's sword."


Madhav Kumar Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher

Biased Story

The cover story "Draft of Interim Constitution" (Spotlight Sep 1) has given information about the draft of interim constitution. But, in my opinion, the story is totally biased. As a journalist, he/ she must not support one party. He must balance the story. But, here, the situation is very different with the quotes of standing committee member of CPN-UML Amrit Kumar Bohara, Nepali Congress general secretary Ram Chandra Poudel, Dr. Baburam Bhattarai and so on, - the story has become one sided. To make the story more credible, the author has quoted a lot but only to quote on one side is not fair. That's why I request to the author to write of both sides.

Merin Tuladhar
Nayabazar

Lack of Close Observation

As the Spotlight magazine has placed the given article 'Draft of Interim Constitution' in cover story, is it praiseworthy? The writer is very seriously concerned on the particular issue. But I think, he has not commented in his own way rather he has focused on different quotes. Only giving more emphasis in quotes by leaders and other figures is not enough to make the article perfect. There must be special observation. Here, the author seems passive to pour his own idea and feelings. To combine other's opinion does not make the article praiseworthy. There should be his way of interpretation and comment. And, at last, he must give the solutions so that the problem can be solved easily.

Bibek Chalise
Koteshwor

Be Active

The article on crime (Spotlight Sep 1) by Sahisnu Poudyal drags me to add my voice over the article. While writing article, the writing must not be written as an essay that makes readers monotonous. In my opinion, the author must be very hard working so that she can quote a lot of figure. If so, the article

becomes credible. The author has just focused on one DSP (Deputy Superintendent of Police), at the Valley Police Office in Hanumandhoka. It would be better to take the interview of public, criminals, other policemen etc. so that more information would make the article more informative.

Kamala Pokhrel
Bansbari

Crazy on Profile

I am a regular reader of Spotlight magazine. And I read profile regularly. But this week, I became confused whether the last page of the magazine was profile or something else. Yes, giving importance to sports vis-à-vis the 'Tenth SAG' is good in itself. But, I think it would have been better to give a separate page for sports. If so, the reader of sports can get his information but not at the cost of readers of profile. That's why I request you to make separate page for sports.

Smita Jha
Dillibazar

Why No Art?

As a regular reader of spotlight magazine, I have found various tastes in it. It has covered relevant issues, political

issues, social issues, profiles and so on. But I have been missing the news on art exhibition since some weeks. I had thought that the magazine had separated a page for art, but its not true. And I found the separate page for fashion, this week. Will you continue it in future? Is there any problem to cover the news of Art?

Shreejana Basnet
Kalanki

US In Nepal

This is in response to the article "US In Nepal" (Spotlight Sep 1). In fact, the article is more informative. It has discussed on various facets of US interest and objectives in Nepal, and the response by ambassador Moriarty- "I have not made any phone calls to get support for ceremonial monarchy." But, why don't you give your own opinion? Whatever the news you have got from different source is not enough for the readers. It must be analyzed closely. The readers want your view and observation but not only known information.

Upendra Magar
Mandikhatar

Nothing Except Strike?

The prevailing mind set of the people is reflected in the article 'Strike Tendency'. It's the exact situation in the present context. If any demand is not fulfilled, then strike begins. It seems that only way of solution to any grievance is organizing strike. I think this is because of the selfishness of strikers. Otherwise, they would follow other options instead of striking. Leaders, industrialist, teachers, students, drivers, all of them have found that expressing anger by striking pays. While talking about the strike against petro price hike last week, tyres were burnt, vehicles vandalized and properties destroyed during the two-day strike. But who is responsible for pollution caused by burnt tyres, who is responsible for the inconvenience caused to people who had to walk long distance, and who is responsible for daily wage-earners, whose livelihood was affected by the strike.

Sagun Shrestha
Kritipur

Disease Strike Flood Victims

Over 2000 Flood Victims In Bardiya District Have Fallen Ill As There Has Been Outbreak Of Gastro Interitis, Pneumonia, Fever And Conjunctivitis. Two Persons – An Elderly Man And A Newborn Have Already Succumbed To Pneumonia In Rajapur Vdc. According To Dr. Ramashankar Deep, Chief Of District Health Office, Over 2000 Persons Have Visited Health Camps For Treatment Till Sunday. Four Health Camps Have Been Organized In The Flood-Hit Areas. *Leading Dailies Report.*

India Agrees Not To Construct More Barrage

India has agreed that it would not construct barrages in border areas including the Siraha embankment without consulting with Nepal. During the meeting of Standing Committee on Inundation Problem (SCIP) of two countries held in Patna, Bihar, India agreed for the same. "Indian side has halted construction at Nepal's request," states a release issued by Nepalese side after the meeting. In future, India has agreed to seek consent of Nepal before undertaking any such construction, it further states. The meeting of SCIP – which should have been held every six months – took place after 19 months this time. *Kantipur daily reports.*

Diplomats Criticize New Provision Of Appointing Ambassadors

Senior diplomats have criticized new provisions of appointing ambassadors, which many say is the major reason for undue delay in appointment of Nepalese ambassadors in around 12 countries. The House of Representatives Rules prescribes a new provision for appointing any ambassador as per which three candidates have to be recommended for any ambassadorial position by the government. These three candidates will then face parliamentary hearing and one will be chosen. Senior diplomats have criticized this method saying it could be humiliating to the aspirants. "This is a procedure that is practiced nowhere in the world and is farcical in itself," said former ambassador to Japan Kedar Bhakta

Mathema. Senior diplomats including Murari Raj Sharma, former Nepalese permanent representative to the UN and head of the high-level task force set up by the Foreign Ministry recently, also said this procedure of appointing ambassador would be unacceptable. Conceding weakness in the provision, UML MP and former minister Bharat Mohan Adhikari said, "If there is any weakness or error in the provision, the Foreign Ministry should recommend reforms." *Kantipur daily reports.*

DfID Returns From Parbat Due To Maoist Pressure

Following the pressure by the local Maoist organization to register with them, the British aid agency Department for International Development (DfID) has decided to return from Parbat district. The DfID will be stopping its program in the district. The DfID has been launching around one dozen programs in the district including those on community forest, safe motherhood etc. The Livelihood Forest Program (LFP) has already been recalled and other programs would also be recalled soon, it is learnt. Earlier, vice chief of Maoists' Revolutionary People's Council-Parbat, Bishnu Lamichhane had warned against engaging in activities in the district without their permission. He accused that national and international NGOs were involved in anti-nation and anti-people programs. DfID sources say that since the policy of the organization do not allow it to register with Maoists or provide them donation, there is no option for them other than to return. The LFP program in Parbat had been providing job to over 100 persons in the district. Its return will affect their livelihood as well apart from the loss of millions of rupees of resources to the district. Meanwhile, other NGOs have started seeking permission from the Maoists to operate in the district following the pressure to do so. *Nepal Samacharpatra daily reports.*

Rayamajhi Panel To Probe King's Role Too

The high level Rayamajhi Commission formed to probe allegations of repression against the People's Movement II is

preparing to probe the role of King Gyanendra, too. "His role as head of the government and not as the head of the state will come under investigation," said Krishna Jung Rayamajhi, chairman of the commission. King Gyanendra headed the Council of Ministers before April 24. "We hope (the King) would cooperate with the panel," Rayamajhi said. He, however, did not elaborate about the time or process that will be adopted to inquire with the King. Meanwhile, the chief secretary of the King, Pashupati Bhakta Maharjan recorded his statement at the Rayamajhi commission on Thursday (August 31). According to reports, Maharjan stated that he only worked as a secretary of the palace and in accordance with law and constitution. He denied any hand in repression of the agitation. *Kantipur daily reports.*

PM Koirala Meets With The King

On the day his chief secretary recorded statement at Rayamajhi Panel and the day when panel head said they could also bring him under their scanner, King Gyanendra met with Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala. PM Koirala visited Narayanhity Royal Palace on Thursday (August 31) evening to 'brief' the King about political situation in the country. In 30-minutes meeting with the King, the PM is learnt to have briefed the King about peace process, letter to the UN and election to constituent assembly. *Leading dailies report.*

No Permission To Let In The Aircraft Carrying Weapons

The Nepal Government has not given any permission to let in an aircraft from Ukraine carrying weapons, which is now stranded in Ahmedabad airport in India. The previous royal government is said to have made the purchase agreement based on which the aircraft was coming to Kathmandu. However, Indian authorities grounded the aircraft for violating their air space without pre-approval. The aircraft is said to be carrying explosives, rifles and ammunition. According to reports, the aircraft had asked for permission to Nepalese authorities only two weeks ago. "Nepal government had not given any

decision on that permission. And suddenly there were news reports of the aircraft being stranded in Indian airport," Tara Pokharel, an acting ambassador at Nepalese Embassy in New Delhi. Pokharel has informed the same to Ukrainian embassy in New Delhi. As per the 25-point ceasefire code of conduct between the government and the Maoists, neither side will purchase or procure any more weapons. Besides, the Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat had stated in budget announcement that the government will not buy any new weapons. *Leading dailies report.*

Turn 'His Majesty' Into 'Head Of State': SAC

Members of the Parliamentary State Affairs Committee, on Thursday (August 3), proposed certain changes in the bill on amendment of laws regarding approval and procedures of public documents, removing the term His Majesty. They proposed that head of the State should replace the term His Majesty in the Clause (2) of the bill that was tabled before the House of Representatives. Chief Secretary Bhoj Raj Ghimire told the panel members that there was no need to retain the term His Majesty. He suggested that Head of the State or President should replace it. Lawmaker Bidya Bhandari said since the King was still there though his rights had been curtailed, the Head of the State should be used. The issue will be settled on Friday after the concerned minister clarifies the matter. *The Himalayan Times daily reports.*

Experts Flay Draft Of Interim Statute

Constitutional experts have criticized the draft of the interim constitution submitted to the seven party alliance and Maoists a week ago. "You cannot call it a draft of any constitution from any point of view. It is a cheating and crime against the state," said Bhimarjun Acharya, a constitutional lawyer, speaking at the Reporters' Club on Thursday. He said that the historic document goes against the basic principle of a constitution right from the preamble. According to him, Maoists, seven-party alliance and the draft

committee should take responsibility for failing to produce a draft that is legally correct and can address the people's expectations. Advocate Shreedhar Aryal blamed the political parties for the incomplete and confusing draft. Likewise, advocate Biswokanta Mainali termed the draft document incomplete, unbaked, confusing and contradictory. "The document has ignored the basic requirements of a constitution," he said. In response to criticism, Laxman Aryal, chief of the Interim Constitution Drafting Committee said the committee failed to produce what it intended because of its limitations and parties' differences on many outstanding issues. "Even at the last hour some members refused to sign in the final document and pressed me to agree on their versions. And once we agreed on one demand, they came up with a series of demands," he said, without elaborating. "That is why the documents contains many brackets, slashes or blanks, which mean that things are yet to be decided," Aryal said. "It would not have been so incomplete had Maoists and SPA come to an understanding on basic points. We found them rigid in their stance and it was very difficult to reach to a consensus," he said. *Leading dailies report.*

Load-Shedding Begins

Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) is starting load-shedding from Friday (September 1). The NEA claims it was compelled to do so because it has to repair turbines of Kali Gandaki project and conserve the water in Kulekhani reservoir. It stated that every consumer household will go through two and a half hour of load-shedding every week (during evening peak hours of 7 -9:30 pm) for the time being. According to Sher Singh Bhat, chief of NEA's Load Management Center, the national grid will face the shortfall of 93 MW power from Friday when one unit of Kali Gandaki project (48 MW) will be put under repair and some units of Kulekhani I (30 MW) and II (15 MW) kept out of operation to conserve water at its reservoir. "We do not have any problem on energy. The rivers are flowing full due to monsoon. But we have problem on power capacity," Bhat said. He added that water at Kulekhani

reservoir had to be conserved to avoid huge load-shedding during winter. He said this year, too, the reservoir is not likely to amass water beyond 1510 m level. The reservoir has the capacity to collect water up to 1532 level. The NEA is planning to buy 70 MW of electricity from India. If that materializes, then load shedding hours in winter can be decreased. Otherwise, the NEA is planning for progressive load-shedding hours - 3 hrs a day (Poush - December/January); 5 hrs a day (Magh - Jan/Feb); 9 hrs a day (Falgun - Feb/Mar); and 4 hrs a day (Chaitra - Mar/Apr). *Kantipur daily reports.*

"Barrage Should Be Pulled Down": Maoists

Accusing that the construction of Laxmanpur barrage and Kalkalwa embankment by India by breaching international norms has led to the death of at least 21 Nepalis, Maoists have warned that they would be compelled to destroy them if it is not managed properly to prevent such disasters. In a press statement issued by Maoists' Tharuwan Autonomous Republic United Revolutionary People's Council, the blame for the recent floods and resulting deaths have been laid squarely on Laxmanpur barrage and Kalkalwa embankment. *Nepal Samacharpatra daily reports.*

Deuba Laments Unity Propaganda

President of Nepali Congress (Democratic) Sher Bahadur Deuba has accused the NC of spreading propaganda and rumors about the unity between the two parties. "Party unity cannot happen by spreading rumors and propaganda," he said, addressing a meeting of workers in Birgunj. "I am not against party unity. But for this to happen, Girijababu will have to demonstrate that his heart is also equally tall as his age and history," he said, reiterating that the first condition for party unity is the respectful status for all from center to ward level. "If there is respectful unity, that will lead to emotional unity. Otherwise, the same betrayal and split will occur," he said. *Kantipur daily reports.* ■



PM Koirala (right) meets with delegation of international media advocacy mission

Gorkhapatra

THE GOVERNMENT HAS APPEALED TO ALL PUBLIC TO come forward with generous support to help the victims of floods and landslides. The government has appealed for the support through Prime Minister's Natural Disaster Relief Fund. The government has also announced immediate relief program of Rs 23.8 million. The cabinet meeting of Thursday made that appeal.

WITH THE AIM OF FINDING OUT THE SITUATION OF media and press freedom in the aftermath of April political change, a high-level international press freedom and freedom of expression mission has arrived in the capital. The team comprises representatives from Article 19, International Federation of Journalists, International Media Support, International News Safety Institute, UNESCO, World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters and Open Society Institute. "The mission will meet PM Koirala and deputy prime minister KP Oli on Monday and join an open discussion," said Mahendra Bista, general secretary of Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ)

THE GOVERNMENT OF FINLAND HAS AGREED TO PROVIDE assistance worth Rs 1.49 billion to Nepal government for operation of drinking water and sanitation projects in nine districts of mid and far western regions. An agreement to this effect was signed between the Finnish and Nepali government officials at the Ministry of Finance on Friday (September 1).

IN A MESSAGE HE DELIVERED ON THE OCCASION OF THE golden jubilee of establishment of diplomatic relations between Nepal and Japan, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala thanked the support by the people and government of Japan towards the democratic aspirations of Nepalese people. "We have defined a roadmap for the country's political future leading to elections to constituent assembly to formulate a new constitution for our nation," Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat read out PM Koirala's message at a program organized to mark the golden jubilee. Stating that Nepal has sought the support of the UN in the peace process to bring an end to the decade-long armed conflict, the message said: "This will lay the foundation for permanent peace, stability and a truly representative, inclusive and plural democracy reflecting the hopes and aspirations of our countrymen." Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi also delivered a message on this occasion expressing that Japan respects the democratic aspirations of Nepalese people. A commemorative postal stamp was also unveiled on the occasion. Japan is Nepal's largest bilateral donor.

ON THE OCCASION OF INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE Disappeared, OHCHR-Nepal renewed its call to the government and the Maoists to take steps to make public the fate or the whereabouts of the hundreds of Nepalis who disappeared during the armed conflict and

hold people accountable for effecting disappearances. "OHCHR-Nepal notes that the Ceasefire Code of Conduct agreed upon by the government and the CPN-Maoist includes a provision in which both parties agreed to make public at the earliest the whereabouts of missing citizens," stated a press release issued by the Office. On July 25, the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs and Human Rights had directed the government to form an "all-powerful commission to solve the issue of disappearances once and for all." OHCHR-Nepal has also recommended that an independent and impartial commission of inquiry be established with adequate resources and full powers to investigate and clarify all cases of disappearances. Meanwhile, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has stated that 936 persons still remain missing. It informed that whereabouts of 563 persons disappeared by the state: 315 by the Maoists; and 58 by unidentified groups still remain unknown.

STATING THAT SUCH ACTIVITIES COULD BOLSTER ANTI-democratic elements, the cabinet has appealed to all concerned not to launch strikes pressing for professional demands for the time being. Informing about the decisions taken by the cabinet, government spokesperson and Minister for Information and Communication Dilendra Prasad Badu said, "The nation is passing through a sensitive phase. Programs held to pressure the government could be used to set in instability. Meanwhile, the cabinet has pronounced four more persons as martyrs of the Jana Andolan II. With this the total number of martyrs of Jana Andolan has reached 25.

THE CABINET HAS DECIDED TO APPROVE THE SENDING of Nepalese Army (NA) peacekeepers to Lebanon. As per the request of the United Nations, the government has agreed to send 850 NA soldiers to keep peace in the southern Lebanon, which is ravaged by the war between Israeli forces and Hizbollah militants.

THE GOVERNMENT HAS AGREED TO RECEIVE JAPANESE assistance to enhance Radio Nepal. Japanese government is providing assistance worth Rs 600 million to improve short and medium wave radio broadcasts. The government has also agreed to receive Rs 4.9 billion from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to fund road Connectivity Project. This will help lay 227 km road connecting Galehhi-Trishuli-Dhunge-Syaphrubi, apart from upgrading road linking Tamakosi-Manthali-Khurkot. It will also help improve the condition of 263 km of other roads in 17 districts.

AS THE COUNTRY FACES LOAD-SHEDDING DUE TO POWER shortage, the government has engaged in homework to develop three mega projects to generate 1000 MW of electricity in six years. Replying to queries by the members of Parliamentary committee on Natural Resources, Water Resource Secretary Tika Dutta Niraula said the government is studying to develop 402 MW-strong Arun project in the east; 309 MW-strong Upper Tamakosi in the central region; and 300 MW-strong Upper Karnali in the western region. Niraula informed that although the government had received attractive proposals on foreign investment on all three projects, it considered utilizing domestic resources on Upper Tamakosi project. "Since it is cheaper one, government plans to mobilize investment from Employees Provident Fund, Citizen Investment Fund and similar domestic organizations in the Upper Tamakosi project," Niraula said. On Upper Karnali and Arun, Indian companies including Reliance company have shown interest to invest. These apart, China is in discussion with the government to develop 60 MW-strong Upper Trisuli A project. China has also shown interest to construct 14 MW-strong Upper Modi project. The Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), on its own resources, has started the construction of 30 MW-strong Chameliya and 14 MW-strong Kulekhani III projects from this year. Secretary Niraula informed that within three four years, additional 300 MW of electricity will be generated. Meanwhile, Niraula informed that the proposed plan to unbundled the NEA into separate generation, transmission and distribution units has hit the snag after intense protest by its employees.

“Congress in 1950 and 1960 and Marxists in 1972 agreed for arms management in a wrong manner because of which people could not get desired system. Therefore, before there is political resolution, we will not agree for arms management.”

Prachanda, chairman of the Maoists, stating that they would not bow down before 'imperialists, expansionists and domestic feudalists,' while addressing a public function in Kathmandu.

* * *

“Although the Maoist leadership has been frequently expressing their commitment to abide by the agreements, there have been ample instances of violations at the local level.”

Krishna Prasad Sitaula, Home Minister and coordinator of the government's talks team.

* * *

“We will not put our army in cantonment before there is agreement on political package.”

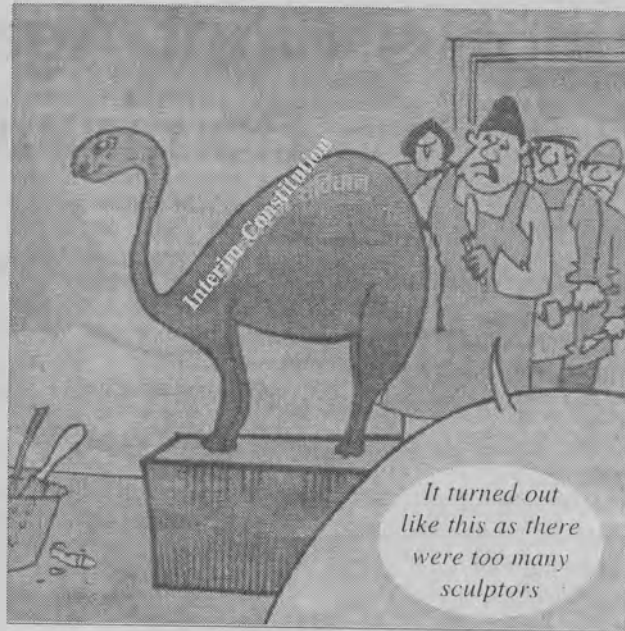
Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Maoist spokesperson, addressing a press meet in the capital.

* * *

“Competition, confusion, and show of strength mark the relationship between the government and the Maoists.”

Surya Bahadur Thapa, Rastriya Janashakti Party president, while speaking at a function in Nepalgunj.

* * *



Bimarsha

“The government is concerned about the recent remarks made by the Maoists regarding the role of the UN in the peace process.”

Pradeep Gyawali, a member of the government talks team and Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, expressing discomfort over the gradual change in the tone used by the Maoist leaders regarding the management of their arms under the supervision of the United Nations, in Kantipur Television.

* * *

“I have clearly said unification should not be in the interest of just a handful of leaders at the top but it should equally address the issue of cadres at the grassroots.”

Sher Bahadur Deuba, president of Nepali Congress (Democratic), saying that unification of the party is not possible based on news reports and propaganda alone, while talking to reporters in Kathmandu.

* * *

“His role as head of the government and not as the head of the state will come under investigation.”

Krishna Jung Rayamajhi, chairman of the panel formed to probe the allegations of repression against the people's movement, saying that the panel is preparing to record the statement of the King in this regard, in Kantipur.

* * *

TRANSITION

BAGGED: Dr. Sanduk Ruit, renowned ophthalmologist, the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Peace and International Understanding, from Philippine Supreme Court Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban, at a ceremony in Manila, Philippines.

FORMED: A 10-member summit talks team headed by Prachanda, by the central committee meeting of the Maoists. Other members of the team include Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, Ram Bahadur Thapa 'Badal',

Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Matrika Yadav, Dev Gurung, Dinanath Sharma, Nanda Kishore Pun 'Pasang', Pampha Bhusal, and Khadka Bahadur Biswakarma 'Prakanda'.

ANNOUNCED: A two and a half hour a week load-shedding by Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), beginning September 1.

APPOINTED: Dr. Jagadish Chandra Pokharel as the vice chairman of the National Planning Commission (NPC), by the cabinet. Dr. Pushpa Raj Rajkarnicar, Indira Shrestha, Dr. Posh Raj Pandey, Dr.

Chaitanya Subba, Ramkant Gauro Tharu and Bhim Prasad Neupane, as members of the NPC, by the cabinet

FELICITATED- Humor artiste Basundhara Bhusal, 56, was felicitated by Lalitpur Art Cultural Academy.

RELEASED- 'Dasgajama Uviyara' a book by Ganesh Rasik, senior artiste and litterateur.

BEREAVED: Bhagirath Yogi, former colleague of SPOTLIGHT Magazine, of his father.

Nepal's Fight Against British Domination

By MRS LAXMI THAPA

British-Nepal War that started from 1814 continued up to 1816. We bravely fought against the British. The War had badly shaken the confidence of the British rulers. Edward Bishop has written in his book *Better To Die- The Story of The Gorkhas* "Lord Moria thought the war would be over by Christmas (or within a month). In the event his invading columns encountered so much misfortune at the hands of the Gorkhas that, quite apart from the Nepalese conflict being obscured by Waterloo and other momentous events in Europe of the period, written reference to it was discouraged over the next hundred years for fear of alerting the British Empire's subject people to the fallibility of the British soldiers and their arms.. the operation of Moria's columns redounded so little to our credit that the less said about them, the better."

The Great Nepal

At a time when the South Asia was being swiftly converted into the colony of the western powers, Nepal was able to rise from a scratch to be a formidable Himalayan power within a very short time. Nepal had gathered enough strength to move forward to protect the peoples dwelling in this vast region. However, the build up of Nepalese strength brought her on a collision course with the colonial power of that time. Colonial power Britain had good reason to fear that if the Nepalese build up continued for some time, the colonial rule of Britain could soon come to an end in South Asia much the same way as in the North America a short time before.

Unification Stood the Severest Test

The process of unification of the Himalayan region had spread like wild fire across the Himalayan region. In 1792 a war broke between China and Nepal. It was the most unfortunate event for the newly emerged Great Nepal. Most of the troops stationed in the western part of the country had to be pulled back to defend the capital Kathmandu. The Chinese offensive was directed straight towards the capital. China has remained a major superpower all along and thus the Chinese attack might have at that time badly shaken the people living across the entire Himalayan region. There could not be other better opportunity for those opposed to the unification campaign to break away and again form independent states. But even during this period of great threat to the Himalayan unity except for few minor incidences nothing untoward happened that could seriously undermine the integrity of the Great Nepal. Thus the Himalayan unity stood the severest test and encouraged those fighting for the cause of such unity not to be complacent about the achievements; there was still a lot to be done.

British Afraid of Nepal

Soon after the signing of peace treaty with China our country had started to make preparation for conducting further unification campaign under the leadership of Bhakti Thapa. The British rulers in India appeared to be showing signs of great worries. We can draw such conclusion from the visit of the Kirkpatrick to Kathmandu in 1793. Historian Steeler has given at length the description of that visit in his book.

British Governor General in India had agreed to send Kirkpatrick to mediate in Nepal China dispute. Kirkpatrick did not even set out for Nepal until after the war had been successfully terminated by the Nepal-China agreement. The Governor General was requested not to send Kirkpatrick since the war had been amicably concluded. However, since the Governor General was keen on sending a man to Nepal, so Kirkpatrick visited Kathmandu for not any specific official purpose. During his visit Kirkpatrick found that Nepal was trying to reinvigorate the attack in the west. The circumstances under which the visit of the Kirkpatrick to Kathmandu took place clearly shows that British rulers in India were all the time watching Nepal with great suspicion. At that time British rulers in India were adopting every possible method to enlarge the territory under their control. The way new territories in India were brought under the British control and ruled had provoked even the British public. British Parliament went completely against it.

Accusations Against British Rulers

Historian HG Wells has written about the British rule in India at great length. The text from his book (History of the World) has been reproduced here. Englishmen at home were perplexed when presently the generals and officials came back to make dark accusations against each other of extortions and cruelties. Upon Clive, Parliament passed a vote of censure. He committed suicide in 1774. In 1788 Warren Hastings, a second great Indian administrator, was impeached and acquitted (1792).

New Concept of Nationalism

It should not have been difficult for British rulers in India to realize that Nepal could soon become a powerful country if further expansion of Nepal under the leadership of the Bhakti Thapa is not checked in time. Bhakti Thapa's appoint to the new post carrying the dwell responsibility was itself the recognition of the fact that the performance of his leadership in preceding operations for national unification was absolutely superb. Historian CB Khunduri, who himself is a Garwali, has clearly explained about it.

“Why Gorkhas won and their enemies, the Kumaonis and Garhwalis lost is the question that should haunt every historian. After all, the armies of those states were large; reasonably equipped; and their men material and their armies were not inferior to the Gorkhas’. And they fought in their own territories with the advantage of intelligence, resources and no dearth of brave population. The conclusion one draws from the analysis of strategies followed, battle field tactics and techniques adopted, is just one: there was lack of leadership among the vanquished. The Gorkhas, on the other hand, had been spurred by their overzealous new concepts of nationalism”. CB Khanduri has stated in his book that Bhakti Thapa had impressed the Gorkha commanders during the War of Consolidation and joined those who were to be the eventual ruler of Nepal. Kazi Amar Singh Thapa had treaded in the footsteps of Bhakti Thapa. British rulers must have been very much concerned that Nepal was going to speed up the next phase of the unification campaign under the leadership of the Bhakti Thapa.

British Preparation For War

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

War Prolonged

British had expected a blitz-krieg victory. It is said that the Governor General Hastings had planned to win the war in one mighty sweep in one to two months in end 1814 but certainly before the Christmas. He was badly mistaken in his assessment. We Nepalese fought very bravely. In early months of the war the initial British invasion was completely beaten off. British offensive ended in complete failure. Nepalese force stationed within the shelter of the fortress were not only able to defend their position against an invading enemy many times superior in strength but they even shocked them by their dreadful counteroffensive that used to be accompanied by big losses on British side. The British rule in India was at a risk of falling apart. Unfortunately at that time the Sikhs

and Marathas did not join Nepal in liberating the whole of the South Asian Continent from the grip of the European domination.

After the initial defeats the British changed their strategy to avoid their casualties. They started to deploy long range guns to level the fortification and force us to flee. This strategy paid off. The British were able to advance quickly into the territory under our control. They even used elephants to carry heavy guns across the mountains.

The Battle of Deothal

The 16th April, 1815 should have gone down in the history of the whole South Asian Sub-continent as a day of great sacrifice in the struggle against the European domination, unfortunately even among we Nepalese only very few know about the significance of that day. It is also a day when the bravery of Nepalese people became a legend in the world. The courage and gallantry shown on that day by Nepalese might have badly shaken the determination of the enemy to subdue Nepal and turn it into an European colony. It was this very day when the 74 years old Bhakti Thapa led a counterattack against an enemy far superior in strength at Deothal to protect the honour of Nepal and its proud people.

For correctly evaluating the true historical significance of the day 16th April, 1815, it is important to know the sequence of events before and after the Deothal Battle. On that day Nepalese side had launched the counterattack. Bhakti Thapa at the age of 74 years had personally led that counterattack. It was a bloody battle. Bhakti Thapa laid down his life in the battlefield. Casualties on both side were very high. It is said that a column of about 400 Nepalese soldiers had taken part in the attack and almost all of them were either killed or wounded.

Legend of the Bravest of The Braves

It might surprise many of us to learn that the Bhakti Thapa who sacrificed his life at an age of 74 in a counter attack in Deothal Battle against the British became a legend even in the eyes of his enemy. Historian CB Khanduri writes quoting various contemporary British historians” The euphemism of the BRAVEST OF THE BRAVES had been used by Napoleon for Marshal Ney, whose bravery during the retreat from Moscow in 1812 was one of the highest. BRAVE LES BRAVE, said Napoleon of him. British then used this citation for the Gorkhas during and after the Anglo-Nepal War. Such was the bravery shown by Bhakti Thapa that the next legend of the Bravest of the Braves had been created on the day- 16 April 1815 at Deothal.

A Pillar of Modern Nepal

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

(The author writes in history)

OLI'S CHINA VISIT

Renewing Friendship

After completing his week long visit to China, deputy prime minister K.P. Sharma Oli returns with a message of friendship and cooperation from northern neighbor

By KESHAB POUDEL

Whether it is a Royalist, a democratic, a communist or coalition government like present one, China, Nepal's northern neighbor, treats all representatives of Nepalese governments as leaders of sovereign and independent nation with a message full of friendship.

China has always responded to Nepal carefully respecting its sensitivities. Even in the time when some anti-China forces were launching anti-China activities in Tibet making Nepal as a base, Chinese mandarins used the words of persuasion rather than coercion.

Sharing more than 1400 kilometers border with Nepal, China has its own security interest in Nepal and it often expresses its security concerns to Nepalese side demanding firm assurance and commitment from Nepal. On its part, Nepal has always expressed its commitment that it will not allow its land to be used against China.

Even during the recent high level visit to China, deputy prime minister Oli reiterated Nepal's commitment that it will not allow anti-China activities in Nepal. After completing his nine-days visit to China at the invitation of Chinese foreign minister Li Zhaoxing, Oli expressed satisfaction saying that China has pledged whatever assistance it could provide in the consolidation of the democracy in Nepal. "Though we share more than 1,400 kilometers of border, we have never encountered any border related problems," said Oli.

During his visit, Oli also met Chinese prime minister Wen Jiabao and other senior officials and exchanged views about mutual interest. "China has pledged whatever assistance it could

provide in the consolidation of the democracy in Nepal. China wants to see political stability, development and economic progress in Nepal. I also assured Chinese leaders that Nepal cannot allow its soil to be used against China," said Oli, adding that Nepal-China relations have stood the test of time and have always been cordial, friendly and cooperative. "There is no problem in bilateral relations," Oli said. "I believe that China's phenomenal economic development will have a positive bearing on the process of our economic development."

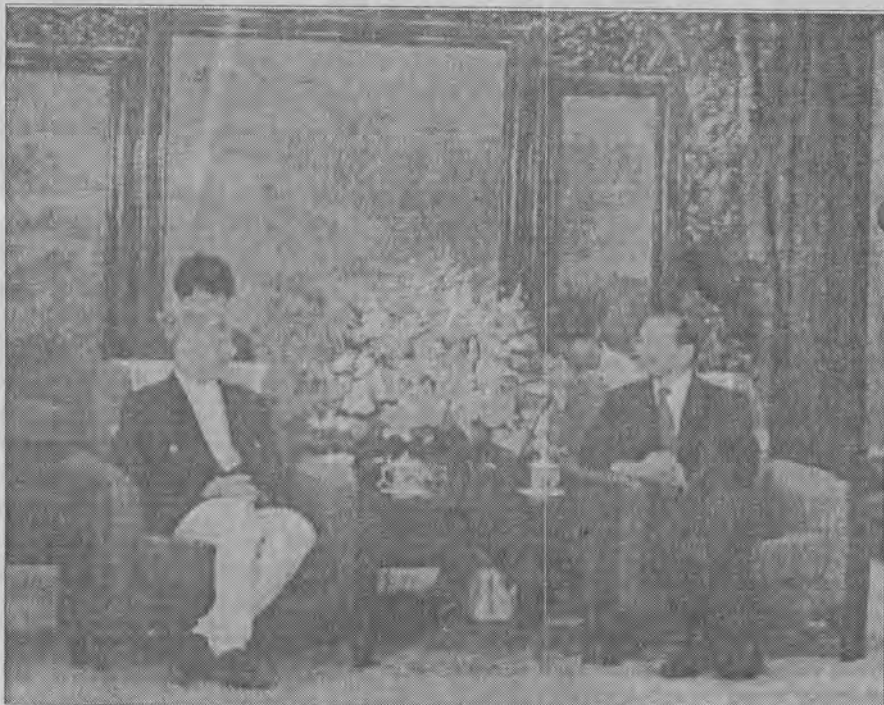
Following the formation of new Seven Party Alliance government after April's political upheaval, this was the first visit by Nepal's senior official. "China took an opportunity to renew its outlook towards Nepal and Nepal's importance to China's security and

stability. Compared to size and strength of China, Nepal has no importance in any other matter than its contribution to geopolitical balance," said a political analyst.

"It is resilience of China's diplomacy that it was helpful as far as possible to the previous royal regime as it is now. China does not have any political preconditions in maintaining normal and friendly relations with Nepal. That does not mean that Chinese do not have any political assessment of the situation in Nepal. Had that not been there, they would not have been so consistent in maintaining cordial and positive relations with any forms of government in Nepal."

Despite being a one ideology state with a totalitarian model, China was as trustworthy and dependable to the royal regime as it is to the present democratic regime. "Chinese leaders fully assured us that they support democracy in Nepal," said deputy prime minister Oli.

"China assured Nepal in every respect by its matured, considerate and positive attitudes towards its small southern neighbor. This time again China has assured Nepal that it will remain a trustworthy and helpful neighbor. There has not been a single incident of its covert machinations inside Nepal to create a proxy factor for making and unmaking



DPM Oli (left) meets with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao in Beijing: Warm Ties

Gorkhapatra

the regimes," said the analyst. "Though gigantically big in size, it does not have any machination to destabilize regimes. Despite its dictating capacity, China has a policy of friendly persuasion to point out its sensitivity in the matter of security from Nepal."

Chinese know how to spell out hard facts in mildest of language without hurting the sentiments of smaller neighbors like Nepal. From Mao to present regime, China has always used cautious and sophisticated diplomacy. During 1960s when anti-China activities were launched from **Nepal**, China maintained best of its relations with then King Mahendra's regime.

Nepal-China relation is not a new one as it has passed through many centuries. The leaders of the new political change are the same as they had been associated with parliamentary politics of the past. "Political atmosphere has much changed but politicians are almost the same. This is not their new interactions with Nepal's neighbors particularly with China. If the past experience is any guide to them yet, they will not go against the proven realities of Nepal," said the analyst.

Railway Link to Nepal

One of the important aspects of deputy prime minister Oli's visit to China is that China has promised the Nepalese government that the newly built Tibet railway would be extended to the border of the Himalayan kingdom.

The promise gives a new dimension to the railway line that is a potent mixture of political and diplomatic baggage besides being a major development project. The promise was given by Qiangba Puncog, chairman of the Tibet autonomous region government.

Qiangba Puncog said that China's newly-built railway to Tibet will be extended to the border between China and Nepal. He said that the remote region of Tibet was looking forward to be connected to South Asia. "The proposed railway extension would promote business exchanges between China and Nepal," Qiangba said.

Deputy Prime Minister Oli hailed China's plan to extend Tibetan railway to Nepalese border, saying it will greatly



Tibet Train: Expansion of railway line likely

facilitate bilateral trade, tourism and people-to-people contacts.

"We welcome China's plan to extend the new railway to China-Nepal border," said Oli. China was positive towards Nepal's request to expand its Qinghai-Tibet railway line to the Nepal border. Nepal has to carry out feasibility study on the possible railway link from Xigatze of west Tibet to Panchkhal of Kavre or Trishuli of Rasuwa within a few years to develop these areas as "special economic zones."

According to current plans, a branch line will be built next year from Lhasa to Xigatze, the region's second largest city located at an altitude of about 3,800 meters and some 270 kilometers from Lhasa. The project is expected to take three years to complete.

Currently, land transportation between Tibet and neighboring Nepal and India is not easy. Nyalam located in Xigatze is the only border crossing that boasts a highway.

"The extension of railway line up to Nepal-China border will greatly facilitate bilateral trade, tourism and promote people-to-people contacts thereby further solidifying the foundation of bilateral relations," Oli said.

"The availability of direct railway services will make our trade less expensive, competitive and reliable," he said.

As China agrees to look in a friendly manner to Nepal's proposal to build the railway, now the test is of India's overall outlooks towards Nepal. It is a fact of geography that Nepal has closer and, therefore, more complicated relations with India. Till now, its access to sea for the third country contact is wholly dependant upon India.

After few years, Nepal will have a new aspect of international contact through the Chinese rail network which is coming closer to borders with Nepal. Despite that the shortest, most convenient and economic transit facility will be with India for a longtime to come. Like China's sensibility for its security, India, too, has similar kind of concern in Nepal. But there are ways to respond to that from Nepal's side.

"The term equidistance may have several synonyms in the dictionary but the essence will be the same in the geo-political context of Nepal. From the side of China, there was nothing unexpected and unusual in response," said the analyst.

Oli's visit also shows that Chinese prefer friendship rather than hostility. Chinese preference is persuasive policy rather than coercive with Nepal and stability and progress against instability and destruction though proxy force in Nepal.

PEACE PROCESS

In Tight

Spot

The five month old euphoria over the peace process is finally giving way to the same old gloom. The decision of the central committee meeting of the Maoists held last week to launch urban revolt and the total indifference to the various understandings and code of conduct has led to a situation where slowly but seemingly, the peace process is being put aside. The recalcitrance of the Maoist side regarding the management of their arms and lack of constructive and creative approach from the government side to convince the rebels has caused much discomfiture to the public who are warily looking at the unfolding events. The rising rhetorics and growing differences among seven parties and Maoists are, indeed, a cause for concern to teeming millions of people who had hoped that their country was finally on the path towards peace and stability

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

If one is to assess the language of speech made by the Maoist leaders in the past few days, one would assume that the peace process is almost dead. At a time when millions of countrymen and the whole international community are watching every move made by them, the recent actions by the Maoists could only lend credence to those who have always doubted their intentions.

For a party that has expressed commitment to join the competitive multiparty politics, the threats of urban revolt and October revolution has further miffed not only the domestic public opinion

but also the overwhelming international community, which is watching the 'rising red storm' in Nepal with both shock and awe.

There is a palpable feeling among the general public that the peace process has hit a roadblock. The 12-point and 8-point understandings, 25-point ceasefire code of conduct and the 5-point letter to the UN had generated high hopes about the success of the peace talks. However, the incidents of past few weeks have only created distrust and mistrust among the seven parties and the Maoists.

Things have come to such a pass, that Maoist spokesperson Krishna Bahadur Mahara stated in a public program that

chairman Prachanda may not be able to attend public programs again due to security reasons. He also hinted at assassination attempts at Maoist leadership but did not elaborate.

The announcement by the Maoists to launch urban revolt and the reaction by the government who has deployed security personnel claiming the entry of Maoist Special Team in the valley has widened the rift between them. As allegations and counter-allegations fly thick and fast, the past understandings have been left in a limbo.

The current spate of distrust dangerously coincides with growing incidents of extortion, intimidation, and



Mahara (center) addressing press meet: Rising rhetorics

Gorkhapatra

leader of Nepali Congress (NC). He further asked, "What will happen when the police resort to lathicharge to disperse their agitators? Will they simply go away or will they take out their arms? How can one believe that hardened guerrillas would be able to handle the complications of peaceful agitation?"

Arms Imbroglio

The United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan has dispatched Ian Martin as his Personal Representative to oversee the peace process and help the government and the Maoists as per the requests made by them in the identical letters they

recently sent to him.

In the letter, the government and the Maoists have asked the UN to supervise that the soldiers of Nepal Army remain within barracks and the Maoist military remain within fixed cantonment areas. However, the central committee meeting of the Maoists last week decided that the issue of arms management will not arise till the political settlements are reached.

Addressing a public function in the capital after the central committee meeting, Prachanda changed tones. He accused that there were efforts to repeat the instances of 1950 and 1990 in the name of 'arms management.' Prachanda said Maoists would not put their arms in camps before elections of Constituent Assembly. "Congress in 1950 and 1960 and Marxists in 1972 agreed for arms management in a wrong manner because of which people could not attain desired change. Therefore, before there is political resolution, we will not agree for arms management," he said. Prachanda further stated that they would not bow down before imperialists, expansionists and domestic feudalists.

Likewise, Mahara ruled out the possibility of arms management before the government and the Maoists agreed on an 'overall political package.' Mahara said they would not be ready even to

Brushing aside speculations that they could again return to the jungle if the current peace talks fails, the Maoist leadership has stated that they would rather remain within cities and launch urban rebellion to defeat regressive and feudal elements.

"There are conspiracies to push us back to the war but we will not go back at any cost," said Maoist chairman Prachanda, addressing families of Maoists' martyrs in the capital last week.

"Through urban rebellion, we will chase away (the King) who has been ruling since last 237 years," he said. Even though Prachanda took pains to clarify that this time the Maoists would engage in peaceful revolt, the fact that his insurgents have been groomed in violent tactics and the periodic outbursts of their anger is enough to make anybody suspicious.

"In order to defeat the imperialists, expansionists and feudalists, we are prepared to accept martyrdom of not only 10,000 people but one million people," Prachanda said, last week.

These hard-hitting statements have strengthened the thinking that the Maoists are waiting to unleash October revolution to capture the state power. "At a time when they have refused to lay down their arms, it is hard to believe that any kind of agitation led by them would be peaceful," said a

abductions by the insurgents even as the government, on its part, has been unable to spearhead the peace talks and quickly overcome this delicate phase of transition.

The fact that the political parties could not agree to minimum common positions in the process of drafting interim constitution has further soiled the atmosphere as the country is nowhere close to interim constitution, interim government or interim parliament, which the Maoists have posed as preconditions before they could even consider abandoning arms.

Talk of Urban Revolt

Last week the central committee meeting of the Maoists was held in Ramidanda, Kavre. The meeting, among other things, decided to launch urban revolt to press the government to meet its demands.

Although the term has not been elaborated, the Maoist threat of urban revolt has sent a chilling message to all those who were genuinely longing for the transformation of the Maoist party into a mainstream political outfit.

"We are not going to transform into parties like Nepali Congress or UML. We will join the government on our terms and not to strengthen the status quo," said Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, senior leader of the Maoists.

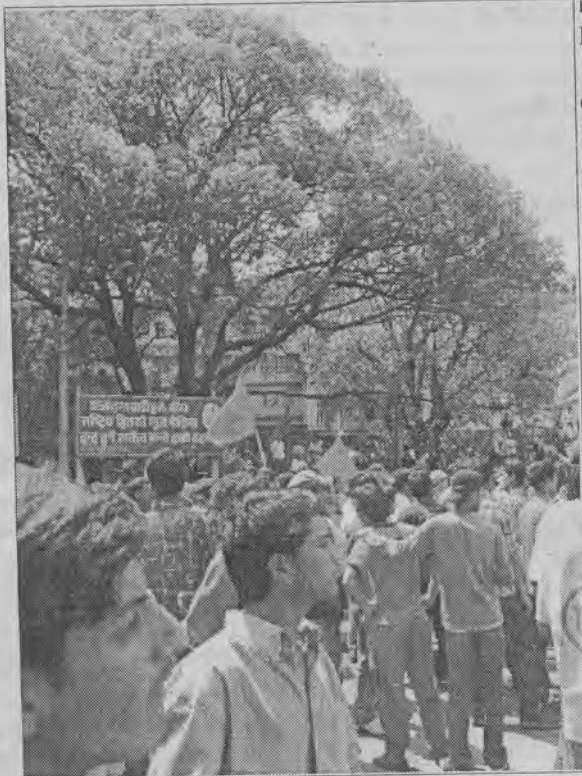
confine the Maoist army to cantonment areas unless the main political issues were addressed. He said progress have to be made simultaneously on the interim statute, interim legislature, interim government and arms management.

A press statement issued by the party's central committee stated that the government was making an "allegiance with domestic and international reactionary forces" going against the spirit of 12-point and 8-point understandings.

Meanwhile, government minister and a member of its talks team Pradip Gyawali criticized the Maoists for changing their tones on the issue of arms management. He also accused the Maoists of continuing to be "bewitched by their weapons" and developing arrogance borne out of it. His remarks came at a time when business community and hoteliers have openly condemned the intimidations and extortions by Maoist cadres in the capital.

Positive Aspect

Amid the increasingly disturbing saga, there is, however, one silver lining. Repeatedly, the Maoists have announced that this time they would not go back to armed insurgency.



Demonstrators: Demanding Peace

"Girija Prasad and international forces want to chase us away from Kathmandu. But this time we will not flee from here. Rather we will make those who have ruled from Kathmandu for 238 years to flee," Prachanda said in the public address.

This shows that in the last few months the Maoist leaders must have realized the ground reality and the limit of armed insurgency in a country like Nepal and in a geo-political situation like today's.

Furthermore, in an indication of their continued earnestness to see the dialogue process succeed, the Maoist central committee decided to form a 10-member summit talks team headed by Prachanda. Other members of the team include Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, Ram Bahadur Thapa 'Badal', Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Matrika Yadav, Dev Gurung, Dinanath Sharma, Nanda Kishore Pun 'Pasang', Pampha Bhusal, and Khadka Bahadur Biswakarma 'Prakanda'. The composition of the team suggest that the Maoists have decided to include leaders from both political and military wing in the process. Badal, Pasang and Prakanda are known to be military leaders within Maoist organization.

Subsequently, the cabinet meeting of Tuesday has decided to hold summit meeting with the Maoists soon, probably next week. Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala expressed his firm commitment towards peace process and the elections of Constituent Assembly.

Amid the rapidly developing scenario, it is equally likely that the seven parties' government and the Maoists ink another accord to bury their differences. However, merely inking accords are not going to give us a durable peace. What is required is genuine intention to follow them through for the sake of peace and stability of the country. ■

Mysterious Arms Episode

It was like a burst of bubble. After creating huge brouhaha in the political establishment, parliament and forcing the Maoists to make another scathing tirade against the national army and the palace, the news of a Ukrainian plane carrying rocket launchers and weapons from Israel for the Nepal Army getting stranded in an airport in Ahmedabad. India turned out to be a false alarm.

Talking to BBC Nepali Service, the Israeli ambassador to Nepal Dan Stav rejected the news reports. He said the news reports did not even merit a reaction. He said he has no information of any deal or agreement on arms purchase between Nepal and Israel whatsoever.

Likewise, director of Ahmedabad airport S.D. Awasthi informed that there was no such plane stranded at his airport.

Earlier, Home Minister Krishna Sitaula, speaking in the parliament, refuted media reports that any Ukrainian plane had entered into India and was headed for Nepal. Sitaula said that Nepalese Embassy in New Delhi had requested Indian authorities not to give over fly permission to Ukrainian plane following a request by Ukrainian authorities to the embassy. According to him, the Ukrainian plane had wanted to deliver arms as per the past agreement reached by royal regime. He clarified that Nepal government did not have any policy to purchase or receive arms at this period.

When the arms episode finally became clear, it seemed the Maoist leaders had made hasty conclusions based on media reports when they accused everyone from the Prime Minister to the royal palace and from Crown Prince Paras to the US and Israel.

Dr. Baburam Bhattarai even linked the meeting between Prime Minister Koirala and King Gyanendra with the arms episode. He said that as per their information the "arms were being flown in at the behest of the palace with the help of the United States and its follower Israel." Mahara called the 'landing of a cargo plane laden with arms and explosives from Ukraine at an Indian airport' a 'conspiracy of imperialist forces against the Maoists.' Prachanda went on to accuse the hand of Crown Prince Paras in the arms episode. This led the traditionally reticent royal palace to come out with a press statement rejecting 'malicious' news reports linking the Crown Prince. ■

POLITICS

Where Have They All Gone?

As forces from the left of center and extreme left have hijacked all national agenda, there is a deafening silence from those who believe in middle path or right of center

By KESHAB POUDEL

Although Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) and Rastriya Janshakti Party (RJP), two parties with leaning towards the right of center, opposed King Gyanendra's direct rule and morally backed the agitation launched by seven parties alliance, which is dominated by left of center and extreme left forces, they seem to have no role in the present political scenario except thumping the table in the House of Representatives.

There are some right of center political parties who have always been represented in substantial number in all previous parliaments, including the present HoR. RPP led by Pashupati Sumsher Rana and Kamal Thapa and RJP led by Surya Bahadur Thapa are parties with right of center political leaning. Except the party of Kamal Thapa, the two others had opposed the direct rule of King Gyanendra and, thus, supported drastic political change in the country. But none of these parties were represented in any of the groups or committees formed by the government to draft interim constitution.

In the last general elections, the RPP had won 11 seats in the parliament securing 18 percent of total popular votes cast. According to the Elections Commission, the RPP won 18 seats bagging 20 percent of total votes in 1994 polls.

There are a significant number of people who still prefer the center of right but they are absolutely ignored in the present political context. In the present HoR, both the parties have at least a

dozen MPs but their role has been limited to just thump tables whenever the SPA and the Maoists announce any change.

"We are not given proper place in the politics. We also played role from our part to bring the present political change," said RPP president Pashupati Sumsher Rana whose party does not have any role in the parliament or the government.

Other RPP leaders, too, hold similar views. "We have played important role in bringing the change but we are treated



NC Workers: Silenced centrists

like Dalit in the politics by seven parties alliance. Divided among ourselves due to perceived compulsion to prove as diehard democrats, our tragedy is that our voice cannot be heard in present context. I want to go to elections taking up the traditional view," said former minister Rabindra Nath Sharma. "You cannot suppress my views."

Although they are silent now, people with conservative views are waiting to speak up and be heard. "Being basically a traditional society, Nepal has a substantial number of people who hold traditional

views on political problems but they are completely sidelined by massive propaganda of extreme leftist politics. In the political classification, the centrist and the right from center opinions are completely ignored," said a political analyst.

"The left of center parties are predominant in public forums and propagandas. In the political confrontation, even the Nepali Congress, due to its socialist commitments, is a left of center party whereas around 10 communist parties of different sizes are competing against each other on the plank of extreme leftist politics."

Persons - who represented the seven left of the center and extreme left political parties along with the Maoists - drafted the interim constitution but none of any right of the center parties were even consulted during the process.

These right leaning political parties have been permitted to exercise freedom to express their opinion in the HoR but

they are not given any role to oppose the move of SPA government's policies. They don't have the participating role in major changes proposed by the HoR.

If this trend continues, in future the centrists and right of center opinions of the society would have no lawful role in the political process. Considering the traditional shape of the society, conservative views in politics would have no role to play.

In fact, in this divergent society extreme leftists have applied lopsided pressure upon the society in its favor whereas

the silent majority of moderate and conservative leaning people and parties have been left without a space and role.

"The way the extreme leftists are exerting the pressure in the society, the future course of politics would not be reflected in a balanced and moderate form. That matter of fact has to be reckoned within the political process. Otherwise, there would be unreal and imbalanced political relationship in the days to come in the critical days of completing transition from instability to stability," said the analyst.

“The Ray Of Hope For Peace Here Is The Role Of International Community”

—RABINDRA NATH SHARMA

Former minister and Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) leader RABINDRA NATH SHARMA is a well known politician. Frank and bold, Sharma is known for his political maneuvering skills. His colleagues often term him as Chanakya of Nepalese politics. At a time when Nepal is going through delicate phase of transition, Sharma spoke to SPOTLIGHT about various issues regarding current politics. Excerpts:

How do you evaluate the coming political situation?

There will be some kind of political upheaval which I like to describe as second bout of political struggle. With the support from so-called civil society members, Maoists will launch another movement in the name of peaceful Janandolan (October revolution). That probably will turn into a violent one as the Maoists have everything to use. Unlike previous agitations, the international community will not back it though.

Don't you think that the various agreements signed between the seven parties and the Maoists are intended to restore the peace in the country?

You may be talking about the 12 points, eight points and 25 points agreement. Nobody has shown any sincere commitments towards them. They signed the agreements for the sake of agreement. So, no one can stop them from doing whatever they like.

How do you see the present state of politics?

The situation is very uncertain. We have already proved ourselves as irresponsible people accountable to nobody. Personal whims and wishes are prevailing over the rules of the game. In a situation when political forces do not want to listen to the voices of other, it is impossible to find out solution.

Who is responsible for present crisis?

We all are responsible for it. But the seven party alliance will have to take bigger share of the blame. When your beginning is bad, how can you expect a good result? Had the SPA government followed constitutional course, their actions would have been regarded as legitimate. One cannot incorporate declaration of HoR as tantamount to amendment of constitution. The constitution of Kingdom of Nepal 1990 had given every right to the HoR to amend the constitution but nobody followed it.

What are your observations about the functioning of the House of Representatives?

This HoR was revived by the King not by the revolution. So this HoR does not have the popular mandate as it was elected six years ago. The members of HoR were elected under the Constitution of Kingdom of Nepal 1990. So, they have certain obligation towards it. Had they moved ahead in a sober manner by following the legal course, the process of transformation would

have been smooth. But when MPs are themselves following a suicidal path, no body can save them.

What about the role of the King?

Following the recent political change, the King has been sidelined now as the monarchy has already lost its traditional privilege and prestige. But, some elements within the SPA are provoking the King as if the institution still is strong as before. The good example is the high-level probe commission, which seems to have no work other than to issue a statement threatening the King. This kind of statement could have boomeranging effects. If you cannot give space to a political force, it will try and create a space for itself. That will be more dangerous.

How do you comment on the treatment of security agencies by the SPA government?

The government is not treating them properly. At a time when the country needs to maintain the law and order, the government must win the confidence of security forces. If the Maoist launch the war again, the government will need security forces to fight against them. Seven parties alone cannot stop the Maoists. If you demoralize the security forces, they will not be in a position to fight in future.

Do you see the possibility to hold the elections for CA?

Now the Constituent Assembly is reality as all political parties have agreed to hold the elections for it. Whatever one claims, holding of the elections for CA is a long process. But before going for CA, there is a need to hold the referendum to decide the vital issues like monarchy, religion and other structures of the state. The government and the Maoists alone cannot decide on them.

How do you see the possibility of holding the elections in free and fair manner?

If the election of the constituent assembly is not held in free and fair manner, it will have no meaning. At a time when the Maoists are declaring that they will hold the gun till the elections for CA, there is no meaning to hold the elections. The Maoists should be first disarmed to hold the free and fair elections. In short, we are following the negative approach and have failed to balance the approach between negative and positive. We are in a very difficult phase.

As the Maoists have indicated that they will go for October revolution, how do you view their threats?

Everyone has his/her own wishes and so do the Maoists. Mere wishes are not enough to go for revolution. Even as the Maoists have already sent thousands of people to the valley, it alone will not be able to bring revolution. No foreign powers including the USA and India will support any kind of communist takeover in Nepal.

What will be the role of international forces in the context when internal forces are unable to solve the problem?

“Mere wishes are not enough to go for revolution. Even as the Maoists have already sent thousands of people to the valley, it alone will not be able to bring revolution. No foreign powers including the USA and India will support any kind of communist takeover in Nepal.”

In one or another point, a major crisis is inevitable. No one can avoid the future clash. Although the larger interest of international force is to restore peace in Nepal, individual countries have their own interests as well. India does not want to see other forces playing determining role in its zone of influence, China, too, has its own interests in Nepal.

In case of major political clash resulting in the deterioration of law and order, what could be their response?

The ray of hope for peace here is the role of international community. They will play a vital role. There are many international factors involved in the peace process of Nepal. I don't think it is easy now for anybody to go against the international community. This is the reason even the Maoists have expressed that they will not return to jungle.

What might be the response of Chinese?

China has its own security interest in Nepal. When I met Chinese leaders a few years ago, they showed immense security interest in Nepal. In my interaction with Chinese, a senior Chinese leader said that Himalayas is not a barrier for our friendship - we are friend not only because we are neighbors but we have a common security interest. It indicated that China has its security interest in Nepal.

Why are you defending the King?

I am not defending the individual king but I am defending the institution of monarchy. I am not defending King Gyanendra's actions. What I want is the institution of monarchy. I was first person who opposed the King's action of October 4, 2002 as unconstitutional. The institution of monarchy still has important role to play in Nepal to unite various ethnic and linguistic groups. There are still many utilities of the institution of monarchy as it has a long history and tradition. We cannot build these kinds of institution overnight. Even for my personal safety, I want the institution of monarchy.

How do you see the status of present government?

Even this government is royal government as it was not constituted under a particular article of the constitution of Kingdom of Nepal 1990. According to that constitution, the government can be formed just under two basis - either single party government under article 136 or coalition or minority government under article 42. All the governments formed after October 2, 2002 are royal governments. The dismissal of the Sher Bahadur Deuba's government in 2002 deviated the constitutional process. In this way, even Girija Prasad Koirala's government is royal government.

Do you see any possibility of new interim constitution coming in place before Dashain?

I can't believe that interim constitution will come before Dashain or the Maoists will join the interim government. As you know the draft constitution handed over by the drafting committee is incomplete, it requires a lot of homework to complete. Since major political parties do not have consensus on vital issues, I don't think it will come out within a month even if they have a magic wand.



But Maoists have threatened that they will launch another Janandolan in case the government disagrees to accept their demands?

Whatever public statements the Maoists have made, their status has already changed now as they cannot return to jungle again. Of course, in the name of Janandolan III, they can burn some tires or disrupt the normal life. It will boomerang for the Maoists. It is just a bargaining threat of Maoists. We all know that it was the support of international media and governments, which made Janandolan II successful. I don't think Maoists will receive support as was there before April 2006 (to the SPA). Had they received such support, Maoists would be in the government now.

Why, then, will the Maoists not return to jungle?

First of all, international situation has changed. Secondly, Maoists are freely roaming in the village and urban centers demonstrating arms and ammunitions. They still continue recruitment, kidnapping and extortion. When the Maoists are enjoying all benefits here, why do they need to go back to the jungle? The government officials are abiding by all the orders of the Maoists.

Who do you blame for the present political situation?

It is solely King Gyanendra who is responsible for this entire political situation. Till a year ago, the Maoists did not believe that they would get such heroic welcome in city and political parties would enjoy such enormous power. Had King Gyanendra listened to the genuine advice of his well wishers, the country would not have to see these kinds of situations.

Do you personally believe that the elections for CA will be held?

If you see the actions of major political forces in power, it seems that nobody wants to hold the elections for CA. Whether it is the SPA or the Maoists, all of them seem to be giving up the demands for holding the elections for CA. Looking at all these political developments, the way ahead for CA is very difficult. It is being used only as political propaganda. ■

"We all know that it was the support of international media and governments, which made Janandolan II successful. I don't think Maoists will receive support as was there before April 2006 (to the SPA). Had they received such support, Maoists would be in the government now."

Conflict Transformation

With the objective of creating awareness about the role and function of the state, political parties and civil society, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) organized a training-cum-workshop titled "Systematic Conflict Transformation for Peace Communications" last week. The program aimed at imparting training on systematic conflict transformation to journalists and other public opinion leaders such as union officials and university teachers.

FES, which is involved in imparting political information and knowledge in an impartial manner, stimulate communication between different political and social spheres, motivate public to discuss complex social, political and economic matters emerging from the pressures of daily decisions, organized the workshop as crisis prevention and peace building have become one of the priority areas of its development cooperation.

The systemic conflict during transformation takes a completely new approach to conflicts, in general, and provides a deeper understanding of hidden conflict structures and their solutions. It integrates established models of communication and conflict mediation, it allows every participant to get a clear image of his/ her own possibilities for influencing a conflict and where his/ her

limits are, it empowers the participants to use their individual strengths and resources for transforming conflict in their environment, and it enables the participants to respect their limits as well, it supports the efficiency of the recently founded non- governmental organization, "Nepal Peace Communication" by clarifying relationship and task structures within the



team, by revealing centers of conflict and by showing viable solution paths.

Jorgen Erik Klubmann, journalist, systemic and communication consultant and Marco de Carvalho, Surgeon, systemic consultant were the two trainers who trained the 25 participants on new method of constellations – which means that a detail of

the relationship system which is supposed to be relevant for the conflict is placed in a given space or room according to an inner picture or image.

When asked about the contribution of constellation of solution of conflict management trainer Jorgen Erik Klubmann said, "Systematic approach is a new dimension, it tries to involve all different aspects and ideology. It gives us certain perspective and it's a relationship system." Added, Marco de Carvalho, "Systemic approach is a tool like a car which keeps mutual relationship between observer and analyzer. Through constellation social problem to political problem can be solved easily if taken seriously."

As Dev Raj Dahal, FES Foundation country director, says, "Conflict starts when a man goes beyond ambition and interest. Constellation is a symbol of conflict. It focuses on hidden dynamic and thoughts of people. And it helps to eradicate in different level of conflict too."

The FES has introduced the concept of National Network of Peace Communicators (NNPC) with twin of enhancing and promoting regular sharing among peace communicators, and providing space of learning, sharing and networking for peace communicators. ■

(By Kabi Adhikari)

UN Official Inspects Flood-Hit Region

The UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Nepal, Matthew Kahane, visited Banke and Bardiya districts on September 1 to assess the rapidly emerging humanitarian needs there, and to express the UN's solidarity with those affected by the recent floods, states a press release by the UN Information Center in Kathmandu. The floods have left scores dead and thousands more in urgent need of humanitarian assistance.

Kahane met with people who had watched their homes, livestock and crops wash away. "People urgently need basic shelter, food, clothes, water and medicines" he said. "An emphasis has to be put on in the surveillance of communicable diseases such as diarrhea, typhoid, viral hepatitis, skin diseases and malaria. Soon they will also need help to rebuild their lives, many have lost everything," he said.

Kahane applauded the efforts underway by Government institutions, and the Nepal Red Cross Society and international non-government organisations in extending assistance to the thousands affected by the floods. "The UN is also assisting the relief effort and stands ready to extend further support if required," he said.

To date, the UN Children's Fund, through the Red Cross, have dispatched relief supplies including: tarpaulins, blankets and oral rehydration salts, water purification materials, household utensils, and blankets to the worst affected areas.

The UN Population Fund has set up two mobile health clinics in Banke and Bardiya to support basic health care services. They are also pre-positioning care packages for a total of 700 pregnant women and those in need of post-natal care.

Meanwhile the World Health Organisation dispatched medicines, while the World Food Program is gearing-up to send food relief if required. The United Nations Development Program is paying some of the cost of critical transportation and communication costs and stands ready to support longer-term rehabilitation work.

International and national NGOs here also immediately are mobilizing their resources to support the Red Cross ensure that emerging needs would be met. These included: CARE, Oxfam, Save the Children US, IRC, Caritas, World Vision, Action Aid, FIDA International, Plan Nepal, LWF/Action Church Together, RRRN and DFID-CSP.

"The best way we, all the organisations and government institutions, can quickly reach critical assistance to the thousands displaced by this flood is to coordinate our efforts," Kahane said. ■

HOTELS

Mixed Bag

Just as the peak tourism season is approaching, there are concerns about the intimidation and threats to hotels

By A CORRESPONDENT

Last week, the half yearly general assembly of the Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN) passed a strange resolution. It allowed individual hoteliers to shut down their hotels if need be.

This news came as a bolt from the blue at a time when there was a kind of euphoria among the tourism entrepreneurs excited over the prospects of huge tourist arrival.

The month of October marks the beginning of major tourist season in the country. After decade-long insurgency, the country this year is finally facing a positive environment given the encouraging signs of peace process. News reports have already stated that airlines have run out of seats as tourists have booked all seats in all airlines coming to Kathmandu for the next three months. Correspondingly, hoteliers were also equally excited since they recorded over 90 percent bookings this season.

Compared to recent past when they had to run hotels below 20 percent occupancy, this was a windfall of sorts to the hoteliers.

So, when the news of the HAN allowing hoteliers to shut down came, it was totally unexpected. But the HAN officials say they have genuine reasons for taking such a decision.

In recent months, hotels like so many other industries in the country, have also come under severe pressure from the pro-Maoist trade union groups, who have not only tried to make huge demands for workers but also press for 'donations'.

"We have no choice but to shut down the hotels if the Maoists continue to make illogical demands," said Prakash Shrestha, president of HAN. According to a hotelier, the hotels have been running on losses for many years and many of them are already under pressure due to the need to

pay bank loans and interests. "And on top of them, we are now facing exorbitant demands from the Maoists. How can we meet them?" he asked.

As such, the news of fully booked airlines may turn out to be another lost opportunity if the hotels are indeed forced to close down. Last year, due to differences between its management and employees, Hotel Yak and Yeti remained shut down for around eight months. This alone had hurt the tourism sector a lot. What happens if

previous few months after the April change in Nepal.

The August news was, however, forgotten as new reports came about the encouraging signs of likely tourist arrival in coming few months. Major airline companies are learnt to have already sold tickets for coming three months. The airlines coming from Europe have been booked for over 90 percent tickets. Qatar Air, Gulf Air, Thai Airways, all have said that their tickets are booked. There were even news reports that some tour operators were compelled to send away prospective visitors due to lack of adequate air tickets. But this encouraging news could end up being yet another lost hope if the hotels continue to face pressure from the Maoists.

Meanwhile, last week the meeting of tourism ministers of BIMSTEC countries agreed to join hands to promote regional tourism. In yet another



Tourists in Thamel: Entrepreneurs Look Forward To Big Season

major hotels are closed down simultaneously during the peak tourism season is anybody's guess. Apart from lost revenue of billions of rupees that will also send a completely negative message to international travelers about the instability and uncertainty persisting in Nepal.

In the month of August, the tourism arrival could not pick up. In fact, it declined by 12 percent compared to the same month previous year. This was a bad news following encouraging signs seen in

encouraging signal, the visiting Indian Tourism Minister Ambika Soni told Nepalese media that Indian government is positive towards enlisting Nepal as a favored travel destination for its employees. India provides Leave Travel Concessions for travel to its 2 million employees to select destinations within the country. If Nepal is also included in the list, it will become an attractive destination for the 2 million India and their families. ■

E-COMMERCE

Potentials Unleashed

The start of MoneyPly Mall, a joint venture with American entrepreneurs, unleash the potentials of harnessing e-commerce

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

The benefits of e-commerce are finally beginning to take shape. With the introduction of new service of cyber mall by MoneyPly in Nepal, the Nepalese entrepreneurs or vendors as they are called in business-speak, can now actually sell their stuffs through internet to virtually any one out there in the world.

On September 3, MoneyPly, LLC – a US-based company, formally launched the MoneyPly Mall, the first-ever fully integrated cybermall in Nepal in partnership with e-Business Solutions. The MoneyPly has joined hands with Nabil bank as official banker and TNT as official shipping agent.

The MoneyPly mall provides simple alternative to tens of thousands of Nepalese vendors to sell their stuff to the world. "Joining of MoneyPly will be like putting up a sales-stall where everyday 100 million people walk by looking for stuffs," said Leo Giacometto, director of MoneyPly. As per their plan, even a simple vendor of yak cheese based in Namche can now sell his/her product to a consumer from New York who he has never met.

Explaining the procedure how it works, Anil Shah, chief executive officer of Nabil Bank Limited, said, "For instance, if an American family wants to put up new and different kinds of decorative items in their Christmas tree during their festival or if an American lady wants original pashmina shawl when going to an opera or if any family in Europe wants pure yak cheese, they can simply visit the cyber mall in the internet, pick their choice, make payment through their credit cards and, boom, the money will travel all the way to our bank here in Kathmandu. Simultaneously, an order form will go out to the shipping agent TNT who will then pick up the stuff from the vendor chosen by the customer and ship it to the US or Europe. The vendor will only need to produce the invoice provided by TNT to pick up their cash. They will get the exact amount as they have put up in their product list in the internet. Within a week, a transaction will be completed."

Shah said Nabil bank was excited to be a part of this unique phenomenon, which he likened with remittances in terms of their potentials. "We believe we can make transactions worth US\$ 2 million per month (in coming months) through this," he said.

Shah, however, cautioned that Nepalese vendors will need to stick to quality and sell exact stuff as they advertise in the cyber mall. "There can be no compromise in quality," he said.

For the time being, vendors need to register with the MoneyPly office in Kathmandu by paying a certain amount. "Rest will be taken care of by us," said Michael Rawson, president of MoneyPly.

"MoneyPly is thrilled to launch the first ever, fully integrated internet payment gateway and cybermall in Nepal," said Rawson. "The core focus of the MoneyPly is to leverage world class technology to allow vendors across Nepal to reach global

markets. A pashmina vendor in Thamel, for example, can now sell to buyers throughout South Asia, Europe, United States and around the world. Our strong local IT team will take care of all of the internet technology for the vendor including taking digital pictures of items for sale and providing support. The vendor does not even need to own a computer. All vendors need to do is collect their payment after a sale is made and items are shipped," he said.

During the launching ceremony of the MoneyPly mall, acting Secretary at the Ministry of Information and Communication, said the government welcome the new initiative that can boost Nepalese exports and tourism potentials. "I am glad this initiative is particularly attractive to small entrepreneurs," he said.

Terming it as the gateway to the world of e-business for Nepal, former minister and MP Bhakta Bahadur Balayar hoped Nepalese will be able to reap benefits from the noble initiative.

According to Vinay Bhardwaj, vice president of MoneyPly, already around 100 vendors have signed up with them. "We expect to sign up around 1000 vendors soon," he said. The global online business is witnessing a stunning growth. A marketplace of over one billion users taking part in \$1 trillion in online commerce will now be available to grow businesses in Nepal and throughout the region. ■

Traffic Jam Hits Kathmandu

In recent weeks, traffic jams have become annoyingly regular phenomenon. As every organization worth its salt resorts to blocking the road to pressure the government, motorists and pedestrians have become the victims.

For the past few days, every day the city has faced traffic jam, which sometime extend up to several hours. As the volume of vehicles have substantially increased even as the length of road has not, even a jam at one place for a short time leads to huge backlog of vehicles creating a blockade all around the city.

On Tuesday (September 5), motorists faced enormous difficulties when main roads as well as street thoroughfares in the capital witnessed terrible traffic jam. A group of taxi drivers blocked roads in various parts of the city protesting the killing of a taxi driver by an unidentified passenger on Monday night.

Tens of thousands of motorists and commuters were trapped in the jam that lasted for several hours. The taxi drivers parked their taxies in the middle of the road in major traffic intersections like Ratna Park, Jamal, Durbar Marg, Maitighar and Baneshwor, completely blocking the vehicular movement in these areas. On Monday night, unidentified passenger stabbed to death a driver named Chudamani Thapa Magar at Balkumari. At several places the protesting taxi drivers who wanted compensation to the family of the victim and security for all taxi drivers, thrashed motorcyclists for defying their blockade. Meanwhile, Valley Traffic Police has mobilized rapid reaction teams to address the problems of traffic jam. It has also started a toll free service to inform about traffic jam. One can dial 103 to find about the traffic information and updates. ■

MONSOON

Erratic Precipitation

Unfavorable weather system and moisture diversion causes erratic monsoon

By SAHISHNU POUDYAL

Monsoon is primarily the period that is looked forward to by millions of farmers in the country who have no other option but to rely on natural rainfall for their crops.

Every year not only the farmers but also economists and planners look up to the sky as the nature of the monsoon largely dictates the performance of agriculture, which is the vital sector of national economy.

Unfortunately, this year the rain Gods did not smile at Nepalese, especially those living in the far west region. Although the monsoon had arrived on time this year, the middle period of monsoon was marked by acute drought whereas towards the end, the country witnessed flash floods and landslides that caused huge destruction of lives and properties. Standing crops were destroyed and even seeds swept away.

This year, first, the monsoon was marked by drought and then heavy rainfall. Weather experts say this is due to unfavorable movement of weather system and unequal rain distribution in all regions of the country. Subsequently, that caused flood at one place while drought in other places. It also destroyed the productive land and the crops. Among other regions, the western regions of terai plains have been badly affected.

"The problem was seen more in western terai plains mainly due to two reasons - one is because of unfavorable movement of weather system from the Bay of Bengal, which affects rainfall in Nepal, and another is from moisture diversion by this unfavorable weather system," said Krishna Bhakta Manandhar, Senior

Divisional Meteorologist at the Department of Meteorology Science at Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA). He added "However, we do not claim this to be vigorous rain."

Manandhar said, "We had expected to have rain from May 27 but it rained only from June 1, but still it was comparatively sooner compared to previous years."

Manandhar said that this year before August, the monsoon was pretty normal as there was good rain distribution in all areas of the country. But, the normal pattern could not hold on from mid-July and there



Rainy Days: Erratic downpour

was a drop in precipitation activities till August.

The absence of rainfall during this period, which is considered to be the peak monsoon season, led to drought, mostly in western regions. "During those days between July 21 and August 21, most of the areas of the western region faced low rainfall," he said.

The weather expert stated that between July 21 and August 21, in Dhangadhi (far western region) it rained only 294 mm whereas in normal years it used to rain around 509.2 mm. Likewise, in Pokhara (mid western region) it rained 542

mm whereas it needed to rain 895.1 mm. Biratnagar (eastern region) also saw less rainfall as it rained 145 mm during the period compared to normal expectation of 448.2 mm. In Simara (central region) it rained 182 mm compared to the normal expectation of 475 mm. In Bhairahawa, (mid western region) it rained 466 mm compared to normal expectation of 827 mm and in Kathmandu, it rained 231.5mm compared to the expectation of 338 mm. Clearly, the big gap in actual precipitation and the normal expectation meant there was acute drought in every part of the country from east to the far west, which directly affected agricultural sector.

As soon as the spell of drought ended, the people faced huge deluge of rainfall. "The immediate change in the weather pattern caused flood. Normally it is believed that the rainfall above 50 mm in a day is considered as heavy rainfall. But according to the record, the rainfall in August 26 at Nepalgunj (Mid western region) was 310

mm in 24 hours - this was the amount of rainfall that should have come down in the whole month of August. We can easily imagine what must have happened due to the heavy rainfall there. At the same day, in Kathmandu it had rained 3.3 mm, in Birendranagar it had rained 149 mm, in Dhangadi (Far western region) it had rained 86 mm, in Bhairahwa (western region) it had rained 49 mm, in Simara (Central region) it had rained 4 mm and in Biratnagar it had rained 16.5mm."

The heavy concentration of rainfall in the mid west and far west region, obviously led to flash floods and inundation. "Moreover, the region is yet to see the end of the monsoon this year. Normally it is predicted that the partial rain would be felt for some more weeks," said Manandhar.

According to the data, it was on July in 1979 when Nepalgunj had faced 310 mm of rainfall in 24 hours, which had also caused flood in those days in the western region. And it was on July 23, 2002 when Kathmandu had faced 177 mm of rainfall in one day causing flood in the valley. ■

AUSTRALIAN FILM FESTIVAL

East Meets West

Australian films have once again proved that they have unique test for audience

By A CORRESPONDENT

Over exposed to Hollywood and Bollywood films, Nepalese audience hardly get any opportunity to see films from other parts of the world. Thanks to the efforts of past few years by different foreign embassies based in Kathmandu, few select viewers have got chance to taste films other than those popularly shown in the capital theaters.

As usual, Australian films, which are based on the reality of society and less commercialized, attracted a large number of Nepalese audience this time. The films also helped understand challenges and problems of Australian contemporary society.

In conjunction with the Australian Film Commission, the Australian Embassy hosted a film festival of contemporary Australian films – the Australian Embassy Film Roadshow from September 2-7.

“Australian films have successfully competed in the international markets for decades, winning accolades and introducing talented actors, directors and technicians to the world. Coming to Kathmandu for the fifth consecutive year, the road show will feature six recent Australian films, appealing to a broad range of tastes, which showcase developments in the Australian film industry and highlight our history, culture and contemporary values. The selection of films this year in particular showcase Australia as a multicultural society,” said Australian Ambassador to Nepal.

Altogether six films were exhibited at the Russian Culture

Center. All six films represented various stages of contemporary Australian society and its values. The characters are interesting and story helped to understand the Australian society.

The first movie showed at the theater was *Radiance*. This film is based on a story of three desperate and distance daughters of a mother who died few days back. The story about three daughters who returned back to their ramshackle childhood home where they are forced to confront their mother's legacy of half-truths, unfinished business and family secrets.

Isolated from outside world for centuries, Nepalese society is gradually getting exposure to other western societies like Australia. Like all other society around the world, Nepali society has been passing through a painful process of transformation. Through the Australian films one can see various phase of Australian society and the complications it went through.

In a film *Floating Life*, the director examines the difficulties encountered by Hong Kong immigrants. On one level, the film is about the experiences of the Chang family as they change residence from Honk Kong to Australia, but much of what is presented regarding this small group of individuals has universal resonance. For all of the contemplation of death, lost roots and fractured families, this is actually a surprisingly lightened motive picture.

Another interesting film was *Children of the Revolution* which depicted the story based on Joseph Stalin. Few ever knew that Joseph Stalin's last conscious night on the planet was spent in the loving and devoted arms of a young Australian Joan Fraser. This film is about ideological fanaticisms and its funny implementation.

Love Serenade is another interesting comedy which also attracted large number of audience. The film is about two sisters in an Australian country town who develop a fierce and competitive crush on their new neighbor, a brooding and self-centered radio personality. A black comedy with smoldering soundtrack and lots of fishing.

There are not many characters in *Love Serenade* which takes place in an almost-deserted outback town called Sunray. This is very interesting film. The clash of personality depicted in the films has so many contrasts.

After the annual exhibitions of Australian film festival, many people have found and enjoyed them, which are different and interesting than usual Hollywood flicks. ■



Prachanda Insists On India Role

In his grey safari suit, Prachanda, the chairman of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), can easily pass for a boxwallah from Calcutta. But there is nothing grey about his politics, which remains uncompromisingly radical, reports *The Telegraph*, a daily from India.

In his avuncular manner, he seems to combine the élan of a statesman with the fleet-footedness of a politician. He seems completely at home in a small hotel strategically located on a hilltop about 45 minutes' drive from the Nepalese capital.

"We want India to help institutionalize the people's demand for a democratic republic in Nepal. The question is not whether India has a role in establishing peace in Nepal. It must have such a role," the Maoist leader said, in the interview he gave to Indian journalist Bharat Bhusan.

Claiming that of late some doubts had arisen about India's role in the peace process, Prachanda (aka Pushpakamal Dahal), said India must not "retreat" from its encouragement and support for establishing peace.

"If India retreats now and there is an attempt to compromise with the monarchy, it would be going against the wishes of the people who want a democratic republic," he said, voicing a fear rampant in Kathmandu that New Delhi was perhaps not averse to a future role, albeit diminished, for the monarchy.

"The Indian government stood by Nepal earlier and played a positive role in helping us forge a common understanding with the political parties. The people of Nepal know that without the direct or indirect help of India, the 12-point understanding which became the basis of joint action with the political parties would not have been possible. India must not give up that role," he said.

Just as the Maoist leader has suddenly started doubting Indian intentions, New Delhi is surprised by his talk of autonomy and self-determination for Kashmir and India's Northeast as well as for saying that Nepal wants to be equidistant from China and India.

"India should not be surprised by my talking about autonomy and self-determination. This is our long-standing ideological position. We want to implement this in Nepal. Purely at a theoretical level we think that this is good for others, too. I have said this in the context of Tibet and other regions of China also," he explained.

India must understand his statement in a positive context. Prachanda said. "If the Indian state expands the democratic rights of those who perceive themselves as oppressed minorities, the Indian republic will be strengthened, not weakened."

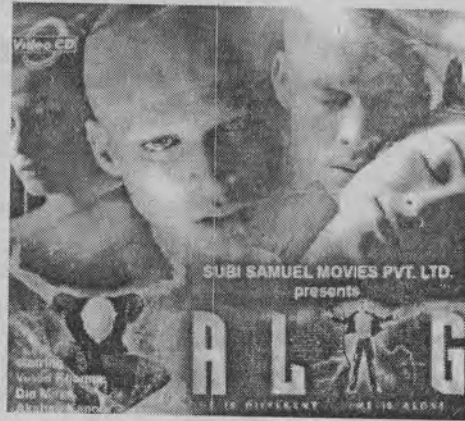
What prompted him to equate Nepal's relationship with India and China and talk about a desire to be "equidistant"? He was quoted in an interview as saying that Chinese weapons supply to King Gyanendra's regime was for "stability" in Nepal. Did this not amount to cozying up to China and sending the wrong signal to India?

Prachanda laughed and said: "No, it is not like that. I had criticized the Chinese both in the party and in public when they supplied weapons to the autocratic monarchy."

He explained "equidistant". "We want to be equidistant from both our neighbors. However, that does not mean trying for equality of relationships or balancing one against the other. If we are closer politically and culturally to someone, that closeness will continue. Equidistant for me does not mean pushing someone away and bringing someone else closer," he said, trying to assuage Indian fears.

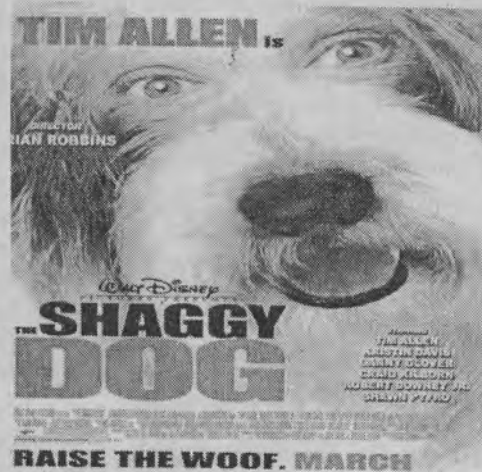
(Courtesy: *The Telegraph*)

CINEMA



Hindi

- Phir Hera Pheri*
- Chup Chup Ke Fanna*
- The Killer*
- Omakara*
- 36 China Town*
- Gangstar*
- Krish*
- Alag*
- Goalmaal*



English

- Shaggy Dog*
- She's the Man*
- Down in the Valley*
- House of Dead 2*
- Hale Light*
- Tuespasseus*
- Kidulthood*
- Over the Hedge*
- The Boston*
- Madea's Family Reunion*

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BIMAL DANGI

Folk Melodies

Dangi has earned name with his dohori songs

By KABI ADHIKARI

“Panas ma batti baleko” - this song, which keeps most listeners interested in lok dohori (a popular folk duet) pondering for hours when it was aired through Radio Nepal, is one of the most known song by Bimal Dangi.

Born on 2041 B.S, Falgun 1, in Dolpa, Dangi is gifted with a melodious voice and a flair for singing. As a very young folk singer, he was groomed under the aegis of good environment of his family. Assisting in the word selection, his brother encouraged him to sing songs since his childhood. Endowed with soothing voice, Dangi was always urged by his colleagues and teachers to pursue the field of singing.

This inspiration led him to participate in school level contests. At his very early age, he used to sing songs of Narayan Gopal, Dharmaraj Thapa, and Kumar Basnet. Besides, he also sang typical songs of Dolpa that caught the attention of many people there.

By taking part in school-level contests, Dangi earned many awards and accolades for his school.

Engaged in musical field since 2055 B.S, his first album is ‘Himali Suskera’. Himali Suskera is an album of Lok Dohori. After this, Sallaghari Ban, Kancho okhar, Panasma Batti Baleko, Saino were released one after another. At a very young age, his labor bore fruits and propelled him as a good singer of folk songs. This name and fame has inspired Dangi to continue singing songs in coming days as well.

Under his own composition, he has brought out “collection of songs” including 10 songs where Suresh Adhikari, Arjun Sunam etc. have also lent their voice. ‘Timi Gayo Arkaiko Dolima’ is his latest album.

With the aim of further refining his skills, Dangi has enrolled at the Fine Arts College at Bachelor level. He has chosen

Classical Music as his major subject. “To preserve Nepali culture and tradition is my responsibility,” said Dangi.

“Pop songs, rock music and modern songs are very common these days, so I wanted to give new taste to listeners,” he added.

In order to participate in cultural programs, Dangi has visited many parts of the country such as Biratnagar,

Hetauda, Ilam, Butwal, Narayaghat etc. Dangi is content to be engaged in promoting typical Nepali songs at this 21st century of globalization. It is his hobby to collect typical folk songs such as Deuda, Jhyaure, Khyalibhaka, Thadibhaka etc. These songs are mostly sung in mid west and far west of Nepal.

He has spent a lot of time in Syangja, Tanahu, Dolpa, Banke, Ramechhap and Dolakha in search of songs. Dangi hopes to bring out more albums in future by including the songs he has collected from far-flung villages. In recognition to his contribution in short period, his songs have already been nominated in Hits FM Award, Kalika FM and Image FM. ■

Japan-Nepal: 50 Years Of Ties

On the occasion of the golden jubilee celebrations of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Nepal and Japan, Junichiro Koizumi, Prime Minister of Japan, and Toshihiro Nikai, Minister for Economy, Trade and Industry, and Chairman of Japan-Nepal Parliamentarians Friendship League, sent their congratulatory messages. Their messages were presented by Takashi Yano, Member of the House of Representatives, and Toshiki Nikai, Executive Assistant and son of Nikai, respectively during the ceremony commemorating the occasion held last week in Kathmandu.

“Japan and Nepal have nurtured the spirit of friendship and cooperation for the past half century. This friendship and cooperation between the two countries exists in various fields including politics, economy and culture, and human exchanges have become active not only on governmental level but also on people-to-people level,” said Koizumi, in his message.

“The Government of Japan dispatched Mr. Yasuhisa Shiozaki, Senior Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, to Nepal in July 2006. The purpose of the envoy was to express Japan’s support to the Government of Nepal in its efforts to push forward the peace process in order to consolidate democracy and realize permanent peace, as a result of people’s movement toward democracy in April 2006. I would like to pay tribute to people’s zeal for democracy, and to support the efforts of the Government of Nepal aimed at bringing about permanent peace and prosperity to Nepal as early as possible.” Koizumi further stated.

“Nepal is well known to Japanese people for its beautiful mountains. This year also marks the 50th anniversary of the first Japanese expedition to reach the peak of Mt. Manaslu. The late Mr. Ryutaro Hashimoto, former Prime Minister of Japan, also truly loved the beautiful mountains in Nepal. This spring, many Japanese and Nepalese people performed “the Manaslu-Fuji cleanup expedition”, and made a great contribution to protecting the beautiful nature of the two countries. I firmly believe that such a joint work at the grass-roots level will make the future of Japan and Nepal more delightful,” the Japanese PM added.

In his message, Toshihiro Nikai stated, “Ever since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1956, Japan and Nepal have built warm and friendly relations through the people-to-people exchanges in fields such as politics, economy and culture. We share and cherish precious values such as democracy, peace and the spirit of tolerance.” ■

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