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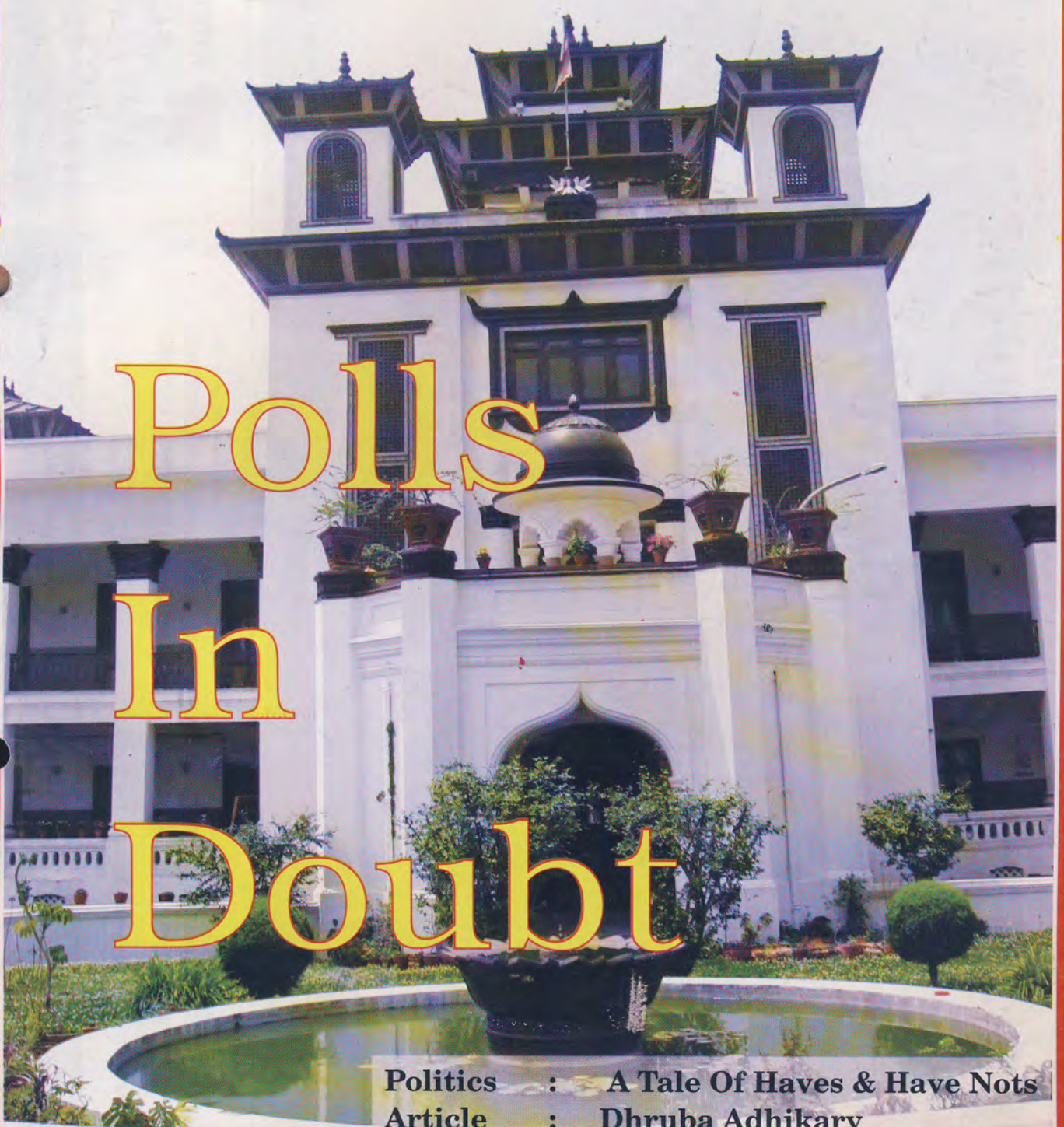
Polls In Doubt

Politics : A Tale Of Haves & Have Nots
Article : Dhruba Adhikary

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प्रस्तुत छ...

....अब मात्र रु. १,०००/- मा लोटस बचत खाता*



Lotus

बचत खाता



नेपाल इन्भेस्टमेन्ट बैंकले तपाईंहरूको विश्वास र चाहनालाई ध्यानमा राखि फेरि तयाथो जीवनभरको लागि मात्र रु. १,०००/- मा लोटस बचत खाता । यो योजना नेपाल इन्भेस्टमेन्ट बैंकका सबै शाखाहरूमा लागू हुनेछ ।

विरस्त जानकारीको लागि नेपाल इन्भेस्टमेन्ट बैंकको शाखाहरूमा सम्पर्क गर्नुहोला ।



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COVER STORY: Polls In Doubt

Following the EC's statement of its inability to hold polls on time, leaders fail to clarify when will the elections be held now

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POLITICS: Tale Of Haves And Have Nots

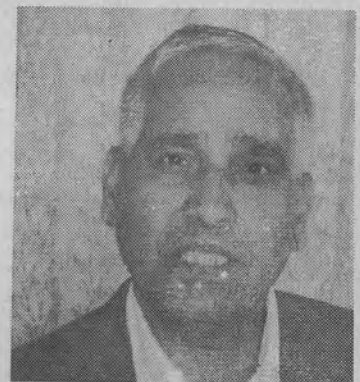
Rather than ideology, Nepalese leaders are guided by whether they are in power or out of it

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INTERVIEW: Sunil Kumar Bhandari

Nepali Congress central leader Bhandari talks about the evolving political scenario

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SPOTLIGHT

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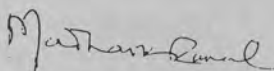
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What we apprehended has happened. Our predictions have come true. The ruling eight parties of Nepal have machinated to postpone the elections to the constitutional assembly. The chief election commissioner has been made the scapegoat. We still are not sure whether the twenty six million poor people of Nepal have been able to see through the evil designs of their tainted politicians who are ruling over them. If not we would like to advise them to read an English daily newspaper "Pioneer" of most recent days (don't remember the exact date) published in India. One of my good friends fed me with this piece of important news. We would like to quote only one sentence from that article recommending the rest to be read. Quote "Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala is totally clueless [to] what is happening in his country – even if he knows he is unable to do anything of consequence." Unquote. Doesn't it clearly mean that GPK is a mere puppet? The *de facto* Prime Minister is behind the screen. This is nothing new, at least for us, as we have been emphasizing on it for years. Be that as it may, the question now before the patriotic Nepalis is how to arrest the rot and save the country from plunging into disintegration. We know, apart from an insignificant few thousand hangers on of these political parties, the huge mass of poor Nepalis have been totally disillusioned with the political leadership and are desperately looking for person or persons who will deliver them from their perennial miseries. It is high time for them to wake up and see the real faces of their leadership who have been taking them for a ride all the time. It is high time they saw through their blaming game to hide their hypocrisy. And it is high time they issued a new "mandate" to the group of honest and patriotic Nepalis who along with the Security Forces will shoulder the onerous responsibility of defending the integrity of the nation. Neither is this the right time, nor are the politicians in power the right and appropriate people to decide the fate of the nation, which only the constitution framed by elected representatives of the people is authorized to do. And this not the right time too for the varied ethnic forces of Nepal to press for their just demands. Indeed, they have been victimized for a long time and do deserve not only compensation but fulfillment of their legitimate rights. Since their fight is neither with their brethren fellow citizens nor their country but with the leadership, they must not do anything that would contribute to the detriment of the nation as a whole. Since the overall situation in the country is very volatile and only a strong and resolute action can control the situation, Nepal's good friends like the United States, the European Union, the United Kingdom and China must not wait for second thoughts to use all their means – men, money or materials – to save Nepal from utter ruin, even extinction. If they really mean well for Nepal and the Nepali people, they can no more depend upon this incompetent and corrupt leadership.



Madhav K. Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher



Success Story

The case of Postal Office department successfully adopting the e-governance ("Tool For Transformation" SPOTLIGHT April 13, 2007) concept could be an eye-opener to all of us. This shows how the technology of the 21st century can benefit our country. In the cover story, it is mentioned that slowly and steadily all government offices and even courts are adopting e-governance. It is good to note that the Supreme Court has started good website through which one can know about case lists. Ultimately, any technology has to benefit the general public if it is to be deemed successful.

*Hira Tuladhar
Old Baneshwore*

Technological Innovations

The cover story "Tool For Transformation" (SPOTLIGHT April 13, 2007) has pointed out the significance and utility of adopting newer technological innovations to improve the nature of governance of the country like Nepal. Of course, in the 21st century when rest of the world is reaping dividends of IT revolution, Nepal cannot remain aloof from the changing times. Sooner than later, Nepal will have to adapt to the innovations. We cannot say that we will make do with the existing technologies and not embrace new ones. As such, it is good to know that Nepal government is also working with donor partners to introduce the concept of e-governance.

*Sita Mainali
Battispatali*

Unclear Answer

The cover story "Tool For Transformation" (SPOTLIGHT April 13, 2007) states that Nepal can also reduce poverty by adopting the e-governance. This, however, is not clear. How the adoption of e-governance reduces poverty? Nepal is known as a

country of villages. When these villages lack basic amenities like health and education, it is preposterous to imagine that they will be able to log on to the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). When the people are illiterate, how can they be able to use the computers in villages? Don't we need to first carry out campaigns for promoting basic computer literacy?

*Kalyan Sharma
Bhatbhateni*

Train The Bureaucracy

Before the concept of e-governance can be materialized ("Tool For Transformation" SPOTLIGHT April 13, 2007), it is essential to train the bureaucrats – junior as well as senior officials – on the basics of computer and ICT. At present, the method of selecting civil servants in the country is very old and outdated. The Public Service Commission (PSC) should update its curriculum and include computer education. And the selected bureaucrats should be given intensive training on the concepts of ICT and how the e-governance can be utilized

to improve the efficiency of service-delivery. If these things are done then the e-governance will prove to be boon for the country.

*Seema Rai
Hattisar*

Importance In Record Keeping

The significance of using e-governance in offices such as Land Revenue ("Tool For Transformation" SPOTLIGHT April 13, 2007) cannot be exaggerated. Currently, these government offices are keeping their records in a very haphazard manner. One cannot get access to proper records on time as the employees take a long time to locate the records. The paper documents are also affected by dust, rodents, water and other problems. If all these records can be kept and stored in computers, that would make it quite easier. Offices like department of transport, which issues driving licenses, administration offices will benefit tremendously from the use of computers.

*Kiran Basnet
Sanepa*

SAARC Story

The article "Walk The Talk" (SPOTLIGHT April 13) rightly pointed out that it is now the time for the regional leaders to start implementing their promises. After two decades of being in existence, the SAARC must now start delivering SAARC dividends to the people of the region. The people of the region must start feeling that SAARC is working for their benefit. Otherwise, they will start forgetting about this regional association altogether. Even though countries from all over the world have shown interest in this regional grouping, the SAARC leaders themselves have not risen to the occasion.

*Dinesh KC
Satdobato*

Govt Invites MJF And NFIN For Talks

Following the formal invitation for talks by the government, the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NFIN) has decided to withdraw indefinite valley blockade beginning April 16. The federation has issued a statement saying that it would sit for talks with the interim government. Minister for Peace and Reconstruction Ram Chandra Poudel, on Sunday, sent letters to NFIN and Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) inviting them for talks. The MJF, too, has shown interest to sit for talks with the government. Although it has dropped earlier condition of resignation of Home Minister Krishna Sitaula, the MJF has asked the government to suspend proceeding with the recommendations of the Electoral Constituency Delineation Commission and establish peace and order. *Compiled from reports*

Police Raid YCL Offices

The Metropolitan Police, on Sunday (April 15) afternoon, conducted a simultaneous raid at the offices of Maoists' Young Communist League (YCL) in Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur districts on Sunday afternoon. At the instruction of Home Ministry, teams of police raided the offices in Balaju, Gathghar and Balkumari in search of "unauthorized weapons" and "abducted persons", according to Metropolitan Police commissioner AIG Deepak Thangden. The police, however, did not find anything. Valley in-charge of YCL Chandra Bahadur Thapa aka Sagar has raised objections to the police raid. He claimed that the organization is involved in development and construction activities. He warned that if the police continued such behavior in future, they would be compelled to seize their weapons. Sagar also demanded that police apologize publicly for the incident. Meanwhile, SP at Metropolitan Police Range in Kathmandu Dhak Bahadur Karki appreciated YCL for its cooperation in the police action. YCL cadres helped the police team, he said, adding they themselves opened the cupboard when the police team reached YCL's offices. Home Minister Krishna

Prasad Sitaula and Maoist PLA's deputy commander Ananta held talks on the incident late on Sunday evening.

Compiled from reports

World Bank To Invest In Kabeli

The World Bank is investing in Kabeli hydropower project through the 13-year-old Power Development Fund (PDF), which was established after the bank pulled out from Arun III project in 1995. The Fund was established to invest in power sector through private companies. The government is currently engaged in final evaluation of two companies who have applied for the project, according to Sritranjan Lacoul, deputy general director of Department of Electricity Development. China's SinoHydro and Nepal's Butwal Power Company have shown interest to carry out this project and have submitted financial proposal. According to their proposals, the BPC has offered to sell per unit of power at 5.8 cents (Rs 4.06) – exclusive of VAT - while SinoHydro has said it would charge 8.434 cents (Rs 5.83) – inclusive of VAT. Upon selection, the company would obtain 40 percent of the project cost on loan from PDF. Through the PDF, the bank has given loan of \$35 million to the government in the initial phase to invest in projects between 10 to 50 MW strength. *Kantipur daily reports*

MJF 'Drops' Demands For Sitaula's Scalp

Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) has dropped one of its key demands to sit for talks with the government. In a statement issued by MJF president Upendra Yadav, the forum has a new condition for the dialogue. Yadav has stated that if the government agrees to suspend working as per the recommendations by the Electoral Constituency Delineation Commission (ECDC) pending consensus on that issue, they will sit for talks with the government committee. He also demanded that all attacks, abductions and looting targeted against MJF activists be stopped immediately. The statement, however, does not include the demand for the resignation of Home

Minister Krishna Sitaula. Earlier, the MJF had posed Sitaula's resignation as a key demand claiming that he was responsible for deaths during Madhes agitation in January and February this year. Despite their demand, Sitaula had been retained as Home Minister even in the recently formed interim government. The statement has come in the wake of invitation for talks by the government committee headed by Peace and Reconstruction Minister Ram Chandra Poudel. *Compiled from reports*

A Company Proposes 22 Percent Free Energy On Arun III

An Indian company called Jindal Power India has offered the government 22 percent free energy from the 402 MW-strong Arun III hydropower project. This company is said to have offered the most attractive package to the government in response to the latter's call for competitive bidding. A member of government evaluation committee revealed that this company has offered 21.9 percent free energy for the whole project period. Among other companies that also had bid for the project, GMR India has offered free energy of 15 percent for the first 15 years and 10 percent afterwards. Likewise, Reliance Energy has offered 7.5 percent free energy for the first 15 years and 10 percent afterwards while Sutlej Power has offered 4.5 percent free energy for the whole project period. The government had set the criteria of free energy to select proper company for the project. As per Jindal Power's offer, Nepal government can get 632.9 million units of free energy every year – equivalent to Rs 2.21 billion. Nine different companies, including Indians, have bid for the Arun III project.

Kantipur daily reports

ECDC Submits Report To Govt; Advises Increasing 35 Constituencies

The Electoral Constituency Delineation Commission (ECDC) submitted its report to Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala on Thursday advising the government to increase the number of constituencies by 35 to 240. Headed by former apex court judge Arjun Prasad Singh, the commission has

advised increasing the number of constituencies in Terai districts by 28 and the number of constituencies in hilly districts by 7. It has fixed 116 constituencies for Terai districts and 124 constituencies for hilly and mountainous districts. It prepared its recommendations based on the first amendment of the constitution. Receiving the report PM Koirala expressed determination to implement its recommendations. The Commission has made the recommendations as per the decision of eight parties and subsequent amendment of interim constitution to increase the number of electoral constituencies in Terai. As per the first amendment of the interim constitution, the CA elections will be held on mixed system – half the seats through FPTP and other half through the PR system. In addition to them, 17 seats would be nominated to include personalities from various walks of life. This actually means that there will be 497 seats in total for the CA. *Compiled from reports*

MPs Stall House Questioning Legitimacy Of Govt's Program

Parliamentarians belonging to several parties criticized the government for presenting the eight party document as the government's policies and programs. They said that the government presented the Common Minimum Program without even putting authorized signature. On Wednesday (April 11), Minister for Peace and Reconstruction Ram Chandra Poudel presented the CMP at the parliament. It, however, had the signatures of eight party leaders. The MPs said that government's policies and programs must have signature of authorized government leader and not that of political leaders. Iswor Pokharel, UML MP, charged the government of undermining the parliament by trying to push through illegitimate document. Mahesh Acharya of Nepali Congress, too, said that it had devalued the prestige of parliament. Narayan Man Bijukchhe of Nepal Workers and Peasants Party (NWPP), said it was 'surprising' to find such glaring mistake in government

document. He said the concerned minister (Poudel) should resign for the bungle. Following expression of outrage by MPs of all parties, Speaker Subas Nemwang directed the government to correct the mistake and present the CMP again on Friday. *Leading dailies report*

Morang Traders Agitated

Following the physical assault by Maoists' Young Communist League (YCL) cadres against a leading businessman Shyam Sundara Sharada in Biratnagar a few days ago, the traders and industrialists of Morang district have threatened that they will close down all businesses and hand over the key to the government on April 16. Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat is expected to visit Biratnagar on the day to inaugurate the general meeting of Morang Trade Association and on that day, the traders plan to hand keys over to him. Sharada is currently undergoing treatment at Intensive Care Unit (ICU) in Kosi zonal hospital. "Handing over keys is our compulsion. In the six decades long history of industrialization, we never had experienced such degrading behavior against a businessman," said Jeevan Nepal, president of the association. Elder brother of Sharada Nanda Kishore Sharada has informed that he was assaulted for not paying "donation." *Nepal Samacharpatra daily reports*

Focus On Polls; Formulating Laws Not That Vital: Envoy

Indian ambassador to Nepal Shiv Shankar Mukherjee who met Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala on Wednesday (April 11), said that holding elections, and not completing the legislation process concerning elections should be the priority. Saying that Nepal should set an example for the international community by conducting elections within the stipulated time. "Finalizing the election law should not be the priority," ambassador Mukherjee said after talking to prime minister for about half an hour at Baluwatar. Mukherjee also expressed commitment on behalf of Indian side to support and assist whatever the Nepali government and political parties decide to do about the elections. Mukherjee and Koirala

also took up the crucial issues of policing the Indo-Nepal border in the wake of security report that anti-social elements were infiltrating Nepal and fomenting trouble. The discussed the cross-border issues for the first time after SAARC Summit. "They discussed current political scenario in Nepal, including the much talked about issue of election to the constituent assembly," said Gopal Bagley, spokesman for the Indian Embassy. *The Himalayan Times daily reports*

Maoists Register At EC

Following their decade long insurgency, the Maoists have finally registered themselves as mainstream political party at the Election Commission (EC) for the purpose of CA elections. A delegation of Maoist leaders led by Dr. Baburam Bhattarai visited EC on Tuesday (April 10) and registered the party. In its manifesto, the Maoists have said that federal democratic republic is their aim. Dr. Bhattarai later told reporters that Maoists will now stark election campaigns. Likewise, Dr. Bhattarai defended constitutional provision that new parties would need to produce signatures of 10,000 people to be registered at EC. "There would be around 20 million eligible voters in CA. A party that cannot even produce signature of 10,000 people has no reason to contest the polls," he said. *Leading dailies report*

Govt Awards Tamakosi Survey License To Norwegian Company

The government has awarded the survey license for 500 MW strong Second and Third Tamakosi hydropower project to Norwegian company called Straatkraft Norfund (SN) Power. According to Water Resource Secretary Tikadutta Niraula, the government has awarded the license for two years for conducting feasibility and preparing Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) to the company. Dr. Sandeep Shah, chief of SN Power office in Nepal, said that the company will immediately start both the tasks. He said that from both the projects, Nepal can request for as much of energy as it requires while the rest will be sold to the Power Trading Corporation (PTC) of India. *Kantipur daily reports*



A local pierces his tongue on the occasion of Bisket Jatra in Bhaktapur

Gorkhapatra

AFTER 14 YEARS, THE GOVERNMENT'S PLAN to link Karnali zone with road has been fulfilled. The plan was fulfilled after the road linked Surkhet with Khalanga, the headquarters of Jumla district. Small vehicles reached Kahalanga on April 14. A team led by National Planning Commission (NPC) vice chairman Jagadish Chandra Pokharel had also reached Khalanga to mark this event. The road construction was carried out by the government, through its own resources, since 1992. The road is 232 km long. Budget constraints, insecurity were some of the reasons that had delayed the completion of this important road link.

KING GYANENDRA HAS EXPRESSED HIS APPRECIATION towards the ongoing peace efforts. In the New Year's message (Baisakh 1, Saturday), King Gyanendra has also prayed for the success of the peace process while expressing his desire for the establishment of lasting peace through meaningful participation of all concerned. "May the New Year accelerate the enthusiasm of the Nepali people in enhancing brotherhood, goodwill, harmony and unity, thereby strengthening the institutional development of democracy," the King said in the message. Two months ago, King Gyanendra's Democracy Day message had generated a huge controversy after he attempted to defend his February 1, 2005 move.

EXPERTS ON TIGER CONSERVATION ARE MEETING in Kathmandu from April 16 to 20 to find ways to save the endangered species from being totally extinct. Out of the eight sub species of tigers, only five species – Siberian tiger, South China tiger, Indo-Chinese tiger, Sumatran tiger and Royal Bengal tiger – are found these days. It is believed that around 5000 to 7000 tigers are left in the world. SC Dey, the general secretary of the Global Tiger Forum (GTF), said that around 100 representatives from 12 countries are participating in the International Tiger Symposium, which is being organized by Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation and GTF in cooperation with national and international conservation partners.

U.S. AMBASSADOR JAMES F. MORIARTY urged the protestors outside the American Embassy to think first of

themselves and their families and to call off their announced hunger strike. "As we explained to this group of protestors in face-to-face meetings with my deputy on February 5 and March 13, no visa is worth damaging your health," the Ambassador said on Thursday (April 12). "I urge these individuals to think first about their families, lives, and future in Nepal, and give up this futile protest." In the last month, the Embassy has learned, the protestors have also begun to use threats and intimidation to try to deny visas to legitimate Nepali applicants. Representatives of the group threatened violence and attempted to extort money from two Nepali doctors who provide medical clearance services to qualified Nepali applicants seeking U.S. immigrant visas. "The Embassy, on behalf of all legitimate Nepali immigrant visa applicants, condemns these actions and calls on this group to halt such behavior immediately. If such threats interfered or halted physical examinations for immigrant visa applicants, the Embassy would be unable to process any immigrant visa applications. Thousands of other Nepalis would be robbed of an opportunity to emigrate to the U.S. as a result..." it states.

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (MoFA) has sent a list of 80 businessmen blacklisted for nonpayment of bank loans to the foreign embassies in Kathmandu requesting them to cancel visa issued to them because their passports have been declared null and void. "The list of 80 people have come to us from the protocol section of the Ministry, and once the passports are declared null and void, the visa also becomes null and void," an official at the American Embassy said. The decision was taken by the Ministry of Finance about a month ago to cancel the passports of bank defaulters.

THE CABINET MEETING, on Tuesday (April 10), has decided to move the Second Amendment Bill to amend the interim constitution. The cabinet decided to sponsor the Second Amendment Bill as government bill at the legislative parliament soon. The cabinet made the decision after the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs presented the draft bill as per the instruction of the government. The Second Amendment Bill has been drafted as the decision of eight party leaders on April 1. In the second amendment draft, the eight parties have inserted a provision whereby the two-third majority of the legislative parliament can announce abolishment of monarchy if the latter is found conspiring to derail the Constituent Assembly polls. Likewise, the second amendment will include provisions whereby the Prime Minister can be sacked through no-confidence motion approved by two-third members of legislative-parliament. The PM can also seek vote of confidence if he so wishes. One-fourth number of MPs can also move a resolution proposing special session of the parliament. On April 1, the eight party leaders had decided to hold the CA polls on June 20 and amend the interim constitution to incorporate that date. However, on Tuesday, Minister for Peace and Reconstruction Ram Chandra Poudel said that the actual date of elections will be fixed with the consent of Election Commission as well as UNMIN. ■

"If the parliament declares republic right away, the Constituent Assembly polls can be held in Mangsir (October/November) or even next year."

Prachanda, Maoist chairman, speaking at a program organized by the Kathmandu-Chitwan republican contact forum, stating that the holding of CA polls was the foundation of eight party unity and that if the CA polls cannot be held then the unity can be re-established only if all agree to go for republic.

"Nothing will happen if the elections are postponed with consensus. At present, there is not a conducive environment where elections can be held in free, fair and fearless manner."

Sher Bahadur Deuba, president of Nepali Congress (Democratic), talking to reporters.

"We need 110 days to prepare for the polls after all necessary legislations are enacted."

Bhoj Raj Pokharel, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), at a press meet informing the EC's inability to hold the polls within mid-June.

"Everybody should share the blame. The previous government and the



current government should share it proportionally. We are ready to share the blame for 15 days since we joined the government only two weeks ago."

Krishna Bahadur Mahara, government spokesperson and Minister for Information and Communication, when asked who should be blamed for the CA polls uncertainty.

"There would be around 20 million eligible voters in CA. A party that cannot even produce signature of 10,000 people has no reason to contest the polls."

Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, senior Maoist leader, defending constitutional provision that makes it mandatory for any political party not

represented in the current parliament to produce signatures of 10,000 people before it can be registered by the Election Commission.

"The government should hold roundtable conference with all the agitating groups to resolve the problem. Separate talks will not help."

Narahari Acharya, central leader of Nepali Congress (NC), at an interaction program.

"Policy of the communists and Maoists is to first strike monarchists and then democrats. Democrats should understand this plan well."

Khum Bahadur Khadka, former minister and Nepali Congress (NC) central leader, in Jana Bhawana.

TRANSITION

NAMED: Minister for Information and Communication and senior Maoist leader Krishna Bahadur Mahara, as the spokesperson of the government, by the cabinet.

RELIEVED: Minister for Information and Communication and government spokesperson Krishna Bahadur Mahara, of his position as Maoist party spokesperson, by the party's central committee.

RETURNED: Sher Bahadur

Deuba, president of Nepali Congress (Democratic), from Singapore, after a weeklong visit for health treatment.

FREED: District Education Officer (DEO) of Saptari Nibharaj Joshi, by a joint team of Nepal Police and Armed Police Force (APF). DEO Joshi, who had been kidnapped by activists of Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (Goit faction) a week ago, was freed from a house of one Yug Narayan Yadav at Bathnaha VDC-2 of Saptari district.

RELEASED: Chief of Siraha district hospital Dr. Murali Prasad Singh, by his unknown kidnapers, after ten days of his abduction.

LEFT: Gyanendra Bahadur Karki, Minister of State for Water Resources, for Seoul, South Korea, to attend the Asia Pacific summit meeting on Peace.

BEREAVED: Chandi Raj Dhakal, president of FNCCL, of his father Laxman Prasad Dhakal who died at the age of 80.

NEPAL FOUGHT AGAINST COLONIALISM: Bhakti Thapa

- By Mrs. Laxmi Thapa

Eighteenth century was a period of great political turmoil in the Indian subcontinent. The Mogul empire had virtually come to an end at the very beginning of this century. Disappearance of even some semblance of authority of the rulers at Delhi succeeding the mighty Mogul Emperors had devastating consequences for the Punjab and its surrounding areas. The colonial powers like England and France were doing their utmost to increase their presence by exploiting the weaknesses of the rulers of small states recently broken off from the Mogul empire. The British had been busy fighting the Marathas. General Lake had succeeded in capturing Delhi and Agra in 1803.

British Rulers Were Condemned

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

Plight of the People in North-West

To the west of the Sub-continent was the Iran under the rule of Nadir Shah described in the history as the most hated man of his age who massacred people in uncounted thousands and plundered the country. After his death an Afghan chief by the name of Ahmad Shah Abdali shook off control of Iran and burst into the plains of Punjab six times slaying, burning and plundering. The Afghan menace to Punjab continued until 1798. At that time Sikhs were not yet organized to protect that region from the Afghanistan invasions. The fate of the Lahore by that time was still undecided. The transfer of Lahore to the 19 years old Ranjit Singh took place only in 1799. According to some historians the Punjab had slipped to becoming prey to bandits and robber chiefs. At that time the peoples living in the Himalayan region must be finding themselves very insecure.

The Great Nepal

Enlightened peoples living in different parts of the Himalayan region must have sensed the urgency

to be united. Because, without being awakened to the realization that the unification of the whole region is a matter of the utmost importance to the peoples across the Himalayan region, it would not have been possible in a very short period to bring together under a common umbrella peoples living in a vast region demarcated on the west by the Sutlej and Bias rivers and on the east by the Teesta. The final outcome of such unification was the creation of the Great Nepal. Our country was able to rise from a scratch to be a formidable Himalayan power within a very short time. Nepal had gathered enough strength to move forward to protect the peoples dwelling in this vast region.

The pace of social integration was not too far behind. Such integration was taking place despite the political barriers. A Garwali historian describes one of such incidences when a local raja murdered the Khanduri brothers for supposed treason in marrying Gorkhali girls. A letter written by the king to the Bhakti Thapa several years before the outbreak of the Nepal-British War helps to explain how the army units under him were being filled up by the Garwalis. Many of those brave Garwali soldiers might have accompanied Bhakti Thapa when he, at the age of 74, led the historic counterattack on April 16, 1815 against far superior British force entrenched at Deothal.

Unification Campaign Stood the Severest Test

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

British-Nepal War

The build up of Nepalese strength brought her on a collision course with the colonial power of that time. Colonial power Britain had good reason to fear that if the Nepalese build up continued for some time, the colonial rule of Britain could soon come to an end in South Asia much the same way as in the North America a short time before.

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

War Prolonged

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

After the initial defeats the British changed their strategy to avoid their casualties. They started to deploy long range guns to level the fortification and force the enemy to flee. This strategy paid off. The

British were able to advance quickly into the territory under our control. They even used elephants to carry heavy guns across the mountains

Battle of Deothal

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

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

Needless to say that British were thoroughly shaken by the bravery of Nepalese in the Deothal Battle. Bhakti Thapa became a legend in the eyes of British. Historian CB Khanduri writes quoting various contemporary British historians "The euphemism of the BRAVEST OF THE BRAVES had been used by Napoleon for Marshal Ney, whose bravery during the retreat from Moscow in 1812 was one of the highest. BRAVE LES BRAVE, said Napoleon of him. British then used this citation for the Gurkhas during and after the Anglo-Nepal War. Such was the bravery shown by Bhakti Thapa that the next legend of the Bravest of the Braves had been created on the day - 16 April, 1815 at Deothal."

The Great Nepal

" Until there was life in the body of Bhakti Thapa Nepal's territory was in a state of great expansion. Soon after his death the Great Nepal crumbled." This is an excerpt from the *sainikitihas* which is based on the book " Vikramjit Hasrat, History of Nepal (Punjab: V. V. Research Institute, 1970)". Bhakti Thapa had laid down his life at the age of 74 in the battlefield at Deothal.

(Thapa writes on history)

CA ELECTIONS

Polls**In****Doubt**

Once again, the people of Nepal face uncertainty whether they will be able to exercise their democratic rights to cast vote and have elected an accountable regime in place. With the announcement by the Elections Commission (EC) that it is not able to hold the CA elections on time - due to absence of necessary political and security preconditions – the much-awaited polls have now come under serious doubts. As eight parties scramble trading blames and slinging mud at each other, the issue of having credible elections have come under shadow. Instead of discussing the fresh date for the polls, the parties are engaged in pushing for newer proposals further prolonging the transitional phase. While the Maoists push for outright declaration of republic and the UML call for referendum, the issue of whether or not CA elections will ever be held has come to the fore. As these parties try to shift the goal posts in the middle of the game, the country looks certain to face further uncertainty

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

Since then Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba dissolved the House of Representatives in May 22, 2002, people of Nepal have not had elected government in place.

In fact, since then the people of Nepal have been denied their basic right to vote, time and again. In the absence of elected regime, the instability of the country turned from bad to worse leading to last

year's Jana Andolan II whose singular demand was to hold the elections for the Constituent Assembly (CA).

After the restoration of democracy in 1990, Nepali people had actively participated in three general elections and two local elections. They were making smart choices in the electoral politics sending majority government in the first polls; not giving majority to any

one party in the mid-term polls; and again giving one party majority in the third polls.

However, in May 2002, the Deuba government abruptly dissolved the elected parliament and announced snap polls in order to settle internal political wrangling. Due to the situation of insecurity, the snap poll could not be held and the King snatched power for himself

on October 4, 2002.

The King also could not deliver his promise of holding credible elections. Because of widespread boycott by the parties, his municipal polls of February 2006 turned into a farce.

With elections being postponed, cancelled or botched for over half a decade, the people faced unaccountable regimes and unelected persons in office. This triggered a series of instability and disorder along with deterioration of security conditions and exacerbation of conflict.

As such, not only the people of Nepal but also the eyes of international community was focused on the holding of credible CA elections to usher in a new phase in the country where the elected representatives would write a new constitution for the country and restore electoral democracy.

However, the slack preparation and inordinate delays in formulation of necessary electoral legislations; absence of required security conditions; and eruption of demands by the people of Madhes and ethnic communities led to a situation whereupon the EC was left alone holding the hot potato.

Despite its repeated call to the parties to complete the prerequisites, the EC got nothing in return except the rhetorical statements by the Prime Minister and other party leaders that the polls must be held on constitutionally stipulated time of mid June.

And then there was the bombshell. On April 13, the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) summoned a press meet where he announced the EC's inability to hold the polls on time.

EC's Statement:

Having failed to convince the political leadership to move rapidly towards completing the formulation of legislations, clarification of several political and security issues, the EC sent a letter to the government on April 12 stating that it is technically impossible to hold the Constituent Assembly (CA) elections within the constitutionally mandated timeframe of mid-June.

The EC's letter read: "It normally takes EC 110 days to prepare for the elections once all legal systems (for the



Election Commission: In the eye of political storm

elections) are in place. Therefore, the Commission requests the Government of Nepal to soon announce date for the elections that will be appropriate for voters, candidates, political parties, election staffs and observers."

At the press meet, CEC Pokharel said that going for elections without addressing outstanding political issues related with election system and before stabilizing security situation could further complicate the whole process.

The EC also made it clear that for the elections to take place within mid-June, the offices of election officers must be set up within third week of April. However, since the tasks like updating voters' list and registering political parties cannot be completed before mid-May, it was impossible to set up election offices in the stipulated time.

The Commission informed that after the completion of enactment of all necessary electoral legislations, the Commission needs to formulate various rules and guidelines; produce materials for voters' education; train election staffs; formulate code of conduct; and procure, manage and deliver over 50 different items that will be required at the polling centers.

Date Debacle Fallout

Even though no sane person was 'surprised' by the EC's announcement of

the obvious – that preparations were incomplete and inadequate to ensure timely polls – the leaders of the parties started acting strange after the letter bomb.

Except for Nepali Congress (Democratic) president Sher Bahadur Deuba, no top leader took the EC's decision in a normal manner.

"The basis for the unity of eight parties was the Constituent Assembly elections. Once that election is in doubt, that basis is no more," thundered Maoist chairman Prachanda reacting to the EC's statement.

Some Maoist MPs even questioned the honesty of EC for stating its inability to hold the polls "at a time when the interim constitution states that it must be held by mid-June." They said they smelt conspiracy in this.

The UML standing committee concluded that the Prime Minister was to blame for the situation whereas the PM himself has kept mum over the issue.

Deuba, on the other hand, welcomed the EC's decision. "Nothing will happen if the election is postponed with the consent of eight parties," he said. It is interesting to recall how Deuba was dismissed by King Gyanendra on October 4, 2002 when he had submitted the decision of all parties to postpone the parliamentary elections then.

Different Positions

After the mud hit the fan, the eight party leaders were unable even to sit together. The crucial eight party meeting scheduled for Sunday (April 15) was put off.

With the CA polls in doubt now, different parties have started advancing different viewpoints and positions.

The UML has proposed holding referendum to decide on fate of monarchy. The UML is trying to emphasize the importance of its position – on referendum – which it had also advanced during the November 8 agreement between Maoists and seven party alliance. It had written down notes of dissent on this issue in the pact.

The Nepali Congress has reacted that

vigorously demanded that the parliament declare the republic immediately.

He has said that new unity among eight parties can only be formed if the parliament declares republic now. Prachanda said that break down of unity among eight parties at this juncture could only embolden the regressive forces. "Therefore, in order to create a new foundation of unity and to take the unity to newer heights, the parliament must declare republic," he said.

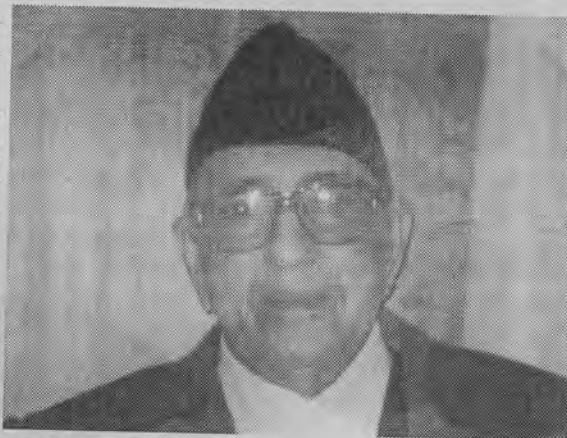
Prachanda has even said that if republic is declared now, "We can have the CA elections in Mangsir (October/November) or even in Baisakh (April/May) next year."

The recently concluded central committee meeting of the Maoists also decided to launch struggle from the government, parliament and streets to press for announcement of republic. The party

has also decided to strengthen its organization, expand base in Madhes and go for republic through parliament.

In an apparent muscle-flexing, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) personnel of Maoists deserted their camps in Jutpani, Chitwan and demonstrated demanding immediate announcement of republic and condemning doubts over CA

"It seems that deep inside the Maoists also do not want the CA elections. If republic is announced, they will have removed their biggest obstacle after which they can train their gaze on other forces. Otherwise, instead of initiating serious discussions about announcing fresh date for CA polls, why are they raking up other issues," asked a political analyst.



PM Koirala: What's next?

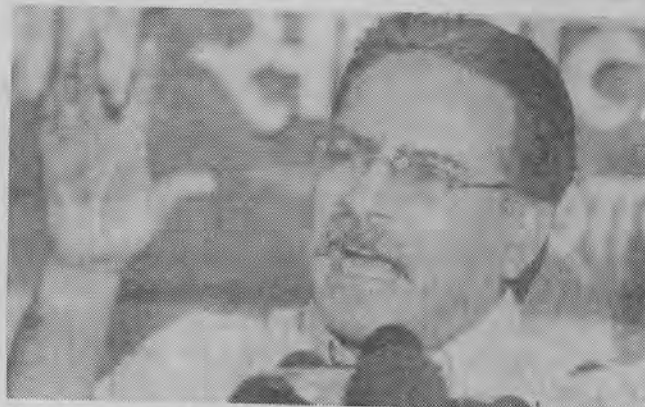
Perhaps because he knows about the Maoist intention, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala has asked the Maoists to first take other parties into their confidence before others can go along with their demands.

Koirala said that whether or not to declare republic from the parliament will depend on the Maoist attitude.

As the dust gradually begins to settle, the eight party leaders will have a hefty problem in their hand. Since they had repeatedly committed to holding CA polls on time till the EC's announcement, people will be clamoring for answers. Why they dilly-dallied with the election preparations? Didn't they know what was coming? Will the CA polls now be held ever? If yes, when? These questions, if not answered soon, will help to increase frustration among the general public.

Parties have already committed one blunder by not being able to hold the CA polls on time. This has already caused the transitional phase to prolong. Now, they should not commit another blunder by engaging in mud-slinging and pushing the real issues beneath the carpet.

As the CA election is certain to be postponed, the parties must use the extra time to address Terai and ethnic issues, create proper political and security environment and organize massive voters' education campaign. If they do so, then the postponement of the polls will have served a better purpose. Otherwise, only instability will prolong and people of Nepal will be denied their basic right to choose their leaders. ■



Prachanda: Shifting gears

the decision of the eight party leaders and subsequent approval by the cabinet of the second amendment of interim constitution whereby two-third majority of parliament can abolish monarchy if the latter is found conspiring to derail the polls should be implemented.

"Nepali Congress feels that this is appropriate. We have already agreed for this. That way we can hold the CA elections in more appropriate time," NC leader Shekhar Koirala told media. He hinted that new date of CA polls can be fixed for the period after Dashain/Tihar festivals and before winter sets in.

The Maoists who have been most aggressive in their reactions to the EC announcement seem to be working in a clear strategy to gain maximum political mileage from this debacle. Prachanda has

CARTER CENTER ON POLLS

Unaddressed Challenges

An independent US-based election monitoring organization lists numerous challenges facing credible elections in the country

By A CORRESPONDENT

In the wake of EC's announcement of its inability to hold the elections on time, the Carter Center – an Atlanta-based institute – has also brought forward a list of challenges facing the holding of credible elections at this juncture.

“Following the Election Commission of Nepal's April 13 announcement indicating that a June constituent assembly election is not technically feasible, it is now up to Nepali political leaders to focus their efforts on putting the proper conditions in place for the conduct of a sound electoral process in a realistic timeframe,” states a press release by the Center.

The Center has stated that while delay beyond June generates understandable uncertainty, a flawed electoral process could also undermine the peace process. “The election commission has undertaken electoral preparations despite difficult circumstances, including the lack of an electoral legal framework from the government from which to operate. Additionally, the poor law and order situation limits freedom of movement for election and government officials, political parties, and Nepali citizens.”

“The Carter Center therefore supports political efforts to create an environment that is conducive to conduct an electoral process, to include the voices of Nepal's diverse communities, and to deliver constituent assembly election results that enjoy credibility in the eyes of the Nepali people.”

The Center has also listed seven major challenges based on its observations. The key points of these

challenges have been listed as follows:

A. Improve security environment: Carter Center observers report unacceptable levels of continued fear, intimidation and physical violence. The poor law and order situation should be addressed in order to ensure a credible electoral process.

B. Allow democratic space: All political parties regardless of their ideology should be allowed to move and campaign freely in Nepal. Violations of this principle should be condemned publicly by all stakeholders when they occur.

C. Adopt critical electoral legislation: At present, the constituent assembly election law and other key legislation and decisions remain outstanding. As a matter of urgent priority, the interim government must adopt the legal framework that will provide the necessary base for the election commission and other participants to conduct the elections.

D. Widen political inclusion: The constituent assembly election is unlike an ordinary parliamentary election and in order for the results to be accepted broadly, extra care should be taken to include the perspectives and participation of previously underrepresented groups.

E. Launch voter awareness campaign: There is a widespread lack

of awareness among the Nepali people about the purpose and meaning of the constituent assembly election. A national voter awareness campaign is necessary to address this gap.

F. Ensure a credible voter register: Seized voter lists, civil unrest in the Terai, migrant voter issues, problems related to the citizenship process and the lack of a publicly displayed preliminary voter's list threaten to undermine credibility of the voter register. Wherever feasible, measures must be undertaken to accommodate these concerns or minimize their ultimate impact.

G. Prioritize transparency in the electoral system: A proposal to allow parties to shift the order of candidate names on party lists after the elections



CEC Pokharel (center): Statement of obvious

would remove transparency for voters and could give political party elites disproportionate control over their candidate lists. The consequences of this and alternative approaches should be debated thoroughly before passage of the electoral law.

The Carter Center was formally invited by the government of Nepal to observe the constituent assembly election process. The Center has deployed long-term observers representing eight different nationalities throughout the country; these observers have visited 50 of Nepal's 75 districts. The goal of the Center's mission is to demonstrate international support for Nepal's peace process and provide an independent assessment of the conduct of the constituent assembly elections, states the release. ■

POWER Politics Of Haves And Have Nots

Whether the government is led by elected, selected or nominated, politics in Nepal is always divided by haves and have nots. Those persons in power always project every thing positively whereas those outside power describe the situation negatively. All these inconsistencies, opportunism and non-ideological behaviors are the result of political instability

By KESHAB POUDEL

Till two weeks ago CPN-UML leader K.P. Sharma Oli, who was kicked out from power, justified every action of the government disagreeing with his own general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal's criticism against the performance of the government. As a deputy prime minister with portfolio of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oli was in the group of haves and he saw everything in a positive light.

However, his positive outlook did not last long. A week after his ouster from the cabinet, Oli started to criticize the performance of the government. "The beginning of this government is bad. I don't think this government is serious to deliver the goods," said Oli. This is usual frustration of 'have nots' class.

On the contrary, CPN-UML leader Pradeep Nepal - who was die-hard critique of previous government represented by his own party men, now has developed fondness towards the government following his inclusion in the cabinet.

"This government's primary job is to conduct the polls for Constituent Assembly. The time is too early to criticize the performance of the government," said Minister of Sports and Education Nepal who had demanded the resignation of his predecessor and party colleague Dr. Mangal Siddhi Manandhar for failing to appoint vice chancellors in universities a month ago. Nepal has

Acharya, Binaya Dhoj Chand, Sujata Koirala and Laxman Ghimire are critical of the government.

For instance, Home minister Sitaula does not have any complain and severe critic like Ram Chandra Poudel is a happy man now.

"There are so many weaknesses in the government, it needs to take bold steps to bring normalcy in the country," said Mahesh Acharya. "The government must improve its performance."

Similar frustration is there in CPN-UML where general secretary Nepal has been expressing his anger. "Prime minister Koirala has to accept his weakness and failure to drive the nation," said Nepal. He always remembers his heydays while he worked as a deputy



PM Koirala (center) with political leaders: Old habits die hard *File photo*

changed his stand now. "I have already proposed the name and prime minister will decide soon," he said.

Class of Haves and Have Nots

CPN-UML is not alone in exhibiting such behavior. Nepali Congress leaders, too, have similar attitudes and tendencies. Nepali Congress leader Ram Chandra Poudel, Krishna Prasad Sitaula, Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat, who are in the cabinet, are quite satisfied with the performance of the government. However, Congress leaders like Govinda Raj Joshi, Arjun Narsingh K.C., Khum Bahadur Khadka, Mahesh

prime minister. "I challenge any government to prove efficiency as we had made in our nine months government," said Nepal.

This differences of haves and have nots apply to all the party. Even recently joined Maoist ministers have different views than their own comrades on the role of government. Those who are in power seem to be positive and those who do not see any possibility to join the government have already started to criticize the government.

"This government has failed to hold the elections for Constituent Assembly.

If it is necessary, we must pull out from the government," said CPN-Maoist leader Mohan Vaidya aka Kiran, who has no possibility of joining the cabinet.

"Of course, it is a failure of the government but we cannot blame prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala alone. All the leaders of Seven Party Alliance are responsible for it," said minister of Information and Communication and spokesman of the cabinet Krishna Bahadur Mahara.

Actually, Nepal has two classes of politicians as the persons in power belong to haves and the persons out of power belong to have nots. Almost all politicians hold positive and optimistic views while in power and negative and opposite views outside power.

"Nepal is undergoing a very serious conflict since long. The conflict is between haves and have nots in the power. The conflict is not between bourgeois and proletariat or between feudal or serf but it is a conflict that is present within the same ideologies and within the same organizations," said a political analyst. "It is not the ideology which counts much in the conflict between political persons but it is the conflict of being on the power and being out of that. Power is the supreme motivating element for a political person especially in a socio-economic background like in Nepal where democratic institutions are in primitive stage of formation and attitudes and habits have not matured since basically a rural environment prevails over the attitudes habits and behaviors."

The stratification of Nepalese politician is not as Karl Marx said in his communist Manifesto - on the basis of freeman and slave, patrician and plebian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman - in a word oppressor and oppressed.

Even if they are husband and wife, their outlook may be completely different while in power and out of power. One does not need to be surprised even if there is difference of opinion between husband and wife if they belong to different class. CPN-Maoist leader Dr. Baburam Bhattarai's wife Hisila Yami is the Minister for Works and Physical



Madhav K. Nepal: Swayed by power politics?

Planning and United People Front's leader Lila Mani Pokharel's wife Sashi Shrestha has been recommended by his party for the position of Minister of State. As such, there could be differences on outlook between husband and wife.

Although more than fifty-seven years have already passed since the political change of 1950, the basic characters and behavior of most of the politicians continues to be determined by being in the power and out of it.

While going into the depth of the problem, one has to reach to a conclusion that this is mainly due to the continuing political instability in the country. More the political situation became unstable; persons in politics are forced to be inconsistent to continue in the leadership. They need, all the time, support of political opportunists for their own survival in the competition with other similar contenders. "It is just like uncertain market where the price is unpredictable. Therefore, one has to follow the market rules," said the analyst.

Nepali Congress leader B.P. Koirala, was the only politician, who had demonstrated the capacity to call the spade a spade. Even former minister Kamal Thapa, who is known to harbor opposite views to B.P. Koirala's politics, observed B.P. as the only leader who could speak anti-current and lead the masses.

In his recent interview to Samaya Weekly, Nepali Congress central

committee member and member of parliament Binayadhoj Chand said, "It is the lack of statesman in politics. After B.P. Koirala, we did not get any such leader in the country."

Former Panchas

When the attitudes of the politicians - who belong to ideological based parties like Nepali Congress and Communists - fluctuate on the basis of haves and have not, it is not surprising to see opportunistic behavior in the leaders of Rastriya Prajatantra Party and Rastriya Jansakti Party - two parties dominated by former Panchas.

Having worked under the active leadership of monarchy to remain in power for more than 30 years, former prime minister Surya Bahadur Thapa and Pashupati Sumsher Rana, who are now under have nots group, removed the monarchy from their party constitution showing eligibility to enter into haves group. In an eight party syndicate with all republicans, Thapa and Rana seemed to realize that retaining monarchy could bar them from joining the haves group.

Taking all the constitutional privileges, the eight party syndicate is now placing themselves in haves group in parliament and have pushed two parties of former Panchas into have nots group.

Alliance For power

The alliances within the party and outside the party are forged not on

ideological or philosophical basis. To be as a member of haves group, one can justify any political alliance. No one is regarded pariah to forge alliance and to join the power.

Under the leadership of Girija Prasad Koirala, Nepali Congress has forged all kinds of alliances from extreme leftists to extreme rightists. Koirala forged alliance with Thapa led RPP in 1997. Projected as an anti-communist in the election of 1992, prime minister Koirala forged alliance with CPN-UML in 1998 showing that he was flexible to any point.

"It is the power, even though it is naked and vulgar, power which counts much to the professional politicians to this country and country like ours," said the political analyst. Politicians in Nepal have nothing to loose in the race of power exercise except their ideological chains. As Karl Marx has said proletariat has nothing to lose but change, the politicians in Nepal have nothing to lose but chains.

Leading communist-dominated alliance of eight parties including the extreme leftists, prime minister Koirala shows that no ideology can bar him from continuing in the power with haves group.

Similarly, CPN-UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal endorsed all alliance with extreme rightists and Congress. As long as his party was in power, he does not have any complain.

CPN-UML forged alliance with royalist RPP accepting Lokendra Bahadur Chand as a prime minister in 1996. CPN-UML again shared power with Nepali Congress Democratic, RPP and Monarchist alliance in 2004.

Even CPN-Maoist leader Prachanda, who is now defending the alliance with Nepali Congress, revealed that he used to meet late King Birendra's brother late prince Dhirendra to forge an alliance.

One of the disgruntled leaders of CPN-Maoist Rabindra Shrestha in his interview to Kantipur Television revealed that he organized a meeting between Maoist leaders Prachanda and Dr. Baburam with Rameshnath Pandey, who is considered as branded royalist, in 2001.



Minister Mahara (center): Changing Positions!

Gorkhapatra

Considered as a branded royalist, Pandey was cabinet minister in Koirala's coalition which included CPN-UML leaders. He worked as an emissary at that time to deal with Indian prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee.

Similarly, Mohammad Mohasin, who is branded as a royalist, was spokesman of coalition government led by Sher Bahadur Deuba. Now Koirala's government has appointed Maoist leader Krishna Bahadur Mahara as government spokesman.

Now Koirala and Deuba are in effort to unite the party. They may share their experience to work with extreme leftists and extreme rightists.

As long as one in power, one sees everything okay even in the personalities of Pandey and Mahara. Once out of power, they will be condemned as regressive royalist and extremist communist by Koirala and Deuba.

"It is rarest in the rare in Nepali politics where politicians maintain consistency in their stand whether in the power or without power. Where the political institutions are fragile, the political culture is immature and where persons are judged on the basis of personal loyalty, in such a society it is natural to see individualistic and selfish behavior pattern. That which promotes the self interest of person is the

motivating factor to act and associate in groups and lobbies. At the initial stage of democratic development, instead of any idea or interest base lobbies and groups, loyalties in the parties made or unmade on the basis of self interest and ambitions of person are the driving factors," said the analyst.

Basically, there is no left, no right and no centrist democrat. If one is in power, he or she can justify everything including hostile alliance. If one is out of power, he even denounces most natural alliance. The struggle in Nepalese politics is not on the basis of ideology but on the basis of haves and have nots or those in power and out of power.

Why such inconsistencies are seen in the political behavior? "All these inconsistencies, opportunism and non-ideological behaviors are the result of serious political instability which the country is suffering from like a myth of Sisyphus a great of the Greek Tragedy," said the analysis. "Many unseen and unpredictable factors influence the policies of this country and seen players in politics are helplessly and miserably turned into power-mongers only. One has to look forward and hope that Nepal may get congenial atmosphere to run stable and respective democracy," said the analyst. ■

TOURIST ARRIVAL

Increasing Number

For the first time in many years, the number of tourist arrival increases

By A CORRESPONDENT

For the last couple of years, country's main tourist areas like Thamel had gone through the period of stagnancy as number of small lodges and hotels went empty. As the conflict intensified, tourist arrival dropped significantly.

The situation has changed now. Increasing number of tourists has given a new lease of to Thamel area with almost all hotels posting good occupancy rate. The restoration of peace has already started to give dividend to Thamel.

However, as country's political situation is still uncertain and volatile, no one can predict how long the present boom of tourism will continue.

After years of stagnancy and decline, the increased number of tourist has provided a relief to the hotels and other tourism-related

industries in the valley. Compared with the previous years, the number of tourist arrival this year has been impressive.

From Americans to European, and from Chinese and Japanese to Korean, tourists from all over the world increased drastically. China South West started two flights helping to bring a large number of tourists from China. Similarly, Korean Air's direct flight to Kathmandu increased the number of Korean tourists.

One of the most disappointing things is the declining arrival from India. According to the recent statistics released by Nepal Tourism Board, the number of Indian tourists slightly declined than previous years.

After the increase of number of tourists in March, hotel entrepreneurs expected that the trend will continue in April. Although frequent strikes is still sending wrong message to the international market, Nepal's previous image as a conflict-zone has changed.

Although there is more than half a

dozen flights between Kathmandu and New Delhi operated by several airlines, the increasing number of visitors still make it difficult to get the tickets. Following high demands, Nepal Airlines Corporation has introduced morning flight to New Delhi which is expected to increase the number of Indian tourists to Nepal.

"Nepal has many potential areas to



Thamel Area: Improving Arrival

lure the number of tourists. The government is making efforts to open new tourist destinations to tap tourists," said Madhav Prasad Ghimire, Secretary at the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation.

Despite the increasing number of tourists, the country is yet to introduce new venues and products to the market. There are still few possible places for tourists and they are confined to trekking and mountaineering in certain pocket areas.

"There is a need to open new areas for tourists. Places like Taplejung in the east and Dolpa in the west can be best places," said a tourism entrepreneur.

The peace agreement between the government and Maoists is going to be a boon for the tourism entrepreneurs in Nepal. What government needs to do now is to make available flights as well as add new venues for tourists to extend their stay in Nepal. ■

UNMIN COMPLETES STORAGE OF NEPAL ARMY WEAPONS

The United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) has said that on Thursday it completed the three-day process of registration and storage of Nepal Army weapons at the Chhauni Barracks in Kathmandu in accordance with the tripartite agreement on monitoring of arms and armies. "UNMIN said a total of 2,855 NA weapons including, rifles, machine guns, sub-machine guns, pistols and mortars have been stored in containers. The key of the storage containers is kept by NA commanders under 24-hour surveillance by UNMIN arms monitors, together with electronic surveillance," states a press release by the UNMIN. "The number of weapons registered and stored is the same as those stored under UNMIN monitoring by the Maoist army, and they are of equivalent types. The arrangements for registration, storage and monitoring of weapons are identical for those in place for the Maoist army," a statement issued by the UNMIN said. UNMIN chief Ian Martin inspected the weapons storage facility at the Chhauni Barracks on Thursday, together with General Jan Erik Wilhelmsen, the Chairperson of the Joint Monitoring Coordination Committee (JMCC) and Brigadier Shiva Pradhan of the Nepal Army, who is the Vice Chairperson of the JMCC. Following the inspection, Martin and General Wilhelmsen met with Chief of Army Staff General Rookmangud Katawal and expressed appreciation for the cooperation of the Army during the registration process. "The first phase of registration and storage of weapons has been achieved with excellent cooperation by both the Nepal Army and the Maoist army, and is a significant contribution to the peace process in Nepal," Martin said, adding, "It provides a sound foundation for the second phase of this process, when UNMIN will verify details of registered combatants in Maoist cantonments." *Compiled from reports* ■

“If We Follow The Populist Trend, Our Party Will Lose Its Identity”

-Sunil Kumar Bhandari

Nepali Congress Central Committee member SUNIL KUMAR BHANDARI, who claims to be a true follower of Congress leader B.P. Koirala, is a minority voice within the party. Bhandari – who hails from far western region-served six months of prison in Dhangadhi following King Gyanendra's action of February 1, 2005. His house in Dhangadhi was bombed by Maoists two years ago and recently his rice mill was locked up by them. Bhandari spoke with KESHAB POUDEL at his residence regarding current political situation. Excerpts:

Nepali Congress is not a radical or populist party. The present populist trend will not last long. If we follow the populist trend, our party will lose its identity. Nepali Congress is a liberal democratic party, which always follows the ground reality of the country.

As a central committee member of ruling party, how do you see the announcement of Elections Commission that the elections for Constituent Assembly could not be held at present context?

As a worker of democratic party, the announcement was shocking. In the last five years, we have not seen any election in the country and the postponement of CA elections will prolong the political instability. It is one of the sad news for me as people are again deprived of the right to exercise their rights to choose representatives.

How conducive was the current environment to hold free elections?

If my party asks me to contest the elections, I will definitely accept that challenge and contest the elections. If you ask me to decide on the basis of ground reality, I have to agree with the Election Commission. The law and order situation has not improved, extortion, intimidation continues as Maoists are still carrying guns threatening people. There are upsurge of Madhesis, Janjatis and Dalits. Without addressing these issues, we cannot hold the elections for CA. It shows that there was hardly any possibility of holding free, fair and credible elections.

What do you suggest now?

We have to improve law and order situation. We have to address the issues raised by various ethnic, regional and linguistic groups so that the situation can be made conducive to hold the elections.

Do you believe that the postponement of elections will end the democratic experiment?

I don't think so. Our experiences have already shown that all of us will be secure only in democracy. Whether leftists, rightists or monarchists, it is the democracy which safeguards their interests. Being a member of democratic party, I cannot justify postponement of elections.

What is the essence of Nepali Congress?

The essence of Nepali Congress is its faith in nationalism and liberal democracy as propounded by our leader B.P. Koirala. Historically, our party was established in an ideological basis of free and pluralistic society representing the democratic aspirations of people. One of the basic characters of Nepali Congress is to bring the change in society through the liberal and democratic ideals and nationalism. Even now Nepali Congress is trying to fulfill its historical role to restore the peace in the country by bringing rebel groups to the mainstream politics.

As you claim to be a follower of B.P. Koirala, do you justify the present stand of your party?

Of course, Congress seems to have deviated from its earlier position at present as it is playing different role than what it had played in the past when our party had visionary leader with far sighted views like B.P. Koirala who always took a decision looking at the future of the country. It is a fact that we don't have leader like him who can take decisions looking at the future.

As your leader B.P. Koirala said Nepali Congress will lose relevancy as soon as it gives up its stand on nationalism and democracy, how do you look at present when your party is harping too much on democracy sidelining nationalism?

As B.P. Koirala said Nepali Congress has to take responsibility of restoring democracy as well as safeguarding the national interest. He always emphasized that if Nepali Congress only talks of one responsibility, the party will be following the wrong track by being one sided. This is still valid for us to keep our identity intact. It is more or less true that Nepali Congress has failed to make balance between democracy and nationalism. We are spending too much time on only one responsibility of restoring democracy. Our party's priority of nationalism seems to have been sidelined. It is definite that our party will lose its relevancy if we are unable to maintain balance on these two factors. I am optimistic that our leader Girijababu will follow it. Nepali Congress has no option other than to follow the middle path.

How do you see your party? Is it a populist radical party?

Nepali Congress is not a radical or populist party. The present populist trend will not last long. If we follow the populist trend, our party will lose its identity. Nepali Congress is a liberal democratic party, which always follows the ground reality of the country.

At a time when almost all your top leaders are competing with populist slogans of communists, don't you think your party has also turned into a populist party?

At this juncture, when we are trying to give space to rebel Maoists, we have certain limitations. Frankly speaking, there is a realization in the party's rank and file whether our party is still a centrist party or there is certain deviation. Slowly and gradually, Nepali Congress workers are raising their voices from center to grass root level, party workers are debating whether we are taking right or wrong stand. As a mass based party, no leader can remain in power ignoring the voices of majority of people. In his recent book Raja, Rastriyata and Rajniti (King,

Nationalism and Politics) B.P. Koirala has clearly stressed the importance of monarchy as well as democracy in the country. Nepali Congress can never win the race in populism as there are many communist and rightist factions to champion this.

Don't you think by defending B.P. Koirala's stand, you may lose privilege as a central committee member?

I don't care about my post and position. I have spent almost all my youth championing the idea of liberal democracy and national reconciliation propounded by B.P. Koirala. Although he was put in prison for more than a decade by the King and some even demanded capital punishment against him, B.P. Koirala never criticized or condemned institution of monarchy. Whether he was in prison in Sundarjal or after returning from exile, B.P. Koirala expressed his own strong belief that democracy and monarchy are supplementary and complimentary to each other. For B.P. Koirala the importance was the institution of monarchy but not the individual King.

Looking at King Gyanendra's actions of October 4, 2002 and 1 February 2005, even your party leadership are determined to establish your party as a republican one like other communists. How do you look at it?

No democrat can defend King Gyanendra's action to impose autocratic rule in the country. King Gyanendra's actions were anti-democratic and anti-people and his actions derailed the democratic process in the country. In a similar way, King Mahendra had also dismissed elected parliament and elected government in 1961 imposing autocratic rule in the country. B.P. Koirala never supported King Mahendra's action and condemned the move to dismiss the elected prime minister and parliament. At the same time he defended the institution of monarchy.

How do you see King Gyanendra's actions?

Of course, the actions of King Gyanendra worked against the wishes of people as he tried to establish the autocratic system replacing the popular democratic government. However, this is not a mistake of institution of monarchy. For the actions of individual King Gyanendra, I don't want to victimize the institution of monarchy- which still has utility. When I was put in prison in Dhangadhi for six months for my conviction on democracy by King Gyanendra, I was tempted to side with republican. I changed, my stand when I read jail journal twice where B.P. Koirala stands for country's interest rather than be guided by personal anger and anguish. Despite atrocities committed against him by King Mahendra, he stood for monarchy looking for the country's interest and he did not take decision in haste.

How do you feel about the path your party is currently taking ?

We still can prove our relevancy again following the path shown by B.P. Koirala. Even prime minister and Nepali Congress leader Girija Prasad Koirala has been stressing for B.P. Koirala's national reconciliation. Of course, he himself claimed that

he is not B.P. Koirala but as a brother of B.P. Koirala, Girijababu knows ethos of national reconciliation.

At a time when Girija Prasad Koirala is toeing his line with extremist leftists minimizing

the traditional forces including monarchy, how can you say that G.P. Koirala is true follower of B.P. Koirala?

I firmly believe that Girija Prasad Koirala is the only living politician who knows the ethos of B.P. Koirala's national reconciliation. According to Girijababu, his recent actions are also a part of broader national reconciliation. As a politician, he might have some constraints and compulsions but Girijababu from his inner conviction is a follower of B. P.'s national reconciliation.

How can you justify his recent actions and utterances against country's traditional force like monarchy making alliance with the radical communists?

It is a fact that Girijababu is now leading communist-dominated coalition and some of his recent reported statements are directed against monarchy. I am not justifying the present alliance and Girijababu's statements. I don't know in which circumstances Girijababu issued those statements. However, we must give credit to Girijababu who has brought Maoists to the mainstream ending decade long violent insurgency.

Had B.P. Koirala ever defined that national reconciliation means the unity against the King?

I have told you that B.P.'s national reconciliation is not unity against any force. Actually, his national reconciliation policy was unity between modern democratic forces and traditional forces of monarchy. In broader sense, it is the unity among the nationalist forces against external power. It is very unfortunate to say that we don't have leader like B.P. Koirala who knows the strength of nation and capability to explain it to others. After returning from eight years long exile, B.P. firmly backed the reconciliation between modern and traditional forces strengthening Nepal's independence.

Don't you think the series of events of last couple of years pushed your party closer to alliance with radical leftists?

Of course, as a democratic party, Nepali Congress has various kinds of people with heterogeneous interests. It seems now that the persons with leftist leaning are hijacking party's agenda but there is no safe way for us other than to follow the course set by B.P.

How do you see Nepal's current political situation?

It is very fluid now. Despite changes in the global power context, Nepal's geo-strategic position has not changed as Nepal is still surrounded by two big powers of Asia. Nepal is still struggling to survive as an independent nation. As B.P. said in his recent book, every Nepalis have to work to show the strength of this country. We don't have leader like B.P. Koirala in this volatile political situation but we can stabilize society following the path shown by him. We will survive if we can retain our independence and sovereignty. ■



When I was put in prison in Dhangadhi for six months for my conviction on democracy by King Gyanendra, I was tempted to side with republican. I changed my stand when I read jail journal twice where B.P. Koirala stands for country's interest rather than be guided by personal anger and anguish.

Maoists face up to political reality

- By Dhruba Adhikary

The choice of April Fool's Day or All fools' Day appeared unintended, but Nepal's first interim government with Maoist participation could turn out to be a bad joke.

It is unclear whether a new chapter has actually begun, as claimed by re-elected Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala; it is equally uncertain whether the landmark event will eventually turn out to be "historic", as claimed by Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal (aka Prachanda).

In 1990, under similar circumstances, the government then-king Birendra constituted on April 1 lasted for only six days. Pro-democracy demonstrators suspected a king-size conspiracy to deprive the people of their civil rights and carried forward their agitation until their demands were met later that year.

The situation this time, a year after an uprising in April 2006, is qualitatively different. The challenges are formidable and varied, ranging from converting Nepal into a secular republic to addressing the demands of women, ethnic/sub-ethnic groups and those who belong to the country's southern plains, called Terai.

That Nepal should now opt for a federal system and offer autonomy to provinces formed on an ethnic basis and on regional aspirations are issues that, if not tackled conscientiously, could lead to the disintegration of the country.

Many blame the Maoists for issuing slogans that sound catchy but are unhelpful in preserving Nepal's unity in the face of its ethnic diversity. King Gyanendra, who is currently a "suspended" head of state under an interim charter enacted on January 15, has to take his share of the blame. Had he agreed to restore the democratic rights of the people he snatched through a coup in February 2005, last April's uprising would not have gone so far and created room for new demands. These included the abolition of the monarchy, removal

of Nepal's identity as the world's only Hindu country, and insertion of a legal provision requiring the state to transform itself from its unitary character to a federal structure.

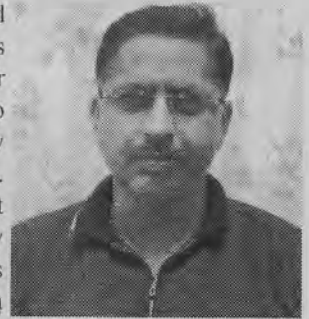
"It is still debatable whether Parliament had the mandate to declare Nepal a secular state," Devendra Raj Panday told the Kathmandu Post newspaper. He was alluding to a declaration the interim parliament adopted last May 18. Panday, a former minister, currently leads a citizens' movement that monitors the activities (or lack of them) of the political parties. Panday's view broadly represents opinions of those who are keen to see Nepal as a republic, but are in favor retaining the country's Hindu identity. They cite a 2001 census indicating that more than 80% of the population follow the Hindu religion.

One other issue that the controversial declaration included (and subsequently incorporated in the interim charter) relates to the government's proposal to liberalize citizenship laws, thereby opening the door for millions of Indian migrants to qualify for Nepali citizenship. It is a belief that Koirala agreed to back the proposition to drop Nepal's Hindu identity on the suggestion of a powerful Western lobby, and listed the subject of liberalized citizenship laws at the behest of India. Two of India's most populous states, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, share a porous border with Nepal.

A panel of eminent citizens is already working to force the government to cancel all citizenship certificates issued after the adoption of the controversial declaration made through the interim parliament. "A mass awareness campaign to foil the 'demographic invasion' from the south has become a must," said analyst Madan Regmi, who is also associated with the panel.

Ever since they launched their "people's war" in 1996, Maoist leaders

have told Nepalis about their dream to make a "new Nepal". What does it exactly mean? Does it mean a truncated



country? In the absence of any credible scheme for a federal state, the Maoist leadership's ability to convince the public is rapidly receding. And some prominent ethnic and regional groups have gone to the extent of accusing the Maoist leadership of outright deception.

And the tendency to express wrath through violent attacks is on the rise. An incident in the border town of Gaur in the southern plains, for instance, on March 21 resulted in the deaths of 29 Maoist cadres and sympathizers. Their leaders in Kathmandu alleged that a splinter group carried out the assault, using armed goons hired from across the border in India.

Anyhow, the peace accords and concomitant undertakings finally paid dividends for the Maoists. On January 15, they took a sizable number of seats in Parliament, and on April 1 they became the eighth party of a ruling alliance, securing five of the 22 ministries through which the government functions.

Despite strong reservations from the West, particularly the United States and the European Union, Koirala formed the interim government just hours before he left for New Delhi to attend a summit of South Asian countries. While Maoist ministers headed toward their assigned ministerial offices, US Ambassador James Moriarty's office issued a statement extending full support to the peace process, simultaneously expressing doubts about the Maoists' sincerity. This is how the statement read,

in part: "The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), which to date has refused to abandon violence, must finally do so. As a partner in the interim government, the Maoists must now be held fully accountable for their actions."

Recently, a senior US diplomat, Richard Boucher, met with Koirala during a regional conference in New Delhi and shared his view that the Maoists, although a part of the government, could not be trusted yet. "Our stance on the Maoists has not changed," Boucher said. The Maoists are still on the US watch-list of terrorists. A widely held perception is that the Maoists' decision to join Parliament as well as the government represents only a change in their strategy, and that they have not abandoned their declared objective of converting Nepal into a communist state. The loss of more than 13,000 lives during the insurgency is a constant reminder of the consequences of a Maoist scheme.

Unlike the West, India avoided fussy remarks while offering its reaction on the formation of the interim government in Nepal. New Delhi considered the development "another step forward in the implementation of the peace process". China remained conspicuous by not giving any instant comment. As has been said many times, Beijing deals with any government that the people of Nepal appoint.

The Western perception of the implications of the Maoists' rise to power could be a bit of an exaggeration, but it cannot be dismissed as a canard, either. What Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai, the No 2 person in the hierarchy, wrote in a commentary published recently does not indicate that the Maoists are committed to any substantive alteration in their policies or objectives.

Neither is their pledge to remain in competitive politics for long very reliable. "In the past, revolutionaries made 'revolutionary use' of Parliament; now they have to make revolutionary utilization of the government. This is all, nothing beyond that," said Bhattarai, whose wife is also a minister, in *Janaadesh*, a Nepali-language weekly.

His categorical contention is that the

flexibility the Maoists have shown must not be understood as their surrender to the old feudal regime. The flexibility he alluded to is the decision to give up the long-held claim for the post of deputy prime minister.

The Maoists have yet to fulfill their promise to return farmlands and properties they have seized from individuals. Thousands of internally displaced families have not been able to return to their homes. People who belong to this class include senior members of prominent political parties such as the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) - the party of leftist moderates.

What are the Maoists now? A party of revolutionaries with the long-term objective of turning the entire South Asia into a red zone, or a band of opportunists who are prepared to give up their aims and ideology in exchange for position, power and privileges?

While those who prefer not to rely on the communists continue to see Nepali Maoists as a group of revolutionaries, there are others - groups and forums - who tend to place them in the second category.

One of these is Rabintra Shrestha, a high-ranking Maoist functionary who fell out with the leadership because of alleged "deviation and distortion". A day after the Maoists joined the government, Shrestha told Kantipur television that out of the 10 years of the insurgency, top Maoist leaders Prachanda and Baburam Bhattarai spent more than eight years in India.

Not only that, Bhattarai allegedly met with the chief of India's external intelligence agency - the Research and Analysis Wing - when the Maoists were in the midst of a crisis.

Shrestha also told the television that Prachanda wanted to enter into a deal with King Gyanendra to become prime minister. But that did not materialize as the king staged a royal coup to grab power for himself.

Angered Maoists then agreed to an Indian suggestion to forge an alliance with Koirala, who was leading a front of seven political parties. The outcome surfaced in the shape of a 12-point

agreement signed in New Delhi in November 2005. The Maoist leadership has yet to respond to Shrestha's allegations.

But Shrestha is not alone to raise a voice against unholy alliances and excessive Indian involvement in Nepali affairs. Nanda Kishore Pun, aka Paasaang, who is still with the Maoist party and is a deputy commander of the People's Liberation Army, recently told a newspaper how reactionaries and "forces from within and outside" were creating instability. "Some people want to turn Nepal into Sikkim," the *Nepali Times* weekly quoted him as saying in reference to the Indian state.

Nepal's traditional forces consider themselves allies of India. But they, too, are at a loss to understand why Indian policy on Nepal has become overwhelmingly influenced by intelligence agencies. Rabintra Nath Sharma, head of the pro-monarchist *Rashtriya Prajatantra Party-Nepal*, thinks New Delhi is following a shortsighted approach.

In his view, for the time being, the Maoists may remain friendly toward India, but they are sure to create problems in the long run. "South Asia is becoming a hub and Nepal the core of all left-wing political parties which draw their inspiration and are driven by Marxist, Leninist and Maoist doctrines," Sharma, who describes himself as a friend of India, recently told *Asia Times Online*.

The gains the Maoists are currently making, he said, will inevitably send jitters all over the world. "The free world will be forced to face up to the tsunami brewing now in Nepal," Sharma said.

Obviously, the Maoists are in a dilemma. Since they always intended to be the liberators of the poor and downtrodden, they don't want to be seen as anything else. Not a Frankenstein. Definitely not an adversary of the Indians, not an unfriendly force to China, and not a pariah for the rest of the international community. Who are they, then? Prachanda and Baburam might come out with explanations and clarifications before too long. ■

(Courtesy: *Asia Times Online*)

BOOK

Maoist Movement

Many books have already been published on Maoist movement in Nepal. Pyakurel discusses it from sociological perspective

By KESHAB POUDEL

From academicians to journalists and from civil society members to communist ideologue, every one has his/her own perspective on the Maoist movement of Nepal. Uddhab Pyakurel, who has completed M. Phil from the Department of Sociology, University of Delhi and is working towards Ph.D. degree, has analyzed the movement from sociological perspective.

Having been associated with the Nepal Center for Contemporary Studies (NCCS) and worked for a number of research projects, Pyakurel is a member of new breed of sociologists in Nepal.

In his book, Pyakurel discusses all the background events of the movement from its inception in 1996 till signing the comprehensive peace agreement with the government. Unlike many other books on Maoists, Pyakurel's book is full of authentic documents, incidents. From the history of communist movement in Nepal leading up to the present time, the book covers entire history of democratization and modernization of Nepal.

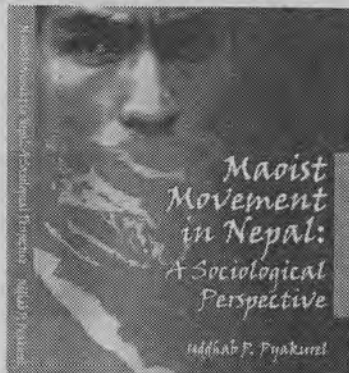
"This work has its own limitations and weaknesses. However, I have decided to get it published in hurry because of the speedy conversion of the Maoist Movement from People's War to the mainstream peaceful competitive politics," writes Pyakurel in his acknowledgements.

One of the important parts of this book is that it analyzes the process of radicalization of Nepalese politics. Pyakurel tries to explain almost all important phase of Nepalese communist movement. From Naxal movement of early 1970s to present one, he tries to see the social, political and economic scenarios. From theoretical to the

political context of Nepal, author Pyakurel has done a remarkable job to show the Maoist movement.

"In the context of Nepal's Maoists movement, one can conduct researches on various dimensions such as the role of ideology, (Marxist-Leninist and Maoist), the history of the Maoist movement, the leadership of the Maoist Party, the comparisons of the authoritarian and democratic systems of government and their role in nurturing and furthering the movement etc," writes Pyakurel.

From analyzing historical socio-economic situation and state discrimination, Pyakurel also examines



**Maoist Movement In Nepal
A Sociological Perspective**

By: Uddhab P. Pyakurel

Published by: Adroit Publishers
Ansari Road, Dayaganj, New Delhi
Price: Rs. 450

cases of post 1990 multi-party democracy. He focuses his study mostly on state-sponsored discriminatory social practices in the Nepali society on the

basis of religion, caste, ethnicity, gender and language which directly and indirectly helped in boosting the eleven year long Maoist movement.

Full of documents including the agreements ranging from twelve points agreement to six point agreement sent to United Nations, the book is first of its kinds which details out all the events.

Sandwiched between two Asian giants India and China, this is not the first kind of insurgency in Nepal. Of course, it lasted for more than a decade and destroyed Nepal's valuable properties and lives. In the last five decades, Nepal has seen violent insurgencies one after another. Even after signing the peace agreement with Maoists, the new phase of insurgency has already begun in southern plains as two break away factions of Maoists party have already created panic.

The author has made all efforts to describe Nepal's course following the political change of 1950 till now with different phases of political development and concludes that the socio-economic disparity and social discrimination is primarily responsible to evolve the Maoist insurgency in Nepal.

With the diverse ethnic and linguistic groups and geographical diversity, Nepal has unique position in south Asia. Along with its diversity, the geo-strategic location is also another important contributing factor for its instability.

Scholar Pyakurel has concentrated more on the ethnic and linguistic discrimination when analyzing the movement. At a time when the Maoists have already joined the government, Pyakurel's book will be interesting to read.

From scholars to the students, this book will give all different aspects of the Maoists movement in Nepal. As a book analyzes on the sociological perspective, it is a first of its kind which discusses all ethnic, linguistic and religious phenomenon that contributed to exacerbate the conflict.

BOOK

Nature Narrative

Although it is a novel, Anil Adhikary's book gives a glimpse of Nepalese rural life

By A CORRESPONDENT

Nepal is known for its beautiful mountains and varied ethnic groups. The simplicity of Nepalese rural population is well known. Even at the time of intensification of insurgency, one can see this reality in rural areas.

A journalist-turned-litterateur, Anil Adhikary has described what he has seen

in the rural life in his novel called Prakriti (which translated as Nature).

Starting from a story of a foreign volunteer working in rural parts of Nepal and his love for Nepali women, the book gives accounts of social structures, human relations and hospitality of rural life of Nepal.

From describing, the simplicity of Nepalese rural population and their sense of belonging to their native lands, writer Adhikary has put down his own imagination in good harmony with words.

His description of the rural settings, difficulties of subsistence-based economy and all other aspects highlight the intricacies of daily life in rural areas.

Prakriti (Novel)

Author: Anil Adhikary

Published by: Sarvesh Publication

Price: Rs. 250, Pages: 312

OHCHR-NEPAL CALLS FOR PROBING DISAPPEARANCES

The OHCHR-Nepal has called on the interim government to establish a commission to investigate disappearances during the conflict.

"The OHCHR-Nepal remains concerned about the continuing uncertainty regarding investigations into the allegations of torture and disappearances from the Bhairabnath Battalion barracks in 2003. Almost one year from the date that OHCHR presented its report on these cases to the Government, a full and independent inquiry has yet to be established. The report of the Nepalese Army special investigation has never been published, nor, despite repeated requests, did the Nepalese Army provide OHCHR-Nepal with a copy," it states in a press release.

It also notes the "unprecedented investigations carried out by the Supreme Court Task Force into the arrest and forced disappearance of Rajendra Dhakal, Bipin Bhandari and Dil Bahadur Rai, and Chakra Bahadur Katuwal in 1999, 2002 and 2001 respectively. The Task Force presented its report to the Supreme Court on 8 April 2007. It concluded that there was a general practice of arbitrary arrest, torture, murder and systematic and widespread enforced disappearances as part of a state counterinsurgency program during the conflict. It also concluded that members of the security forces were responsible for the arrests, and named individual security force members as responsible for the four disappearances, as well as in one case the death in custody."

The press release adds that the OHCHR-Nepal hopes that full and independent criminal investigations will be conducted in these and other disappearance cases, and lead to those responsible being held accountable, including those persons who had command responsibility. "In its report, the Task Force also recommended, inter-alia, that the Supreme Court issue a directive to the Government to set up a high level commission of inquiry into disappeared persons. The eight parties had agreed to the formation of a high level commission of inquiry to look into the disappeared in their agreement of 8 November 2006. In its Common Minimum Program, the Interim Government gave a commitment to investigate the fate of those who disappeared during the conflict. OHCHR-Nepal is calling on the Interim Government to fulfill this commitment by holding broad consultations with civil society and other stakeholders in order to establish a credible, competent, independent commission to look into those who disappeared after arrest by security forces or abduction by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). Such a commission should have powers to order access to documents and subpoena individuals to appear before them. The outcome of the commission's work should be made public, but should not substitute for prosecutions."

Lena Sundh, Representative of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal, said, "Delays in setting up proper, independent inquiries to clarify the fate of all the disappeared is simply prolonging the agony of their families, who do not know the whereabouts of their loved ones or what happened to them, as well as denying them the right to truth and justice." ■

Book List

- Fateful Interview, Madhav Kumar Rimal,Rs. 400.00
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EXHIBITION

Shashi Shaha's Collections

Senior artiste Shashi Shaha depicts his creations

By A CORRESPONDENT

As the country has been passing through a very critical phase of its history with many ups and downs in its course including violence and peace, tragedy and terror, people have their own ways to express them.

Unlike other common people, artist, novelist, short story writers and fiction writers can translate their imagination in the forms of book or canvas or papers. In recent times, from April uprising to twelve years long bloody conflict and political uncertainty, various writers and authors express it on their own way. Some stressed the tragic part of conflict other focused on revolutionary crazes, there are various ways to explain the event.

Every one has his/her own way to describe inner feelings. Some expresses it through skies and some through natures, Nepal's renowned artist Shashi Shaha's favorite is horses. In his long carrier as an artist, Shaha uses the horses to express as an anger, tragedy, frustration and change.

Following a long gap, Shaha came with his horse this time to depict the mood of conflict and its devastations consequences. With perfect combination of color and expression of horses, Shaha expressed his own inner feelings.

Some of his horses are crying loosing their patients and some horses have strange behavior in their expressions. Unlike in abstract paintings, the expressions delivered through the horses are so powerful that they tell every bit of emotional and other expressions.

Senior artist Shaha is not a new name in Nepalese art sector as he has been painting inner expressions of human society and human life for last many decades.

After long time, senior artist Shaha exhibited his paintings in the city. The solo exhibition titled "Retrospective: Celebrating Forty Years of Creativity" was organized at Siddhartha Art Gallery,

As a modern artist, Shaha's imagination is superb and his way of expressing inner feelings are very humane and concentrated in and around the human misery and life.

Among the contemporary artists, Shaha has a special place whose imagination and performance is very creative.

Babarmahal. The paintings will be displayed for few more weeks.

Renowned for his creative paintings, Shaha, who always uses images of horses to express his inner feelings and imagination, has, this time, depicted the life of contemporary human society as well as the conflict-prone Nepal's difficulties. His art Royal Massacre drawn in 2004 and Black Horse and

the World Trade Center painted in 2006 depicted the tragic situation and human relations.

Senior artist Shaha's paints horses in varied forms and varied natures. His horses represent fear, courage and progress. In his all paintings, he shown shadow of human terror and fear psychology.

As a modern artist, Shaha's imagination is superb and his way of expressing inner feelings are very humane and concentrated in and around the human misery and life.

Among the contemporary artists, Shaha has a special place whose imagination and performance is very creative. His horses are always keenly observing the overall situation of Nepal.

In his paintings, artist Shaha described and expressed with his powerful instruments of paintings. In the art galleries of the valley, people see various kinds of painting exhibition; Shaha's exhibition was first of its kind where one can see

completely different postures and positions.

Whether it is normal or abnormal time, it does not make a much differences in the life of the artists who always observe every bit of incidents and describe them through their own inner feelings. Although senior artist Shaha came with his new paintings after a long gap, he is able to lure the heart of art lovers. ■

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