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The National Newsmagazine

SPOTLIGHT

July 27- Aug 02, 2007

CA Elections:

A Hobson's Choice



Terai Violence : Complicated Picture
Press Freedom : Sinister Attacks

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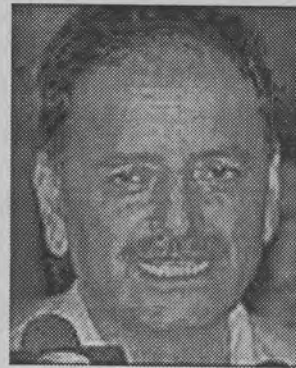
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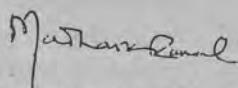
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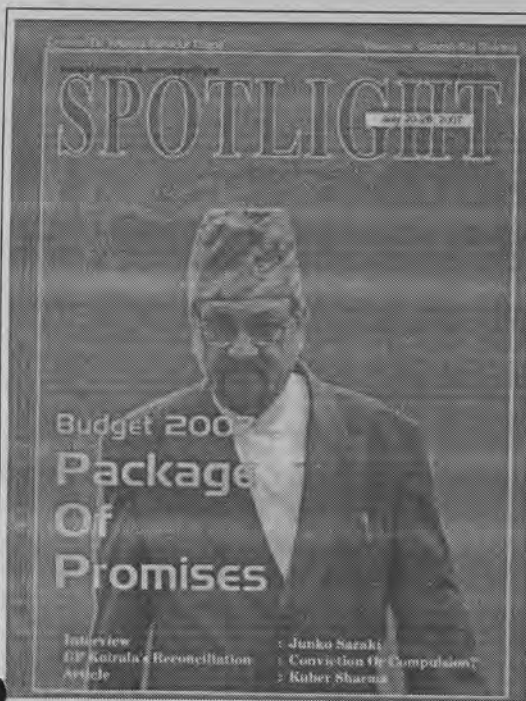
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It is high time Girija Prasad Koirala resigned from the prestigious post he is holding. Not only he is sick, even his senile mental faculties have turned him unfit to stay as prime minister and acting Head of States. Since he has led the heterogeneous government of political parties looking towards different poles, nursing opposing goals and creating jams that have got the country stuck when the parties themselves might have gained. As a matter of fact, the cabinet has turned into a bedlam. His sickness has made him a total incommunicado, even unaware of the ever mounting resentment against his rule. His inability to sack his incompetent home minister derided even by senior colleagues of his own party, his absolute helplessness to appoint envoys to various vacant diplomatic missions for over a year, his blatant failure to arrest the increasing infringement in the freedom of print and electronic media and his utter lack of courage to resist the Maoist blackmail with the threat of withdrawing from the coalition government are only some of the visible *raison d'etre* for him to vacate his post without a moment's delay. His more than frequent meeting with a certain foreign envoy has turned him into a live robot which cannot function without periodic instructions and feedings. Is he aware how such behavior has denigrated not only his own stature and reputation but that of the nation as well? As such, if his intentions were not fraudulent and if he were an honest and principled politician, he should not hesitate to step down and make room for a more competent and honest person. Knowing the man as we do and having seen his former innings, it would be nothing but sheer foolishness even to entertain such absurd ideas. Even many of the foreign dignitaries stationed in Kathmandu are appalled at his behavior. However, since there is a limit to everything, we thought there would be a limit to his hunger for power and pelf too and dared to make this suggestion. When some one is incapable of doing a job assigned to him, he must not follow the dog in the manager policy. May be, this is his crucial test of his long political career and even his patriotism. The nation is awaiting most impatiently to know his verdict.

By relaxing its rigidity and registering many smaller political parties, the Election Commission has rectified its unjust and undemocratic behavior. Had it refused to follow the authoritarian and undemocratic laws passed by the nominated and unconstitutional parliament, it would have set a shining example about how the Election Commission must always behave. As the saying goes 'better late than never', if the honorable commissioners have realized the importance, gravity and momentousness of the job they are doing and will stand up to the undue pressures and influences of the politicians and the government as well, they will be able to win, love and regard of not only their own countrymen but of the whole world which no amount of money or temptations of any kind can buy. As a matter of fact, had our countrymen been more literate and knowledgeable they would have summarily rejected the undemocratic laws that have made blatant discrimination between the eight parties and the rest of the country. Evidently, this has been the work of selfish narrow minded and anti-national politicians who are still taking the poor countrymen for a ride though their glib speeches. In these circumstances, our intellectuals should have been able to educate and guide our illiterate mass. But majority of them have behaved like of most self-centered people running after any politician that wields some power. For a change, let the Election Commission set an example by showing that the country is bigger than politicians and they themselves are not for sale like their predecessors. We are just keeping our fingers crossed that elections will be held. But at such a critical juncture when the country is at the brink of the precipice the Election Commission can play a very important role to save the country and direct the destiny of nation to the purposeful future by helping to initiate new, honest and patriotic blood in the poor country's politics which a free and fair elections is definite to provide. Can they rise up to the expectations?


Madhav K. Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher



Promises Galore

The cover story on Budget 2007 (Package of Promises SPOTLIGHT July 20) was interesting to read. At a time when the country has been passing through a very critical political crisis, finance minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat has presented a very balanced budget for the country. His efforts to continue the process of liberalization is commendable. One can hope that this budget will implemented as promised by finance minister Dr. Mahat. For this, all the parties needs to support finance minister.

*Smriti Gurung
Balaju*

Ritualistic Budget

It is like a ritual to present the huge budget with big deficit (Package of Promises SPOTLIGHT July 20). Recently presented budget of coming fiscal year is no different than the past ones. Although only one objective of this interim government is to hold the elections for Constituent Assembly, finance minister Dr. Mahat's budget shows that this is a government elected for five years. If this government is for short period of tenure, it should have presented the budget for short period of time. I don't understand rationale behind presenting such a huge budget aiming to cover whole fiscal year. One cannot guarantee that the new government formed after the elections will continue to follow this budget.

*Kalpna Sharma
Maitighar*

Populist Budget

I agree with your analysis that this is a budget full of populist promises (Package of Promises SPOTLIGHT July 20). Nobody knows how government can generate internal revenue for these kinds of budget.

Increasing of salary of civil servants will add burden to the government. Where the government gets all the money to fund the development activities is a serious question. This budget will have less money for the development programs and most of the budget will be consumed by civil servants as salaries.

*Jamuna Pradhan
Pulchowk*

Balanced Move

I would like to thank finance minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat in bringing out a very balanced budget in the critical hours like this when the government is dominated by all kinds of communist forces who do not believe in liberalization and market orientation (Package of Promises SPOTLIGHT July 20). He has been able to place the economy firmly on track of liberalization and reforms despite the pressures by other political parties represented in the government. One of the main challenges of the government will be to meet the ambitious target set for the revenue collection. In this critical hour, I hope,

finance minister Dr. Mahat will be able to implement the budget to contribute something for New Nepal.

*Ramesh Chettri
Via-email*

Half-Hearted Conviction

The article on GPK's national reconciliation showed prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala's half hearted support for national reconciliation (Conviction or Compulsion SPOTLIGHT Jul 20). I agree with the article that GPK is last politician with the inner commitment to national reconciliation but nobody understands why this old man is surviving in power by engaging in such humiliating compromises. If prime minister Koirala is really abiding by his brother B.P. Koirala's national reconciliation, he must show his guts to speak the truth. He is quite aware that B.P. Koirala's national reconciliation never suggested to compromise with extremist communists to uproot monarchy. Although time has already gone out of hand, junior Koirala can still make a lot of difference if he decides to take certain risk in his political career.

*Nirmal K.C
Birgunj via e-mail*

Informative Interview

The interview of Junko Sazaki, country representative of UNFPA Nepal (SPOTLIGHT July 20) was very interesting and eye opener. She has made clear that if Nepal is to benefit from demographic bonus, this is a window of opportunity. At a time when foreigners like Sazaki working in Nepal are giving such positive remarks, Nepalese policy makers are yet to take any step towards it. I would like to request Spotlight bring more interesting interviews like that of Sazaki, which gives information about our country.

*Phanindra Timsina
New Baneshwore Via-email*

VDC Secretaries Launch Agitation

The VDC secretaries have said that they will not return to their work until the government fills the vacancies in the local bodies; guarantees security; and declares employees killed in Terai as martyrs. The VDC Secretary Rights Protection Center, an umbrella organization of the VDC secretaries, organized a special gathering in Kathmandu on Sunday (July 22) and announced their agitation. The VDC secretaries have been stopping their works since a VDC secretary of Govindapur VDC of Siraha district was killed by cadres of Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM-Jwala Singh). The VDC secretaries have also given the ultimatum of three days to the government to fulfill their demands, if not, they have warned that they will all come to the capital. *Kantipur daily reports*

Parliament Passes RTI Bill

The Parliament has endorsed the much awaited Right to Information Bill, thus meeting the long-standing demands for a law ensuring that a Nepali citizen seeking any information from government bodies can have it after following a due process of law. Minister for Information and Communication Krishna Bahadur Mahara said the new bill could prove a cornerstone towards democratizing the state authorities as well as building proper mechanism for free flow of information. He said the bill was based on the norm that the state bodies should not operate in non-transparent situations. Now anyone seeking any information from the government offices is eligible to get it 15 days after submitting an application. Refusal or denial to this mandatory responsibility would invite Rs 1,000-25,000 fine on the responsible official. This provision is mandatory to NGOs as well. The parliamentary Committee on Environment, Media and Technology had finalized the draft of the bill following discussions held at the parliamentary secretariat on Friday. The bill proposes a three-member high-level National Information Commission. Likewise, every government office should appoint a spokesperson to coordinate with media and provide information to the seekers. The new law,

however, does not allow disseminating information that poses threat to the sovereignty and integrity of the country, national security, public security, or any information that might pose a threat to international relations. It also states that it is not necessary to provide information to anyone if such information might affect the economic condition, business and monetary issue of the nation, and the protection of intellectual property rights and business. It also restricts dissemination of information if that information affects relations between several castes and tribes. *Compiled from reports*

Congress Moves Closer To Unification

Following the meeting between Prime Minister and president of Nepali Congress (NC) Girija Prasad Koirala and president of NC (Democratic) Sher Bahadur Deuba at Baluwatar on Wednesday (July 18) evening, the two parties have moved closer towards unification. "Girijababu and I are positive towards uniting Congress soon," Deuba told reporters after he had over one hour meeting with Koirala. Deuba informed that taskforce prepared by the two parties will carry forward the dialogue from Thursday. He, however, refused to give a date for the unification. When asked if the two parties were preparing to announce their unification on July 22 – the anniversary of legendary Congress leader BP Koirala -, Deuba said he cannot confirm whether the unification will actually take place on that date. *Compiled from reports*

Talks With MJF On July 25

The second round of talks between the government and the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) could take place on July 25. A leader of Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP-Anandidevi) informed that the talks will be held on July 25. "The government will hold talks with MJF on July 25," said Anil Kumar Jha, leader of Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP-Anandidevi) after he emerged out of the meeting of eight party coordination committee held at the premises of Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction. The government has already held one round of talks with MJF in Janakpur. Meanwhile, the high level committee has decided to forge stronger coordination among the eight parties and

make the report of Rayamajhi commission public. "In many instances, the government is functioning as if it is a one-party government. So we decided to form eight party mechanism for stronger coordination. Likewise, we also decided to make public the report of Rayamajhi commission soon," said Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, a senior Maoist leader. *Compiled from reports*

MJF Registered As Political Party

The Election Commission (EC) registered 17 more political parties on Wednesday (July 18) and allocated them election symbols. Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF), which spearheaded the Madhes agitation in January/February this year has also been registered as a political party. It has been allocated the election symbol of "Flame held by hand." Likewise, Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP-Nepal) led by Rabindra Nath Sharma, too, has been registered. It has obtained "Cow" as the election symbol. Other parties registered include Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist (election symbol - Trident), Sa-Shakti Party (election symbol - Taraju), Nepal Rastriya Loktantrik Party (election symbol - Topi), Nepal Jagriti Dal (election symbol - Baby sitting on mother's lap), Prajatantrik Shanti Party (election symbol - Rice Panicle), Rastriya Janata Dal Nepal (election symbol - Lantern), Nepal Prajatantrik Yuba Party (election symbol - Cross Khukuri), Shanti Party Nepal (election symbol - Satkon), Hindu Prajatantrik Party (election symbol - Woman), Rastriya Jana Prajatantrik Party (election symbol - Rhinoceros), Nepal Janabhawana Party (election symbol - Panas) and Prajatantrik Janamukti Party (election symbol - Comb). Similarly, Loktantrik Janata Party, Nepal (election symbol - Airplane), Nepali Janatantra Party (election symbol - Axe) and Prajatantrik Shakti party (election symbol - Clock) were also registered with the EC. *Compiled from reports*

Great Disaster If CA Not Held In November: PM

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala has said that there will be a 'great disaster' if Constituent Assembly election is not held on November 22. Talking with a delegation of elected leadership of Nepal Students Union (NSU) on Tuesday (July

17). PM Koirala said he wants help from all to hold the elections successfully. PM Koirala said he was fully committed and singularly focused on the elections. PM Koirala urged the NSU to work to create conducive atmosphere for the elections.

Compiled from reports

Maoist And PF Ministers Complaint Against Cabinet Procedure

Ministers belonging to the Maoists and People's Front (PF) have raised their complaints against the cabinet procedure. Claiming that the cabinet was making decisions by overruling their dissenting opinions six ministers have made the complaint demanding immediate correction in the manner of cabinet functioning. In their complaints, the ministers have said that although eight parties should be jointly conducting the government based on mutual consent, the cabinet was functioning as if it belonged to one-party government. They also demanded proper system of registering their notes of dissent over cabinet decision. The ministers who have made this complaint include Minister for Information and Communication and government spokesperson Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Minister for Local Development Dev Gurung, Minister for Forest and Soil Conservation Matrika Yadav, Minister for Works and Physical Planning Hisila Yami, Minister for Women, Children and Social Welfare Khadga Bahadur Biswakarma and Minister for Health and Population Giriraj Mani Pokharel. *Compiled from reports*

Jwala Singh Asks 'Pahade Employees' To Leave Terai In One Week

Accusing them of strengthening the regime, Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM-Jwala Singh) has asked 'Pahade' (people of hilly origin) government employees and administrators to leave Madhes region within a week. The Singh faction has threatened to take action against those who refuse to comply with their diktat. The warning has come as a response to Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula's appeal to Terai agitators to come for dialogue within 15 days or face security action. *Leading dailies report*

VDC Secretaries Seek Transfer

Senior officials of Ministry of Local Development have informed the parliamentary committee on CA Election Monitoring that a large number of VDC secretaries were seeking transfer from Terai region due to insecurity. They also said that some secretaries were still working from district headquarters instead of venturing to the remote regions. Ram Kumar Shrestha, acting Secretary at the Ministry of Local Development, said that secretaries of VDCs in Terai districts have started applying for transfer elsewhere. They informed that 366 VDCs were without secretaries. At the parliamentary committee, Minister for Local Development Dev Gurung said that vacant positions will be filled by recruiting temporary secretaries on contract basis. He said people of Madhesi origin will be given priority to fill the positions in Terai VDCs. Lawmakers, however, were not assured by Gurung's statement. MP Mahesh Acharya said that presence or absence of particular community is not an answer to the problem. "You may send secretary of Madhesi origin. But who will you send as media representative or observers?" he asked. The MPs also said that recruiting temporary VDC secretaries could complicate the problem further. They said restoration of previously elected local representatives could mobilize 200,000 local leaders. *Kantipur daily reports*

Sitaula Leaves For India

Home Minister Krishna Sitaula who had gone to visit Terai districts has left for India on Monday. Reports say he will try to hold talks with leaders of two Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM) factions. Sitaula informed that he left for 'pilgrimage' to Jharkhand along with family. But sources say he was actually trying to meet with JTMM leaders Jai Krishna Goit and Jwala Singh. Security sources say he will return after two/three days. Sources said that Nepali Congress MP Amaresh Singh is in New Delhi trying to arrange meeting between Sitaula and Goit and Jwala Singh. Amaresh Singh had met with the two in India a few months ago. Meanwhile, Minister for Peace and Reconstruction Ram Chandra Poudel who is in Janakpur said, on

Monday, that formal initiatives to negotiate with JTMM has started. "We tried to contact with both JTMM leaders here but could not do so as they are in India," Poudel said. *Kantipur daily reports*

EC Changes Maoist Election Symbol

Following protests by other communist parties, the Election Commission (EC) has changed the election symbol of the Maoists. The new election symbol of the Maoists will be 'hammer and sickle within a circle.' Other communist parties including UML had protested the symbol of 'hammer and sickle' saying that it is the common emblem of all communist parties, which cannot be given as election symbol of a particular party. Earlier, angered by the EC decision to award 'hammer and sickle' as election symbol to the Maoists, the UML had registered an application seeking its cancellation. *Leading dailies report*

Nepal, South Korea Sign Labour Pact

Nepal and South Korea signed a memorandum of understanding for Employment Permit System (EPS) in Seoul on Monday, opening up the prospects of more job opportunities for Nepalis in Korea. Nepali Labor Minister Ramesh Lekhak and Korean Minister Lee Sang-Soo signed the MoU amid a ceremony, a statement issued by the Nepalese embassy in Seoul said. According to the new provision, the Nepal government would make all necessary arrangements such as providing training on Korean language and proper selection procedure before sending workers to Korea. The expenditure that Nepali workers need to make prior to flying to Korea for job would be determined on consensus, the agreement reads. Speaking on the occasion, Korean minister Soo said the agreement would help strengthen the bilateral relation between the two countries. Minister Lekhak also expressed Nepal government's commitments to effectively implement the understanding. As per this agreement, Nepal will send around 5,000 Nepali workers to Korea every year. Similar agreement was signed recently with United Arab Emirates. *Nepalnews.com reports* ■



PM Koirala visits NA headquarters

Gorkhapatra

CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF OF NEPALI ARMY General Rookmangud Katawal has left for the United Kingdom at the invitation of British Ministry of Defense. This is the first time NA chief has visited foreign country after last year's political change. Meanwhile, the British Embassy in Kathmandu has said that the visit by the NA chief was aimed at assisting the NA in "making it more accountable to the democratic/civilian authorities". "The visit aims to assist the General with the information and discussions that he needs to develop the Nepal Army for its post conflict role in society and in making it more accountable to the democratic/civilian authorities," the statement says.

NEPALAND INDIA HAVE AGREED on a range of measures to upgrade security and other facilities in check posts in four major entry points. Meeting of the Joint Planning Direction Committee, which comprises senior officials of Nepal and India, held at the Ministry of Physical Planning and Works on Saturday (July 21) arrived at the decision to develop the entry points in Birgunj, Bhairahawa, Nepalgunj and Biratnagar. Acting secretary at the Ministry of Works and Physical Planning, Purna Kadariya, who led the Nepali team in the talks, said 'integrated checkpoints' would be established outside the Dus Gaja on both sides of the border. The infrastructure in the proposed checkpoints will be of international standard with all facilities including sprawling parking lot and security arrangement. As per the agreement, construction of new checkpoints in Birgunj and Raxual (India), which is the main entry point between the two countries, will start within one year. Three other border points will also be developed gradually, Kadariya said. A sub-committee has been constituted to decide technical matters related to the plan. The Indian team led by U.N Panjiyar, a senior official at India's Union Home Ministry, had arrived in Kathmandu on Friday for talks.

SPEAKING AT THE CLOSING CEREMONY of five-day workshop on Democratic Transition and Civil Military Relations, on Friday (July 20), Minister for Peace and Reconstruction Ram Chandra Poudel has said that security sector reforms involved not only the right sizing of the security bodies but also internalization of basic tenets of human rights. The government wants its security wings to be "more democratic, inclusive and responsive to changed local and global contexts," said Poudel. "Our greatest challenge in the security sector reforms is to streamline the Nepali Army and integration of verified Maoist combatants," he said. Poudel received the document on "National Security Strategy Development" prepared by the workshop by incorporating inputs from the government officials, political leaders, security officials, civil society as well as business sector. He said the government will go through the document and implement its

suggestions where possible. Addressing the ceremony, Robert Hugins, Charge d'Affaires of the US Embassy, stressed the importance of security to hold free and fair Constituent Assembly elections. "The recommendations should prove as invaluable references to policy makers," he hoped. At the program, Nepali Congress leader and former foreign minister Chakra Bastola and Additional Inspector General of Police (AIG), Armed Police Force (APF), Sanat Kumar Basnet presented the highlights of the document.

GURKHA PENSIONERS WILL BENEFIT from an average increase of 19% to their service pension under new measures announced on Thursday (July 19), by Under Secretary of State for Defense Derek Twigg. The Ministry website says that the significant increase to the Gurkha Pension Scheme (GPS) is in line with changes to Indian Army pensions set by the Indian Pay Commission, and follows on from an increase of 7% announced earlier this year as part of the annual inflationary uplift. All Gurkha pensioners of the rank Warrant Officer Class 1 and below will benefit from the increase – representing 95% of all Gurkha pensioners. Twigg also announced that the British Government will be conducting a review into how Gurkha Pensions are increased annually. The review will look at how best to measure the cost of living in Nepal, where an estimated 25,000 Gurkha pensioners live. Twigg said, "I am delighted to be able to announce this substantial increase in pensions to retired Gurkhas in the Gurkha Pension Scheme. This increase will sustain Gurkha Pension Scheme payments at an appropriate level and demonstrates our continuing commitment to the retired Gurkha population in Nepal. The bravery and heroism of the Brigade of Gurkhas is world renowned and they are fully deserving of this reputation. Their continued significant contribution to operations around the globe has been and will continue to be greatly appreciated." The website report states that the 1947 Tripartite Agreement between Nepal, India and the UK established the linkage for pensions between British Army Gurkhas and those recruited to serve in the Indian Army. A Gurkha Rifleman with 15 years service currently receives approximately £110 per month. This will rise to approximately £131 per month. The increased benefits to the Gurkha Pension Scheme have been included in the Gurkha Offer To Transfer to the Armed Forces Pension Scheme which was announced on 8 March 2007.

SUPREME COURT (SC) has ordered the Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) to make public the financial situation of Nepal Bank Limited (NBL). The bench comprising judges duo Balram KC and Gauri Dhakal issued the order in response to a writ petition filed by businessman Rajendra Kumar Khetan last year. Khetan had pleaded that shareholders should be informed about the annual general meeting proceedings and other activities of the bank. In his petition, Khetan has contested that as a shareholder he has the right to know about the financial situation of NBL.

The Honorary Consuls & Honorary Consul Generals Corp (HCC) has elected Mr Gajendra Br. Shrestha as Its Dean & Mr Rajendra Khetan as its Vice Dean for next one year. Inaugurated by Minister for foreign affairs Sahana Pradhan inaugurated, the first Assembly of HCC has decided to be affiliated with Int'l Congress of HCC. The Assembly has also decided to recognize 23rd July as its Annual Day. Minister Pradhan & HCC exchanged views on issues of mutual cooperation and support to each other. HCC of Sweden, Spain, Portugal, South Africa, New land, Mexico, Luxemburg, Iceland, Italy, Hungary, Brazil, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, Greece, Ukrain etc were present and spoke on many aspects of Bilateral Cooperation. ■

“There will be a great disaster if Constituent Assembly election is not held in November.”

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, in an interaction with the leaders of Nepal Students Union.

“We are suspicious because they have sent soldiers of ranger force trained by Americans and they come from Bhairabnath battalion, which is engaged in rights abuses.”

Dev Gurung, Minister for Local Development, on why Maoist ministers refused the sudden change of Nepali Army guards in their official quarters.

“They are not from Bhairabnath battalion. They are from Sinhanath Battalion of Shivapuri and are trained to provide VIP security. The change in guards is a routine procedure.”

Brigadier General Ramindra Chhetri, spokesperson of the Nepali Army.

“We have found that the situation in Madhes is, indeed, quite complicated. But we will find a way to resolve them.”

Ram Chandra Poudel, Minister for Peace and Reconstruction, after his initial assessment during the tour to Madhes districts.

“You may send secretary of Madhesi

Ouch! There is a mosquito. Increase security.



origin. But who will you send as media representative or observers?”

Mahesh Acharya, NC lawmaker, questioning the plan by Local Development Minister Dev Gurung to send VDC secretaries of Madhesi origin in Terai districts to avoid attacks on government employees.

“Maoists are losing faith in UNMIN.”

Sher Bahadur Deuba, former prime minister and president of Nepali Congress (Democratic), in response to stalled verification of Maoist

combatants, in Nepal Samacharpatra.

“The Election Commission cannot give communist parties’ common emblem, which is present in their flags as well, as election symbol of a particular party.”

Amrit Bohara, standing committee member of Unified Marxist Leninist (UML), criticizing the EC for giving ‘hammer and sickle’ as election symbol to the Maoists.

TRANSITION

LEFT: Ramesh Lekhak, Minister of State for Labor and Transport Management, for Seoul, South Korea, to ink labor pact between the two countries.

Ian Martin, UNMIN chief, for New York, to take part in the UN Security Council meeting to assess the progress of peace process in Nepal.

Krishna Sitaula, Home Minister, for India.

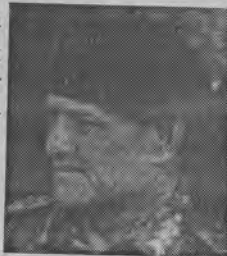
General Rookmangud Katawal, Chief of Army Staff of Nepali Army, for the United

Kingdom, for a weeklong visit, at the invitation of British Ministry of Defense.

ELECTED: Kalyan Kumar

Gurung as the president of Nepal Students Union (NSU) affiliated with the Nepali Congress (NC-Democratic), by its ninth general convention. Pratima Gautam has been elected as its general secretary.

Mahendra Yadav, as the president of



Nepal Tarun Dal, youth wing of Nepali Congress (Democratic), by its third national convention.

PASSED: Right To Information Act, by the legislature parliament, unanimously.

REGISTERED: Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF), as a political party by the Election Commission (EC).

GIVEN: “Flame held by hand” as the election symbol to the MJF; “Mango” to the Green Nepal Party; and “Cow” to Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP-Nepal), by the Election Commission.

NEPAL BAR, INTERIM CONSTITUTION AND WEST SETI PROJECT CONTROVERSY

- By Dr. AB Thapa

Nepal Bar Association and its representatives had taken active part in drafting the Interim Constitution of our country. Now people involved in water resources sector are surprised at the way the Article 156 of the INTERIM CONSTITUTION is being interpreted by the Government. The West Seti project is going to provide an enormously large benefit to India, whereas the structures built in India to draw regulated flow of the West Seti would uproot thousands of Nepalese people due to widespread submersion. The West Seti project is going to be implemented without the approval of the Parliament despite the fact that in the opinion of many it is de jure as well as de facto multipurpose project spread over India and Nepal. The Government decision appears to be in violation of the Article 156. At present the people of the Eastern Nepal are already panicked by the way Government is trying to interpret the Article 156. In a very recently held meeting of the Community Forest Sangh, representatives of the local people vehemently opposed the Kosi and Sun-Kosi projects despite the fact that those projects are now only in early stage of study. They have started to fear that the Government will decide to implement on completion of study the Kosi project also much the same way alike to the West Seti case turning a blind eye to the plight of the people who would be uprooted from their ancestral homes. Now many people involved in water resources sector would certainly be eager to know the opinion of the Nepal Bar Association, its highly respected present and erstwhile Presidents, eminent law experts about the true meaning of the Article 156 of the Interim Constitution.

West Seti Project and Laxmanpur Barrage

The Laxmanpur barrage, few other barrages including the Girjapur barrage across the Karnali river, and the Saryu Canal are the direct extension of the West Seti High Dam Project proposed to be built in Nepal. The year-round operation of the Saryu Canal earmarked to irrigate a vast area of agricultural lands of the north-east UP would be totally dependant on regulated flow drawn from the West Seti. High Dam Project via Girjapur barrage.

The Saryu Canal has been built too close to our country's border with India. As a result, people of our Western Terai particularly those living in the Banke district have already started to suffer from submergence. Now, instead of reliving the suffering of the people of the Western Terai by holding dialogue with Indian Government at the highest level to make necessary modifications of the Saryu Canal to avert submergence of Nepalese territory, we are going to greatly worsen the plight of our people by supplying all year round the West Seti regulated flow into the Saryu Canal that would cause widespread submergence and uprooting of people in Banke district in far greater number.

Are Not We Morally Wrong to Ignore Terai People's Grievance?

It can hardly be denied that it is morally wrong to implement the West Seti project without a thorough technical and environmental impact studies if it involves widespread submergence of the Banke and other districts of Nepal. Such submergence would unjustly cause uprooting of a vast number of Terai people from their ancestral lands. How can we remain indifferent to plight of our Terai people who are going to be badly affected by the West Seti Project?

Violation of Benefit Sharing Proviso

The West Seti Project is going to provide large downstream irrigation benefits to India. Nepal could hope to get a fair percentage of such downstream benefits accruing to India. Recently, as published in Indian news media, India has already expressed its eagerness to share with its neighbours downstream benefits. Do we have a right to dispossess our country a fair share of the downstream benefits?

Interim Constitution appears to be very clear about the procedures to be followed if any major water resources project is going to provide benefit to Nepal and India both. Government is required to enter into an agreement with the neighbouring country before we decide to implement the project, like the West Seti project. Such agreement must be produced before the Parliament. The agreement

or the Treaty must be approved, instead of a simple majority, by a 2/3 members of the House. We would certainly be betraying the interest of our country if it is decided to refrain from entering into a Treaty with India that would have helped to protect our right to entitlement to downstream benefits from the West Seti Project. The outright violation of such a sensitive Article of the Constitution, in the opinion of a layman, can even imply to constitute a felony.

Let us take the case of the Columbia River Treaty signed between Canada and the USA. Both the countries had entered into an agreement despite the fact that the concerned projects located in Canada and the USA were not directly implemented by either of the governments. Canada was able to recover from the USA 50% of the net downstream benefits on the basis of the Columbia River Treaty.

Widespread and Long Lasting Adverse Impact

Interim Constitution requires that any water resources project that involves a neighbouring country must be approved by a 2/3 majority of the House if such project would result to widespread and long lasting adverse impact. People of Nepal and particularly those living in the Western Terai would be forced to bear the disastrous consequences if the West Seti Dam Project is implemented without resolving the worsening flood problems in the Western Terai associated with the Saryu Canal (that includes Laxmanpur Barrage also) which is in realty a component of the West Seti Dam Project.

The total length of the Saryu Canal running almost parallel to Indo-Nepal border is about 230 km. In the original design the barrage across the Saryu River was at a location about 328 meters to the south of the railway bridge at Nanpara. Later, the design was modified and the location of the barrage was shifted 10 km to the north from the original site.

Cause of Western Terai Submergence

The Saryu Canal crosses three main rivers- Saryu (Babai), West Rapti and Rohini (Banganga). Normally siphons (a kind of tunnel) are provided underneath the riverbed to deliver canal water across the river. An altogether a different type of structure has been devised for reducing the average slope of the Saryu Canal that would allow the canal alignment to be pushed as far as possible north close to Indo-Nepal border. Barrages have been built across the rivers to elevate the river water to a level that would allow free

passage of Saryu canal water to the canal taking off from the other side of the river The contentious Laxmanpur Barrage is one of such structures devised to deliver the water from the Girjapur Barrage across the West Rapti.

It would be necessary to maintain all the time pond water upstream of the barrage above certain fixed level to keep the Saryu Canal running at desired capacity. Thus the pond would always be full, with the result that a sizeable area of lands in Nepalese territory could remain perpetually submerged. When the river is in flood, the water would be spreading out onto the lands that were never before regarded prone to flooding.

Terai People Will Feel Betrayed

We all citizens of our country including the legal professionals dedicating their life in the cause to provide justice must realize that the Terai people living in the Western Terai would certainly feel themselves betrayed if the West Seti Project is implemented without a full guarantee based on thorough engineering and environmental impact studies that they would not be unjustly uprooted from their ancestral homes and lands.

(Dr. Thapa writes on water resources)

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TERAI TROUBLE

Complicated Picture

Amid the mushrooming growth of armed factions in Terai, the government is making last ditch effort to resolve the trouble ahead of elections

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

As the realization that resolving Terai problem is going to be the key to holding timely elections has dawned on the political actors and the government, the latter is making last ditch efforts to restore normalcy in troubled southern plains.

On Monday (July 23), Home Minister Krishna Sitaula made a sudden dash towards India cutting short his trip to Terai districts. Although he portrayed his rush across the border as a 'pilgrimage' to meet his spiritual Guru in Jharkhand, reports coming in from Terai claim that he is attempting to meet with key leaders of both factions of Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM).

Lending credence to the reports, Minister for Peace and Reconstruction Ram Chandra Poudel who is in Janakpur said, on Monday, that formal initiatives to negotiate with JTMM has started. "We tried to contact with both JTMM leaders here but could not do so as they are in India," Poudel said.

In recent days, key ministers of the Koirala government have camped in Terai districts. Immediately after the high level inter-party coordination committee directed the government to resolve the Terai problem through talks, senior ministers have rushed to different districts of Terai.

Ram Chandra Poudel, Education Minister Pradeep Nepal and Home Minister Krishna Sitaula visited different Terai districts sounding out conciliatory tones to the agitating Madhesi parties in an apparent effort to control the damage

caused by Sitaula's recent remarks where he vowed strong security actions if the Terai agitators did not come for talks within mid-August.

Even as the ministers have been holding interactions with the various stakeholders, party leaders, civil society and media representatives in Terai, the initial response from the JTMM and Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) have been cold. The MJF boycotted the interactions called by Poudel and waved black flags at Sitaula.

The ministers are moving around in Terai district headquarters amid a watertight security arrangement. Minister Poudel is said to be escorted by half a dozen vehicles of Armed Police Force (APF).

The ministers have not been able to venture out to the villages in Terai due to security reasons. The APF chief Basudev Oli is also in Terai taking stock of security situation. The APF has been assigned the task of providing security to the CA election.

The sudden urgency with which the government is dealing the Terai issue could be linked with the race against time to hold CA elections in free, fair and fearless atmosphere in November. Many analysts have already pointed out that in case the government is not able to sort out the problem in Terai within a month or so, holding of CA elections in a peaceful atmosphere could not be realized even in November. The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Bhoj Raj Pokharel has also repeatedly appealed to the government to create favorable security situation.



Sitaula: Meaningful rush

The seriousness towards the security situation in Terai increased among the political parties due to continued killing. Last week, cadres of Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (Jwala Singh) butchered Ramhari Pokharel, secretary of Govindapur VDC of Siraha district. His murder has triggered an agitation by VDC secretaries across the country who have stopped their works demanding security. The JTMM faction has also asked all government employees of Pahade (hilly) origin to leave Terai within a week or face physical action.

In the aftermath of intensification of violence in Terai, Minister Poudel has distanced the government from the recent remarks made by Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula where the latter claimed of using force to check Terai violence if the groups there did not come for talks within two weeks. "The government does not believe that administrative measures will resolve problems in Terai. We are firmly committed to resolving the problem through dialogue," Poudel said.

Furthermore, the government talks team headed by Poudel is also scheduled to hold second round of talks with the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) on July 25 in Kathmandu. This talk along with parleys with JTMM factions could determine how things will proceed in the coming weeks. ■

PLA VERIFICATION

Delayed Resumption

The Maoists agree to let the second stage of verification proceed but not before compelling UNMIN to re-verify some cases in Ilam

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

The meeting of the Joint Monitoring and Coordination Committee, including representatives of the UNMIN, Maoist army and Nepali Army (NA), on Monday (July 23), agreed to resume the second stage verification of Maoist combatants from Sindhuli camp from mid-August.

The resumption was agreed to take place only from mid-August because of the important plenary meeting of Maoists scheduled before that.

The Maoists have agreed to let the verification proceed after the UNMIN agreed to re-verify the Maoist combatants who had failed the recent verification in Chulachuli cantonment site, Ilam district. Deputy commander of the Maoist People's Liberation Army (PLA) Nanda Kishor Pun 'Pasang' told reporters after the JMCC meeting that the UNMIN was ready to re-verify the disqualified combatants.

Earlier, the meeting between the Maoist leadership and UNMIN officials, on Friday (July 20), had decided to hold more discussions regarding the immediate resumption of the verification.

The meeting between Maoist leaders including Prachanda and his deputy commanders and UNMIN officials led by its chief Ian Martin, on Friday, had focused on resolving the issue of stalled verification.

Following the meeting, Martin told reporters that more discussions were necessary before the second stage verification can resume. Martin left for New York on Friday evening. He will brief the UN Security Council on the progress of peace process in Nepal.

"It was agreed to prepare to resume the second stage of registration and verification of Maoist army personnel as soon as possible. Military representatives will now meet to exchange views on lessons learned from the verification at the first cantonment site in Ilam and to consider the basis for a possible review of disputed cases," said the statement issued by UNMIN after the meeting on Friday.

In the statement, the UNMIN had said that re-verification on limited cases could be done based on certain criteria only. "UNMIN has made it clear that any review of a limited number of cases could be based solely on the two criteria set in the Agreement on Monitoring the Management of Arms and Armies (AMMAA). UNMIN also expects that the discharge of those found to be ineligible will proceed as soon as appropriate arrangements are decided. UNMIN hopes that the Special Committee established by the Interim Government will discuss the issue of discharge with urgency," it stated.



PLA camp: Verification Process

Amid the stalled second stage verification of the Maoist combatants, Indian ambassador to Nepal Shiv Shankar Mukherjee and British ambassador Dr Andrew Hall had held separate meetings with Maoist chairman Prachanda on Friday and advised him to abide by the peace agreement. The discussions focused mainly on the constituent assembly election, current security situation and the stalled verification of the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

The second stage of verification had stalled after the completion of verification process in the Chulachuli cantonment in Ilam. It was reported that about 900 combatants at the Chulachuli camp were rejected because 400 plus did not meet the UN criteria while over 400 had deserted the camp and did not show up during the verification. The UNMIN has not yet revealed the actual number of those rejected from the camp.

ROW OVER CHANGE OF GUARDS

Maoist ministers have threatened to walk out of the government over the row regarding the change of Nepali Army (NA) guards in their ministerial quarters. Suspecting conspiracy over the sudden change of guards in their official quarters, Maoist ministers have rejected the Nepali Army (NA) guards.

Stating that they were not given prior information before the change of the guards, the Maoist ministers said that since the guards belonged to Bhairabnath battalion notorious for rights abuses and since they are American-trained ranger force they could not accept them.

There are five Maoist ministers in the current cabinet including Krishna Bahadur Mahara (Minister for Information and Communication/government spokesperson), Dev Gurung (Minister for Local Development), Hisila Yami (Minister for Works and Physical Planning), Matrika Yadav (Minister for Forest and Soil Conservation) and Khadga Bahadur Biswakarma (Minister for Women, Children and Social Welfare).

Addressing a press meet on Monday, the Maoist minister and government spokesperson Krishna Bahadur Mahara said his party was seriously discussing if they should walk out of the government. He accused PM Koirala of 'conspiring' against them. The Maoist ministers accused that the army is still not under the government control.

However, NA spokesperson Brigadier General Ramindra Chhetri termed it as a 'routine' change of guards. "They are not from Bhairabnath battalion. They are from Sinhanath Battalion of Shivapuri and are trained to provide VIP security," said Chhetri, adding that guards for all the ministers, not only the Maoist ministers, were to be changed for the sake of uniformity. "But, due to misunderstanding we have now decided to recall them for the time being," he said, adding that the guards will now be sent only after thorough discussion. ■

CA ELECTIONS

A

Hobson's Choice

In a recently concluded mock election for Constituent Assembly, overwhelming majority of the voters participated showing their strong commitment and determination in poll process but all of these are not alone enough to decide the fate of the elections. Other major determinant factors - which have decisive power - count much. At a time when other determinant factors, internal and external, are reaping all benefits in the existing interim arrangement, they seem to be in a dilemma whether to go for the unpredictable outcome of elections or to continue with the existing arrangement. Except the silent majority, all other forces have nothing to lose in continuing with the present interim order

By **KESHAB POUDEL**
reporting from Pharping

For Sanumaiya Shrestha, 70, who came early in the morning to the polling booth in Dakshinkali Village Development Committee, 10 miles south of capital Kathmandu, Saturday (July 21) was a historic day when she cast her vote in a mock election for Constituent Assembly.

"It does not make any difference to me whether this is a mock or real election but I cast my vote in the ballot box. I don't know whether I will be still alive or not for the next polls," said Sanumaiya who has experience of taking part in several elections in the past.

Although it was a mock election, like Sanumaiya overwhelming number of people of four wards of Dakshinkali VDC responded positively. Out of 1501 voters of 1, 2, 3 and 4 wards of the VDC, 588 votes were cast in just two hours of polling time.

From UN observer team to Election Commission Officials and local leaders of political parties, all are satisfied with the voting pattern. "Despite short preparation, the voters' turn out is exciting," said Nilkantha Upreti, a Commissioner at the Election Commission (EC).

The mock election indicated that silent majority are committed and determined to hold the elections. However, the ground reality is that they are not the only determinant factor. Given the appropriate situation, they will definitely exercise their sovereign rights as in the past several elections of Panchayat and multi-party elections of local and national level.

Who Needs Elections?

There is a commitment for elections for Constituent Assembly from all sides. "Even though CA may not be able to reflect the real opinion of the people, the

elections definitely have the sanctity. But in present situation, there are some forces which may like to have it held sooner and others may not like to have it held at all because of benefits being reaped during this interim period," said a political analyst.

This dilemma is natural. Elections are, in a way, a gambling with the opinion of an innumerable number of people who cast votes. It is always unpredictable in its results and consequences. Several such instances have been there in the past in Nepal as well as other countries even including the developed democracies.

The forces - which have been acquiring all the benefits in the present interim period - may naturally be inclined to get the elections postponed and reap the benefit as much as possible. This applies to all internal and external forces as well.

"Though it is a poor country, Nepal is abundantly rich in its natural resources. Since a long time there have been attempts to get benefits from these resources as much as possible, if not monopolize it altogether. Similarly, there are some parties and politicians who had not obtained seats in the elections for previous parliament and who have now become equal partners in the eight parties alliance," said the analyst.

According to the analyst, even dominant parties have such leaders in power at present who may hardly be able to get a party ticket to contest the elections having no chances to get elected by the people. "All such internal and external forces may have different interest than that of common people and their genuinely expected leaders," said the analyst.

The other determinant in politics is the mobilization of cadres of leadership and mass of workers behind their supreme leaders. As none of the political parties have a solid grass root organizations and committed mass, they all have to gamble with their fate in



Election Commission: In the limelight

floating political trends. This makes them feel very vulnerable.

Reasons for Disruption

The main factors that do not want to gamble in the elections have already started to play the game to disrupt the polls. For the persons and parties in power and other external factor benefited by the present interim arrangement, disruption of law and order situation by armed group is a good excuse to prolong present interim period.

As the armed groups continue to create anarchical situation in terai, it is inevitable to have impact on the elections process. With a demand for proper security, secretaries of Village Development Committees, who are the main employees working in the grassroots level, have already declared a nation wide strike calling to shut down all 3912 Village Development Committees.

After the killing of one of their colleagues recently by armed rebel Jantantrik Terai Mukti Morcha - Jwala Singh (JTMM-J), all the village secretaries in terai have shut down their offices.

If village secretaries continue to defy

the government order, it will hamper the elections related works including publication of voter lists. "There is no question to return to work as long as the government does not guarantee our security," said Bhawani Prasad Ghimire, secretary of Village Development Committees Secretary Welfare Committee. "We are not sacrificial lambs."

Moreover, following the threat of JTMM (J) to attack officials of hill origin posted in terai, there is more panic and uncertainty in the region. "If we cannot settle the ongoing violence in terai by August 17, it will be impossible to hold the elections for Constituent Assembly in November," declared home minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula in Saptari.

The scenario in Terai is very much pessimistic. Even overwhelming majority of Nepali Congress parliamentary members expressed concerns over the deteriorating law and order situation of the country in their meeting on 19 July.

Among others, the UN Electoral Expert Monitoring Team (EEMT), responsible for assessing the preparations for the upcoming Constituent Assembly

elections slated for November 22, said that the deteriorating security situation in the country continues to pose the most serious threat to the electoral process.

In a report submitted to the government and the Election Commission, the EEMT has also recommended that the political leaders reach an agreement on the security issue before the elections

PM's Arrogant Tone

However, against the pessimistic outlooks of the members of Congress parliamentary committee and civil servants serving in terai, a lone voice of confidence came from prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala in a bit of arrogance tone.

"I will hold the elections at any cost," said prime minister in a language of arrogance as a person in power but not in the spirit of collective leadership. Maoist leader Prachanda, however, challenged Koirala's arrogance. "Without understanding between me and Girijababu, one cannot hold the elections," said Prachanda in his recent interview to Rajdhani daily.

"If prime minister Koirala's pious wishes are the sole determinant of the present politics of Nepal, one can believe that the elections will definitely be held but facts do not suggest that. Prime minister Koirala who has full authority of the government - has to live with several political determinants active and alert with heterogeneous interests within and outside his cabinet, his party and country," said the political analyst.

Terai Violence Rises

Although the situation is more or less normal in hills, almost half of Nepal in terai region has been going through a serious law and order problem where more than 15 armed groups have emerged, some with a declaration of independent state adopting similar modus operandi practiced by Maoists in

the past. Previously, they championed federalism as a progressive stand but now they are demanding independent state in Terai.

As populism is an unstable game, demand for federalism has been sidelined by a demand of secession. The present trend of populism showed that it has a tendency to encourage violence and political instability more than any definite solution.

"We are no more interested to talk on federal structure for terai with Pahade government. We want a separate independent state in Madhesh where Madheshi can rule their own country. Our future negotiation with Pahade's government will be held to demarcate the border," said JTMM (J) leader Jwala Singh.

In private, everyone whispers why violence is in full swing and which force is abetting, encouraging the trend but there is no appropriate answer from any political party or leader of credible standing.

Clashes of Interests

Looking at all factors combined together, one cannot be assured that all these forces have same interest and same goals in Nepal. The persons in the present government including prime minister Koirala - who is paying lip service expressing determination to hold the elections - may lose nothing if the election is not held at all for a long time to come.

"However, if election takes place, many of eight party leaders may not be there and prime minister may also not have this privilege of power, which he has been increasingly using since he reached into the present position. For political leaders, it is not election but it is the power which counts much. And therefore, they don't have any serious urge to hold the elections. The second determinant of the present politics are



PM Koirala and Prachanda :
How committed are they?

the leaders of eight political parties who have all the power without any responsibility of the state and to the people," said the analyst.

Because of their parties in power, all political leaders come out with headlines of one or the other kinds of threat to the government and sermons for the people with all unrealistic but attractive promises in every day news paper.

"If the election is held in time, their parties may have a substantial share in the elected house but they themselves may not be anywhere in the limelight. Most of the prominent leaders including prime minister Koirala, Congress vice president Sushil Koirala CPN-UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal, CPN-UML leader Bharat Mohan Adhikari, Jhalnath Khanal, Bamdev Gautam, CPN-Maoist leader Prachanda, Dr. Baburam Bhattarai have their mass base and constituency in troubled areas where all kinds of ethnic, regional groups have emerged with their new darin leaders who defy all the authority of the state," said the analyst

Uncertain Course

At a time when the course is very uncertain, political leaders may not want to take risk contesting elections. Even dominant parties have some leaders in power at present who may hardly be able to get party ticket to the elections. As the future may be no better than what they have at present, they too may not have intense desire to face the election soon.

Of course, the floating political trend has brought miracles many times in the



Poudel: Rush for negotiations

past. Nani Maiya - who was semi literate but got elected by an overwhelming majority from the city of elites during the last days of Panchayat - syndrome is being repeated time and again deciding the fate of a person or party.

After Panchayat, Madan Bhandari, a completely new face in politics, was able to defeat a widely respected politician Krishna Prasad Bhattarai who was an all party consensus prime minister at that time.

"Several such incidents are there to show that opinions at the grass roots are not with an organized command. Communists parties elsewhere in the world come out from the working classes in industries or agriculture but it is the unique phenomenon in Nepal that communists first emerged through propaganda and reached towards peasant later," said the analyst.

There is the most powerful silent majority who are eagerly waiting for elections but they don't have their own initiative to lead the trend and get what they want.

The silent majority needs a congenial atmosphere to chose their representatives to serve the needs of common people. "As long as that substantially determined political power remains handicapped and without leadership of their own, elections in Nepal will be a game of convenience

of the illegitimate stakeholders in the power," said the analyst.

External Factor

The last but the most decisive element in politics of Nepal is an external factor with its geographical proximity and strategic advantage. This factor is still able to manipulate the situation and gets the results as it desires.

"Till now it is the only player in the political field performing through its unseen channels. Election is not its primary need now. Since half a century, it didn't get opportunity what it has at present to deal with several pending issues related to its own national interests. Apart from security matters, it has vital stakes in the natural resources of Nepal and particularly perennial water resources of abundant potentials. What it is achieving at present under the cover of sick prime minister with all his hallows of supreme decision maker of present hotchpotch government, is unequalled," said the political analyst.

Even a senior minister representing the largest party CPN-UML Pradeep Nepal has written, "Girija Prasad Koirala holds the view that other cabinet members of coalition government should also endorse the decisions taken by him without any amendment like that of his party colleagues. (See Samaya Weekly July 5)

Among the external forces, except two dragons bordering with Nepal, others don't have those capabilities to dictate terms in Nepal. "The whole experiments under the active diplomacy of James F. Moriarty - out going US ambassador had proved that even a superpower USA has to follow the interest of one or the other of these two neighbors of Nepal," said the analyst.

Net results under the Moriarty's diplomacy was his failure to stop King Gyanendra from taking over power in February 1, 2005 and failure to block entry of red tag bearer Maoists into power.



CEC Pokharel: Challenges galore

"Maoists were successful in both; destroying the authority of King as well as degrading the democratic party Nepali Congress into minority and dependent force upon it," said the analyst. "The USA needs to seriously review the failure of Moriarty for it own regional strategy and pragmatic treatment to Nepal. In handling Nepal, European countries proved much matured and farsighted."

"In such a situation, a question haunts everybody's mind whether the elections for Constituent Assembly will be held or not in a given time on November 22, 2007. Lord Pashupati doesn't utter and he is helpless look in his statue. Moreover, there are ruling "gods" in power who are no better than a chattering box," said the analyst.

Among others changing alliances among internal and external forces make the situation more complex. "Because of changing alliances from north to south and south to north, the possibility of holding the elections is becoming uncertain," said the analyst.

As the election result is always unpredictable, it is Hobson's choice for all determinant actors whether to hold the elections for CA or not. Growing violence of terai may be a good excuse for all to postpone the election for indefinite period and satisfy the silent majority by holding mock elections like the recent one in Dakshinkali. ■

Importance Of Political Culture In Sustaining Democracy

- By Professor Dr. Thomas Meyer

PROFESSOR DR. THOMAS MEYER, University of Dortmund, Germany, was recently in town addressing a number of discussion programs. Organized by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, the discussion programs were participated by a large number of participants from various strata. Prof. Meyer addressed various issues raised by Nepali scholars. He described Nepal's on going conflict and resolution through theoretical paradigm. Excerpts:

On Social Transformation

You cannot change the society overnight as the social transformation is a very long and tedious process. For instance, the present day German society is not like that of 100 years ago. Five decades ago, German society was different than the present one. Transformation process spanning centuries are taking place in families, value systems and society as a whole. Nepal has also been passing through similar process of transformation but you cannot have the society and system like ours now. It will take time.

Importance of Political Culture

I don't know how political culture has been evolving in Nepal. Changing political system and political culture are two distinct things. You can change the political system as many times as you can but you cannot change the political culture as required by democracy. One can change the political system within two hours but one cannot change the political culture overnight. It is a long evolutionary process. Democratic institutions actually bring forth democracy but to make them stable society needs a strong political culture of democracy. Political culture denotes the entire knowledge actually available in society, instinctive attitudes, moral and ethical values in relation to politics.

On Democratic Process of Government

Every one asks me question what

democracy is all about. Democracy is a process of government. The history of all democracies has shown that good institutions which are accepted, function well and also adjust to the special conditions of a country are the most important factors for success. However, just as important for the success and failures of democracies are soft factors, the political culture, in which the institutions are embedded. This especially involves attitudes and customs, actions and values, and the convictions and expectations by which society and the political elite allow themselves to be guided. Whenever contradictions persistently become established between the spirit of institutions and the customs of the political elite as well as the majority of society, the best democratic institutions neither have a chance to fully develop their potential in the long run, nor to gain the necessary credibility to be recognized as legitimate and sensible for the interest of all respective parties.

On the Important Aspects of Democratic Institutions

The most important conditions for the continuous work and the proper performance of democratic institutions in the area of political culture are trust and the ability to reach a clever compromise. Both of these conditions, trust and the ability to reach a clever compromise, presuppose one another and grow with one another. Whenever these conditions are strong enough, a society can recognize that the interests of all individuals in a democracy should be taken into consideration with fairness – and this is actually the sense of democracy. And if nearly all citizens share this experience, democracy will rest on solid ground, its great intrinsic value can be experienced, and the willingness to make a contribution to its preservation will grow through one's own willingness to make a compromise.

Democracy is not primarily machinery made of institutions. It lives especially from the spirit and custom of its elite and citizens.

On Monopolization of Majority

Whenever the majority principle is misused as a lever to inconsiderately establish the personal interests of the present majority against the rest of society, mistrust grows and the state is regarded only as prey by more and more participants so that they can establish advantages for their own at the cost of all others.

On New Terms of Compromises

Compromises are called the "advanced school of democracy". As the experiences of all democracies show, it rightly deserves this honorary title. In exercising compromise, participants learn how to allow trust and to make the correct use of democratic institutions, which need to demonstrate their usefulness for all of society. The culture of clever compromise has shown itself to be one of the prerequisites for a credible and successful democracy.

On Definition of Compromises

The definition of compromise in the dictionary stress that it is sensible and necessary if none of the participants has enough strength to pursue its own personal goals resolutely and completely. However, in the political context, another function of compromise is decisive. Compromises have the productive function of resolving conflicts whenever the complete establishment of the interests of the stronger party does not bring about a lasting solution. This means that the decision which was made unilaterally is consistently brought into question and is therefore not stable. In such cases, the forced solution is often only maintained by the dominant party at a very high cost, and, in most cases, this is only for a limited period of time until the balance of power changes.

On Conflict and Confrontation

Many questions are raised about the present conflict in Nepal. Conflicts involve many factors, internal and external. With a country of diverse social, ethnic, regional, linguistic, economic and other interests, Nepal needs to develop a way to deal with conflict and confrontation. Conflict, as the confrontation of different interests whether they are of a regional, social, economic, cultural, religious or ethnic nature, is the unavoidable starting point of any free society. Conflict is the commodity and basic of politics. So that conflicts can be settled democratically, there is need for a basic consensus and the willingness to reach a compromise in every democracy.

On the Importance of Consensus Building

There must be a consensus at least on the basic values of the constitution, e.g. basic rights, democratic decision-making processes, and important fundamental objectives for the entire nation as a political state. Conflicts, which in much culture are regarded as rather negative and can actually be avoided as accompanying features of politics, are in reality a direct expression of freedom and consequently a productive element of political understanding. Without a clear expression of the different political interests and goals, political opponents would have no opportunity to enter into the process of forming political opinions and political objectives. Surrounded by two big countries, Nepal needs to evolve the culture of compromise and consensus to deal with all the issues.

Devastative Effects of Conflict

Being a small country like Nepal, conflicts sometime may have devastating effects as there involves many factors. Conflicts without a basic consensus have a destructive effect. Consensus without room for conflict paralyzes and inhibits democracy. It depolarizes the country. The core of democratic political culture is the productive interaction between consensus and conflict. There should be as much consensus as necessary in order to prevent conflicts from jeopardizing the fundamentals of living together and the common recognition of the process of peaceful and fair resolution.

On Incorporating Interests

Compromise as a give-and-take situation while incorporating the interests of the community, and as a fair exchange of advantages and disadvantages, in which none of the participants inconsiderably achieve their own goals with all the forces available against the interest and goals of the others and no one is loser, creates trust through fairness and dependence on the others and the value of mutual consideration. It conveys the idea that one's own goals and interests can hardly be realized entirely, but rather always have to be negotiated together with the interests, values and goals of many others because these also have their justification.

On Embracing Legitimate Interests

Considering as many interests and values as possible is an important goal of democracy.

The ability to embrace as much legitimate interests as possible which are represented in society and to integrate them into the deliberating and decision making process of politics is an imperative principle of a well-understood democracy. For these reasons, collaborative work and the realization of clever compromises develop the attitudes, habits, and skills which democracy needs in order to function and to find recognition for all its citizens. In this sense, the culture of compromise is the advanced school of democracy.

On Social and Political Reality

In social and political reality, there are always differences in perceiving one's own interests pursued values, and the desires and hope which are derived from political ideals if outside pressure does not work artificially against this. Pluralism exists in accepting these differences and structuring politics in a way that is equally productive for individual societal groups and the entire community. Human society is never homogenous in all its parts, nor united without differences on all important issues without the use of force. Social pluralism is therefore an expression of freedom as the manifestation of various interests, values and perspectives.

On Political Pluralism

Political pluralism, which is the organization of various interests and values for the purpose of participating in the political process, is a part of

democracy.

Democracy lives from pluralism. The basic feature which makes democracy possible and necessary at the same time is therefore different



human interests and goals. Pluralism in practice is always group pluralism. Employees, employers, the rural population, merchants, people from the same region, people with the same religious beliefs or a similar cultural and political mentality join together in order to present their common interests all the more effectively in the political process of their country. Political pluralism is always the group pluralism of various clubs, associations and political parties.

On Process of Evolution

History shows that democracy has mixed results. Some democracies survive for centuries and some do not. This again depends on the values and culture of particular society. Those who have incorporated democratic culture survive and those who don't incorporate democratic culture collapse. I don't know much about Nepalese situation but democracy needs certain paraffin for its survival. Just establishing democracy cannot make your country democratic. It is the overall behavior of people and their values which counts much. Nepalese society is also evolving.

On the Process of Federalism

Federalism is a process of power sharing between the units of the state. In the case of Germany, federalism was imposed by allied powers in the World War II to weaken Germany. Allied forces fragmented Germany into several units. It is just an artificial creation of federalism. For a small country, federalism like in Canada, United States and other big countries is no good. One can make Nepal federal state but the center must be given all the powers in economy, social and welfare issues. The center must be single sovereign power and it must be stronger. Otherwise, it will create problems. Even if there are disputes between the center and units, the issue must be settled through compromise. Again this is a whole question of compromise. ■

PRESS FREEDOM

Sinister Attacks

In an eerily familiar tactics, the Maoist-affiliated workers disrupt distribution of yet more newspapers

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

Just a little over one month ago, the Maoist-affiliated delivery boys had stopped the publication of Nepal Samacharpatra and Mahanagar dailies for five days.

Applying similar tactics, they disrupted the distribution of The Himalayan Times and Annapurna Post dailies this week.

On July 21, the two dailies did not reach the market due to disruption. "On 21st July it did not reach the market because all distribution in Kathmandu was hijacked by the Maoist affiliated trade union," stated a statement issued by Ram Pradhan, the editor of THT, on behalf of The International Media Network Nepal.

The Maoist affiliated trade union workers (delivery boys) creating obstruction beat up dispatch staff of Annapurna Post and The Himalayan Times. "We conclude that such act is a blatant attack on the independent press and interference in the people's right to information," the statement added.

The publishing organization has made it clear that the delivery boys are not affiliated with it. "Nine distribution agencies including RB News are involved in the distribution of these dailies and they manage all the things related to the distribution of these dailies. It is no concern of the publishers of Annapurna Post and The Himalayan Times on what kind of individuals are involved in the distribution of the papers and how much salary is paid to them," the statement said.

The delivery boys disrupted the

distribution demanding that they be made permanent staffs of the organization and their salaries be hiked. Their demands, the publisher has said, is "a mockery of the labor laws in this country."

"We believe that the rights of working staffers should be protected. However, the act of piling newspapers in the front door of their offices by taking control of the vehicles carrying the papers in the name of workers is a criminal offence. It is highly regrettable that the government is a silent spectator even at a time when a criminal act is being committed in media houses with impunity. The government has proved to be powerless to protect the right and independence of journalists."

Referring to similar disruptions in Nepal Samacharpatra and in Kantipur and The Kathmandu Post some weeks ago, the statement said that incidents like these show that there is planned offensive against the private media houses. "This should be taken with utmost seriousness and there is the need to raise strong voices for press freedom."

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala told a visiting delegation of publishers of major broadsheet newspapers and TV broadcasters that he will not tolerate attacks against press freedom. Urging the publishers not to give in to unjustified demands, PM assured to take up the issue with Maoist leadership.

The Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ) and Press Council, too, have expressed solidarity with the newspapers saying that they cannot support efforts that infringe upon the people's right to information. ■

NBL MANAGEMENT ROW

As the foreign management team of ICC has, unilaterally, cancelled its contract to oversee the management of Nepal Bank Limited (NBL), the Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) has started consultations regarding new management.

For the interim period, the board of directors of the NBL, on Saturday (July 21), appointed a three-member team to look after the management. The team is headed by Mahesh Dhakal and includes Keshab Raj Lamichhane and Keshab Prasad Pathik.

Earlier, the ICC management team chief J. Craig McAllister wrote a letter to the NRB, Finance Ministry and the chief donor World Bank informing about the decision of cancellation of the contract. Claiming that the NRB did not cooperate with it in resolving the pressures from the employees' union and did not address their conditions, the ICC team had announced the cancellation of contract. They were also dissatisfied with the decision of the NRB to extend their contract by only six months – as against their demand for 18 months extension.

On the other hand, Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat has said that if the ICC management team withdraws, then the government will hand over the management to a Nepali team. "In the present context in the country, we cannot extend the management tenure by more than six months. If the foreign team is not willing to accept this offer, we will have to look for alternatives," Dr. Mahat said. ■

NRB UNVEILS MONETARY POLICY

Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) unveiled the Monetary Policy for fiscal year 2007/08, on Monday, relaxing the limit for long-term and high volume loan investment for commercial banks.

Earlier, the commercial banks could only invest up to 25 percent of their primary capital on such projects. The new policy has relaxed this provision without fixing the actual limit or project duration. The banks had been complaining that they could not invest in long term projects due to earlier provision. The new provision would ease banks' investment in hydropower and infrastructure projects.

The Monetary Policy, as in the past, has stressed on attaining price stability and external stability. It envisages 5.5 percent inflation rate and aims to achieve

Rs 8 billion as Balance of Payment surplus. Likewise, the policy further eases the foreign exchange regime.

Acting governor of the central bank, Krishna Bahadur Manandhar said it focuses on managing the liquidity and stabilizing the overall economy. The policy has projected the gross domestic product (GDP) to grow by 4.5 to five percent in 2007-08. However, NRB has stated that the set growth rate is achievable only if weather favored agricultural production and political stability prevailed in the country.

Like in the past, the bank has taken more steps to liberalize the foreign exchange regime. The policy has added a new mechanism making imports possible using documents against payment in addition to the existing letter

of credit (LoC) or draft/TT facilities.

Now on, traders can import raw materials and intermediate products from India against payment of US dollar. It has also made an arrangement of the exchange facility of \$5,000 per individual directly through bank or financial institution for those going abroad under immigrant visa. Stating that the current rate of two percent service charge on purchase of foreign currency is high, the bank has lowered it to one per cent. The ongoing financial reform programs will continue. NRB plans to establish an Industrial Reconstruction Fund of Rs 2 billion to support sick industries. The central bank is implementing a 'Scripless Securities Settlement System', which will reduce paper work and procedural hassles free transaction of treasury bills, development bonds and debentures. ■

HOUSE ASKS GOVT TO GET FREE POWER

The parliamentary Natural Resource Committee has directed the government to obtain free power (10 percent) from the West Seti hydropower project.

Minister of State for Water Resources Gyanendra Bahadur Karki has said that the government will abide by the instruction by the parliamentary committee to obtain free power from the West Seti project.

Talking to BBC Nepali Service, Thursday (July 19), Karki said he was confident that the Snowy Mountain Engineering Corporation (SMEC), which is developing the 750-MW strong mega hydroproject, will be willing to accept this demand. "I think they will be positive towards this demand," Karki said.

Earlier, the Parliament Natural

Resource Committee had approved the decision of the government to award the 750-MW strong West Seti hydropower project to Snowy Mountain Engineering Corporation (SMEC) opening the door for starting construction of the mega power project, which is designed to export power to India on commercial basis.

However, the parliamentary committee had instructed the government to get 10 percent free power from the West Seti project. As per the understanding, the SMEC had agreed to give either 10 percent free power or equivalent amount of money to the government. The SMEC had said it could build a separate 75 MW project if Nepal wants free power since it finds there will be technical difficulty in providing 10 percent power from the

West Seti project itself due to lack of transmission facilities in the project site, which is located in Doti district.

The parliamentary committee, however, has instructed the government to get the free power from the West Seti project itself instead of equivalent amount of money.

"The committee has asked the government to hold necessary talks with concerned parties to obtain free power from the project instead of equivalent royalty," Ram Sharan Ghimire, Secretary at the committee, told media.

Ghimire added that the committee has also instructed the government not to award both the Upper Karnali (300MW) and Arun III (402 MW) to the same Indian company, GMR. Earlier, the taskforce headed by former finance secretary Bhanu Acharya had identified GMR's proposal as most attractive for both the projects

The construction of West Seti was earlier expected to begin later this year. ■

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Harsh Hand

The parliament passed a new act against human trafficking with severe punishments for traffickers

By NIRAKAR POUDEL

Tulsi Tamang (name altered), a 22-years-old girl from Makwanpur, was traded to a trafficker by her own aunt. The trafficker and her aunt coaxed her to go to India promising a good work there. Her visit to India ended up in a brothel where she was forced to become a prostitute.

However, she was successful in escaping from the brothel after two years of painful life there. On her return to Nepal, she filed a case against her aunt and the trafficker who sold her to the brothel.

As the legal process is complicated, the process is lengthy to get justice. Even after four years elapsed, she was denied justice. Frustrated and despaired by the lengthy and complicated judicial procedure she had no hopes for getting justice until the parliament passed a New Human Trafficking Control Act recently. Like Tulsi many others who are seeking justice in the court have reasons to rejoice as the new act promises to deal with the crime stringently.

In Appellate-level Attorney General Offices, there 73 cases were registered about human trafficking last year. Out of them, only 11 offenders were convicted while 50 cases are still pending. Likewise, during the period, the district Attorney General offices filed 203 cases in the district courts. Among them 60 were convicted and 35 freed while 108 cases are still pending.

Many victims like Tulsi Tamang were denied justice by the ineffective trafficking control act of 1986. The process prescribed in the law was lengthy. According to the act, a guilty could be sentenced to two to four years of imprisonment with a penalty running 20 years in prison. Although the act seemed harsh enough to act as deterrent, it was very inefficient. Ironically, the burden of proof was on victims themselves. This was a big loophole and the culprits capitalized on it.

Victims had to present enough evidences to convict the guilty party. Such a cumbersome task compelled girls to withdraw their statements. The law also gave the offender ample opportunities to destroy all the evidences.

Statistics also show that the judicial procedure is very long. For example, according to annual report of Attorney General 2061/62 (2005/06), out of 117 cases regarding human trafficking, only 29 cases were completed. There were still 88 cases pending in the court. Out of 29 cases, in 16 cases the



Maiti Nepal's border checkpoint in Kakarbhitta: Vigilant eye

defendants were convicted.

When only 25% of the cases are decided in one year, victims become frustrated because the holdup costs them their time and money. The pending cases are aggregated with new cases of another year making the judicial process very lengthy. In most of the cases, the delay may be credited to the time spent in gathering evidence. Therefore, there were many cases in which the victims spent many years waiting for hearing but were denied justice.

After the passing of new act, there are reasons to rejoice for the victims of trafficking now. The act has addressed the most serious loophole of the old act. The burden of proof has shifted from the victim to the culprit. Now, the defendant has to accumulate proofs to prove that he/she is innocent.

"This new bill was passed by the legislative parliament following a series of discussions with all stakeholders and officials. The new act covers the broader area of human trafficking," said Binod Kumar Adhikary, secretary of Human

Rights and Social Justice Committee.

The clause 7 of the new act has given the police the authority to take control of the property of the person who is guilty. According to this act, police can use force in case of the obstruction by the offender, confiscate the property of the offender and even apprehend the guilty party without warrant.

This clause provides extremely less room for the offender to flee or even destroy evidence. The act as a whole is harsher towards the offender. It has certainly provided sufferers edge over criminals. Clause 24 prevents third party from obstructing the investigation process against the offender.

"This new act has addressed the human trafficking in broader terms. The act is also harsher than the previous act. Punishments for criminals are stricter,"

said Adhikary.

For example, 15 years of imprisonment for a person who is proven guilty in human trafficking has been increased to 20 years. There is a provision of prize of 10% of total fine for informers who inform the authority about human trafficking. People are also encouraged to inform about trafficking by concealing the identity of informer and providing them security if needed.

Clause 27 of the act mentions about the trial in closed court room. This clause will encourage more victims to come forward and file cases against lawbreakers. Closed court room means that all the information remain confidential. Therefore, women don't have to fear that their cases will be disclosed to society. This is very encouraging for women.

The act has been hailed as a milestone by many NGOs working against human trafficking. Many people are also optimistic that it will deter women trafficking. But only time will tell if this act will be able to address the problem of human trafficking in Nepal. ■

STREET LIFE: ADVENTURE, ABUSE & ADDICTION

- Karen Choy

Happy days. Countless hours spent sniffing dendrite, smoking cigarettes, drinking "chyang", watching movies, playing cards, marbles, and video games. This is the life of a street child in Kathmandu. No responsibilities and fun with friends.

According to one child, "I don't want to go home because I earn money here. I earn 100 to 150 rupees per day by rag picking. I eat meat and rice and with the rest of the money, I buy dendrite and drink alcohol. I'm the leader of my group."

Comments such as this reinforce the public perception of unruly, uncontrollable, and unreformable children. Many children do not regret their decision to live on the street. One child explains, "I like to stay on the street. Everyone loves me here." For most of us, leaving behind family and friends to live life on the street is an unappealing choice. However, for these children, the home life they are leaving behind is often more abusive than street life. "When my father died, our family situation got very bad. We didn't even have proper food. When I left, my mother was beating me badly, so I took a bus and left home." Stories of abuse and neglect are common among street children. Coming from hostile home environments and the need for personal security on the street, it becomes easy to understand the intense bonding that occurs among street children.

At the same time, strong bonds can become a source of peer pressure and exploitation among street children. Inhalant use, also known as "glue sniffing", is a popular social activity among Kathmandu street children. Those who choose not to inhale dendrite are forced to inhale by their peers through physical coercion. One child explains, "when I start sniffing, it becomes an addiction. What to do? I get sick. Friends force me when I quit. I can't say no to friends." Once addicted to dendrite, the child is subject to exploitation by older street children and shopkeepers. "I am living on the street and I'm the leader of my group of 6 to 7. They are totally under me. I don't beg anymore. They give me their earnings, if they don't I beat them badly."

Another child reports exploitation from the shopkeepers who sell dendrite to addicted street children. "In a group we use 7-8 tubes to sniff. Each tube costs 50 rupees. Sometimes I've paid 100 rupees for a tube when I'm sick. Some shopkeepers are bad and charge high prices." These shopkeepers are consciously profiting from a child's addiction.

A number of child welfare organizations such as Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Center (CWIN), SAATHI, Child Protection Centers and Services (CPCS), Association for the Protection of Children (APC), and Sath Sath have been assisting Kathmandu street children. However, long-term solutions for dendrite addicted street children must consider the impact of strong bonds among street children and the absence of drug rehabilitation programs for children. Both of these factors dictate the effectiveness of long-term interventions for children. One child spoke of his difficulty in remaining at a shelter for an extended period of time due to his strong ties to other street children. "I've been to a lot of organizations but fail to stay there because I miss my friends a lot. Nowadays, I'm having a lot of dendrite and cigarettes. I've become more dirty." Another child highlights dendrite addiction and withdrawal as the primary barrier in participating with long-term reintegration programs. "I can't live without taking dendrite. Feel sick without it. I try to leave it but I can't. That's why I can't stay in any organization for a long period of time"

SAATHI recently completed a research project, "Street Children on Dendrite: Needs, Attitudes, and Desires", which examines the needs and concerns among street children to develop effective long-term drug rehabilitation programs. From the data collected through interviews with street children in Jamal, Thamel, Basantapur, and Mahankal districts, SAATHI has found dendrite use to be an endemic part of street life. Virtually all research participants have engaged in dendrite use or are currently addicted to dendrite. Research participants indicated that dendrite is easily purchased in the Ason,

Jamal, Kalopul, and Kalimati areas of Kathmandu and the Kumaripati area of Lalitpur. Dendrite sniffing typically takes place in a group setting. Groups as large as 30 street children inhale dendrite together. A group of 12 children can inhale up to 8 tubes of dendrite per day. Milk packets and polyurethane bags are generally used to contain the dendrite for easy inhalation.

Recommendations stemming from the SAATHI research project include the immediate need for a drug treatment program for children alongside an activities based outreach program for street children. Dendrite use has been a key method in which street children establish friendships. A peer based outreach program will provide another environment in which street children can build friendships that are not centered upon drug use.

Most of the children interviewed expressed a desire to end their dendrite addiction, however, many did not know how to achieve this. The children participating in the study ranged from 6 years old to 13 years old. One child states, "I want to change myself but I can't and I don't know why." Another says, "I don't want to die soon. Feel like I'm mad. I don't like drugs because one of my friends died because of these drugs."

It is up to concerned citizens, child welfare organizations, and the government to address the problem of dendrite use. Aside from their peers, these children have no guidance or support in overcoming addiction. This is not only a moral obligation but also mandated by Article 24.1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which states that no child should be deprived of the right to access health care services. The Government of Nepal ratified this convention on October 14th, 1990. It is crucial that this commitment is fully implemented with regard to dendrite use because the lives of hundreds of children in Kathmandu are at stake.

(Karen Choy is a Canadian student doing her internship at Sancharika Samuha)

BOOK

Traveling Time

Achyut Prasad Poudel's book highlights his experience of visiting various parts of the country as well as foreign cities

By A CORRESPONDENT

Many people travel to different parts of the country and the world but only a few people have interest and capability to explain the place he/she has visited. A career civil servant who is now posted in General Post Office, Poudel has proved his mastery in writing about his travels.

Divided into two parts, the book has some unique features. In first part, the author describes his two visits to Singapore and the surroundings of the city. Written in Nepali language, this book is very helpful to a person who is going to foreign country for the first time.

Author Poudel has minutely observed various things in Singapore. From development perspective to economic prosperity, he also observes the life in Singapore. One of the

important things he mentions is about the water distribution between Malaysia and Singapore. Singapore as a small island depends upon Malaysia for whole of its water supply. In the past, whenever the small city state Singapore had any

Samjhana ka Chyanharu

Part II

Travel Description

By Achyut Prasad Poudel

Price: Rs.250.00

*(individual) and Rs.
500.00 (institutional)*

Pages: 123

problems with Malaysia, the

Singaporeans had to think how to get water.

A person from country with abundant water resources, Poudel discussed the water sharing situation between the two countries.

In second chapter, Poudel describes his experiences in visiting various parts of the country. As a civil servant, he was posted to various parts of Nepal including the remote parts. It seems that he spent a lot of time in far western Nepal during his career. His description of traveling from Kathmandu to Dhangadhi was very interesting as he mentions everything from the place of religious importance to other historical places.

He also describes Kanchanpur, a commercial city of far western region bordering India, Dadeldhura and Doti. Along with the description of the city of far west, there is also a description of Surkhet.

In traveling to the far west, he found that the road from Dhangadhi to Dadeldhura and Dipyal were very interesting. The road from Atariya to Dhangadi and Dadeldura is fascinating as it starts from the plain area of Dhangadhi and goes up to about 6000 feet above the sea level. ■

Debate On CA

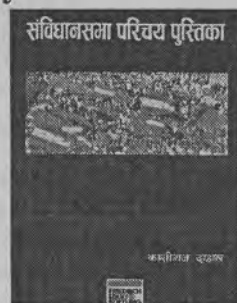
The book by renowned law expert explains the meaning and importance of the Constituent Assembly

By A CORRESPONDENT

Various opinion polls have shown that Nepali people are yet to fully understand the meaning and importance of Constituent Assembly election.

Even during the last week's mock elections held by the Election Commission (EC) in Dakshinkali VDC – a relatively quite accessible area nearby the capital – many voters who lined up to cast their votes expressed their ignorance about the CA.

“People are still in the belief that CA is all about giving majority to some party and installing new government. But this is not true. CA is a historic opportunity for the people of Nepal to decide their nation's destiny,” said Kashi Raj Dahal, author of the book “Constituent Assembly: An Introductory



*Sambidhansabha Parichaya
Pustika (CA Introductory Book)*

By Kashi Raj Dahal

Pages: 40

*Published by: Friedrich Ebert
Stiftung*

Book.”

Published by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Nepal office, the book explains

in simple Nepali language about the process and importance of constitution-making.

Former secretary of the Judicial Commission, Dahal, has dealt with the subject of historic struggle of Nepali people to write constitution by themselves.

Issues such as constitution, methods of constitution-making, processes adopted elsewhere and significance of CA in Nepal's context have been explained in the book.

Furthermore, the book also attempts to explain the various election systems including the First-Past-The-Post, Proportional and Mixed System. It also explains the system agreed upon by the eight parties in Nepal.

The book will be highly useful to the people of Nepal. Besides, it can also prove to be useful for other countries going through similar constitutional transition in future as it has information about international experience as well as theoretical explanations of constitution-making exercises.

UN ELECTORAL TEAM WORRIED BY INSECURITY

The United Nations Electoral Expert Monitoring Team (EEMT) has said that it is of the view that the security situation remains the most serious threat to the electoral process.

The EEMT has recommended that political leaders be encouraged to come to an agreement on security long before the elections, including the signing of appropriate codes of conduct to be widely distributed among party activists.

The report concludes that the formula of representation proposed for the election meets general democratic standards, ensuring both universal suffrage and the right to contest elections to all political parties and individuals that comply with the legal requirements.

"The EEMT nevertheless expresses concern over the provisions of Article 7 of the Constituency Assembly Members Election Act, which stipulates that once the results have been issued, the central party committee will allocate winning seats from the proportional representation ballot to individual candidates. This should be considered a departure from best practice and democratic procedures, as it could strengthen the control of the political elites and constitutes an impediment for voters to exercise their free choice."

The EEMT has also noted that the Election Commission is generally well accepted and respected by political parties as an independent constitutional body. The voter registration process is also assessed as generally positive, although some groups have voiced grievances about the quality of voter lists. The EEMT urges the Election Commission to promulgate the regulatory framework for the Constituent Assembly election as soon as possible, to initiate a comprehensive and wide civic and voter education campaign in order to raise public awareness of the election, and to ensure equitable access by political parties to the state owned media.

The EEMT recommends that the Election Commission consider an additional period of registration to allow the inclusion of new political parties in the process, in order to widen the participation of ethnic communities. The registration deadline, set for an election by mid-June 2007, expired by the end of April.

The first report of the United Nations Electoral Expert Monitoring Team (EEMT), established under the mandate of the Security Council Resolution 1740, was submitted by the Secretary-General to the Government and the Chief Election Commissioner on 17 July 2007. The five-member Team, appointed by the Secretary-General and led by Dr. Rafael Lopez-Pintor, is responsible for assessing the Constituent Assembly electoral process on a regular basis in order to determine whether it is proceeding in a manner that will lead to a result that accurately reflects the will of the Nepalese people.

The EEMT will visit Nepal in key moments of the electoral process. The report establishes benchmarks for the assessment of preparations for the election. The benchmarks are based on the democratic principles enshrined in Article 25 of the 1966 International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights: periodic elections; universal and equal suffrage; right to stand for public office; right to vote; secret ballot; genuine elections allowing for the free expression of the will of the people. ■

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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- Nepal Struggle for Existence -Jagadish Sharma\2006 Rs.999.00
- Nepal Postage Stamps Catalogue 2005, Chandra Kumar Stapit \Deepak Manandhar \2005 Rs. 150.00
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- 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 \Warburation \ Hatley \2007..... Rs. 250.00

CHINESE PHOTO EXHIBITION

Prosperity In The Neighborhood

The photo exhibition depicts China's fast pace of modernization

By A CORRESPONDENT

Although China shares a long border with Nepal and has a long history of relations with Nepal, only a few people of Nepal know about the rapid progress made by Nepal's northern neighbor and its cultural, social and other aspects.

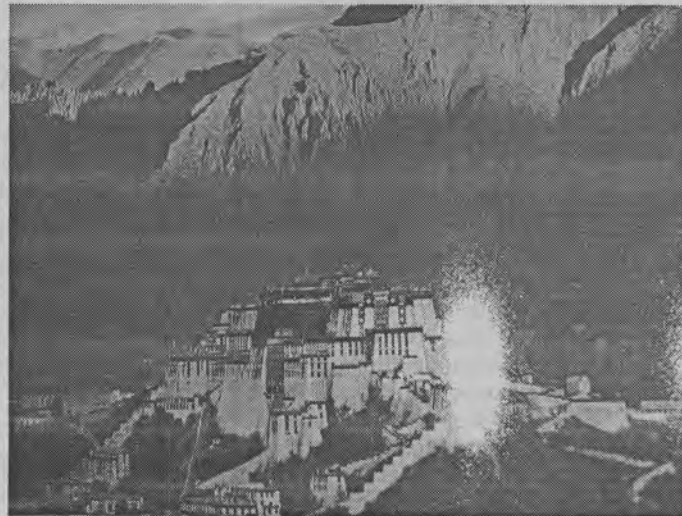
As Nepal is in a very critical phase of its history going through a painful process of change, China seems to have realized that the time has come to show Nepalese people how much they care about Nepal.

In the last two decades, China has made tremendous progress in the field of economic, social and other sectors. With the economic liberalization, Chinese society has also transformed. This what displayed in the exhibition.

This is what one can see in the photo-exhibition held in Rastriya Sabhagriha recently. The photographs displayed in the wall showed the transformation of the traditional Chinese cities into modern ones. One can see the change including construction boom, high rise buildings and so on.

Organized jointly by Embassy of People's Republic of China and China Society For Human Rights Studies and World Cultural Net/ Chinese Information Center, the photo-exhibition was the first of its kinds. The photographs displayed the past and present situation of China.

Some of the photographs displayed in the exhibition showed high speed of transformation of Chinese cities and life of the people. In almost all cities,



the old houses and roads are gradually disappearing and new buildings are coming up. This has made Chinese cities look completely different in the last two decades.

Some of the photographs are also related to the scientific and other achievements made by China in the last few decades. Along with the rural life, there are also photos highlighting cultural and ethnic diversity of



China. For Nepalese viewers, Chinese photo exhibition helps to open their mind regarding the progress in China.

In the process of strengthening people to people relations with Nepal, China has already organized a number of such programs in recent months.

Few months back, Chinese book exhibition helped Nepalese readers to know about the Chinese literature of past and modern history.

Inaugurated by Charge d' Affairs Xi Hui of Embassy of the People's Republic of China, the photo exhibition

helped to learn about the modernization of China and progress made by Chinese people.

As Chinese technical universities are gradually achieving academic excellence in the world, many Nepalese students are going to China

for further study. This exhibition helps students to know more about China.

Through the cameras of photographers, one can see the work,

life, civilization, culture, leisure and entertainment of common people in the modern China. One also sees the changes that are happening in its urban and rural areas. The exhibition shows a long experience of China its history and modernity. ■

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