

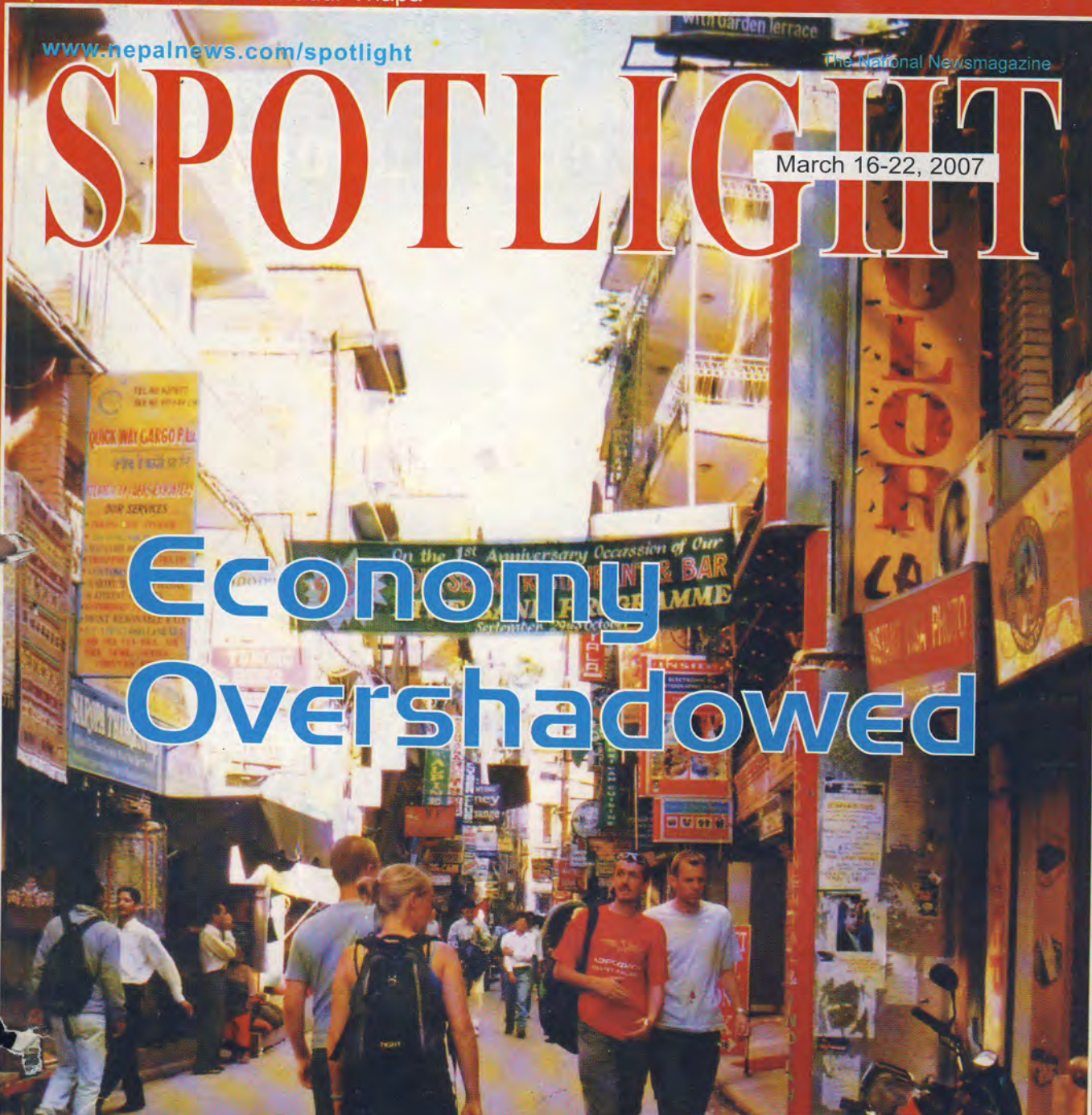
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The National Newsmagazine

SPOTLIGHT

March 16-22, 2007

Economy Overshadowed



Interview :
Bishnu Dutta Upreti



**Role of Opinion-builders:
Inconsistencies & Contradictions**

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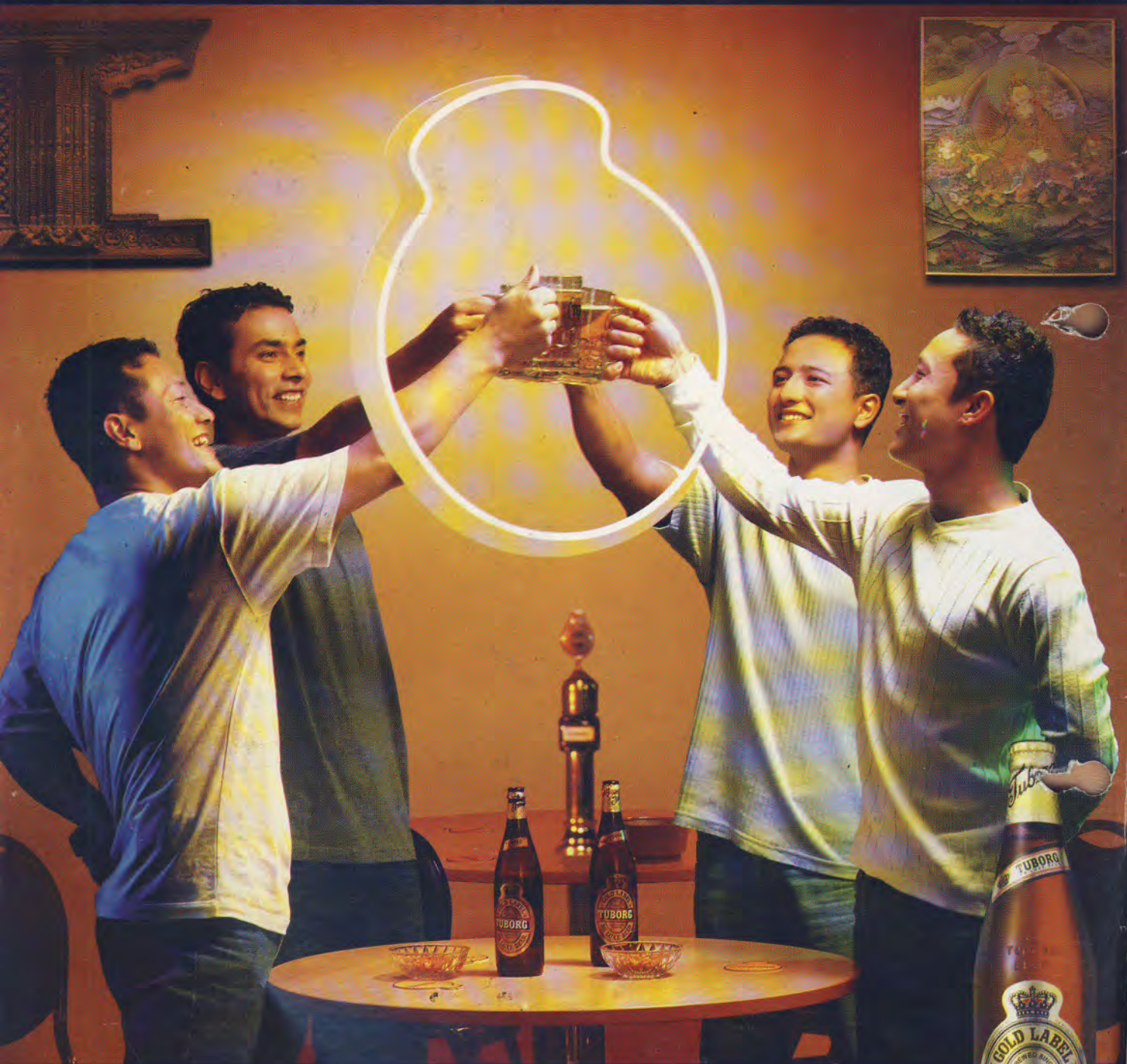
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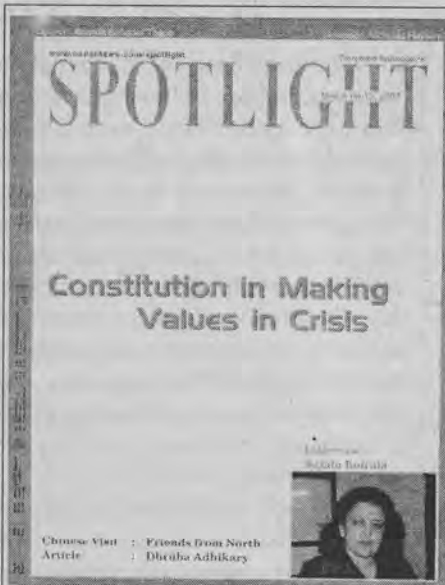
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F For many, prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala's statement issued in Biratnagar seems to be surprising regarding his tilt towards republic. Prime minister Koirala was republican even when Maoists and other communist leaders were in two-minds over it. Koirala actually turned towards republican soon after the decision of the dissolution of House of Representatives in 2002. In a book Simple Conviction, Koirala said, "The moment, I concluded that monarchy was (not needed) was with the dissolution of parliament." Koirala's recent statement is just continuity of his conviction.

One can find out points of agreement into the postures of disagreement. There is a consensus within the contradictions. Opinion leaders of the countries are horrified by the lurking threat of disintegration and chaos in the country but unfortunately all have their different outlook for the solution. There is a consensus that the integrity of the country is much more endangered since the change of April 2006. But if that is correct who is to be blamed for all these things? All political leaders from leftists to rightists, are alarmed over the crisis of nation's survival. But, unfortunately, they cannot find out a common solution within a concept of national reconciliation. The term national reconciliation itself has become outmoded and reactionary and, therefore, objectionable to all political players. In fact what the country needed most at this juncture is to forge a greater unity of the nation under the broader concept of national reconciliation. The people need it very much but unfortunately, there is no political party, no political leader, and no opinion builder from any profession to express it effectively. Leaders of eight political parties have single point unity of sharing the power through anti-monarchist programs. There is no other positive and constructive point that binds them. According to a political analyst, all are at the cut-throat competition for power as their future agenda. Communist parties have had their own struggle for survival among themselves. They have, at large, organized themselves at the cost of democrats and democrats at the cost of communists and all are active at the cost of monarchists. If all these political groups could harmonize their conflicts and reach into a common agenda for the peace, stability and reconstruction, it would have been an ideal situation for the country. But unfortunately, there is no visionary leader to provide the leadership to the country at this critical juncture.

Keshab
Keshab Poudel
Managing Editor



Making of Constitution

The cover story "Values In Crisis" (SPOTLIGHT March 9) points out to the inherent lack of prudence on the part of our national political actors even as the country is headed towards a crucial task of writing a new constitution through the process of Constituent Assembly. It is surprising that people seem to be taking this issue lightly. A CA is once-in-a-nation's-lifetime exercise, which needs careful thoughts and ample preparations—ranging from awareness-raising to technical preparations. It cannot be held just on the basis of some whims.

Girish Thapa
Satdobato

light to the people of Nepal who are yearning for peace and stability.

Kalpa Gurung
Maitighar

Ensure Participation

As experts have said the process of constitution must be participatory, representative and inclusive ("Values In Crisis" SPOTLIGHT March 9). Due to the long ethnic disparity, there are various groups that have emerged with their set of demands. Some have even called for federal autonomy with the right to self-determination. How feasible these demands are should be discussed by the elected CA. Only then can the CA come up with the constitution that Nepalese people deserve.

Simanta Thakur
Chabahil

CA Sans Knowledge

The political leaders have been incessantly expressing their commitment to hold the Constituent Assembly (CA) elections by mid-June ("Values In Crisis" SPOTLIGHT March 9). Unfortunately, since the restoration of Loktantra in April last year, the parties and/or the government have failed to launch any mass campaign aimed at educating the people about the process, objective and significance of CA. There have been quite a lot of news reports stating that in far-flung areas, people have no idea what the CA is. As this is the first time CA is going to be held in the country, it is only fair that people be informed as much as possible. Otherwise, as most people still see CA as some kind of parliamentary elections, the significance of this whole process will be lost. Instead of bickering over interim parliament or interim government or interim constitution, the eight parties would have done well had they concentrated on educating the people about the CA. That would have ensured deep-rooted and well-understood democratic polity in the country. Only three months remain for the CA elections, and voters' education campaign have not been launched yet. This lack of seriousness is certain to hurt the nation's democratic prospects in the days to come.

Diwas Gurung
Kaushaltar

Will CA Address Ethnic Issues?

There are numerous ethnic and regional fronts that have emerged raising demands from autonomy to self-determination rights ("Values In Crisis" SPOTLIGHT March 9). Obviously, this is a transitional period and different groups are coming out with their own set of agenda. Many ethnic groups that had felt marginalized in the last many decades are now attempting to make sure that their condition will improve in the coming days. All of them are pinning their hope on the CA. But will the CA be able to address all of their concerns? That is the million dollar question haunting every one of Nepali these days.

Sidhartha Bista
Balaju

Starting From A Scratch

The exercise for the new constitution-making marks another start from the scratch for the people of Nepal ("Values In Crisis" SPOTLIGHT March 9). People of Nepal have experienced six different constitutions in the last six decades. They are now preparing to write the seventh one through Constituent Assembly. It is not clear what of constitution the CA will come up with. There are some inviolable democratic values that must be adhered to in any democratic constitution. Hopefully, the CA will have enough wise people to show

Sujata's Assertions

The interview of Sujata Koirala (SPOTLIGHT March 9) was interesting. It seems the ruling Nepali Congress (NC) has diverse opinions among its various leaders. Quite unlike blatantly republicans like Narahari Acharya, Koirala has talked about the need to accommodate ceremonial monarchy. It will be interesting to see how this party will reach conclusion on what policy to follow at the upcoming Constituent Assembly elections. Time is running out, the NC will have to make the decision before the elections, which are scheduled to be held by mid-June.

Srijana KC
Putalisadak

Koirala Speak

The daughter of the Prime Minister, Sujata Koirala will need to work a lot harder if she wants to get over the image of a corrupt person who reached to center of power through nepotism (SPOTLIGHT March 9). She took an impressive position during the movement to restore democracy and had stood by her father through the thick and thin. Now the time has come for her to show that she stands for democratic ideals propounded by her illustrious uncle BP Koirala.

Deep Tamang
Ghattekula

PM Says King Has Paved The Way For Republic

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala has said that the King himself has paved the way for republic. Talking to journalists in Biratnagar on Monday (March 12), PM Koirala said that a new environment can still be created if the King and the Crown Prince step down. He said there was no need to declare republic as it was already coming in place. He said the statement by the King had only encouraged elements that want to derail the peace process and Constituent Assembly. He added that his earlier call of giving space to ceremonial monarchy was misunderstood. Likewise, PM Koirala reacted, for the first time, that the discrepancy between the number of arms and combatants registered by the Maoists was big. He also termed Prachanda's remarks that 'weapons were swept away by river and burnt down' as irresponsible. He warned that any weapons found outside PM Koirala said all kinds of bandhs and strikes will end once the interim government is formed.

Leading dailies report

MJF Withdraws Indefinite Bandh

Amid mounting pressures and growing defiance, the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) has withdrawn the indefinite bandh in Madhes. Addressing a press meet on Monday (March 12), MJF president Upendra Yadav said they will now change the nature of their agitation. "We will hold peaceful rallies," he said. The MJF leader said they decided to withdraw bandh because of demands by the people and civil society. Activities like closure of custom points and government offices will, however, continue. He accused the government of being insensitive towards their demands. The MJF had been imposing indefinite bandh since March 6. On Monday, indefinite curfew had to be imposed in Inaruwa of Sunsari after clashes erupted between MJF activists and students who wanted to defy bandh. Later, a Maoist cadre was also killed in scuffle with MJF activists. *Leading dailies report*

Maoists Produce Plot CD

Maoist MP Janardan Sharma aka Prabhakar produced a CD at the parliament, on Monday, claiming that it contains details of plots by the royalists to derail the peace process. According to reports, the CD contains information that the palace had allocated Rs 600 million for purpose. Likewise, it alleges that a committee headed by Crown Prince Paras had been formed to implement those plots including assassination of top pro-republican leaders by using hit squads. The CD, the Maoists allege, were being distributed to army barracks to incite the army against them. The Maoists claim that they were informed about the CD by source within the army itself. The CD was handed over to Speaker Subas Nemwang. The Speaker said the CD was already handed over to the Home Minister. *Leading dailies report*

Thousands Of Weapons Still Outside, Says Prachanda

Maoist chairman Prachanda revealed that thousands of weapons and combatants that could not be registered with the United Nations are still outside cantonments. He said the Maoists were facing problems about where and how to manage them. Talking to reporters in Baglung on March 12, Prachanda said technical force capable of 'hitting multiple places overnight' also remained outside. Prachanda also said that PM's remarks on republic had come as per the understanding with them. He also warned that if the eight parties did not make decision on their inclusion in the interim government and announce the date for CA polls, Maoists will declare republic on their own. *Kantipur daily reports*

NC Wants Maoists To Behave; Prachanda Asks His Cadres To Do So

In a significant move, the Central Working Committee (CWC) of the ruling Nepali Congress (NC) has asked the government not to induct Maoists in the interim government till the latter completely behaves like a political party and stops from engaging in forceful and

intimidating acts. It asked the Maoists to immediately return seized properties; allow displaced persons to return home; and stop display of arms. The meeting also expressed concern over the huge disparity in the number of combatants and weapons registered by the Maoists. Meanwhile, Maoist chairman Prachanda has directed his cadres, members and associates to help in the rehabilitation of the displaced people, return their properties seized during the war and in the management of the arms. In a statement he issued on Thursday (March 8) afternoon, Prachanda asked the party members to work on war-footing to complete these tasks with timetable as per the commitments expressed in the agreement reached earlier with the seven parties. The statement comes a day after prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala asked Prachanda to stop the unruly activities of the party cadres seen in the recent days and create environment for their inclusion in the interim government. In strong words, Prachanda has also asked the government to immediately release the remaining Maoist cadres from jail, publicise the status of the disappeared people, ensure the proper management of food and other necessities of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) at the cantonments and take initiatives for implementation of the agreements and understandings. *Compiled from reports*

Maoists Register

Commitment Motion On Republic

Maoists have registered commitment motion at the legislative parliament on Thursday (March 8) proposing that the House declare republic if the King makes any move to thwart Constituent Assembly (CA) elections. The motion registered by Maoist MPs Khim Lal Devkota and Janardan Sharma 'Prabhakar' proposes to insert a restrictive clause to the Article 159 (3) of the interim constitution – which states that the fate of monarchy will be determined by the simple majority at the first meeting of the CA. The Maoists' restrictive clause states that notwithstanding what is mentioned in this article, the interim parliament can remove

monarchy by two-third majority if the King makes any move to thwart the CA polls. According to Maoist MP Khim Lal Devkota, they registered the proposal after notifying all eight parties. Likewise, People's Front's MP Lilamani Pokharel registered a separate commitment motion proposing to end monarchy and declare republic. Both the motions have been registered as non-governmental bills. They have been registered as bills to be considered in the second phase of amendment of the interim constitution. The eight parties have already decided to amend the constitution in two phases – in the first phase they have agreed to pass the first amendment bill on Friday. *nepalnews.com reports*

Sherchan Dismisses Claims By Rayamajhi

Dismissing the claims made by Krishna Jung Rayamajhi and other members of Rayamajhi Commission – which has submitted its report recommending action against oppressors of people's movement – deputy prime minister Amik Sherchan said that the report does not accuse the King over the repression. Speaking at an interaction program in Reporters' Club on Thursday, Sherchan also said that the report does not recommend strict actions against guilty persons as expected by the people. He said Rayamajhi commission members were making empty claims that they have recommended action against the King. He said the government will soon make the report public. "It seems the commission members are making false claims as they think that the government might never make their report public," he said. *Nepal Samacharpatra daily reports*

Crude Bombs At Pandey's And Pahadi's Place

Crude bombs were discovered from the residences of civil society leaders Dr. Devendra Raj Pandey and Krishna Pahadi. Police later disposed them off. At Pandey's house in Bishalnagar, police discovered a two-liter pressure cooker bomb inside a black bag. Dr. Pandey is currently in London to attend the conference organized by Department for

International Development (Dfid). Likewise, a crude bomb was also discovered from the residence of Krishna Pahadi. He accused the forces disturbed by their movements for democracy of trying to explode bombs and scare them.

Leading dailies report

Solheim Satisfied With Peace Process

Erik Solheim, Minister for International Development of Norway, said that he was satisfied with the ongoing peace process in Nepal. Addressing a press meet on Thursday (March 8), Solheim said an inclusive interim government should be formed soon. He said the formation of such government will send important message to both people of Nepal and international community. "Important and complicated questions on the future of state structure and democratic organization of Nepal should be left to the constituent assembly to decide, as its democratic legitimacy will be vested in people's choice," Solheim said. Solheim visited Chitwan cantonment of Maoist on Thursday before he returned after wrapping up two-day visit to Nepal. During his visit, he met with Prime Minister Koirala and Maoist chairman Prachanda. *Leading dailies report*

Danish Support To Peace Process

The Board of DANIDA (Danish International Development Assistance) has approved a grant of Rs 600 million for support to the ongoing peace process in Nepal. "Acknowledging the challenging but positive situation in Nepal, the Board of DANIDA found it highly relevant, that Denmark over the next years provides support to a broad range of stakeholders working for peace in Nepal, as a natural consequence of Denmark's long-standing support to the countries democratic forces," states a press release issued by the Danish Embassy in Kathmandu. Finn Thilsted, Danish Ambassador, stated, "Without a successful peace process there will be a very limited scope for sustainable development in Nepal. Only through a fully inclusive peace process that meets

the expectations of the Nepalese people will it be possible to create democracy, stability and economic growth.

Denmark will support the efforts of all spheres of the Nepalese society to achieve this well deserved goal. Our support to the peace process will be given to the Government of Nepal and to the Nepalese civil society, which will continue to play an essential role in the time ahead." *Compiled from reports*

EC Worried Over Delay

The Election Commission (EC) is worried with the delay in reaching political decisions by the eight parties, which it says could impede the holding of CA polls on time. The EC officials are concerned that though only three months remain, the eight parties have not yet fixed date for the elections. Likewise, five important electoral legislations are yet to be enacted. "Parties have not kept their commitments so there is confusion regarding the polls," said an EC official. Till now, only one electoral legislation has been enacted. Four others – Bill on EC; Bill on Elections (Crime and Punishment); Bill of CA Court; and Bill on Political Parties – are under discussion at the parliament. The sixth but the most important Bill on CA Members Elections is only being drafted. After they are enacted, around 20 different guidelines and 5 different Rules will have to be formulated. *Leading dailies report*

MPC Lifts League Title

The Mahendra Police Club (MPC) lifted this year's league title by defeating the Tribhuvan Army Club (TAC) 2-0 in the decider match on Thursday (March 8). TAC stands in the second position at the league ladder this year followed by Three Stars Club in the Martyrs' Memorial A Division League Tournament organized by All Nepal Football Association (ANFA). The MPC bagged Rs 2 million prize money. Captain of MPC Hari Khadka was declared best player of the tournament and bagged a Toyota car. Likewise, MPC coach Birat Krishna Shrestha was named best coach. He bagged a motorcycle. This year Brigade Boys' Club and Saraswati Club were relegated to B division. *Leading dailies report*



Women celebrating international women's day

THE BRITISH HOUSE OF COMMONS, on Thursday (March 8), announced that Gurkha soldiers who had joined the British armed force after July 1, 1997 would get pension equal to their British counterparts. Pensions for riflemen with 15 years' experience will increase by five folds — from £1,200 to at least £6,600. Persons serving in senior ranks will get more than 7,000 pounds a year or considerably more depending on the time they have served. Gurkhas joined British Army in 1815, with 110,000 enlisted in World War II. They fought in the Falklands War, both Iraq invasions and are currently serving in Afghanistan as well. There are currently 3,500 Gurkhas in the British force, the majority of whom have served on all overseas operations, especially Afghanistan and Iraq. The number was as high as 110,000 during the World War II. Meanwhile, in Nepal, although ex-servicemen welcomed the announcement of the British parliament they expressed dissatisfaction over the cut-off date. President of Gurkha Army Ex-Servicemen's Organization (GAESO), Padam Bahadur Gurung, termed it the victory of the Gurkha soldiers. However, he said the announcement was biased. He said the current decision will only benefit about 600-800 retired soldiers. "Whereas there are over 40,000 of retired Gurkha soldiers in the country," Gurung said. He vowed to continue GAESO's agitation until full parity is reached. "The dedication and loyalty of Nepali soldiers to the British Crown has been unquestionable all through history, but the issues of the Gurkhas who joined before 1997 have been ignored," he added. Likewise, Prem Rai of United British Gurkhas Ex-Servicemen's Association Nepal said that the organization will continue protest for equal benefit to all ex-Gurkhas. Another organization of Gurkha Soldiers, British Gurkhas Welfare Society (BGWS) also said that the announcement is partial victory of the ex-soldiers as it failed to address their demands. Chairman of the BGWS, Tikendra Dal Dewan said that they will continue their movement as the announcement failed to incorporate Gurkha soldiers who retired before 1997.

THE INDO-NEPAL TRADE TREATY has been automatically renewed from Tuesday (March 6) for the next five years. As per the Clause 12 of the treaty, it has been automatically renewed, according to the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies. The Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) and Nepal Chamber of Commerce (NCC) have welcomed the renewal of the treaty. After its renewal, Nepal's products — apart from those under quantitative restrictions and three in the negative list — will

continue to enjoy free access to Indian market. Although there were talks to refine the treaty by including Nepal's demands, it was later decided that Nepal's concerns will be separately dealt with soon. Nepal had been raising concerns about non-tariff barriers and quarantine issues. Earlier, the treaty had been renewed once in 2002. The treaty was initially signed in 1996.

THE US EMBASSY IS CHANGING ITS non-immigrant visa application system effective April 1, 2007. According to a press statement by the American Center, the change will enable applicants outside of Kathmandu to submit their applications from five Nabil Bank branches across Nepal, thus eliminating the need to travel to the capital. Applicants in Kathmandu, also using the new system, will continue to apply from the Nabil Bank, Maharajgunj. Beginning April 1, all applicants for non-immigrant visas (tourists, students, etc.) will be required to submit Electronic Visa Application Forms (EVAF) when applying for an interview appointment through Nabil Bank. Typed or handwritten applications will no longer be accepted. The EVAF forms are available online at <http://evisaforms.state.gov> They must be printed using a laser printer or a high quality ink jet printer and all printed pages must be included with your application. The Electronic Visa Application enables the Embassy to offer a more convenient option for applicants. Instead of traveling to Kathmandu early, as has been the case, applicants residing outside Kathmandu can now submit their application for a visa appointment at one of the five Nabil Bank branches throughout Nepal — in Biratnagar, Birgunj, Butwal, Pokhara, and Nepalgunj. Besides introducing the new EVAF forms for non-immigrant visa applicants, the Embassy urges all visa applicants other than students to apply at least 30-60 days before planned travel. Based on increasing numbers of student visa applicants over the past year, the Embassy expects a significant increase in applications in the summer of 2007. The waiting time for all visa appointments will likely increase. Students should apply as early as possible, up to 120 days ahead of the reporting date listed on the I-20.

SOUTH KOREAN GOVERNMENT will provide Rs 10.6 million worth of IT equipment to Nepal through the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) to support the peace process. At the Donation Ceremony held at the Election Commission on March 7, 2007, the Korean Ambassador to Nepal, Nam Sang-Jung stated that ensuring a free and fair election of the constituent assembly in June is crucial for maintaining peace and stability in Nepal in the future. In this context, the Korean Government, as a part of its efforts to support peace process in Nepal, provided 95 multi-function laser printers and 57 portable hard disk (worth Rs 3.6 million) to EC. The Korean Government also plans to provide computer equipment (worth Rs 7 million) to police through the Ministry of Home Affairs to beef up security capacity of police. In addition to this, 5 military officers of the Korean Army will be dispatched to Nepal early April as UN Arms Management Observers. The Korean Government will continue to support Nepal not only for economic cooperation but also for peace building, and thus contribute to the latter's national development, says a statement issued by Korean Embassy. ■

"If it solves the problem, I am prepared to resign myself."

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, reacting to queries regarding the demands made by Terai agitators about the resignation of Home Minister, in Biratnagar.

"Pro-palace forces are conspiring to assassinate US officials stationed in Nepal and pin the blame on the Maoists."

Prachanda, Maoist chairman, addressing a mass meeting in Pokhara, in *The Himalayan Times*.

"I will give him my email address."

James F. Moriarty, US ambassador to Nepal, when asked if he will meet with Prachanda if the latter wants to share information about the alleged plot to assassinate US officials, at a media roundtable at the US Embassy.

"The commission members are making false claims as they think that the government might never make their report public."

Amik Sherchan, deputy Prime



Minister alleging that the members of Rayamajhi commission had not recommended specific action against the King for repressing the people's movement, speaking at Reporters' Club.

"All forceful acts must be stopped and seized properties returned before the Maoists can be inducted in the interim government."

Ram Chandra Poudel, general secretary of Nepali Congress (NC), talking to reporters.

"The seven parties are engaged in a

game to keep the Maoists out of the government."

Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, senior Maoist leader, talking to reporters in Pokhara.

"Important and complicated questions on the future of state structure and democratic organization of Nepal should be left to the constituent assembly to decide, as its democratic legitimacy will be vested in people's choice."

Erik Solheim, Norwegian Minister for International Development, at a press meet.

TRANSITION

RETURNED: Erik Solheim, Norwegian Minister for International Development, after completing his brief visit to Nepal.

Henrietta H. Fore, US Under Secretary of State for Management, after wrapping up her two-day visit to Nepal.

POSTPONED: The visit by British Minister for International Development Gareth Thomas (March 11-13), due to his pressing works related with parliament.

RENEWED: Indo-Nepal Trade Treaty, for five years, beginning March 6 this year.

NAMED: The 7871 m high Peak 29, as Harka Gurung Peak, after the renowned late geologist Dr. Harka Gurung, by the government.

LIFTED: Mahendra Police Club (MPC), this year's title of the Martyr Memorial League Tournament organized by All Nepal Football Association (ANFA). Tribhuvan Army Club (TAC) stood in second position followed by Three Stars Club this year. Likewise, Brigade Boys Club (BBC) and Saraswati

Club were relegated to B Division.

FORMED: A 46-member committee headed by deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister KP Oli to celebrate the golden jubilee of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Nepal and Sri Lanka.

AWARDED: Kamal Kumari Bhandari, English language teacher of a primary school in rural Chitwan, with prestigious Elton Innovation Award, by the British Council, for using innovative ways to teach the language in rural areas by using available newspapers.

NEA COULD MAKE TERRIBLE BLUNDERS

(Upper Trishuli Projects)

- By Dr. AB Thapa

It is reported that the NEA is considering to implement the Upper Trishuli A & B Projects. According to the Gandak basin Master Plan a single stage development of the Upper reach Trisuli will be the most attractive project. Such development of the Upper Trishuli will allow obtaining a head of about 835 m to generate 300 MW. However, it is also possible to develop the Upper Trishuli in two or three stages. It appears that the NEA is considering adopting the multi-stage option to develop the potential of the Upper reach Trisuli.

Upper Trisuli projects and the project to transfer the Langtang river flow from the water surplus Trisuli basin into the water deficit Bagmati and Kulekhani basins could be construed to adversely affect one another. If we are contemplating to engage private developers to take up the Upper Trisuli projects, we should not provide them with grounds to seek compensation for the reduction of the Trisuli flow as a result of the Langtang diversion to Bagmati and Kulekhani through the Melamchi route. While taking any decision on the implementation of the projects to utilize the potential of Upper reach Trishuli, we should be very careful to insure that the Langtang diversion possibility to augment the Melamchi, Bagmati and Kulekhani flows would not be adversely affected. A brief synopsis of the proposed Langtang diversion project to augment the flow of the Bagmati and Kulekhani rivers is presented hereinafter.

Langtang Diversion

The hydropower generation potential of the Langtang river has been significantly enhanced by a relatively large storage reservoir located in the upper reaches of this river. It can help to provide all through the year an uniform flow of about 15 cumecs in the middle and lower reaches. A total head of about 3500 meters could be utilized for power generation by 4 hydropower stations to be built in a cascade and out of them three power stations would be operating at an exceptionally high head of about 1000 meters or more. It also avails an opportunity to make full use of the existing structures like the storage dam, tunnels, power houses of the Kulekhani No-1 & No-2 hydropowers ever since suffering

from acute shortage of water for power generation. The development of the Langtang river would allow us to generate electricity at a rate perhaps the lowest in our region and **also to provide drinking water to the Katmandu valley for free.**

The Langtang Power Projects

The concept of the Langtang project solely for power generation was developed under the UNDP supported Gandak basin masterplan study. This concept requires some revision to include a new component aimed at supplying drinking water to Kathmandu valley. It necessitates discharging at the end the regulated Langtang water into the Melamchi river instead of the Bhotekosi (Trisuli).

According to the Gandak Basin Master Plan a 120m 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 Very 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 hydropowers could be built at 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."

A joint team of German, Japanese and US consultants has made an interesting reference to a Canadian high head project vis-à-vis the Upper Arun project to be operated at moderately high head. "It is worth mentioning that the search of the worldwide inventory of the existing hydropower installations identified only one plant with a combined head and flow magnitudes greater than that of the Upper Arun - Kemano in British Columbia, Canada". At present the electricity generated by the 896 MW Kemano Project with a 16.3 km long headrace tunnel operating at 800 m head provides power for Alcan's aluminum smelters at Kitimat at a cost below US cents 3 per KWh.

Power To Subsidize Water Supply

A Melamchi project conceived primarily as a power project linked with the existing Kulekhani hydropowers acutely suffering from water shortages along with the Langtang projects could provide Kathmandu people water almost for free. A Melamchi project exclusively for water supply is obviously very expensive. The project involves the construction of a 28 kms long delivery tunnel. Thus, the Melamchi tunnel is too long. Apart from it, the tunnel size adopted based on the construction requirement is also very big for a scanty dry season flow of only about 1.5 cumec. The proposed tunnel could be used as a transit route for the passage of surplus Melamchi and Langtang waters into the Kulekhani storage reservoir acutely suffering from water shortage.

After the Langtang diversion the Melamchi tunnel could be expected to run in full capacity of about 15 cumecs throughout the year. It would permit a 35 MW Melamchi tunnel hydropower operating at a head of about 300 meters to generate annually about 300 GWh firm energy, which is 50% more than the generation of the both Kulekhani No-1 and No-2 hydropower stations put together.

Water Supply To Kulekhani

The electricity generation of the Kulekhani projects

could be increased by 5 times if the combined flow of the Melamchi and the Langtang after setting aside adequate quantity of water for Kathmandu valley is delivered into the Kulekhani reservoir. It would be necessary to increase the capacity of the Kulekhani power stations. An additional 300 MW power station would be needed to utilize the 1000 meters head between the Kulekhani storage reservoir and the tailrace of the Kulekhani-2 near Bhainse.

New Ideas Should Be Explored

There is no denying the fact that countries all over world are at present engaged in fierce fights not in the battle field but in economic front and trying their utmost to find new ways to gain ground against their competitors. For this purpose even developing countries like ours are providing all out support to encourage and promote new research works in very complicated areas of science and technology

The possibility of developing the Langtang project for the generation of exceptionally cheap electricity on a big scale sufficient to meet our country's requirement for quite some time and also to supply drinking water to Katmandu valley for free should not remain a mystery to the institutions like the National Planning Commission, Academies or the ICIMOD. It hardly needs explanation that the institution like the ICIMOD is expected to rise above day to day office works to act as a think tank to reach out to member governments to sort out exceptionally vital problems confronting our region like the Kosi flood problem just in its own backyard. It could also help to develop awareness of the true value of the natural resources like the vast potential of the Langtang river that could be effectively utilized to gather rapid momentum in our efforts directed towards the socio-economic development of Nepal.

Langtang Projects Benefit/Cost

The total firm power generation of the proposed four power stations could be about 2500 GWh and their total capacity 550 MW. The projects could be developed in several stages. All of them are very high head power stations. At such high head the unit construction cost could be only about US \$ 1000 per KW capacity. The generation cost of the firm power could be slightly over US Cents 2 per KWh.

(Dr. Thapa writes on water resources)

US OFFICIAL'S VISIT

Superpower's Super Concern

The senior-most US official who came calling to Kathmandu expressed worries over Maoist violence and ethnic unrest

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

Though her visit was quite short, the Under Secretary of State for Management Henrietta H. Fore – the senior-most Bush administration official to visit Nepal since April change – made very important statements during the two-day trip that ended on Saturday (March 10).

Right at the Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA), she told reporters that she fully stands behind statements made and positions taken by her country's ambassador James Moriarty – who has been drawing huge criticism from a section of left-oriented politicians and civil society members for making disapproving remarks about the continued Maoist violence.

At the media roundtable held at the American Center on March 10, she said that the United States government is worried with two particular trends in current situation in Nepal, – the continuing Maoist violence and growing ethnic unrest. She warned that the two trends, if unresolved, threaten Nepal's democratic progress.

"The Maoists are now members of the interim parliament, and they have proclaimed their commitment to democracy. Yet, what have we seen? Violence and intimidation continue. Impunity continues," she said. She added that the Maoists themselves must finally renounce violence and begin acting like a mainstream political party. "If they cannot, then the United States believes they do not deserve membership in a coalition government whose other partners play by the rules

of civility and non-violence," she said.

Referring to the latest incident of a Maoist MP bragging at parliament about pistol in his pocket, the US official reminded what her colleague, Assistant Secretary Richard Boucher, during his visit to Kathmandu last November, had told reporters: "... you don't walk into Parliament with a gun in your pocket." "Sadly – and incredibly – the Maoists recently proved that statement wrong," she said.

Likewise, the US official added that the growing unrest among various ethnic groups in Nepal has also worried the US. "Unity and inclusiveness are central for Nepal's democratic transition and its future. Various groups are clamoring for dialogue. The United States hopes that Nepal's leaders can find an effective and transparent manner to engage them," she said.

"We support a peaceful, prosperous, and democratic future and we stand ready to help," she said.

Prachanda's Plot Allegations

The allegations made by Maoist chairman Prachanda that he has the information about plots by royalist elements to assassinate US officials posted in Nepal and pin the blame on Maoists has, quite naturally, generated a lot of concern to the US government.

During her visit with the Prime Minister also, Under Secretary of State Fore raised this issue and the PM assured to provide adequate security to the US officials in the country.

At the media roundtable, American ambassador James Moriarty has said that he was "stunned" by the statement made by Maoist chairman Prachanda over plots to kill US officials in Nepal. Reacting to Prachanda's statements made in Pokhara on Thursday, ambassador Moriarty said that Prachanda should immediately share the information with authorities. "As an ambassador, my most important job is to ensure protection of US officials, citizens and people who work with here," he said.

If Prachanda has evidences to support his claim, he should immediately provide that to authorities



Fore meeting with PM: Conveying the message

otherwise he should retract (the statement), he said. Moriarty termed the statements as malicious and dangerous if Prachanda had made them without evidence. Moriarty said the US government has no information about such plots though.

As ambassador Moriarty, Prachanda has made a dangerous statement, which if he fails to back up with evidences quickly, could even belittle his position. ■

JMCC REPORT

Arms Discrepancy

In the final report of the JMCC, the NA official has stated there are 781 weapons still unaccounted for

By SANJAYA DHAKALA

Adding to the voices about huge discrepancies in the number of Maoist combatants and their weapons registered by the UNMIN, the Nepali Army (NA) official has formally noted down that 781 of their weapons – were looted by the Maoists in the past – are still unaccounted for.

In the final report submitted by the Joint Monitoring Coordinating Committee (JMCC) including the representatives of the UNMIN, Nepali Army (NA) and Maoist army, the NA representative Brigadier General Shiva Ram Pradhan has said that out of the total 3,430 weapons as per the list provided by the Nepal Army to UNMIN, 781 weapons – including modern weapons, area weapons, and automatic machine guns – have not been registered.

“The total number of battle-tested modern weapons and their calibres/categories procured by the Maoists from abroad and those manufactured locally cannot be precisely verified. But over the ten years of conflict, large numbers of such weapons were seen to be in use. However, the number of such weapons now registered seems to be far less. The great discrepancy in the total number of weapons and combatants registered is also of serious concern to all,” he states in the report.

On the other hand, Pasang, deputy commander of Maoist army states that the Maoist Army has been loyal to the Agreement on the Monitoring of the Arms and Armies during the first phase of registration.

“The Maoist Army has registered all 3,475 of the weapons in its inventory. If the Maoist Army detects weapons in the

future that are presently out of our memory or control then we will inform the JMCC. We would like to express our commitment that if other weapons are found they will automatically be categorized as illegal in accordance with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Agreement on the Monitoring of the Arms and Armies.”

The report has been submitted to the government as well as the Maoist leadership. “It is now for the Government of Nepal and the CPN (M) to consider the findings of the JMCC report and conclude whether they are satisfied with the first phase of monitoring arms and armies. It is essential that the Government and the CPN(M) immediately finalize arrangements for security of the Maoist leadership, so that UNMIN can put in place full monitoring procedures for all Maoist arms,” said Ian Martin, UNMIN chief.

Martin added that the UNMIN, and the members of the JMCC, will investigate any alleged breaches of the Agreement on Monitoring Arms and Armies, including reports of weapons outside the cantonment sites which are not approved for the security of Maoist leaders.

The United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) completed the first phase of registration of Maoist combatants and weapons on 7 March 2007.

The total number of weapons registered by the UNMIN was 3,475 including 522 weapons for perimeter security and 96 weapons registered outside of cantonments. In addition, ammunition as well as Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) – at a safe

distance from cantonments have also been deposited.

In any situation of extended internal conflict, it is impossible to provide 100 percent accuracy or clarity regarding the completeness of arms separation, given the fog of war and competing claims and counterclaims, the JMCC report states.

The reports received from the Maoist Army and the interviews personally conducted by the Chairman of the JMCC give a generally plausible explanation of the discrepancy in numbers of weapons registered, it adds. “The Maoist Army has demonstrated the will to register and store what is by any estimation a significant weapons stock, including weapons procured and imported from outside Nepal. This indicates a seriousness of purpose by the Maoist Army that can broadly be described as satisfactory, although it does not preclude the possibility that arms caches may exist outside of the registration. Any such unregistered weapons would be treated as a violation of both existing agreements and the law of Nepal if found from this period forward,” the JMCC report adds.

The total figure of registered Maoist Army combatants at the end of the first phase of registration was 31,152. The second phase of registration – to begin in two weeks – will verify the legitimacy of those registered to ensure that they are not minors and that they joined the Maoist Army before the cut-off date established in the arms management agreement – 25 May 2006.

“The total of 31,152 appears significantly higher than many previous official and unofficial estimates of the Maoist army troop strength. The Maoist Army commanders maintain that the forces are legitimate and the increased numbers represent large numbers of militia members merged into the force before 25 May 2006.”

According to UNMIN, the decisions regarding the formation of an interim government, taking into account a judgment regarding the adequacy of the arms separation process, however, are political decisions to be made by Nepal’s political leaders. ■

ECONOMY OVERSHADOWED

As political events unfold with breakneck speed, economic issues have been swept beneath the carpet. Paralyzed by weeks of indefinite Terai bandh, the economy could face another round of problem as the agitating parties in Madhes have declared that they will continue to carry forward their programs such as customs closure. Ten months after the breathtaking April change, the much promised peace dividend has not happened. While politicians continue to concentrate on political agenda – which is not likely to change in the foreseeable future – the economy has become nobody's baby. However, in the absence of economic improvement, the political changes may fail to become sustainable. Even if only to institutionalize the political changes, the economic growth have become essential

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

- An Indian company with the largest investment in the eastern region has decided to shift its base from Nepal to India. Faced with unending bandhs, disputes and strikes, Arati Strips – with investment over Rs 2.8 billion – has decided to shift its base. It used to manufacture zinc plates. In the last fiscal year alone, it had exported zinc plates worth Rs 5.25 billion.

- Due to Terai bandh, over 450 containers carrying goods for export and import have been stranded at different places like Biratnagar, Birgunj,

Kathmandu, Raxaul and Kolkata. According to Nepal Freight Forwarders Association (NEFFA), the trade sector has been thoroughly crippled due to the bandh as over 90 percent of the country's trade takes place through land route. Traders are desperate due to rising demurrage and other charges due to the delay.

- Business community active in Morang-Sunsari corridor warned they will not pay taxes, revenue, bank interests, electricity/telephone charges for the period of bandh. After meeting

with them, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala assured to look into their demands and provide necessary concessions.

- A delegation of business leaders of the Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) met with Speaker Subas Nemwang along with various other ministers and presented a seven-point demand list. Their demands include declaring industry/business as peace zones; banning of bandhs and strikes in highways and major roads; waiver of

electricity and telephone charges and other taxes for the period of bandh, rescheduling of payment of bank loans/interests, among others.

The snippets of these recent news reports give a clear indication about the state of economy of the country.

On Tuesday (March 13), Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat made a fervent plea to all concerned to stop all kinds of bandhs and strikes. He said that the economy was bleeding due to these activities.

Dr. Mahat reminded that the country could have attained 5 percent GDP growth had the post-conflict period been free of such disruptions.

Since the day one he was appointed as the Finance Minister after April change, Dr. Mahat has been calling on all to give priority to economic agenda but to no avail.

As he watches with trepidations over the bleeding economy, the country continued to suffer from not only bandhs but huge surge of unproductive expenses – like over Rs 450 million already spent for the management of cantonments and upkeep of combatants; distribution of compensation to all kinds of victims; allocation of money for the holding of the elections, among others.

Although these issues are greatly important to ensure smooth political transition, their effects on the economy of a poor country like Nepal is quite obvious. It is not because of his stinginess that Dr. Mahat frequently snubs Maoist demand for more money for their combatants. "They should first give accounts of their spending to the government," he has repeatedly said.

Recently, another minister also drew the attention towards addressing economic issues. "As the country is preparing to resolve political agenda, there is a need to pursue economic agenda," said Gyanendra Bahadur Karki, Minister of State for Water Resources, speaking at a program in the capital. "Let us not waste any more time," said Karki,



Marketplace: Economic Stagnation

who is also a member of the government team formed to hold talks with agitating Madhesi and Janajati organizations.

Not only the minister and economists of the country, even visiting foreign officials have started pointing out to the need for taking care of economic issues.

"It has been the experience of my country that political freedoms must be accompanied by economic freedom," said Henrietta H. Fore, the Under Secretary of State of US government, who made a brief trip to the country last week.

Adds economist Dr. Raghav Dhoj Pant, executive director of Institute for Development Studies (IfDS), "Without creating jobs and improving economy, we will not be able to arrest the socio-economic and political problems. Just look at the genesis of our conflict. They started and rapidly spread in districts with poor economy. This should teach us some lessons."

Desperate Situation

Frustrated by the unending strikes, FM Dr. Mahat has warned that the government was planning to adopt tough measures to stop bandhs.

Earlier, talking to delegation of

business community, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala had assured that the eight parties will take steps to ban such bandhs and strikes.

"The government is doing homework to keep the highways always open, end bandhs forever and provide strict security to industries," PM Koirala told a visiting delegation of business community in Biratnagar on Saturday.

During their interaction with the PM, the business community asked for security so that they can open their factories. PM also assured that the government will compensate for losses due to vandalism during bandhs and also assured concessions in bank interests during such period.

Meanwhile, the desperate private sector representatives are running from pillar to post clamoring for attention towards their plight.

"The private sector makes significant contribution to the economy. The strikes and bandhs for the past one and a half month has crippled not only the private sector but the total socio-economy. People's fundamental right to do business has been violated," the delegation of Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce (FNCCI) informed Speaker Subas Nemwang a few days ago.



Wage earner: Hit by strikes

Stating that nobody was paying attention to the plight of private sector, the FNCCI presented a seven-point demand list including demands for declaring highways and major roads bandh-free zones; rescheduling of their bank loans and interests; waiver of electricity/telephone bills and other taxes for the period of bandhs, among others.

Power & Tourism

Despite all the doom and gloom, Nepal's economy pins its hope on twin promises of hydropower and tourism – but efforts to exploit them in a major way are nowhere to be seen

For a country endowed with natural and cultural resources, Nepal quite rightly pins its hope on the development of tourism and hydropower.

Quite unfortunately though, these promises have remained just that – promises. Though the country is almost completing one year since the remarkable April change last year, people are still unable to taste the peace dividend.

Tourism has not been able to witness the growth given the continuous bandhs, strikes and instability. The unrest in Terai and instability in politics has hurt its prospects.

On the other hand, due to lack of exploitation, the hydro power remains untapped potential. Worse still, the country is facing crippling hours of load-shedding.

KHUDI HYDROPOWER

Small Addition

Khudi Hydropower starts commercial generation

By A CORRESPONDENT

Though it is small in quantity, the completion of Khudi Hydropower project has lessened the burden on the national grid, which is under pressure due to energy crisis.

At a time when the country is facing crippling hours of load-shedding, a private sector company has commissioned a new hydro project of small scale.

Despite having started its construction amid the escalating conflict, the Khudi Hydropower Limited (KHL) completed the construction of 4 MW strong Khudi hydropower project within 15 months. It was formally inaugurated at Khudi – 9 km north of Besisahar in Lamjung district on March 8. Speaking at the ceremony to commemorate the inauguration of the project, Minister of State for Water Resources Gyanendra Bahadur Karki congratulated the developers for completing the project in an exemplary manner despite conflict.

“Although this is a small project, the success of its construction can provide us with models for future,” said Gyanendra Lal Pradhan, chairman of KHL.

The KHL is promoted by three developers including Butwal Power Company (60% share); SCP Hydro International Inc, Canada (25%) and Lamjung Electricity Development Company (15%).

The KHL project is located along Khudi river in Simpani, Khudi and Ghanapokhara VDCs of Lamjung district. The power generated is evacuated through 14 km long 33 KV transmission line to Udipur substation. The project was put into commercial operation on December 30. At present, the project is supplying electricity to Khudi, Besisahar, Dumre, Bandipur and nearby areas.

Completed at the total cost of Rs

560 million – Rs 40 million less than initial cost estimation – the project has also invested over Rs 24 million in social mitigation efforts with the help of CEDA. “We have electrified parts of three VDCs, supported 26 schools, set up health posts, constructed football ground, motorable road to village and provided training to many local people,” said Pradhan.

According to Francois Vitez, Director of SCP Hydro International – a Canadian investing company – the result at Khudi has generated a lot of interest among big Canadian investors about projects in Nepal.

The Canadian delegation led by Andre Boulanger has already met with Finance Minister, Minister of State for Water Resources and Managing Director of Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA).

Boulanger, chief of distribution of Hydro Quebec, speaking at the commemoration ceremony, said that Nepal should keep its vision alive so that it can succeed. Hydro Quebec is the largest hydropower utility in Canada with the generation capacity totaling 40,000 MW.

Besides, the team of Khudi developers have already identified Nyadi project as their next venture. “Once the PPA (Power Purchase Agreement) is sealed, we can start the 24-MW strong Nyadi within three months,” said Pradhan.

Meanwhile, Pradhan said the National Planning Commission (NPC) needs to upgrade the plans so that Nepal can develop at least 5000 MW power between 2007 and 2017. “This alone will take the GDP to double digit growth,” he said. According to him, the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) can develop few thousand megawatts of power on its own, the private sector can add few hundreds and the rest through foreign investment.

“The Government Feels No Compulsion To Act”

Dr. Raghav Dhoj Pant

Dr. Raghav Dhoj Pant is the executive director of the Institute for Development Studies (IfDS). Dr. Pant, former acting vice chairperson of the National Planning Commission (NPC), spoke on the overall situation of economy.

How do you see the current situation of economy?

It is quite obvious that the situation is not good. But I don't see any compulsion on the part of the government to act to set things straight. I see that all the actors – the government, the financial sector and others – are feeding on poverty. In fact, it is the poverty that is sustaining our economy. And poverty itself is very high, but statistically declining. Since poverty is important to sustain our economy, I doubt there is any target to alleviate poverty even.

So, how is the economy running, then?

There is a very interesting vicious circle that revolves around poverty. Population is growing and young people have left for overseas due to lack of jobs in the country. They send back billions of rupees as remittances, based on which the banks and other financial institutions are running. This has increased our foreign exchange deposit. Consumer spending has also been pushed by the remittance leading to fairly growing revenue (out of imports) for the government. As such, the government is under no pressure to do anything more since the macro-economic indicators are fairly stable. This is how our economy is running. I want to add here that while India is enjoying demographic dividend, Nepal is suffering from demographic crisis. In India, there is a huge population of young people. Recently The Economist reported that the pool of highly qualified graduates in India will

be twice as large as China within few years. India is reaping dividends from its population. On the other hand, in Nepal we have been incapable of providing jobs to our youths forcing them to go overseas for works.

How do you read the economic policies followed by the current government?

I do not find any economic policy aimed at bringing about change in the situation. There is no policy to uplift the economy. As I said earlier, the authorities have no motivation to do anything more. They are content at just getting by. Unless they face serious crises to economy, they won't feel tempted to take any constructive initiative. There is high but statistically declining poverty and the receipts from remittances associated with it appear to have generated an impression of a self-generating well managed process of the macro economic structure. And, this has led both the government and the central bank not to hurry to initiate new policy measures. Neither the government nor the political parties feel the urgent need to take initiative in the area of economic management.

There have been continuous bandhs and strikes. How have they impacted the economy?

This again is quite obvious. However, till now, there has not been any study to measure the impact of such bandhs. But, of course, the bandhs hit at the transport, trade, manufacturing, consumption etc. The continuous bandhs have definitely hurt the economy. But as I said earlier, without the crisis our leaders will not be inclined to take any initiative.

So, will Nepal's economy continue like this or will it face grave crisis?



There is no indication that Nepal's economy will collapse because there are still resources pouring into the nation in the name of remittances or foreign aid. Besides, though it is small, Nepal is in a strategic location and other countries will not allow its economy to totally collapse. But if our leaders are to prevent economic crisis, they must address the issue of employment, first and foremost. I do not think depending on remittance income is wise or appropriate. Already we are noticing huge social costs of the unbridled growth of foreign employment.

What about inflation?

That is going to be another serious challenge. Besides, India is also suffering from inflation and there is quite a panic about rising prices there.

You have been talking about discrepancy in exchange rate vis-à-vis Indian currency. Can you elaborate?

There is quite a discrepancy in the exchange rate between Nepalese and Indian currency. I don't think the current exchange rate (at Rs 160 for IRs 100) is realistic. We have to depreciate it to about Rs 180. We should not make it a prestige issue. The central bank can just let the market fix the exchange rate also.

“NA Knows That They Have Bright Future Under The Govt Of Elected Leadership”

-Bishnu Dutta Upreti

Secretary at the Ministry of Defense, BISHNU DUTTA UPRETI, has worked under two different systems at the Ministry. Fifty-three-years-old Upreti is retiring in mid-June after completing his five years tenure. Born in Nuwakot and grown up in Chitwan, Secretary Upreti spoke to KESHAB POUDEL on various issues regarding the new situation. Excerpts:

Till a year ago, Nepal Army functioned under the guidance of Royal Palace and now the Army is detached from the Royal Palace. Following the promulgation of new interim constitution and new army act, its new attachment is with the government accountable to the people through the Ministry of Defense

How do you see the role of Ministry of Defense in the changed context?

In the present changed context and this transitional phase, the role of Defense Ministry, philosophically and theoretically has changed drastically. To work in a changed context and changed role, we need legal basis. Following the new political change and restoration of parliament, the power was shifted from place to government. The parliament declaration clearly shifted the traditional power of King to prime minister. After the declaration of parliament, there was growing concern in national and international level regarding the role of Nepalese Army. In this new circumstance, the government formulated new Nepalese Army Act replacing the old act of 1960. The act was not amended for about five decades. Earlier, the army was guided by government regulations, orders and directives of the Royal Palace.

What is the difference in new and old army act?

There are drastic changes in the new and old army act. The new Army Act was drafted in accordance with the declaration of parliament making the army accountable to popular government elected from parliament. After brining new act, we are now working to draft new regulations in accordance with the requirements of the act. New regulation is needed to regularize all its functions.

What is the status of National Defense Council now?

New interim constitution and the new act have replaced the old concept of Defense Council. First of all, the composition of Defense Council has changed now. Earlier, there used to be three members in Defense Council consisting of prime minister, defense minister and the chief of the army staff but now it consists of five members - prime minister as chairman and three ministers nominated by prime minister as members.

Has it been activated after the promulgation of new constitution?

The Defense Council is not activated yet. Since new structure of Defense Council is yet to be constituted, the old secretariat of National Defense Council is transformed to new DC in accordance with interim constitution and new act. In the old Council, defense secretary was given role as the convener and major general of then Royal Nepal Army as co-convener.

What institutional status has changed now?

According to the new act, defense secretary is the secretary of National Security Council. There is no provision of coordinator and co-coordinator. We have yet to decide how its organizational structure will be. We are working on that.

There are reports in the news papers that the

government is recalling its military attaché from Bangladesh and Pakistan. What do you say?

Two years ago then Nepalese government appointed defense attachés in Bangladesh and Pakistan. In SAARC countries, Nepal has defense attachés in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. The defense attaché was opened in Pakistan keeping in mind the training relations between Nepal Army and Pakistan Army. Along with India, United Kingdom, United States, China and Bangladesh, Pakistan is providing many training programs to Nepal Army. These are the countries where Nepal has frequent contacts through the high level trainings. The defense attachés were posted there to work as facilitator for Nepalese trainees and the concerned defense and military officials of those countries.

If that is the case, why the government suddenly decided to remove such positions?

According to the Ministry of Finance and Foreign Affairs, the government relocated the resources utilized in these defense attaché to newly opened Nepalese embassies in Australia, South Korea and Denmark. The government also removed posting of Nepalese police in Nepalese Embassy in New Delhi.

When did you know about it?

Ministry of Defense was not consulted before taking this decision. The proposal was forwarded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the cabinet coordinating with the Ministry of Finance. We have already posted two colonials as military attachés, who even sacrificed their promotions for two years in written. We are facing problems for removing them before completion of their tenures.

What is the role of Ministry of Defense?

The role of defense ministry as a coordinator is very crucial. The ministry deals with national security related matters particularly related with Nepal Army. This ministry's duty is to oversee all related matters in Nepal Army including recruiting and promotion.

How do you see the changing role of NA?

Till a year ago, Nepal Army functioned under the guidance of Royal Palace and now the Army is detached from the Royal Palace. Following the promulgation of new interim constitution and new army act, its new attachment is with the government accountable to the people through the Ministry of Defense and the ministry has to coordinate between the army and government. The army has to work now under the guidance of government given through defense ministry. Since this is new situation, there might be certain uneasiness in adjustments with new situation.

What is happening to arms and other military equipment ordered by previous King's government from other countries?

Then government ordered military equipment in accordance with the demand of Nepal Army. We signed the agreement sending some money as advance. Following change of regime, Ministry of Finance asked to cancel the order. Now the government realizes that the equipment are essential for Nepal Army so it is arranging the resources to procure the equipments ordered in the past. So far as two airplanes ordered from China are concerned, the government is requesting Chinese manufactures to convert to use as civilian aircraft.

How do you see the role of army in development?

During the time of peace, army is always confined to barracks but they remain active in development works. Traditionally, Nepal Army has been playing important role in the process of construction of infrastructures like highway and road. Along with taking up the responsibility of providing security to vital installations, national parks and banks, Nepal Army plays important role in development works as well. Following formation of new government, it cancelled the unified command system and army was sent to barracks. Nepal Army is now taking up responsibility in constructing 14 road projects as they have already constructed number of other such highways in northern parts and mid-hill. Some major road projects include Chhinchu-Jajarkot Road, Jumla Highway, Beni-Jomsom Road and so on. Nepal army continued the construction of roads even during conflict period.

How does the government see it?

After site inspection, finance minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat and vice chairman of National Planning Commission were highly impressed by their performance in the role building. Frankly speaking, Nepal Army has expertise in road construction.

How do you see the role of Nepal Army in UN peace keeping operation?

There is growing demand of Nepal Army in UN peace-keeping. Recently, a team of 350 Nepal Army went to Haiti to conduct provincial elections. Nepal Army is now deployed in 11 countries under the Peace Keeping Operation. The size of peace keeping battalion is varied from a small unit to big battalion. We are taking part in Lebanon with fully mechanized battalion. Nepal Army personnel are performing their peace-keeping roles in Haiti, Sierra Leone, Congo, Eritrea and Burundi. Their role is highly appreciated by the UN and local militia groups. Nepal Army has gained high fame in international peace-keeping operations. They rotate every six months and there is rotation of 3000 in every six months. More than 53,000 Nepalese Army personnel have already served in UN Peace Keeping operation.

What is your experience of working at the Ministry of Defense?

I have seen four prime ministers in three years and two regimes. I worked under the constitution of Kingdom of Nepal 1990 as well as the new Interim Constitution. When I was appointed, Surya Bahadur Thapa was prime minister. Then came Sher Bahadur Deuba and then King's direct rule and now new government established under

the mandate of Janandolan II. This ministry has faced all kinds of governments. Working under three different political environments, I am fortunate enough to get knowledge about security issues.

What is the role of army when they are in barracks?

Though they are confined to barrack, army's primary role is to observe Nepal's overall internal security as well as international security issue. It must be ready to move whenever the government asks them to perform their role.

Is it true that Nepal Army has established a battalion for terai?

Actually, Nepal Army is an inclusive organization. It consists of more than 42 castes and ethnic groups from all 75 districts of Nepal. There is representation from all over Nepal. This is an inclusive army. Even Magars have a separate battalion. We should have pride for our national army which represents all the caste and ethnic groups. There is a separate battalion for people of Terai and it was established a long time ago. NA is also recruiting women in the army. There is no discrimination against any groups, cast and gender.

How do you see the new role of the army?

In accordance with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, Nepal Army is permitted to take care of its traditional role like providing security to national parks, vital national installations and taking part in rescue and rehabilitation during the time of natural disaster.

What plans the government has to make national security more effective?

In the changed context, we need to see overall security strategy in national context. Ministry of Defense is one component of national security. In terms of national security perspective, home ministry also a part of internal security. Our security sector consists of Nepal Army, Nepal Police, Armed Police Force, and Nepal Investigation Department. These are the four major components of security sector. Some time private security firms are also utilized. In the present context, we are also debating over restructuring the national security.

Do we have defined security strategy?

If we have to develop comprehensive security strategy, we have to define the perspective and objective. We need to redefine what is the relation between civil and military? What is the role of military and media? In the present context when Maoists are joining the mainstream politics we have to formulate different policies. At a time when we are setting up new values on the basis of democracy, our priority should be to build democratic identity of security forces. We need to maintain security forces by making them professional and accountable. For this, security forces need to build trust and confidence. In the changing context, we need to improve human rights standard of the army. Army should follow the international norms and safeguard and respect the human rights. ■



Actually, Nepal Army is an inclusive organization. It consists of more than 42 castes and ethnic groups from all 75 districts of Nepal. There is representation from all over Nepal. This is an inclusive army. We should have pride for our national army which represents all the caste and ethnic groups.

ROLE OF OPINION BUILDERS

Unstable Op inions And Political Instability

The role of opinion builders is so inconsistent and contradictory that they have confused the people

By KESHAB POUDEL

From ideology to their political base, there are many uncommon things among opinion builders like politicians, elites and media houses. What they have in common is inconsistency and contradiction in explaining the country's situation.

Whether octogenarian prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala or CPN-UML leaders Madhav Kumar Nepal, Bharat Mohan Adhikary or CPN-Maoist leader Prachanda and Dr. Baburam Bhattarai or rightist leaders Surya Bahadur Thapa, Rabindra Nath Sharma, Pashupati Sumsher Rana or Dr. Tulsi Giri, their commonalities are inconsistencies and contradictions in expressing opinions.

Among media houses, whether those running with foreign investment or indigenous investment, they do not have much differences so far as covering inconsistencies and contradictions about the country's situation is concerned. It seems that the role of opinion builders is to express unstable opinions and to promote political instability.

From half a dozen of TV channels to about 200 hundred FM Radio Stations and number of broadsheet dailies with wider reach, they are the foremost opinion makers. However, media—which is supposed to disseminate accurate and objective information—are too full of inconsistencies and contradictions. They don't care about the opinion of common people but work to protect the interest of promoters. Not analyzing the events and trends impartially and objectively, media spread inflated and sensational ideas and jargons into the society.

Whether in promulgating new interim constitution or proposing amendment of it or declaring republic, opinion makers'

remarks are full of contradictions and inconsistencies and there is virtually no voice reflecting the actual opinion of common people. They impose their imported views and ideas to the people.

CPN-UML

Among many leftist leaders, CPN UML leaders have set a record in delivering inconsistent and contradictory opinions. Bharat Mohan Adhikary issued two inconsistent statements on interim constitution within a week.

"If the interim constitution need to be promulgated as it was presented to the cabinet, otherwise there will be bloodbath," said Adhikary who was one of the members of the constitution drafting committee of 1990 (February 12). Next week he said, "The interim constitution needs amendment to address the problems of Madhesis and Janjatis (February 25)."

Nepal has undoubtedly been facing very serious crises in its long history as the peace has been disturbed and progress has retarded. The institutions related with education, administration, economy, security etc have received a serious setback. Unstable opinions and political instability have done further harm.

"One of the first requirement for the society is to get in-depth stock-taking of the events that require objective analysis of the situation. The second requirement at present is to find out real solution of the pressing problems that

also require a detailed analytical opinion to be generated in the society. Unfortunately, that is not available to the people as they generally feel one thing at their core of the heart but that is not reflected into the expressions of media persons, elites and political activists. In a traditional society with a typical Nepali character, there are contradictions between the realities and aspirations for the change," said a political analyst.

According to the analyst, had people been the only real determinants of political events, those contradictions would have been understandable. But due to its peculiar geo-political situation many unseen and ulterior interests enter



PM Koirala: Caught in contradictions

into the situation, which make the contradictions more complicated to understand. This problem is with everybody who has a role in the formation of public opinion.

The class of political activists always appear to be inconsistent and vacillations in diagnosis of situation as well as prescriptions of the solutions. Take a case of CPN-UML general secretary Nepal who too is inconsistent in analyzing the situation.

"The monarchists and regressive forces are trying to sabotage the elections for Constituent Assembly elections," said CPN-UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal. (In Gulmi on Thursday). "Nepali Congress and CPN-Maoists are trying to postpone the elections," he said in Palpa on

Sunday.

CPN-Maoists

CPN-Maoist leader Prachanda too has similar problems. "Monarchists are main hurdles to hold the elections for Constituent Assembly," said Prachanda addressing the mass meeting in Nepalgunj. "Nepali Congress and CPN-UML are hatching conspiracy to prevent the elections for Constituent Assembly," he said while addressing a rally in Pokhara.

The most sensationalized leader of CPN-Maoist has also demonstrated a very interesting conversion from revolutionary ideologue to revisionist parliamentarian. CPN-Maoist leader Prachanda has renounced the violence but he is yet to regret the atrocities committed by them during their armed insurrection.

One of the top theoreticians of that party Dr. Baburam Bhattarai has in his book "Monarchy Vs Democracy" published from New Delhi presented his set of contradictory statements. Whatever views they held before the Royal massacre of June 1, 2001, after the event they made their earlier stand irrelevant. Dr. Bhattarai expressed his views thus, "Despite differences on many issues, an important contribution of Shah Kings (from Prithvi Narayan Shah to King Birendra) has been to preserve Nepali independence and sovereign status from the hands of British imperialism and later from Indian expansionism. The contribution made by Kings – from Prithvi Narayan Shah to King Birendra – will be valued highly by the Nepali people for ages."

Published in June 2005, the book Monarchy Vs Democracy consists of various articles written by Dr. Bhattarai. In his article "Let's Not Legitimize the New Kot Massacre," Dr. Bhattarai adds, "There should not be any doubt that RAW which had already found their Lendup Dorje (the Sikkimese leader who collaborated with India during the annexation of Sikkim) in Girija (the current pro-Indian Nepali Congress prime minister), aligned the new Jigme Singay with their Lendup Dorje for the

Bhutanization of Nepal, with a goal of eventual Sikkimization of Nepal."

There were times when Maoists were lavish in their expressions in the praise from King Prithvi Narayan Shah to King Birendra but now the institution of monarchy is the only hindrance between them and the prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala.

Koirala As A Republican

Although Maoist leaders including Prachanda seem to have confusion about prime minister Koirala's conviction on republic, Koirala, however, converted into a republican just after the dissolution of House of Representatives in 2002. Koirala, who renewed his own views against the monarchy in his home town of Biratnagar on March 12, 2007, honestly and boldly expressed his inner conviction long time back giving up his earlier stand as a constitutional monarchist.

As prime minister Koirala has multifaceted image of a monarchist, whether ceremonial or constitutional, or Loktantrick or Republican, in his recently published image building publication "Simple Conviction," he expresses his inner conviction about the monarchy.

"The moment I heard of the dissolution of parliament, I had the impression that it would be really difficult to give continuity to monarchy in the country. I concluded that monarchy was to end with the dissolution of parliament. Monarchy seemed to be at its deathbed owing to King Gyanendra's folly. The King saying he believes in democracy had been meaningless," said Koirala to his interviewer journalist Sital Koirala in April 26, 2003.

Evergreen Leadership

In other countries, leadership change in the new context but it is only in Nepal



Gautam: Points of agreement amid contra-

where politicians remain at the leadership despite changes in the issues and priorities. "The same leader continues to lead the line of national reconciliation consisting of King and democratic forces and between democratic forces and extremist communist shouldering republican slogan. Whatever the political change, the same politician maintains his supreme position in the leadership by leading a front of all republicans against the institution of monarchy," said the analyst.

Not only centrists and leftists, the rightist brackets of politicians like Thapa, Sharma, Rana, and Dr. Giri, too, have similar characters. In almost half century of political experiments from party-less Panchayat system under active leadership of King to these new versions of Loktantric democracy with absentee monarchy, they always claim to be right. As history itself is explicit, it is not necessary to go into details - though inconsistency is the essence of their politics.

The politicians of left brackets, too, are always in the leadership. The two top leaders of CPN-UML general secretary Nepal and Adhikary who were in the drafting committee of previous constitution which functioned well till the Maoist insurgency created an abnormal situation in the country - held power in the King's government

declaring that induction of leaders of CPN-UML in the government was a partial correction of regression.

During the direct rule of King Gyanendra, CPN-UML leader Adhikary and his colleagues were in coalition government shouldering major portfolios of finance, trade and industry. "Now not only the same party but the same persons, having the same privilege in the leadership, take it for granted that the people have no memory of their involvement as the active leaders of the King's government. Today they do not feel responsible for the derailment of constitutional experiment as the monarchy was an easy scapegoat for them, too," said the analyst.

South African Experiment

For foreigners with a western education background, they can easily explain the reality. Although this was his first encounter with Nepal's constitution-making process, a scholar from South Africa Nicholas Haysom spoke the fact of Nepal. He was much closer to the reality than any talked about elites and academicians of the country.

"I don't know the situation in your country. It will be largely on the people of Nepal to decide whether to retain the monarchy or to introduce the republic," said Haysom (See Spotlight March 9-15). "Writing a good constitution is easy as we have knowledge to do it. Making it good is going to be important."

"A new born democracy in South Africa was able to stabilize democratic process. Not only due to the wise leadership of Nelson Mandela but because of presence of such elites and opinion builders of that country," said the analyst. "Because of them the democratic process has been stabilized and economic prosperity of nation materialized. It is not possible for those scholars to prescribe a suitable model of constitution in Nepal. South Africa is among several models of democracy but all these models were strengthened by the presence of balanced and enlightened class of opinion builders."

Unfortunately, Nepal lacks those kinds of institutional support in its search for an appropriate model of constitution.

Nepal has lost recently a most appropriate constitution not by its inherent deficit but due to the lack of appropriate awareness and conduct to make it success.

"Till these drawbacks of inconsistencies and contradictions remain in the body politic of Nepal, no substantial gain can be recorded by merely changing the constitution and forms of government," said the analyst.

Points of Agreement

Amid Contradictions

One of the silver linings of present crisis is that there are points of agreement in the postures of disagreement. There is a consensus within the contradictions. Opinion leaders of the country are horrified by the lurking threat of disintegration and chaos in the country but unfortunately all have different outlook for the solution. There is consensus among political leaders that the integrity of the country is much more endangered since the change in April 2006. But if that is correct, who is to blame?

CPN-UML leader Bamdev Gautam and Rastriya Janshakti Party leader Dr. Prakash Chandra Lohani represent two opposite viewpoints. Dr Lohani is known for his liberal ideas and has Panchayati background while Gautam is an extremist leftist within CPN-UML. One was supposed to be the loser by Jan Andolan II and other was on the victorious side of that movement. But both are alarmed over the crisis of nation's survival. But unfortunately, they cannot find out a common solution within a concept of national reconciliation.

Surviving in Equilibrium

Although opinion builders are



Parliament: Plethora of voices

inconsistent and contradictory in their statement, Nepal's own geographical reality has no contradictions. Whether Nepal becomes republican state or monarchical, no one can change its geopolitical situation.

"As Charles Dickens has mentioned in his book Tale of Two Cities, it was the best as well as worst of the times in the history. It may be sheer day-dreaming for the best of time, because our everyday life has been going through the worst of times," said the analyst. "Despite all difficulties, Nepal is neither East Timor, Cambodia nor Afghanistan. As long as block headed leaderships, who are there in Beijing and New Delhi, care for their own national interests, Nepal could not face a tragic end. In this space of peace, the world community especially democratic west has come out with enormous empathy and support to the people of Nepal and for the appropriate management of the crisis at this critical and unusual juncture," said the analyst. "As long as equilibrium between two juggernauts is there and as long as this space contributes something to the people of Nepal, but it will not be wiped out from map of the globe." ■

WATER AND SANITATION

Crisis Of Resources

End Water Poverty Coalition urges G8 leaders to recognize sanitation and water as basic human rights and fundamental to poverty reduction

By KESHAB POUDEL

Renu Khadka, 24, living in a rented land at the bank of Bagmati river in Koteshwor, just a few kilometers away from capital city, has to spend almost two hours to fetch a bucket of water from a well. Although Khadka, a mother of three children, belongs to so-called higher caste, people from nearby communities treat her as an untouchable because of the unhygienic place.

Khadka is not the only woman to face these kinds of problems. Many people living in urban areas and rural parts of Nepal have similar stories to tell. The water and sanitation are not only life-sustainers but also important components to uplift the social status.

"Don't talk about the quality of water and don't talk about residential areas with sanitation. If we demand more than this, we will have to lose everything," said Khadka, who seeks support of her seven year old girl child. "As the water level has depleted, we don't know where to go for water," she said.

For billions of poor people of world, their hope to have drinking water and access to sanitation can materialize only if the world's richest countries make certain commitments to their cause.

As the group of world's richest countries of the world, the G8 has the power to make huge changes in development of drinking water and sanitation. Since the G8 summit meeting is scheduled to be held in Germany, the End Water Poverty Coalition has urged Germany to explicitly recognize the slow progress in extending access to sanitation and clean water.

As a global initiative, members of the

End Water Poverty - consisting of representatives of local non-governmental organizations and Water Aid Nepal's representatives - met with Germany Embassy officials in Kathmandu urging Germany to use its leadership of the G8 in 2007 to address the water and sanitation crisis in Nepal and globally.

The coalition, among others, also urged Germany to ensure that the G8 Summit commits to a Global Action Plan for sanitation and water to ensure services for the world's poorest people.

From social status to gender, education and health, access to drinking water and sanitation is

prerequisite in a drive to fight poverty.

Nepal has been making efforts to increase the access to water and sanitation to remote areas. But the country is yet to address the sanitation and drinking water supply even in urban areas like capital Kathmandu.

"Germany is in a unique position to make huge changes in the lives of

millions of poor people throughout the world. It needs to use the G8 to initiate a task force to prepare a Global Action Plan to be adopted at the 2008 G8 Summit in Japan. Our coalition members in Europe are pushing for this to happen. In Nepal, our link with Germany is through the Germany Embassy here and we met the Embassy officials to have this message heard," say the coalition members.

As 2015 deadline set by Millennium Development Goals is coming closer, Nepal seems to be in no position to meet the goals of providing access to drinking



Unsafe water: Cause of many problems

water and sanitation to all of its population.

"One in three people do not have access to drinking water. Similarly, every two in three do not have access to sanitation in Nepal. Every year more than 13,000 children die in Nepal before completing one year due to water related diseases," said Umesh Pandey, director

of Nepal Water For Health (NEWAH). "Since Germany is second largest country contributing in water and sanitation: We are expecting that Germany will include this as an agenda."

Although the situation is so pathetic, Nepal, which has to address number of other issues, does not have adequate resources to invest in the water and sanitation sector. "The access to water and sanitation is prerequisite to alleviate poverty. Leaders of world's richest country will hear this voice," said Lazana Manandhar, executive director of Lumanti, an NGO working in sanitation sector.

At a time when Nepal is facing a huge resource gap to provide sanitation and drinking water to all of its citizens, the initiative taken by various NGOs under End Water Poverty, an international campaign calling for sanitation and water for all, urging G8 leaders to take global water and sanitation gives some reasons for hope. "Without sanitation and water, there can be no sustainable development in health, education, and livelihoods, locking people into a cycle of poverty and disease," said Sanjaya Adhikary, country representative of Water Aid Nepal.

According to the End of Water Poverty, billions of people live in the same kind of squalor and disease that was eradicated long ago in the rich world. Without sanitation and water there can be no sustainable development in health, education and livelihoods, locking poor people into a cycle of poverty.

Along with the resource gaps, there is also gap in coordination among the agencies working to increase access of sanitation and drinking water. "As there are various agencies working in the sanitation and drinking water, they don't have only one agenda," said Pandey. There are 23 agencies under the UN working in water and sanitation.

According to Water Aid Nepal's 2004 report, to reach the sanitation target, an additional 14,000 households need to be

served per month between 2000 and 2015, and an additional 11,300 households need to be served per month to reach the drinking water target. The total financial requirement to meet these targets is US\$ 1,087 million - the resource availability for 2000 to 2015 is US\$ 755 million resulting in an annual resource gap of US\$ 23 million.

"Our experiences have shown that increased access to sanitation and water can bring a lot of change in the human life," said Rajendra Aryal, president of Drinking Water Consumer Federation.

Providing access to drinking water and sanitation to all Nepalese is primarily a national responsibility. The government, however, lacks resources to invest in this area.

Published by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and National Planning Commission, Millennium Development Goals Needs Assessment for Nepal says that the total cost of attaining the MDG on water supply and sanitation for 2005-2015 amounts to Rs 137,398.2 million at 2004/05 constant prices.

As the government is not in a position to allocate such huge resources, only a support from international donor communities can make difference to the poor people of Nepal living in various part of the country.

"This is a global crisis and the G8 countries can bring a change. By the cancellation of debt and announcement of doubling of the aid, the G8 countries have shown that they are committed to the welfare of people living in Africa and Asia. We hope they will give priority to the water and sanitation," said James Wicken, Asia Regional and Advocacy



Drinking water access: Precious reach

and Policy Advisor, Water Aid Nepal.

According to the Human Development Report 2006, Nepal falls in the category of countries with sanitation coverage less than 40 percent. Inequality in water provision relates not just to access and expenditure but also to price. Price rise steeply as water passes through intermediaries i.e. trucks, vendors, tanks. In Kathmandu, the municipal water utility reaches about three quarters of the population but half of the poor depend upon public taps.

Whether it is Nepal's needs assessment or Water Aid Nepal's study, all the reports clearly show that Nepal require a major increase in donor funding to properly finance the increase in water and sanitation access. At the same time, there is also the need for coordinated efforts to provide facilities at grass root level.

As it has done in the past by doubling the aid and cancellation of debt of poor countries of Asia and Africa, there lies hope on G8 summit regarding the increased access to water and sanitation for poor people like Khadka. ■

UNICEF ON INTER-COUNTRY ADOPTION

On the eve of International Conference on Inter-Country Adoption being held in Kathmandu 11-13 March, the UNICEF hoped that it will lead to the ratification of the Hague Convention on Inter-Country Adoption and the adoption of national laws and mechanisms to regulate in-country and inter-country adoption.

"The Hague Convention is designed to put into action the principles regarding inter-country adoption which are contained the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) which Nepal has ratified." said Gillian Mellso, UNICEF's Representative in Nepal.

"These principles include ensuring that adoption is authorized only by competent authorities, and that inter-country adoption does not result in improper financial gain for those involved in it."

According to UNICEF these provisions are meant first and foremost to protect children, and also have the positive effect of providing assurance to prospective adoptive parents that their child has not been the subject of illegal and detrimental practices.

Referring to the increasing trend of families from wealthy countries wanting to adopt children from other countries, Mellso said, "Lack of education and oversight, particularly in the countries of origin, coupled with the potential for financial gain, has spurred the unfortunate growth of an industry around adoption. This means that profit, rather than the best interests of the children, takes centre stage. Abuses include the sale and abduction of children, coercion of parents, and bribery, as well as trafficking to individuals whose intentions are to exploit rather than care for children."

Mellso said, "Adoption should always be the last resort for the child. The CRC, which guides UNICEF's work, states very clearly that every child has to the right to know and to be cared for by his or her own parents, whenever possible. UNICEF believes that families needing support to care for their children should receive it, and that alternative means of caring for a child should only be considered when, despite this assistance, a child's family is unavailable, unable or unwilling to care for her or him." ■

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'India has played a positive role'

-C.P.Gajurel

As the United States increasingly grow wary of the Nepalese Maoists despite the latter's publicly declared commitment to pursue a peaceful politics, the Maoists have mounted verbal attacks on the US in recent weeks. While the world's only super power still suspects the intentions of the former communist rebels, the battle-hardened Nepalese comrades have drawn closer to the South Asian regional power. Even as the Maoists see the US as a key obstacle to the current peace process and their ultimate goal of overthrowing monarchy, they laud India for what they see as a positive role. The policy towards the "imperialist" America may have hardened, but there has been a sea-change in the Maoist policy towards the "expansionist" India. This was as much evident from a recent interview (March 7) a top Maoist leader gave to the BBC Nepali Service. Excerpts of a ten-

minute interview with the chief of international relations department of the CPN-Maoist, C.P. Gajurel:

Prior to the royal coup in February, 2005, India had a different policy towards Nepal. It had been backing the monarchy and helped a lot to save the monarchy. India's policy changed after the royal coup. It did not supply the arms that had already been on pipeline. It suspended the arms supply. The subsequent move of king Gyanendra to import arms from China further angered India. This escalated the Indian hostility towards the royal regime. On the other hand, as the seven-party alliance could not intensify the anti-king agitation, India felt the need to bring the seven parties and us (the Maoists.) together.

At the government level?

Yes, of course, at the government level. Then, we (the seven parties and us) had our first meeting near Delhi. The meeting was impossible without India's

approval. India's role has been positive in the subsequent developments. It has continued to date.

Are you implying that India shares your position on the future of monarchy?

Not necessarily absolutely. But India has made it clear that it will respect whatever verdict Nepalese people will give. So, if a republican regime is established here, India will accept it.

So, your one-time foe has turned friend now?

We view India from its policy on Nepal. When it stood against the Nepalese revolutionaries, we opposed India. But now that India has backed the on-going process in Nepal and vowed to back a logical end to it, our policy towards India has also only naturally changed.



NIBL INVESTS IN CONSERVATION

A leading commercial bank in the country has announced to organize annual marathon to generate funds to support conservation efforts.

The Nepal Investment Bank Limited (NIBL) is all set to organize annual marathon on March 17. The funds raised will be utilized for the renovation and preservation of Patan Durbar Square.

At a press meet on March 13, the NIBL officials informed that they plan to raise over Rs 2.5 million. This amount will then be matched by the US-based World Monuments Fund.

According to the bank, nine different events of marathon will be held in four categories – 21 km, 10 km, 5 km and 1 km. A total of half a million rupees cash award will be given to the winners of the nine events.

Prithvi Bahadur Pande, chairman and executive director of the bank, said, "We are committed to continue our support to various social and sporting activities as the bank grows."

Pande said that the marathon even will be held every year to build

awareness among people about the need to preserve monuments that are our cultural heritage.

"NIBL, through its first Annual Marathon, has taken this opportunity to support Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust (KVPT) by way of raising funds for the restoration and conservation of Patan Durbar. This project was selected amongst various others in the World Monuments Nepal Watch List and UNESCO World Heritage Centre," states a press release by the bank

Nepal Investment Bank Limited has assisted and contributed to various conservation/heritage related projects as well as numerous sporting activities in Nepal. In the area of conservation, NIBL started by contribution towards the restoration of the Kal Bhairab Temple and the Pancha Kumari Maitidevi Temple.

In sports, NIBL has been a generous



NIBL officials at press meet: Social responsibility

contributor in various sporting activities of the likes of tennis, golf, athletics, cricket, boxing, etc. NIBL also supported the Tenzing-Hillary Everest Marathon and the 35th National Athletics Championships. NIBL is the exclusive sponsor of the Friends Club Kupondole.

Nepal Investment Bank Limited's total support and contribution to heritage and sports has been to the tune of Rs 31 lakhs 81 thousand since the Nepali Management took over the Bank in 2002.

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