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The National Newsmagazine

# SPOTLIGHT

Nov 03-09, 2006

## Agro-reforms Defeating Poverty

Peace Process : Slow But Steady  
Aviation : Flouting Safety Rules

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# सुखी परिवारको लागि आनो पैगानी

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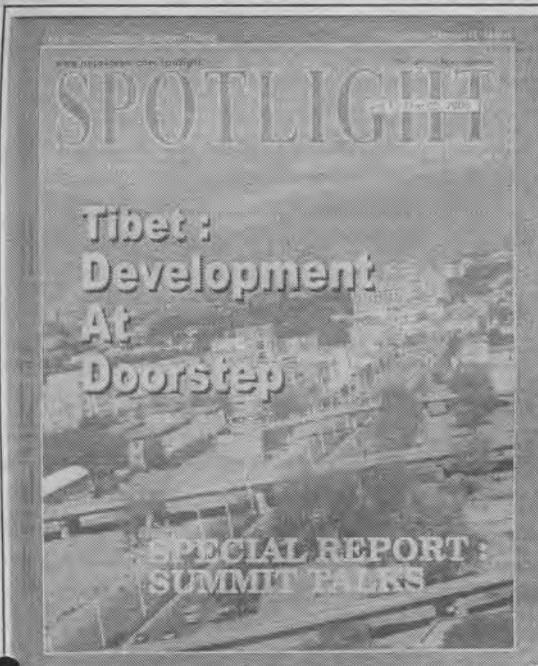
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**T**he festive season is over but the anxieties of poor Nepalis are still haunting them. The SPA government and the Maoists do sit down and talk but cannot arrive at a final solution. It looks both the negotiating parties are losing their grip on the problems. The initiative seems to be gradually shifting into alien hands. And the government and the Maoist leadership are behaving like helpless kids. Before it becomes too late, it is time for Nepalis all over the kingdom to rise up and assert their sovereign rights of managing their own country. The manner the restored House of Representatives and the SPA government have behaved, it is becoming crystal clear that they did not deserve the mandate if it really was the people's mandate. The discredited politicians who were rejuvenated by the follies of the Palace have again lost the people's trust and confidence. The Maoist leadership, although still untried in statecraft, are turning out to be collaborators and losing public sympathy before they ever hold the reins of government, must dissociate with the corrupt politicians lest they get tarred with the same brush. At a time when the nation is at the crossroads of survival and annihilation, we need patriots with unimpeachable integrity to lead the country. We have burnt our fingers with the present leadership too many times to stay complacent again. It is not a time to serve one's personal partisan interests when the nation's integrity is at stake. It is a time for all nationalistic forces to rise and unite and defend the country's integrity. No one can or should stay disinterested. The SPA government has failed once again to rise to the occasion. The humiliating defeat at the United Nations, the non-appointment of country's representatives in fifteen countries for such a long time, the rampant corruption plaguing all the departments of the government and the utter failure to safeguard the nation's prestige and honor, all these have clearly demonstrated that the government has forfeited its right to stay in power. If they have any semblance of honor and honesty and even an iota of love for the country, they must vacate for a better set of people and the Maoists can join the new government after laying down their arms. Let the new government immediately go for the election of the constituent assembly. There is absolutely no time to lose. Our country has suffered a great deal and those who cry hoarse for democracy are least affected. Moreover, they keep on destabilizing our country knowing fully well that democracy only works in a country where they people can chart their own destiny. So, let us be our own arbiter. The SPA government the installed itself at the heat of the demonstrations has let down the people and the country. In such a crucial time, the security forces cannot stay a silent spectator. They must come to the rescue of their motherland. And Nepal's security forces are too patriotic to shirk their responsibility. Let us keep our fingers crossed. ■

*Madhav Kumar Rimal*  
**Madhav Kumar Rimal**  
Chief Editor & Publisher



## Neighbor's Progress

The cover story "Development at Doorstep" (SPOTLIGHT, October 13) showed how our neighbor to the north – Tibet Autonomous Region – has started making swift progress towards modernization. For a long time, Tibet was considered as an under-developed region. But no more. The authorities and people of Tibet have brought about a marvelous transformation in their socio-economic status. As Tibet is also a mountainous region, the models of development applied there can provide important lessons for Nepalese

authorities in their efforts to develop the remote mountainous terrains of the country.

*Sujata Bista*  
Kamalpokhari

## Good Signs

The serious manner in which the seven parties and the Maoists are engaging in intensive meetings to sort out all outstanding issues is a welcome sign ("Baluwatar Brainstorming" SPOTLIGHT October 13). This provides Nepalese people with excellent opportunity of living in durable peace and stability. The leaders need to rise above their petty personal and partisan interests and keep their eyes focused on the future prosperity of this nation. If they can do that, then the country will definitely have the peace it so clearly deserves.

*Bikas Lamsal*  
Ghattekelu

## Evaluation Of Foreign Assistance To Nepal

Foreign assistance for developments, in the form of technical assistance, grants and loans, started pouring into Nepal specifically after 2007 BS (1951 AD) political changes ending the 104-year-old Rana autocracy. Following this initial political change,

Nepal continues to receive foreign assistance after the 2046 (1990) and the current 2063 (2006) political revolutions for the implementation of development projects in various sectors. It must be noted that most of these so-called development projects were politically motivated rather than the need of the country. While projects with long gestation periods were financed by the donors, little considerations were given for short gestation and quick-yielding projects so badly required for uplifting the lives of rural poor.

It is now after 50 long years that Nepal has fallen in the trap of receiving such foreign assistance but there has absolutely been no reports either by the Nepal Government (except hand-shaking) nor by any donor concerned as to the impact of such assistance to the Nepalese economy including the urgent need of poverty alleviation except the idle talk. The donors boast of granting financial assistance and appear at the TV signing agreements but have very miserably failed to publish the results of their assistance and the benefits Nepal has received/derived from such assistance. It is high time, therefore, to stop

such nonsense and to evaluate the impact of such assistance by the Nepal government and publishing a comprehensive report focusing on the impact by sector the loan and technical assistance provided including the date of approvals, amount, implementation period and reasons for delays, major problems encountered and the results of the Impact Evaluation Studies, if any. Furthermore, the future programming should very seriously consider the specific projects Nepal really needs for which she has no financial and/or manpower resources for implementation. Until such an exercise is undertaken and the foreign assistance program's impact evaluated, the Nepal government and the donors should stop such assistance. Furthermore, for technical assistance and advisory programs the available manpower in Nepal should be utilized and no foreign consultants should be hired. Then only we can hope for actually required projects implementation saving the country from idle talks, wastage of time, and heavy debt burden. In view of the very high level of corruption in Nepal, the donors should not give Nepal government any cash but should implement themselves all development projects for Nepal.

*Mrigendra Mani Dixit*

## Develop A Package

Propos the article "Baluwatar Brainstorming" (SPOTLIGHT October 13), I would like to point out the apparent need to evolve a package solution that provides a lasting impact. The arms management and interim arrangement along with procedures of Constituent Assembly should all be included in a single package. This will boost the confidence of whole countrymen. It is also necessary that such package include a comprehensive peace pact between the government and the Maoists. Furthermore, the Maoists must also demonstrate solid commitment towards their intention to renounce violence for good. Otherwise, the CA elections will end up being a farce and lose legitimacy if it is held under the shadow of guns.

*Kushal Bista*  
Narayanthan

## 42 Passengers Killed, 45 Injured In Bus Mishap

In a tragic incident, 42 passengers were killed and 45 injured when a crowded bus headed from Bangelakuri of Salyan district to Tulsipur of Dang plunged 200 meter down from the road into Bhantakhola ravine on Saturday (October 28). Around 32 passengers died on the spot, eight on the way to hospital and two others died during treatment at Mahendra Hospital, Dang. Of the dead, 11 were women and six children. Nearly 100 people were travelling in the Ra-1-Kha 185 bus belonging to Rapti Yatayat. Local people, Nepali Army and police officials and local Maoist activists were involved in the rescue works. Reports say the overcrowded bus might have gone out of control leading to the accident. Injured passengers say the bus could not move uphill and skidded off the road. Of the total injured passengers, 30 are said to be in serious condition. *Leading dailies report.*

## Pakistan Shows Concern About Proposed Indo-Nepal Extradition Treaty

Even as governments of Nepal and India step up efforts to sign bilateral extradition treaty, the government of another South Asian neighbor Pakistan has shown concern about the proposed treaty. Acting ambassador of Pakistan to Nepal Ehsan Ullah Bath has said that though "the treaty is a subject of interest" to Pakistan, it has not yet decided what to do about it. He made these remarks at a program on environment organized by the Pakistani Embassy in the capital on Friday (October 27). Another Pakistani official raised objection over proposed provision in the treaty about extraditing third-country nationals. He said that there should be a similar extradition treaty with Pakistan also. He revealed that Pakistan government has submitted a draft of such treaty to Nepal government three months ago. In the proposed Extradition Treaty and Mutual Legal Assistance agreement between Nepal and India, there are provisions about extraditing third-country nationals also. The government officials have said that there has been understanding that third-country nationals will have to be extradited

only after completing judicial process. The treaty aims to replace 53-year-old extradition treaty between Nepal and India. The formal signing of the treaty on October 5 was postponed after Maoists raised objection. *Kantipur daily reports.*

## Ninety-Five Percent Of Political Issues Agreed

Even as the leaders of the seven parties and the Maoists prepare to hold the next round of summit meetings, a daily newspaper has stated that they have already reached understanding on about 95 percent of political issues. The Kathmandu Post daily has referred to a political leader involved in the peace talks as saying that they have reached agreement "on almost 95 percent of the political issues and have even documented this." The report states that the leaders have agreed that the fate of the monarchy will be decided by the first meeting of the Constituent Assembly. "However, the documented agreement does not say whether the decision will be by a simple or a two-third majority," the daily report adds. The daily further states that the leaders have agreed to form a 300-member strong interim legislative body with the NC, UML and Maoists sharing similar number of members. "The major political parties will re-nominate all sitting lawmakers in the incumbent House of Representatives and the National Assembly. They will also nominate some SPA leaders who are not in the present parliament, but sitting lawmakers who supported regression will not be nominated to the interim legislative body—which will be automatically dissolved after the first meeting of the constituent assembly," the report says. Likewise, the leaders also have agreed to form 23-member interim cabinet—NC, UML and the Maoists will get five ministries each. The NC (Democratic) will get 3-5 ministries and the rest will be divided among smaller parties. The division of portfolios has not been discussed yet, it adds. The daily further writes that the leaders have also agreed that the CA will have 425 seats in which members will be elected through an election that would be of mixed proportionate type. "The 205 members in

the CA will be directly elected from the existing constituencies, another 204 will be nominated by the political parties in proportion to the popular votes they garner during the CA polls. The prime minister will nominate the remaining 16 members. "The CA will also function as the legislature for about two years until full-fledged parliamentary elections takes place," the daily report states. On the issue of citizenship, the NC and the Maoists want all those born in Nepal before 1990 or have been residing in Nepal since then to be eligible for Nepali citizenship. The UML wants 1979 to be the cut off year. "But that's not a big issue and an agreement will be reached without any difficulty," said a UML leader. The daily report adds that the NC and the Maoist leaders have also "reached and documented a crucial agreement on the issue of royal property." The daily quotes NC leader Dr. Shekh Koirala as saying that the property belonging to the late King Birendra and his family will be put under a trust, and will be used for welfare activities. "The property inherited by King Gyanendra by virtue of ascending the throne will be nationalized. However, the King's personal property will remain with him. This means properties like Narayanhity Palace and Nagarjuna Palace will become national property while shares in Hotel Soaltee and the like will remain with the King's family," the daily report states. The daily report also quotes Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, senior leader of the Maoists, as saying that "although we have not exactly sealed the deal, (the aforementioned political agreement) is true." The issue of arms management, however, remains undecided. "The NC and the Maoist negotiators have not made any tangible progress on the technicalities of arms management. The only thing they have agreed is to form a Commission or a Committee under the cabinet that will work on the issues of reform in the Nepali Army, integration of rebels into the national army and rehabilitation of the remaining combatants," the daily report says. The report also quotes Dr. Bhattarai as saying that following the comprehensive agreement, "the interim government should be in place by mid-November." *The Kathmandu Post daily reports.*

## Army Starts Reforms

The Nepali Army (NA) has started reform initiatives to end feudal practices and usher in democratic norms within its organization. The Chief of Army Staff, General Rukmangad Katawal has initiated reform measures. In the first phase of such reforms, the NA is preparing to withdraw the employment of orderlies in household duties by senior army officers; dissolve the Army Officers' Wives Association; and end discriminations between senior officers and junior jawans. These measures are recommended by a task force led by General Gobinda Gurung. The task force was formed to recommend ways to bring in reforms. In the first phase, 166 orderlies working as domestic helps in residences of senior officers will be recalled. The army chief has already started eating together with jawans once every week. Soon, the system of two different eating places for officers and jawans will be ended. *Kantipur daily reports.*

## Govt Willing To Hold Talks With JTMM

In response to an offer for peace talks made by Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM), Minister for Industry, Commerce and Supplies Hridayesh Tripathy has said that the government is willing for it. The JTMM - a splinter of the Maoists - is launching armed and violent activities in few Terai districts. Tripathy told journalists in Dhobidhara of Saptari, that since there were two factions of JTMM, the government is still unclear about how to deal about with the peace talks with them. His comment has come days after offer for peace talks was made by Jai Krishna Goit-led JTMM. Recently, Jwala Singh had floated a separate faction of JTMM. Both are active in Siraha and Saptari district. In these districts, JTMM regularly organize bandhs. The JTMM and Maoist cadres frequently clash. The JTMM claims it is working for the liberation of Terai people. *Leading dailies report.*

## Maoists Cautiously Positive About WFP Proposal

Following an offer of food security assistance offered to its fighters by the UN World Food Program (WFP), a senior SPOTLIGHT/NOVEMBER 3, 2006

Maoist leader has said that his party views the proposal to provide food to the Maoist army and their families as positive. "We have always positively looked at UN programs. This program also seems positive. However, we have not studied the proposal in detail," said Dev Gurung, a member of Maoist talks team, told FM radio. Responding to the UN WFP's proposal to provide food security to Maoist fighters and their families in the aftermath of peace agreement, Gurung added, "It would be too early to react to the proposal right now. In any case, the proposal would be studied after the peace talks become successful and we can then move ahead on the basis of the peace agreement." *Compiled from reports.*

## King Does Not Reply To Rayamajhi Commission

King Gyanendra did not send replies to the questionnaires submitted by the Rayamajhi Commission. The Commission had expected the replies by Wednesday (October 18) evening to the queries that it had sent a week ago. The Commission, which was formed to probe allegations of repression of People's Movement, had sent the queries asking the King to clarify his position regarding the role he played in the capacity of Chairman of Council of Ministers. "There has been no response to the commission's questionnaire. We had asked for clarification about the atrocities during the people's movement, as the King chaired the then Council of Ministers," said Harihar Birahi, a member of the commission. He hinted that now the commission does not hope to get a reply from the King because it should have come by now if the King had intention to comply with. The probe body, however, cannot compel anybody to give statement, according to him. "Everybody summoned by the commission is free whether to record statement or not. We can't compel anybody but we did give chance to everybody to clarify their position," he further said. The commission will arrive at a conclusion on the basis of the facts but no decisions will be taken on the basis of statements alone, according to Birahi. The commission headed by former Supreme Court Justice Krishna Jung Rayamajhi had sent the questionnaire to the King on October 12.

King Gyanendra's principal secretary Pashupati Bhakta Maharjan had met with Prime Minister GP Koirala a few days earlier and reportedly discussed about the commission's letter to the King. The probe commission has already interrogated 274 individuals including the ministers of the then royal government, former and incumbent security chiefs while 610 witnesses have recorded their statement. At least 21 persons lost their lives and over 4000 persons were injured around the country in clampdown on the movement. The commission's deadline to wrap up its investigation and submit a report to the government ends on October 27. *Compiled from reports.*

## Drop Arms Before Joining Govt: Mehta

A leading Indian commentator on Nepalese politics has said that the Maoists cannot join the interim government as a guerrilla organization, rather they must abandon arms before doing so. Indian analyst Retired General Ashok Mehta accused the Maoists of "shifting goalposts." Talking to BBC Nepali Service on Wednesday (October 18), Mehta said New Delhi could still play the role of a 'facilitator' to help peace process in Nepal just like it did when bringing the 12-point pact between the SPA and the Maoists to fruition last November. The former commander of Gurkha forces in Indian Army, Mehta said "there were still lack of confidence and trust" between SPA and the Maoists. Mehta said that during recent trip to New Delhi, Ian Martin, Tamrat Samuel (UN officials) and Indian ambassador Shiv Shankar Mukherjee focused their consultations on the issue of "arms management." When asked about India's current position on Nepal, Mehta said that New Delhi has stopped stating the twin pillar theory of multiparty democracy and constitutional monarchy. "Now, India has said that it will respect the decision of Nepali people through constituent assembly about the status of monarchy," he said. Mehta also added that peace process anywhere is a time-consuming affair. He gave examples of Northern Ireland or Sudan or Rwanda where it took years for the peace process to complete. "It has just been six months in Nepal. There should not be any haste," he added. *Compiled from reports.* ■



King Gyanendra receives Bhaitika from his sister Shobha Shahi

Annapurna Post

**ON THE OCCASION OF BHAIKA FESTIVAL ON** Tuesday (October 23), King Gyanendra received Bhaitika from his younger sister Shobha Shahi. King Gyanendra went to the residence of his sister at Shobha Griha in Kamaladi to receive auspicious Bhaitika at 11:25 am. Likewise, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala also received Bhaitika from his elder sisters Indira Acharya at Chabahil and Nalini Upadhyaya at Biratnagar. Bhaitika marks the end of five-day Tihar festival. On this day, brothers receive Tika from sisters. They pray for each other's long life and happiness.

**NEPAL'S HOPES OF BECOMING A TEMPORARY** member of UN Security Council for the third time have been quashed. On Monday (October 16) night, it lost to Indonesia in the race for the temporary membership for the year 2007/08. At the voting carried out late Monday in New York, Nepal only got 28 votes against 158 votes in favor of Indonesia. Any nation that seeks to become a temporary member of UNSC would require to bag two-third votes of 192-member strong UN general assembly. Nepal had been elected as temporary member of UNSC twice in the past – once in 1968 and second time in 1988/89. Meanwhile, South Africa, Indonesia, Belgium and Italy, have been elected non-permanent members of the UN Security Council for a two-year term beginning January next year, according to media reports.

**THE NEPAL ELECTRICITY AUTHORITY (NEA) DOES** not appear confident about its ability to avert the crippling hours of load shedding in the coming winter months. The chief of the state-owned electricity monopoly has revealed that it may not be possible to import power from India this winter season. Arjun Bahadur Karki, Managing Director of Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), has said that because of delay in the construction of sub-station in the Indian side, the power import may not be possible. The NEA has already said that during forthcoming winter season it will suffer from big shortfall in power and, thus, will be compelled to impose crippling hours of load-shedding. "We have already requested Indian Embassy to expedite the construction of the sub-station. However, if the current pace of construction continues, it would not be ready for the winter months," Karki said. The NEA has already signed an agreement with India's Power Trading Corporation (PTC)

to import 50 MW of power during the winter months. That power would have been used to fulfill domestic demand and to do away with load-shedding. During winter months, almost all of the hydro projects in the country run in very low capacity since they are of the run-of-the-river type. In winter, rivers run dry affecting their capacity.

**BHUTAN HAS REQUESTED TO DEFER THE BILATERAL** ministerial meeting with Nepal that was scheduled for November 12-13. "Bhutan's Prime Minister called me to request for the deferment," said Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister KP Oli. "He said that since November 11 is the birthday of Bhutanese King, he will have busy schedule at that time." Oli said that the Bhutanese PM also requested to hold the meeting in Thimpu instead of Kathmandu. Oli had written a letter a week ago officially requesting for holding the meeting on November 12-13 in Kathmandu. Although no new date for the meeting has been set, DPM Oli hoped it would be held sometime on November 18-19. Meanwhile, reports say DPM Oli is scheduled to pay a five-day visit to New Delhi beginning November 5.

**THE SUPREME COURT (SC) HAS OVERTURNED THE** decision of the government to retire Major General Pradip Pratap Bam Malla. The special bench of the apex court comprising judges Sharada Shrestha, Rajendra Kumar Bhandari and Tahir Ali Ansari has decided that the government's decision was illegal. It has ordered the Office of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet and the Ministry of Defense to reinstate General Malla. General Malla is one of the senior-most officers of Nepalese Army and is in line to become the next chief of the army staff after the current chief retires.

**THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION HAS ALLOCATED 28** million Euros for drought victims in western Nepal. The funds are channeled through the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department, a statement issued by the EC office in Kathmandu said. Food and nutritional support will be provided to people in the western region, it said. Lowest rainfall recorded in the history of Nepal last year had an adverse effect on winter crop production, which in turn resulted in acute food shortage, particularly in the western region. "This decision targets more than 120,000 people living in the remote mountainous districts of western Nepal."

**THE TOTAL NUMBER OF JOB ASPIRANTS LEAVING** the country for employment abroad went up by 14.67 percent in the first quarter. Latest report of Department of Labor and Employment Promotion shows that a total of 44,881 workers left the country for various labor destinations around the world in first three months of the current fiscal year. A total of 39,136 workers had left the country in the similar period last year. However, the number of people leaving the country in the month of Asoj (September 17 to October 17) fell by 8.66 percent compared to same period last year. The number of outgoing workers stood at 10,571 in that month, compared to a monthly average of around 15,000. According to the report, of total workers, 46.7 percent opted to go for Malaysia, 21.9 percent chose Qatar and 16.5 percent accepted employment in Saudi Arabia. ■

**“N**epali Congress will not be a part of any republican front. There is no need for any such front.”

*Prime Minister and president of Nepali Congress **Girija Prasad Koirala**, rejecting the Maoist offer of forming a republican front and appealing all concerned not to impose any thought on a democratic party.*

\* \* \*

**“P**M Koirala’s remarks about republican front will only strengthen the autocratic elements.”

***Ram Bahadur Thapa aka Badal**, a senior leader of the Maoists, criticizing PM Koirala for rejecting to form a republican front.*

\* \* \*

**“A** republican front will be formed even if NC does not become a part of it.”

***Bamdev Gautam**, a standing committee member of the Unified Marxist Leninist.*

\* \* \*

**“W**e are moving ahead with the determination to settle all the issues by Kartik end (mid-November). We want all issues including the formation of interim government to be finalized by then.”

*Deputy Prime Minister and Health Minister **Amik Sherchan**, addressing a program in the capital.*

\* \* \*

## TRANSITION

**EXTENDED:** The tenure of the high-level commission headed by former judge **Krishna Jung Rayamajhi** to probe allegations of repression during April’s People’s Movement, for the third time, by the government. The Commission tenure has been extended till November 16.

**RANKED:** Nepal in 159<sup>th</sup> rank in terms of press freedom situation, by the Reporters Sans Frontieres, a global media watchdog in its fifth national report.

**SUMMONED:** **Chandi Raj Dhakal**, president of Federation of Nepalese

Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), to reply to the case of contempt of court filed against him, by the Patan Appellate Court. Dhakal and FNCCI had defied the court’s order not to organize nationwide business shutdown.

**RETURNED:** **Krishna Bahadur Mahara**, spokesperson of the Maoists, Nepali Congress (NC) general secretary **Ram Chandra Poudel**, leader of Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) and Speaker **Subas Nemwang**, NC (Democratic) leader **Dr. Minendra Rijal**, central member of People’s Front Nepal **Shashi Shrestha** and Janajati leader **Dr. Om Gurung**, after attending conference in



Annapurna Post

*To accommodate all, why not form a democratic; loktantrik, ceremonial, republican united front?*

**“W**e are making every effort for the sake of peace and we will continue to do so because we all need peace.”

*General **Rukmangad Katawal**, Chief of Army Staff, Nepali Army, talking to media during his visit to barracks in eastern region during Tihar festival.*

\* \* \*

**“T**he key (for successful peace talks) is stuck in Delhi. Big parties as well as the Maoists are dependant on New Delhi. So, presently there is a rush among the leaders towards Delhi.”

***Narayan Man Bijukchhe**, president of Nepal Workers and Peasants Party (NWPP), a constituent of the ruling SPA.*

\* \* \*

**“W**e were in a strong position. But in the last few days, the behavior by the Maoists had cast doubts about Nepal’s credentials in the international arena. The Maoist cadres had even come to Prime Minister’s official residence and gheraoed it, which sent quite a negative message to the international community.”

*Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister **KP Oli**, blaming Maoists’ anarchic behavior for Nepal’s failure to win the voting for the UN Security Council temporary membership for 2007/08.*

\* \* \*

London organized by Non Resident Nepalis (NRN-UK) community.

**APPOINTED:** **Lena Sundh**, a Swedish national, as the chief of Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Nepal, by **Louise Arbour**, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

**RECOMMENDED:** **Dr. Bhoj Raj Pokharel**, **Usha Nepal** and **Nilkantha Upreti**, for the position of Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners, respectively, by the Constitutional Council. The three nominees will be confirmed after the Parliamentary Special Committee on Hearing approves their appointment. ■

# MALPASSET AND VAJONT DAMS: *West Seti Dam Safety*

By DR. AB THAPA

At present our country is heading for the implementation of the West Seti storage dam project. This project will have a concrete faced rockfill dam which is going to be the highest dam of this type in the whole world. The dam will impound a vast storage reservoir. It will be about 1,500 million cubic meters in volume. Needless to explain that the failure of the West Seti dam would result to a colossal loss of life and property.

Malpasset and Vajont dam disasters struck because ample attention was not paid to dam safety. We are going to handover the West Seti dam project to a private developer to implement. It is unfortunate that our government is already determined to implement this highly sensitive project virtually without examining the technical aspects of this project with the help of competent foreign experts.

## **West Seti Dam Safety**

The West Seti dam project appears to be ridden with very serious technical problems that concern the safety of its most important structure, the high dam itself. The WECS had few years back sent its opinion to the Water Resources Ministry stating that the type of the high dam proposed for the West Seti by the private developer could be risky. Some of the evidences put forward by the developers to justify their selection do not appear to tally with the information contained in the recently published scientific documents. So it was suggested to constitute a panel of few renowned international experts recognized to be the authority on their respective discipline to seek their opinion. Any further action in the direction of taking the decision to award the project to the private developer should be deferred until the panel gives its absolutely positive view.

The West Seti Project will have a 195-m high concrete face rockfill dam (CFRD). This type of dams are found to be very competitive in cost but until recent time they were considered risky for heights above 150 meters. This type of dam could have also been considered as one of the alternatives in selection of the high dam for the Kankai Project. The French expert called in to advise on Kankai dam appears to have dissuaded the German study team from considering the CFRD as a viable option. It was considered that it could be unsafe to build the CFRDs. So finally at the end an embankment type dam with an asphaltic concrete face was selected.

The CFRD is very sensitive to settlement and deformation of the rock-fill supporting the upstream face. These deformations produce movements of the concrete slab joints by opening them and if the movements exceed certain limits then the resulting leakage is difficult to control. The deformations of CFRD for dynamic loading are even more

difficult to evaluate. In the Michigan Convention of ASCE in 1985 on CFRDs papers were presented to establish Earthquake Severity Index (ESI) with relative vertical settlement. In the ICOLD meeting of 1988 it was suggested that future research should be focused to correlate ESI and the relative settlement as function of yield acceleration.

## **There is no Precedent**

Needless to say that there is a need for great caution in adopting very high CFRD. According to J. Barry Cooks, Consultant USA (Development in High CFRDs, Hydropower & Dams, Issue Four 1997), this type of dams are of empirical design and based on precedent design and experience. Unfortunately only very recently relatively high CFRDs have been introduced.

The proposed developer of the West Seti Project has cited as precedent in their report two CFRDs close to the West Seti dam in height. It is claimed that they are already in good service. They are the Tiensingquiao of China with a height of 180 meters and Aguamilpa of Mexico with a height of 185.5 meters. Unfortunately both these CFRDs can not be satisfactory example to justify the selection of CFRD for the West Seti Project. The Tiensingquiao dam of China might be still under construction. According to the original schedule the dam was expected to be completed towards the May of 1999. So nobody might be yet knowing how that dam would be going to perform. The Aguamilpa reservoir was first filled in August 1993. Since then two abnormal peak seepage values have been observed. These events were of great concern, and several hypothesis were made to explain this behavior although none has been satisfactory. Now underwater inspections are in progress to try to identify any factor, which could explain the observed behavior.

There are not any other examples in the world of CFRD in service with heights close to 195 meters. It is a fact that very high CFRDs are yet to be tested in practice. So a great deal of caution is required to adopt this type of dam. Let us not take the risk of unnecessarily endangering the life and property of innumerable people by recklessly deciding to implement the West Seti Project.

## **Competence of Government Institutions**

Nepal's laissez-faire hydropower development policy could have adverse effect on dam safety. Until now our government's performance in handling private developers of hydropower projects has been extremely shocking. Government endorsed whatever the private developers proposed. There is nobody from the government side to check the works of the private developers at the site. As a result, in case of the Bhotekosi Project the concerned

Department and the Ministry came to know that the installed capacity of that hydropower project had been raised from 35 MW to 45 MW completely defying the power purchase agreement only after the completion of the construction works. Government learnt about it only after a claim was lodged by the private developer with the government to compel the NEA to buy extra power to be generated entirely during the monsoon season which is going to be totally wasted.

It is difficult to visualize how we can be assured that the private developers would be sincerely interested in maintaining the high standard of workmanship and superior quality of materials which are fundamental prerequisite for dam safety that would invariably lead to higher cost. What is the guarantee that the private developers would not be tempted to cut a lot of corners in order to make hefty profit that could be disastrous in long run. Institutions like the Electricity Department, Ministry of Water Resources and National Planning Commission have yet been seen to be competent at ensuring that the storage dam projects have been planned, constructed and operated in accordance with internationally accepted norms and practices.

**Dam Failures**

Insensitivity to advice from outsiders could have terrible consequences. A case in point could be the Malpasset dam near Frejus in Southern France. It is reported that the decision makers were cautioned in time. They were told that the dam site was not suitable so it was recommended that the dam be built elsewhere. However, for reasons of engineering convenience, the advice was disregarded. The dam failed on 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 1959, causing death of a large number of people.

Construction of the high dam without full study of the environs led to the catastrophe of the Vajont Dam in Italy. The Vajont Dam is 261 meters high and the volume of the water contained in its reservoir is 150 million cubic meters (the volume of the West Seti reservoir would be about 1500 million cubic meters). In September, 1963 the reservoir level reached a height of 180 meters, and an earth movement started along the slope of Mont Toc. That movement accelerated in October and caused a landslide which gave rise to a giant wave that flooded the valley beneath, wiping out several villages and killing more than 2,000 people.

Shoddy workmanship and poor quality of materials are often the prime cause of dam failures. The failure of St. Francis dam in California has been attributed to faulty foundations. Design errors were apparently largely responsible for the collapse of the Teton dam. In our own region 'over-topping' occurred with the Machau II dam in India in 1979 and caused the death of 1,500 people downstream. In this case, the malfunctioning of equipment contributed to the failure, as the spillway gates could not be opened in time. The failure of spillways to function properly also led to the near failure of the 140 m high Tarbela dam in Pakistan in 1975-6. It is reported that in this case design errors and possible poor construction materials were also involved.

**In Conclusion**

Nepal's laissez-faire hydropower development policy could have adverse effect on dam safety. It is difficult to visualize how we can be assured that the private developers would be sincerely interested in maintaining the high standard of workmanship and superior quality of materials which are fundamental prerequisite for dam safety that would invariably lead to higher cost. What is the guarantee that the private developers would not be tempted to cut a lot of corners in order to make hefty profit that could be disastrous in long run. ■

*(Dr. Thapa writes on water resources)*

**ADB Projects 4 Percent Growth**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has projected 4 percent GDP growth for Nepal in the current fiscal year. In its South Asia Economic Report, the bank has said, "The outlook has significant downside risks. The most critical risks relate to the progress in the peace talks."

The bank says recent political developments and the improved security situation could yield a significant 'peace dividend' for the economy over the next few years. However, it has also expressed concerns of adverse affect on economy if peace talks disrupts. "Failure to sustain the ceasefire and make headway in the peace process will seriously undermine macroeconomic performance and poverty reduction," the report said.

The report further said, "In FY2007, inflation is forecast to moderate to 6.5 percent as the effects of upward adjustment in VAT and petroleum prices subside and food-production returns to normal levels."

The ADB forecasts budget deficit for the current fiscal year at 3 percent of the GDP, which stood at 1.8 percent in the last fiscal year. "The FY2007 budget announced by the government is expansionary to support reconstruction, rehabilitation, and reintegration of the Maoist insurgents into Nepal's mainstream politics and development process," the bank said.

"Despite a slowdown in exports and continued recovery in imports, the current account surplus widened in FY2006 due to a sharp increase in remittances. However, the surplus is projected to decline in FY2007, as the investment climate improves and imports grow strongly," the report adds. "In addition to increasing public and private spending on infrastructure, there is a need for better targeting of investments and in particular, for improvements in sector policies, governance, and institutional environment," a statement of the bank quoted Juan Miranda, Director General of ADB's Central and West Asia Regional Department as saying.

The report says that intra-regional trade and investment offers immense opportunities for accelerating growth and reducing poverty in South Asia. The report says that improved governance, better quality of regulation and infrastructure can help South Asian economies emerge as the "New Tigers" of Asia.

## SUMMIT MEETING

# Untangling Arms Issue

The SPA and the Maoists reach close to resolving the knotty issue of arms as they start discussing specific modalities of its management

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

After months of intense discussions, the Seven Party Alliance (SPA) and the Maoists seem to be zeroing in about the resolution of the most sensitive issue of managing the arms.

Ever since the two sides started peace talks following the April change, the management of arms surfaced as the most daunting challenge for both of them. Reaching to a widely acceptable – both domestically and internationally – terms and conditions of managing the rebel arms – had to be done in such a manner that the Maoist leadership could sell them easily to its battle-hardened and ideologically-bathed militants and cadres – indeed, an uphill task.

However, in the past one week, media reports have suggested that the two sides may be quite close to reaching such an agreement on the arms management.

Having reached agreement on “almost all political issues” the two sides had homed in on the issue of arms since last many days. And now, quite encouraging for the wider public, the two sides are talking about specific proposals like ‘single lock or double system.’

“Now there are very few issues related with the arms management that still remains to be resolved. We no longer want to further complicate this matter,” said Ram Chandra Poudel, general secretary of the Nepali Congress (NC).

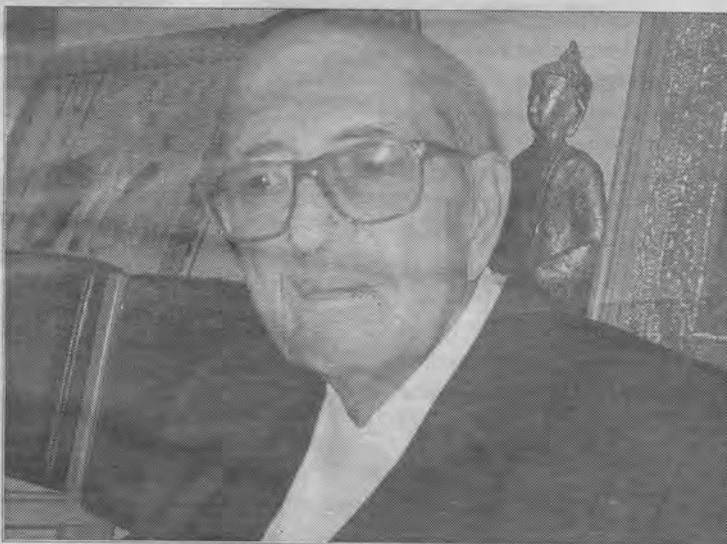
In the previous four rounds of summit meeting between the SPA leaders and the Maoists, the issue

of monarchy and the arms management had emerged as the most contentious ones.

The issue of monarchy seems to have been, more or less, resolved after the Prime Minister agreed to nationalize the ancestral properties of the King and the Maoists agreed to let the ‘powerless’ King continue till the elections of Constituent Assembly (CA) – which would ultimately decide the fate of the institution of monarchy.

But the arms issue has not yet been resolved. However, since this issue is quite sensitive and key to leading up to the peaceful CA elections, the SPA and the Maoist leaders have begun intense ‘jaw jaw.’

The fifth round of summit meeting, which was to take place after Tihar festival, has not taken place till Wednesday (November 1) afternoon because, as the government talks coordinator Home Minister Krishna Sitaula says, “the leaders want to reach agreement through intense home work first.”



PM Koirala : Arms management first

## Issue of Arms

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala has often reiterated that the Maoists cannot be taken into the interim government before they are completely disarmed. He has stated that taking armed Maoists into the interim government would lead to an international isolation and non-recognition of Nepal government.

But the Maoists, on the other hand, have both real and perceived concerns about the complete disarmament. “We will not surrender before the Constituent Assembly elections,” Dev Gurung, a member of Maoist talks team, recently stated in Dhangadi.

The reading of Maoist leaders’ statements show that they perceive the “separation of arms and army” as surrendering. That is why, they have demanded that equal number of army and weapons of the Nepali Army (NA) should be ‘locked up.’

In recent days, specific proposals of arms management are being seriously considered. The Maoists, it seems, have already agreed to put their army and weapons in cantonments under a “single lock” system – the key remaining with them.

This proposal, however, does not seem to have convinced the SPA. The Prime Minister is learnt to have pushed for “double lock” system with one key given to the Maoists and the UN monitoring team each.

The leaders expect the two sides will reach a compromise soon on this issue. “All issues were discussed and all discussions have been positive,” Dr. Surendra Chalise, advisor of PM Koirala, told media after the first meeting between Koirala and Prachanda after Tihar early this week.

## Continuing Parleys

When the meeting between PM Koirala and the Maoist leadership was held immediately after Tihar, the PM Koirala pushed his position that the Maoist leadership must separate their army and weapons and join the interim government.

However, the complete separation of their army and weapons seem to be out of question for the Maoist leadership, which has made a counter proposal that if it is difficult for the PM to take Maoists in the interim government at this present stage, they are also willing to peacefully take part in the CA elections without joining the government.



**Prachanda** : Narrowing down differences

“We have said that we are ready to take part in CA elections without joining the interim government also. Joining the government is not our primary concern. We have shown this much of flexibility,” said Maoist spokesperson Krishna Bahadur Mahara.

But this proposal is also not realistic because nobody would take any CA election seriously if it does not accompany arms management.

“How can anybody believe that a free and fair CA election will be held when there are Maoists with arms taking part in it?” said a political analyst. “Therefore, the Maoists must agree to acceptable terms of arms management and join the interim government if only to ensure that a credible and legitimate CA election will be held.”

Meanwhile, not only the Nepalese political leaders, intense efforts are being made also by international community to facilitate the early resolution of peace process.

In recent days, the UN and US officials have visited New Delhi for consultations over the Nepalese peace process.

The UN Secretary General Kofi Annan’s point-man in Nepal Ian Martin visited New Delhi last week to exchange views about the modalities of management of Maoist arms.

Likewise, this week, the American ambassador James Moriarty went to New Delhi where he held talks with Indian foreign secretary and other officials.

India and the US both are favoring complete management of Maoist arms before anything else on the political front can proceed. The US ambassador Moriarty has been quite vocal in demanding that the Maoists first renounce violence completely.

While the Indian authorities have not been that much forthcoming, some Indian analysts have

hinted that India, too, favors the arms management first.

“The Maoists cannot join the interim government as a guerrilla organization, rather they must abandon arms before doing so,” said a leading Indian analyst Retired General Ashok Mehta. Talking to BBC Nepali Service last week, Mehta said New Delhi could still play the role of a ‘facilitator’ to help peace process in Nepal just like it did when bringing the 12-point

pact between the SPA and the Maoists to fruition last November.

Indian ambassador to Nepal Shiv Shankar Mukherjee met with Prime Minister Koirala as well as Maoist chairman Prachanda, separately, this week. Although details of his talks with them are still unknown, reports say they were focused on the successful resolution of the peace process.

**Breakthrough This Week!**

As proposals are flying thick and fast, influential leaders have hinted that there could be a major breakthrough in the upcoming summit meeting – which could be held anytime soon, within this week.

The Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal said, on Tuesday, that he expects a breakthrough in the summit meeting. “Since both seven party leaders and Maoist leaders are seriously engaged in home work, I hope the summit meeting would take place within this week,” Nepal said.

His views were echoed by Home Minister Krishna Sitaula. “Just wait for a few more days. We are working hard to resolve all differences,” he said. ■

## Koirala Rejects Call For Republican Front

Prime Minister and president of Nepali Congress (NC) Girija Prasad Koirala has said that his party “will not be a part of any Front for Republic.” Talking to journalists in Biratnagar last week, PM Koirala said that since NC is a separate party, it will go to the elections of Constituent Assembly with a separate manifesto.

His refusal to join republican front comes at a time when Maoists have been saying that they would be willing to show maximum flexibility in the management of their arms and armies if the Seven Party Alliance (SPA), including NC, agrees to join a united republican front to establish republic through the CA or referendum.

Senior Maoist leaders have gone on record saying that they would accept making Koirala even the first president of the country. Apart from the Maoists, the proposal for republican front has been supported also by the Unified Marxist Leninist (UML). Likewise, Deputy Prime Minister and president of People’s Front Nepal (PFN) had recently urged PM Koirala to “lead” such a republican front. However,

PM Koirala has been favoring the line of keeping ‘ceremonial monarchy’ in place, at least before the CA gives its final verdict on the status of monarchy.

Meanwhile, senior politician Rabindra Nath Sharma, who has assumed the position of president of Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP- Thapa faction) by replacing former Home Minister Kamal Thapa, has said that there is a need to form a separate democratic front.

“I see there is going to be a swift polarization between leftist forces and democratic forces. Our party will work to strengthen the democratic camp,” Sharma said after taking over the party reins. Sharma, however, said that any democratic front has to be led by PM Koirala. ■

## COMMERCIALIZATION OF AGRICULTURE

# Fight Against Poverty

Nepalese farmers have shown that transformation of agriculture from subsistence-based to market-oriented can reduce their miseries of poverty. Given access to market, they can produce high value agriculture products maximizing their income. After the implementation of Agriculture Perspective Plan (APP) 1995-2015, which aims to reduce the poverty incidence to 14 percent by 2015 by increasing agriculture production, market forces are gradually coming to play their role. Although the agriculture sector has yet to be fully exploited, transformation has immensely contributed to improve the lives of tens of thousands of poor rural farmers. Between 1995-96 and 2003-04 the performance of agriculture sectors was reasonably good as the number of rural poor declined by over 2 million with poverty rate falling from 42 to 31 percent. Shifting to commercialization, agriculture sector is proving as an important component in the fight against rural poverty

By KESHAB POUDEL

**T**he livelihood of Maila Bomjon, 45, a resident of Palung Village Development Committee of Makwanpur District, 60 kilometer south-west of capital Kathmandu, has drastically changed as his family has now turned from sole importer of food grains to surplus producer of vegetables. Shifting

traditional pattern of subsistence-based farming to market-oriented, growing vegetable crops made the change possible in his family.

In the past decades, government agencies, international non-governmental organizations and non-governmental organizations brought many programs targeting to uplift livelihood of people like Maila but all programs resulted in a failure. However,

the completion of 15 kilometers-long agriculture road linking a point near, Tribhuwan Rajpath, Nepal's oldest high way brought the change in his family life.

Instead of cultivating traditional products like corn, millet and barley, which was hardly sufficient to feed family for six months, Bomjon now grows off-season vegetables like cauliflower, cabbage, radish which brought about Rs.200,000 (US\$ 3000).



**Vegetable marketplace:** Applying agro-economy to defeat poverty

This flow of money supported him to feed his two daughters and a son in local school and buy other cereal food stuffs to feed his six-member family.

As the monsoon rain was inadequate in two consecutive years, the production of traditional crops like maize, paddy and millet declined throughout the country but the overall production of cash crops including vegetable has gone up.

"Unlike traditional crops, the water flow from nearby mountains is enough to irrigate our vegetable crops. Unfortunately, the excessive rain of August destroyed some vegetables," said Bomjon. "As there was less rain, other

farmers of nearby village too switched off to off-season vegetables."

Although Tribhuvan Rajpath, which was built under Indian cooperation, is more than 55 years old, it is just recently that the construction of other agriculture roads have begun to link this highway. Like Bomjon's village, the government is constructing many other agriculture roads to link villages with national road network opening up the market.

"In the past, we did not know that our patches of terrace land irrigated by small water stream could produce off-season vegetables and there was also the lack of road. It used to take three to four hours of walk from our village to reach

nearest point of highway," said Maila. "Now it is less than an hour's drive by mini-truck. We don't have to go to city centers as the vendors collect vegetables from our doors."

Published by the Ministry of Finance, Economic Survey 2006/07 reveals that the food crops contribute 65.5 in total food production and 34.5 by cash crops in the fiscal year 2004/05. The pattern changed in the fiscal year 2006/07 with food crop and cash crop sharing 62.5 and 37.5 percent respectively. Out of total 3.36 million food covered areas; food crops covered 89 and cash crops 11 percent in both the years. In current fiscal year, 2006/07 the production of vegetable crops is expected to increase from 2.081 million metric tons to 2.182 metric tons with an increment of 4.86 percent. The area covered by vegetables crops is expected to remain at 189,000 hectare.

"It is found to have frequently increased both the area covered by vegetables and cash crops and its production owing to increasing inclination of the farmers towards doing vegetable farming as a means of principle cash crop to replace other crops," writes the Economic Survey.

For years, Purna Sunar, 45, a Dalit of Bethan village of Ramechhap district, production of juicy Japanese orange had no commercial use other than to feed to the cattle but the situation has changed for last two years. The opening of motorable road to his village has brought both fruit vendors and money.

Sunar, who used to feed Juicy Orange (Junar) to his cattle that was planted a decade ago under the support of Japanese government, made Rs.100,000 (US\$1500) selling the fruits of ten trees this year. "If everything goes normal, I will get more money next year," he said.

Frustrated by lack of access to market, Sunar had chopped almost five other trees four years ago to grow the traditional crop corn and millet. The completion of 25 kilometers road linking his village to Dolalghat, a small market place at Nepal-Tibet highway, opened a gateway to go to market through out Nepal.

"I just laughed when some Japanese volunteers gave the plants saying that it would produce money later. But now their remarks have come true. Small farmers like me have to go for cash crops like vegetables and fruits than to plant the traditional crops - which did not produce enough food to feed families round the year."

Maila and Purna are not alone, tens of thousands of Nepalese marginal and poor farmers who live along the high way corridors and those whose village are linked by rural road are getting same kind of economic benefits growing off season vegetables, fruits and other new agriculture products.

#### Past Experience

For centuries, Nepalese farmers had to be satisfied with what did they had as high mountain terrains remained hindrance to transform the subsistence based agriculture to commercialization.

"At least 2 million Nepalese farmers (out of a total population of 8.4 million) make a trip of 1-2 months duration annually, just to bring their agriculture products to the market to the Indian or Tibetan borders, and to get mainly salt in exchange for it. The average net cash income of Nepalese farmers is between thirty and seventy Nepalese rupees. The extremely low income is caused by the poor quality of products and the small quantities involved," wrote Toni Hegan, a Swiss

geologist, who conducted the first geological survey of Nepal in 1950-1958 under a project of United Nations Development Program.

In his report Observation on Certain Aspect of Economic and Social Development Problems in Nepal presented to United Nations Development Program in 1959, Hegan observed that Nepal needs to transform its subsistence-based agriculture system to commercialization to bring prosperity in poor households of rural Nepal.

#### Investment in Rural Road

As the government is investing more money to build the agriculture road, many other rural poor also see transformation of their life as the road gives access to the market which can transform subsistence-based agriculture to market oriented.

Nepal has invested a lot of resources in the past to build the infrastructures but they are hardly used to bring the substantial change in the rural life. The

argues that the higher growth will be achieved through greater productivity in agriculture. Nepal's Poverty Reduction Strategy was also framed toeing the line of APP.

Funded by the Asian Development Bank, APP- aims to modernize, diversify and commercialize crop and livestock production by expanding the use of technology and increasing the access of farmers to modern agricultural inputs credit and access to road.

Experts argue that poor accessibility not only restricts the movement of people and goods but also ideas and technologies. This is recognized at the policy level and there is now emphasis on the construction of agriculture roads. The APP estimated that about 6,200 kms of rural road need to be constructed within 2015. Department of Local Infrastructure Development and Agriculture Roads have already constructed some 1000 kilometers road according to Millennium Development Goals Needs Assessment, a report published by United Nations Development Program on International Poverty Day.

"Nepal has to pursue agriculture-led growth to address poverty successfully, 90 percent of the poor are concentrated in the agriculture sector. Although the Tenth Plan 2002-2007 and Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRSP) stress the primary role of agriculture as a key to broad-based and pro-poor growth, neither can be realized without

full implementation of APP," writes Nepal Human Development Report 2004.

Although Nepal's agriculture sector is moving towards market oriented, it is still predominantly marked by subsistence production. "The government is giving high priority to transform the agriculture sector encouraging farmers to grow the cash crops," said vice-chairman of National Planning Commission, Jagdish Chandra Pokharel.



**A lady farmer: Livestock for livelihood**

studies have shown that subsistence-based agriculture is main hurdle to move towards high economic growth.

By aiming to transform Nepal's subsistence-based agriculture into market-oriented by exploiting infrastructures built in the past and construction of agriculture roads, APP has given a new way to raise living standard of all through the dynamic growth in agriculture.

The World Bank's Country Assistance Strategy 2004-2007 also

Being predominantly subsistence based agriculture society, Nepal's economic progress lies on what ratio country's agriculture sector commercializes. After liberalization of agriculture policy along with APP, private sector is also a part of the fight against rural poverty.

According to the Asian Development Bank Country Strategy and Program Nepal 2005-2009, agriculture is the largest sector of the Nepalese economy and it contributes 39 percent of GDP (in 2004) and involves more than 60 percent of the population. Majority of farmers are small with 70 percent holding less than 1 hectare of land and 44 percent holding less than 0.5 hectare.

As long as the programs are directed to marginal farmers like Bomjon and Sunar who possess the land less than 0.5 hectare, poverty reduction strategy cannot work.

For the farmers with small land holdings, there require diversification of crops as well as maximum use of fertilizers and high value seeds of market driven products. As Nepal lies in the high-hill with diverse climatic zone,

Nepalese farmers have advantage to grow off-season vegetables, fruits to the population Indian plain.

In recent years, Nepal's share of agriculture exports has increased dramatically and there is considerable scope for further expanding exports of horticultural and livestock products.

In the past decades, the livelihood of tens of thousands of farmers, who gave up the subsistence farming, has drastically changed. Prepared by Central Bureau of Statistic and the World Bank, Nepal Living Standard Survey II (NLSS II)



**Growing pumpkins at rooftop: Cash for crops**



**A highway link: Access to market**

reveals that agriculture in Nepal is still largely subsistence or semi-commercial but the extent of commercialization of agriculture has increased steadily. In 1995/96, sales of agricultural commodities by rural households on average were equal to modes 16 percent of gross crop output.

By 2003/04, the value sales as a percentage of gross crop output increased to 25 percent. The share of households selling crops increased to 54 percent. Market surplus of most crops like paddy, wheat, summer maize and lentils are still very low. However for a number of crops such as winter vegetables, these surpluses increased quite noticeably since 1995/96.

"Despite many constraints, there is ample evidence that Nepal's farmer do, in fact, respond to market signals. Past experience shows that agriculture production is responsive to market success and that Nepal's farmers are quick to capitalize on new income-generating opportunities. Being effectively connected to markets, therefore, is crucial to progress in rural Nepal".

Market-based agricultural development has proceeded in a faster pace in all parts of Nepal particularly in eastern region. Accelerating the shift from subsistence to a commercial orientation is a key strategy for boosting rural productivity and incomes.

Many factors still hold back poor farmers in the process of commercialization including technology for production and post production, limited access to market, credit information and poor infrastructures.

After decades of efforts, agriculture is shifting from subsistence to market orientation paving the way to reduce the level of poverty in rural areas. ■

## MDG NEEDS ASSESSMENT

## Renewed Efforts Required

The MDG Needs Assessment Report points out the need for doubling donor support if Nepal is to attain the goals.

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

Even as the clock is ticking, countries like Nepal need to redouble their efforts along with renewed help from development partners in order to attain the socio-economic development goals determined by the UN and endorsed by world leaders.

The level of external assistance needed to meet the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will be about double of what is currently available, says an MDGs Needs Assessment Report launched on October 17 on the occasion of International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

"Donor support will need to be doubled over the next decade to properly finance development efforts especially if the nation is to reduce hunger and improve education," said Matthew Kahane, UNDP Resident Representative. Kahane, however, added that the international community is willing to invest in "well-planned, well-managed and well-monitored national efforts."

Presenting the report, Dr. Bal Gopal Baidya – leader of the team that compiled the report – estimated there would be about US\$ 8 billion of financing gap in the next one decade to attain the MDGs.

The report showed that the government must make a public investment of US\$ 12.6 billion over the next decade if the goals are to be reached. More than half of that money must be channeled to reducing hunger, improving education and, critically, developing rural infrastructure. The report has identified areas of interventions to meet the MDGs; estimate resource requirements; and estimate the financing gap.

Launching the report, Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat said that the government is committed to implement plans and programs to attain MDGs. He said that since sustainable peace is in sight, there

are rooms for improvement in government performance.

Dr. Jagadish Chandra Pokharel, vice chairperson at the National Planning Commission (NPC), said the report would help the government to internalize MDGs in national plans.

MDGs are the world's time-bound and quantified targets for addressing extreme poverty in its many dimensions – income poverty, hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter and exclusion – while promoting gender equality, education and environmental sustainability.

The millennium goals summarize the development targets hammered out at international conferences and world summits during the 1990s. In September 2000, world leaders distilled the key goals and targets in the Millennium Declaration. There are eight major goals and 18 time-bound numerical targets to be achieved over a 25-year period (1990-2015).

Based on the surveys conducted before 2003, Nepal is on a right direction to attain many of the basic goals like reduction of poverty, universal primary education, access to safe drinking water and reduction of child mortality even as it is faltering to meet other goals like promoting gender equality and empowerment of women, improvement of maternal health and combating HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases. The eighth goal of developing a global partnership for development, too, does not look likely to be attained as the developed countries have not yet addressed the special needs of the Least Developed Countries like Nepal.

The number one goal of halving the level of poverty (from 1990 to 2015) is attainable, particularly after the encouraging figures from the National Living Standard Survey II, which showed that from 42% of people living below absolute poverty line (less than \$1 a day) in 1995/96, the figure has come down to 31%. On the issue of universal access to primary education, the net enrolment ratio is on track at 84%. The

ratio of children completing up to fifth grade has also increased to 60% from 38% in 1990.

The goal of eliminating gender disparity in all levels of education by 2015 appears hard to achieve. The latest data show that the ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary level of education stands at 86.1% (up from 62% in 1990); 81.7% (up from 46.7% in 1990) and 35% respectively. The gender disparity, especially at tertiary level, is huge and hard to bridge by the stipulated time.

The fourth goal of reducing child mortality by two-thirds among children under five years of age, however, looks likely to be attained. From the Infant Mortality Rate of 102 (per 1000 births) in 1990, it has decreased to 61. The child mortality rate, too, has decreased from 162 to 82 during the period. The proportion of 1-year-old kids immunized against measles has increased remarkably from 42 to 80 in the same period.

The fifth goal of reducing by three-quarters the maternal mortality ratio is another weak point. In fact, the government has not even been able to conduct a survey to assess progress in this goal. The MMR in 1990 was 850 per 100,000 live births – one of the highest in the world. Latest estimations suggest it might have come down to 415. The goal of bringing this down to 213 by 2015 is going to be difficult job.

The sixth goal of halting and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other major diseases is also going to become a tall order. The incident of HIV prevalence has, instead, been growing from 0.29 percent of total population in 2000 to 0.5 percent in 2005. The incidences of malaria are decreasing but cases of drug-resistant malaria have also been emerging in recent years.

On the seventh goal, in 1996, there were 61 percent people who had access to safe drinking water, which increased to over 70 percent in 2005. It has to touch 80 percent mark by 2015. Likewise, the area under forest cover is 29% and the area reserved for conservation of biological diversity has increased by three-fold from 1990 to reach 28,587 square kms.

The eighth goal is largely associated with the help that will be extended by developing and developed countries to open up global partnership by promoting trading and financial assistance.

## HELICOPTER CRASH

# Again Controlled-Flight-Into-Terrain

Initial probe indicates that Controlled Flight Into Terrain (CFIT) is the reason behind September 23 chopper crash

By KESHAB POUDEL

Although the high-level probe commission, which was constituted to examine the reason behind Shri Airlines helicopter crash on September 23, is yet to present the final report, the initial investigation, as usual, indicated that the CFIT is the main reason behind the chopper crash.

With the opening of Nepalese sky private airlines, more than three dozen airplanes have crashed causing immense loss of lives and it was the CFIT that caused almost all the accidents. This year alone, two other accidents involving a Yeti Airlines Twin-otter and a helicopter was blamed on CFIT.

Despite the rising number of accidents, the civil aviation authorities seem to have failed to reduce it. Due to the frequent changes of the government, there are frequent changes in the management of Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN) resulting in instability in policy implementation.

According to aviation experts, CFIT is a significant accident categorization, cited as the cause of most aircraft accidents. CFIT results when an airplane suddenly deviates from its normal flight pattern and flies into terrain. A CFIT accident is one in which "an otherwise-serviceable aircraft, under control of the crew, is flown (unintentionally) into terrain, obstacles or water, with no prior awareness on the part of the crew of the impending collision."

In the last few years, CAAN claimed that it has conducted a number of safety related seminars in the country and conducted the safety audit including checking the airworthiness of aircrafts.

But CFIT is not the result of aircraft's mechanical failure, and rarely is it the result of the failure of any governmental or regulatory agency but it is the result of human error—allowing a well-operating aircraft to fly into terrain.

"If CAAN takes strong measures, the number of accidents can be reduced," said civil aviation expert. In the geographical terrain like that of Nepal, there is a need to take more precautionary measures.

Until recently, the Ground Proximity Warning System ("GPWS"), and the



Crashed chopper: Blame it on CFIT Photo: Annapurna Post

Traffic Collision Alert and Avoidance System ("TCAS"), were two of the most popular avionics devices available to help combat CFIT. Nepal has also made GPWS as a mandatory but it has not made any impact.

According to CAAN website, there are total numbers of 227 civil aircraft, and 15 operating airlines with nine fixed wing and six helicopters.

"Continued vulnerabilities to controlled-flight-into-terrain accidents demonstrate the need for further improvement in this area. New approaches are needed to supplement or replace the current ground proximity warning systems, such that earlier

indications and warnings of potential collisions with terrain are provided and nuisance warnings are eliminated," said the expert.

An aircraft may experience several abnormalities involving equipment malfunction, unexpected adverse weather conditions, and loss of situational awareness by the flight crew. At the time of chopper crash, the weather at the accident site was bad and visibility was poor. As most of the domestic aircraft flies under Visual Flight Rule (VFR), there are certain mandatory instructions to follow like visibility should be 5 kilometers, one thousand feet above the obstacles and ceiling base of the cloud above 1500 feet.

In all past accidents, almost all these universal instructions were violated. Interestingly, no actions have been taken yet. In case of death of crew members, all blames are put on the dead crews.

Human factor include mistakes caused by voluntary acts, failure to act, and other factors associated with actions or inaction. Cause factors associated with aircraft, engines, and systems include deficiencies in the design, manufacture, maintenance, or operation of the aircraft or its systems.

Personnel error (human factors) is the most common cause of both incidents and accidents. CFIT and loss-of-control accidents, which almost by definition involve human factors, account for more than half of all fatal accidents.

Although aircraft system malfunctions are involved in a relatively small fraction of aircraft incidents and accidents, improvements in aircraft systems often improve safety by making aircraft more robust—providing flight crews with more accurate information to improve their situational awareness and reducing the likelihood that a human error will result in an incident or accident.

As Nepal's international reputation has already been damaged following the series of accidents, one cannot escape all the time just pointing at the human failure of the CFIT. The CAN must act to prevent future accidents. ■

## POLITICS

# Realities of Country and Aspirations of People

Nepal is in a very explosive situation, which is a result of its own contradictions: realities vs aspirations of the people

By KESHAB POUDEL

**A**mid conservative social and cultural structures and subsistence-based economy, overwhelming Nepalese live under the shadow of radical political ideology and high expectations of modern economic world. Under this internal contradiction, Nepal has been passing through a very critical phase.

In the words of Gunnar Myrdal, an author of *Asian Drama*, it is the revolution of rising expectations in a typically underdeveloped country.

With more than 90 percent of population living in village, the country still has subsistence level agriculture economy whereas the aspiration of the people have gone higher by the awareness created by electronic media and multiparty system, which give access to a poorest of person to the competing political systems, in which radical extremists are in the driving seat.

As a result, the idea of revolution, insurrection or even terrorism easily catches the imaginations of adolescents and romanticists in the street and hamlets of rural Nepal. During the competitive elections, it does not emerge as decisive as the extremism has no social and economic base. It has an easy tendency to spread in the mind but has no attachment with social and economic realities.

Although Nepalese society is still conservative in all its sense, the extremist tendency appeared soon after the revolution of 1951 in various forms and characters. Since then, this tendency has been prominent in destabilizing political and social relations. Present day violence and anarchy has come as a changed and aggravated form of this same tendency.

"Slogans and slogan shouters have been changing time to time and their motivations too are different but it is the continuation of same form of extremism which has become number one problem

situation of this country, the god may fail to maintain a just and orderly society."

Nepal is in an alarming stage of disorder which is much more aggravated by situation of regional turmoil. As a small and underdeveloped country in peculiar geographical setting, Nepal's present problems may have spill over effects beyond its border. If any short sighted machination inside Nepal with presumed outmoded concept of national interest instigates at the cost of other, this may have a counter productive results.

"Small countries like Nepal can hardly afford to promote their national interest at the cost of other nation. But there can be exceptions for a despotic regime which may promote the personal interest of the ruler as the national interest. In an open society like Nepal, there can hardly be such situation," said the analyst.

Despite ups and downs, Nepal has maintained its openness and therefore it



**Political workers: High expectations**

of Nepal at present. This is as a product of inherent contradictions of the country between the realities and aspirations," said a political analyst. "Nepal does not need any enemy or hostile neighbor to make any political order dysfunctional. But if there is any unseen hand with a crooked design to maneuver political

has no such imposing interest at the cost of others. Considering all these situations, now the problems of Nepal has to be dealt with in depth and broader perspective. Its challenges are two pronged—its own internal contradictions and the other, effects of regional turmoil on its internal situation.

International communities and particularly industrial western countries have relatively correct understanding and measures to deal with Nepal's inherent problem than what Nepalese leaders have with them.

The enormous amount of aid and support has been promised by the humanitarian concern of those countries but there is a lack of sincerity among the leaders in power. This is a fact which any right thinking person may confess. But the other problems was not getting enough serious attention before the involvement of western countries particularly USA in Iraq and Afghanistan.

After the US entry into the area, problems of conflict in South Asia are now being taken up seriously and Nepal in priority of their challenging task. Before mentioning about their interest in Nepal's internal conflicts, one has to see how much eagerness is there among those countries to resolve the Bhutanese refugee problems by offering them accommodation in their own countries.

Now in the problems of internal conflicts of Nepal, western countries have extended support through the UN also. British government has already allocated resources needed to operate office of UN secretary general's special envoy to Nepal Ian Martin. Before the persons in power express the need of help, supports are coming from both UN and western sources. British Ambassador to Nepal Dr. Andrew Hall revealed this recently at his press conference.

"We hope the peace talk will succeed. Maoists must lay down their weapons before the elections for CA," said Hall. Norwegian ambassador Tore Toreng too called on seven party alliance and Maoist not to disappoint Nepalis and international community.

Along with its mission to watch human rights situation in Nepal, UN has already sent expertise to help Nepal in decommissioning arms and monitoring the peace process. Even the leaders of Seven Party government are not definite about holding of Constituent Assembly Elections whereas the United Nations Development Program has organized a

team of experts to enable Nepal for drafting new constitution.

"We are discussing the modalities of arms management with experts. Arms must be managed beforehand to ensure free and fair elections for Constituent Assembly," said Ian Martin, personal representative of UN secretary general.

The US ambassador to Nepal is more under attack than any politician in power because of his persistent and vocal stand against parallel armies of rebel against the legitimate government.

The arms management has become a matter of concern to international community also because of their experience of several countries in conflicts in Asia as well as in Africa. "Maoists should not be included in the government until their arms are managed," US ambassador James F Moriarty reportedly said in New Delhi talking with selected Indian journalists and intellectuals (The Himalayan Times). "Maoists will not submit their entire arms; they have a different grand design," he is reported as saying.

"Yes, all these internal as well as external problems have to be dealt with in a broader perspective at the initiative of the national government. The people of this country particularly enlightened and vocal group have to consider all these problems while responding to any political demand of the pressure groups," said the analyst.

While doing that, one has to maintain a balanced approach and moderation in all extreme and provocative situation. The help and response which Nepal is getting from sympathetic sources from international community needs proper response and involvement of the community particularly of government.

"Even if there are no external machinations in Nepal; the inherent contradictions of Nepal may invite disorder and anarchy. If it is not tackled promptly and properly, its own inherent problems are so acute and explosive that it does not need any enemy or hostile neighbors to destroy its fabrics," said the analyst. ■

## India's MEA Prepares Relevance For India Index

A report prepared by the India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has shown that Nepal figures in the top ten countries vis-à-vis its significance with India's foreign policy. More interestingly, Nepal stands before Pakistan – an archrival of India – which hugs the ninth position.

The MEA has devised a 'Relevance for India' (RX) index that categorizes countries on the basis of their political and strategic importance and their economic and commercial value to India over the next decade, reports The Hindustan Times daily.

The index forms the basis of India's ambitious expansion plans. The US and the UK top the index as the two most important countries in New Delhi's view. China, which is far more crucial to India in proximity and strategic importance, is ranked after Japan at sixth place.

"The RX index serves as an indicator of the importance of a particular country to India from the political, economic, commercial and cultural perspective on a 1-100 scale," a classified document says.

The US and UK have got percentile scores of 92 and 86; France, Japan and Russia 79. China is sixth (77); above Pakistan. Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka all have got the same points, and come in at places 7, 8, 9 and 10. Papua New Guinea is the least important country from India's perspective: number 114 in the list of 114. Bhutan stands at 67th place in the index. ■

# Ratification of Rome Treaty: Ending of Impunity

By LALIT BAHADUR BASNET

On 25 July, the House of Representatives directed the government to ratify the Rome statute, which created the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2002. Subsequently, the government has assured about the statute's ratification. This decision gives the message to the international community that Nepal is sincere to end the heinous crimes like genocide, torture, mass murder, or atrocities against humanity. It will be a milestone in the field of human right protection and no longer could any heinous criminal escape from the trial of justice.

Recently, representatives of NGOs forming the Asian delegation met the Prime Minister and other political leaders and received assurance about the ratification of the Rome treaty. But Maoist leaders hesitated to meet with the delegation, - a possible demonstration that they may not be sincere to end the culture of impunity and atrocities.

The ICC is soon going to start dispensing justice. This court was established on 17 July 1998 in Rome, and was formally launched in Hague, the Netherlands. The Court has rekindled a hope that it would protect and promote human rights. All human rights activists hope the Court would enhance international humanitarian laws. It is the first permanent tribunal having functions of handling heinous crimes like genocide, torture, mass murder, or atrocities against humanity. As no single national court was able or willing to do so, the ICC was designed to deal with crimes by individuals.

After the establishment of this court, it is now accepted that there can be no impunity for the worst violations of human rights. The human right activists even said it were too late to establish such court because the world's worst tyrants had escaped justice as leaders like Hitler, Stalin and Moa did not face trial. Polpot, responsible for the slaughter of 2 million Cambodians in the 1970s, lived in Cambodia until his death in 1998. Idi Amin, Uganda's brutal dictator, saw out his days in comfortable exile in Saudi Arabia.

## Main Provisions of Rome treaty-

The statute of ICC Article 5 says the jurisdiction of the court shall be concern to the international community as a whole, which are: the crime of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and, the crime of aggression. Even if any state is not a party to the ICC, its citizens could still be prosecuted if they commit any of the listed crimes in the territory of the signatory states. Some argued that these statute provisions are against the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, which says that the states that do not accept a treaty are not bound by its provisions. But others claim that if the provisions are not enforced it would mean legitimizing the law of the jungle. The court has jurisdiction over the individuals who commit any of the statutes core crimes and are not prosecuted by their own states. Under its provisions, it cannot bring about a prosecution unless the accused country of origin is "genuinely unable or unwilling" to do so. In this sense, the ICC represents a genuine step forward. The statute of ICC has no retrospective effects.

## Can form war crime tribunal in the absence of Rome Treaty

In 1993, the UN'S international Criminal Tribunal for ex-Yugoslavia where Slobodan Milosovic was tried in the Hague became the first international war crime tribunal to be set up since the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials after the second world war. It was followed a year later by the UN Tribunal for Rwanda. Like their post war forbearers, the two courts operated exclusively under international law. Since then, five other war crimes tribunals have been set up to deal with atrocities in Sierra Leone, Cambodia, East Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan. Recently Lebanon has asked the UN for help in setting up a tribunal of international charter "to try the assassins of Rafik Hariri, the former

Lebanese prime minister who was killed. A year ago, in Sierra Leone a special tribunal was set up after 11-years bloodbath and barbarism in which about 200,000-500,000 people were killed and three-quarter of the country's 6 million inhabitants were forced to flee their homes. This barbarism had raised question: should such crimes be forgotten and forgiven. The special tribunal was set up in 2002, which is operated jointly by the UN and Sierra Leonean government under international law in 2002. This was called the world's first hybrid court. It was the first modern war crime tribunal, which is based in the country where the crimes were committed.

## Why the USA opposed Rome Treaty?

The formation of the ICC was an uphill task, especially because big and powerful countries like the USA, China, Iraq, and others like Libya, Qatar, and Yemen voted against the formation of this court. The USA has not only refused to ratify the treaty, but it has opposed it vehemently. The US Congress has denied funding and cooperation to the ICC. America has campaigned against the court for the fear that it will be used to mount politically motivated prosecution of American government officials. But the supporters of ICC insist that there are enough checks and balances in the 1998 treaty to ensure that it operates responsibly. The USA claims immunity from the ICC jurisdiction. The superpower also rejects the Court's jurisdiction that allows it to prosecute the citizens of non-signatory countries. The Clinton administration was involved in shaping the court's treaty. Former president Clinton had even signed the treaty just before the end of his term. However, president George Bush revoked the decision. He was seeking absolute legal immunity for the Americans from the ICC jurisdiction. Last year George Bush signed extra territorial legislation, which permits the US "to use all means necessary and appropriate to bring about the release" of US citizens being tried in the court. Even British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw had warned America against attacking the ICC. The USA insists that it did not want a court that could prosecute its military personnel. After the statute was finalized, the US State Department spokesman James Rubin came up with a self-serving stand "Countries did not recognize that because of our responsibilities with troops around the world, we thought there needed to be unique provisions to prevent prosecution based on some political desire. It would be unfair to prosecute American soldiers who are conducting the policies of the president. That is the burden of being the United States." The extra territorial legislation was also signed between Nepal and USA government on December 2002.

## Criticism of ICC

The statute has not prohibited the use of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, which are of genocidal nature. Mexico and Arab states strongly protested when these weapons were deleted from the draft of the statute. The big powers contend that only the Security Council has the right to determine whether an act of aggression has taken place, relying on a narrow reading of Article 39 of the UN charter. The Red Cross, and various INGOs have criticized the Rome statute for making it difficult to prosecute crimes committed in domestic civil wars. It can invite external intervention in the internal conflicts. The treaty had inherent jurisdiction over crimes committed on a territory of a non-state party, it would be an infringement of national sovereignty. This may be unpalatable but under the present circumstances of a discriminatory world order, it is unavoidable. Critics complain that they are selective and deliver only partial justice. Such kinds of tribunal and court failed to prevent the massacres in Srebrenica and Kosovo. Despite establishment

of tribunal in Nuremberg, the genocide has continued. Likewise the indictment of Mr. Kony and his henchmen has not stopped the Uganda killings and since the referral of Darfur to the ICC the violence there has got even worse.

Although these weaknesses deprive the ICC of a certain degree of legitimacy, they don't entirely rob the court of usefulness. Formation of ICC has enhanced greater respect for international humanitarian law. So all the states involved should take the ICC seriously and work towards making it robust and genuinely impartial. A decade of experience at the Yugoslavia and Rwanda tribunals has taught lessons of lengthy and costly trial proceedings, which have been broadly criticized. The ICC's proceedings, they hope, will be more efficient and follow the due process of law. The ICC is expected to focus mainly on the world's worst atrocities, rather than on the small fry.

#### Who are going to be on trial?

Serbia's former president, Slobodan Milosevic—who recently died—was under trial by the ICC in the crimes against humanity. The ex-Serbian president's ex-Army Generals are on the trial in the ICC. The Bosnian Serb Army Chief Ratko Mladic for Srebrenica massacre, Thomas Lubanga Dyila of Congo (where conflict has claimed 4 million lives since 1998), and ex-president of Liberia Charles Taylor (a notorious warlord)—are some of the people who have already been arrested or are going to be arrested in future. In Chile, Augusto Pinochet is going to be a real possibility of trial—17 years after the end of his dictatorship and Hissene Habre, a ruthless ex-president of Chad, exiled in Senegal for the past 16 years, could soon be extradited to Brussels to face trial against humanity. And Saddam Hussein, Iraq's former dictator has been facing trial before a special tribunal in Baghdad. The court has also been mandated by the Security Council to investigate the current horrors in Darfur, in western Sudan, which is a non-member of ICC. The ICC continues to keep watch on developments in five other violence-racked countries, including Cote d'Ivoire and the Central African Republic. Taylor's capture has send a very strong signal to other potential tyrants.

These activities show that there can be no impunity for the worst violations of human rights not even for heads of state and long after they go out of power.

#### Why Nepal should ratify the Rome Treaty?

The main purpose of ICC is to try the world's worst criminals who have committed crimes against humanity, and to end impunity for the perpetrators of the international community. Apart from Rwanda and Yugoslavia cases, many heinous crimes against innocent people remain unchecked and unpunished. The ICC is hampered by the refusal of many of the worlds worst human right violators like Zimbabwe, Cuba, Uzbekistan, North Korea, Syria, Belarus and Saudi Arabia to sign up to it.

Nepal has ratified all kinds of treaties related to Human Rights and is committed to the protection of international humanitarian laws. With such respect and commitment of Nepal in the field of Human Rights, why is there hesitation and delay in the signing and ratification of the Rome treaty? By being a party of the Rome Treaty, Nepal does not lose her sovereignty nor does the treaty usurp local jurisdiction. The ICC is only complementary and local courts can function independently. For the last few years, Nepal has been facing various crimes against humanity. Both the revolutionary forces and the government have committed heinous crimes. In the name of people's war, many innocent civilians are being killed brutally. Such kinds of crimes should be punished. If the national court is unable and unwilling to punish such criminals, the ICC will take jurisdiction over them and no one will be able to enjoy impunity anywhere in the world. The extra territorial legislation signed between Nepal and the US government on 31 December 2002 has created some difficulties to sign Rome Treaty. Our neighboring countries India and China have not signed this treaty. That's why Nepal seems to be a bit hesitant to ratify Rome Treaty. ■

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## Pak Embassy Holds Program On Environment

The Pakistani Embassy in Kathmandu held a talk program on "Pakistan's Priorities in the Regional and Global Environment" on October 27 in Kathmandu.

Addressing the program, which was attended by a large number of intellectuals and media persons, Charge d'Affaires Ehsan Ullah Batth said the bilateral relations between Nepal and Pakistan were based on solid principles of sovereign equality, respect for territorial integrity and non-interference in each other's internal affairs. He said the excellent relations were bound to improve in future.

He spoke at length about the challenges and opportunities thrown up by the fast changing regional and global environment and Pakistan's response and priorities in this regard.

He stressed the need for early resolution of all the outstanding issues between Pakistan and India including the core dispute of Jammu and Kashmir without which the prospects of peace and stability in South Asia would remain bleak and goal of economic and social development of the region, a dream. He said the issue of Jammu and Kashmir remained a stumbling block in improving relations between Pakistan and India, which affected the dynamics of the entire South Asian region.

Batth also stressed the need for making SAARC an effective organization and an engine of economic growth and social development in the region.

Describing Pakistan's efforts in the war against international terrorism, which predate 9/11, Batth told the audience that his country had lost more

troops than the entire coalition forces in Afghanistan, fighting Al Qaeda and the Taliban.

He also briefed about the two-pronged strategy of "Enlightened Moderation" envisioned by President General Pervez Musharraf to address the root causes of terrorism by urging the West to be just in resolving festering issues like Palestine and Kashmir on the one hand, and the Muslims to reject the terrorism and extremism in order to concentrate fully on internal socio-economic developments.

He also informed about political and economic achievements made by Pakistan in last several years due to comprehensive reform measures. As a result, he said, Pakistan is poised to become an anchor of peace and stability, as well as hub of economic and commercial activity in the region. ■

## UNHCR Tables Nepal Human Rights Reports

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, has tabled the annual report on Nepal at the General Assembly in New York, highlighting the human rights abuses that took place in the country and the need to work on improving the situation.

A statement issued today by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal (OHCHR-Nepal) said the report on Nepal was tabled at the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) of the General Assembly on Wednesday (October 18).

In her report, Arbour notes that the political changes following the April movement in Nepal and the ceasefires, which were announced subsequently, have had a significant impact on the human rights situation, particularly with regard to violations of international humanitarian law following the cessation of hostilities, and greater respect for freedom of expression and assembly, according to the OHCHR.

"The High Commissioner's report describes some of the positive steps which have been taken and highlights the fact that the peace process offers a hope of continuing improvements in respect for human rights by the all parties. At the same time, it stresses that there are many issues which still need to be addressed," the OHCHR statement said.

All parties must ensure that human rights remain central to the peace process in order to ensure that a sustainable peace is secured. Any setback to the peace process risks a negative and potentially devastating impact on the human rights situation, it added.

The 19-page long report documents the human rights abuses committed by the Maoists- including kidnappings, ill-treatment and killings and recruitment of children- as well as the violations on the part of the police and the Nepali Army. Pointing out the weakness or absence of the law enforcement and administration of justice systems, the reports calls for firmly establishing the rule of law in order to protect human rights and prevent the emergence of elements which risk undermining the peace process.

"Effective law enforcement in accordance with international human rights standards will also help to ensure that the electoral process for a Constituent Assembly, from its early stages, can be organized without fear, intimidation or more serious abuses," states the report, stressing that the parties need to recognize the demand of marginalized groups for adequate participation and representation.

The High Commissioner's report to the General Assembly notes that the Nepali Army's investigations are not transparent or impartial, and that the army continues to refuse to provide OHCHR-Nepal with access to documents relating to military investigations and court martial proceedings into abuses. The report also notes serious concerns about the lack of progress in clarifying the fate of numerous individuals abducted by the CPN-Maoist during the conflict, and also in the failure to hold CPN-Maoist cadres fully accountable for any abuses committed, including in the case of the attack on a public bus in Madi Chitwan last year. ■

## UNDP, AusAID To Assist Forestry Entrepreneurs

Six thousand people living in poverty stand to benefit from a new agreement signed between the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Government of Australia at UN House.

Under the new agreement signed on October 20, Australia will contribute US\$ 560,000 towards the Micro-enterprise Development Programme, which seeks to help the very poor improve their incomes by starting and managing their own businesses. The Program—a joint initiative between the Government of Nepal and UNDP, and also funded by DFID and NZAID—has helped 84,000 people in 20 districts improve their incomes through enterprise since 1998.

The new Australian contribution will be used to assist people in Sindhupalchok and Kavre districts, where under a previous program Australia helped communities to form Community Forest Users Groups, which now successfully manage plantations covering almost 42,000 hectares of woodland. The Micro-enterprise Programme will assist some of these Users Groups to

improve their members' livelihoods by promoting forest-based enterprises.

"The best way to help people out of poverty and exclusion is by creating opportunities, especially employment opportunities, which are very limited in many parts of rural Nepal," UNDP Resident Representative Matthew Kahane said.

AusAID's Deputy Director General Murray Proctor said that AusAID sees its contribution to the Micro-enterprise Development Program as building on Australia's four decades of assistance in Nepal's Forestry sector. He also hoped that this assistance will, in future, open the way for similar activities among other Community Forest User Groups.

In Sindhupalchok and Kavre, the Micro-enterprise Development Programme will initially assess local skills, resources and market potential. Once this is complete, potential entrepreneurs, largely belonging to the very poor and marginalized groups, will be linked with banks, training opportunities and eventually markets. ■

FESTIVALS

# New Found Merry

This year, the residents of Katmandu valley celebrated Dashain and Tihar with much élan

By SAHISHNU POU DYAL

Dashain and Tihar are the biggest festivals celebrated by all Nepalese around the world. It brings lots of joy and happiness but it also causes different kinds of serious accidents due to ignorance.

The news of serious accidents like falling down from top of the house while flying

kite, getting serious burn injuries while playing with firecrackers during Tihar and so on are frequent during festive season.

Fortunately this year not any serious accident happened. And everyone felt safe and sound during this Dashain and Tihar.

“Some small incidents had happened during this period but not any serious one due to Pataka (firecrackers) during Dashain and tihar. Therefore, we can consider this festive time as having been a safe period compared to previous years,” said Pradhumna Karki, Deputy Superintendent of Police at Valley Police Office at Hanumandhoka.

“Yes, there was no such record in our office this year,” said Pitambar Adhikari, another deputy superintendent police at valley police office at Hanumandhoka.

Apart from the new found security and peace across the country, the people also celebrated festivals responsibly this year.

“We felt that very few people actually played with firecrackers. And I think that it is not bad to play with firecrackers safely because the festival itself is named as Dipawali - a time to celebrate light. But one should remember that security must be given the first priority. And this year I felt people had adopted this formula in a well manner and there were no bad news about accidents,” said Shreejana Thapa, a local resident of Koteswor.

“This time we didn’t hear any kind of news of bad accidents due to Patakas during this festive time. And I wish the same thing would happen time and again. I found people have become more concerned and careful while dealing with such things. And I found this festive time is more secure than those of previous years,” added Bijaya Khadka, a local resident of Khumaltar. ■

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# NEPAL-INDIA RELATIONS

## A Time To Change

By MADHAV KUMAR RIMAL

Recent news and comments in some of leading Indian print media have stressed the necessity of reviewing India's foreign policy and implementing requisite improvement that have become overdue. India's dismal failure to win the confidence and goodwill of her neighbors, specially her smaller neighbors, has cost her greatly. The extreme humiliation she had to suffer in the recent election for the Secretary General of UN Security Council has not only scarred her global image but also impelled her policy makers to come down to earth and face the naked realism in good grace. India's leading daily, The Times of India, usually said to be the official organ, has reported that the newly appointed foreign minister, Pranab Mukherjee is "likely to make substantive difference in neighborhood" policies. Indeed, it has been overdue for a long time. The utter failure of Indian statesmen and bureaucrats to shake off their colonial psyche has not only contributed to make South Asia as the most volatile region but one of the poorest also. India, as the biggest and most powerful nation, with a booming economy in recent times, should have been able to lead the region to peace and prosperity. Instead, fear, misgivings and unrelenting animosity keep on plaguing her bilateral relations with all her smaller neighbors. No ghost need come from hell to tell us that India has no option but to establish and maintain cordial and cooperative relations with all her neighbors, big or small, if she wants to achieve her soaring ambitions in the international community. Her size, population and strategic importance does demand that. But what a great pity that even with her smallest neighbor Nepal, with whom she keeps on boasting to have centuries old religious, cultural and social affinity, her relations are far from satisfactory. But in statecraft, these kinds of sentimental protestations carry little weight as scores of regional and two devastating world wars have proved. These are only the tools of wily politicians to hoodwink the poor innocent masses. Instead, one must be sincere and put the fingers on the real causes of dissensions and make honest efforts to diffuse them. Nepal-India relations could be said to have assumed the present form after the British left India in 1947. The British were happy to maintain a friendly working relation with Nepal. But the Indians celebrated their freedom starting with an obsession of *Akhanda Bharat* and still have not been able to gracefully accommodate with the principle of partition that created Pakistan and the existence of a free and independent Nepal. They completely forgot that India was united into a centrally administered unit, as it is today, by the British and her ancient history keeps on reminding us of her possible disintegration. Coming back to Nepal-India relations, India never tried to give a strong and solid foundation to her relations with her small neighbors. Starting with exploiting the folly of King Tribhuwan of surrendering himself to the Indians to get rid of the autocratic Ranas, the Indians have never permitted politics to stabilize in poor Nepal. Since it will be futile to dig skeletons out of the graves, which will only reopen the scars and fill our hearts with bitterness, we will take a few more recent issues that throw ample light on India's attitude towards Nepal and, have deeply influenced the course of Nepal-India relations. One, the economic blockade of Nepal by India more than a decade and half back, two—the Bhutani refugees packed into Nepal by India. Nepal has no contiguous border with Bhutan and rashly, aiding and abetting the Maoist insurgents to mount violent insurgencies against Nepal enjoying a safe sanctuary in India - are some burning issues that have marred their bilateral relations. Of course, the trauma of the economic blockade has become thing of the past for poor Nepalis with the scars indelibly engraved on their hearts. The economy badly bruised by the

blockade had not even got to its feet when unprecedented corruption of the restored multiparty democratic regime and the forced influx of the refugees of Nepali origin, evicted from their homeland in Bhutan claiming a share in the scanty resources of the poor country further aggravated the miseries of the Nepalis. These refugees should have gone over to India being the contiguous neighbor. Instead, they have been thrust on Nepal by India, their paths to India were blocked by the Indian army. If this is not the undeniable proof of Indian complicity in the eviction of thousands of non-indigenous population by the King of Bhutan as the finale of a well-organized plan of ethnic cleansing, how is one going to explain it? Political analysts here opine that this problem could have been solved by the Indians with the snap of their fingers. Naturally, they would not do it as it serves their interest of pressurizing the Nepalis.

The third issue, that of the Maoist insurgents, has taken Nepal to the verge of total ruin. She was almost on the point of becoming a failed state. Why India granted them a safe sanctuary with all kinds of help and cooperation apart from training camps and other training facilities and permitted them to mount violent insurgency against the small neighbor despite the fact that she was the first to label them terrorists, is, indeed, beyond common human comprehension. The analyst further explained that this Indian umbrage against Nepal, the small, poor and weak but friendly neighbor, was simply a part of the Grand Design they have been harboring ever since they won their independence in 1947. For a student of history who has followed the political developments in South Asia for the last five decades and a half, this paradoxical behavior of the Indians will not be difficult to comprehend. It can be easily compared to the methodical madness of Hamlet. But the most surprising fact is why they cannot see the obvious that is has not paid them. And neither ever will. That India's stature in the international community still needs greater height and depth has been irrefutably substantiated by recent events, which impel her to revamp her image in the immediate neighborhood. As far Nepal is concerned, India must give up the practice of hypocritical rhetorics, buying the loyalties of politicians, journalists, bureaucrats and a section of intellectuals, and start a clean diplomacy. The Nepalese masses are getting wiser and have started to resent the exploitation of even their corrupt anti-nationals. Sooner or later, Nepal is sure to produce patriotic politicians who will undo all the anti national pacts or treaties the pliant political set up has signed or plans to sign. The Indians have to realize, once and for all, that the corrupt politicians could not be their sincere friends since they have no morality and no character. They only work to serve their own interests.

India must also stop insinuating that Kathmandu is the breeding ground of ISI agents. "It is a matter of extreme concern that ISI is trying to infiltrate and subvert our armed forces," said Pranab Mukherjee as Defense Minister (TOI 24 Oct, 2006). They must strengthen their own defenses rather than blaming others. Wouldn't it be a great shame for India if ISI infiltrated her armed forces? And how about the RAW network in Nepal? Why does not he say something on that? Mukherjee is now the foreign minister and must mind his language. His top priority would be to try to instill trust and confidence in the Nepali minds. All patriotic Nepalis are good friends of India and don't want any confrontation with her. India must change her policy of nurturing spineless and submissive Nepali politicians. They must not forget that even a brave and honest enemy is better than a coward and dishonest friend. Both Nepal and India do need each other. It is time India started winning the hearts of her smaller neighbor. ■

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