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SPOTLIGHT

Feb 23- Mar 01, 2007



Power Cut Darkness Rules

Interim Constitution : Swift Shake-up
King's Message : Kicks Off Controversy

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COVER STORY: Darkness Rules

Due to short-sighted policies and lack of commitment, the country faces crippling hours of power cuts, which is only likely to worsen in coming years

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ARMS MANAGEMENT: First Stage Completed

The UN reports that the first stage of registration of Maoist combatants and storage of weapons have completed

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KING's MESSAGE: Ruffling of Feathers

King Gyanendra's Democracy Day message kicks off controversy

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SPOTLIGHT

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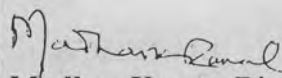
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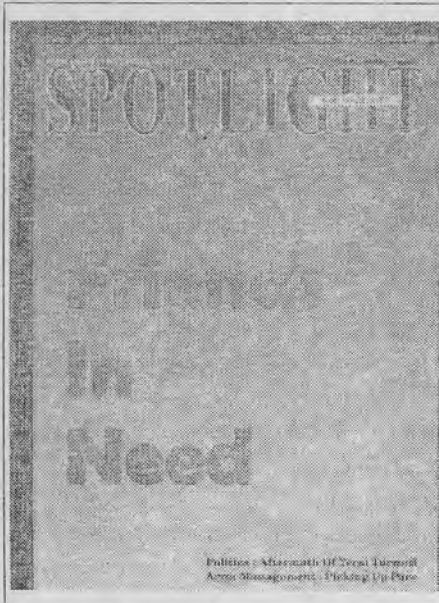
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The vociferous outbursts for the amendment of the interim constitution have clearly exemplified that the drafters nominated for the job were men of narrow vision. The interim parliament and the Seven Party Alliance government with the support of the CPN (Maoists) from outside, must not give in to vindictive, prejudicial or partisan feelings in finalizing the interim constitution. They must not overlook that strong and healthy opposition is the indispensable *sine qua-non* of a successful democratic regime. Unwillingness to accommodate the opposition is a clear manifestation of dishonorable intentions that should never be permitted to prevail. This is certain to lead to sectarian differences leading to unstable politics making way to interested extraneous forces keen to fish in the troubled waters. It is a great pity that the toughest man in the present political scenario of the country is badly suffering from very fragile health. He can rise up to the occasion, if he wants, and can save the country from going into disintegration with the help of the country's loyal and patriotic security forces. If there is any force that can defend and preserve the integrity of the country in such a volatile and fluid situation, it is only the security forces of Nepal. Enough harm has already been done by trying to demoralize them by the pliant politicians who have yet to prove their own loyalty to the country. Nepali security forces are not only brave and loyal. They are most disciplined and responsible. At the same time, they would not shirk any responsibility if they feel the country is facing any kind of threat. We do trust prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala has become a chastened man and would not succumb to any pressure from any quarter, whether internal and external, that would be unproductive in or injurious to the country's interests. He is not only the most experienced politician but also the most influential statesman in the country at the moment. We think, he is the one who can also assess the importance of the security forces objectively and treat them with respect they deserve. We do wish him a quick recovery so that he may control the situation effectively.


Madhav Kumar Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher



Foreign Aid

Nepal has been fortunate that it has a long list of well-wishers and friendly nations around the world ("Friends In Need, Friends Indeed" SPOTLIGHT February 16). The cover story also pointed out to this fact. Because of the generous help by the friendly nations, Nepal has been able to survive amid difficult situation. The assistance has helped the country's economy to carry on.

*Ramesh Bista
Sallaghari*

Careful Analysis

The cover story ("Friends In Need, Friends Indeed" SPOTLIGHT February 16) showed how western European countries and Japan, who have minimal geo-political interests in Nepal, have been showering the country with help. They have particularly been active in supporting the rural people through grassroots programs. Likewise, the European countries have also shown their top priority in the human rights situation and humanitarian concerns. People of Nepal are very grateful for their generous aid. Their help will be very useful as Nepal embarks on the path towards building new Nepal.

*Janak Dhital
Kuleshwore*

Don't Depend On Foreign Aid

While it is good that Nepal's friends have pledged generous support, we should start to develop on our own strength and not always depend on foreign aid ("Friends In Need, Friends Indeed" SPOTLIGHT February 16). Already our policy makers and planners are fraught with what is known as dependency syndrome. They talk about carrying out such and such project by raising so much foreign assistance. They

have forgotten that the country should try to stand in its own feet. More dangerous than accepting foreign aid is the tendency to consider foreign aid as necessary for all kinds of nation-building efforts. Every passing year, Nepal is becoming more and more dependant on foreign aid. Its people have to bear billions of rupees of foreign debt. Besides, the tendency of looking for foreign aid will ultimately lead to a situation where our people will not work. They will become lazy and survive on the paltry assistance thrown by rich countries. The eight parties must make a decision about this problem soon. As it will be unrealistic for us to immediately start refusing all kinds of foreign aid, the parties should rather formulate a long-term policy about the acceptance of the foreign aid. They could plan how much of foreign aid they will accept this year and how much they will accept ten years from now. These are some of the most fundamental questions that our leaders must answer. The Maoists when they were engaged in people's war had been saying that they will reject foreign aid once they grab power. Their leaders had, time and again, stated that the foreign aid was one of the major reasons causing the poverty in the country. They talked about the pauperization of Nepalese people due to

the unbridled entry of the foreign aid. However, after the restoration of Loktantra, they have stopped making such acerbic remarks. In their efforts to gain confidence of donors and foreign governments, they have swept their concerns inside the carpet. This tendency is equally appalling to all of us. Though the Maoist leaders still say that they are in favor of developing domestic capital, their voices now lack the gusto and fail to inspire confidence. They should have, at least, told the people that they want to cut down the level of foreign aid the country will accept. Unfortunately, recently a senior Maoist leader Chandra Prakash Gajurel was telling an FM radio that once the Maoist government comes to power, the foreign aid will pour in substantially more. And he was saying so as a matter of pride.

*Laxman Gurung
Dhobihat*

Terai Questions

The article "Short Relief" (SPOTLIGHT February 16) pointed out that the agitation in Terai could flare up anytime soon. It is clear that the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) will not back out till Home Minister Krishna Sitaula resigns. But the government is in no mood to meet their demands. As such, the country will have to bear another round of violence and rioting. How much this country can take? Riots and bandhs have already taken a heavy toll in terms of lost lives and economic opportunities.

*Shyam Gartaula
Bhimsengola*

Inflation In The Horizon

The growing inflation is becoming a big cause for concern ("Looming Large" SPOTLIGHT February 16). At a time when economic growth have virtually stagnated, the increase in inflation is sure to eat up any growth. Couple this with the population growth and you will have an economy that is actually contracting.

*Bikendra Singh
Thapathali*

Maoists Kidnap Family Members, Torch House

A group of people led by local Maoist leader Badri Bajgain, on Sunday (Feb 18), kidnapped all the family members of Nanibabu Karki and set his house on fire, accusing the family members of murdering Nabaraj Bajgain, nephew of Badri, nearly two and a half months ago, police said. According to Mahesh Shah, deputy superintendent of police at Metropolitan Police Circle, Boudha, family members of Karki had just entered the house after being acquitted by the District Court, Kathmandu, on Sunday, when the group kidnapped them. "As Laxmi Karki, daughter of Nanibabu, and Nabaraj, both students of KIST college, were in love before Nabaraj committed suicide, Bajgain families were blaming Karki's family of murdering Nabaraj," a police official said. The police said the Maoists kidnapped all the four members of the family from the house in the evening. "When we reached the post, locals didn't cooperate with us due to fear of the Maoists and we had to return," a police officer said. The police reached the house again with additional force as the people led by Badri returned to the house to set it on fire, the police official said. The police official said that the group of people took out all the goods and logistics from the house and torched them. They torched a motorcycle also. The police have taken five persons in custody for interrogation, the police official added. *The Himalayan Times daily reports*

Team Formed To Probe Incident Of Stone-Pelting At King's Motorcade

Expressing regrets over the incident, the Home Ministry has formed a three-member team to probe the incident of stone-pelting at the King's motorcade on Friday (Feb 16) on the occasion of Mahashivaratri. The led by Pratap Kumar Pathak, joint secretary at the Home Ministry, will have to present its report within a week. Other members of the

team include Deputy Inspector General of police Rabi Shrestha and Basanta Kumar Rai, senior superintendent at National Investigation Department. The Ministry, in its statement, has said that the incident which occurred on the occasion of Mahashivaratri festival at Pashupatinath temple was unfortunate and could even affect the religious harmony. Therefore, it said, the team was formed to bring out the truth. On Friday evening, unidentified persons had pelted stones at the King's motorcade when he was returning from the temple. The bumper of the King's car was slightly damaged in the incident. The groups threw stones at the motorcade injuring a police man. Scores of security personnel rushed to provide cover to the King's motorcade as it made its way through the crowded area. The King who came alone to the temple on the occasion of Mahashivaratri spent one and a half hour in worship in the temple premises. There were people chanting pro and anti King slogans at various areas of the temple vicinity. When the King returned at around 8 pm, some groups started pelting stones at his car causing slight damage in its bumper. In previous years, the King used to visit the temple accompanied by the Queen and other members of royal family to the Pashupatinath temple. This year, however, he was alone. *Compiled from reports*

Hindu Activists Stage Rally

Hundreds of activists of various Hindu organizations took part in a rally staged at the capital city on Saturday (Feb 17). Led by World Hindu Federation, the activists chanted slogans demanding the restoration of Hindu Kingdom with constitutional monarch. They also raised slogans demanding protection to cow. Organizations like Shiva Sena Nepal and Nepal Independent Youth Society participated in the rally, which was also attended by Sadhus. They said that by abandoning its Hindu ethos – which they claimed had never affected religious and cultural harmony in the county - Nepal was

heading towards immoral and dangerous future. *Compiled from reports*

King Tarnished Monarchy Image: Survey

A survey carried out by Annapurna Post daily has found out that the last five years of King Gyanendra have seriously damaged the 237-year-old institution of monarchy. The survey was conducted nationwide with the sample size of 9629 respondents – possibly the largest ever survey of such kind in Nepal. Poll was carried out in 96 VDCs and 12 municipalities in 57 districts. Among the respondents, 50 percent were male and 50 percent female; 23 percent were from cities and 77 percent from villages; 29 percent were illiterate and 71 percent were literate. The figures show a division in the poll regarding King and monarchy. The respondents saying that King Gyanendra was not the incarnation of lord Bishnu stood at 52 percent as against 40 percent who thought he was an incarnation of the lord. In a one-to-one comparison, respondents were asked if King Birendra was Lord Bishnu's avatar. Out of 3787 respondents, 97 percent considered late King Birendra as the incarnation of Bishnu. This clearly implies that the institution of monarchy has been badly shaken by King Gyanendra whose personality and actions have impacted the institution rather than it being a reflection of the King as a person. Among the respondent – illiterate (26 percent), literate (51 percent), those passing school education (64 percent) and those acquiring higher education (77 percent) said King Gyanendra was not the incarnation of lord Bishnu. On another question, the number of respondents saying that the King was a symbol of national unity stood at 41 percent with those saying the King was not a symbol of national unity at 39 percent. Similarly, the number of respondents favoring monarchy as an institution stood at 49 percent with those opposing 44 percent. According to the survey, the view of not favoring the King

increased as the level of education went up. As many as 24 percent of illiterate respondents and 43 percent of literate respondents did not support the King. Interestingly, not only level of education but location also made a difference. The results show that the monarchy was relatively more popular with the people of Terai origin than with the people of hilly origin. However, Terai has one-third of total population of the nation.

The Himalayan Times daily reports

Home Minister Apologizes For Terai Incident

Speaking at the parliament on Thursday (Feb 15), Home Minister Krishna Sitaula expressed his sincere apologies for whatever "mistakes and weaknesses" made on his part during the recent Terai unrest. Sitaula said he wants to apologize to the people of Nepal through the parliament for mistakes he has committed in course of carrying out his duties. His apology has come in the wake of growing demands for his resignation. Meanwhile, reacting to his apologies, the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) has said it is not enough.

Upendra Yadav, president of MJF, said apologies were not enough. "Mere apologies will not suffice. He has to resign. Only then we will sit for talks," said Yadav, speaking at a program organized in Biratnagar on Thursday. The MJF has, on February 8, given ten-day ultimatum to the government to create conducive environment for talks. They have warned to intensify agitation if Sitaula does not resign. *Leading dailies report*

Maoist Armed Guards Stopped

The security personnel posted at the gate of Singh Durbar on Thursday (Feb 15) stopped two Maoist guards after they discovered that they were carrying weapons – ostensibly for the purpose of providing security to Maoist MPs Dev Gurung and Lokendra Bista. They were later released. The Maoists have claimed

that the weapons were for the security of their leaders as per the agreement with the government. *Leading dailies report*

Serial Blasts In Birgunj

An unidentified gang triggered three blasts at different places, including the UML office in Birgunj on Thursday (Feb 15) evening. The bombs went off in the UML party office in Parsa district's Ramgadhwa VDC, the district education office at Pragatinagar and Department of Drug Administration in the National Trading Building. The gang, which came on motorbikes, tossed two socket bombs on the education office compound at 7:30 pm, inspector at the district police office Prem Basnet said. The blasts occurred at an interval of 15 minutes. Subsequently, a hitherto unknown organization called Nepal Defense Army has claimed responsibility for the blasts.

Leading dailies report

RJP Doubtful About Fairness Of CA Polls

Pointing at the recent spate of attacks by Maoist cadres against its workers and leaders, the Rastriya Janashakti Party (RJP) has doubted that the forthcoming Constituent Assembly (CA) elections would be held in free and fair manner. Following attacks against its workers in Nuwakot, Tanahu and Dhankuta in recent days, RJP president Surya Bahadur Thapa said these actions would hurt the prospects of timely and fair CA. He said his party had already said that they would accept the decision of elected CA about the status of monarchy. The Maoist cadres reportedly attacked RJP charging it to be a royalist party. Thapa accused that activists of Nepali Congress (NC) and UML were also involved in the attacks led by the Maoists. He also urged eight parties to maintain national unity, territorial integrity and communal harmony while going for federal structure. *Leading dailies report*

Prachanda Cautions Against Conspiracies To Derail CA Polls

In his first public address at Khula Manch on Tuesday (Feb 13), Maoist

chairman Prachanda cautioned against conspiracies to derail the elections of the Constituent Assembly (CA). "Conspiracies are being hatched to derail the CA polls. But if the CA polls are not held by mid-June, we will go ahead and declare republic by mid-May," he warned. Prachanda pointed out to recent remarks made by a Nepali Army general in Pokhara as indicative of such conspiracies. In his hour long address, Prachanda clarified that there was no alternative to federal republic system in Nepal. "There is no alternative to ethnic and regional autonomy," he said. Prachanda expressed regrets that newly emerging outfits without roots were now trying to steal the slogans and agenda of the Maoists. He also outlined the economic policy of the Maoist party saying that top priority will be accorded to revolutionary land reforms. "After fixing a certain land ceiling, the excess land will be confiscated without giving compensation and redistributed to landless," he said. Prachanda also expressed apology for some mistakes his party committed during the period of insurgency. Tens of thousands of people had gathered at the Open Theater to listen to Prachanda's first open public address. *Leading dailies report*

JTMM (Singh) To Come For Talks

The Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM – Jwala Singh faction) has declared that it will hold talks with the government as per the latter's invitation. The faction has also decided to cease all armed actions, bandhs and strikes for a short period for the purpose of advancing solution through negotiations. The JTMM has also forwarded ten-point demands to create environment for negotiated solution. Those demands include declaration of independent Terai state, appointment of people from Terai-origin in all police and army positions in the region, holding of fresh census in the region led by Terai people, among others. *Compiled from reports* ■



Government celebrates 57th Democracy Day *Gorkhapatra*

TENS OF THOUSANDS OF HINDU DEVOTEES thronged at Pashupatinath temple on February 16 to worship Lord Shiva on the occasion of Mahashivaratri – one of the biggest Hindu festivals. Thousands of devotees including Sadhus travel from India on this occasion. This year, the authorities said there will not be special passes for the VIPs. King and Queen normally visit the temple every year and are accorded special treatment. Meanwhile, Nepali Army (NA) celebrating the Army Day on the same day. This year, army chief was the chief guest at the celebrations organized at Sainik Manch in Tundikhel. In the past, the King used to grace such occasion in his capacity as the supreme commander of the armed forces. However, the parliament has already stripped the King of that position. In his message on the occasion of Army Day, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala said the NA should bring about reforms and improvements in keeping with the democratic system. He said the army would make an important contribution in respecting the aspirations of the people and protecting democratic values. In his message, the army chief General Rukmangad Katawal said that a structural reform is necessary to make the NA inclusive.

AFTER A PERIOD OF OVER SIX DECADES, the capital valley witnessed the first snowfall when on the Valentine's Day, the Kathmanduites were treated to a rare phenomenon. The snow was part of a westerly disturbance that had earlier dumped about 20 mm of rain all over Nepal. The mercury dipped due to biting cold. In surrounding hills, snowfall was heavy. People rushed to Nagarkot and Phulchowki to enjoy the snowfall. According to senior Divisional Meteorologist of the Meteorological Forecasting Division, Krishna Bahadur Manandhar, the temperature of Kathmandu Valley dipped to 3 degree Celsius. Meanwhile, normal life across the country was badly affected due to incessant rain and snow fall. Some of the western and eastern hilly districts and mountainous regions witnessed heavy snowfall following continuous rain. Two to three feet thick snow has been recorded in several parts of the country. The district headquarters of western Baglung, Myagdi and Parbat districts saw snowfall for the first time. Schools in remote parts of these hilly districts remain closed due to rain and snowfall. Some places around Kathmandu Valley like Phulchoki, Godavari and Nagarkot have been covered with snow, inviting hundreds of merry-makers and Valentine's Day celebrators from Kathmandu. In Dolakha, all the schools remain closed for a week following snowfall in the area.

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS (ICRC) has sought to clarify the status of 800 missing persons. The list of names of more than 800 persons reported missing by their families was published on February 15 in Nepal by the ICRC in an attempt to obtain information on their fate. "ICRC has the names of more than 800 people who remain unaccounted for in the wake of

the armed conflict. The families of these missing persons suffer intolerably from not knowing what has happened to their loved ones and they have the right to know", stated Mary Wertz, Head of the Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Nepal. Under international humanitarian law, all parties to the conflict must take all feasible measures to account for persons reported missing as a result of the armed conflict and must provide their families with any information they have on their fate. "I appeal to all families anxiously waiting for news of their missing relatives and to anyone else who may know about the fate of a person who remains unaccounted for to check our list. If your missing relative is not on the list, or if you have any information about the fate of anyone on the list, please contact the nearest Red Cross office and make sure it is informed" said Wertz. "Since it began work in Nepal in 1998, the ICRC has regularly submitted all requests concerning missing persons to the parties to the armed conflict and demanded that families be told about the fate of these persons. The ICRC and the Nepalese Red Cross are firmly committed to pursuing their efforts on behalf of the families and to seeking to alleviate their suffering," states a press release issued by ICRC on Wednesday. The list will be published in the newspaper Gorkhapatra on 15 February 2007 and will be available in electronic form at www.icrc.org and www.nrcs.org.

THE FEDERATION OF NEPALESE JOURNALISTS (FNJ) has released a report its team prepared after observing the situation of media freedom in Terai region during recent unrest. Publishing the report, FNJ president Bishnu Nishthuri informed that there have been 124 different incidents of atrocities against press and journalists during the unrest. The report says that 19 journalists were attacked; 5 media houses and 23 journalists discouraged; 19 journalists displaced; 53 papers suspended publication for a short time; and 12 vehicles belonging to press vandalized during the unrest. The FNJ has demanded independent probe of all these atrocities through a commission. It has also demanded proper compensation. The FNJ has expressed concerns that journalists actively promoting democracy during People's Movement were targeted this time.

THE UNITED STATES, THROUGH USAID'S Office of Food for Peace, has provided \$1.8 million dollars to the UN World Food Program (WFP) in Nepal to feed more than 108,000 Bhutanese refugees living in camps in Eastern Nepal. The in-kind donation of 2,640 metric tons of commodities such as rice, lentils, chickpeas, and vegetable oil will provide up to two months of rations for the refugees. "We are glad to help the World Food Program help Bhutanese refugees in their hour of need," said Ambassador James Moriarty. "This assistance reflects the generosity of the American people and their commitment to help others around the world." "This donation could not have come at a more critical time. This year, WFP is in a situation where each month, we don't know if we will have the funds to ensure adequate food supplies to the refugee community. We appreciate how quickly and generously the United States responded to our call for support to provide food aid to the refugees," stated Richard Ragan, WFP Country Representative in Nepal. ■

SPOTLIGHT Family extends best wishes to Queen Komal on the auspicious occasion of her 57th birthday.



“It is clear that the prevailing situation compelled us to take the February 1, 2005 step in accordance with the people’s aspiration to reactivate the elected bodies..”

King Gyanendra, in his message to the countrymen on the occasion of 57th Democracy Day.

“The message was not authorized by the government.”

Khadga Prasad Oli, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, responding to the King’s message.

“Parties should declare republic right away to pre-empt conspiracies by reactionaries.”

Prachanda, Maoist chairman, talking to journalists in Biratnagar.

“Due to the ineffectiveness of the seven parties and the Maoists, the King could pluck the courage to trample the martyrs of people’s movement and the feelings of people.”

Dr. Devendra Raj Pandey, leader of the Civil Society for Peace and Democracy, in a statement issued to denounce the King’s message.

“The government is not serious to pay heed to our demands.”

Upendra Yadav, president of



Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF), saying that his organization would re-launch agitation in Madhes since the government did not remove Home Minister to create environment for talks, at a press meet.

“What kind of people are they who do not allow (to dump garbage) despite repeated pledges to fulfill their demands? There is rule of law, how can the government fulfill the demands immediately after it pledges to do so?”

Rajendra Pandey, Minister for Local

Development, in Nepal Samacharpatra.

“How much should I shout? If I say anything in the public, they (other leaders of eight parties) complain that I speak out too much. And if I put my views before them, they don’t listen. I am distressed.”

Madhav Kumar Nepal, general secretary of the Unified Marxist Leninist (UML), complaining about the manner in which eight parties are functioning, in Kantipur.

TRANSITION

ANNOUNCED: A series of protest programs by Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF). According to MJF, they will hold peaceful protests between February 18-25. Between February 26-March 5, the MJF will impose Terai bandh and blockade custom points. After March 6, the MJF will impose indefinite general strike in Terai.

LEFT: Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat, for Mumbai, India to take part in SAARC Business Leaders’ Conclave.

FORMED: A four-member talks team, by Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha

(Jwala Singh), to initiate dialogue with the government. The team is led by Jhabbar Shah (Saptari) and includes Bibas Bidrohi (Saptari), Binod Sada Bidrohi (Siraha), Sakhi Chandra Yadav Tuls (Mahottari) and Hridaya Narayan Chaudhary (Sarlahi).

The 17-member executive committee of the Nepal English Language Teachers’ Association (NELTA), by the association’s annual meeting. Prof. Dr. Gobinda Raj Bhattarai has been reelected as the president of NELTA.

PARDONED: 197 inmates languishing in various prisons across the country who have completed fifty percent of their sentences and who have good character, by the government, on the occasion of 57th Democracy Day.

BEREAVED: Indian Ambassador to Nepal Shiv Shankar Mukherjee, of his father-in-law Colonel Kapur who passed away at the age of 85 years, in Kathmandu. Colonel Kapur was staying with his daughter and son-in-law.

CONSTITUTED: A three-member team, to probe the incident of stonelpelling at the King’s motorcade on Friday (Feb 16) on the occasion of Mahashivaratri, by the Home Ministry. The team is led by Pratap Kumar Pathak, joint secretary at the Home Ministry, and including members Deputy Inspector General of police Rabi Shrestha and Basanta Kumar Rai, senior superintendent at National Investigation Department. The team will have to present its report within a week.

DEEP CUT IN POWER SUPPLY

• AB Thapa

The NEA has started to extend further the load-shedding hours. Now we are having six hours of load-shedding each day. Local newspaper "Kantipur" has reported that the NEA was forced to take such a drastic measure because the Kulekhani reservoir, which is the only storage reservoir in the country that can provide regulated flood season water to generate electricity during the dry season, is almost empty. Such a decision of the NEA to introduce deep power cut has certainly been received with a great dismay by everybody.

The newspaper "Kantipur" has provided information on firm capacity of the Kali-Gandaki, Marshyangdi and Trisuli hydropower also which, however, does not appear to be correct. All these hydropower stations have daily storage reservoir to regulate water that enables them to operate at full capacity even in the driest months during the peak load hours. In other words the hydropower stations Kali-Gandaki or Marshyangdi would be able to generate 144 MW or 69 MW respectively during the peak load hours (contrary to what has been reported that they can generate only 80 MW and 30 MW respectively). It, however, looks certain that the power shortage crisis is going to last until the onset of the coming monsoon season unless there will be dramatic change in rainfall pattern.

The power shortage crisis is going to deepen further in the years to come because the demand for electricity in our national grid with a total firm capacity of about 500 MW is expected to grow steadily at an annual rate of at least about 5 to 7 percent. Except for the 70 MW Middle Marshyangdi Project, other major new power projects are nowhere near which would have come into operation within the next 5 to 7 years. Thus we are now being dragged into a whirlpool of deep power shortage crisis due to our shortsighted planning.

Softening the Impact of Power Shortage Crisis

There is an easy way to soften the impact of the power shortage crisis if we launched a programme on war footing to utilize the full potential of the existing Kulekhani storage reservoir and hydropower stations (Kulekhani 1 & 2 hydropower) to generate extra power by diverting from Kathmandu valley the surplus flow of the Bagmati river and later on the Melamchi river into the Kulekhani reservoir. The design of the proposed Kulekhani 3 Hydropower should also be reviewed and perhaps its capacity might have to be raised to over 100 MW to meet the steadily growing peak load demand if it is decided to divert the Bagmati water into the Kulekhani reservoir.

Full Use of Kulekhani Reservoir Capacity

It is reported almost every year in local newspapers that the electricity generation of the Kulekhani hydropower stations is going to be reduced by a substantial margin because

the Kulekhani storage reservoir is half-empty at the end of the monsoon season, with the result that the NEA would be forced to resort to load shedding in the oncoming dry season. This problem would certainly be solved if the surplus water from the Bagmati river in the Kathmandu valley is pumped into the Kulekhani reservoir to be stored for the supply to the Kulekhani hydropower stations in the dry season.

The Kulekhani reservoir operation rule for the Kulekhani-1 power station with an installed capacity of 60MW is framed by a basic discharge pattern of 6.2 cum./sec. in the dry season from December to March and 2.1 cum./sec. in the wet season from April to November. The former is designed to generate four-hour peak power using the maximum discharge of 13.1 cum./sec. and 20-hour base load using 4.8 cum./sec. The latter is to utilize 6.55 cum./sec. for the peak power and 1.21 cum./sec. for the base load respectively.

Available water for the Kulekhani-2 power station with an installed capacity of 32 MW is comprised of the outflow from the Kulekhani-1 and the runoff of the Mandu river. The maximum Kulekhani-2 discharge is designed to be 13.3 cum./sec.

Diversion of Bagmati into Kulekhani

The Bagmati river water in surplus to the need in the Kathmandu valley could be diverted into the Kulekhani reservoir from a place near Chobhar gorge. Mean flow of the Bagmati river at Chobhar is quite abundant during the monsoon seasons. Even in the winter months of the dry season starting from December to the end of March when the demand for the electricity in Nepal is very high the average flow of the Bagmati is expected to be over 2 cum./sec. The half empty space of the Kulekhani storage reservoir (with an effective storage capacity of 73.3 million cubic meters) could be utilized to accommodate about 20 million cubic meters monsoon season flow of the Bagmati river. Thus the Kulekhani hydropower could be provided throughout the 4 winter months additional 4 cum./sec. flow. Out of this total flow, the water drawn directly from the Bagmati would be about 2 cum./sec. and the Bagmati water stored in the Kulekhani reservoir would provide the remaining 2 cum./sec.

The diversion of the surplus Bagmati water from Kathmandu valley to the Kulekhani reservoir could be a very simple and at the same time the most cost effective proposition despite the fact that at first glance it might appear to be a somewhat complicated engineering task. Let us consider that we are going to draw about 4 cum./sec. Bagmati water from somewhere near Chobhar. It is explained hereinafter that the total power generation of the Kulekhani 1 & 2 hydropower plants would almost be doubled by investing only about US

\$ 20 million in the construction of the proposed diversion structures including a pumping station.

The Proposed Design

We might have to build a 15 MW pump station at Chobar to lift 4 cum./sec water to a height of about 300 meters which might be equivalent in height to the full supply level (FSL) of the Kulekhani storage reservoir. It is equally possible that instead of one big pump station we might need several small pump stations with a total capacity of about 15 MW if the topography does not allow to provide a single stage pumping. A 15 km long waterway might be needed to carry the water into the Kulekhani storage reservoir out of it the length of the tunnel could be about 9 kilometers. The total cost of such diversion could be about US \$ 20 million.

The construction of the proposed Bagmati diversion works could be completed within 2 years with one additional year for the initial preparatory works. The NEA might not require external foreign investment. It could mobilize its own resources to finance this project.

After the completion of the proposed Melamchi river diversion into the Kathmandu valley there would be a substantial increase in flow of the Bagmati river at Chobar. As a result, the electricity generation of the Kulekhani 1&2 hydropower stations would be further increased.

Rationale Behind the Bagmati Diversion

The proposed Bagmati diversion could be implemented within a very short period to meet the ever growing demand for power in our national grid. The proposed diversion is going to be perhaps the most economic project because we do not need to invest on construction of the reservoir, power stations and transmission lines. We are going to utilize the existing power stations, reservoir and other structures. For pumping surplus monsoon period water from the Bagmati river into the Kulekhani reservoir we can use seasonal energy generated by our run-of-the-river hydropower projects. At present the seasonal energy is almost entirely wasted. The proposed diversion plan would open a route to transfer Langtang River water via Melamchi tunnel into the Kulekhani reservoir for generation of exceptionally cheap electricity.

Langtang River Potential

According to the Gandak Basin Master Plan study carried under the UNDP assistance, a fairly large storage reservoir can be provided in the uppermost reach of the Langtang River and thus the hydropower development potential of this river is quite high. The Langtang storage reservoir can help to provide all through the year an uniform flow of about 15 cumecs in the middle and lower reaches if this river is developed in combination with the Melamchi Project. There would be a total head of about 2500 meters between the full supply level of the Langtang storage reservoir and the Melamchi powerhouse tailrace that would be discharging the Melamchi and the Langtang waters into the Kathmandu valley. Such an enormous head could be utilized for power generation by 3 hydropower stations to be built in a cascade and out of

them two power stations would be operating at an exceptionally high head of about 1000 meters or more. The surplus Langtang and Melamchi waters after the use in Kathmandu valley could be easily delivered into the existing Kulekhani storage reservoir and, as a result, it would be possible to run in full capacity the Kulekhani No-1 & No-2 hydropower stations by almost tripling their present annual power generation capacity.

The Langtang Power Projects

The Langtang projects operating at a head of about one thousand meters and more could produce electric energy at a very low cost. Apart from it, water in abundant quantity could be supplied to the Kathmandu valley for free. The concept of the Langtang project solely for power generation was developed under the UNDP supported Gandak Basin Master Plan study. However, this concept required some revision to incorporate the drinking water supply component to provide water to Kathmandu valley. It necessitated that at the end the regulated Langtang water after power generation be discharged into the Melamchi river instead of the Bhotekosi (Trisuli).

According to the Gandak Basin Master Plan a 120 m high dam has been proposed on the Langtang Khola near Jaithang. The volume of the reservoir would be about 180 million cubic meters. Based on revised concept the water in the reservoir at a full supply level of 3995 meters would be first tapped by the Langtang-1 power station operating at a gross head of 950 meters. The installed capacity of this Langtang-1 power station located near Ghore Tabela about 15 km downstream from the storage reservoir would be about 70 MW.

Water from the Langtang-1 power station would be directly drawn into the Langtang-2 power station. For augmenting this flow the water from the catchment downstream of the storage dam would also be drawn into the headrace tunnel of the Langtang-2 power station. The installed capacity of the Langtang-2 power station operating at a head of about 1300 meters would be about 150 MW.

Why Langtang Power Would Be Cheap

Of all the site characteristics, head is the most important. **Design guidelines, 1989** approved by the **American Society of Civil Engineers** has given some simple reasoning that would help to explain why the super high head Langtang power stations operating at many times greater head by comparison with other hydropower stations could be built at a very low cost. **"Very simply if one doubles the head the quantity of water needed to produce a certain amount of energy is halved, Thus, for like site energy development the penstock area and reservoir volume are halved and further large cost reductions occur for powerhouse and machinery costs. This fundamental consideration is at the root of the large cost reductions that occur at higher heads."**

(Dr. Thapa writes on water resources)

KING'S MESSAGE

Ruffling Of Feathers

As he defends his February 1 step as a result of compulsion, parties react strongly terming it as inappropriate message

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

The traditionally mundane Democracy Day message by the King has become a topic of heated debate this year after the leaders of political parties strongly reacted to the timing and wordings used in it.

Even as King Gyanendra continues to be isolated from the state affairs since the interim constitution has virtually kept the monarchy in a suspended animation, the message he delivered on the Democracy Day has ignited controversies.

Already in a precarious position, the monarchy is certain to attract more pressures with this message as the early indications show.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign

government had not approved the text of the message.

Political parties, civil society and media organizations have quickly denounced the message saying that the King was trying to legitimize his February 1, 2005 step. The message itself has been termed as 'constitutionally unauthorized and politically inappropriate.'

Maoist chairman Prachanda has said that the message revealed that royalists were trying to hatch conspiracies to derail the Constituent Assembly (CA) polls. "We parties must be alert about this and go ahead and declare republic

be to settle this issue of the King," he told media.

Nepali Congress central committee members and Unified Marxist Leninist standing committee members also denounced the message and urged for maximum alertness against any efforts to derail democratic process.

Sher Bahadur Deuba of NC (Democratic) has urged the King to float a political party if he wants to engage in politics.

Interestingly, Surya Bahadur Thapa, president of Rastriya Janashakti Party (RJP) termed the message as natural. Refusing to comment on it, he told journalists that historians will analyze it after fifty years from now.

On the other hand, the civil society leaders have also denounced the message. In a statement issued jointly by them, prominent activists Kanak Man Dixit, Nilambar Acharya, Suhil Pyakur and Nabindra Raj Joshi have called for removing King Gyanendra from the Narayanhity palace and wresting the title of King from him.

Likewise, the Civil Society for Peace and Democracy has urged the eight parties to declare democratic republic.

KING'S MESSAGE

Beloved countrymen,

Today, the 57th National Democracy Day, reminds us of the joint struggle launched by the King and the people, culminating in the successful restoration of the people's rights. On this historic day, we pay homage to our august grandfather His late Majesty King Tribhuvan, the architect of democracy in Nepal, and all the brave martyrs who laid down their lives for this cause.

Nepal's glorious history is guided by the fact that Monarchy has always abided by the aspirations of the Nepalese people, on whom sovereignty is vested. It is clear that the prevailing situation compelled us to take the February 1, 2005 step in accordance with the people's aspiration to reactivate the elected bodies by maintaining law and order following the dissolution of the House of Representatives at the recommendation of the elected Prime

Minister of the day, who was unable to conduct general elections within the timeframe stipulated by the Constitution. Subsequent governments, too, were not successful in this task. Various obstacles thwarted our resolve to install elected representative bodies. We are also morally responsible for any success or failure during the 15 month effort.

As our sole wish is that the people should govern themselves through their own elected representatives, it is well known that we reinstated the House of Representatives on April 24, 2006 with the confidence that the nation would forge ahead on the path to national unity and prosperity, while ensuring permanent peace and safeguarding multiparty democracy.

In order to consolidate multiparty democracy, elected representative bodies must be installed, taking into consideration, in a mature manner, the grievances, aspirations and sentiments of all the Nepalese to the satisfaction of

all. Nepal is a kaleidoscope of diverse peoples - be they indigenous, dalits or those living in villages, cities, terai, hills or the mountainous regions. It will do well to remember that Nepal's sovereignty and integrity remains safeguarded only because all have accepted and abided by this reality. The Nepalese people alone are the arbiters of their own destiny and they wish to build a prosperous Nepal through a meaningful exercise in multiparty democracy. The self-respecting Nepalese people have an unshakable belief that one's unique identity can be upheld only by respecting one's history.

While upholding the people's wish as supreme, may this day inspire all to remain dedicated, through multiparty democracy, to the greater welfare of Nepal and her people by ensuring their concurrence and active participation.

May Lord Pashupatinath bless us all!

Jaya Nepal! (February 19)

Minister KP Oli, talking to media persons during the Democracy Day reception hosted by the government at Shital Niwas, said the message was unacceptable to the government. Earlier Home Minister Krishna Sitaula said the

right away," Prachanda said.

Maoist spokesperson Krishna Bahadur Mahara said that the message shadowed other issues like the Maoists joining the interim government. "It is now clear that the first priority should

The Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ) also issued a statement denouncing the King's message. The federation has said that the journalists remember how the media was ill-treated and suppressed during the royal regime.

ARMS MANAGEMENT

First Stage Completed

The preliminary stage of the arms and armies management in all the seven cantonment sites have been completed

By SANJAYA DHAKALA

A day after Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala told a visiting delegation of German MPs that the Maoists will be inducted in the interim government only after the United Nations informs him about the completion of arms management, the UNMIN chief Ian Martin reported to the representatives of talks teams of the government as well as the Maoists, on Monday (Feb 19), informing them about the completion of weapons registration and first stage of combatants' registration at all the seven cantonment sites.

Martin submitted his report at the tripartite meeting held at the Peace Secretariat. The report was handed over to member of government talks team Minister Pradip Gyawali and coordinator of Maoist talks team Krishna Bahadur Mahara.

With the completion of the first stage of the arms management, all eyes are now upon the Prime Minister on when he will actually invite the Maoist representatives to join the interim government.

Maoist chairman Prachanda has already publicly said that if his party is not inducted in the interim government within a week, it will be impossible to hold the Constituent Assembly (CA) elections on time. And holding of the CA on time (by mid-June) appears mighty important to the Maoist leadership, which has made repeated threats that they would unleash urban revolt in case there is any delay in the CA polls.

However, the government is still uncomfortable about the huge number of weapons of the Maoists that have remained outside the storage containers ostensibly to provide security to the central leaders of the Maoists.

Just last week, the policemen posted at Singhdurbar gate discovered guards of Maoist MPs carrying weapons into the central secretariat.

It is now time for PM Koirala to take a careful look at the UN report along with discussing about the ways to manage the



UN officials registering combatants: First phase completed OPRSG

weapons held back by the Maoists if he wants to ensure credible management of arms.

In their earlier statements, the envoys of India and the United States have clearly stated that they would want to see credible arms management before the Maoists are taken into the interim government.

The US ambassador James Moriarty has gone on to accuse that the Maoists were actually buying crummy guns from India to store them in the weapons while keeping more sophisticated arms with themselves. The American envoy has been saying that he stands by his remarks

despite sharp rebuttal by the Maoists.

All the while the Maoist leadership is getting anxious to join the interim government. As per the November

8 agreement between the seven parties and the Maoists, interim cabinet should have been formed by December 1. However, the delay in the start of the process of arms management pushed back a number of time lines. The interim constitution, which should have been promulgated by November 26 could be adopted only on January 15.

Apart from the Prime Minister and seven parties, the formation of the interim government is going to prove a crucial test for the Maoist leadership also. The Maoists continue to face

accusations of intimidations, threats, physical actions and abductions even after it has joined the mainstream parliament, there are ample reasons. How they will conduct once they become a part of the government remains to be seen.

But as the Lahan incident exposed – where the firing by a Maoist cadre led to the death of a Madhesi agitator igniting widespread unrest – even a single incident could become so sensitive and dangerous. Any incomplete arms management is likely to spell trouble not only for the people but the Maoist themselves, who will then have to answer to the international community even. ■

LOAD SHEDDING

Power Crisis

Nepal's political leaders - who have spent decades selling dream of exporting energy to India to make Nepal prosperous - find themselves facing load shedding of seven hours a day. Unfortunately, the leaders - who have already convened dozens of all party meetings to discuss all kinds of issues - are yet to treat country's power crisis as a national agenda. In reality, it seems that everybody loves load shedding. With enough internal resources, technical and managerial capabilities, hundreds of various sizes of potential hydro power sites are available to meet the increment of 60 MW of power annually. Nepal, which has already shown its capability in 1995 after Arun III debacle in averting a major crisis by constructing a number of small and medium scale hydro power plants - can easily handle this power crisis also. What Nepal does not have right now is the leadership with a vision and commitment and stable government. As such, the country will have no immediate solution for the power crisis

By KESHAB POUDEL

"We are going to start some new hydropower projects so the country would not have to face load shedding for a long period of time. For this, the government is proposing large and medium scale projects. NEA is planning to construct Upper Tamakoshi Project," said Gyanendra Bahadur Karki, Minister of State for Water Resources who is uncertain about his re-appointment in the new interim government which is going to be formed anytime soon. "I will submit this proposal in the cabinet," said Karki, chairman of Nepal Electricity Authority Board, indicating there will be financial guarantee from the government to build the hydropower by NEA. "We are also

encouraging private sector to invest in small and medium projects by signing Power Purchasing Agreements."

Though his tenure is uncertain, Karki is seeking financial guarantee from the Ministry of Finance. However, Finance minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat, who also faces similar fate, revealed that the government has no plan of investing in hydro power projects. "It is purely an economic area and it is the responsibility of the private sector," said Dr. Mahat addressing a program by the Management Association of Nepal.

At a time when the country is facing a severe power crisis with seven hours of load shedding daily with possible

increment of another few hours in next month, Dr. Mahat's and Karki's reactions indicate more gloomy scenario of the future power supply.

Although the statements of both ministers, whose fate in the interim government is unknown, are valid in principle, it reveals the delay in the construction of new power projects. "Finance minister Dr. Mahat may be in principle correct as the government needs not stand as a financial guarantor for the organization like NEA which has its own assets valued at about Rs.50 billion," said journalist Rajendra Dahal who specializes on hydro power. "Since generating energy is an economic

activity, private sector should be given the role with complete autonomy to NEA. However, given the present circumstances when the government has absolute control over NEA's management, policy and marketing, it is also the obligation of the government to respond to its concerns."

As a government-owned institution, NEA is still a milching cow for the persons in power. Minister of Water Resources and other senior officials regularly misuse vehicles and other properties of NEA for their personal use. According to Nepal Electricity Authority fiscal year 2004/05 year review, besides paying royalty of 6 and 21.72 percent as interest, out of Rs.13.389 billion to the government, NEA also paid other taxes. According to an estimate, NEA pays about Rs.5 billion to the government under different headings.

"Since the government is reaping enormous benefits from NEA, it is also the duty of the government to back it whenever it requests some support in terms of implementing the projects. If NEA collapses, how can the finance minister generate such huge revenue?" asked a former managing director of NEA.

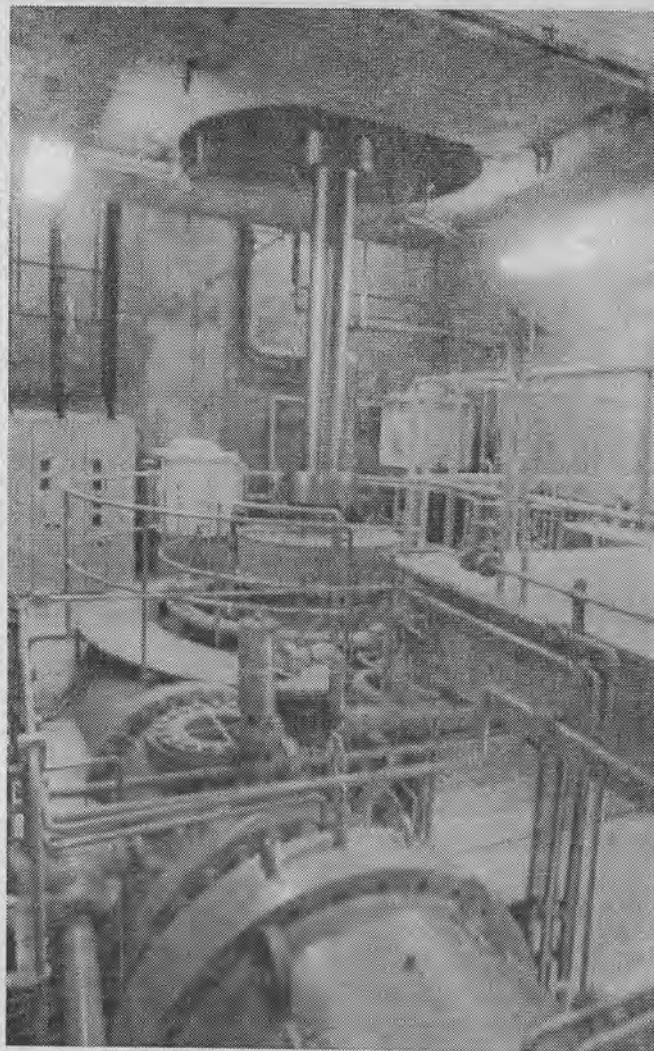
If government wants to see NEA's own investment in hydro power projects, the government has to give up all its control in the electricity trade from tariff to pricing.

Gap in the Construction

The present power crisis is not an

overnight development. It is the inevitable result of political crises and conflicts of the last ten years. Following the completion of Chilime Power Project, Nepal did not start any major project to meet the growing demands of electricity. Although some efforts have been made to increase the power production of Devighat and Sunkoshi, they were too little.

Even the completion of construction of Middle Marsyangdi project continues to be delayed because of disturbance caused by Maoist insurgency and political instability. Following the dismissal of Sher Bahadur Deuba's government in October 2002, Nepal has seen a number of governments with unstable tenures. Although the new interim constitution



Power Plant: Few and far between

was promulgated and new government with the backing of eight political parties is ruling the country, it is not in a position to take major decisions and nobody can predict its future.

After the debacle of Arun III, the situation was tackled since there was a parliament and continuity of the government. The NEA signed agreements for 144 MW Kali Gandaki A, 14.8 MW Modi Khola, 6.2 Puwa Khola. In private sector, 60 MW Khimti and 36 MW Bhotekosi came. They filled the gap of power demand and supply.

"This is a national crisis and there is a need for high level commitments to address it," said S.B Pun former managing director to NEA. "There is no alternative other than to formulate clear plans."

Now the situation is completely different. Despite the end of violence,



Indrasarovar Reservoir: Receding water level

the phase of political instability and anarchy seems to be the rule of the game. The 70 MW middle Marsyangdi project, which was supposed to be completed by end of 2005, is yet to materialize as it faces various crises. In present circumstances, whatever officials say, Nepal's power sector will have to face more painful days in coming years.

"It is for the Maoists and leaders of seven parties to decide as they are responsible for the present crisis of power. It is not technical incapability or lack of resources but it is the lack of commitment," said a former managing director.

Private Sectors

There are a number of small and middle scale projects with capacity of 10-30 MW in Nepal and NEA and private sectors can construct them without any major financial involvement from foreign countries. For private sector, NEA's policy is not optimistic. Thanks to the policy of the NEA, which prefers to import electricity from India with per unit cost of Rs. 6.40, it is always adamant to sign Power Purchasing Agreement with private sector investors even at a price of below Rs. 5. "If NEA gives Rs.5 per unit, I am sure many Nepali investors will pour investment in this sector," said journalist Dahal.

Many private sector developers are showing interest in the construction of hydro power projects. From small to medium projects, they have already invested a lot of money in it. Although there is some controversy over the pricing of some projects, private sectors contribute more than altogether 148 MW in the electricity generation. Butwal Power Company, Khimti, Bhotekosi and Chillime, which supplies cheapest energy - are major suppliers.

There are many other private parties which are supplying the electricity to NEA grid including 7.5 MW Indrawati, 3MW Puluwa Khola, and 2.6 Sunkosi Small. The 3.4 MW Khudi Project and other two small projects below 1 MW each are under construction.

Role of NEA

The NEA, as the largest public sector enterprise, has technical, financial and managerial capability to start any middle sized projects in the country.

"Had NEA been given full autonomy in its functioning and allowed to work with concept of market economy, it would not have to knock the doors of the government for financial guarantee. It has all necessary capability," said the former MD.

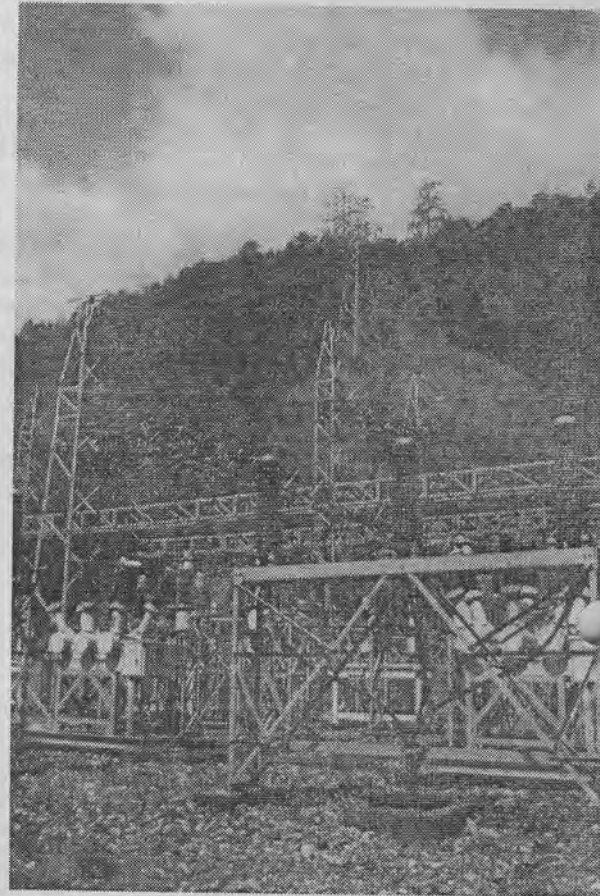
At a time when the NEA is fully owned and controlled by the government, it cannot make decisions on policy matters. Whenever there is a change in the government, the managing director of NEA has to go. In the last two years, the NEA has already seen three MDs.

Although Nepal Electricity Authority Act gives it an autonomous status, the NEA cannot act alone as it is under the control of the government. Minister for Water Resources is the chairman of the board of NEA and government has control over pricing, appointments and other major decisions. As the government representatives have overwhelming majority in the NEA board, it cannot take any decision without the permission of the government. But, it hardly gets government support when it requires it.

Amid dispute between the Ministry of Finance and Water Resources, it seems inevitable that the power sector will suffer. As there is no power project under construction except the delayed middle Marsyangdi, the country is certain to suffer from regular power cuts from now on - there will be planned and/or contingency power cuts round the year, even in the monsoon for at least another six years.

Load Shedding: A reality

Whether one likes it or not, the load shedding is now a stark national problem and policy makers will have to accept it and adjust. Along with treating it as a reality, the political leadership of eight



Transmission Line: Need to Upgrade

parties, who are mostly responsible for bringing the present crisis, must show vision to overcome it.

Since it is a reality of the country, one must make a long term vision and program to address the problem. As a country cannot go ahead by just cutting the power, addressing load shedding will be of concern for all. To address the load shedding, the government has many options before it - it can import the electricity from India, build some thermal plants and give green signals for new hydro power projects both for NEA and private sector.

With deadlock over the financial matter for construction of new projects and only a few Power Purchasing Agreements having been signed with small hydro power developers, Nepal is getting pushed to the new no option trap to buy the electricity from India on its own term. It shatters the hope of Nepal of becoming a major power supplier to India.

"The only way ahead is to start the

construction of new projects which are in the pipeline. For short term, Nepal can import certain quantity of electricity," said Rabindra Shrestha, former senior employee of NEA. "If we launch the program now, we will be out of trap within a few years."

As usual, almost all snow-fed rivers have dried up in the dry winter months and the electricity production has gone down. Most of the power houses of "run of the river project types" are now producing less than one fourth of total capacity. Naturally, the pressure is building on country's only storage project Kulekhani I and II.

In a situation of such a panic, the officials from NEA have even signed an agreement with Power Trading Center of India to import 28 MW of power at the rate of Rs. 6.30 per unit. The NEA is also working to import 50 MW electricity from India through Duhabi-Purnia transmission line. The NEA officials, who hesitate to sign PPA with domestic power producers even at Rs.5

Potential Projects by NEA

309 MW Upper Tamakosi
61 MW Upper Trishuli
40 MW Upper Trishuli
30 MW Chameliagadh
27 MW Raghughat
14 MW Kulekhani III

Potential Projects by Private Producers

53 MW Upper Marsyangdi
42 MW Upper Modi A
20 MW Trishuli A
14 MW Maikhola
5 MW Seti
Other smaller projects

per unit, see this price as cheap and acceptable. Similarly, the NEA officials are now working to develop more exchange points so that Nepal can import electricity as much as possible.

"There is a need to establish high powered national committee to implement the plans," said Dr. Rabin Shrestha, a former senior executive of NEA.

Talking to Kantipur Daily, economic counselor of Indian Embassy Javed has already indicated that Indian government is ready to supply the electricity to Nepal

in the current price.

It is well known that Nepal's electricity tariff is much higher at 9 cent per unit. Indians are said to be arguing with Nepalese officials about the per unit prices they are paying for two IPPs like Khimti and Bhotekoshi.

New Projects

As the power supply has reduced and the load shedding hour increases, the officials in NEA are in panic. From negotiating for import to inviting private builders for PPA and beginning the construction of new power projects, they are taking all the steps together. "There will be no power cuts from 2012," said Arjun Karki, MD of NEA.

In the last few weeks, Arjun Karki has already spoken volumes about the need to develop power projects to avoid the prolonged load shedding. As he does not have any role in decision making, Karki's statements have very little importance. Leaders of eight parties must come up with a strong commitment to meet the present challenge of power crisis.

If it comes true, the NEA is starting construction of projects totaling 481 MW in output and entering into Power Purchasing Agreement with private hydro power producers for projects totaling 150 MW in the next six months.

"Of the projects, we are building, we have more or less sealed financial commitments for the 61 Megawatt Upper Trishuli A, 30 MW Chameliagiadh, 27 MW Raghughat and 14 MW Kulekhani III," said Karki in an interview with The Kathmandu Post. "China, South Korea, the OPEC fund and NEA are funding these projects."

"Apart from these Nepal will start the construction of the 309 MW Upper Tamakosi either with internal funds or through international funding with the project remaining under NEA's ownership and work will also start on



Solar power: Alternative energy

the 40 MW Upper Trishuli B which will follow Upper Trishuli A as a cascade project. In case NEA gathers internal funds for Upper Tamakosi, Upper Trishuli B will be built with international funds and vice versa," said Karki.

After the intensification of Maoist insurgency in 2001, Nepal's power sector has also badly suffered. The construction of 70 MW middle Marsyangdi was already delayed for more than two years and it is expected to complete by 2008.

Similarly, only a few IPPs have shown interest to invest in the power sector as uncertainty and frequent disturbances have discouraged the private sector from investing in the hydro power.

"Nepal has technical, managerial capability as well as financial resources to construct the middle and small scale hydro projects," said journalist Dahal. "There is every possibility to meet Nepal's annual incremental demand is 60 MW by encouraging the small and medium scale hydro power plant."

If Nepal has such capacity to construct hydro power plants, then why is the country facing the acute power crisis. "Every one in Nepal loves load shedding," said Dahal. "If NEA pays Rs.5 per unit for private entrepreneurs, there will be rush for projects. But, every one seems to be happy to import the electricity from India by paying Rs.6.30 per unit."

Non Committal leadership

Although there is a dispute over the cost and benefit of Arun III projects, Nepal's power sector has lost a great opportunity through the debacle of Arun III. It was cancelled following the letter sent by CPN-UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal in the last minute of finalization of the project.

The dispute of Arun III is now history in the hydropower development. It is always remembered by Nepalese whenever there is power crisis in the country. Had the 402 MW project been allowed to proceed, the country would have got all weather road to Arun III basin with immense potential of generating power.

There were many groups that came to block the projects but the project was finally killed by the letter of CPN-UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal whose party had then formed a minority government for nine months following the collapse of the project.

The scenario is not much different now. As the country is facing power shortage, Ministry of Water Resources is preparing to sign a number of projects aiming to supply cheap energy to India. A senior official at the Ministry confided that the government is preparing to sign agreements with Indian companies to build 600 MW Budhi Gandaki and 300 MW Upper Karnali.

"After the completion of the projects, Nepal will receive 10 percent of power from these two projects along with royalty," said a senior official at the ministry. "This will contribute to reduce power shortage in the country."

As the country is facing problem of load shedding, the time has come now to start new projects. For this, there is a need for political commitments. ■

"Along With The Construction Of Power House To Domestic Use, We Are Also Proposing Some Power Projects For Exports"

Gyanendra Bahadur Karki

As the country is passing through a very serious phase of power crisis facing 7 hours load shedding every day, Minister of State for Water Resources Gyanendra Bahadur Karki addressed media at the Reporters' Club recently. Excerpts of his remarks:

On Power Supply

We are in the process to increase the power supply. As we don't have any internal sources, we are negotiating with Indian officials to import additional electricity from India. For immediate solution, we have already signed an agreement with Power Trading Company of India to import 26 MW power.

On New Projects

We need to construct more power plants in future to maintain power supply. This (load shedding) is not the result of one day or one month but it is the result of accumulative effects of last few years. Had the country's planners made the efforts a decade ago, the country would not have to face this kind of situation. Except middle Marsyangdi, no power projects were forwarded for execution. Now we are proposing 330 MW Upper Tamakosi project, Upper Trishuli A, Upper Trishuli B, Chameliagadh, Raghughat and Kulehani III.

On Private Sector Participation

We are also encouraging the private sector for power generation. NEA is signing PPA agreement with private sector's producers. Private parties are developing Upper Marsyangdi, Upper Modi A, and Trishuli A, Maikhola and Seti and a number of other projects. NEA has policy to encourage the private sector.

On Load Shedding

This is a reality now. We are making every effort to reduce load shedding hours. After importing the electricity from India, the situation will be eased next year. Frankly speaking, the country will have to pass through a few more years of load shedding. We don't have any project now to meet the annual demands. That means there will be more power cuts in coming days.

On Financing the Projects

We are talking with different international and national financial institutions regarding the issue of financing the NEA. Upper Tamakosi is one of the cheapest projects and NEA is technically capable to construct the project. I don't want to disclose details now but I will assure you that we don't have any financial constraints.

On Export of Power

We have a major power market in India. Along with the construction of power house to domestic use, we are also proposing some power projects for exports. We are in the process of signing the agreement on the development of Budhi Gandaki and Upper Karnali projects. Along with exporting the power, these projects also provide the power for internal use. As there is growing demand of energy in India, we have great potential to export our hydro power.

On Priority of the Government

The priority of the government is to maintain the uninterrupted supply of power in the country. We have already directed the NEA to make necessary arrangement for the construction of new hydro power plants. You can see some changes soon in power sector. We are also taking efforts to reform power sector by encouraging them to play lead role. We are also making efforts to complete the construction of middle Marsyangdi project in schedule. As the construction work is in final stage, it will complete on schedule. ■

GDP

Lowered Expectations

Post conflict euphoria seems to have died down as Finance Minister is compelled to lower the GDP growth estimates

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

Even as India and China continue to grow in double-digit rate – frequently readjusting their estimates – Nepal sandwiched between the two Asian giants has been unable to reap benefits from the cessation of armed conflict.

As the end of Maoist conflict has not translated into much anticipated peace dividends, the Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat has announced that the government is formally lowering its expectations of GDP growth from 5 percent to 3.8 percent this fiscal year.

Presenting his mid-term evaluation report of this fiscal year's budget to the interim parliament, Dr. Mahat said the government has lowered the GDP growth estimates by 1 percent owing to "non-economic reasons" (read instability, strikes, bandhs etc).

In the report, the Finance Minister has estimated that the GDP will grow by only 3.8 percent – down from 5 percent projection he made when he unveiled the budget for the fiscal year 2006/07 six months ago.

The Finance Minister has pointed out to the decrease in agricultural growth rate as the major reason for the lowered estimation. The budget had estimated the non-agriculture sector to grow by 6 percent, and agriculture sector by 3.5 percent.

However, the mid-term evaluation points out that the agricultural sector would grow merely by 0.7 percent while the non-agricultural sector would grow by 5.7 percent. The revenue growth, on the other hand, is said to have increased handsomely. It has grown by 19.7 percent in the first six months of the current fiscal year to reach Rs 37.8 billion.

The volume of foreign assistance, however, has been received lesser than expectation. Till now, the government has received Rs 10.54 billion as grants and Rs 3.18 billion as foreign loan.

During his recent visit to Nepal, Managing Director of the World Bank Graeme Wheeler had to appeal to the political actors to cast their attention also on development agendas. Speaking at a

press meet at the end of his three day visit to Nepal on Friday, Wheeler said, continuation of reforms with due investments for social sector development is one of the powerful ways for Nepal to achieve sustainable development. He stressed the need of rapid investment in infrastructure development, power generation and distribution and speed up economic and labor reforms.

Wheeler added WB would support the government towards the building of new Nepal and urged the latter to clearly set development goals, which he said



Crop Production: Reduction Hits Economy

would make it more easier for development partners to come up with their assistance.

Likewise, the revised estimates have put the recurrent expenditure at Rs 88.14 billion – up from Rs 83.76 billion that was mentioned in the budget. The capital expenditure, on the other hand, has been revised at Rs 38.22 billion – down from Rs 44.97 billion.

At a press meet organized last week to reveal the mid-term evaluation report, Dr. Mahat said, "We have seen weak progress in some areas of budget implementation. But these things are due to non-economic reasons."

In his budget, Dr. Mahat had

increased the direct cash support to the Village Development Committees (VDCs) from Rs 500,000 to Rs One million a year. But six months after the budget was announced, the local bodies are yet to be in place.

The recurrent expenditures were increased due to added liabilities in non-productive sectors like the cost of distributing citizenship, management of Maoist camps, election activities and so on. ■

TERAI UNREST COSTS RS 29 BILLION

The three-weeks-long Terai unrest has caused immense losses to the socio-economic sector as well. The unrest not only claimed the lives of 29 persons – as claimed by the government – but also led to losses to the tune of Rs 29 billion – around 20 percent of the country's annual budget.

The Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) has stated in its white paper issued last week that the unrest led to complete stoppage of economic activities. Over 1000 industries, tens of thousands of shops and business enterprises, custom points and transport system were closed down.

The FNCCI has asked the government to compensate all the victims and provide relief to the business community. It estimates that loss on exports stands at Rs 2.5 billion, while the imports loss is estimated at around Rs 7.45 billion.

Revenues were lost and goods were trapped at transit points and even in Kolkata port. According to FNCCI, over 1000 containers including 500 at Birgunj customs, 400 at Rani-Jogbani and 100 at Kakarvitta were stranded during the period with raw material and finished products worth Rs 2 billion. The demurrage charge for the stranded containers is estimated at six million rupees.

The loss of transportation sector has been calculated at Rs 200 million, while the losses due to destruction of physical infrastructure and properties are yet to be calculated.

Nepal rioting threatens political transition

- *Dhruba Adhikary*

The disturbances that mountainous Nepal is currently facing in the southern plains, called Terai, threaten to blossom into a separatist movement as in Sri Lanka. And they could derail the peace process, in effect preventing Maoist rebels from joining the interim government in a few weeks' time.

The agitation in Terai, also known as Madhesh, started immediately after the interim legislature, which includes Maoist representatives, approved an interim constitution that was promulgated on January 15. A small group of native Madheshis instantly expressed their discontent by burning a copy of the interim charter. Another group took the issue to Terai, where it spread like a wildfire. Two other groups, edged out by the mainstream Maoist party, also became a part of the agitation.

Spontaneous demonstrations across several Terai towns, separated by a porous border from the Indian states of West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, took an ugly turn when mobs began to attack the lives, homes and properties of people with hill origins. In some district centers, government offices were burned, others stormed and ransacked. In some cases, mobs with spears, knives and sticks attacked police stations unprovoked, killing police officers trying to defend themselves.

On Wednesday, demonstrators in the eastern district of Morang took a sword to the head of a police officer and threw him into a nearby pond with his limbs tied. Demonstrators were among a dozen people who have lost their lives. The violent activities subsequently assumed communal overtones, prompting authorities to impose a curfew in half a dozen towns in the eastern region. But the measures have not been effective.

Initial restlessness among the Madheshis was visible in the western town of Nepalgunj.

"The continuing violence and loss of life in the Terai is very worrying," said the United Nations office for human rights. UN representative Ian Martin separately expressed his concerns, saying the trend could affect the schedule for polls to elect Nepal's first constituent

assembly by mid-June.

The main reason for the disgruntlement, according to those who think they can speak for the Madheshi community, is the failure of the interim constitution to include a provision whereby the Terai region could become an autonomous province in a federal Nepal, which thus far remains a unitary system, though with provisions for devolution of powers to regions, zones and districts.

Another point of contention is based on a perception that Madheshi natives have always been under-represented in Parliament, and that the number of seats allocated to them should be increased in proportion to their population.

These demands appear innocuous, but those currently in authority argue that a proposition for restructuring the state apparatus is not something an interim government is empowered to do. It is the new constitution, to be written by a constituent assembly, that will deal with demands for autonomy and regional identities.

Terai is not the only perceived victim of discrimination; there are several dozen ethnic groups in the hill districts, some of whom live in the remotest parts of the country. The claim that the Terai region is under-represented in Parliament is not exactly correct, either. An analytical report published by the Kathmandu Post disproves the Madheshi claim. And, since most of Nepal's road networks and industrial activities are based in the Terai, it is unrealistic to say that the region is neglected from the national perspective.

Members of the Madheshi community, including the members of the interim legislature representing various political parties, contend that agitation in Terai is spontaneous and an expression of pent-up anger against exploitation and discrimination, and is not directed to Terai people with hill origins (often alluded to as Pahaades).

This contention is not credible to the authorities, nor to most of the leaders whose political parties are constituents of the governing alliance headed by Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala. In a televised address to the nation on Wednesday to deal with the "Madheshi

grievance", Koirala minced no words about who the suspects could be: "After analyzing the recent incidents, I want to caution you all that regressive forces are attempting to take advantage of the situation."

The authorities have, in the meantime, detained three politicians who served in King Gyanendra's regime, which was toppled last April. A section of the Nepali media has been constantly writing that Gyanendra's loyal courtiers have been working clandestinely to bring the monarchy back to power.

Together with others, Maoists see the Terai unrest as a ploy to disturb the constituent-assembly polls and thereby stop the smooth transition to a democratic republic. The Maoist supremo, Pushpa Kamal Dahal (aka Prachanda), and his deputy Barubarm Bhattarai have publicly shared the government perception of a conspiracy, adding that Hindu fundamentalists from India are also active behind the scenes.

"They are carrying many truckloads of people from Bihar, India, to foment violence in the Terai," Bhattarai said in a recent radio interview.

According to Prachanda, two of the militant Madheshi groups that have surfaced in recent months are headed by people who were earlier expelled from the Maoist party. And the leader of a "forum" of the Madheshi community was once detained in India for being a member of the Nepali Maoist movement.

While Indian authorities, said Prachanda in a televised debate last week, handed over two of three detainees to the Nepali army, the third one, Upendra Yadav, was set free without any condition. He was allowed to stay in India for the next six months, and now he is the person who heads the "forum" for Madheshi rights. The Maoist leadership once again claimed in a press conference on Thursday that the Indian establishment is conniving, if not overtly cooperating, with the groups carrying out violent deeds in the southern plains.

Indian Ambassador Shiv Shankar Mukherjee has described as "rumors" the media reports that India's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party was involved in the Terai mayhem.

Mukherjee, as a diplomat, has to

follow New Delhi's instructions. But people who welcomed India's support of the pro-democracy movement last year do not believe that the ruling class in New Delhi is unaware of what is happening in Terai. India is the only country that has a consulate in Nepal outside of the capital city, Kathmandu, Birgunj, where the Indian diplomatic mission is located, has been in the midst of what a local journalist described as a "highly inflammable" situation since last week. "A lot of vested interests are active," Chandrakishore Jha, editor of a local newsmagazine, told *Asia Times Online*. He did not elaborate.

Back in Kathmandu, there is a strong perception that New Delhi has instigated a directionless, and often leaderless, violent movement, the fallout of which could harm Indian interests. It appears to be a case of shortsightedness. Analyst Madan Regmi, writing in the *People's Review* weekly, used strong words to criticize the UN for glossing over the reality and becoming servile to New Delhi.

What is New Delhi up to? Since Nepali rulers have always shied away from entering any agreement to place Nepal under the Indian security umbrella, often citing their need to balance relations with China, New Delhi might have devised an alternative scheme to achieve its objective. One such alternative could be to fan a secessionist movement in Terai.

Professor Mahendra Lama of Jawaharlal Nehru University does not find reason to disagree with such a view even if it sounds alarming. In an interaction program held in Kathmandu on December 26, Lama alluded to a small strong minority view in New Delhi that advocates the following: "If Nepal has to be managed effectively, it should be allowed to disintegrate." Such a minority view might not ultimately prevail in India, which is an emerging Asia power.

But this minority opinion does not seem to be a sudden thought. In a book titled *The Call of Nepal*, a former British embassy defense attache in Laos, J P Cross, recalls his conversation with an Indian embassy diplomat in mid-1970s (around the time India "liberated" Bangladesh and annexed Sikkim) when he told the author, "sincerely if a little drunkenly, that by the year 2000 Nepal would be part of India for all intent and purposes. He proceeded to tell me the

weak points about all levels of Nepalese administration that India would rectify."

Why did not it happen? First, as Lama said, it has been a minority view probably influenced by a colonial mindset inherited from the British Raj. Second, events in 1980s and thereafter did not encourage the Indian leadership to embark on a mission that would put the Indian military face to face with the Chinese in an

additional area covering nearly 1,500 kilometers. Third, the global scenario that emerged after September 11, 2001, required India to explore other alternatives, including the one referred to by Professor Lama.

(Courtesy: *Asia Times Online*. The article appeared in *Asia Times Online* on February 3)

ACTION AGAINST DEFAULTERS

Operation Starts

After months of inaction, the government finally wakes up to take action against willful defaulters

By A CORRESPONDENT

Following months of nudging by the development partners like the World Bank, the government has finally decided to take action against willful defaulters of bank loans.

Although the cabinet had decided to take action against the defaulters much earlier, the Finance Ministry is now acting with renewed vigor.

The Ministry's newfound zeal coincides with the visit by the World Bank Managing Director Graeme Wheeler.

The government has decided to implement the cabinet decision to impound passports of 80 blacklisted loan defaulters who have not paid Rs 12 billion in interest and principle and who are associated with 27 leading business groups.

The Finance Ministry sent formal letters to all concerned agencies on Sunday (February 18) regarding the action against defaulters.

The Ministry has written letters to the Foreign Affairs Ministry, Home Ministry, Land Reforms Ministry, Civil Aviation Authority and Nepal Rastra Bank, among others, specifying actions against the defaulters.

As per the decision of the cabinet, the passports of the defaulters have been annulled, assets frozen and their shares in financial institutions seized. Likewise, the facility of Commercially Important Person (CIP) has been withdrawn, and all other state-bestowed recognitions cancelled, according to Deep Basnyat, spokesperson at the Ministry.

The Finance Ministry has said that

these actions could be withdrawn if the defaulters agree to reschedule their loan repayment with the concerned banks. "Nepal government is compelled to take this action in order to keep the financial system alive and protect savings of common people," the Ministry says in a statement.

The cabinet had, on December 2006, taken the decision of delegating authority to the Finance Ministry to take action against such defaulters. The Finance Ministry is said to have taken the decision on the basis of names recommended by six leading commercial banks through Nepal Rastra Bank, Nepal Bank Limited recommended names of 11 business groups for the passport seizure, while NIC Bank recommended six groups. Similarly, Rastriya Banijya Bank gave four names, Himalayan Bank recommended three, Lumbini Bank two and Nabil Bank recommended one for the same purpose.

The fixed assets of these defaulters will be frozen and they will be stopped from assuming the position of director or promoter of any company. The defaulters have also been disqualified from trading in treasury bills and savings certificates and from receiving medals and decorations conferred by the State.

However, blacklisted defaulters will be permitted to sell off fixed assets, including treasury bills and saving certificates for the purpose of servicing their outstanding financial liabilities.

ICJ ON CONSTITUTION

Concerns About Judiciary

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) wants to see independence of judiciary maintained

By A CORRESPONDENT

Lending its voice to calls made by a number of people from the judicial and legal field, the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) has written a letter addressed to Speaker of the parliament Subas Nemwang appealing for the amendment in the interim constitution to allow for the fully independent judiciary, among others.

In a letter signed by its general secretary Nicholas Howen, the ICJ has recommended that the "interim constitution be amended to state clearly that the judiciary in Nepal shall be independent and that it is the duty of all governmental and other institutions to respect and observe that independence."

The letter has stated that the interim

constitution should also guarantee the right of everyone to be tried, not only by a competent court or judicial authority, but by an independent court or judicial authority. "Ensuring and protecting the independence of the judiciary is at the heart of the rule of law, the administration of justice, including fair trial rights, and is an essential part of the institutions necessary to implement human rights guarantees and provide effective remedies," it further states.

The ICJ has mentioned that the independence of the judiciary could well become critical in Nepal as a check and balance and oversight mechanism in the months ahead. The ICJ's letter has come in the wake of numerous appeals by the

legal practitioners regarding the need to make judiciary fully independent in the interim constitution. In its letter, the ICJ has listed thirteen recommendations for amendment in the interim constitution including in the provisions about discrimination, fundamental rights, rights against enforced disappearances, freedom of expression and emergency powers.

The ICJ has stated that promulgation of the interim constitution is a considerable achievement and represents a further positive development towards sustainable peace and democracy in Nepal.

"The ICJ welcomes many of the provisions in the Interim Constitution, in particular the confirmation that Nepal is an inclusive and fully democratic State committed to multiparty democracy, the commitment to the rule of law, the recognition of the National Human Rights Commission as a constitutional body, and the elaboration of fundamental human rights and freedoms. These components will lay a foundation for the protection and promotion of human rights in Nepal," it says. ■

GARBAGE TO BE DUMPED FORCEFULLY

Frustrated by the obstinate local residents living around the Sisdole landfill site, the authorities are now preparing to use force to dump the garbage there.

Since past two weeks, the garbage have remained uncollected. Heaps of stinking garbage are found in every nook and corner of the valley after the Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) was unable to collect them.

The local residents of Sisdole area have, time and again, disrupted the KMC's dumping processes demanding that they be provided with jobs, health and educational facilities be set up in the area and people be compensated, among others.

Each time the authorities try to reach a short-term agreement with the local residents. Therefore, every now and then, the problem recurs with stinking regularity.

As tourism organizations such as Nepal Association of Tour Operators (NATO) and Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) have already stated that garbage was affecting tourist interests, the authorities are now mulling to use force if the residents of Sisdole still refuse to

let them dump garbage there.

"There is no alternative dumping site. The government will dump the garbage

there at Sisdole," said a visibly enraged Local Development Minister Rajendra Pandey. "We need cooperation of capital residents for this purpose," he said, adding, "What kind of people are they who do not allow (to dump garbage) despite repeated pledges to fulfill their demands? There is rule of law, how can the government fulfill the demands immediately after it pledges to do so?"

Pandey told Nepal Samacharpatra daily.

Pandey said that since the landfill site there was built by investing Rs 1 billion, the government will not hesitate to use force. "Work and money should come together. Otherwise we will not allow garbage to be dumped," said Bilas

Upreti, a local resident of Sisdole.

KMC chief executive Dinesh Thapaliya has said that the government



Uncollected Garbage: Stinking Problem Gorkhapatra

should take the initiative to resolve the crisis.

Due to the stoppage by the residents of Sisdole, the capital city now has over 10,000 tons of garbage lying uncollected at various parts.

INTERIM CONSTITUTION

Swift Shake Up

The interim constitution heralded as a document of comprehensive understanding among eight parties could not remain stable for more than a month

By A CORRESPONDENT

Five weeks after it was adopted unanimously by the eight parties – and also by other parties like Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) and Rastriya Janashakti Party (RJP) – the interim constitution is all set to be amended.

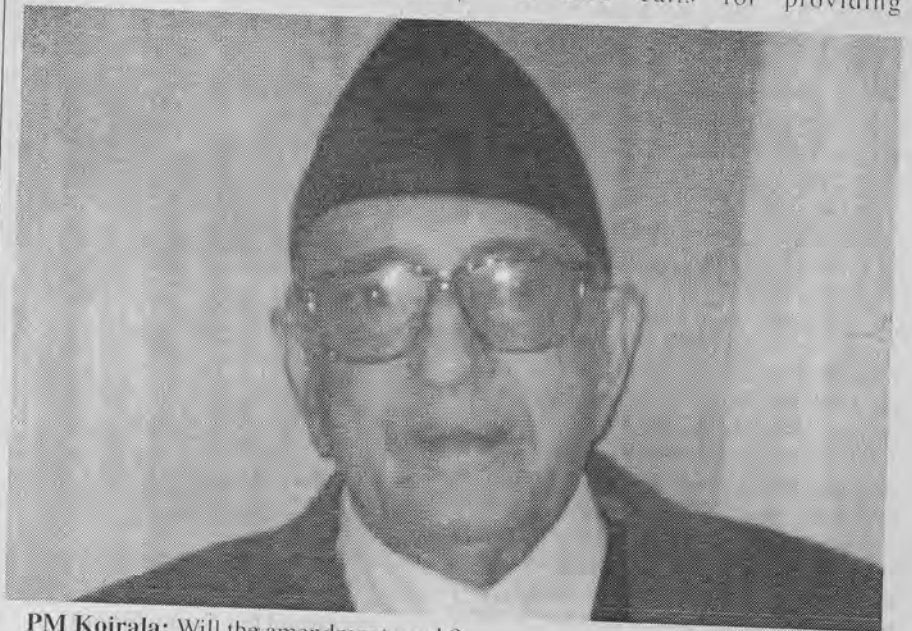
The interim constitution, which could be in force for at least three years, the elected Constituent Assembly (CA) writes and adopts a new constitution, ran into rough waters less than 24 hours after it was promulgated when the little known Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) organized a surprisingly intense unrest in Terai region for three long weeks till the government finally relented and agreed to make changes in the interim statute to meet their demands.

Law Minister Narendra Bikram Nemwang registered a Bill to amend the interim constitution at the Parliament Secretariat on Sunday (Feb 18) evening. The Bill has been drafted by incorporating the issues raised in the address made by Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, on February 7, to fulfill demands of Madhesis and Janjatis.

On the other hand, despite the government's moves to amend the constitution, the MJF has said that it will continue with its agitation – which was suspended for ten days on February 8 ostensibly to provide the government opportunity to create atmosphere for talks. The MJF chairman Upendra Yadav said that his organization will launch peaceful agitation between February 19 till 25. The MJF will then organize Terai bandh and blockade the custom points between February 26 and March 6 after which it will impose indefinite strike across the region. The MJF has stuck with its earlier demand that the Home Minister Krishna Sitaula resign to create environment for talks. The MJF has also described the manner with which the eight parties went ahead and decided to

amend the constitution without talking with them as “arrogant.”

The eight parties, on their part, believe that their decision to amend the statute will address the grievances of the Madhesis and Janjatis. As per the amendment bill, the one month old



PM Koirala: Will the amendment work?

constitution – which had been endorsed by the interim parliament unanimously on January 15 by rejecting calls for rectifying its weaknesses that were pointed out by legal experts as well as MPs themselves – will now be amended to state that Nepal will head towards federal democratic structure through the Constituent Assembly (CA).

Likewise, the bill has provisions to reconstitute the electoral constituencies on the basis of equal population, geographic characteristics and peculiarities, and increment of percent of population in Terai region. The existing constituencies in hills and mountains won't be reduced but the number of those in Terai where

population has increased will be increased proportionally.

The bill also states that the elections to the CA will be held on the basis of Mixed electoral system – whereby direct elections will be held in districts on the basis of existing (and additional constituencies) constituencies along with proportional representation-based elections to be held simultaneously by treating the whole country as a single constituency.

Furthermore, the bill also states that a high-level five-member Electoral Constituency Fixation Commission will be formed to be led by a former judge of Supreme Court (SC) and including geographic, demographic and social experts as members.

It also calls for providing

proportional representation of Madhesis, women, Janjatis, Dalits, disabled people and other minorities in all structure of the state. The bill, however, does not have any provision regarding the election of Prime Minister. There were calls to insert provision whereby two-third of MPs should elect and/or remove the PM. The interim parliament will discuss and endorse the amendment bill in its next meeting on February 20.

Meanwhile, the parties have formed a task force including representatives of all the parties to decide about the issue of whether to provide temporary voters with the opportunity to cast their votes in the CA elections. The Maoists are firmly demanding that temporary voters, too, be allowed to cast their votes. ■

BOOK

Historic Encounter

Madhav K. Rimal, chief editor of Spotlight, who was the last person to interview King Birendra at Royal Palace, describes his encounter with the late monarch

By KESHAB POUDEL

From holding referendum to restoring multi-party democracy and constitutional monarchy in 1990, late King Birendra initiated various political liberalization process in his three-decade long reign. Even less than hour before his assassination, King Birendra had shown his full commitment to constitutional monarchy and multi party system.

Despite several provocative questions by Rimal, King Birendra did not deviate from his own stand on democracy and patriotism. From democracy to Nepal's relations with its two neighbors, King Birendra had posed all kinds of questions to Rimal.

King Birendra was put in throne at the early age of 27 years having no special attributes in his character. But he passed through several tests in the political turmoil of the country in several phases. When he became the King, the King was the absolute ruler but when he died, the country had liberal democratic system and the monarch was constitutional.

The association was for no other than the faith and belief he had upheld up to the last of breath and this book is the testimony of that. "Madhav, what you say could be correct. But perhaps, you are not aware there are certain things which we are unable to do despite our best

efforts. You people are really fortunate. You can say what you like and do what pleases you. But we have to be very reserved in articulating our opinion. We also cannot do what we want to do all the time. We suffer from big constraints," replied King Birendra when answering to provocative questions.

"As a King the highest ideal of Birendra was to serve in the job as a



The Fateful Interview
By: Madhav K. Rimal
Published by: Sarita Rimal
Phone : 4413961
Pages: 72
Price: Rs.400.00

monarch, as a person to uphold the independence of the nation as well as fully democratic governance within the structure of constitutional monarchy." said a political analyst. "He was a patriot as well as democrat by conviction. Like the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, it was due to his personal faith and beliefs which led to his death. In fact, whole circumstantial evidences testify that there was no other cause for his assassination than his firmness on the twin pillars of Nepal's independence and the democratic system."

There were may provocative questions from Rimal's side but his answers proved that King Birendra was not a short-tempered and impulsive person. In the whole interview, he was never provoked and over excited to assert the supremacy of monarchy over the political system which was restored through an extraordinary consensus of 1990 and the constitution made by that consensus.

Although he is the last person to get audience with late King Birendra in June 1, 2001, it took five years for Rimal to publish the book about his meeting with late King Birendra.

"King Birendra was temperamentally fit to play role of a constitutional monarch. In obituary interviews after his death, all prime ministers from K.P. Bhattarai to Girija Prasad Koirala had the same appreciation of his attributes as a constitutional monarch in idealism," said the analyst.

Rimal's interview showed King Birendra's maturity and his soft approach to play a successful role of constitutional monarch. This book is very important since it tells something about the person who is widely known as a noble king.

Some Important questions posed by late King Birendra during his interaction

But, Madhav, what you are suggesting would be unconstitutional. The politicians are sure to raise strong objections and might even resort to Bandhs, destabilizing normal life of the people.

You know Madhav, I am not very happy with the situation prevailing in the country. But I cannot act precipitously. Moreover, we are still experimenting with democratic

exercises and it may be too early to become despondent. You know, these could be the teething problems of democracy in Nepal. We think we must have more patience. I do hope things will improve.

Madhav, tell me what do you think about Nepal-India relations and what improvements are needed to make them more effective?

What do you think about Nepal's

relations with China, Madhav?

"How can a poor and small nation like Nepal withstand international pressure and follow its own independent course?"

A small nation like Nepal has to face much pressure from various directions. Do you think, Madhav, it will be advisable. Or, do you believe, we will be able to sustain?

SUNDH URGES FOR PEACEFUL PROTESTS

Addressing a public gathering in Birgunj on Saturday (Feb 17), Lena Sundh, the chief of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Nepal has stressed that everyone should adopt only the peaceful means to advance their concerns and draw attention of the government.

"My office has given the highest priority to monitoring the situation in the Terai. Our mobile teams have been investigating abuses occurred throughout the region. They have also been attempting to defuse tensions and prevent abuses and violence through dialogue and advocacy with local authorities, police and protest organizers," she said, adding, "These activities have been carried out in the broader context of OHCHR-Nepal's work to advocate for an end to discrimination and for appropriate representation for all excluded groups in the peace and electoral processes."

On the other hand, Sundh highlighted the need to address the prevailing social exclusion and longstanding discrimination against any Nepalis, including Madhesis, Dalits, indigenous peoples, communities such as Badis, groups such as ex-Kamaiyas, people with disabilities and sexual minorities. She said the parties must follow the commitments stated in the comprehensive peace agreement with practical measures during the ongoing transition process to ensure that those peoples who have been traditionally left out of the political process are able to participate equally in shaping the new Nepal.

Sundh said OHCHR-Nepal is focusing on two crucial issues that must be addressed in order to ensure that there will be no further human rights abuses in Nepal. "First, impunity must end, especially for serious human rights abuses. Those who hold positions of power and public responsibility must be accountable to the public, not least the State security forces. It is essential to create a new culture within the security forces, including any new or reformed forces, of being accountable before the law, to ensure that human rights violations are not repeated," she said. Sundh stated that both the sides committed serious abuses during the conflict and there would be dangerous consequences for future human rights protection if these were merely swept under the carpet – supposedly in the interests of peace.

Sundh also stressed the need of well functioning law enforcement and criminal justice system in the country. "Providing security through civilian policing is among the most important of the state's human rights obligations. The Nepal Police is called upon to fulfill this state responsibility at an historic juncture, and in order to do so they must be well-resourced and properly trained. The criminal justice system must also function in a strong and independent manner, and be accessible to all Nepalis, including those who traditionally have had difficulty gaining access to justice, such as Dalits and the rural poor. Women victims of sexual violence must also have the full protection of the law — the obstacles they currently face to accessing the justice system must be removed," she added. ■

Book List

Bayung Rai: A socio-linguistic by M.B. Lee/R.B.Rai/ B.K. Rai and C. Boone Rs. 200.00

Business and Law in Nepal J. Adams/ B.K. Maskey/ S.D.Tuladhar Rs. 200.00

Caravan to Lhasa Newar Merchant of Kathmandu in Traditional Tibet Kamal Tuladhar Rs.150.00

Geopolitics of Nepal and International response to Conflict Transformation Rajan Bhattarai Rs. 60.00

Important Bird Areas in Nepal Key sites for conservation by Hem Sagar Baral/ Carol Inskipp Rs. 1000.00

Kiran Saga of Modern Nepali Artist Everest Art Gallery Rs. 1375.00

Local Governance in Nepal Democracy at Grassroots Rabintra Khanal Rs. 295.00

Milestone of History Vol 1 Pramod Mainali Rs. 1000.00

Milestone of History Vol 2 Pramod Mainali Rs.500.00

Nepal Atlas and Statistic Dr.Harka Gurung Rs. 700.00

Nepal Contemporary Political Situation – II opinion poll report by Sudhindra Sharma and Pawan Kumar Sebn Rs. 200

Nepal Conflict resolution and sustainable Peace by Dwarkia Nath Dhungel and Aditya Man Shrestha Rs. 800.00

Nepal Struggle for Existence Jagdish Sharma Rs. 999.00

Nepal Statistic Indigenous People Parsuram Tamang Rs.800.00

Pe Ads and Pinn Acles Mountaineering in Nepal Harka Gurung Rs. 500.00

Towards a democratic Nepal Mahendra Lawoti Rs.632.00

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ART

Ragini's Work

Artist Ragini Upadhaya comes with her new paintings

By A CORRESPONDENT

Love, affection and passion are important components of human life cycle. All people have in one or other way experiences of understanding each other's feeling. Artist Ragini Upadhaya has chosen the art as a medium to express her feelings.

Just a few months after completing her exhibition on Janandolan II, artist Ragini Upadhaya has come up with her new paintings but this time all the paintings are about love and human expressions.

Organized to mark the Valentine's Day, artist Ragini's paintings express various mode of love and affections. With nude and semi-nude paintings, she has presented unique characters which express the inner desire of love and affections.

Inaugurated by German ambassador to Nepal, the paintings pasted at the wall of The Art Shop in Durbar Marg explain various moods and expression of love. Although it is very difficult to portray the abstract theme like love in paintings, Ragini has proved that it can be expressed through art.

Every human being has some sorts of feeling in his mind about love. This is the gift of nature. Some express it through their body and some through their language and other through signs, artist Ragini is able to capture these moods in her 32 pieces of paintings displayed at the exhibition.

From combination of color to actions and other spirits, artist Ragini has chosen perfect ways. Drawn in acrylic, water color and mixed in dried paper, she has made couples of men and women as her theme.

Although some complained too much westernization of arts, many agree with Ragini's way of expressing love and passion. Priced between Rs.18, 000 to Rs. 165,000, the exhibition will be there for another two weeks.

"My aim is to share message of love, friendship and harmony among different groups. Valentine's day is not just for young couple to share love and feelings but it is for all the people of different ages," said Ragini.

One of the important aspects of artist Ragini's exhibition is that she is able to paint one of the most complicated and sentimental theme in simplistic way. In a painting dedicated to the Valentine's day, Ragini painted a young couple who are exchanging red rose at Kathmandu.

Every one has

feelings about the love but it is the young people who share it most. This is what one can see in her paintings also where mostly young people were shown in the romantic moods with various stages of love.

"Valentine's day is universal day for love and affection. Love do not have any boundary and limitation. I dedicated all my paintings to Valentine's day," said artist Ragini.

Although some visitors objected over the theme chosen to celebrate the tradition, there are many who think Ragini's works are perfect expression of freedom and harmony. It gives eternal satisfaction for many to read the message of love.

Most of her paintings narrate the story of young couples and their desires of love. As a renowned artist, Ragini always chooses the complicated themes to express human feelings in her paintings. Hardly a few Nepalese artists have these kinds of quality. ■

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