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SPOTLIGHT

June 01-07, 2007

Hamstrung Economy

Interview :
Sang-Jung Nam



Politics : Where Lies The Power ?
Refugees : Long March

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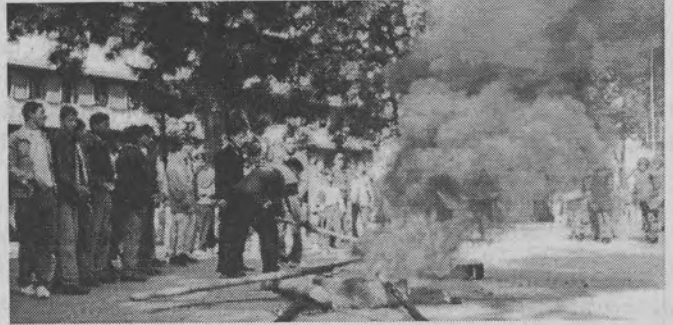
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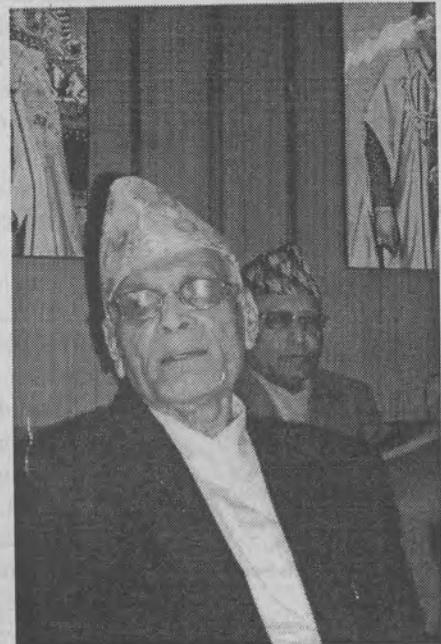
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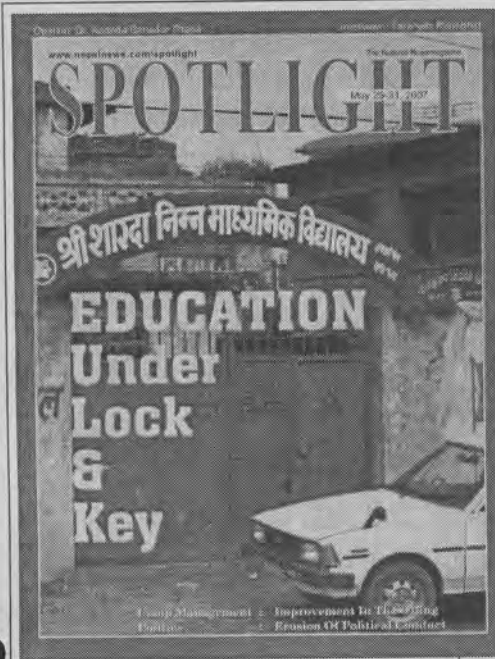
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As Nepal's political instability shows no sign to recede, the coming days will be more difficult and anarchic. Although eight party leaders sat several times for discussions in recent days, they have failed to build consensus on political way out for future and date for the elections of Constituent Assembly. It seems that they are not in the decisive position and somebody else is invisibly pushing the agenda. In this context Maoist leader and Minister for Information and Communication Krishna Bahadur Mahara's recent statement that Nepal's decisive power lays in Delhi and Washington reminds one about many things. Following the promulgation of interim constitution, the country entered from a stable and predictable to unstable and unpredictable situation where Nepal's political forces become weak. As long as elected parliament was in operation, it was generally believed that the parliament was capable of reflecting the popular will of the country and it could decide the fate of politicians. The previous constitution not only had declared the sovereign power vested into the people but it also generated belief. Even during the direct rule of the King, the supreme decision making power was believed to be with the King. Of course, April upsurge of last year deprived the King of that power but unfortunately no political force is sure of center of the decisive power of this country now.

In the last days of Royal regime, as a theoretician vice chairman of council of minister Dr. Tulsi Giri used to say that there could not be two centers of power – the people and the King. However, the statement delivered by Maoist group leader in the cabinet and minister of information and Communication Mahara showed that it is now neither with the King nor with the people. However, while judging position of Washington, it has a very humiliating response from current events of Nepal. Prime minister Koirala completely ignored the advice of America in all important matter, particularly on the decision of inclusion of Maoists in the government. In the growing anger over American government's policy and US Ambassador Moriarty's stand on Maoist, even a group of miscreants reportedly affiliated with the Maoists attacked US ambassador James F. Moriarty's car, which we consider as a condemnable act. We believe that this kind of act should be condemned by all and the government and political parties. This incident showed where Nepal's decisive power lies. Merely expressing statements do not make any difference. The time has come for all of us to reconcile and unite to make Nepalese decisive.

As the government led by eight parties is directionless, Nepal is gradually losing its credibility in front of donor communities. Following the peace agreements, Nepal required huge amount of resources for rehabilitation and reconstruction of the infrastructures but Nepal's economy is heading towards more difficult phase. The government has to provide huge amount of money to subsidize oil and other such products. In this context, we decided to see the economic situation of the country as this week's cover story.

Keshab
Keshab Poudel
Managing Editor



No Education

The cover story "Education Under Lock and Key" (SPOTLIGHT May 25) has clearly pointed out the implications of strike in a sensitive sector like education. No words can be enough to criticize such behavior by responsible people like teachers. They are incurring huge damage on the education sector. Only future generation will aptly evaluate their activities and judge them accordingly. For the time being, we have no option but to grin and bear it.

*Lata Sharma
Bageshwari*

is jeopardizing whole Melamchi project. By refusing to implement agreement to let a British company take over the management of valley water system, Yami has reasoned that she cannot allow a discredited company. By that logic, the Maoist ministers should immediately vacate their posts because once upon a time PM Koirala – their leader in the cabinet – was also discredited. The 1950 Treaty with India has been discredited adequately enough. Why should she honor it now? Why should they continue to honor the 12-point agreement? Honoring agreements – that too reached with foreign sovereigns and foreign donors – must be sacrosanct. You cannot go about dishonoring pacts and understandings with foreign donors like you are doing with the ones reached with seven political parties or the people of Nepal.

*Binaya Sharma
Kaldhara*

Shameful Treatment

What a shameful and pathetic way to treat the war heroes like Tul Bahadur Pun VC who was denied access to UK for the better treatment who sacrificed the cream part of his life for the vested interest of the 'British Empire'. British government used the Gurkhas like Tul Bahadur Pun VC and others during the two bloody wars and in the cold wars and now wants to dump them like garbage. God help and guide the United Kingdom government to end the 200 years of racial discrimination and human rights violations against the Gurkhas and their families from Nepal.

*Yam Gurung (rtd)
British army*

Watford

WD18 0AU, UK

Destructive Minds

The country is reeling under anarchy. The anarchists are in the forefront everywhere. Go out to the street, you will find anarchists of every shade and color trying to impose blockades and bandhs at the drop of the hat ("Education Under Lock and Key" SPOTLIGHT May 25). In industries, there are other kinds of anarchists. And even in education sector, there are so many anarchists in the guise of revolutionaries. The agitating teachers have demanded that pay-scale should be equal in public and private schools. This is high absurd demand. How can private and public sector's pay scale be equal? Will they now demand equal pay scale in government banks and private banks? In pursuing populist policies, they have embraced highly destructive path.

*Dinesh Thapa
Balkhu*

Criminalize Strikes

It is high time to criminalize strike in sectors like education ("Education Under Lock and Key" SPOTLIGHT May 25). In pressuring to fulfill SPOTLIGHT/June 01, 2007

demands of few lakhs teachers, no one can play with the future of the nation, no one can play with the future of 8 million children, no one can play with the rights of children. If the teachers do not understand the noble profession they are engaged in, they should leave the profession altogether and join some trade union. Teachers should be the noblest of role models in any society. They must be harbingers of change. They cannot be roadblocks.

*Kamal Adhikari
New Baneshwore*

Who Is In Charge?

The pathetic state of affairs compels one to wonder who actually is in charge of this country (Melamchi: Still Nowhere, SPOTLIGHT May 18). The Prime Minister is reported to be concerned about Melamchi project. The Finance Minister has publicly stated that government does not want to jeopardize its relations with the Asian Development Bank in the name of Melamchi. But the Minister for Works and Physical Planning Hisila Yami stubbornly refuses to implement what has been already agreed upon and

Maoist Atrocities On

At least fifteen persons have been injured following clashes between activists of Maoists and Nepali Congress (Democratic) in Humla on Sunday (May 27). The clash occurred after Maoists imposed bandh protesting detention of its local leader Surbir Aidi. He was detained by police after father of NC-D leader Netra Bahadur Shahi filed murder complaint against Maoists. Shahi was abducted two and a half months ago and his whereabouts are still unknown. All party meeting held to resolve the issue, too, failed. The administration has clamped curfew between 9 pm till 5 am. Meanwhile, activists of Maoists disrupted district level workers' training program of Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) in Kusmabazaar of Parbat district on Sunday. Over one dozen RPP workers including its district president Rana Bahadur Chhetri and central trainer Madhu Prasad Risal were injured by the Maoist attack. "We were holding programme when suddenly 50-60 YCL cadres barged into the hotel room and started thrashing us," said Chhetri. The Maoists attacked them claiming they would not let conspiracy to protect feudal monarchy succeed. *Compiled from reports*

Republic Already Here: Narahari

Nepali Congress leader Narahari Acharya on Sunday (May 27) said there is no need to hold discussions on the announcement of a republican set-up as Nepal has already entered into such a system sans the King. "Discussion on the topic is not necessary at all because the system we have in place on Sunday is nothing but a republic as the King has already surrendered power, which the Shah dynasty enjoyed for the past 238 years,

to the people," he said, addressing a program at Media Mission. The mentality of the leaders should change and the transformation of thoughts is necessary to welcome the republican set-up," he said. There should be a federal republican system of governance. It should not be a totalitarian one, which deprives people of basic democratic rights, he said. He was of the view that federalism is unavoidable, but "giving autonomy on the basis of ethnicity is not possible." He said the slogan of "One Madhesh, One State" was not practical because there are many cultural diversities and economic disparities among different ethnic groups in the Tarai itself. Maoist leader Dinanath Sharma said the republican system in Nepal would not be a copy of that in Russia, the USA or any other country because "Nepal has some special characteristics." "The republic of Nepal is going to be special — it will take into consideration Nepal's cultural, ethnic, language, gender and other diversity," he said. He also ruled out any possibility of accepting monarchy as in England, Spain or any other country because Nepal's royal dynasty is based on the old feudal mentality. UML leader and former minister Pradip Gyawali stressed the need of considering the vertical and horizontal diversity of Nepali regions and culture while establishing a new Nepal. *The Himalayan Times daily reports*

Yadav Says MJF Ready For Dialogue

The Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) president Upendra Yadav has said he is ready for dialogue with the government. Welcoming the decision of the cabinet to form a judicial commission to probe alleged atrocities committed during Madhes agitation, Yadav has said that he is ready to

negotiate with the government if charges against MJF workers and leaders are dropped and their security guaranteed. Addressing the workers of MJF — which spearheaded the Madhes agitation demanding proportional representation and regional autonomy, among others — Yadav said that his party was not against any ethnic community. He made these remarks at Jaleshwore of Mahottari district on Saturday. Earlier, on Friday (May 25), the cabinet had decided to form a commission led by judge of Supreme Court Khil Nath Regmi to probe atrocities during Madhes agitation.

Compiled from reports

Poudel Elected NSU President

Pradeep Poudel has been elected as president of Nepal Students Union (NSU). As per the results of election of NSU held on Friday (May 25), Poudel, who is the current vice president of Congress' student wing, bagged 830 votes of the 1500 votes that were cast. His nearest rival Bikash Koirala bagged 402 votes followed by Badri Pandey who bagged 179 votes. Poudel is said to represent the republican camp within the student organization and had been backed by influential student leader Gagan Thapa.

Leading dailies report

Prachanda, Nepal Blame Koirala For Deadlock

Maoist chairman Prachanda and UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal have concluded that Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala is to blame for the current political deadlock. Prachanda met with Nepal's on Thursday (May 24) to talk about the delay in Constituent Assembly. "We discussed whether the government is actually honest and committed. When elections could not be held on June, there is no guarantee it can be held in

coming days," said Nepal. Prachanda was accompanied by Dr. Baburam Bhattarai in the meeting. After the meeting, Dr. Bhattarai said they expected the eight party meet to take place in two-three days. He said they also discussed the Melamchi Water Supply Project, the future of which is in a limbo following the row between the Asian Development Bank and the Minister for Works and Physical Planning Hisila Yami, who wants to review the project in the 'changed context.' "We share the view that the mega project must serve the interests of the people," Bhattarai said. Meanwhile, in his interaction with the delegation of seven trade unions on Thursday, PM Koirala said the eight party meeting will be held on Saturday to fix new date for the Constituent Assembly (CA) elections. *Compiled from reports*

YCL Forms Monitoring Team

The central committee meeting of the Maoist-affiliated Young Communist League (YCL) ended on Thursday (May 24) by deciding to form monitoring team to supervise whether the activities by its cadres are in line with its policies. The team will be headed by its general secretary Dilip Prajapati. Likewise, the meeting also decided to probe atrocities committed in its name. At a press meet, YCL president Ganesh Man Pun said that the YCL will engage in public service and social change. He said the YCL will actively involve in public mobilization to assist in the Maoist party's move to declare republic and fix new date for CA polls. The meeting was held since Tuesday at the behest of Maoist leadership. On Wednesday, Prachanda directed YCL to stop from engaging in atrocities that could tarnish its image. *Compiled from reports*

Three Arrested For Stoning Moriarty's Vehicle

The police have arrested three Maoist activists on charges of being involved in pelting stones at vehicle carrying US ambassador James Moriarty in Jhapa on Friday (May 25). The police had arrested Bishnu Budhathoki on Friday evening. They arrested two more persons – Renuka Karki and Nabaraj Subedi – on Saturday. Karki is said to be a member of district women's wing and Subedi is said to be a member of district students wing of the Maoists. On Friday, a vehicle carrying US ambassador was pelted with stones by cadres of YCL. Although the vehicle was slightly damaged, the envoy was unhurt. After the incident, the Home Ministry had issued a statement expressing sadness and directed the administration to take action against all who were involved. Subsequently, the YCL had issued a statement saying that its cadres were not involved in pelting stones at the vehicle carrying US ambassador. Issuing a statement, YCL president Ganesh Man Pun has said that his organization does not have any policy of pelting stones at anybody. The US Embassy's acting spokesperson Sharon Hudson-Dean had said that the incident demonstrated YCL violence. She said it was dangerous to pelt stones at moving vehicles. Meanwhile, FM radio reports, on Saturday, said that senior Maoist leader Dr. Baburam Bhattarai has stated that YCL showed black flags to Moriarty in line with the party policy. Claiming that Moriarty was acting against the interest of Nepal, Dr. Bhattarai, however, denied the hand of YCL activists in pelting stones at the vehicle carrying Moriarty. He hinted Bhutanese refugees were involved in pelting stones at Moriarty. Dr. Bhattarai added that his party was

ready to take action if any of its cadres are proven to have been involved in pelting stones. *Leading dailies report*

Pemba Sherpa Dies

Pemba Doma Sherpa, first woman who scaled the Mount Everest from the northern face, died near the Lhotse Mountain, on Monday. "She died in a mishap at Yellow Belt area (around 7500 m altitude) while she was returning to base camp after successfully ascending 8,511-metre-high Lhotse peak," said her brother, Nima Nuru Sherpa. "We received the news of accident last night. The rescue team recovered her body from the Yellow Belt area today," said Nima. Saying that the cause of mishap was not clear, he said, quoting the rescue members' preliminary report, she died after 'slipping' in heavy snow. "In the same incident another climber Pemba Tenjing was injured. Rescue members rescued him from Camp III this morning and his condition is reported to be out of danger," Nima informed. Pemba Doma scaled the mountain at 12.24 pm on Monday and the accident occurred at around 1.30 pm. She left for the Mountain from the Namche bazaar in May 7, locals said. *Leading dailies report*

Maoist-affiliated Entrepreneurs To Float Organization

Industries and entrepreneurs close to the Maoists have decided to form a separate organization. The meeting of the businessmen close to Maoists, which started in the capital from Thursday (May 24), has floated a statute for "Nepal National Industries Enterprises Organization." At the meeting inaugurated by Maoist chairman Prachanda, Maoist MP Krishna Acharya submitted a 10-page concept paper. The meeting, which will continue till Friday, will announce the organization and its executive committee. ■



PM Koirala inaugurates Rehab Center of Nepali Army *Gorkhapatra*

THE MEETING OF THE Privatization Committee of the government has decided to provide 5 percent shares of Nepal Telecom (NT) to its employees at concessional rate. The meeting decided to provide shares worth Rs 100 at Rs 90 to the employees. As per the NT's total capital on Magh 2 of 2060, 5 percent shares amounting to Rs 750 million will be provided to employees while ten percent shares amounting to Rs 1.5 billion will be provided to general public. The meeting of the Committee – headed by Finance Minister – has decided to give shares at concessional rate to all employees (permanent, temporary or contractual workers). The Committee has also decided that employees will be able to sell up to 25 percent of their shares after five years. They cannot sell the remaining 75 percent till they move out of service. Meanwhile, Telecom employees have said that these conditions are very impractical. Likewise, the government has decided to give full mobility to NT's CDMA service.

THE OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER for Human Rights has called on the parliament to increase penalty for those involved in forced disappearances. The OHCHR-Nepal also demanded that time period for filing disappearance cases in court be extended, taking into account extreme seriousness of the crime. It also suggested the government to provide adequate reparations to victims dependants of disappeared persons and immediate family. The "Disappearance Bill", which has been pending in the parliament, should explicitly state that civilian courts will have jurisdiction over all persons alleged to have committed forced disappearances, including Nepalese Army personnel, the OHCHR-Nepal said in a statement. International human rights standards require that ordinary civilian courts exercise jurisdiction over military personnel, who commit serious human rights violations. "Forced disappearance is amongst the most serious human rights violations, and extremely traumatic for family members of the victims. The criminalization of forced disappearance is an encouraging step towards bringing perpetrators to justice," Lena Sundh, the

representative of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal, said in the statement. "However, a comprehensive law on forced disappearance, which encompasses relevant international human rights standards, will be an even stronger indication that the government of Nepal is serious about ending impunity and ensuring accountability."

THE REPORT BY AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL (AI) has raised concerns over the continuation of rights abuses by the Maoists as well as other armed groups even as it points out to the need of ensuring accountability for past abuses. "Despite the CPN (Maoist)'s public commitments to respect international human rights standards, there were continuing reports of unlawful killings, abductions, torture and ill-treatment, extortion, threats and harassment by members of the CPN (Maoist)," states Amnesty International Report 2007. The report added that there were reports of "ongoing child recruitment after the ceasefire, particularly in the days and weeks preceding the Peace Agreement." The report also mentions rights abuses, including unlawful killings and abductions, by Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM). With regards to security forces, the report says that although conflict-related violations have ended "almost completely" since cessation of hostilities, there were still concerns regarding accountability for past human rights abuses. The report adds that last year's April changes led to major improvements in the human rights situation and raised expectations that long-standing issues, such as caste-, ethnic- and gender-based discrimination, would be addressed.

MINISTER OF STATE FOR WATER RESOURCE Gyanendra Bahadur Karki said that West Seti hydropower project is necessary for Nepal. He said that the cabinet including eight parties' representatives has decided to have share investment in the project and, therefore, it should be completed on time. Replying to queries by MPs at Natural Resource Committee of the parliament, Karki said thousands of Nepalis will get jobs, government will enjoy royalty and after 30 years take over the ownership of the 750 MW project. He informed that electricity will be generated from this project from 2015. He said Upper Tamakosi project of 309 MW strength will be completed before that to cater to domestic demands. The West Seti is a purely export oriented project, which is being developed by Australian Snowy Mountaineering and Engineering Corporation (SMEC) to export power to India. Meanwhile, MPs including CP Mainali criticized the government for trying to invest in a totally export-oriented project by seeking loan from ADB.

THE GREEN NEPAL PARTY president Pusp Prasad Luitel has submitted the report of annual activities to party High Command and central executive committee. In the report, the president has mentioned all the activities the party had carried out including public gatherings, submission of memo to the Chief Election Commissioner and various other position papers and statements issued from time to time. ■

“We are not against Melamchi. We are not against ADB. We only want to send the message that we cannot accept any kind of condition.”

Prachanda, Maoist chairman, speaking at a program.

“The nebulous position of Nepali Congress has disrupted the CA elections and republic declaration.”

Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, senior Maoist leader, in Damauli.

“Discussion on the topic (republic) is not necessary at all because the system we have in place is nothing but a republic as the King has already surrendered power, which the Shah dynasty enjoyed for the past 238 years, to the people.”

Narahari Acharya, central leader of Nepali Congress, addressing a program at Media Mission, in The Himalayan Times.

“The republic of Nepal is going to be special — it will take into consideration Nepal’s cultural, ethnic, language, gender and other diversity.”



School and parliament are same. They open for one day, and close for 7 days

Dinanath Sharma, Maoist leader, saying that the republican system in Nepal would not be a copy of that in Russia, the USA or any other country, addressing a program at Media Mission, in The Himalayan Times.

“We fear that it might not be possible to hold free and fair election because of deteriorating political situation. There were also quite some

concerns over YCL.”

Franz Ring, Ambassador of Germany to Nepal, telling media about his meeting with Maoist chairman Prachanda.

“We understand the people that threw stones at the vehicle today were YCL. This is yet another demonstration of their violent unacceptable tactics. While we respect their rights to protest — throwing stones at a moving vehicle is very dangerous. We call on them to stop this type of behavior.”

Sharon Hudson-Dean, spokesperson, US Embassy, reacting to stoning of Moriarty’s vehicle in Jhapa.

“The Rayamajhi Commission has exonerated King Gyanendra. Although it described King’s action against the People’s Movement, it attempts to absolve him by stating that he restored the parliament on April 24.”

Pradeep Gyawali, former minister and senior UML leader, in Gorkhapatra.

TRANSITION

ELECTED: Pradeep Poudel, as the president of Nepal Students Union, at its Tenth Convention.

FORMED: A high-level five-member judicial commission led by former Supreme Court judge Khil Raj Regmi, to probe alleged atrocities committed during Terai unrest. Other members include Janardan Khadka, judge at Patan Appellate Court; Raj Narayan

Pathak, co attorney general, DIG Rabindra Pratap Shah and Sukha Chandra Jha, AIG at National Investigation Department.

DIED: Pemba Doma Sherpa, first woman who scaled the Mount Everest from the northern face, died near the Lhotse Mountain.

LEFT: Antonio Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, after completing his visit to Nepal. He left for Thimpu, Bhutan.

Bishnu Nishthuri, president of Federation of Nepalese Journalist, for Moscow, Russia, to attend 26th general assembly International Federation of Journalists.

RETURNED: Speaker of Legislative Parliament Subas Nemwang, after a visit to the United States.

AWARDED: Deep Shrestha, with Image Lifetime Achievement Award, for his contribution to music.

WHO WILL BE RESPONSIBLE IF WEST SETI DAM FAILS?

- By Dr. AB Thapa

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

Malpasset and Vajont dam disasters struck because ample attention was not paid to dam safety. We are going to handover the West Seti dam project to a private developer to implement. It is unfortunate that our government is already determined to implement this highly sensitive project virtually without examining the technical aspects of this project with the help of competent foreign experts to ensure that this project would be implemented fully complying the well established internationally accepted engineering practices. Our Government must ask itself, who would be held responsible if the West Seti dam failed because of design inaccuracies. Let us refresh our memory for the Kulekhani dam which was already once on the verge of collapse.

Kulekhani Dam on the Verge of Collapse

In 1970s the construction of the Kulekhani High Dam Project was about to begin. I had horrible suspicion that the geology of the Kulekhani dam site area could be problematic. I published an article about that in the newspaper "The Rising Nepal". Some other local and foreign newspapers also carried partially the content of my article shortly thereafter. That news was very seriously taken up by the World Bank and the Government. Much later on, I learnt that I was even going to be charged with criticizing the Government decision. The case was dropped, when few of my colleagues stepped in to plead on my behalf. It is said that extra concrete grouting works and other measures were taken up to protect the river bed and the terraces just adjacent to the dam to ensure safety. Despite such limited measures, few years after the completion of the Kulekhani dam news came out of the blue that very wide cracks have already developed over an wide area adjacent to the intake structures on the right bank. It was the result of poor geology of the dam site. The Kulekhani dam was on the verge of collapse.

An Ironic Twist To The Story

The misgivings I had about the poor geological conditions turned into the most grave reality. At that time I was heading the monitoring section of the Water Resources Ministry. Dr. John Cooper and Mr. Deepak Gyawali from WECS had visited the Kulekhani dam site

to spend the weekend. They were shocked to find that the Kulekhani dam was at the risk of being washed away. We got the full reporting from them. It was feared that at any time in near future a very big portion of the right bank terrace along with the intake structure could plunge into the reservoir setting in motion a huge big mass of the reservoir water to overtop the dam. In a similar type of Vajont dam incident in Italy, the loss of life was significant even though the dam was left standing after the overtopping because it was a concrete dam. However, the whole project was rendered useless after that incident. In case of the Kulekhani dam made of earthen core the whole dam body would have been completely washed away after the overtopping.

I myself had to play the lead role on behalf of the Ministry in expediting the civil works to save the Kulekhani dam though just few years back I was considered bete noir by staunch supporters of that project. Leading experts from the USA, Australia and Japan were called in for consultation shortly thereafter. On their recommendations works such as the clearing of large volume of weathered materials, anchor bolting of huge masses of rocks to prevent sliding into the reservoir, provision of underground drainage system were carried out. Nepal was guided all along by the advice of the donor agency. Their timely assistance helped to preclude the possibility of Nepal being hit by a big disaster.

Dam Failure Cases

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

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

that flooded the valley beneath, wiping out several villages and killing more than 2,000 people.

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

West Seti Dam Safety

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

The West Seti Project will have a 195-m high concrete face rockfill dam (CFRD). This type of dams are found to be very competitive in cost but until recent time they were considered risky for heights above 150 meters.

The CFRD is very sensitive to settlement and deformation of the rock-fill supporting the upstream face. These deformations produce movements of the concrete slab joints by opening them and if the movements exceed certain limits then the resulting leakage is difficult to control. The deformations of CFRD for dynamic loading are even more difficult to evaluate. In the Michigan Convention of ASCE in 1985 on CFRDs papers were presented to establish Earthquake Severity Index (ESI) with relative vertical settlement. In the ICOLD meeting of 1988 it was suggested that future research should be focused to correlate ESI and the relative settlement as function of yield acceleration.

There is no Precedent

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

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

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

Competence of Government Institutions

Nepal's laissez-faire hydropower development policy could have adverse effect on dam safety. Until now our government's performance in handling private developers of hydropower projects has been extremely shocking. Government endorsed whatever the private developers proposed. There is nobody from the government side to check the works of the private developers at the site. As a result, in case of the Bhotekosi Project the concerned Department and the Ministry came to know only after the completion of the construction works that the installed capacity of that hydropower project had been raised from 35 MW to 45 MW completely defying the power purchase agreement. Government was unaware of it until a claimed was lodged by the private developer with the government to compel the NEA to buy extra power to be generated entirely during the monsoon season which is going to be totally wasted.

It is difficult to visualize how we can be assured that the private developers would be sincerely interested in maintaining the high standard of workmanship and superior quality of materials which are fundamental prerequisite for dam safety that would invariably lead to higher cost. What is the guarantee that the private developers would not be tempted to cut a lot of corners in order to make hefty profit that could be disastrous in long run

(Dr. Thapa writes on water resources)

Where Lies The Power?

As conflict among internal political forces intensifies, Nepal leaders helpless even to announce elections date for CA. Where lies the decisive power?

By KESHAB POUDEL

"I have to admit honestly and frankly that Nepalese people have no more decisive power and the decisive power is in New Delhi and Washington," said CPN-Maoist leader Krishna Bahadur Mahara who is also the government spokesperson as the Minister for Information and Communication. (See Kantipur May 14 and Nepal Television May 13) addressing general meeting of District Development Committee, Rolpa.

- "NC people must consider what BP Koirala had once said. Rather than going to India with a package of problems, they would have done well had they gone there with a package of solutions," said Jhalnath Khanal, reacting to the visit of NC delegation of vice president Sushil Koirala, Dr. Ram Baran Yadav and Dr. Shekhr Koirala. "I don't understand what they are up to when they go to India with a problem." (The Himalayan Times May 28)

Strangely Khanal, who criticized the visit of three Nepali Congress leaders who are reportedly in New Delhi for health check up, is himself going to be a member of CPN-UML delegation to New Delhi. According to a May 29 reporting in The Himalayan Times from New Delhi, a team of CPN-UML leaders including its general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal will arrive in New Delhi on 30 May. The members of delegation include K.P. Sharma Oli, Jhalnath Khanal, Bamdev Gautam and Ashok Rai.

As Nepal's present political situation is in a very crucial phase and internal political forces are in dispute over the announcement of elections date for Constituent Assembly, the visit of high-level party leaders of Nepal's two major political parties have definite political meaning.



Dr. Giri: Now, the power is neither with the King nor the people

The Himalayan Times – which is supposed to predict political weather coming from South – has already declared on May 27 that Koirala clan is losing its grip on the party. "In a way, the election of Pradeep Paudel as Nepal Student Union president is tantamount to a rebellion against the Koirala clan and its political ideology dating back to the 1950s," writes The Himalayan Times.

According to THT, the bid is a last ditch effort by prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala who is under stepped up pressure to declare Constituent Assembly Elections.

If minister Mahara really believes upon his statement, many more questions may come to him. Along with other political forces, which one force led the Maoists into the power?

Prachanda's Realization

For CPN-Maoist leader Prachanda, it took a year to realize Nepal's reality. "One year after my public appearance when I met a number of capitalists, feudalists and other power centers, I have drawn the conclusion that Nepal is not like what we used to think. Eventually, we are now in a position to understand Nepal," said CPN-Maoist leader Prachanda (Kantipur May 24).

It is not clear whether they are the expressions of frustrations or defeatism or expressions of the real situations of the country. People in Nepal generally feel that they have come to know the Maoists in their political shape but surprisingly its supreme leader Prachanda has just started knowing what Nepal is.

The precious 15,000 lives have been lost to educate him about Nepal as he has realized now. Despite his realization, indications are that political situation in Nepal has no sign to stabilize and follow a fair and predictable process.

Past Experiences

Past experiences have shown that sooner the election is held, better for the country's over all situation. As Nepal's internal political forces are yet to agree on the date to hold the elections for CA, third party will have much more to rejoice as there will require third party intervention to end any major political deadlock.

"Although the situation was very abnormal in the last days of Panchayat system, the upheavals of that time – which overthrew the previous order – reintroduced the multi-party parliamentary process very shortly. Within 14 months, the constitution was promulgated as a product of unique political understanding and reconciliation under which three elections for parliament were held with amazing peace and popular participation," said a political analyst.

According to the analyst, ongoing interests in the political destabilization created an opportunity to do away with that constitutional order as well as the political adjustments. "In the last phase of previous constitutional order,

unfortunately, politicians ignored the consequences of cut throat competition for power which created a situation in which an inexperienced but over ambitious King played a short sighted role and the country entered into another phase of uncertainty and destabilization."

From Stable To Unstable

Following the promulgation of interim constitution, the country entered from a stable and predictable to unstable and unpredictable situation. Nobody is able to predict his/her own future now. Nobody in politics knows his/her future role. Even prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala, who sacrificed all political ideals, values, country's interests for power, is uncertain about his position.

"As long as elected parliament was in operation, it was generally believed that entire parliament was capable of reflecting the popular will of the country and it could decide the fate of politicians. The previous constitution not only had declared the sovereign power vested into the people but it also generated belief in declaration. During the direct rule of King in the last phase, rightly or wrongly, the supreme decision making power was believed to be with the King," said the analyst.

Of course, April upsurge of last year deprived the King of that power but unfortunately no political force is sure of the center of the decisive power of this country now. In the last days of Royal regime as a theoretician vice chairman of council of minister Dr. Tulsi Giri used to agree that there could not be two centers of power – the people and the King.

"Few days back the Maoist group leader in the cabinet and Minister for Information and Communication Mahara was on record in the media telling the people that the decisive power of this country is either in New Delhi or in Washington. Recalling Dr. Giri's statement regarding duality of the center of power to decide, it is now neither with the King nor with the people," said the analyst.

About Washington

In the words of minister Mahara, the decisive power has gone away either to Delhi or to Washington. However, while



Mahara: Meaningful realization

judging position of Washington, it has a very humiliating response from current events of Nepal. Prime minister Koirala completely ignored the advice of America in the process, particularly, on the decision of inclusion of Maoists in the government.

US and its ambassador James F. Moriarty, whose car was stoned Friday (May 25 in Damak Jhapa) by the members of Maoist -affiliated Young Communist League, are persistent in their position vis-à-vis Maoist party, which they term as terrorist outfit and have given no indication to budge from their stance yet. Americans denied visa to Maoist leader and still put them in US terrorist list.

Although US ambassador Moriarty was unhurt, this stoning incident, which the Maoist organization later claimed was not its planned doing, has raised a question on whose protection Maoists are waging a war against the US.

In the words of vociferous Maoist leader and Minister for Forest and Soil Conservation Matrika Prasad Yadav, US ambassador Moriarty has completely failed in his attempt to block their road to power.

About New Delhi

About another power center New Delhi, there is a lot of whispering and rumors getting space in the print media that it has a lot of influence in Nepal. Actions and activities of politicians corroborate the apprehension of the

people, which is not in the interest of good neighborly relationship between countries.

Series of meetings and negotiations were taking place in New Delhi before finally the 12 points agreement came to light in November of 2005. Even the recent rush to New Delhi by all leading politicians of major political parties is not properly explained to the people.

Although CPN-UML leader Khanal who objected Congress leaders' visit to New Delhi a day before - is now going to New Delhi along with his party general secretary Nepal.

After looking at this entire circumstantial situation, one can guess that something covert and secretive dialogue and negotiations are going on in New Delhi. There is no sense for different political persons of Nepal to go to Delhi for dialogue and negotiations among themselves. One does not know the role of third invisible and undeclared party into that deal.

According to Nepali Congress leader Amod Upadhyay, the visit is no more than a visit for medical check up. "All of them are political figures, they might meet Indian political leaders," said Upadhyaya. Anyway, this kind of visit of politicians to a powerful neighboring country is not without definite meaning.

"The experience of the past creates a reasonable doubt in the minds of people. Perhaps minister Mahara could not betray his conscience and expressed naked fact that internal conflicts of Nepal has shifted decisive power of this country," said the analyst.

"Dr. Giri's views have prevailed but in a perverted manner. Now the power is neither with the King nor with the people. It has shifted to a hegemonic center. It is very painful to believe and accept this fact. And now the uphill task for all is to clear the hostility and conflict among ourselves for a broad based national unity based upon widely accepted political process in which all will have fair opportunity to live and let live," said the political analyst. ■

ECONOMY

Hamstrung & Crippled

As the country is neck-deep in political crises, the economy has become nobody's baby. In fact, the issues of economic concerns have not drawn the attention of either the political parties or the civil society. This is happening despite the fact that without stabilizing economy, there will be no political stability. The acute fuel shortage that has constantly hit the people since last many months; the inability of the government to maintain law and order; the Melamchi debacle are some of the examples that point at paralyzed economy. Trade union disputes, frequent lock-ups; abductions of businessmen; almost constant bandhs and total unrest in Terai region have hit the national economy where it hurts the most.

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

On Monday (May 28), a group of robbers attacked a businessman Kanhaiya Agrawal in Kalikasthan in broad daylight and looted Rs 1 million cash from him. The robbers have seriously wounded the businessman.

In recent months, there were a plethora of reports of series of abductions of Marwari businessmen in Kathmandu valley. According to one businessman, Bihari-style kidnapping for ransom has haunted the community.

Over 35,000 schools across the country – including 8500 private ones – remained shut down for ten days at the call of Educational Republican Forum. There are calls from pro-Maoist student wing to nationalize the private schools in which entrepreneurs have made billions of rupees of investment.

The biggest infrastructure project on the floor – the Melamchi Water

Supply Project (MWSP) – is almost gone. Due to stance by Maoist minister, the principal donor Asian Development Bank (ADB) has said it will pull out its funding after June.

Bandh, partial blockades, strikes are commonplace along the length and breadth of East West Highway – the lifeline of Nepal's economy. There is hardly a day when the entire highway remains open. In contrast with the past trend when one single political entity would call strike, in recent days a new trend has emerged whereupon hitherto unknown organizations call localized strike crippling the transport movement.

Shortage of petro products has become a constant phenomenon. The bankrupt Nepal Oil Corporation is unable to incur further losses whereas the government is unable to hike fuel price fearing backlash.

Frustrated by the incessant unrest and decreasing demand, the garment entrepreneurs have started to shift their operations to India and elsewhere. Kiran Sakha, president of Garment Association of Nepal, has said that due to cutthroat international competition, labor problems and unrest, they are manufacturing garments elsewhere in order to fulfill some export orders that they are still getting.

Violence Holding Sway

Speaking at a program in the capital last week, Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat expressed deep sadness over the continuing culture of violence.

Conceding that even the mainstream democratic parties have contributed to further the culture of violence by engaging in vandalism during their agitation, Dr. Mahat, however, justified it pointing at the need to uproot

autocracy. Sadly, others are indulged in vandalism without justification, he indicated.

Dr Mahat said that since peace is necessary to sustain democracy, the prevailing culture of violence must come to an end. "During the period of transition, everybody must exercise restraint. We must not try to impose agenda through street politics. Otherwise, there are all kinds of elements including divisive, religious, regional, rightist and anarchist forces who will create an unbearable situation in the country," Dr. Mahat said.

He said that there should be singular focus on economy if the nation is to realize the dream of building new Nepal. "Besides, only economic prosperity can consolidate the hard-earned democracy," he said.

"Economic issues must be brought to the central stage. There is no alternative to hard work and discipline," he said.

Disturbed by the incessant unrest, Dr. Mahat said the future of Nepal lies only in peace, democracy and economic prosperity.

"But I still see the silver-lining in the dark clouds. There is a huge enthusiasm among the people of villages. After long conflict they are now brimming with zeal and confidence to build the nation. We must be able to tap that zeal properly," he said.

A senior economist Prof Dr. Bishwambher Pyakuryal said that the current degeneration in the country were a bad omen. He said history has shown that 50 percent of countries, which have ended conflict, have gone back to conflict during the first five years of post conflict period. "There is no guarantee that same thing will not happen in Nepal given the level of degeneration we are witnessing. Therefore, we need to be careful," he said.

Melamchi Musings

The unfolding debacle of Melamchi Water Supply Project (MWSP) threatens to mar the image of Nepal among the international investors.

As the tussle continues between the senior Maoist leader and Minister for Works and Physical Planning Hisila Yami and the Asian Development Bank

(ADB), the latter has clearly stated its intention to pull out from the project unless the previous agreement to hand over management contract of valley's water distribution system to a foreign company is honored.

Buoyed by their revolutionary zeal, the Maoists have adopted a tough posture saying they will not allow a 'discredited British company Severn Trent' to manage valley's water. In so doing, they have also earned support from bands of NGOs that have been working against the project for a long time and some of whom have been pointing at 'rainwater harvesting' as

Upper Seti project.

Minister Yami, on the other hand, has refused to climb down from her position. Despite repeating that she is in favor of Melamchi project and wants to cooperate with ADB, Yami said, "The world will go on (even without foreign assistance)."

Her remarks are eerily similar to the statements made by former vice chairmen duo of erstwhile royal cabinet. Faced with international censure, Dr. Tulsi Giri and Kiritinidhi Bista had made statements saying that it had provided opportunity for Nepal to stand on its own.

If Melamchi is cancelled, the Maoists will have live with a permanent blot on



Vandalism: Unending culture of violence

better alternative to overcome valley's water scarcity.

Last week, Maoist chairman Prachanda, addressing a program in the capital, said his party has taken the stand in order to smash the tradition of abiding by all conditions posed by donors. Maoist leaders including Prachanda had also met with ADB country director Paul Heytens on Wednesday (May 23) to request the latter to reconsider its decision to pull out of the project.

Notwithstanding their revolutionary zeal, the Melamchi dispute is already sending very negative signals to the international community. Reports say that Japan has already warned to withdraw all its support to 127 MW strong Upper Seti project if the Melamchi Water Supply Project is stalled. Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), which also has a commitment for assisting a portion of Melamchi project, had committed to provide US\$ 250 million soft loan at 1% interest for the

their image, particularly among the thirsty population of Kathmandu. "The decision will ultimately prove to be political as well as economic catastrophe for the Maoists. They should not be following the agenda of some NGOs who are selling impossible and ludicrous dreams of fulfilling water demand of a metropolis like Kathmandu through collecting rain water," said an economist.

Fueling The Problem

The scarcity of fuel and the imminent rise of inflation once the inevitable decision of price hike of fuel is taken also threaten to affect the economy.

The government is yet to get over the hangover of last August's violent reaction to the decision of hiking fuel price.

Therefore, despite feeling the bitter pinch, the government – and the eight parties, of course – have scoffed at taking the overdue decision.

The current fuel crisis is caused by the inability of Nepal Oil Corporation

(NOC) to pay back its outstanding dues running over Rs 6 billion to the sole supplier Indian Oil Corporation (IOC).

Despite repeated requests by Nepal government including Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, India's state-owned IOC has cut down the supply volume by over 40 percent leading to the shortage.

Rajendra Mahato, Minister for Industry, Commerce and Supplies has claimed that the government will soon pay Rs 1 billion to IOC, which will improve the situation for some time.

The NOC, on the other hand, held a press meet on Friday (May 25), to warn that the supply of fuel would worsen unless the government helped it to clear dues. The NOC has given two advice to the government – either provide it with Rs 500 million every month or hike the fuel price.

“The government, in principal, has agreed to release Rs 1.0 billion to clear dues and import bills for the months of April and May,” Mahato has said.

The government, is in no mood to hike the fuel price. It has already referred this decision to eight party leaders who will, most definitely, decided not to hike the price at least till the CA elections.

“We feel that any increase of fuel price at this time would be exploited by nefarious elements to create turmoil and disrupt the Constituent Assembly elections,” Minister Mahato said.

At a time when CA elections date is not certain, the continuous deferral of the decision to hike the fuel price is sure to further bleed the NOC and the government.

As immediate measure, the government is planning to involve private sector for the trading of petroleum products. “At the beginning, government plans to handover the trading of cooking gas to private parties,” he said.

According to Biswonath Goel, executive director of NOC, the NOC's current total liabilities stand at Rs 10.20 billion including Rs 5.96 billion dues of IOC and Rs 4.26 loans of various domestic financial institutions.

He said that NOC suffers from Rs 256 loss per cylinder of cooking gas.



A queue for drinking water: City of shortages

Likewise, it suffers from Rs 6.55 loss per liter of petrol; Rs 4.31 loss per liter in diesel; Rs 2.35 loss per liter in kerosene, while it profits Rs 16.85 per liter in aviation fuel.

Minister for Industry, Commerce and Supplies Rajendra Mahato added that while only half a million families were using cooking gas, the whole country was suffering from its losses.

On the other hand, Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat has said there is a need to hike fuel price ‘favorably.’ “Losses cannot be incurred like this for a long time. The direct impact is in our Balance of Payment. Even consumers will be affected. There is no escaping this,” he said.

Dr. Mahat said Nepal's dependence on India will increase as much as

outstanding dues increase. “India will not resume normal supplies. Consumers will suffer from shortage,” he said. He said that since price of fuel is rising in the international market, other countries, too, were facing similar problems.

Dr. Mahat, however, ruled out revoking tax on fuel. “In South Asia, Nepal imposes least tax on fuel. In India, 30 percent of total revenue comes from taxes on fuel. Cutting down taxes means cutting down development and administration expenditure,” he said.

As such, the perennial problem of fuel shortage is likely to continue for a long time to come. The volume of dust that are being brushed inside the carpet is swelling by the day even as the national economy continues to bleed. ■

REFUGEE IMPASSE

Long March Cut Short

India cuts short the "Long March" launched by refugees and pours cold water over the desperate bid to force their way into Bhutan

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

Like some 80 times in the past, the Indian Seema Suraksha Bal (SSB) blocked the entry of Bhutanese refugees into Indian territory on Monday (May 28).

A particularly huge deployment of security forces was put in place by India to thwart the efforts by the refugees to walk through India to their homeland – the same route they had taken when they were evicted from Bhutan one and a half decade ago.

Around 15000 refugees, of the total 106,000, from different camps had gone on a "Long March" to their homeland to join the campaign launched by National Front for Democracy (NFD-Bhutan).

Even though the refugees claimed they had support from Indian civil society and political leaders, they found themselves fighting with the SSB force alone at Mechi bridge. Dozens of them were injured when SSB used force to prevent them from crossing the bridge.

The refugees were, like in the past, compelled to reduce their much-publicized homeward march to a mere sit-in at the bridge.

The March was being launched to coincide with the second stage of mock polls by Bhutan government in what it claims as its efforts to train its citizens about the democratic exercise ahead of its scheduled parliamentary polls in 2008.

The refugees had decided to launch the Long March out of frustration with the lack of progress in the one and a half decade long refugee impasse.

The NFD-Bhutan – which has received backing from other parties of refugees – had appealed to the Indian

government to allow them to walk through India into Bhutan.

On the other hand, unrest gripped Beldangi camp of refugees when two refugees died in clash with Armed Police Force on Sunday and Monday.

The clashes occurred after refugees attacked a police team that had gone to the camp after receiving information that

angered opposing refugees who attacked him and triggered the clash.

In recent months, the unrest in refugee camps have been growing. Recently, a report by US-based rights watchdog Human Rights Watch, too, had pointed out that the offer of third country resettlement had ignited conflict between refugees.

Last week, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres visited Nepal. He also went to Goldhap camp where he said that all options will be kept open to resolve this protracted problem. He stressed that voluntary repatriation is still the most desirable solution.

He met with Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and other senior officials before leaving for Thimpu.

In his meeting with Guterres, PM requested him to apply pressure on Bhutanese government to allow safe repatriation of its refugees.



Injured refugee being carried to hospital: Fighting for right Kantipur

refugees were engaged in a fight on Sunday.

Narpati Dhungel, 17, was killed when police opened fire to foil the attack. On Monday, Purna Tamang, 25, also died in the clash. Several others were injured when they tried to disobey the curfew imposed in the camp.

The whole incident occurred after two groups of refugees clashed with each other over the issue of third country resettlement. An interview given by local camp secretary Hari Bagale Adhikari in support of third country resettlement had

As tensions start brewing and frustrations start creeping in, it is high time Nepal government, UNHCR, international community and refugee leaders gave serious considerations towards the ways of resolving the protracted impasse. The role of India and Bhutan governments must not be undermined if this problem is to be resolved. PM Koirala has already said that he will make a last ditch effort to resolve the issue bilaterally by sending advance team to Thimpu. Bhutan, therefore, needs to demonstrate some amount of flexibility. ■

“For Sustainable National Development Of Nepal, There Should Be Consensus On The Development Strategy”

-Sang-Jung Nam

SANG-JUNG NAM, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea, came here a year ago. A career diplomat, Sang-Jung Nam spoke to KESHAB POUDEL on various issues regarding Nepal-Korea relations. Excerpts:

How do you see the present state of relations between the two countries?

I think the present state of relations is very good. A number of meaningful and concrete progresses have been made in the bilateral relations, particularly over the last one year.

What are areas of progress?

The first one is the opening of the Embassy of Nepal in Seoul in March this year. Ever since the establishment of diplomatic relations between our two countries in 1974, the Republic of Korea alone had maintained its Embassy in Kathmandu. In this light, this fact is hard evidence that our bilateral relations have reached the point where our two countries have many things to share and exchange, and feel the need for more cooperation in various areas. I am convinced that the Nepalese Embassy in Seoul will play a very important role in further strengthening the existing friendly and cooperative relationship between our two countries.

What are other sectors of progress?

Secondly, the opening of sky way between our two countries by the direct flight operation of Korean Air in November last year. With that air-service, each of the two countries now can have a very easy access to the other country. From Korea, more tourists are coming to Nepal. The recent statistical data on the number of foreign tourists show that the number of Korean tourists has increased by almost 180% in April this year. I firmly believe that this will be a firm foundation for promoting exchanges of people and trade relations between our two countries. Thirdly, the inclusion of Nepal in the list of the Employment Permit System (EPS) is another achievement. I am expecting the MOU of EPS will be signed very shortly as the two governments are ready to do so. Under the new EPS, Nepalese workers will have job opportunities with far more favourable working conditions: better salary, welfare and job security, to name a few. I am also convinced that the EPS will be beneficial to the economics of our two countries. Notwithstanding the above progresses, I think there is still much room for deepening our relations further. Fortunately, I believe, the foundation for future development in our relations is now firmly laid.

Nepal is trying to introduce IT in the governance sector and the Republic of Korea has already supported Nepal to develop an e-Government Master Plan. How easier is it for Nepal to introduce e-Governance?

With the advent of the information era, providing broad access to information has become a vital issue for the public as well as private sector. In this context, governments around the world are aiming to establish

the e-Government for the purpose of its better services to citizens and more efficient management. The resulting benefits can be less corruption, increased transparency, greater convenience, and/or cost reductions. I believe the Nepalese government can also enjoy those benefits from e-Government. Implementation of e-Government is very challenging task. If I just look back at Korea's experiences, the first important thing is the top leaders' full commitment of implementation. Secondly, it needs to detect works that cause bottleneck in workflows or cut inappropriate works, and deploy new system through Business Process Reengineering (BPR). This is a very difficult job but most actions are to be taken before informatization of government. In order to expedite the e-Government, Korean government has established a special organization under the President called PCGID (Presidential Committee on Government Innovation and Decentralization). They are taking charge of all process of innovation activities based on the e-Governance roadmap. Finally, each Ministry should develop individual e-Government application based on its priority and budget with technical support from experts group under the Master Plan of e-Government.

How will the Korean government help in future to implement it?

Recognizing that 'bridging the digital divide' is one of the most important determinants to alleviate poverty, and to facilitate sustainable economic growth for developing countries, KOICA has given to extend assistance to partner countries to share the benefits of information technology and develop digital opportunities as we are highly recognized by UN eGov Index as No. 5th in the world in 2005. For the development of ICT sector in Nepal, we have already provided eGMP consulting report to the Nepalese Government team last year. KOICA is also planning to support the Project for Establishment of the Government Integrated Data Centre and IT Training Centre, which will begin this year with a budget of US\$ 2.5 million. In addition to this, KOICA supported to establish 10 School Tele-centres in districts and also developed Cyber Nepali dictionary for the public use. KOICA dispatches about 5 Volunteers annually in fields of computer and electronics as well.

As the Nepalese and Korean Governments are about to sign the MOU of EPS (Employment Permit System), can you elaborate how this will benefit Nepalese workers?

EPS is the very policy to recruit Nepalese workers according to the Korean labour related Law. During the period of employment all the benefits to Nepalese workers will be identical to

We believe that the regular and direct flight of Korean Air to Nepal will definitely assist to push up the ratio of Korean visitors each year and help strengthen bilateral relationship

Korean workers such as Labour Standard Act, Minimum Wages Act, Industrial Safety Health Act etc. For more detailed information on EPS, I would like to advise those who are interested in seeking job opportunities in Korea to visit the Internet site of EPS: www.eps.go.kr.

What are the highlights of EPS?

In comparison with the previous ITS, EPS is designed to establish a transparent network and legal way for the employment in Korea. Therefore, under EPS, only the government or government designated public organizations will be given the responsibility of recruiting workers. My understanding on this is that the Ministry of Labour and Transport Management and the Department of Labour and Employment Promotion (DOLEP) of Nepal and the Ministry of Labour and the Human Resources Development Service of Korea will be the responsible bodies for EPS. Therefore, in Nepal, no other than the DOLEP can take part in the process of recruiting, selecting and sending workers to Korea. Details will be agreed upon as the MOU will be signed between our two Ministers of Labour.

Will it protect rights of workers?

Under EPS, salary level and welfare level will be significantly increased than those under ITS. The reason is quite simple. Under ITS, the status of foreign workers is industrial trainee. As a trainee, each worker's wage level should not be as much as ordinary or regular worker. Under EPS, each foreign worker will be given the status of a regular worker. Protection of rights and interests of foreign workers will be applied as equally as Korean counterparts based on the labour standard law, the minimum wage law and industrial health and safety law.

Who can apply?

Any Nepalese men and women of age between 19-40 are eligible to be applicants and they must pass the Korean language proficiency test accredited by the Korean government and medical test by the Nepalese and Korean governments. Not all applicants are guaranteed for employment in Korea. Korean employers have their rights to select preferred job seekers among those who meet their requirements.

Korean Air has started its regular flight linking Nepal to its global network. How does the direct flight between Kathmandu and Seoul contribute to increase the number of Korean tourists in Nepal?

Nepal and Korea have many similarities in cultural and traditional aspects. Nepal is a country of biodiversity and is endowed with natural beauty, particularly the Himalayas. Nepal's natural beauty attracts thousands and thousands of people from around the world and the Korean people cannot be any exception. It is well known that since the restoration of peace in Nepal, the visitors' figure soared up rapidly. We believe that the regular and direct flight of Korean Air to Nepal will definitely assist to push up the ratio of Korean visitors each year and help strengthen bilateral relationship. During the month April, this year only, we have the record of 677 Korean visitors. This ratio is very encouraging and it will

undoubtedly help boost up the tourism industry of Nepal. Since visitors from Korea have option to fly directly to Nepal, they are free from the nuisance of flying to other destinations or spending hours in transit or requirement of visa of that country en route Nepal. As the access between the two countries becomes easy, this will be a firm

foundation for promoting exchanges of people and trade relations between our two countries.

Does Korean Air have any plan to increase its flights?

Korean Air is planning to increase its regular and direct flights three times a week from coming October, if political stability is maintained and more secured environment is assured. Therefore, this is happy news that the direct and regular flight of Korean Air to Nepal has certainly helped in the increment of 180 percent Korean visitors this April only.

Many Korean companies are investing in Nepal, what is their impression working in Nepal at this crucial juncture?

Nepal is a close friend of Korea and has always been wishing its success in all sectors, be it political, economical or over all development of Nepal. This is the world of globalization. As Korea's fast growing economy booms in the country, the establishment of Korean companies in foreign lands increases. With the configuration of new government and restoration of peace in recent time, many Korean companies are attracted to put their hands in Nepali market so as to bring mutual benefits. Since 1984, set up of series of Korean companies have been very remarkable. As of 2006 data, there are about fifty nine Korean companies established yet. They vary from textile to spinning industries, from motor repairing companies to language and computer training centres, and from medical services to mostly restaurants and hotels. And the total amount of investment according to the record of FNCCI is around NRs. 951.68 million till present. And of course the number will certainly soar up every year if the political upheavals are settled and a secure environment for investment is guaranteed.

As an ambassador from a developed country like Korea, how do you see Nepal's current development process?

A Millennium Development Goals' (MDGs) Needs Assessment Report for Nepal in 2006 said that there has been remarkable reduction in poverty and hunger in aggregate level for the past 15 years. However, the report has also called for special efforts to address education and hunger-related activities etc. The progress has been far from satisfactory in the case of rural infrastructure as well. To achieve MDGs in Nepal, all international societies need to enhance efforts to support Nepal. I would like to highlight here that the most important thing in new era for Nepal, after ending the conflict of 11 years, is a strong political leadership with a vision of New Nepal and



Under EPS, each foreign worker will be given the status of a regular worker. Protection of rights and interests of foreign workers will be applied as equally as Korean counterparts based on the labour standard law, the minimum wage law and industrial health and safety law.

integrated society, and better coordination and implementation of international assistance from donors.

How will international community response?

As I understand, international society is ready to support peace building and reconstruction of Nepal. In addition to the outside support, the Nepalese government should have its own development strategy based on correct and accurate understanding of the hard reality and potentiality of Nepal. As many economists and politicians have stressed that strong leadership as well as clear vision for the national development can draw up the right development strategy and successfully implement it, I think Nepal is no exception to this kind of advice.

Korea has been providing technical supports to Nepal in various sectors. What are the specific areas where it is supporting Nepal now?

To strengthen friendly and cooperative relationship between Korea and Nepal, the Korean government has made efforts to assist with the socio-economic development of Nepal through various development programs implemented by the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA).

What is the level of assistance?

Assistance in 2007 is about US\$ 3.1 million. The amount is expected to double in 3 years. KOICA has given priorities in the fields of education, health, rural development and ICT for Nepal. KOICA is conducting two projects now. The project for establishment of Korea-Nepal Friendship Hospital in Thimi, which is designed to assist with the improvement of public health care services in the immediate and neighbouring areas. Another is the project for establishment of the Government Integrated Data Centre and IT Training Centre which is to facilitate the e-Government of Nepal. In addition, KOICA plans to invite 57 Nepalese government officials to Korea for 34 training courses. The majority of the courses will deal with the IT and governance sectors and aims to help narrow the digital divide and spur economic growth and good governance. KOICA will also offer courses on rural development, education and vocational training, and energy etc.

Do you have any other program?

The Korea Overseas Volunteer program is one of the major assistance programs for Nepal with a total of 60 volunteers scheduled to be dispatched to Nepal in 2007. Moreover, two medical doctors from KOICA are volunteering to serve at the Bhaktapur Hospital and the Korea-Nepal Friendship hospital respectively; providing services to approximately 700 patients in a month.

What about KOICA's activities?

Korea International Cooperation Agency, KOICA was founded in 1991 under the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Korea. KOICA is the sole government agency having the responsibility of Korea's grant aid programs to developing countries with the slogan "Cooperation for a Better World".

How KOICA has been supporting Nepal?

As a part of support for peace process in Nepal, KOICA provided 10.6 million Rs. worth of IT equipments to Election Commission and Police Headquarters. KOICA has already delivered 95 multi-functioned laser printers and 57 portable hard disks to EC. I expect that 100 Desktop PCs will be provided to Police Headquarters in June. KOICA also supports grass-roots projects in the fields of primary education, health care, and income generation through Korean development NGOs in Nepal, and has been doing so since 1995. The Korean Government would like to make great efforts to support

not only in Nepal's economic development but also in peace-building through the cooperation programs of KOICA.

Your country has also experiences of passing through a very difficult time. How do you explain Korean experience?

The entire Korean peninsula had been devastated by the Korean War (1950-1953). The Korean people had to start their national reconstruction almost from the scratch. The Korean people have undertaken economic development in earnest since 1962. In less than four decades, they achieved an incredible process that dramatically transformed the Korean economy, now ranked the 12th largest economy in the world. In the course of its national development, Korea has faced a number of challenges such as political turmoil, economic crises, military confrontation between the two Koreas and so forth. The Korean people have met the challenges with courage and wisdom sometimes even by sacrificing themselves.

What are the major factors for the development?

There may be many factors which lead to national development. Among them, as many can agree, Human Resources Development might be the number one factor particularly to those countries with scarce natural resources. Human resources, unlike other natural resources, have been regarded as a never drying well. Korea has invested enormously in the education sector. With heavy and long-time investment in that sector, Korea became able to shorten the development path. If I may suggest one more factor, I would like to bring forward the wise development strategy. An outward-oriented economic development strategy, which uses exports as the main engine of growth, contributes greatly to the rapid economic transformation. Based on such a strategy, many development programs have been successfully implemented.

What is your observation on Nepal?

My observation on Nepal in this context is very limited mainly because of my shallow knowledge about Nepal. As a foreign diplomat who has stayed in Nepal just over one year, I am afraid that I should make irrelevant comments based on my shallow experiences of Nepal. But If I dare to say something about Nepal, first of all, I would like to stress the importance of recovering the political and social stability through reconciliation and social integration at an earliest date possible. In my opinion, for sustainable national development of Nepal, there should be consensus on the development strategy which is really suitable to Nepal. In order to design its own development strategy, it is not only necessary for Nepal to benchmark the successful cases from other countries, but also important to make precise and accurate analyses about its own social and economic circumstances. The world has already moved into a highly competitive society. These days, each and every country is taking very bold measures for its national development. In this light, Nepal doesn't have luxury of time to spend a long time to prepare for its national development. ■

Human resources, unlike other natural resources, have been regarded as a never drying well. Korea has invested enormously in the education sector. With heavy and long-time investment in that sector, Korea became able to shorten the development path.

SCHOOL EDUCATION

Surviving Under Threat

Despite the end of strike, it is difficult to erase psychological trauma from the minds of children and parents

By KESHAB POUDEL

“My school has opened now but I don't know whether they will allow me to pursue my education or not as agitators still are locking up account sections and administrative offices of the school,” said Pragya Subba, a student of class 7 of a boarding school.

“Our teachers have been closing school frequently in the last few years with their own demand. I don't know how long they will allow schools to open,” said Janak Shrestha, a student of class 8 of Tripadma Vidyashram of Lalitpur.

They are not only the two students who are uncertain about their future. All 7.8 million school children studying in over 35,000 schools have similar expressions. As Maoist affiliated agitating Education Republican Forum (ERF) and All Nepal National Independent Students Union (R) do not have any reasonable demands, they can call indefinite strike at any time when country's political leadership is so weak and inefficient.

The indefinite general strike called by the Maoist-affiliated organizations and threat to stop all education institutions from next months have already created the havoc among the parents. These threats, though to pressure the government, have pressured Nepalese parents to search other schools abroad or India.

This threat has come when the admission for higher secondary school education has started in India and other parts of the world. This is not the first time when Maoists called indefinite general strike coinciding with this period of time.

When the country does not have accountable legislature elected by people and there are no effective ways to organize the people, Nepalese people are forced to live in this kind of situation for a long time to come.

If Maoist-affiliated unions decide to support the education, other groups will replace them like in terai following comprehensive peace agreement between the government and Maoists, other groups have replaced Maoists to create terror.

In recent case, even Maoists have not withdrawn the strike completely. “It does not, however, mean we have called off the agitation,” said Mukunda Gautam, president of the Institutional Teachers Union (ISTU) and a member of ERF.

On Sunday, ERF boycotted the talks with State Minister of Education and Sports Mohan Singh Rathore. “The central committee meeting held in the evening decided not to sit for the talks since the

government did not keep its promise made during an informal meeting with the minister of state for Education and Sports. We have put forth three conditions for making an environment conducive to talks, which the government failed to meet,” said Bhim Chhetri, general secretary of ERF.

Ministry officials, however, are saying that ERF is adding demands one after

another. In their list of demands, they have included three more demands now. ERF demands include an apology from the Minister for Education and Sports on the police high-handedness on Friday's rally, arranging treatment for those injured in the incident and the announcement of talks team under Rathore.

Minister of State for Education Rathore, however, said: “ERF claims are only an excuse to stay away from the talks. We cannot understand why they keep on changing their demands every day,” said Minister of State Rathore to The Himalayan Times.

Whether the teachers and students unions reached any agreement or not



School kids: Fearing another strike

with the government do not make any difference. The ten days of indefinite strike has already damaged a lot in the minds of children and students.

No rebel forces except fundamentalist Taliban has attacked the educational institutions and see enlightening of the people as inimical. ■

RHINO PROTECTION

Managing the Crisis

At a time when rhino population is declining, a new project aims to protect them

By A CORRESPONDENT

Despite signing of peace agreement and improvement of law and order situation, the rhinos are yet to be completely safe as they were before. Rhino population is facing many problems.

Deteriorating grass lands, increasing incidents of poaching and apathy of public are creating problems in the conservation of rhino population. According to the estimate, there are now 372 or less rhinos in three national parks of Nepal.

With the support from U.K government's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs under the Darwin Initiatives Programs, a new project Crisis to Biological Management: Rhinoceros, Grassland and Public Engagement- Nepal was launched recently.

The central aim of this project is to re-establish effective capacity, system and motivation the conservation of the endangered one horned Asian rhinoceros and associated Terai grassland habitat in Nepal. The project will focus on three protected areas of terai region.

"The project is a concerted effort of multiple partner agencies particularly of NTNC (National Trust for Nature Conservation) and Department of National Park and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) for saving greater one horned rhinoceros that are critically endangered species and restricted to protected areas, namely Chitwan National Park,

Bardia National Park and Suklaphanta Wildlife Reserve in Nepal," said Dr. Shant Raj Jnawali of NTNC. "Efforts will be made to check both organized and opportunistic poaching that has been the major cause of recent rhino decline."

Nepal has a long history of ups and downs of rhino population. According to Jnawali, the number of rhino increased from 100 animals in mid 1960 to 544 in 2000. Between 1986 and 2003, 83 rhinos were translocated to BNP and SWR.



One-horned rhino: Better protection needed

However, there has been a significant decline from 2000-2005 to probably less than 372 today in Chitwan National Park, less than 67 in Bardia and 7 in Suklaphanta, said Dr. Jnawali.

The past experiences have shown that rhino conservation is impossible without participation of local communities. Along with tightening security, there must be a sense of ownership among the local community.

This is what one of the key components of the project is all about. In partnership with

DNPWC, Zoological Society of London, WWF-Nepal and IUCN, the NTNC will implement the project.

"As the endangered rhino species

continue to decline, this kind of project will definitely protect them from extinction. The government will provide all necessary support to implement this project successfully," said Tirtha Raj Sharma, Secretary at Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation.

"It is a privilege for DNPWC to be a part of the project. Department will provide all necessary support to implement the project," said Dr. Krishna Chandra Poudel, director general of the DNPWC.

One of the major causes of declining rhino population is organized and opportunistic

poaching. Unless the local populations are taken into confidence and ownership on the animal is built, it

is impossible to control the poaching.

"We are now emphasizing the engagement of the people in the conservation efforts. It means our project wants to have more participation from the community," said Dr. Richard Kock of Zoological Society of London.

As the security posts along the national parks have already been restored and efforts are being made to engage local population in protection of rhinos, there is hope to revive the rhino population.

"We believe the program will be of immense public interest in the context of growing concern of declining rhino population in the country," said Dr. Siddhartha Bajra Bajracharya, member secretary of NTNC. ■

Contours of Communism

Translated in Nepali, the book by American author Richard Pipes reveals how brutal communist regimes are

By A CORRESPONDENT

At a time when the communist system is at the verge of collapse in the world, upsurge of communism in Nepal is a strange phenomenon for westerners. Nepal's communist movement started to intensify in 1990 when the communism in the world was crumbling from the Eastern Europe and former Soviet Union.

Having written numerous books and essays including *The Russian Revolution*, *Russia Under Bolshevik Regime* and *Property and Freedom*, Richard Pipes, Professor of History, Emeritus, at Harvard University, is a well known author.

Translated into dozens of languages throughout the world, Pipe's book "Communism A History" discusses and highlights different aspects of communism looking back at its historical evolution.

Without knowing much about theoretical and other aspects of communism, many Nepalese - whether they are champions of liberal democracy with absolute freedom or other like minded members of civil society - are backing communist parties.

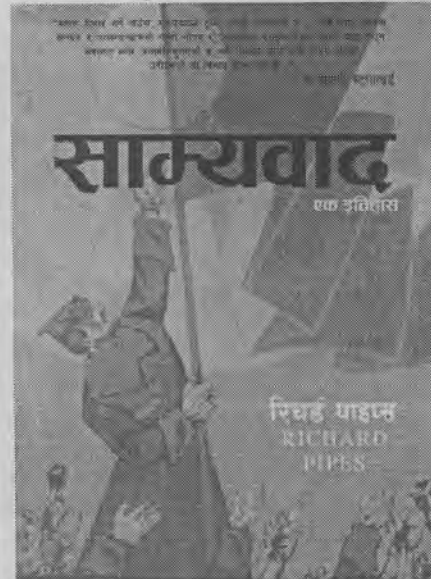
The context of publication is very timely as it gives the picture of history of communists to those who cannot read English. Translation is a very difficult task as it needs to follow the text and context of original book. One of the challenges is to maintain the spirit and content of the book.

Upadhyay, professor of English at Tribhuvan University, has done very hard work to translate it into Nepali. Despite his efforts to use generalized words, some words used in book are difficult to understand for common people. Even sentence structures, at times, are complex as they have been translated from English.

In Nepal's case, it is Nepali Congress, a liberal democratic party, and its leaders

who are responsible to legitimize the communist forces. The western followers of liberal democracy are surprised when they see this unique alliance of liberal Democratic Party and radical communists in the name of strengthening democratic process.

Even now an octogenarian liberal democratic leader is leading a cabinet dominated by communists. Communist



Communism A History

Author: Richard Pipes

A Nepali translation by

Hrishikesh Upadhyay

Published by: Creation Media

Company Pvt. Limited

Phone: 44255125

Edited by: Saurav Kiran Shrestha

parties have majority in the parliament. Although Nepal is a neighbor of world's largest democracy as well as world's largest communist country, it is strange to see that communism here is exported by democratic neighbor rather than the other way round. In reality, Nepal's communism is exported by Nepal's

democratic neighbor and nurtured by liberal Democratic Party.

Nepal has its own history of communist movements but it was never so much influential. In 1995 communists emerged as the single largest party. Since then, communists are in one or other way making greater influence in Nepali politics blocking every move to liberalize economic, political and other processes.

It surprised the world in 1995 when Communist Party of Nepal Marxist and Leninist - which emerged as a single largest party in the elected House of Representatives - formed minority government for nine months.

Another phase of communist upsurge began following the decision of CPN-Maoists to wage People's War in 1996. After successful People's Movement II in April 2006 and several agreements with Seven Party Alliance, Maoist movement came to an end following its inclusion in coalition government.

Despite painful atrocities committed by communists during the period of its upsurge, only few people have ever read about the history of communism and atrocities committed by them in the world.

As it is translated into Nepali, Pipe's book will help to know reality behind the communism and communist party. With low literacy and rampant poverty, communists have always tried to influence poor people showing that they are their messiah. In reality, these people have to pay high price for it.

"The costs of the experiments in utopia were staggering. They took a huge toll on human lives. Stephen Courtois, the editor of *The Black Book of Communism*, estimates the global number of communism's victims at between 85 to 100 million, which is 50 percent greater than the deaths caused by two world wars," writes Pipes. "The survivors, too paid, a price. In their effort to impose total conformity, communist regimes drove into exile,

incarcerated, and silenced those who would not conform- often the ablest and most enterprising."

This is very timely book for Nepalese who like to know the history of communism in the world. It shows how communists grab the power and how they suppress people once they are in power. Every Nepali regardless of political ideology must read the book giving regard to Pipes. ■

PHULMAYA FOUNDATION

Contributing In Education

A group of Americans from Vermont State support to build new schools in Mukten

By A CORRESPONDENT

For the children of Multan Village of Dhankuta, 500 miles east of Capital city, the dream to study sitting in furniture with adequate space and light in the room has come true after the completion of modern school building.

Thanks to the contribution of Phulmaya Foundation of Vermont, a building was inaugurated recently along with other three buildings constructed through the contribution from similar groups.

As there is a lack of basic infrastructures like toilets, water and space, the drop out in primary school is very high in the village. Children sit in floor and dark room. As roof is too old, it leaks when there is rainfall. After the completion of buildings, the students now don't have to sit in floor and there is furniture.

For approximately 65 students at the primary school in Mukten, three schools buildings were built - Phulmaya funded one of them. Following the construction of new buildings the situation has drastically changed now.

"The conditions of the old schools were horrible - the roofs leaked, there was very little sunlight which is needed when the community lacks electricity, and the walls were decaying. The new school is both soundly built and very attractive. The community expressed deep appreciation for the school at the commemoration. Hopefully we can move to teacher training at this point, since that is essential," said Patrick Beggam, founder of foundation who attended the inauguration program along with another founder member Scott Skinner, a former American Peace Corp Volunteer.

Established in 1996, Phulmaya Foundation, Ltd has also supported a

children home in capital. "I named the foundation after my friend Scott Skinner's friend and porter, Phulmaya, who Scott visits whenever he is in Nepal," said Patrick Biggam, board of director.

"She is not literate, yet she spent what little money she earned to send her sister and brother to Secondary Schooling. Her dedication to the value of education was



Skinner and Biggam: Generosity for a cause



The school in Mukten: Joyous parents and children

inspirational to me. In addition, we experienced the same level of commitment to education among many, many people in Nepal. Phulmaya came to represent the "New Nepal" - a country where education and personal growth would be available to everyone, regardless of sex, status or caste," said Patrick Biggam. "The purpose of Phulmaya Foundation is to raise money to be used for the educational needs of Nepali children. At first we sent money to an NGO in Kathmandu which provided scholarships to children to enable them to remain in school."

"Lately we are raising money to build new schools, provide educational material, and train teachers. This later purpose of training teachers is most crucial, since poor instruction will fail

children's educational goals," said Biggam.

"To date we have provided sufficient funds (\$20,000) to build a primary school in Mukten. This was inaugurated during our recent visit," he said.

With a per capita income of less than one dollar a day, parents of the village have been happy to see the school building for their children in Mukten. "The

building will bring much needed relief for the parents as well as the students in these communities, where many are on the verge of losing hope," said Hark Prasad Lama, principle of local high school and community coordinator.

The USA Board of Directors of Phulmaya Foundation, Ltd. is: Patrick Biggam - Attorney; Scott Skinner - Attorney; Diane Derby - former press secretary to US Senator Jeffords; David Kelley - Attorney and founder of Project Harmony; and Steve Conlin - president of Above the Clouds Trekking.

Whether one lives near or far, it does not make any difference if people have zeal and commitment to do something to help oppressed communities. This is what a group of Americans from Vermont State have shown. ■

MMR AND CMR DECLINES

The Demographic Health Survey by the government has shown that there has been a remarkable reduction in child and maternal mortality rate in Nepal in the last 10 year period.

The report released by Minister for Health and Population Giriraj Mani Pokharel states that there has been significant improvement in child and maternal health in Nepal.

According to the survey report, the maternal mortality rate in Nepal was 281 in every 1,00,000 births in the year 2006, a reduction from maternal mortality rate of 539 in the year 1996.

During the past ten years there has been a decrease in the child mortality rate with 48 newborn dying in every 1,000 births, according to the 2006 statistics. The mortality rate in children below 5 years of age, however, remained 61 in every 1,000 births.

The report says that in the year 2001 this mortality rate was 1 in every 11 births. Likewise, the survey states that 44 percent women currently use modern family planning contraceptives in the country, a good 9 percent increase from what it was in the year 2001.

There has been a remarkable increase in children taking vaccines against child diseases also, the report says. Similarly, the survey also states that 44 percent pregnant woman now take the help of skilled health workers during their delivery. The survey was conducted on more than 10,000 women between the ages of 15 to 49 and more than 4,000 men of the same age category.

Earlier, a report by Save the Children, too, had commended Nepal for making progress in child survival despite conflict and financial constraints. Save the Children's new *Child Survival Progress Report Card* ranks Bangladesh 3, Nepal 4 and India 10 among 60 developing countries in reducing child mortality since 1990. Pakistan ranks 17, while Afghanistan ranks 39.

The ranking included 60 developing countries, which together account for 94 percent of all child deaths worldwide. The rankings indicate which countries are succeeding and which are failing to save the lives of children under the age of 5 years.

"Among the developing countries, Bangladesh and Nepal are making great strides in child survival despite limited financial resources. These countries have invested in better health care for mothers, better nutrition for children, and lifesaving health care services to prevent and treat deadly diseases," stated a press release issued by Save the Children Sweden Regional Office for South and Central Asia. ■

Book List

- Fateful Interview, Madhav Kumar Rimal,Rs. 400.00
- Beyond The frontiers Women's stories from Nepal Padmavati Singh/2006.....Rs 200.00
- Bonded Labour Kamaiya in Nepal. Padma Raj Lamichhane/2005.....Rs. 350.00
- Dhoopee "The Juniper" A Long Poem.Toya Gurung/ 2006.....Rs. 185.00
- Distribution of goods and Services in Nepal's Conflict Ananda P. Shrestha \Hari Uprety\2006.....Rs. 200.00
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- Development planning in the Era of Globalization. Govind Nepal\2006..... Rs. 110.00
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- My Life Story Ramhari Sharma Nepal \ 2006 Rs.....250.00
- Nepal -Japan Relation, Ram Kumar Panday\2006 Rs. 2000.00
- Nepal Struggle for Existence -Jagadish Sharma\2006 Rs.999.00
- Nepal Postage Stamps Catalogue 2005, Chandra Kumar Stapit \Deepak Manandhar \2005 Rs. 150.00
- Nepal 's conflict and its impact on Public Ananda P. Shrestha \Hari Uprety \2006.....Rs 150.00
- 15. Peaks and Pinnacles Mountainering in Nepal Harka Gudung\2004.....Rs. 500.00
- The Sakyas, Ajaya Kranti Shakya\2006Rs. 350.00
- Simple Convictions My Struggle for Peace and Democracy Girija Prasad Koirala\2006.....Rs. 250.00
- 18 Uncertainty on a Himalayan Scale, Thompson \Warburaton \ Hatley \2007..... Rs. 250.00

Remembering Late King Birendra

At a time when even his statues seem to be objectionable as Maoists have been destroying them, late King Birendra's tutor Francis G. Hutchins comes out with a book on the sixth anniversary of his mysterious killing

By KESHAB POUDEL

Whether it was during the direct rule of his brother King Gyanendra or direct rule of eight political parties now, nobody finds time to remember the legacy of late King Birendra, who was

mysteriously killed in June 1, 2001.

Six years have already been passed since but it is still a mystery why King Birendra, who had shown his complete faith in liberal democratic system and made efforts to democratize the

institution of monarchy and modernize the country, and his entire family were killed?

Unlike in the first four years of his brother King Gyanendra's direct rule when King Birendra's views were ignored but now even his statue seems to be objectionable to the government of eight parties. Most of the leaders in present government worked with late King Birendra including prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala and CPN-UML leader Madhav Kumar Nepal. Earlier, all of them praised King Birendra's role without any reservation on his commitment to liberal democracy. In the contest of new Loktantra, no body is there to remember him.

Although King Birendra had many Nepali tutors who even worked as secretary in Royal Palace like Narayan Prasad Shrestha, Chiran Sumsher Thapa and numerous others but nobody has written any book on late King Birendra and his contribution to Nepal.

As no Nepalis in power want to remember late King Birendra as eight party leaders have destroyed the Constitution of Kingdom of Nepal 1990 which made Nepali people sovereign, Francis G. Hutchins, who also served as Kissinger's personal assistant in 1960s, has come with a book with full memory of King Birendra and his liberal views. "Always affable, polite and attentive to the nuances of my arguments toward egalitarianism, he never openly contradicted me.

When his memory is gradually fading from the minds of people, Hutchins' book again reminds one about the importance of this noble king.

Having worked for a long period of time in South Asia, Hutchins, who was with the Harvard University, is also well known about geo-strategic complications of South Asia. From King Prithivinarayan Shah to King Birendra, he explains the challenges posed by Nepal to survive as an independent nation.

Although it is short and small, the book consists of all important aspects of King Birendra and his contribution to Nepal. Hutchins must be thanked for his contribution to remind a noble King of Nepal who is still popular among Nepalese people. This book is noteworthy to read. ■

Highlights of the Book

"As the pole star, Dhruva is also called Graha-Dhara, pivot of the planets, to which the pole star is thought to be linked by invisible strands of nurturing influence. While it may not have been his conscious intent, Birendra's deepest aspiration seems indeed to resemble the pole-star, itself unmoving, its manifold effects manifested in others. This was not a realistic regimen for a work-a-day monarch, even for Dhruva, who became the pole star only after his death. In death however, Birendra has surely drawn closer to Dhruva. Like Dhruva, Birendra seems certain to remain a fixed point of reference," writes Hutchins. (page138)

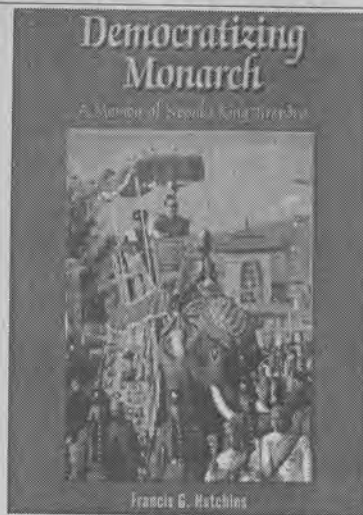
"I had always thought of my relationship with Birendra as confidential. I rarely mentioned him even to close friends and never spoke publicly about him. I anticipated he would rule throughout my life and never expected that a time would come when it would be appropriate for me to describe my discussions with Birendra or my thoughts about him." (Page 8)

"I would not today approach the project of tutoring a future ruler of Nepal as I did in the fall of 1967. When I became Birendra's tutor, I was twenty-seven, and he was twenty-two."

"I do know that Birendra shaped my career path, my thinking about the United States, and about the ways nations can beneficially interact. Birendra became part of my life and to his memory, I must dedicate this book."

"Whatever the twenty-first century bodes for Nepal, the Shah dynasty's historic role as a definer of Nepal's nationhood in the eighteenth century and as a nurture of Nepal's political independence in the twentieth century will not be affected. A sense of Nepal's uniqueness was fostered by dynasty, and benefited it, but is now deeply shared by all Nepalis."

"For three generations spanning fifty years, from 1951 to 2001, Nepal was ruled by latter-day monarchs who were



Democratizing Monarchy (A memoir of Nepal's King Birendra) By Francis G. Hutchins, Published by Vajra Publication 42205562, Price Rs.350 Pages:138

imaginative, serious-minded and public-spirited. Each was different, each thoroughly Nepali. As the last great Shah ruler, Birendra seem certain to be remembered as a pivotal figure in the history of Nepal."

"Then there was Nepal, nominally also a British-allied princely state, which stood apart as the modern buffer state between India and China. This twentieth century accomplishment would not have been possible had it not been for Nepal's eighteenth century consolidation as a dynamic pre-modern empire by Prithivinarayan Shah."

On Nepal's broader international situation, Prithivinarayan Shah was characteristically concise: "This country is like a gourde between two boulders. This remark was made when China was governed by Manchus and India by the British East India Company. Yet no revision is needed to update it for the twenty-first century, when India is a self-governing republic and China Communist."

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