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The National Newsmagazine

SPOTLIGHT

May 18-24, 2007



MELAMCHI: A MIRAGE?

Security : Unguarded Border
 Article : Bhagirath Yogi

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रु. १,०००/- मा लोटस बचत खाता*

...अब मात्र



Lotus

बचत खाता



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

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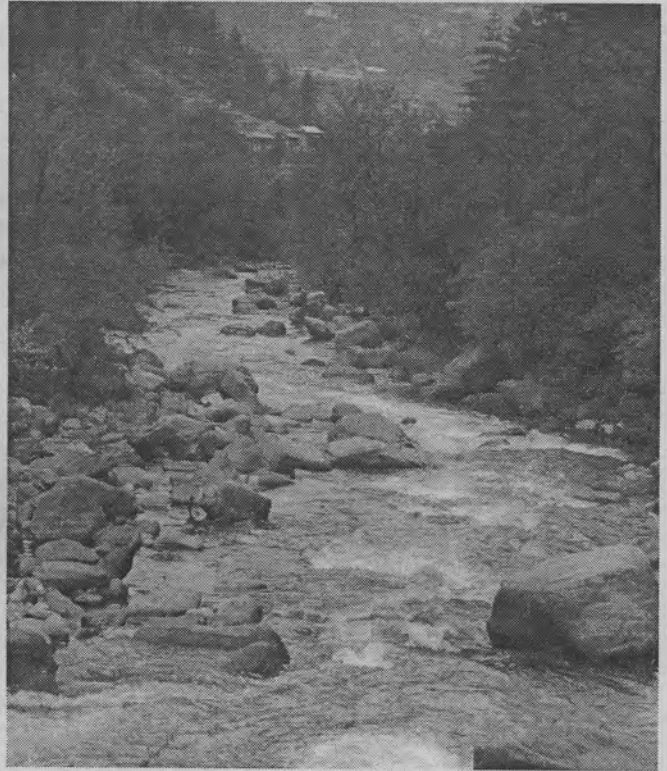
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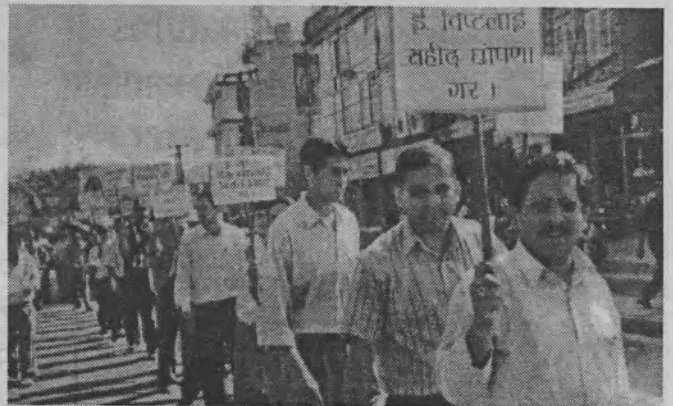
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COVER STORY: Melamchi Still Nowhere The recent decision by Minister Hisila Yami to review contract on water management has pushed Melamchi into uncertainty Page 12



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Rajendra Dahal
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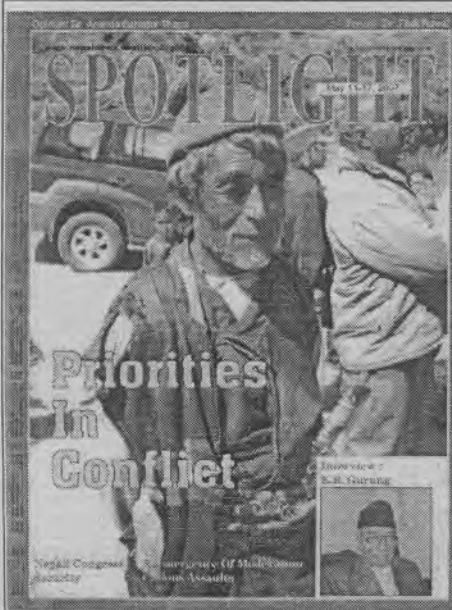
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Nepalese people's expectations to see normalcy and peace following a decade long atrocities and destructions by Maoist insurgency has turned into a fiasco. If the incidents of past few months are any indication, Nepal's southern plain (called terai or Madhes) adjoining with India seems to be heading towards violent and anarchic phase. From east to west, all of the southern plain –which remained peaceful for most of the time in the past – is now boiling as various brands of armed groups are in killing spree. In the far west and mid-west, Maoists are creating anarchy whereas anti-Maoist groups organized on the basis of race and region are creating anarchy in eastern and central parts of Nepal. All are preaching and practicing violence, extortion, kidnapping and crimes of these natures. This new upsurge of violence initially started in the name of protection of rights of Madhes and against settlers of hilly origin in Terai. Now both the communities are suffering from these violence and terror. Thanks to destruction and devastation unleashed by the Maoists in the previous twelve years and now attacks from various brands of terrorists and criminals, there are virtually no police security posts in Nepali side along the 1600 kilometer long border with India. Despite strong presence of paramilitary forces in Indian side of the border, criminals and terrorist activities continue unabated in Nepal. These criminals and terrorists are threatening from across the border in India. It seems that Nepal-India border is without guard. All kinds of elements including criminals and terrorists are entering into Nepal from southern border. The time has now come for the leadership of both the countries to make the border safe.

It seems that Melamchi Drinking Water Project is now almost dead following the decision of Minister for Works and Physical Planning not to sign agreement with UK's Severn Trent Water International (STWIN) - which was scheduled to be signed as a Kathmandu Valley's water utility manager on May 1. This is one of the conditions Asian Development Bank (ADB) had put for investing in Melamchi Project. The decision of minister Hisila Yami also questioned the credibility of cabinet and prime minister of Nepal as the earlier decision to award contract to STWIN was taken by the previous government led by prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala. In a cabinet system of government, it is prime minister who is the final authority in decision making. If a minister can reverse the cabinet decision, what is the role of prime minister and where is his authority? For Minister Yami, the decision might be a moment of jubilation and a political move but the cancellation of Melamchi is going to be a major blow to three million population of valley who have been facing acute shortage of drinking water. Looking at the larger implications of cancellation of the project to poor people, we hope wise leadership at Asian Development Bank would not take the decision harming the interest of Nepalese as Nepal has already spent about two decades in this project. We have decided to look on Melamchi project as a cover story this week.

Keshab
Keshab Poudel
Managing Editor



Development And Peace

Peace and development are two sides of the same coin ("Priorities in Conflict" SPOTLIGHT May 11). Peace is incomplete without development and vice versa. As such, it is the duty of the leaders to carry forward both peace and development. While they have made a lot of progress in peace front, they are yet to win people's hearts and minds through development in the past one year.

*Seema Gautam
Jamal*

Restart Development

The cover story "Priorities in Conflict" (SPOTLIGHT May 11) leads one to conclude that the people at large want to see development and economic prosperity at the soonest. This is the area that the current democratic government must concentrate upon. By re-launching development activities like road construction, tourism promotion, infrastructure building, rural electrification, literacy campaign, health development and so on, the government will be able to win the precious trust of the people. This trust will allow it to move ahead on other pressing political fronts such as elections, state transformation, inclusion and so on.

*Jeevan Kayastha
Lagankhel*

Clash of Priorities

The cover story "Priorities in Conflict" (SPOTLIGHT May 11) sheds light on how the people of this country are feeling disoriented with the current state of affairs. The political leadership are totally focused on political issues like Constituent Assembly elections and restructuring of state. The general people are unhappy with the slow pace of development. With the restoration of democracy, people not only wanted peace and political resolution but also

development. It is due to the lack of socio-economic development, which had led to conflict in the first place. Without resolving socio-economic issues, durable peace cannot be conceived.

*Hemanta Thapa
Baluwatar*

Changing Picture

A year after the restoration of democracy, people are now getting desperate for economic transformation of their lives (Priorities in Conflict" SPOTLIGHT May 11). Leaders had promised socio-economic progress along with political transformation. They now need to keep their promise. The recent inauguration of road link to Karnali region was a big achievement. This event made the general people happier with the thinking that their government is doing something. Such development achievements should be frequent. Otherwise, people tend to lose patience with non-functional governments.

*Bir Tamang
Kuleshwore*

Silent Majority

The interview of general secretary of Nepali Congress Kul Bahadur Gurung (SPOTLIGHT May 11) provided interesting insight into how the largest democratic party in the country is

functioning. The NC, arguably, is facing the most difficult time in its history as its shoulders carry heavy responsibilities of steering the nation through the turbulent transition. Faced with barrage of criticisms from within and outside, the NC warhorse needs to keep moving. Its stance on monarchy, for instance, has been the subject of criticism from all quarters. Republicans have been applying their pressure on the party. Till now, the NC has maintained stoic silence on the issue. But it cannot prevaricate this issue forever. A time will come, soon, when it will have to make its position clear. Therefore, the Congress leadership will do good to carefully weigh in all options and formulate party position. The centrist approach of the party has been a time-tested ideology. Whether the party will side with extreme positions vacating its centrist approach, will not only decide the Congress' political course but also shape nation's future.

*Kamal Pradhan
Khichapokhari*

Security Undermined

The article "Callous Assaults" (SPOTLIGHT May 11) shows how much the Maoists must need to change before the country can breathe easy with the peace process. At a time when the Maoists are already in the interim government and interim parliament, the activists of the party act as if they are the same old rebels. First, the people thought that the Maoists will change once the peace process sets in. After the November 22 peace accord, they thought Maoists will change once they are inducted in the parliament; then they rested their hope on interim constitution. However, even after they are included in the government, there is no fundamental change in their attitude and their demonstrated aversion towards feudal elements (read the middle and upper class sections of society).

*Khusbu Thapa
Samakhusi*

PM Flies To Biratnagar

Leaving the much-awaited eight-party meeting high and dry, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala flew to his hometown of Biratnagar, on Sunday (May 13), for two days of rest. In Biratnagar, he met with local security and administrative officials. He refused to make any comment with the media saying that he will talk with them on Monday. *Leading dailies report*

Police-Maoist Clash Leaves 44 Injured In Nepalgunj

Maoist activists clashed with the policemen on Sunday (May 13) in Nepalgunj leaving 44 injured including Maoist lawmaker. The clash occurred after the Maoists violated the District Administration Office's prohibitory order in the center of the city. The Banke administration office had issued the order a week ago to maintain peace and order. Maoists have accused that three dozen of its leaders and workers including MP Purna Subedi were attacked by the police. Eight policemen were injured in the incident. *Nepal Samacharpatra daily reports*

Ex-COAS Thapa Barred From Flying Abroad

The former chief of army staff Pyara Jung Thapa was barred by security personnel at the Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA), on Sunday (May 13), from flying abroad. Officials said he was barred as per the directive by the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA), which is investigating persons named as accused in the report by Rayamajhi Commission regarding repression of Janaandolan II. Thapa was flying to London via Doha. After he was stopped, Thapa returned home immediately. *Leading dailies report*

Minister Mahato For Autonomy To Madhesis

Minister for Industry, Commerce and Supplies Rajendra Mahato on Saturday

(May 12) said that the Madhesi people should be allowed the right to rule themselves in the Madhes. Speaking at a press conference organized by the Nepal Journalists' Forum here, Mahato warned that the people of the hill community might be forced to displace from the Madhes if Madhesis were denied the right to rule themselves. He stressed the need for involving the people of the Madhesi community to the level of leadership. He said that a probe team would be formed to ascertain the extent of the suppression during the Madhes agitation. The team will be formed after holding talks with the agitating forces. *The Himalayan Times daily reports*

Bill To Clip King's Authority To Confer Awards

A bill clipping the King's authority of conferring awards, honors and decorations has been registered at the parliament. As per the bill, a separate committee headed by the Prime Minister will be formed to confer awards, honors and decorations from now onwards. The committee will include Home Minister, Defense Minister, Information and Communication Minister, Education and Sports Minister, chief secretary and one nominee by the PM from among distinguished personalities. The bill has also introduced new honors, awards and decorations abolishing the past ones. In the category of honors, the bill has introduced Nepal Ratna, Rastra Gaurav, Rastra Deep, and Jana Sewa Shree. The bill introduces decorations such as Rastra Yashobardhak, Nepal Sewa Pravin, Samaj Sewa Ratna, Param Paurakh Bhaskar, Ati Paurakh Bhaskar, Maha Paurakh Bhaskar, Nepal Pratap Subhushan, Nepal Pratap Abhushan and Nepal Pratap Bhushan. While the Param Paurakh Bhaskar, Ati Paurakh Bhaskar and Maha Paurakh Bhaskar decorations will be conferred to Nepali Army soldiers who display outstanding valor,

the Nepal Pratap Subhushan, Nepal Pratap Abhushan and Nepal Pratap Bhushan will be conferred to gallant members of police force. Likewise, the bill introduces awards such as Lok Shree Padak, Rastra Sewa Padak, Satkarya Padak, Samaj Sewa Padak, Sagarmatha Padak, Sukirti Padak, Birta Padak, Shaurya Padak, Prakritik Prakop Pidotoddar Padak, Bikas Ratna Padak, Shanti Padak and Bigyan Pravin Padak. *nepalnews.com reports*

Home Minister Vows To Declare Bista Martyr

Home Minister Krishna Sitaula has said that the government will declare Nabaraj Bista a martyr. Bista, a government engineer, was shot to death by the cadres of Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM-Goit faction) on Friday. The JTMM-Goit cadres had killed one engineer and abducted three other government staffs. The cadres descended upon four government employees in Khelonatole of Karkatti VDC of Siraha district. They killed engineer Nabaraj Bista – who worked in district technical office. Of the three others abducted including driver Ram Kumar Yadav, engineer Murli Gopal Ranjit and contractor Tek Bahadur Lama – Yadav has been released while the whereabouts of other two remain unknown. *Leading dailies report*

Prachanda Regrets Dang Incident, Mahara Unhappy Over YCL Activities

Maoist chairman Prachanda has said that his party expresses deep concern over the incident in Dang last Sunday (May 6) when a Nepali Congress leader was thrashed by Maoist activists outside the Tulsipur municipality where senior Maoist and NC leaders were discussing ways to resolve the issue of seized properties. In a statement he issued on Thursday, Prachanda has said, "Our party expresses deep concern at the sad incident that occurred after dispute

erupted between tenant farmers and land owners even as consultations between our party leader Dr. Baburam Bhattarai and NC leader Dr. Shekhar Koirala was reaching to conclusion (to resolve the issue)." He has said that the incident appeared 'spontaneous.' Prachanda also said that setting of fire in Dang on Wednesday was also against the policy of Maoist party. He vowed to take action against any of his party members if found involved in that incident. "It is the burning need of the country today to fix the date for CA elections by maintaining political understanding on republic and building an environment of trust through appropriate management of PLA cantonments, release of detainees, making whereabouts of disappeared persons public and correctly resolving issues regarding land-house disputes," Prachanda states. "Our party feels that consolidation of eight party unity is mandatory to achieve these results. Expressing our commitment (on the unity) we appeal to all to move ahead in the direction of unity and trust by correcting their weaknesses," he adds. Meanwhile, Maoist minister Krishna Bahadur Mahara has said that the violent activities being carried out in the name of Young Communist League (YCL) were against the policies of the party. Talking to reporters, Minister for Information and Communication Mahara said, "The violent activities carried out by the YCL itself or by others in the name of YCL are against the policies of the party." Mahara said incidents of looting, arson and beatings were against party policies. He, however, said the peaceful campaign by the Maoist-affiliate YCL were as per the party policy. Meanwhile, in Bardiya on Thursday, YCL cadres set fire to Small Farmers Cooperatives Limited and looted documents. Reports say that the cooperative had safely tucked away monetary deposits fearing such attacks.

Consequently, only documents were looted. The cooperative has provided over Rs 12.5 million loan to farmers of the region. *Compiled from reports*

YCL Steps Up Violence, Thrashes Assistant CDO In Kailali

The Maoist-affiliated Young Communist League (YCL) has stepped up its violent activities on Tuesday (May 8) when its cadres thrashed assistant chief district officer and policemen in Kailali district. The YCL cadres and Maoist-affiliated Tharu Liberation Front (TLF) activists, demanding the release of their comrades in Bardiya, ran amok the District Administration Office in Dhangadhi and severely thrashed assistant CDO Ganja Bahadur Mahara Chhetri. A few security personnel were also injured. The YCL cadres padlocked the DAO. Sis UN officials who had reached Kailali DAO when the incident occurred were also locked inside the DAO office for half an hour. Meanwhile, in Dandagaon of Rasuwa district, the YCL cadres chased away 9 police men on duty at Dandagaon police post. The policemen fled to Betrawati in search of safety after Maoists attacked the post claiming that the police had booked YCL cadre Kumar Tamang on a complaint filed by workers of Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP). *Leading dailies report*

YCL Intensifies Actions

The Maoist activists belonging to Young Communist League (YCL) and Tharu Liberation Front (TLF) set the office of land reform in Ghorahi of Dang district on fire on Wednesday (May 9). The group of Maoist activists who had gone to District Administration Office (DAO) to protest arrest of their comrades in Bardiya district, set the office on fire. According to chief of land revenue office Keshav Acharya all the documents including land records were gutted in the

fire. When police intervened to disperse the protesters, a clash ensued, which resulted in injuries to four policemen and a dozen protesters. Meanwhile, in eastern district of Sankhuwasabha, YCL cadres beat one worker to death. Bir Bahadur Kalakheti, a 67-year-old person was beaten to death by YCL cadres named Harka Bahadur Gole and Sher Bahadur Gole. He was killed after a dispute erupted over building of a bridge in Lafunga river – located in northern part of the district, some four hours of walking distance from district headquarters Khandbari. *Leading dailies report*

Janajatis Threaten Stir

Five Janajati organizations, on Thursday (May 10) announced protest programs beginning May 17 to press the government to meet their demands, including federal system of governance, the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN), Indigenous Nationalities Joint Struggle Committee (INJSC), Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities Students (NEFINS), National Indigenous Nationalities Women Federation (NINWF) and Nepal Indigenous Nationalities Youth Association jointly announced the struggle programs at a press conference here on Thursday, addressing the conference, NEFIN president Pasang Sherpa said that the indigenous people were forced to take to the streets, as "three rounds of talks with the government remained fruitless". He, however, said the dialogue with the government would continue. He said rallies and mass meetings would be organized throughout the nation on May 17. A sit-in protest will be held at Maitighar Mandala on May 24 and 25 and torch rallies will be taken out from various parts of the country on May 31. The Janajatis have announced Nepal bandh on June 1, 10 and 11. *The Himalayan Times daily reports*



PM Koirala attends Law Day function hosted by Chief Justice Dilip Kumar Poudel
Gorkhapatra

THE GOVERNMENT IS PREPARING THE BUDGET totaling around Rs 159.325 billion for the forthcoming fiscal year 2064/65 (2007/08). As per the ongoing budget preparations, of the total budget, Rs 90.08 billion will be allocated for recurrent (administrative) expenditure while Rs 69.23 billion will be allocated for capital expenditure including debt servicing. This will be the budget of the first year of the new three-year interim plan being prepared by the National Planning Commission (NPC). The Finance Ministry is discussing the proposed budget with other Ministries and Finance Committee of the parliament. Meanwhile, Maoist chief whip Janardan Sharma has said that his party will not approve any budget that allocates any resource to the palace.

THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL (UNSC) Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict has demanded that the parties in Nepal and Sri Lanka "demobilize all child soldiers without delay." Addressing the Government of Nepal and the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M), which are now engaged in a peace process under the UN monitoring, the group called for the "immediate liberation" of child soldiers without waiting for further stages in that process. "We hope that the children who remain in the ranks of the CPN-M will be demobilized and reintegrated in their communities without delay," said Radhika Coomaraswamy, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. The group has also called the Sri Lankan rebels, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), to end child recruitment, respect safe zones for children and guarantee humanitarian access to all areas.

THE DECADE-LONG CONFLICT HAD CAUSED destruction of physical infrastructures worth Rs 5 billion. According to Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction, properties worth Rs 5.127 billion were destroyed during conflict period. The Ministry has estimated that Rs 7 billion will be required to reconstruct the damaged structures. Ramesh Kumar Sharma, spokesperson of the Ministry, said, "In coordination with

National Planning Commission and Ministry of Works and Physical Planning, reconstruction will begin from coming fiscal year." As per the collected data, Home Ministry has incurred the most losses – at Rs 2.4 5 billion. Maoists used to target police posts during the conflict.

THE US STATE DEPARTMENT HAS cautioned US citizens against traveling to Nepal, saying that the Maoist party remains a danger despite having recently joined the interim government. "The Department of State remains concerned about the security situation in Nepal and continues to urge American citizens contemplating a visit to Nepal to obtain updated security information before they travel," a statement on Monday reads. It further says, "Despite the signing of a comprehensive peace agreement by the government and Maoist insurgents and their entry into an interim government, Maoists continue to engage in violence, extortion, and abductions." The US government also claimed that Maoists freely roamed around the countryside and cities, openly bearing their weapons. "Given the nature, intensity and unpredictability of disturbances, American citizens are urged to exercise special caution during times when demonstrations are announced. Avoid areas where demonstrations are occurring or crowds are forming, avoid road travel and maintain a low profile," the statement says further.

THE NEW YORK-BASED HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH (HRW) has asked the Maoists to immediately release all child soldiers from their forces, whom it said have been 'held for months in the cantonments sites'. In a letter sent to Minister of Women, Children and Social Welfare, Khadga Bahadur Bishwakarma, who is the central committee member of the Maoist party, the human rights body said on Tuesday that this was necessary to secure the Maoists' cooperation with the United Nations and child protection agencies to allow children to return home without further delay. The rights body has claimed that of more than 30,000 PLA members registered in the cantonments created under Comprehensive Peace Agreement, an estimated 6,000 to 9,000 are children under the age of 18. "There's no excuse for letting children languish in cantonment sites month after month," a statement by the organization quoted its children's advocate Jo Becker as saying. "Under the terms of Nepal's peace agreement, these children should be released immediately so they can enter rehabilitation programs, get back into school, and rejoin their families," he said. The letter sent to Bishwakarma reminded the minister of his presence in a February conference in Paris, where representatives from 58 countries committed themselves to putting an end to the unlawful recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts. At the conference, participating governments had agreed to support and apply new guidelines called the 'Paris Principles,' for protecting children from recruitment and providing assistance to those who have already been involved with armed forces or groups. Becker further said, "Minister Bishwakarma should work with the Maoists to implement the commitments that have been made." Human Rights Watch also claimed that it has 'credible reports' of Maoist forces recruiting children in various parts of the country.

“Eighty percent of King’s rights and privileges have been ended. Once the remaining 20 percent are ended, then the nation will be declared republic.”

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, addressing a press meet, in Biratnagar.

“There is no justification for our People’s Liberation Army to suffer in cantonments if the parliament does not announce republic.”

Maoist chairman Prachanda, addressing a program in the capital, saying that his party will not remain silent if republic is not declared.

“We believe in plural democracy but they have their Prachandapath. We are working for democratic republic while they are in the process of transformation.”

Madhav Kumar Nepal, general secretary of Unified Marxist Leninist (UML), ruling out the possibility of unity with the Maoists.

“The people of hill can stay in Madhes only if they agree to be ruled by the people of Madhes. Otherwise, they should leave.”

Rajendra Mahato, Minister for Industry, Commerce and Supplies, in



Birgunj.

“We have registered a motion on the crucial agenda of republic. The objective of the motion is to tell the government to come up with a common proposal in parliament declaring the country a republic.”

Dinanath Sharma, chief whip of the Maoists, after registering the motion in the parliament secretariat, in The Himalayan Times.

“This whole exercise is a rehearsal for the third Janaandolan.”

CP Gajurel, senior Maoist leader, addressing a street meeting in Putalisadak, after the Maoists formed a human chain around Singh Durbar and presented 1.5 million signatures demanding republic.

“They (big parties) are not as serious as us. Otherwise, why don’t they apply pressure by stepping down from the government?”

Narayan Man Bijukchhe, president of Nepal Workers and Peasants Party (NWPP), claiming that eight parties are not serious to hold CA elections.

TRANSITION

BARRED: Governor of Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) Bijaya Nath Bhattarai, from flying abroad, by the government as per the directive of Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA), which is investigating the charges of misuse of fund against Bhattarai leveled by Rayamajhi Commission.

Former chief of army staff Pyara Jung Thapa, from flying abroad, by the government as per the directive of Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA), which is investigating the charges of misuse of

fund against Bhattarai leveled by Rayamajhi Commission.

ELECTED: Ambika Basnet, as the new president of Nepal Women’s Association (NWA) – the sister wing of Nepali Congress (NC). Basnet won by bagging 246 votes. Her nearest competitor Meena Pandey - outgoing president - bagged 214 votes followed by Kamala Thapa with 91 votes.

Chanda Joshi and Rajeshwori Singh have been elected as central members of NWA from far west region; Mahalaxmi Sodhari and Anita Devkota from mid-western region; Maya Rana and Belamati Khatri from western region; Sabitri Chaudhari

and Sushma Mudhbari from central region; and Rukmini Koirala from eastern region.

LEFT: Mahantha Thakur, Minister for Environment, Science and Technology, for New Delhi, India in a high-level study tour of information technology.

Giriraj Mani Pokharel, Minister for Health, for Geneva, Switzerland, to attend the World Health Assembly meeting.

SUBMITTED: A memorandum by the Nepal Bar Association (NBA), to the Pakistani Embassy in Kathmandu, expressing solidarity with the agitation by lawyers of Pakistan.

PLANNING COMMISSION TURNING A BLIND EYE: Great Loss of the Upper Karnali Hydro Potential

-AB Thapa

It is a terrible shock to everybody possessing the slightest understanding of the water resources economics that our Government is now on the verge of destroying the Upper Karnali's vast hydropower potential which could help to boost significantly our country's national income while even the institution like National Planning Commission is seen turning a blind eye to these disastrous developments. Our Government wants to engage a private developer to implement a relatively very small 300 MW Upper Karnali Project precluding the viability of the mammoth 4,180 MW Upper Karnali Project. The latter, perhaps, can be ranked among the very few best hydropower projects in the whole world to generate cheap electricity on a large scale to meet peak load demand.

According to a rough estimation the comparative construction cost advantage of the 4,180 MW Upper Karnali storage project over the highly publicized 10,800 MW Karnali Chisapani Project could allow to accrue to our country additional bonus benefit equivalent to total value of annual rice production of our entire country. The feasibility study report of the Upper Karnali Project carried out with the assistance of the World Bank has cautioned against the idea to implement the 300 MW Upper Karnali Project by pointing out the dire consequences. Chief Advisor from the Bechtel International assisting our Government in carrying out the feasibility study of the Upper Karnali project has clearly expressed in an article published in the journal "HIMAL" that Nepal should not compromise optimum development for the sake of a quick deal.

Should the National Planning Commission, an institution assigned to lead the national development works, remain indifferent to these extremely harmful decisions? Can not Planning Commission involve a trustworthy foreign expert to advise the Government on this highly important matter?

Why Upper Karnali Site Attractive

The Karnali basin is the first to arouse keen interest in Nepal's vast hydropower development possibility. There are several attractive sites for the generation of cheap hydroelectric energy in this basin. In early 1960s an agreement was signed between HMG of Nepal and the UNDP for providing assistance to conduct a survey

of the Karnali river and its main tributaries culminating in a pre-investment report indicating hydroelectric potential of the river as well as the best sites for hydropower development. The final feasibility report and general basin development report were submitted in February, 1966.

In 1980s further studies of the two projects were carried out under the aegis of the World Bank. They are the feasibility study of the Karnali Dam Project (Chisapani) and the pre-feasibility study of the Upper Karnali Hydroelectric Project (Karnali Bend Site).

The Karnali river makes a big loop in its lower reach near a place called Asare. From here the river flows in the south-east direction for about 25 kilometers; there after the river makes a complete reversal in its direction. The river comes back to a point just two kilometers away from its earlier position near Asare. There is a very big drop of about 150 meters in Karnali river bed elevations between these two positions merely two kilometers away from one another. The project to utilize this bend for power generation was originally known as the Karnali Bend Project. Later on the name was changed to Upper Karnali Project. There are very good sites to build a very high storage dam at the beginning of the bend. Thus, it makes the Upper Karnali Storage Project far superior to the 10,800 MW Karnali Chisapani Project in terms of per unit capacity investment cost because its hydropower station would be operating at a firm head two times greater than that of the latter though the total length of the waterway of both these hydropower plants would be almost exactly the same.

Large Cost Reduction at Higher Heads

Of all the site characteristics, head is the most important. Design guidelines, 1989 approved by the American Society of Civil Engineers (a document used throughout the world for the design of hydropower) has given some simple reasoning that would help to explain why the Upper Karnali project operating at a head about two times greater by comparison with the Chisapani hydropower could be built at far less per unit installed capacity cost. It is explained in the guidelines

quote, "Very simply if one doubles the head the quantity of water needed to produce a certain amount of energy is halved, Thus, for like site energy development the conduit area and reservoir volume are halved and further large cost reductions occur for powerhouse and machinery costs. This fundamental consideration is at the root of the large cost reductions that occur at higher heads", unquote. Needless to mention that the lower investment cost means the generation cost of the electricity would also be less.

Additional Bonus Benefit

By comparison with the mammoth 10,800 MW Karnali Chisapani Project the firm head of the Upper Karnali Storage Project would be almost two times greater. It can be derived based on Stage A Optimization Study Data of the World Bank financed Karnali Project (Chisapani) Study report that per KW installed capacity construction cost of the Upper Karnali Storage Project could be only about 70% of such cost of the project at Chisapani. If such comparative cost reduction advantage is treated as extra bonus to accrue to Nepal in addition to normal royalty to be received from private developer then Nepal might be able to receive per year about US \$ 300 million as extra bonus which is the gross value of the total annual paddy produced in the whole country considered to be between 2.5 to 3 million tons at a price of about US \$ 100 per ton.

The 4,180 MW Upper Karnali Storage Project is the most attractive hydropower project among the projects identified so far in Nepal. It also is, perhaps, among the very few most attractive hydropower projects in the whole world. It would be a great tragedy for Nepal if our Government did not reconsider its decision to push ahead the plan to allow private developer to implement the 300 MW Upper Karnali Diversion Project, which precludes the development of the 4,180 MW Upper Karnali Storage Project.

Upper Karnali Pre-feasibility Report

The World Bank supported pre-feasibility study has clearly explained that the 4180 MW Upper Karnali Storage Project and the 300 MW Upper Karnali Diversion Project are mutually exclusive. The relevant excerpt from the World Bank supported study report is presented below.

"Even when assuming that the KR IA run-of-river project (it indicates the small 300 MW Upper Karnali project) is a sunk cost, it will be seen that a single large

power plant (4180 MW) associated with the major storage project is less costly than the combined cost of smaller plant at the same location (3532 MW) and a second power plant at the foot of the storage dam (408 MW) discharging directly into the KR IA run-of-river project head pond. Based on this assessment, it appears that the later development of the major hydro storage project at Site KR I (4180 MW Upper Karnali Storage Project) would cause the KR IA run-of-river project to be effectively discontinued. There may be limited opportunity for secondary energy generation during the periods of spillage".

In Conclusion

Our grandiose national plans to develop our water resources to uplift the living condition of common Nepali would be nothing more than an empty rhetoric if our policy making institutions failed to intervene in time to save the 4180 MW Upper Karnali Storage Project which might be the best in the world for the generation of cheap peaking energy on a large scale. National Planning Commission should not hesitate to invite competent foreign experts for advice if we find ourselves not capable to make correct judgment on this very important matter.

(Dr. Thapa writes on water resources)

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REPUBLIC AGENDA

Push From The Left

As Maoists clamor for immediate republic announcement, PM Koirala tries to apply brakes on red motion

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

Keeping their promise of launching all round agitation from the government, parliament and the street to push for immediate republic announcement, the Maoists have registered a motion of public importance on republic at the parliament secretariat on Sunday.

Along with registering the motion, they also handed over a petition containing 1.5 million signatures demanding republic to Speaker Subas Nemwang. They formed a human chain around the central secretariat of Singhdurbar for hours on Sunday to press for republic.

Addressing a street meeting following these moves, senior Maoist leader CP Gajurel claimed that this was their 'rehearsal of the third round of agitation.'

The Maoists have said they had to introduce the motion because reactionaries were attempting to derail the Constituent Assembly (CA) elections.

The Maoists' republic motion, however, seems to have rung alarm bells among the seven party camp with most of the senior leaders expressing surprise and distrust.

Ram Chandra Poudel, general secretary of Nepali Congress (NC), expressed surprise over the 'light and immature' manner in which the Maoists registered the motion of public importance. He said that such a proposal coming from a 'revolutionary

party' was a surprising move and added that it would only strengthen the monarchists.

Amrit Bohara, senior leader of Unified Marxist Leninist (UML), said the declaration of republic should come through CA or referendum and not through a haphazard procedure. "It (republic) is our demand also. But we think it should come through a procedure of CA or referendum. Sovereign people should be allowed to decide," he said. Likewise, Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat, central member of Nepali Congress (Democratic), said that the proposal could be a game to by-pass the CA process.

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, himself, dismissed the Maoist motion. Talking to reporters on Monday (May 14) in Biratnagar, Koirala merely said that it is the Maoists' right to do so.

"But Nepali Congress is a responsible party and it will not decide on republic based on whims," Koirala said, in a clear indication that he was averse to the Maoist proposal of announcing republic through the parliament.

"Republic is not something that comes out from any announcement. Already 80 percent of King's rights and privileges have been ended. Once the remaining 20 percent are ended, then republic will be announced," Koirala said.

A day before they registered the

motion at the parliament, Maoist chairman Prachanda had warned 'domestic and foreign reactionaries' against undermining the strength of the Maoists and misconstruing their flexibility for weakness.

Addressing a meet of All Nepal People's Health Workers in Lalitpur, on Saturday, Prachanda said his party had abandoned some of its positions for progressive march, which, he



Prachanda: Fiery talk

warned, should not be misread as their weakness.

"There is no justification for our People's Liberation Army to suffer in cantonments if the parliament does not announce republic," he said. Prachanda added that responsibility of any consequence resulting from PL march out of cantonment will rest on seven parties.

Furthermore, marching ahead on their plan of larger communist unity, Maoists have brought into their fold three smaller leftist outfits in recent weeks.

This week, Bhim Bahadur Kathayat-led Loktantrik Ganatantrik Morcha merged with the Maoists. At a program organized to welcome the Morcha, Prachanda reiterated the need to forge larger communist unity. "We have no ego. We want communist unity based on new thought. Those

against the unity in the UML must be exposed," he said.

Kathayat's outfit is the latest to merge with the Maoists. Last week, another Republic Front led by Dr. Ram Man Shrestha had merged with the Maoists. Likewise, Keshab Nepal-led Communist Party of Nepal (CPN-2006) had merged with the Maoists a few months ago. The Maoists are planning to induct another leftist outfit led by veteran communist leader Krishna Das in a few days.

In an interesting development, weeks after Prachanda had held a serious deliberations with the UML leadership on the issue of larger communist unity, the top UML leaders now speaking in different tones.

Madhav Kumar Nepal, general secretary of UML, has been making a series of remarks ruling out the possibility of unity with the Maoists at this juncture. Addressing a program by the party in Balkhu on Saturday (May 12), Nepal ruled out the possibility of unity with the Maoists in near future.

"Owing to different viewpoint of looking at Marxism, international situation and domestic reasons, unity is impossible at this point," Nepal said. "We believe in plural democracy but they have their Prachandapath. We are working for democratic republic while they are in the process of transformation," he said. Nepal added that failure to return seized properties and lack of improvement in Maoist behavior were also hindering the unity process. "There can be no unity before there is unity of ideology and practice. Unity in haste will lead to split again," he said.

Interestingly, Nepal went on to add that talks of communist unity were the reason why eight party meeting had not taken place. He issued an appeal to all concerned not to get worried by this proposal of communist unity. ■

REMITTANCE SHARES 16.8 PERCENT OF GDP

With a continuous rise in the inflow of remittances, money earned by Nepalis working overseas has become a vibrant contributor to the gross domestic products (GDP) of the country. It has surpassed exports as the top contributor to foreign exchange earnings, reports The Himalayan Times daily.

A significant rise in the contribution by remittances to the GDP from 11.5 per cent in 2000-01 to 16.8 per cent in 2005-06 is a clear testament that its role in the national economy is gaining stature. It has now positioned itself as the top contributor to foreign exchange earnings for the last five years. This was revealed in a Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) report on 'Inflow of Workers' Remittances: Nepal's Experiences' presented at SAARC-Finance seminar on Management of Workers' Remittances in SAARC Countries, on Wednesday (May 9).

The share of remittances in total foreign exchange earnings increased from 36.6 per cent in 2003-04 to 46.7 per cent in 2005-06, whereas the corresponding share of exports dropped to 29.4 per cent in 2005-06 from 34.5 per cent in 2003-04. The growing remittances have led to a surplus in the current account, thereby strengthening the overall balance of payment position. The share of remittances in total current account soared to 46.7 per cent from 29.8 per cent in the past five years. Growth of 26 per cent in convertible currency reserves of the banking system is also due to increasing remittances.

The report also shows that the

inflow of remittances through official channels registered a dramatic rise from Rs 47.53 billion in 2001-02 to Rs 97.68 billion in 2005-06. However, it doesn't take into account the flow through informal channels, as the econometric analysis and available household surveys show that unrecorded flows through informal channels may add 50 per cent or more to recorded flows. Quoting the findings of the Nepal Living Standards Survey-II, the report says that remittances have had a positive effect on the economy through various channels such as savings, investment, growth, consumption, poverty alleviation and income distribution.

However, it has cautioned that the use of remittances have been more concentrated in unproductive sectors like real estate and daily consumption. It has pointed out the need for policies to encourage the use of remittances to promote longer-term growth and income security.

Nepal needs to further devise policies that send more remittances through official channels, increase the levels of remittances by encouraging migrants to hold their savings in financial assets rather than holding them abroad and encourage migrants to become investors in productive assets in the country. Lauding the role played by remittances in socio-economic development in the region, NRB governor Bijaya Nath Bhattarai pointed out that there lies a challenge of steering remittance flows through formal channels and towards productive use. ■

MELAMCHI

Still

Nowhere

Since its inception, Melamchi Drinking Water Project has been facing a series of crisis. Despite crises like costs and benefits, technical viability, water with power, private sector participation and corruption, the project survived for eighteen years generating hope that it will bring water from Melam chi to the thirsty capital. Suddenly, there has come another phase of uncertainty now after a decision by Minister Hisila Yami. If the Asian Development Bank (ADB) pulls out from Melamchi in case the agreement with UK 's Severn Trent Water International (STWIN) - which was scheduled to be signed as a Kathmandu Valley's water utility manager on May 15 – is not honored, the death of Melamchi is inevitable. This is going to be a major blow to three million population of valley apart from tarnishing the credibility of Nepalese government

By KESHAB POUDEL

Harkaman Tamang, 40, who lives in squatter settlement in Bishnumati, spends almost four to five hours for the collection of drinking water. Tamang has to roam around different places to get a bucket of water during the dry season when the water supply is irregular.

Shree Chandra Nagarkoti, 37, a resident of Seti Opi Koteswor, has a difficult time to distribute 6000 liters of water twice a week to 400 households. Supplied by Nepal Water Supply Corporation (NWSC) through six thousand liter reserve tanks, he has to distribute 150 liters to each household twice a week. With an area dominated

by migrant population, each house has at least five families. This means a family of four is given 60 liters a week.

Shreeram Sharma, 52, of Kalanki, spends Rs.1300 a month to buy water from private tankers for domestic use and pays Rs.300 for mineral waters.

Even in areas like Maitidevi, Siphel, and Baluwatar, people have to wake up in the middle of the night to run the electric water pump to suck water from the pipe. This is time-consuming, cumbersome as well as costly. The bill for electricity goes higher than the actual price of water. In some areas, nobody knows how much water they do get on rotation.

From rich to poor, all are facing

similar kinds of problems of lack of water. For affluent community, they can pay huge chunks of money to fetch water from private tankers but for poor communities, times have become very difficult.

Since last two decades, successive governments, however, injected hopes among the people selling the dream of Melamchi - that they would get enough water after diverting the fresh water from Melamchi River located some 40 miles north-east of capital. Confined to Melamchi for a long time, no one searched any viable alternative for future.

The collapse of Melamchi means reversing back valley's situation two

decades earlier. Nepal has already been trapped in a situation without option. No Melamchi means no water to Kathmandu for another two decades.

Consumption of Water

Average per capita consumption of water continues to increase. According to a projection, it will increase from 74 lpcd in 2001, to 92 lpcd in 2016. The present average per capita water consumption rate is about 78 lpcd. The non domestic consumption is now around 11 percent.

According to a very conservative estimate, average daily demand of water is about 133 MLD (Million Liters a Day) and maximum demand is 146 MLD. It will go up to 313 MLD by 2016.

The present supply capacity is around 77 MLD which is to provide only 37 percent of the average daily demands in dry season. If Melmachi is completed in accordance with its schedule, it will add 170 MLD in a system and even that will be short of demand level when it is completed.

Urban Program Operation Framework 2005-2010, published by WaterAid Nepal, reveals that on an average, 78 percent population have access to water supply. This does not ensure adequate and safe supply. For example, water distribution is contaminated and most part of Kathmandu receives only half an hour supply on alternative days. The city water supply is also contaminated by various types of bacterial coliform, resulting in frequent outbreak of water-borne diseases.

"There is a great urgency to resolve this problem. It is quite clear that the present water shortage problem would hardly be resolved without augmenting the supply. It has been estimated onward 2010 the supply to Kathmandu Valley would have to be further increased even after the diversion of the Melamchi flow into the Kathmandu Valley," writes Ananda Bahadur Thapa, a renowned water resources expert, in his article *Are Donors to be Blamed?* (See spotlight January 19)



Kathmandu Valley: Haphazard settlement, increasing population

Private Vs Public

Despite facing a series of pressure on the project area, the road is almost complete and the project has already spent Rs. 4 billion. When the process of contract for 28 long KM tunnel was proceeding, this project faced another major jolt following a decision of Minister for Works and Physical Planning Hisila Yami to review the agreement with STWIN.

Appointment of private management contractor is a condition set by ADB for releasing its fund. The condition to bring private sector in the water management of Kathmandu valley is added keeping in view the fact that there was no improvement in the water supply situation in the valley from 1990-1999 despite US\$ 100 million injected for that purpose.

STWIN –which was selected through international bidding- was scheduled to sign an agreement with Kathmandu Upatyaka Khanepani Ltd (KUKL) on May 15, a water utility operator constituted by the previous government. Minister Yami, however, directed KUKL not to sign STWIN's contract letter as the matter was under review.

The previous government in a cabinet decision approved the contract award to STWIN for a six-year period for a total fee of US\$ 8.5 million fulfilling a major condition set by ADB

to release of funds.

This is not the first time ADB is pursuing private sector participation in water. ADB's Country Strategy and Program Nepal 2005-2009 argues that a performance-based management contract will be put into operation to ensure that urban drinking water supply and wastewater services are managed effectively and efficiently and to enable private sector to undertake poverty-focused water distribution service.

ADB's Threat

According to The Kathmandu Post (Thursday, May 10), ADB's Melamchi Mission chief Keiichi Tamaki wrote to KUKL that if the contract is not awarded to STWIN by May 15, ADB would terminate its loan number 1820 worth US\$ 120 million, committed to the project.

"Tamaki was scheduled to request the ADB board in Manila, Philippines in June to extend the funding commitment till 2013. However, without appointment of a private management contractor, there will be no ground to persuade extension of the funding commitment," the daily quoted a consultant.

The earlier decision to award the contract to STWIN was taken by the government led by prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala who is again leading the current government. In this case it is the prime minister who has to take all the responsibility.

If present minister does not abide by the earlier decision taken by the previous government led by same prime minister, ADB has hinted that it would pull out from the project. This was expressed by ADB's senior officials to Nepalese delegation led by Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat in Tokyo recently. A high level source at the Ministry of Finance revealed that the Minister has already conveyed ADB's concern to prime minister Koirala who, in turn, has assured them that he will intervene in the matter.

ADB is Nepal's major donor contributing a huge amount of money in water and sanitation. According to the report of WaterAid Nepal, in total, till 2005, ADB has provided loans totaling US\$ 305.25 million in water supply and sanitation sector.

According to ADB's Country Strategy and Program Nepal 2005-2009, water supply improvement in Kathmandu Valley will be undertaken in tandem with the Melamchi Water Supply Project.

New Cause of Concern

A new cause of water related tensions has surfaced in just the last few years, the transfer of water system ownership and/or management from the public authorities to private multinational corporations. This is the ninth time the deadline for award of the management contract has been extended.

"I have reservation about privatization. These things can be done through public-private participation," said Minister Yami. Minister Yami, a senior Maoist leader, disclosed that she will put the issue before the cabinet.

Amid the personal games and whims of ministers, Nepal seems to be going to lose a major project. Of course, the idea of public-private sector partnership is good but it cannot be imposed by the whim of individual minister. The question now is does Nepal have the luxury to continue this kind of debates? At a time when citizens have not gotten water, the state has to find the way out.

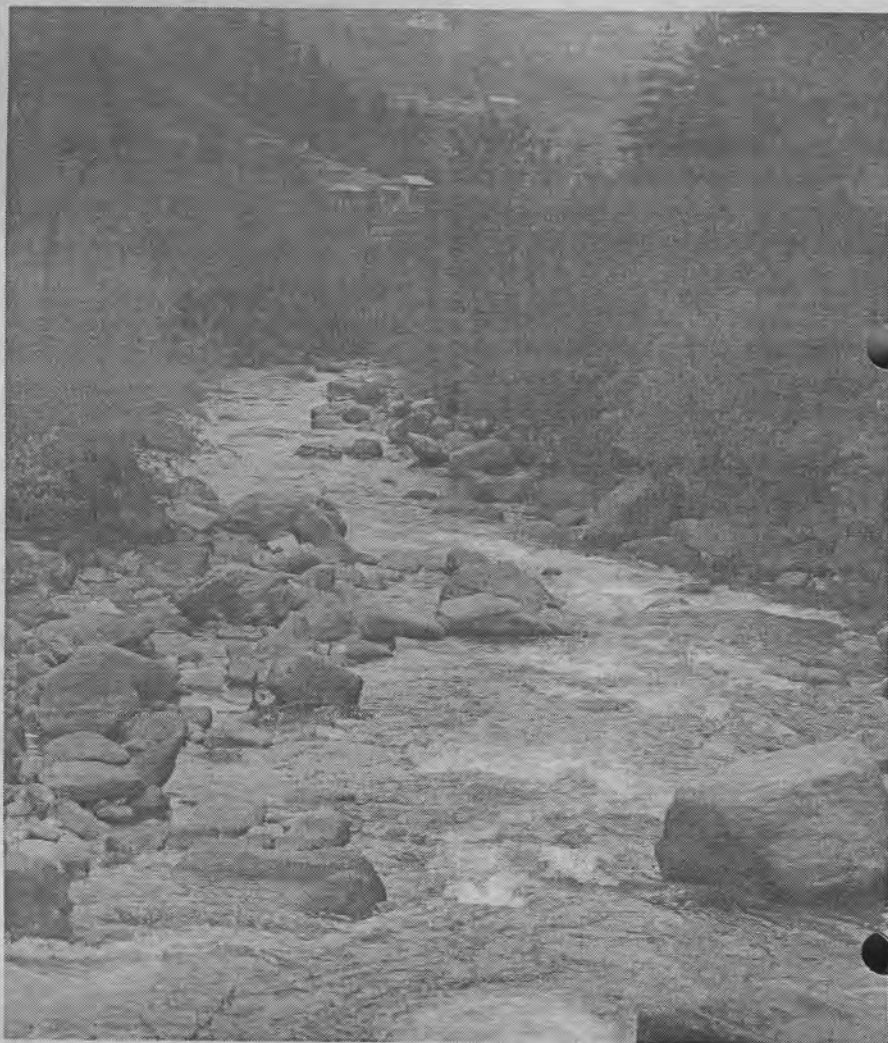
One of the primary duties of the state is to provide drinking water to its citizen. From ancient times to present, it remains the obligation of the state to provide

drinking water as it is the basic necessity to sustain life. Although Nepal is known as a country with abundant water resources, its population is unable to get even the very minimum requirement of water.

According to experts, water is renewable but not infinite resource - fresh water is becoming increasingly

What Are The Alternatives?

No one has clear alternative in mind. Some non-governmental organizations who oppose mega-projects like Melamchi see rain water harvesting and renovation of stone spouts as alternatives. According to them, the rain water collections alone can meet over 60



River water: Abundant resources but not a drop to drink

scarce. The water amount available in the valley is almost the same as it was twenty two years ago when civil society leaders led by late Surya Bahadur Shakyaa staged a demonstration demanding adequate supply of water in 1988.

As population grew in Kathmandu between 6-7 percent in last one decade, the demands of water have increased. Even after bringing water from Melamchi by 2012, it is going to be insufficient.

percent of demand and stone spouts can meet the remaining.

Although rain water harvesting, renovation of traditional water spouts and utilization of small water sources of valleys are some temporary measurements, they cannot be alternative to projects like Melamchi. According to experts, harvesting rain water and renovation of water spout can be subsidiary but not an option.

As Kathmandu valley has a large

number of floating population who live in rented houses and slums, rain water harvesting is not an option for them. Rain water collection cannot solve the problem when there is a large population involved.

“Water, water every where but not a drop to drink. But why Kathmandu valley residents amidst the plenty of water should be punished by denying them to quench their thirst with enough water,” writes Dr. Ananda Bahadur Thapa (See Spotlight Dec 29 2006- January 4 2007)

Drawbacks of Melamchi

Although Melamchi has many drawbacks and disputes regarding the project formulation including canceling power generation component from it and handing over distribution of drinking water to private sector, cancellation of the project would be disastrous for Nepal. The country has already spent almost one and a half decade in the project and there is no alternative project to bring such a large quantity of water to thirsty population.

Melamchi reportedly received priority because of possibility of bringing abundant quantity of water to the valley. Presented to then Government by Asian Development Bank in 10 December 1997, Melamchi Water Supply Project Memorandum of Understanding and Technical Assistance Loan Fact Finding Mission recommended carrying out the project.

The components include headwork, 28 kilometer tunnel, a 15 MW hydropower plant, a water treatment plant, a bulk distribution system and rehabilitated distribution system. The expected 170 MLD in the first phase capacity, should satisfy water supply demand in the Kathmandu Valley through the Melamchi tunnel.

In the process of negotiation, the proposal for construction of hydro power plant was removed. The generation of 15 MW power would have significantly reduced the cost of the project.

The studies conducted by Binnies in 1988 and further studies by SMEC in 1992 and Butwal Power Company and



Queue of empty buckets: Water is scarce

Binnies in 1996 confirmed that Melamchi should be developed to supply the water in Kathmandu valley. Asian Development Bank sent a reconnaissance mission in April 1996 but it initiated further action when the government agreed to a private sector management contract to manage the water supply in Kathmandu.

“It is the primary responsibility of the state to provide water. People are concerned with the supply of drinking water. People don’t care about the project what they want is assurance from the government towards adequate water supply,” said Sanjaya Adhikary, country

representative of WaterAid Nepal. “People cannot be deprived of water. Civil society members, intellectuals, government officials and development planners have to start debate and discussion on how to supply water to all.”

After the decision of Minister Yami, the future of Melamchi is again uncertain shattering the hopes of 3 million population of valley to get enough water. At a time when there is no other immediate alternative to Melamchi Project, the valley’s population, mostly poor, would have to suffer for a long time to come. ■

“Press Has To Be More Liberal Than Others”

- Rajendra Dahal

Rajendra Dahal is the chairperson of Nepal Press Council. Dahal, a senior journalist and former editor of Himal Khabarpatrika, was appointed as the chairperson of the Council some ten months ago. He spoke to Sanjaya Dhakal about the situation of press freedom and activities of the Council in the backdrop of the completion of one year of April change. Excerpts:

Liberal in the sense that we have to desert our old mentality of not listening to anything that does not fit our concept.

You have been assuming this position at the Council at a time when the nation is in transition. How do you look at the changing face of Nepali media during this period?

The position of media, as a whole, has been restored (by the April change) to the period before February 1, 2005. The development and expansion of media has regained the pace that was there before February 1.

How do you compare the state of press freedom before and after the April change?

The period between February 1, 2005 and last year's Jana Andolan cannot be compared at all. The February 1 step by the King came as a big shock to the Nepali press community. It taught us a lesson how even after 12 years of democratic exercise, such regression could take place. I think the Nepali press is yet to fully recover from that shock. That is why we still find the press quite vocal about its freedom and rights and has not yet been able to accord due seriousness to other aspects such as social responsibility and need to strictly abide by code of conduct.

What do you say about new challenges facing the press, which was quite evident during recent unrest when diverse groups were found to target media?

In fact, this trend should be studied in a more comprehensive manner. The challenges, actually, had confronted Nepali society as a whole. Our society was quite unaware about simmering tensions. We had been taking aspects like social harmony, unity and reconciliation for granted. We thought

everybody was happy in the way things were moving. But that turned out to be a false happiness. They were far from reality and there were people, community, and region who were not happy at all. As such, the same weakness was inherent in Nepali press. It is time now for the press to prepare itself for these new challenges. The voices from Terai, Janajati and other backward classes would have to be heard in a new light now.

Does that mean Nepali press was prejudiced against certain regions or communities in the past?

Maybe not deliberately, but there were problems in our perspective as there were problems in the perspective of the whole society. We never thought that the state's predominant concept of nation, national unity, and nationalism might not have touched certain regions or communities while the press might have developed its mentality based on that. As such, it is necessary for the press to review its perspective. The press can no longer refuse to listen to the voices of even those who might be clamoring for separate state. The press will have to advance logic, analysis and viewpoints to convince those on the extreme front. But they cannot simply turn other way round and refuse to listen. Press has to be more liberal than others. This can lead to the process of negotiation to settle grievances.

To what extent can the press be liberal?

Liberal in the sense that we have to desert our old mentality of not listening to anything that does not fit our concept. Even if somebody raises issue that is impossible or unacceptable or impractical, the press will have to listen to them with cool head and forward logic to deal with them.

Do you find the press here free and tolerant enough to opposing views?

One fundamental weakness of Nepali media is that we still lack the practice of healthy competition on the basis of pluralism. Perhaps

this is because of frequent political instability. We can still find everyone trying to install their own mouthpieces. Everyone wants his/her own microphone instead of using a common one.

What about the quality of reporting?

Quality is a relative term. There will always be complaints no matter how much one improves. This is human nature. But one thing is quite clear, Nepali media has not been able to lure professionals with high caliber – it is neither financially nor intellectually attractive enough. Furthermore, although media has produced highly skilled professionals through years of experience and exposure, it has failed to retain those human resources.

What are the major functions of Press Council?

Press Council is a statutory body. It is an autonomous body formed by the act of parliament. Its duties have been determined in the act itself. The basic concept of Press Council in Nepal – like elsewhere in the world – is to formulate journalists’ code of conduct and monitor their implementation. Likewise, it is the body that receives complaints against media (misreporting, disinformation, libel, defamation etc) and acts upon them. However, in our country, the Press Council has been assigned a number of other jobs. We are engaged in classification of newspapers and magazines based on Audit Bureau of Circulation report. This job, actually, should not be performed by Press Council and we are working to hand over this job to competent independent private sector body. Even the high-level Media Recommendation Commission has suggested handing over this job. Likewise, we are also keeping archives of newspapers and even literary creations. For the time being we don’t find other alternative to national archives. Furthermore, Press Council is also assigned to operate the Media Development Fund – which we have been using to help media of mofussil region. Currently, we are also organizing nationwide campaigns to brief media persons outside the valley about code of conduct.

What is your reaction to frequent charges of biasness in classification?



I think the charges are bound to crop up every now and then. We have to evaluate newspapers and magazines on the basis of set criteria and then classify those newspapers in A, B, C classes. Those on higher classes are eligible to obtain government advertisements. As such, everyone wants to be in top class. But everyone does not pay attention to other aspects like regularity, objectivity and so on. Naturally, those who do not want to spend time, energy and resources on professional development but only want to enjoy benefits would be unhappy over their classification and are bound to come up with charges of biasness.

Despite its growth, online journalism is yet to be accepted as mainstream journalism by the government. How does the Council see it?

As far as Press Council is concerned, for the purpose of monitoring code of conduct, online journalism is considered as full-fledged journalism. Perhaps due to old acts, this sector might not have gotten due recognition but the Press Council is quite clear that online journalism is a full-fledged mainstream journalism.

How many complaints do you receive on average and how is compliance among the media institutions?

Because of controversies surrounding the Council during royal regime, the number of complaints had dropped as its credibility was hurt. But now the number of complaints has grown. On average, we receive 20 to 25 complaints a month. Likewise, the compliance rate has also improved and media institutions respond positively to our letters.

(Courtesy: Nepalnews.com)

Nepali media has not been able to lure professionals with high caliber – it is neither financially nor intellectually attractive enough.

NEPAL-INDIA

Unguarded Borders

From smuggling to criminal activities, extortions and terrorism, Nepal's southern border has been facing all kinds of destabilizing activities

By Keshab Poudel

Cadres of Jwala Singh-led Jantantrik Terai Morcha traded gunfire with security personnel at Sitlapur Barganiya village development committee Rautahat, close to Indian border - The Himalayan Times (May 14, 2007)

Five members of a family were injured when a group of dacoits attacked them at Miguliya VDC in Morang district - Kantipur (May 13)

There were celebrations in Birgunj when one of the dreaded criminals Chhotelal Sahani was killed in India. Sahani was extorting money and kidnapping Nepalese businessmen from across the border in India. (Gorkhapatra May 10)

An engineer of district road office Navaraj Bista was shot dead by Terai Jantantrik Mukti Morcha (Goit) in Lahan and they kidnapped two others. (Kantipur May 12)

Ajaya Yadav, district president of Jwala Singh, was shot dead by Goit group in Rautahat district. Similarly, an unidentified gunman killed 23 years old Dilip Raya in Sarlahi.

Proprietor of a medical store in Bara, Hridaya Narayan Yadav who was abducted by an unidentified group on April, fled from the clutches of the kidnapers from unknown location in India. (The Himalayan Times May 15)

More than nine tons of red sandalwood was discovered in Swayambhu. In Imadole of Lalitpur, over ten tons of red sandalwood was seized. The smuggling of sandalwood is reportedly carried out from Indian state of Andhra Pradesh to smuggle to Tibet.

After upsurge of smuggling activities in border, chief district officer of Morang constituted five members coordination committee. According to Chief District Officer, everything is coming from Indian border to Nepal. (Annapurna Post May 13)

A group of Maoists were detained in Nautunwa when they were traveling to

Gorakhpur, India carrying Maoist literature. (Nepal Samacharpatra).

These are some sporadic news coming out in major newspapers from Nepal's southern terai. One can read these kinds of news every day in various newspapers. From robbery to act of terrorism, extortion and kidnapping, such things have become commonplace in Nepal's southern border and plain areas.

Incidents of killings, extortions, rapes and heinous crimes of this nature have become everyday news in the country. It is said that this upsurge is for liberation of suppressed population in Madhes, which is in the south of Nepal. Some times it is seen as an ethnic cleansing against the population of hill but the violence has no border and no identity as a race or the region.

Lots of Madhesis many of whom are supposed to be of the Indian origin are also facing same kinds of cruelties and kidnappings along with the population of hilly origin. "The open border between Nepal and India has been one of the main contributing factors to the increasing magnitude of international migration. Illegal trade associated with free movement of people across the border has been a matter of grave concern for both countries. It is therefore necessary to regulate the movement of people along the border between Nepal and India," late Dr. Harka Gurung had recommended in his study on internal and international migration.

After the atrocities and destructions unleashed by one decade long Maoist insurgency, all had expected that peace had come to Nepal and it would prevail. Sadly, this is not turning out so.

"After a series of arguments and discussions, ultimately, Maoists have procured substantial share in parliament of nominated persons as well as in the government. Soon after the announcement of the end of insurgency

by arrangement of interim constitution on January 15, another phase of violence has erupted as a bolt from the blue. Nobody had any apprehension that a new kind of violence and insurgency would erupt in whole of southern belt of Nepal under several leadership with similar motto. All are preaching violence, extortion, kidnapping and crimes of these natures," said a political analyst.

Beside various criminal groups, Madheshi Tiger, Terai Cobra, Jantantrik Terai Mukti Morcha - Goit and Jawala Singh, Chure Bhawar Ekata Samaj, Nepal Defense Army (a religious group more active in Birgunj), Madheshi Janadhikar Forum, Terai Army (which owned up the responsibility for exploding a bomb in Chandranigahapur of Rautahat on May 14 injuring 14 persons), TM Don Group (active in far western terai region) have been launching violent activities.

"Outwardly, it does not seem like calculated and coordinated terror. But whatever general idea one has about the method of terrorism as a weapon of extracting concessions from a regime, is clearly seen in this situation. This is a completely new experience of terrorism for Nepalis," said the analyst.

A veteran Indian journalist Rajinder Puri describes the situation as, "The silent cooperation between terrorist groups with diverse aims." The inference is that these groups function under a central command. In his recent write-up in The Statesman regarding terrorism in India, Puri writes, "Broadly there are three kinds of terrorists. The dupes who believe in a cause and are the cannon fodder for terrorism; the criminals who take to extortion, murder and rape under protection of political banner; finally there are the few moles that are aware of hidden agenda of their masters. The hidden agenda of terrorism here is to destabilize and weaken India."

What Puri diagnosed in Indian condition is as much appropriate in the case of Nepal. Nepal has been suffering from the curse of terrorism since a decade. Now a new dimension has been added in this crisis under the garb of regionalism, ethnicity, religion and language.

The country was supposed to have a lasting peace to get rid of poverty and illiteracy and usher a new Nepal- a credible Nepal.

"All didn't share that kind of wishful thinking and day dreaming. The root

cause of one decade long terrorism was not at all any upsurge of any ideology and noble ideals. It was an outcome of disguised conflict based upon strategic interest of broader dimensions. The new phase of political instability and rampant lawlessness and violence is the continuation of the same design under new facets and jargons. What veteran Indian journalist Rajinder Puri in his recent article in *The Statesman* 'Anatomy of Terror' had explained is not only the problem with India. All neighbors of India suffer from almost similar problems," said the analyst.

Nepal had very peaceful borders with its neighbors in the past which is now a matter of history. It has two most powerful neighbors both economically and militarily powerful compared to which no security arrangements of Nepal can effectively insulate troubles from across the border. During the past one decade, slowly and gradually, Nepali border with the south became very fragile and uncontrolled as most of the police posts and check points were destroyed and devastated by Maoists. Although an effort was made to restore them following the ceasefire, last Madhesi uprising again devastated it.

The situation is now that there are virtually no police post and custom office in the Nepalese side of border where any element can come and go without any identification.

"We will take necessary steps to strengthen the security in terai. The government will prepare a long term security plan for terai," said Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula.

According to the analyst, when Nepal was being burned by Maoists, all prominent Maoists leaders had enjoyed haven in India - which is an open secret now. Even Maoist leaders who have returned back to Nepal have revealed as much.

In the last few months after the upsurge of new violence under the name of Madhesis, Maoist cadres have become the first target. What happened in Gaur in March was quite cruel and dreadful.

"After all what all these great games are gaining on at the cost of lives of the common people and their peace and self respect. One need not go far away to find a clear perception of this crisis," said the analyst. "There are some respectable columnists who have expressed their anguish while analyzing the violence of Nepal."



Engineers protest killing of their colleague by JTMM: Effects of Terai turmoil THT

Swapan Das Gupta, in *Pioneer* (29 May 2005), had long backed this view when he stated, "However, that does not give it right to undertake a covert war in Nepal. How is this any different from the operation mounted by Pakistan, in Jammu and Kashmir and north India?"

"In one stroke, heads of intelligence service and the MEA have demolished ethical grounds of India's diplomacy. We too are guilty of encouraging terrorists and acknowledging them as freedom fighters," writes Gupta.

"These are some highly sensible and respectable Indians analysts who see troubles in Nepal as an outcome of a covert operation to promote an ulterior interest which is unethical and in the long run counter productive to them," said the analyst.

In his recent article in *Indian Defense Review*, its editor Bharat Verma writes, "By humiliating its national army and making them surrender their weapons, Koirala government has opened itself to Maoist blackmail. It is a matter of time before the gun-wielding Maoists throw Koirala and rag-tag liberal political parties out of power. In terms of Indian foreign policy, it is blunder of epic proportions. The stark question is, if New Delhi cannot handle Nepal then what exactly can it do?"

A peaceful neighbor is the best guarantee of one's security. Destruction in the neighborhood ultimately engulfs key players, too.

"Nepal is not an isolated case in crisis rather it is more orderly and peaceful than

any other smaller country of this region. Nepal has open and unguarded border due to which any disorder and violence in Nepal may ultimately spill away beyond its territory. It will be too late if the border with Nepal is kept unsafe and unguarded as it is at present - despite a huge deployment of Indian paramilitary border force SSB and all security system in the Indian side of border," said the analyst.

The SSB came into the limelight for the first time through a report in *Times of India* supplement in 30 August 2001 soon after the Royal Palace massacre in Nepal. That dispatch reveals that it was created to use for subversive and clandestine activities deep within the Tibet. As the relations between India and China had improved, it was withdrawn from that task and deputed into a new task of guarding India's border with Nepal against the ISI's threat.

"After its deployment, there has not been any sensational news in the Indian press regarding ISI activities from Nepal's border. But since then Nepal itself had become much more disturbed and chaotic in many respect," observes the analyst.

"Now the question is of the statesmanship from big neighbor who could see that the border between the two countries is guarded properly and convincingly. Politicians in a democratic order are accountable to the people as well as their representatives. Therefore, they have to prevail over all kinds of administrative and security agencies," said the analyst. ■

IFC SUPPORT

Trading Strides

IFC enlists NIC Bank in its Global Trade Finance Program

By A CORRESPONDENT

IFC, the private sector arm of the World Bank Group, today announced that Nepal Industrial & Commercial Bank has become the first bank in Nepal to join its Global Trade Finance Program. IFC is providing NIC Bank with a \$2 million facility, which will increase the volume and value of the country's imports and exports while improving access to finance for local businesses, according to a press release by the IFC.

The Global Trade Finance Program supports trade with emerging markets worldwide and promotes the flow of goods and services between developing countries. IFC provides partial or full guarantees against underlying trade instruments and covers the payment risk of participating issuing banks.

The program allows issuing banks to increase the volume and value of trade transactions, with enhanced tenors and access to competitive pricing terms. In addition to the guarantee facility, the IFC South Asia Enterprise Development Facility will conduct a diagnostic study and eventually assist the bank on a specific program for institutional capacity building that will help enhance the quality of service to the bank's SME clients based on the findings of the study.

Sashin Joshi, NIC Bank's Chief Executive Officer, said, "We are delighted to work with IFC's Global Trade Finance Program. It will help us expand our network of corresponding banks and create new and valuable business opportunities for our clients in Nepal and around the world. In addition, through the capacity building program, we hope to adopt better risk management practices."

"I am very pleased that NIC Bank has signed up under the guarantee program," said Per Kjellerhaug, IFC's Country Manager for Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan. He added, "The Global Trade Finance Program is an important mechanism to get local banks into an active global network that facilitates transactions in challenging markets,

promotes competitive financing, and builds correspondent bank relationships with new institutions on a low-risk basis. Trade finance is one good example of the many products IFC offers to help develop a sector."

Anil Sinha, General Manager of IFC SEDF, explained, "We will collaborate with NIC Bank in developing appropriate SME banking products and services and building their institutional capacity." Sinha is also the South Asia Regional Coordinator for IFC's advisory services, an increasingly large component of IFC's contribution to private sector growth in developing regions.

Trade development and advisory services for issuing banks represent an integral part of IFC's Global Trade Finance Program. Advisory services modules include basic and intermediate courses on trade finance. In some cases, IFC places experienced trade finance bankers with issuing banks to help them develop their trade finance and other banking skills.

IFC, the private sector arm of the World Bank Group, promotes open and competitive markets in developing countries. IFC supports sustainable private sector companies and other partners in generating productive jobs and delivering basic services, so that people have opportunities to escape poverty and improve their lives.

Through FY06, IFC Financial Products have committed more than \$56 billion in funding for private sector investments and mobilized an additional \$25 billion in syndications for 3,531 companies in 140 developing countries. IFC Advisory Services and donor partners have provided more than \$1 billion in program support to build small enterprises, to accelerate private participation in infrastructure, to improve the business enabling environment, to increase access to finance, and to strengthen environmental and social sustainability. ■

PVT SCHOOLS Facing Agitation

Once again, over 8000 private schools across the country face the indefinite strike that could paralyze the education sector.

In the last one decade, the education sector has faced tumultuous times as it was often targeted by the conflicting parties.

This time, the Institutional School Teachers' Union (ISTU) has warned of indefinite strike in private schools across the country from May 17. On Sunday (May 13), the ISTU disrupted school classes and organized a protest rally in front of Education Ministry demanding that the teachers' community and private schools be given facilities similar to those of government schools such as appointment letters, passing new Education Act, making them permanent, fixing minimum pay scale and so on.

The private school operators have warned that they, too, will shut down the schools forever if the ISTU forces them to close down. Umesh Shrestha, president of Private and Boarding Schools Organization of Nepal (PABSON) said it is impractical for private schools to reduce their fees by 50 percent and provide similar facilities to their teachers like those of government schools. He dared the agitators to come up with Rs 20 billion and nationalize all the private schools.

On the other hand, Education Minister Pradeep Nepal has urged the agitators to gherao the office of Maoists instead. "It is because of Maoist MPs who are stalling the House that a bill on education is in a limbo," he said. Nepal said he was ready to step down if that solves the problem.

The ISTU along with Education Republican Front has been picketing the ministry, Department of Education and Regional Directorates of Education to press their demands. ■

PETRO CRISIS

Recurring Problem

As government fears hiking petro prices, it is forced to deal with recurring consequences of shortage and loss

By A CORRESPONDENT

After days of renewed disruption of petrol supplies, the Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) has resumed the supply of petroleum products to Nepal from Monday (May 14).

Newspapers have quoted a high-ranking Indian official as saying that 7,000 kilolitres of petroleum products have been routed to Nepal – which is still much less than normal supply of over 1900 kilolitres.

The news reports of IOC's partial resumption of supplies followed reports that Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) had made partial payment of Rs 1 billion to the IOC.

After the IOC slashed the supply by 40 percent since last one week, citing non-payment on the part of Nepal, there was a huge shortage of fuel in the country. Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala talked with

Indian ambassador Shiva Shankar Mukherjee on Saturday (May 12) on the issue of ending petroleum crisis.

"The political consequences resulting from shortage of fuel was briefed (to the envoy) and appealed for resuming supplies," Rajendra Mahato, Minister for Industry, Commerce and Supplies said.

Earlier, the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies said it was planning to present a proposal at the cabinet asking for Rs 240 million a month from the Finance Ministry to tide over the financial problems faced by NOC. Sources said that since the Ministry is not in the mood to allow the NOC to hike the fuel price given the planned CA elections, such a proposal is being mooted to resolve the problems of supply cut down and soaring losses in cooking gas.

The Ministry is proposing to sell the cooking gas at actual cost – the NOC is said to be incurring Rs 256 loss per cylinder of cooking gas. In order to do so, the distribution and retail sales of cooking gas will be handed over to private sector. The NOC will sell cooking gas at actual cost to private players who will then sell them at retail level by adding necessary taxes, transport cost and so on.

The government will fix Maximum Retail Price for terai and hilly region. The MRP will be around Rs 1200 per cylinder, the source said. "Private operators will fix retail price remaining within the MRP limit," the source said. Likewise, it will also segregate cooking gas for domestic use and industrial/commercial use (where large-sized cylinders will be used). At present, the NOC incurs Rs 254.8 million loss every month. The new provision on cooking gas pricing will bring this down to Rs 100 million. Currently, NOC incurs Rs 6.55 loss per liter in petrol; Rs 4.31 per liter in diesel; and Rs 2.35 per liter in kerosene. In aviation fuel, it makes profit of Rs 16.85 per liter.

Carlsberg Accelerates Brewing

Carlsberg's joint venture South Asia Breweries has accelerated brewing in India. This has been made possible after the company acquired an existing brewery in the state of Himachal Pradesh north of the Indian capital of New Delhi, according to a press release.

Production at the brewery, which

has a capacity of 150,000 hl and with possibilities for significant expansion of capacity, will be up and running shortly, whereas the construction of the greenfield brewery with an initial capacity of 450,000 hl in the state of Rajasthan south west of Delhi will be completed in Q1 2008.

The brewery in Himachal Pradesh

is ten years old. It is one of the very few breweries in North India with brewing equipment as per European standards, and the brewery has a unique location due to its close proximity to most of the beer consuming north Indian states. New Delhi is at a distance of only 280 km from the brewery.

NEPAL AND BRITAIN

A Friend in Need

Thousands of miles away—Nepal could present an example of ‘ethical foreign policy’ that Tony Blair espoused while in office

By Bhagirath Yogi in London

As soon as British Prime Minister Tony Blair made announcement last week to step down from the post of leader of the ruling Labour Party and the government on June 27, British media, analysts and members of public found themselves debating over the legacy of the departing leader—who ruled the country for 10 long years from the 10 Downing Street.

“War cost Blair respect,” wrote Geoffrey Wheatcroft in the *Financial Times*, referring to the British premier’s role in wholeheartedly supporting the American-led incursion of Iraq in early 2003. Four years down the road, the country is still under flames and many Iraqis said their lives had become worse than under the regime of Saddam Hussein.

In a front-page commentary in *The Guardian* newspaper, Polly Toynbee—a leading columnist—however, defended the performance of the charismatic leader while in office. She wrote, “Tony Blair is the supreme political interpreter of modern times.....Make no mistake, at home he leaves behind a country far better than he found it. Abroad Blairism was a noble ideal of liberal interventionism.”

Two years after being elected Prime Minister of Great Britain, Blair lobbied hard for sending ground troops – as part of NATO led military intervention of Serbia—to stop ‘ethnic cleansing’ in Kosovo. Addressing the Economic



Blair: Man With Mission

Club of Chicago in April 1999, he declared that “the most pressing foreign policy problem we face is to identify the circumstances in which we should get actively involved in other people’s conflicts.”

By pushing aside the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations, the military intervention in Kosovo was able to stop the ethnic conflict in former Yugoslavia and prepared ground for the United Nations’ peacekeeping operations. In 2000, British troops went to Sierra Leone and were instrumental in stopping a decade of violent conflict.

After 9/11, Britain emerged as the closest ally of the United States in its “War on Terror.” In 2001, US-led forces ousted the Taleban regime in Afghanistan though NATO-led forces are still fighting the Islamist fighters in the war-ridden country. In 2003, Blair joined hands with President Bush to oust Saddam Hussein – alleging him of possessing the weapons of mass destruction, which could not be corroborated later— by ignoring

popular opinion that was overwhelmingly against the war.

The Labour government has more than doubled the country’s Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) since 1997. When Britain hosted the G8 summit—the exclusive club of rich nations—Blair focused on aid, trade and Africa. He was able to persuade world leaders on 100 percent debt cancellation and an increase in global aid flows by 50 billion dollar a year by 2010.

In Nepal, Britain has been focusing on promoting human rights, rule of law and good governance as the means to improve lives of people. The Country Assistance Plan (CAP) of the Department for International Development (DFID) 2004-08 says (the UK) seeks to reduce poverty and social exclusion (in Nepal) establishing the basis for lasting peace.

Britain is the second largest bilateral donor to Nepal, after Japan. It has already announced to increase its annual aid to 43 million pounds in 2007-08 (up from around 33 million pounds in 2006-07). Besides, the British government has also announced a contribution of £13 million for Peace Trust Fund set up by the Nepal government and debt relief of £2.3 million for the year 2006-07.

In the wake of the Mao insurgency, Britain called for negotiated settlement of the armed conflict and appointed Sir Jeffrey James as its special envoy to coordinate international efforts to restore peace in Nepal. After King Gyanendra took direct control of the government in February 2005; along with the US and India, UK stopped its military assistance to Nepal and continued to press for immediate return to multiparty democracy in the Himalayan kingdom.

In March 2005, Nepalese Foreign

Ministry summoned then British ambassador to Nepal, Keith G. Bloomfield, for his critical remarks against the royal takeover. The British envoy had said on record: "The king's move was a backward step in terms of democracy and restoring peace; it has made the process of negotiation (with the Maoists) much more difficult."

Britain welcomed the restoration of parliament in April last year, after the successful People's Movement II and has been pledging its unwavering support to the country's peace process. While the US continues to treat Maoists as a 'terrorist outfit,' Britain seems to be flexible towards former rebels by allowing Maoist leaders to visit London over the past few months.

"Unlike the popular perception that US often looks at Nepal from Delhi's eyes, Britain has been supporting Nepal's efforts towards democratisation and poverty reduction in its own way," said Dr. Surya Subedi, professor of International Law at the Leeds University, UK. "Nepal should maintain close relations with UK since it has been passionately advocating in favour of poor countries like Nepal in the international arena," he added.

Thousands of British tourists visit Nepal every year. British investors have invested in areas like tourism, infrastructure and services sector. Nepal government has entered into investment protection agreements with France, Germany and the United Kingdom.

Gurkha recruitment in the British Army is nearly as old as the two centuries old relations between the two countries. Amid complaints of unequal treatment to Gurkha soldiers vis-a-vis their British counterparts in the British Army, the British government has made a number of decisions for the benefit of serving and ex-British Gurkha soldiers over the years. They include

right to settlement for British-Gurkha soldiers and their families in the UK and announcement of ex-gratis payment of 10,000 pounds under the Gurkha Far Eastern Prisoner of War scheme. The British Home Office gave an immigration concession to ex-Gurkhas who retired after 1 July 1997 to allow those who had completed at least four years military service to count this towards the qualifying period for settlement in the United Kingdom.

"While various organisations of the ex-British Gurkhas are still campaigning for equal pension and other benefits for their members, it should not be forgotten that the British government has taken a number of important steps for the benefit of British Gurkha soldiers and their families over the last decade," said Prof. Subedi.

"The relationship between the Brigade of Gurkhas and the British Army has always been one built on mutual trust and confidence. Nothing has been hidden and our Gurkhas have known from their first days of service what their terms and conditions of service would be. When there have been changes over the years, we have given extremely detailed briefings. The relationship within the Army is but a reflection of the long term relationship between our two nations. From where I sit our friendship remains as strong as ever," wrote Andrew Hall, British ambassador to Nepal (The Kathmandu Post, March 30).

In a major foreign policy speech last year, Prime Minister Blair said globalisation begets interdependence and interdependence begets the necessity of a common value system to make it work. "Our values are our guide," he declared.

As Tony Blair is all set to say good



Gordon Brown: Incoming Leader

bye as the British premier, the values held close by him are being scrutinised closely. "Stopping butchery in Kosovo as well as in Sierra Leone won Tony Blair genuine applause," wrote James Rubins, diplomatic correspondent of the BBC. "He coupled his own charisma and political power to the power of popular heroes led by Bob Geldof."

Added Timothy Gordon Ash, another British commentator, "Take away Iraq and the record of the Blair government in foreign policy would be overwhelmingly positive."

For Nepal, it would be a fitting tribute to consider Britain under Blair as a Friend in Need. Moreover, it is assumed that future policies of Gordon Brown— who is widely believed to succeed Tony Blair— would be more or less the continuity of his predecessor's policies in the international fora. He has, however, said he will give more emphasis on economic development and political reconciliation in Iraq.

(The author works with the BBC Nepali Service and can be reached at bhagirath.yogi@gmail.com)

DINESH ADHIKARY'S NEW ALBUM

Lyrics of Life

Renowned lyricist Dinesh Adhikary comes up with a new album consisting of 10 songs

By A CORRESPONDENT

Various lyricists have their own ways of expressing his/her feelings through words. Lyricist Dinesh Adhikary also has his unique style. In his career in music spanning over two decades, Adhikary has written a number of songs that went to become super hit. His songs have been sung by all the top singers of Nepal and composed by top musicians. As a leading lyricist, Adhikary's songs have proven to be everlasting.

From modern songs to national songs, Adhikary has written all genres of songs. Having earned a special position in Nepalese literature and poetry, Adhikary has maintained his quality and peculiarity in music sector also.



Adhikary does not require introduction as he has written a number of popular songs contributing

to enrich Nepalese modern songs.

Produced by Music Nepal (P) Ltd, the album Shabda is Adhikary's 19th album. In the latest album, there are ten songs penned by him. Top-notch singers like Deep Shrestha, Sunita Subba, Deepak Kharel, Ram Krishna Dhakal, Sapana Shree, Karna Das, Reema Gurung, Kunti Moktan, Swarup Raj Acharya, Lasmit Rai, Udaya Sotang and Bimala Rai have lent their voice in different songs written by Adhikary in this album.

Like all his earlier albums, this new album, too, consists of many prominent songs, which at one time or another, have become hit in Nepalese music market.

The musicians who have composed the songs included in this album include Gopal Yonjon, Sambhujee Baskota, Shakti Ballav, Prakash Gurung, Nhyu Bajracharya, Udaya Sotang, Raju Singh, Suresh Adhikary and Karna Das. For his contribution, Adhikary has already received prestigious awards like Madan Puraskar, Sajha Puraskar, and Chhinnalata Puraskar.

Release Minors: CZOP

The National Coalition for Children as Zone of Peace (CZOP) has appealed for release of minors and newborns from the Maoist cantonments. In a press release, it has drawn its serious attention and expressed great regret on the news that newborn babies and their mothers are also injured along with the others in the Maoist Cantonment in Chitwan because of the heavy storm and rain.

"This kind of affect on children, newborn babies and their mother is serious concern of shame and humiliation for the entire human community. It is also the gross violation of human rights and humanitarian law. Hence, CZOP would like to draw the attention of the State,

civil society and international community towards their responsibility of releasing the minors, newborn babies and their mother, pregnant women and injured from the Cantonments and providing humanitarian support and health care facilities."

It has also made special request to the State, CPN (M) and UNMIN to release and reintegrate the minors, newborn babies and their mothers and pregnant women from the Cantonments immediately. "The reintegrated children and mothers from the cantonments should also get the same support and opportunities as other PLA in the cantonment will get."

It has also asked for necessary support for organizing observation visit of cantonments to CZOP Coalition members and civil society organizations. "Do not place any precondition as an obstacle in releasing the minors, newborn babies and their mothers and pregnant women from the cantonments."

"Keeping the minors in the cantonment with adults is violation of international laws, Child Rights Convention, interim constitution of Nepal and also against the national law of Nepal. Hence, CZOP once again would like to draw the attention of CPN (M), Nepal Government and UNMIN for the immediate release of the children below the age of 18 from the cantonments without putting any preconditions."

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