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The National Newsmagazine

SPOTLIGHT

Sept.28-Oct.04, 2007

Aftermath of Carnage In Kapilbastu

- Disorder** : **Who is to Blame ?**
- GP Koirala** : **Giving Up Legacy**
- Swami's Session** : **Yearning For Yoga**
- Indian Idol** : **Prashant's Victory**

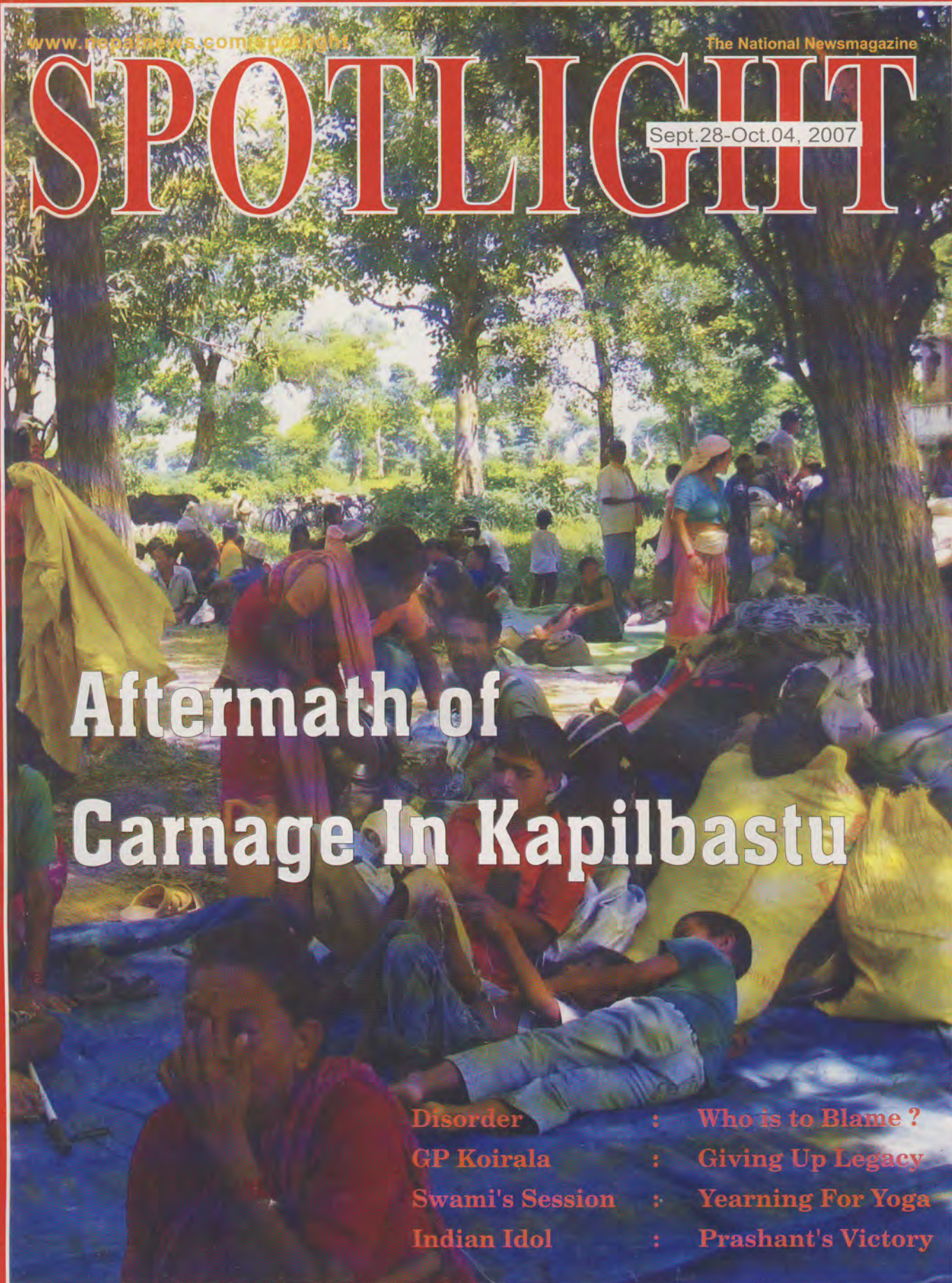
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अब... १* रु. १ मै बचत खाता



नेपाल इन्भेस्टमेन्ट बैंक बढी भन्दा बढी
नागरिकहरुमा बैंकिङ्ग सेवाको पहिलो अनुभव
एवं बानी बस्न सकोस भन्नाका लागि सगौरब
प्रस्तुत गर्दछ...

**मात्र रु.१ मा
“आफ्नै बचत खाता”**

सम्पूर्ण अन्तराष्ट्रिय स्तरको सेवा सुविधा सहित ।



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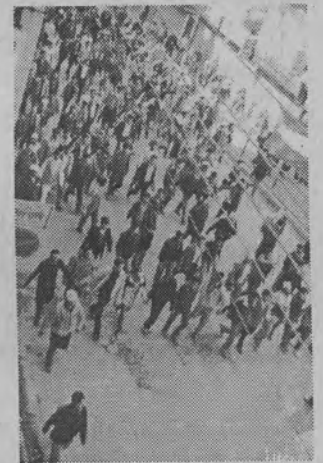
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Photo by: Madhav Nepal

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SPOTLIGHT

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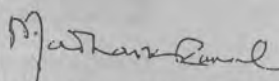
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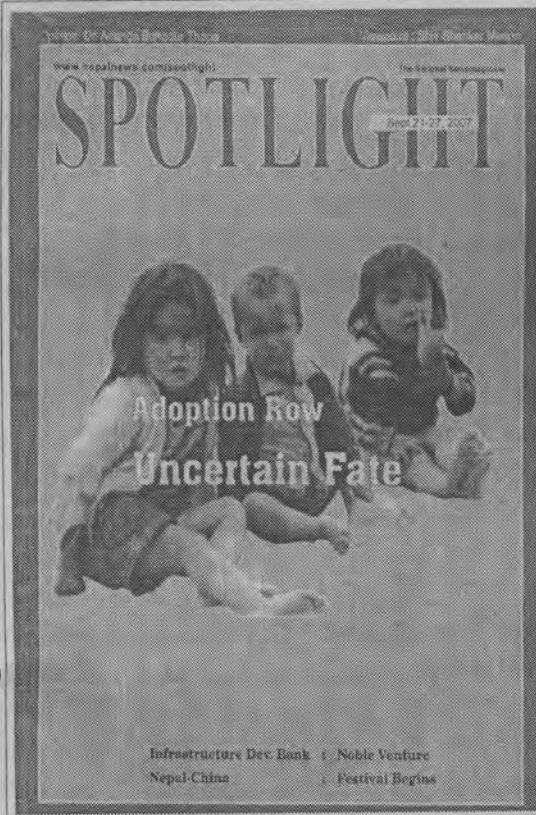
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The 2006 April agitations that sounded the death knell of the two hundred thirty eight years old kingly authority were the direct sequel of the self-destructive and insensitive behavior of King Gyanendra. He and his handful of sycophantic cohorts not only precipitated the down fall of the authoritarian monarchy but also betrayed the people by pushing the very institution to the brink of the precipice from where it might, any day, fall into the bottomless pit of ignominy and death. The myth that the institution had bound the heterogeneous Nepali society into a strong unit has been shattered for all time and now the Nepali community stands splintered into small irreconcilable units that can be more easily used to keep the poor country into continued destabilization so that interested parties may always fish in the troubled waters to serve their own designs. In such an uncertain situation, the country is expected to go to polls for the Constituent Assembly. That the country most urgently needs a constitution prepared by its own people is the only need of the hour with topmost priority. But to use the utopian means to achieve one's objective not realizing the underlying impracticalities would be nothing but sheer foolishness. A Sanskrit proverb says "There can be no desirable end to a task started with ill intentions". And there can be no ray of doubt that the intentions of the incumbent government are not only ill but out right evil. They are bent on depriving a very large number of (hundreds of thousands) people from exercising their fundamental right to vote. As long there is no total peace in the country and the law of the land is applied without any obstructions and as long the lakhs of displaced persons are not rehabilitated in their villages and homes, how is it possible to hold a free and fair elections? If the elections are to be a farce and the international community wants that, so be it. Otherwise, the powers that call themselves guarantor of equality, freedom and democratic rights must step forward and stand behind all those whose rights are being trampled under feet by the unconstitutional government. As a matter of fact such an historic act of elections to the Constituent Assembly for framing a constitution of the country by the people must be conducted by a national government that commands the confidence of its entire populace. A government which has no constitutional validity and is blatantly subservient to alien powers must not be permitted to conduct such elections. Since the constitution only has to be the arbiter what kind of government our country should have, no political party, howsoever big or powerful, has any business to suggest that Nepal must go republic. Moreover, the Maoist have not yet been tested by the Nepali people. They must fist establish themselves as a legal political party. So far, they have only used bullets not ballots. They must realize that bullets don't count. Only ballots count. Moreover, we don't think they have not realized the urgency of the two factions of Nepali Congress to unite at this juncture. Since the knowledgeable Nepalis are very well aware who was behind the division and who is behind the unification of the two factions of the Nepali Congress, we trust the Maoists tool would understand and bring necessary changes in their thinking and behavior, if they want to survive as an influential political force. Instead of going for polarization the Maoists, forgetting their past allegiance and mistakes, must try to win the support and confidence of Nepali people and emerge as a truly national and patriotic force. Can the Maoists fulfill the aspiration of the Nepali people? Or shall the Nepali people have to solicit to the savior to come to their rescue?


Madhav K. Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher



Amend Terms And Conditions

The government's decision to amend the terms and conditions for inter-country adoption is very much justifiable as there are many cases in the world where infants are sold out. In many cases, there are reported cases of abuse of such children. One cannot blame the government for delaying the process as it is a very complicated and serious matter.

*Jasuda Khadka
Balaju via e-mail*

Shocking Story

It was very interesting to read the story about adoption (Adoption Row Uncertain Fate September 21-27, 2007). I was shocked to know the way government is playing with the sentiments of children and adopted parents. Present government has committed many crimes but this is one of the greatest crimes they have committed in the country. At a time when they are unable to provide shelter to the street children, ministers are pushing more children to the streets. I hope government will pave the way to integrate the children with adopted parents.

*Ghanashyam Shrestha
Baneshwor*

Whose Interest?

After reading the cover story on Child Adoption, I would like to know

whose interest the government is serving by blocking the process. It is shameful to know that the government cannot draft new terms and conditions for six months. Where are our legal experts and INGOs? Adoption is purely an issue of human sentiment and it must be treated with human care. Separating mother and child for such a long time is crime against humanity. I don't know what so called human rights groups and child rights groups are doing in the country. Don't they see reason to raise this issue?

*Bikas Luitel
Sallaghari*

Restore Pashupati

I don't know what Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala is doing for the country. At a time when his own minister is playing with the sentiments of billion plus Hindus

from all over the world, by destroying the sacred nature of Pashupati area, prime minister Koirala seems only caring about his chair than anything

else. Pashuapti is not only a pilgrimage site of Nepalis but it is a sacred religious site of Hindus all over the world. As a World Heritage Site, it is the responsibility of international community also to protect it. I would like to request Nepalese government not to allow anybody to destroy Hindu's pride.

*Shishir Ghosh
Calcutta, India Via-email*

Strong Words

The editorial of Spotlight is one of its interesting columns. The editorial is so strong and powerful that it sees every issue in objective and critical manner. The content and language of the editor's note is superb and timely. I hope chief editor of Spotlight will maintain it.

*Bindu Subba
London via-email*

Environmental Concern

At a time when the world's environment is deteriorating further, the cover story on Conservation and Development Synergies for Progress is very interesting. IUCN has done very commendable work by organizing international conference in Nepal. Of course, Nepal has made so many progresses in environmental sector but all those successful programs are suffering now. IUCN conference gave wake up call to our policy makers and political leadership.

*Suman Gurung
Via e-mail*

Maoists Preparing To Call Special Session Of The Parliament

A senior Maoist leader has said that they are preparing to call a special session of the parliament before September 30 in order to push through the proposal of declaring republic by the parliament. CP Gajurel aka Gaurav, politburo member and chief of the party's international relations cell, said that they were preparing ground to call the special session of the parliament to discuss their 22-point demands. He informed that the motion to call special session will be registered after they complete collecting signatures of all of their MPs. A petition by one-fourth of total MPs is enough to call special session. Meanwhile, a leftist group led by Nanda Kumar Prasai and Krishna Das Shrestha has decided to merge into Maoists. *Leading dailies report*

Experts Meeting On Pancheswore Likely In January

The Indo-Nepal Joint Group of Experts is most likely to hold a meeting on the 6,480-MW Pancheswore High Dam Project in the first week of January, a source close to the Ministry of Water Resources said, adding that the Indian government had floated an offer in this regard. Apart from identifying the site for the re-regulating dam for the Pancheswore project, the proposed joint-secretary-level meeting is expected to discuss outstanding issues pertaining to the 1996 Integrated Treaty on the Mahakali river and Tanakpur. A Detailed Project Report (DPR) is being prepared. Site identification for the re-regulating dam has long been a topic of disagreement between India and Nepal. Nepal had proposed Rupaligad as the site for

building the re-regulating dam. Two sites — Rupaligard and Purnagiri — have been identified as likely sites for the dam. “Due to political differences, nothing concrete has been implemented at the project level,” Sunil Malla, project manager, Department of Electricity Development (DoED), said, adding, “Unless political and technical differences are sorted out at the high level, not much can be achieved at the project level.” Jay Kishore Maiké, director general, DoED, said that both sides are carrying out environmental studies. He, however, added that it is a ‘deadlock’ situation. “Talks will have to focus on benefit-sharing, cost and power trading,” he said. Experts feel that the talks could have been scheduled for January due to the current political situation here and say the project has been delayed due to lack of political commitment. “Nothing is possible before the assembly elections,” Arjun Prasad Shrestha, former coordinator and executive director, National Water Plan, said, adding, “Both India and Nepal stand to achieve a lot from this project, but lack of commitment and coordination has held the project back for almost 15 years now.” According to the 1996 agreement, the DPR had to be completed within six months of the signing of the treaty. As per Nepal government's re-regulation project proposal, an extra 260 MW can be generated from the re-regulation project. *The Himalayan Times daily reports END*

Deuba Urges For Maximum Flexibility To Fulfill Maoist Demands

Sher Bahadur Deuba, former prime minister and president of Nepali Congress (NC-Democratic), has called

for maximum flexibility to fulfill the demands of the Maoists. Speaking at a function in Pokhara on Saturday (September 22), Deuba said that holding election without the participation of Maoists will be meaningless. He said political discussions should be held to resolve Maoists' demands. *Leading dailies report*

Only CA Can Declare Republic: Mahat

At a time when Maoists are pressing for outright declaration of republic through the parliament, senior Nepali Congress leader and finance minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat has ruled out such possibility. “If the interim parliament declares republic that will be tantamount to seizing the right of the people,” said Dr. Mahat, speaking at an interaction program in the capital on Saturday. He said that elected Constituent Assembly is the only legitimate body to make such important decision. Dr. Mahat also hinted that the NC will not even agree to pass a commitment proposal in the parliament to go for republic. Meanwhile, a delegation of 11 central working committee members of NC led by general secretary KB Gurung met with prime minister and party president Girija Prasad Koirala to advise him against going for republic through the parliament. They said that the crucial decision on republic should be left for elected CA to decide. *Leading dailies report*

Parties, Leaders

Endangering Polls, Says Leahy

Patrick Leahy, the US senator who has played an important role in shaping the United State's policy on Nepal, has criticized the Maoists, political parties

and the leaders for endangering elections, and for not putting the people and the country first. Speaking at the US Senate on Tuesday (September 18), Leahy said: "The failure of the parties to govern and match rhetoric with action threatens the election, as does the Maoist's sabre-rattling." He also called on Nepali leaders to "put the Nepali people and their country first, by showing that they believe in effective, accountable government." Leahy called on other political parties in government to "make good on your commitments" including downsizing and reforming the army, supporting land reform, and creating jobs and opportunities for minority groups that have long been disadvantaged and ignored. Calling upon the Maoists, he said they should "earn the people's trust and support" in order to "become an effective force for change". He said the US would treat the Maoists as rightful members of the CA or the government if they win seats through free and fair elections and work for change peacefully. "We may disagree with their positions on some issues, but not about their right to serve in government and to advocate for those positions," he said. Leahy said that the US is aware that the Maoists want the US to lift restriction on the party and its leaders, and to remove them from the list of terrorist organizations. "In order for that to happen, the Maoists need to take unequivocal, positive steps," he said. Calling the current situation a historic opportunity to "change course", he said the leaders of the Congress parties and the Maoists have done little to prepare for the elections. Leahy, however, credited the UML with doing more to prepare for polls. Calling King Gyanendra "a narcissistic, arrogant autocrat," he said

Nepal's previous experiment with multi-party democracy during the 1990s was disappointing. "The leaders of the country's political parties distinguished themselves by amassing personal fortunes and doing little for the people," he said. *The Himalayan Times daily*

Fuel Supply Expected To Resume

Following Prime Ministerial-level request made to Indian government, the Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) is reported to have agreed to increase supply of petroleum products to Nepal, according to Purushottam Ojha, joint secretary at the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies. Meanwhile, Minister for Industry, Commerce and Supplies Rajendra Mahato has said that the supplies of fuel will resume and shortage will end in the capital in next few days. Mahato said that although the government cannot continue to bear billions of rupees of losses by giving subsidies, it was not prepared to increase the price as of now fearing that the issue could be exploited by regressive elements to disturb the election environment. He said that substantially higher volume of fuel has started to be delivered from Raxaul. Meanwhile, in the capital, taxi drivers and bikers staged protest on Thursday demanding fuel supply. They blocked roads at different parts causing traffic snarls for hours. *Leading dailies report*

Eight Parties Agree To Reach Understanding

The eight party meeting held in Baluwatar on Wednesday (September 19) has agreed to reach understanding through dialogue. Held in the wake of Maoist decision to quit the government and launch agitation, leaders

participating at the meeting urged Maoists to reconsider their decision. Maoist chairman Prachanda and leaders Krishna Bahadur Mahara and Dev Gurung had attended the meeting. They said that they will discuss the seven parties' request in their party meeting. Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala also held separate meetings with Prachanda and Madhav Kumar Nepal. PM Koirala is learnt to have asked Prachanda to wait till Nepali Congress Mahasamiti meeting on September 23-24 before deciding on republic through parliament. Prachanda is also learnt to have stressed on strengthening eight party unity. "It has been agreed to further strengthen eight party unity," said UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal. Earlier, at a meeting of Maoists party secretariat, its leaders endorsed party's decision to quit the government and launch protests. The meeting said they would now call for a special session of the parliament to proceed with republic declaration and even mulled no confidence against PM Koirala. *Leading dailies report*

EC Enforces Election Code Of Ethics

The Election Commission has announced the enforcement of election code of ethics from Tuesday, September 18. In the first phase, the commission has enforced the code for government, semi-government offices and local bodies. The code will be enforced for the political parties from September 30. Likewise, it will come into effect for candidates from October 5. The private media will have to observe the code from October 11. "The code of ethics will not obstruct matters related with peace process," said Chief Election Commissioner Bhoj Raj Pokharel. *Leading dailies report* ■



PM Koirala attends Indrajalatra festival in Kathmandu Photo THT

THE NEPAL STOCK EXCHANGE (Nepse) index gained 61.8 points in the past one week. Pushed by soaring prices of shares of commercial banks and financial institutions, the Nepse index reached 879.96 points from 818.16 points in a matter of one week. In another development, the price of gold has also surged in the local market. According to Nepal Gold-Silver Traders Association, the price of gold increased by Rs 407 per tola to reach Rs 18,102 per tola. The association has said that gold price has increased in the international market due to weakening dollar and rising price of fuel oil.

NEPAL TELECOM AND CHINESE COMPANY CITTC signed a contract on Sunday (September 23) to lay an Information Superhighway Cable Line from Kathmandu to Khasa along the Araniko highway. The total cost of the project will be Rs 25.4 million and Chinese government is providing aid for it. The project is targeted to be completed within nine months. According to Nepal Telecom, the superhighway will provide cheap and reliable voice, data, internet, video and television signals. Videoconference, tele-education and tele-medicine can be easily accessible. The superhighway will also help Nepal become a transit country between China and India, according to NTC

THE GOVERNMENT IS PREPARING TO SPLIT the Department for Labor and Employment Promotion into two separate departments for labor and foreign employment. It is said that the decision to split the departments was made since the joint department lacked effectiveness. According to Uddhav Prasad Baskota, spokesperson of the Ministry of Labor and Transport Management, a proposal to create two departments has been submitted to the cabinet for approval. Following the restoration of democracy, there has been a surge in trade union activities forcing the government to consider setting up a separate department for labor.

JAMES P LEAPE, DIRECTOR-GENERAL of the WWF International, one of the major partners in Nepal's wildlife conservation efforts, today said Nepal should lay emphasis on cross-border conservation programs. "Nepal has to work beyond political boundaries because nature knows no boundaries," Leape said. Leape is in the capital to pay tribute to those conservationists who died in a chopper crash in Ghunsa of Taplejung district a year ago. He added that cross-border conservation programs can bring immense changes in the landscape on a broader scale and also assure sustained conservation. He also urged Nepal to work in close cooperation

with neighboring countries in the field of conservation of animals and plants of the Himalayas and the southern plains. "Nepal is doing a remarkable job in conservation with community participation and is raising awareness to the extent that Nepal's success stories have become a role model in the world's conservation efforts," he added.

JAPAN HAS RECENTLY APPROVED the utilization of the Counterpart Fund of Rs 295.35 million for the implementation of different ongoing projects. The projects in which the fund would be utilized include seven related with agriculture. They include projects aimed at enhancing agriculture production, agro-extension, sericulture development, providing subsidies for repairs of small-scale irrigation systems through farmers' groups and/or cooperatives, fisheries development and agriculture research. Likewise, the fund will also be utilized for community development and forest/watershed conservation project. "The Counterpart Fund was established through the financial assistance extended by the Government of Japan to increase agriculture production under KR2 (The Grant assistance for underprivileged farmers). The Government of Nepal has procured fertilizer through this assistance, and sold it in the domestic market to prevent acute shortage and unexpected price hike. The amount collected from selling the fertilizer was deposited as a Counterpart Fund. The Fund can be utilized for implementing various social and economic development projects through consultation between the two governments," says a statement by the Japan Embassy.

THE SOUTH KOREAN GOVERNMENT through the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) will support to establish the Government Integrated Data and Training Center in Nepal. Korean Ambassador to Nepal, Nam Sang-jung and Joint Secretary in Foreign Aid Coordination Division in the Ministry of Finance, Krishna Gyawali signed the MOU for the Project worth US\$ 3.5 million on September 19, 2007. "Through this project, KOICA will support to build infrastructure of e-Government by establishing a Government Integrated Data Center (GIDC) in Singha Duarbar, Kathmandu. KOICA will also provide equipment and materials necessary for the operation of IDC and IT Training, and support the capacity building in the ICT field of Nepal through training programs," says a statement by KOICA Nepal office. At the signing ceremony, Ambassador Nam said that this project would contribute to laying the foundation for e-Government in Nepal. Ambassador Nam added that the resulting benefits for e-Government were enhanced transparency, better services to citizens, administrative cost reductions and etc. Recognizing that 'bridging the digital divide' is one of the most important determinants to alleviate poverty and to facilitate sustainable economic growth for developing countries, KOICA has given to extend assistance to partner countries to share the benefits of information technology and develop digital opportunities. Other than this project to Nepal, KOICA has supported to establish 11 School Tele-centers in districts and also developed Cyber Nepali dictionary for the public use. KOICA dispatches about 5 Volunteers annually in fields of computer and electronics as well. ■

“All the changes in the country in the past were brought about in the leadership of NC. This time, too, NC will lead the change. Until the NC decides, the nation cannot change.”

Prime Minister and president of Nepali Congress Girija Prasad Koirala, addressing the inaugural session of the Mahasamiti meeting of NC.

“It will be meaningless to hold election with Maoist participation.”

Sher Bahadur Deuba, president of Nepali Congress-Democratic and former prime minister.

“If the interim parliament declares republic that will be tantamount to seizing the right of the people.”

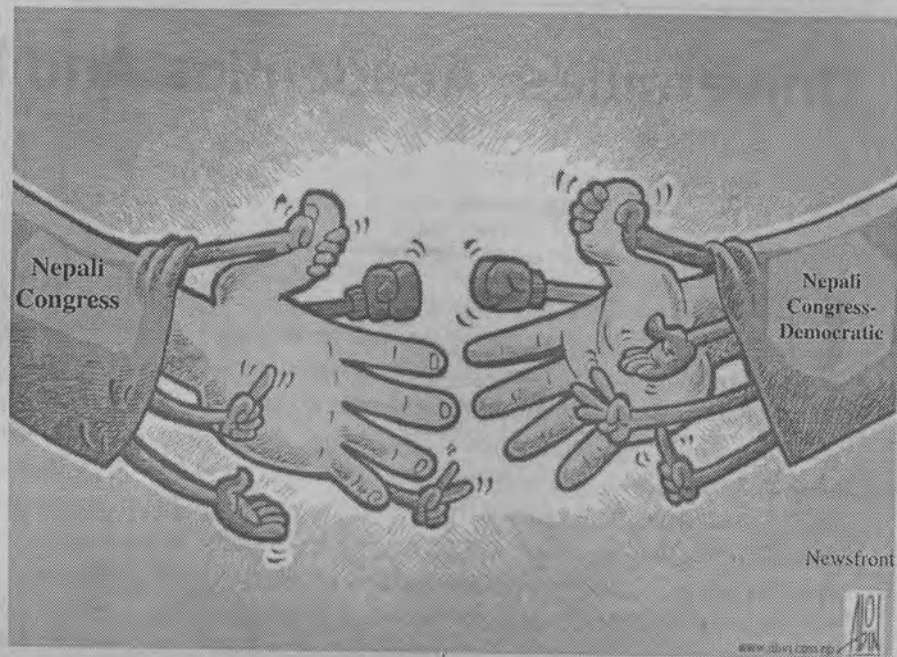
Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat, speaking at an interaction program in the capital.

“The common goal must remain to enable the people of Nepal to choose their own future and the manner of their governance.”

Pranab Mukherjee, India’s Minister for External Affairs, reacting to the Maoist decision of quitting the government.

“Trying to trash this election is trying to trash the whole process.”

Richard Boucher, US Assistant Secretary of State for South and



Central Asia, commenting on the Maoists’ move to quit the government and launch agitation against election, while speaking at Washington’s Johns Hopkins University.

“The failure of the parties to govern and match rhetoric with action threatens the election, as does the Maoist’s sabre-rattling.”

Patrick Leahy, US Senator, speaking at the Senate on September 18.

“It has not been possible for relief workers to go far beyond the highway to gather details or to provide assistance.

If the situation is not addressed effectively, the communal discord that has erupted in parts of Kapilvastu could well travel to other parts.”

A statement issued jointly from Butwal by civil society activists Dr. Gauri Shankar Lal Das, Sushil Pyakurel, Kanak Dixit, and Kundan Aryal who toured the violent-torn Kapilbastu district.

“Nepal has seen many movements. It now needs movement for health.”

Swami Ramdev, India’s Yoga Guru, who arrived in the capital to hold Yoga session.

TRANSITION

WON: Prashant Tamang, 24, from Nepali-origin family in Darjeeling, India, the coveted Indian Idol title.

FORMED: A three-member panel led by Lokendra Mallik, judge of Appellate Court, Rajbiraj, and including joint attorney general Pushpa Raj Koirala and Additional Inspector General of Police Niraj Pun, to probe the incidents of violence in Kapilbastu. The panel

has been asked to submit report within a month.

RECALLED: Narendra Dahal, Chief District Officer of Kapilbastu district, to the Home Ministry. He will be replaced by Beni Madhav Gyawali.

AWARDED: Mahesh Bikram Shah with the Madan Puraskar 2063 for his book “Chhapamarko Chhora” (Son

of a Guerilla) and botanist Dr. Tirtha Bahadur Shrestha with Jagadamba Shree Puraskar 2063, by Madan Puraskar Guthi.

ARRIVED: Swami Ramdev, Indian Yoga Guru, in the capital, to conduct a week-long Yoga session.

RETURNED: Shahid Mallik, UK Minister for Asia, after completing a brief visit to Nepal.

Universities, Academies And Kosi Problems

By DR. AB THAPA

Universities and academies are seen playing in most of the countries very important role in shaping national policy on socio-economic development.

They are usually in forefront in helping to resolve complicated problems facing the country. Nepal is now going to confront with a new type of problem. It is the Kosi flood problem. The Kosi river is on the verge of abandoning its present course and shifting to the east far away from its present position, hence the life and property of millions of peoples in our region are at great risk.

The Kosi river flood control problem, beyond all doubt, has emerged as the most important task before us requiring immediate attention of the whole country. Unfortunately only very few of us are aware of it. The Kosi problem is too complicated and vast to be handled solely by a single institution in Nepal. It need not be explained that universities, academies and various national and international institutions involved in the field of water resources development of our country and other socioeconomic sciences should come forward to help to resolve the Kosi flood problem.

River of Sorrow

The Kosi river known as the river of sorrow of the Bihar shifted from east to west over 120 km in the last 200 years. In the past about 8000 sq. km. of lands had been laid waste as a result of the sand deposit. In course of shifting, many towns and villages were wiped out, and heavy losses of property, cattle, and human life were inflicted. Fortunately the embankments built few decades ago temporarily helped to check the lateral shifting of the Kosi.

All the elderly people living in the Saptari district not far away from the Kosi river would not have much difficulty to recall that some 50 years ago the channel of the Kosi river flowing across the Sunsari district from north to south was gradually shifting laterally from east to the west. The river was already quite close to Hanumannagar. It is reported that by that time the Kosi. River debouching into the Terai plain at Chatra and joining the Ganges River near Kursella in India had already laid waste about 500 square miles of lands in Nepal alone. People living in the eastern part of the Saptari district were panic stricken. They were leaving their ancestral homes in

thousands to find shelter at safe places far away from their villages carrying with them whatever few things they could take with them. The headquarter of the Saptari district at Hanumannagar was swiftly moved to Rajbirag which was at a safe distance away from the Kosi River. Fortunately the shifting of the Kosi River course to the west was held in check by the embankments built on either side of the river some 50 years ago. Now all those who are involved in the Kosi River study are saying that the embankments built to protect the life and property of millions in India and Nepal might have already outlived their usefulness. What is going to happen the next? Every common man would be expecting to get an answer. Perhaps it is of interest to all of us to know why the Kosi River changes its course.

Sediment Deposition

The Kosi River brings every year an enormous quantity of sediments from its catchments in the mountains. Sir Claude Inglis an expert on Kosi had attributed the shift of the Kosi River channel to excessive sand load carried by the river. Leopold and Maddock considering Kosi behavior had stated that a braided stream will tend to shift laterally at a rate dependent on the rate of accumulation of material being deposited. As one course becomes higher than possible adjacent paths, the river would shift.

Data published in the American Society of Civil Engineering in March, 1966 indicate that in the period between 1938 and 1957 every year on an average about 100 million cubic meters of sediments used to be deposited on the Kosi River bed. The maximum such deposition was around Nirmali in India not far away from the Hanumannagar. There was a very big change in sediment deposition pattern immediately after the completion of the Kosi barrage in 1963. The results of the Kosi River channel study for post barrage period have been published by V.C. Galgali, Central Water and Power Research Station, Pune (India), and Gohain & Prakash of Roorke University. All the past studies confirm that the Kosi River bed just upstream of the barrage has significantly aggraded due to sediment deposition. On account of ponding, sediment deposition had occurred, flattening the bed

gradient. The bed slope of the river in the pond area was about 0.61 m per km in the year 1956 prior to construction of the barrage, which became flatter to about 0.42 m per km in the year 1969, ie in six years of the functioning of the barrage. Studies were made to determine the sediment deposition based on post flood 1963 and 1970 surveys. These studies indicated that about 35 million cu.m. sediments had deposited in the pond length of about 10 km upstream of the barrage, giving an average depth of about 0.4 m in about 8 years with a rate of bed level rise at about 0.05 m per annum.

Alarming Situation

All the past and present studies and the very recent observations indicate that the Kosi is quickly turning into a hanging river and we are heading for an unprecedented flood disaster. Such flood disaster would not be just one time event. Like the Yellow river floods disaster in China in the past, the ferocious floods of the Kosi would also be frequently hitting particularly our Sunsari district and the North Bihar wiping out towns and villages, and laying vast area of lands bare with sand deposits. The eastern and the southern boundaries of the flood-affected area could extend upto the Mahananda river and the Ganges respectively. India's railway and roadway linkages with her northeast states could also be severed. In a similar type of China's Yellow river's latest flooding in 1938 the number of persons killed alone was about half a million. After this flooding big storage dams were built to control the Yellow river floods. The river is now completely regulated. There are no more flood damages. It is stated in CHINA DAILY (October 16, 1998) that the Yellow river dams have helped to save flood damages as of now of about US \$ 50 billions.

Few years after the commissioning of the Kosi barrage there was a big flood in 1968. A discharge of about 25,000 cumecs was recorded. The flood at that time did not pose any serious threat. At present the conditions might be altogether different. It is said that whenever the discharge exceeds 9,000 cumecs which is fairly common the whole area between the embankments is submerged. Such observations raise the fear that a flood similar to 1968 flood in magnitude could prove to be catastrophic. It should be further remembered that the 1968 Kosi flood is not exceptionally rare. A flood of this magnitude has already been observed twice within the last 50 years. Fortunately in course of the last 35 years the maximum flood discharge of the Kosi River has not exceeded 16,000 cumecs.

If the Kosi River changed its course to the east, the flood-affected area of the Kosi in the past estimated at about 8,000 sq. km could again be laid bare with

sand deposits within a certain period by the combined effect of the Kosi floods that bring big quantity of sediments and the shifting of the main river course from one channel to another. The changing of the river course is the distinguishing feature of braided rivers like the Kosi.

In Conclusion

Mr. F.A. Shilling Feld, a renowned expert on Kosi study, had made a chilling forecast a long time ago "*The westward movement of the Kosi oscillation (in the past) is slow and is in a series of steps, each of which is attended with damage to property of temporary nature. The eastward movement (in future) of the oscillation will probably be accompanied with great loss of life and property.*" The Kosi floods control problem has already emerged as the biggest challenge facing our country.

Indeed, the Kosi River is posing a serious threat to life and property of millions in Nepal and India. Solutions to the Kosi floods problem should be quickly found. Our universities and academies should direct their activities to help to resolve the imminent Kosi flood problem.

(Dr. Thapa writes on water resources)

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NEPAL'S DISORDER

Who Is To Blame?

Nepal's geo-strategic location between Asia's two major powers is to be blamed much for Nepal's disorder. At the same time, this geo-political situation is a guarantor of Nepal's survival in the world map as an independent nation

By KESHAB POUDEL

From bloody Maoist insurgency to pushing monarchy to the verge of collapse and from unstable politics to bloody sectarian unrest in southern plain, Nepal has seen all kinds of political turmoil in the last one decade.

Past experiences have shown that these kinds of situations are not new to Nepal. Geo political reality of Nepal or very existence of Nepal is that of a buffer state as it is the state situated between two equally powerful big neighbors where external domination and subversion is part and parcel of politics.

In their book *Nepal Profile of a Himalayan Kingdom*, Leo E. Rose and John T. Scholz write, "Small countries situated in highly strategic areas between larger and more powerful neighbors, must by necessity, formulate strategies and policies that reduce their vulnerabilities and exploit opportunities. Nepal finds itself in this unfortunate situation. On several occasions, it has had to face external threats in which the absorption of the central Himalayan region by the political system of north or south appeared to be the issue at stake."

Whether through the twelve point agreement in New Delhi between Maoists and Seven Party Alliance or sending special envoy at the height of Janandolan II to convince King to give up power, Nepal's southern neighbor has played a major role.

Although Maoists continue to maintain ceasefire, seven party alliance government is in power and there is a strong UN's presence to monitor arms management and elections, Nepal's political instability as well as uncertainty continues to grow. Moreover, eight political parties are on the verge of declaring Nepal as a republic blaming

monarchy as the source of instability and regression.

Unlike Nepal's southern neighbor, officials from Nepal's northern neighbor rarely express their comments on Nepal's internal matter publicly. Chinese have shown that they are comfortable with all kinds of rulers in Nepal in maintaining relations provided that such government respects its security interest. China has already recognized Nepal's new political realities by sending its new ambassador to present the credentials to prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala.

As both the neighbors have openly said that their priority in Nepal is their own security and that they want assurance from Nepal. As Nepal has been passing through an unstable and chaotic situation created by one of its neighbor, overtly and covertly, other side has already shown its sensitivity towards the new looming threat to its security.

Chinese ambassador Zheng Xianglin's remarks seem to be in reference to that. He had recently said, "When Nepali people face difficulties and pain, we will take that as ours; especially when Nepali people face some difficulties to uphold sovereignty and territorial integrity. Any foreign intervention in Nepal will not be tolerable for China."

Both of our neighbors need assurance for security but various kinds of covert operations launched by one of

Nepal's neighbor against a small and peaceful neighbor would definitely be counter productive for its initiator. "Nepal's conflict may cause much damage to it but if this conflict is aggravated, it would definitely be counterproductive for its very initiators. Nepal faces a constant challenge of living in the enlarged conflict zone of this part of the world. It is in every body's knowledge in Nepal that the ongoing acts of terror and disorder till now have the source in India as a solo player yet," writes Ganesh Raj Sharma in his article *Nepal in a Zone of Conflict* (See Spotlight July 20, 2007).

As Nepal's internal political forces, which are weak and indecisive, are very



Growing instability : Who is responsible

much in debate over the issue of Republic Vs Monarchy, they don't bother much about the disorder and security problems - which are beyond their control. This internal debate is of very little concern to Nepal's neighbors.

What type of political system Nepal would have - whether it will be a

monarchical or republic – it does not bother much to them than the aggressive posture of one power against the other in Nepal.

India appears to be in a massive operation in Nepal covertly to maintain a claim over the security zone which late Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Lal Nehru had propounded at the time of first parliamentary experiment in Nepal under the premiership of B. P. Koirala.

Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru had then declared, "From time immemorial, the Himalayas have provided us with a magnificent frontier... We cannot allow that barrier to be penetrated, for it is also the principal barrier to India. Much as we stand for the Independence of Nepal, we cannot allow anything to go wrong in Nepal or permit that barrier to be crossed or weakened because that would be a risk to our own security."

Chinese, however, promptly and strongly opposed this view. From historical period, these two powers, in one or other ways, have been making efforts to influence Nepal to protect their interest.

China's Stand

In the period of Rana Bahadur Shah, China became sensitive about third country interest in Nepal, which culminated in a war that ended with an agreement between two countries in 1792. China's concern is still there.

The more sensitive objection was expressed by nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek regime of China in 1947 when Nepal participated in Indian sponsored Asian Solidarity Conference. A seven member Chinese delegation arrived in Kathmandu expressing its resentment on whether Nepal was going to tilt towards its southern neighbor or not.

In 1962, same kind of concerns were expressed through a Chinese strongman Marshal Chen Yee. In his historic warning in October 1962, foreign minister Marshal Chen Yi said, "I assure Nepalese people that in case any foreign forces attack Nepal, we Chinese people stand on your side. That said any threat to Nepal will be considered aggression against China."

The recent statement given by Chinese ambassador Zheng Xianglin indicates that China has taken seriously those words which was expressed by very SPOTLIGHT/September 28, 2007

precise but a well meaning statement reiterating China's unchanged attitude towards its concern of national security in Nepal.

"Strategists in the Indian establishment are more aware of these continued trends of history than our political actors of unstable political scenario. Our leaders could afford the luxury of stupidity and short sighted selfish interest. Neither China nor India appear to be negligent of each others' strategic moves in Nepal," said a political analyst.

"A massive and powerful presence of Tibetan refugees in India and Nepal-India open border are two such important matters which will not allow Nepal to go to an alliance or security umbrella of other," writes Chinese strategist writer Wang Xung in his book Nepal's National Defense Strategy and Nepal-China Relation. "Nepal's independence is a prerequisite for Chinese security interest."

Indian strategic writers, too, have their own arguments. "Ever since the elimination of Tibet as the outer buffer, India has regarded Nepal and Bhutan as its inner strategic buffers. India's security would be gravely imperiled if it were to lose the two inner buffers. Chinese efforts to make strategic inroads and into those buffers thus challenge Indian security," writes leading Indian strategic analyst Brahma Chellaney in his recent book Asian Juggernaut: The Rise of China, India and Japan

Some ask the question, why India's involvement is growing in Nepal. "India's whole move is directed to protect its own security. A short sighted gains is counterproductive against which may bring disastrous results not in the high Himalayas of Nepal but in the coastal areas of Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal. Even the Bay of Bengal is now open to both to try their strength. A step towards in the Himalayas of Nepal may bring tides in the seas of south. This is not only about a less than 200 kilometers wide and 1400 kilometers long region where the security interest between the two regional powers is in collision, it is very much integrated with their collision in the coastal areas," said the analyst.

"Both these two powers of the region are more decisive and dangerous to their neighbors but that is possible only at the



Common People: Victim of instability

cost of their overall peace and integrity. Nepal is assured of the geo-political advantages between the two equally powerful neighbor and equally alert military power," said the analyst.

Indian strategist like S.D. Muni, too, justifies India's role. "Being vulnerable to Nepal's turbulence, India cannot afford to let Nepal degenerate into anarchy. A stable and peaceful Nepal is vital to India's own security. Therefore India is deeply engaged with the peace process to ensure that the Maoists get mainstreamed into a peaceful and democratic order," writes S.D. Muni, former professor of Jawahar Lal University.

"Nepal may burn or it may bleed but the center of destabilization is not going to achieve positive results in its favor by creating unmanageable disorder in a country which is intimately connected with the vital security interest of other," said the analyst.

For over two centuries, Nepal has been facing external subversions and dominations in one way or the other resulting in constant political instability and chaos. Being a buffer state between two big hostile powers, disorder and instability in political process is unavoidable as long as Nepal's two neighbors do not accommodate their interests. Thus geo-strategic location is to be blamed for all the problems but it also guarantees Nepal its sovereignty and independence. ■

CARNAGE IN KAPILBASTU

Ominous Indication

The violence in Kapilbastu has pointed at more dangerous portents for the days to come. A year and a half after the restoration of democracy through popular uprising, the political parties have faltered. They have failed to maintain law and order and boost the morale of the people. In the name of inclusive politics, they have been promoting caste-based, region-based and ethnicity-based politics, which is slowly but steadily dividing the people. From last year's Nepalgunj riots to recent Kapilbastu violence, their divisive politics have started to bear evil fruits. Though they declared the country secular, they are failing to maintain communal harmony. Furthermore, as they keep themselves busy politicking in the capital, their criminal negligence has threatened to add fuel to the fire stoked by anti-social elements who want to create communal and social tension. If Kapilbastu's lessons are not learnt right away, Nepal could be heading towards unpredictably disastrous course

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

Even after a week has passed since the violence erupted in Kapilbastu district, the authorities are not able to provide actual facts and data on the number of people killed, number of displaced persons and the extent of damages. Consequently, reports have been floated putting the death toll at around 30. Around 300 are said to be missing and over 150 vehicles were torched. Over 5000 people are said to have been displaced with hundreds of houses set to fire and properties worth over Rs One billion destroyed.

The security and administration, which remained paralyzed for a number of days after the violence erupted, is just now beginning to come alive. But it is too little and too late.

The delegations of civil society leaders who have visited the violence-wrecked regions in the past few days

have come back with horrifying tales. As communities have been pitted against one another, the long-term implications of the violence are going to be very costly. People are beginning to lose trust among each other. Even a small incident can spark further violence.

"Even after so many days, there is no presence of the government. Another disaster will strike if displaced persons are not immediately rehabilitated," said Dr. Devendra Raj Pandey who led a team of civil society members to visit displaced persons living in Chandrauta, Sundaridanda, Magarghatta and in bordering areas.

Earlier, another team of civil society leaders had called the government to immediately dispatch special task force to bring the situation in Kapilbastu under control.

"We demand the government to

immediately set up a special task force in order to control the violence that has erupted in Kapilvastu District since 16 September, to protect the lives of citizens, and to maintain communal harmony. We believe that there is a need for such a task force to immediately start work in the district," says the statement issued jointly from Butwal by Dr. Gauri Shankar Lal Das, Sushil Pyakurel, Kanak Dixit, and Kundan Aryal on September 20.

The civil society leaders painted a terrible picture of Kapilbastu where they said that even relief workers are not yet able to go far beyond the highway to gather details or to provide assistance.

"If the situation is not addressed effectively, the communal discord that has erupted in parts of Kapilvastu could well travel to other parts," the statement warned.

"To this day, depending on the place, individuals from one community are continuing to attack the property of members of another community. The neglect of the national government, the negligence of the district administration, and the inaction of the security forces has been responsible for the deteriorating state of affairs," they said.

Echoing the comments made by local affected people, the delegation said that the local administration is not capable of controlling the situation.

Another organization CWIN, which has been active in the field of child rights promotion, has said that at least 20 children are among those missing since the violence erupted in Kapilbastu.

It said that 100 children have been displaced. It called for immediate psychosocial treatment to the children who are horrified by what they have just passed through.

On the other hand, the umbrella body of private sector, the Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) has informed that private properties worth over Rs 1 billion have been lost due to the violence.

After he was gheraoed by enraged locals of Kapilbastu district in Chandrauta and Krishna Nagar on Saturday (September 22), Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula assured that he will take action against the administrators and police officials who failed to protect lives and properties. The locals were angry over the failure of administration to protect them and their properties during the week-long violence that triggered in the district last Sunday. Once he returned to the capital, Sitaula recalled the CDO of Kapilbastu district. "But the problem runs deeper than the local administration and security arrangements," say activists.

The Incident

The Kapilbastu violence was triggered on September 16 following the killing of one Mohit Khan, leader of Madhesi Loktantrik Mukti Morcha (MLMM) and a former leader of anti-Maoist resistance group, in Birpur area.

Based on rumors that gunmen on motorcycle wearing Nepali cap had shot him to death, there was a communal violence. In a mysterious manner, mobs



A cotton factory set to fire in Chandrauta: Senseless violence

Photo: Madhav Nepal

started vandalizing shops, looting properties, setting vehicles to fire and attacking people hours after Khan's murder.

People in Krishna Nagar, Birpur and Chandrauta were caught off-guard as they were subjected to frenzied attacks. In a matter of few hours, the news traveled to nearby Butawal where mobs took to the streets and started vandalizing mosques. Although administration clamped indefinite curfew, the paralyzed security forces could not bring the situation under control.

As Kapilbastu burned, political leaders and home minister were busy in trying to prevent yet another political disaster in the capital as Maoists stepped up threats to quit the government. They actually quit the government on September 18 plunging the nation into another pit of controversy.

It was only after few days and deaths of few dozens that politicians started to realize the gravity of the problem. Swift dispatch of ministerial delegations did little to restore harmony.

On September 20, a second round of violence erupted in Jagdishpur of the district when clashes occurred in front of security personnel and rights workers. A group of people who had come in the name of helping the victims of Sunday's violence had attacked three persons kept in Jagdishpur police post and killed them. More than a week later, Kapilbastu is still in tenterhooks.

Worse, the communal tension sparked in Kapilbastu and Rupandehi districts traveled to nearby Dang where local administration responded with curfew in Lamahi and Tulsipur bazaar.

The Fall Out

The government has, as usual, formed a three-member panel to probe the violence in Kapilbastu. The panel will be led by Lokendra Mallik, judge of Appellate Court, Rajbiraj, including joint attorney general Pushpa Raj Koirala and Additional Inspector General of Police Niraj Pun. The panel has been asked to submit report in a month.

The government also decided to provide with Rs 10,000 to each of the families of people killed in the riots as immediate relief, Rs 10,000 to families whose houses have been burned down and Rs 5000 to families that have suffered minor damages. Additional Inspector Generals (AIGs) of Nepal Police and Armed Police Force have been dispatched to Kapilbastu to bring the situation under control.

But these administrative moves are not adequate to bring normalcy in the region. What is needed is a healing touch from all sections of Nepali society to defeat the rising communal discord. If this problem is not nipped while in the bud, it is sure to lead to catastrophe. In the short-term, the government and political parties have to help the displaced, provide security and maintain harmony if they want to hold November election in a smooth manner. ■

CA ELECTION

Global Concerns

In the aftermath of the decision by the Maoists to quit the government and launch street agitation and following their statements against the November elections, international community has expressed serious concerns. Follows excerpts of their reactions:

By A Correspondent

UNITED NATIONS:

A senior UN official made telephone calls to the prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala and Maoist chairman Prachanda urging for political compromise. "Both the Government of Nepal and the Maoists have renewed their commitment to the country's peace process in conversations with the top United Nations political official, who urged them to reach a political compromise in the broader interest of the peace deal, which ended a decade-long bloody civil war that killed some 15,000 people in the country," says a news received from UN center.

B. Lynn Pascoe, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, called Prime Minister Giriji Prasad Koirala and Maoist Chariman Prachanda on behalf of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who "has been following the recent political developments in Nepal with concern," UN spokesperson Michele Montas told reporters in New York.

In the telephone calls, Pascoe also stressed the need to press forward with the Constituent Assembly election as scheduled in November. "Both leaders reiterated their commitment to the peace process, and also noted that 8-Party discussions were continuing positively with the goal of overcoming the current difficulties in the near future," Montas noted.

INDIA:

Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee has expressed hopes that concerned parties would come up with resolution to the crises in a democratic manner on the basis of previous understandings. Talking to reporters in New Delhi, Mukherjee said, "These are internal issues of Nepal which are to be resolved by Nepal itself." He said that he was confident that parties in Nepal would reach to an understanding themselves.

"We would hope that all concerned will implement previous understandings that underpin Nepal's peaceful transition and that differences will be resolved democratically," he said. Mukherjee said "The common goal must remain to enable the people of Nepal to choose their own future and the manner of their governance."

UNITED STATES:

United States has warned the Maoists against trying to 'trash' the November polls, which it has said is quite crucial for Nepal's future. To decide sensitive questions of constitutional change and the role of the monarchy in Nepal, it is "essential" to consult the voters, top State Department official Richard Boucher said, according to a report by AFP.

"We're glad to see the elections scheduled for November and we think it's very, very important that

everybody respect that and that everybody go through that polling process," said Boucher, who is Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia.

"Trying to trash this election is trying to trash the whole process," Boucher said at Washington's Johns Hopkins University. "Declaring yourselves an opponent to the democratic voting process, we can't abide that. So I hope they won't go that far," Boucher said. Boucher said the US government would continue to treat the Maoists as extremist outcasts until the movement becomes a normal political party.

"They need to give up the gun. They need to give up extortion. They need to give up the militant youth groups that have sort of extended their power and tried to intimidate people in the countryside," he said.

EU & BRITAIN:

The European Ambassadors and Representatives in Kathmandu issued a statement on Thursday (September 20) expressing disappointment over Maoist decision to quit the government. They said, "We are disappointed that the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) have decided to withdraw their participation in the Government and deeply concerned that they have announced plans to disrupt the elections. These elections are about securing peace and democracy in Nepal. They are in fulfillment of promises made to the Nepalese people that they will be able to decide their own future through a fully representative and inclusive Constituent Assembly and begin building a lasting peace and a prosperous future. If the elections cannot be held on time with the full support of all parties this will be a betrayal of the people's aspirations and damage the credibility of the peace

process in their eyes and in the eyes of the international community.”

The EU ambassadors further said, “Accordingly we urge all parties to resolve their differences quickly and peacefully and encourage them to find common ground to ensure the elections are held as planned on 22 November. It is vital that the elections are held in a secure and peaceful environment in which the parties and the voters are confident they can freely express their views. We request all the political forces to give a clear commitment to maintaining public security and to support the Election Code of Conduct.”

The EU ambassadors have said that they strongly support the peace process and are now preparing to bring a substantial Election Observer Mission for the election.

Addressing a press meet on Wednesday (September 19), the visiting UK Minister for Asia, Shahid

Mallik, said that his country wants the parties to find ways to hold elections to Constituent Assembly (CA) on November 22.

Announcing a fresh aid of \$ 8 million to the Peace Trust Fund, Mallik said that he believed that although they pulled out from the government, Maoists were still committed to peace process and elections. Stating that credible CA polls would offer the best hope for maintaining peace and development, Mallik warned that if the elections were not held on schedule, Nepal would lose confidence in the political and peace process. “No party would want that to happen; everyone I met understands that at least the peace process should go on,” he said. “For all the political parties, November 22 should not just be about winning elections, but about winning peace.”

JAPAN:

Japan has also expressed its concerns with the decision of the

Maoists to pull out from the government. “Japan expresses its concern that the four Maoist ministers tendered their resignations to Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala on September 18 and declared not to abide by the code of conduct and the schedule of an election for the constitutional assembly,” states a press release issued by Director-General for Press and Public Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan. It adds that Japan continues to pay close attention to the political situation in Nepal.

Supporting the decision of Nepali people “to choose peace and democratization through the agreement made by all the parties in Nepal in November last year with the assistance of the international community,” Japan has said that it “strongly hopes that the election scheduled for November 22 will be carried out in a free and fair manner.”

PRACHANDA SPEAKS....

Indicating a prolonged instability, Maoist chairman Prachanda has said that his party will join the government only if there is a new cabinet based on new understanding.

Speaking after the function organized to mark the merger of CPN (Marxist Leninist Maoist) into Maoists, on Monday (September 24), Prachanda said his party will not join this current government – pointing at moves to pull down Koirala government.

His comments have disappointed the national and international community who were hoping that the Maoists would soon return to the government and help conduct Constituent Assembly elections on

schedule.

Expressing happiness over the merger of MLM, Prachanda said it marked polarization of revolutionary forces. “Our strategy is world revolution. Tactically, we have to lean towards right some time and towards left some time. Let there be no confusion,” he said.

Likewise, Dr Baburam Bhattarai said there would be polarization between communists and democratic groups. Bhattarai said the issue of monarchy that divided the political parties is no more the topic of debate. He stressed the need of one communist party in Nepal to fulfill the aspirations of the people’s democracy in true sense and called



on all communist groups to get into this bloc.

With the merger of MLM into Maoists, the latter have become second largest party in the interim parliament with 84 MPs. The NC has 85 MPs while UML has 83 MPs. ■

From Guns to Greetings: Defrosting China's Borders

By Lou Chen, Quan Xiaoshu (China Features)

On the winding Heilongjiang River, China's northeast border with Russia, Chinese soldiers ride in blue patrol boats, passing Russian houses on the other bank so swiftly that they soon look like matchboxes.

Patrolling the river is now routine, but it was unimaginable when relations between the two nations were strained.

"The border was once marked with barbed wire and dotted with blockhouses. Cannons were positioned against each other. The Heilongjiang River was a forbidden zone, and any approaches could have seen a flare up in the bitter bilateral relations," says Colonel Jia Lun, of the People's Liberation Army regiment stationed in Mohe County on the southern bank.

But the same border is no longer a "sensitive" area, and sentry posts and lookout points are fewer, Jia says.

And similar changes have taken place along other parts of China's 22,000-kilometer land border.

According to China's white paper on National Defense in 2006, China has signed land border treaties or agreements with 12 of its 14 neighbors, with most of the demarcation disputes settled. It is currently negotiating with India and Bhutan to resolve boundary issues.

"China now shares the most peaceful borders with its neighbors since the republic was established in 1949," says Teng Jianqun, deputy secretary-general of the China Arms Control and Disarmament Association.

China saw three major military conflicts along its borders from the 1950s to the 1970s. "Since the 1980s, no major border clashes have occurred and border troops have gradually expanded exchanges with each other," Teng says.

He considers changes in the

international environment, particularly the demise of the Cold War mentality, as a key factor in better border relations.

"There did exist territory disputes along the borders, but the prevailing ideological bias during the Cold War period served as a catalyst and worsened conflict," Teng says.

"The whole international climate has changed since the end of the Cold War, as a country is no longer judged as a friend or an enemy according to its political pattern, which has helped China to rebuild relations with its neighbors," he says.

More importantly, the Chinese government has employed a practical attitude in solving border issues.

"Following the foreign policy of building good neighborly relations and partnership with adjacent countries, China is more willing to solve border problems through negotiations, with both the confidence brought by its rapid economic growth and the consideration constrained by its 'peaceful development' promise," he says.

"Now, border troops from China and its neighbors have very friendly exchanges and communication. Sometimes, they invite each other to parties or celebrations," he adds.

Basketball Diplomacy

"We salute every time we meet the Russian soldiers on the river or patrolling on ice during winter. We shout hello in Russian, and they greet us in Chinese," says Jia Pengfei, head of a border sentry post.

China and Russia share a 4,300-kilometer border, with most of the 3,800-kilometer eastern section sitting along the boundary of the Heilongjiang Province.

There are no bridges spanning the

Heilongjiang River and the border is crossed by boat. In winter, the frozen river can carry vehicles.

Russia's Amur Region has agreed with Heilongjiang Province to build a bridge that links Heihe city with Blagoveshchensk city, but the date for construction is yet to be set.

Jiang Yi, a researcher with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), says that as relations between the two countries improve, the two militaries are transcending old conflicts to develop a solid friendship.

In 1996 and 1997, China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan signed agreements on disarmament and deepening military trust along borders, agreeing to restrict the scale, geographical limits and the number of troop exercises, to notify each other of large military activities and troop movements during emergencies and to allow temporary entry of armed forces to 100 kilometers across borders.

"These joint endeavors have improved security along China's 7,000-kilometer border with the other four countries," China's Foreign Ministry spokesman has said.

The agreements helped lay the groundwork for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) founded in 2001, which has brought about closer cooperation among the five member states and Uzbekistan on trade, energy and fighting terrorism.

"Peace Mission 2007", an anti-terrorism drill on the SCO agenda, was staged in Chelyabinsk of Russia and Urumqi, capital of China's northwestern Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, from August 9 to 17, 2007.

Apart from increasingly frequent and deep military and political exchanges,

China and Russia have been making agreements on their borders.

In October 2004, the two sides signed the Supplementary Agreement on the Eastern Section of China-Russia Boundary Line, setting a deadline to complete demarcating the eastern boundary at the end of 2007.

Chinese and Russian border troops have, since the 1990s, operated a regular meeting mechanism to increase trust and resolve problems.

Under the mechanism, troops across the boundary have met for news briefings, joint patrols, holiday celebrations and even basketball matches and parties. Senior officers have also invited each other for family gatherings, says Song Wanjiang, deputy chief of a company stationed in Hunchun, northeast China's Jilin Province.

"The meetings allow us to meet face to face, but we also have a direct telephone connection to the Russian border troops, just like the hotline used by heads of state, for daily contact," Song says.

Inhabitants of border areas are the direct beneficiaries. Along the Sino-Kazakhstan border, Chinese soldiers worked with Kazak troops last summer to tame the flooded Ulken Ulast River, the border river, which could have ravaged areas in Kazakhstan.

Locals recall how Kazakhstan soldiers helped a Chinese herdsman find a cow that disappeared across the border.

Thaw in the Himalayas

China's southwest border with India is also growing more amicable. From busy passes to lonely sentry posts high in the Himalayas, Chinese personnel are warming to the uniformed guards on the other side.

Jin Guangyong, a soldier at a sentry post along China's southwestern border with India, says Indian soldiers often shout "Hello" to greet Chinese soldiers.

Isolated by snow for eight months a year, the two sentry posts, separated by a canyon, are the only signs of human habitation, clinging to the black and bare mountain.

"I can feel their loneliness, since we

suffer it ourselves. We respond to their greetings. Even the guard dogs bark at each other," Jin says.

But Major Ai Huaichun remembers skirmishes when troops from the two sides confronted each other on patrol just a decade ago.

"In the 1990s, meetings usually ended in squabbles that solved nothing. The two parties could argue for hours about whether a soldier had trespassed or not," says Ai, who used to serve as interpreter at joint meetings for 11 years.

China and India fought over the border in 1962 and hostility afflicted bilateral relations for decades until the end of the 20th Century.

The year 2000 marked the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and India, which helped warm relations between the troops.

In June 2006, the Nathu La Pass, a century-old trading post that sits 4,545 meters above sea level between China's Tibet and India's Sikkim, was reopened after being closed 40 years ago.

"Border meetings have become more friendly. The two sides tend to reflect on progress in Sino-Indian relations and constructively plan for further exchanges," says Ai.

"Now, if problems like trespassing come to the meeting table, both sides politely agree to further investigate and then settle it through negotiations."

The regular meetings have resulted in the successful repatriation of soldiers who became lost and strayed over the border in 2003 and 2006.

"The meetings have enabled both sides to exchange information promptly and resolve problems conveniently, which has better maintained peace and stability," says Colonel Zhang Weiguo, head of the Chinese delegation at a meeting with Indian border troops in May this year.

From Landmines to Tourism

Tension has also eased at the Sino-Vietnamese border. In the Friendship Pass area, in China's southwestern Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Chinese border troops have just finished

clearing landmines left from confrontations in the late 1970s.

Vietnam and China normalized relations in 1990, and in 2002, the two countries agreed to settle demarcation of the border by 2008. The troops have been ordered to step up mine clearances.

In two campaigns from 1992 to 1994 and from 1997 to 1999, Chinese troops cleared more than 6,800 mines from 130,000 square kilometers along the Friendship Pass.

"You face death every day," says Wei Lianhai, who has done the job for almost 10 years.

In June 1998, Wei and his comrades were setting up detonation devices in a minefield, and one soldier was so nervous he pulled a fuse before the order was given. They had to evacuate immediately, but one was trapped in vines on the ground. They managed to pull him free and run to safety before the mine went off.

When they cleared the last landmine on July 5, making the Friendship Pass zone a mine-free area, everybody roared with relief. They had reason to rejoice, as they had smoothed the way for the two countries to develop tourism, trade and regional integration.

China has been the largest trade partner of Vietnam for two years running, with trade hitting almost 10 billion U.S. dollars in 2006, up 21.4 percent from 2005.

Leaders of the two countries have set a target of 15 billion U.S. dollars by 2010. In addition, they have pledged to accelerate the establishment of sub-regional economic areas, including the China-ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) free trade zone and trade corridors along the Mekong River, which originates in China, runs through Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam and empties into the South China Sea.

"A peaceful border is part of any promising relationship between two armies and two countries, and provides opportunities for increasing mutual respect and trust," says Jiang Yi, the CASS research fellow. ■

NEPALI CONGRESS UNITY

Reluctant Republicanism?

The adoption of a republican agenda by the unified Nepali Congress raises more questions than it answers

By NARAYAN KARKI CHHETTRI

"The agenda of a republic and its endorsement would be in contravention of the policy and the tradition of the Congress."

Thus spake the only surviving founding leader of the Nepali Congress, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, in his letter to the presidents of the two Nepali Congresses – three days before the two got re-united under the watchful presence the very octogenarian leader.

But the unification of the two Congresses witnessed the now-largest centrist party of the country formally adopting the republican agenda.

Did Bhattarai become irreverent, then? If yes, why did he choose to be a witness to the unification event that also saw the party making a major policy shift to republicanism? Or, why did the "rejuvenated" Congress under a republican bandwagon roll a red carpet for "the out-dated monarchist" saint leader at the joint mahasamiti? Why did Girija Prasad Koirala and Sher Bahadur Deuba drive all the way to Bhainsepati to have a meeting with him ahead of the mahasamiti?

The questions remain unanswered.

Bhattarai must have been a happy man having witnessed the realization of his long-cherished dream which he re-emphasized in his letter: "Both Nepali Congresses need to be unified at the earliest to achieve the main objective of national reconciliation: build a total trust and collaboration between nationalism and democracy."

Did he bargain his principles and beliefs for the happiness at the Congress unity, then? This also remains unanswered. Answers to these very questions would determine the shape of

politics in the days to come.

The Nepali Congress' decision to go republic through the first meeting of the proposed constituent assembly could be



NC Unity : Will it last ?

a strategy to placate the Maoist leadership who are bent on imposing a republic without a popular mandate through elections.

But the cloud of uncertainty still hovering over the constituent assembly elections which had first been due more than fifty years ago, translation of the Congress decision into action would be a matter of a great speculation.

Koirala and Deuba rather reluctantly joined the republican bandwagon is no secret. Both may have been vocal on the issue of building a new Nepal and heralding a new era in the country's history, but neither has been as clearly categorical in favour of a republic

Whether their reluctance is guided by their own conscience or influenced by

the hard realities of the country's geopolitics and the competing interests of the nuclear neighbors is not clear yet.

Incidentally, a senior Chinese delegation was in town on the day the Nepali Congress mahasamiti began its deliberation, and stayed, coincidentally, till it was over.

The quite and largely un-reported visit of the Chinese delegation led by the influential vice-chairman of the people's political consultative conference, Wang Zhonguy, came days after the Indian external affairs minister, Pranab Mukherjee, reminded the Nepali

political actors of the previous agreements.

Delhi's South Block boss was specific, but many believed that the former boss of the North Block could well have been referring to one of the past agreements that led to the royal relinquishing of absolute power and swearing in of Girija Prasad Koirala as the head of a multi-party coalition at the Narayahiti palace in April 2006.

On their part, neither Koirala nor Deuba have given any hint so far about the geo-political compulsion. In private conversations, though, both do appear to be aware of the same

Clearly, it is these compulsions and the resultant actions and reactions that would determine the future course of the present fragile politics of Nepal. ■

YOGA

Ramdev In Town

Thousands of people including politicians of every shade took part in the week-long camp conducted by Indian Yoga Guru Swami Ramdev

By A CORRESPONDENT

For a person who had advocated Marxism, Leninism and Maoism for their whole life, it was strange to see Janardan Sharma aka Prabhakar, a deputy commander of Maoists' People's Liberation Army (PLA) and their whip in the parliament, at the Yoga session conducted by Swami Ramdev.

Sharma said that he has been practicing Yoga for a long time and said it promotes healthy lifestyle.

Earlier, when the news of sudden suspension of first session of the camp on the first day (September 22) came out, a section of Indian media had reported that the suspension was due to Maoist threat.

In an uncharacteristic speed, the Maoists refuted the news report and spokesperson Krishna Bahadur Mahara issued a statement showing support to Yoga. In the same evening Mahara attended the joint press meet by Ramdev to dispel all rumors. He also attended Sunday's inaugural session in Tundikhel.

The Maoist leaders joined thousands of people who turned up in the mornings in make-shift camps erected in Tundikhel for yoga session from Sunday till Thursday.

Ramdev has a huge following across the world. In Nepal, too, tens of thousands of people have been following his Yoga techniques through cable television shows.

"Nepal has seen many political movements. Now it needs a health movement," said Ramdev - the television's new age Guru.

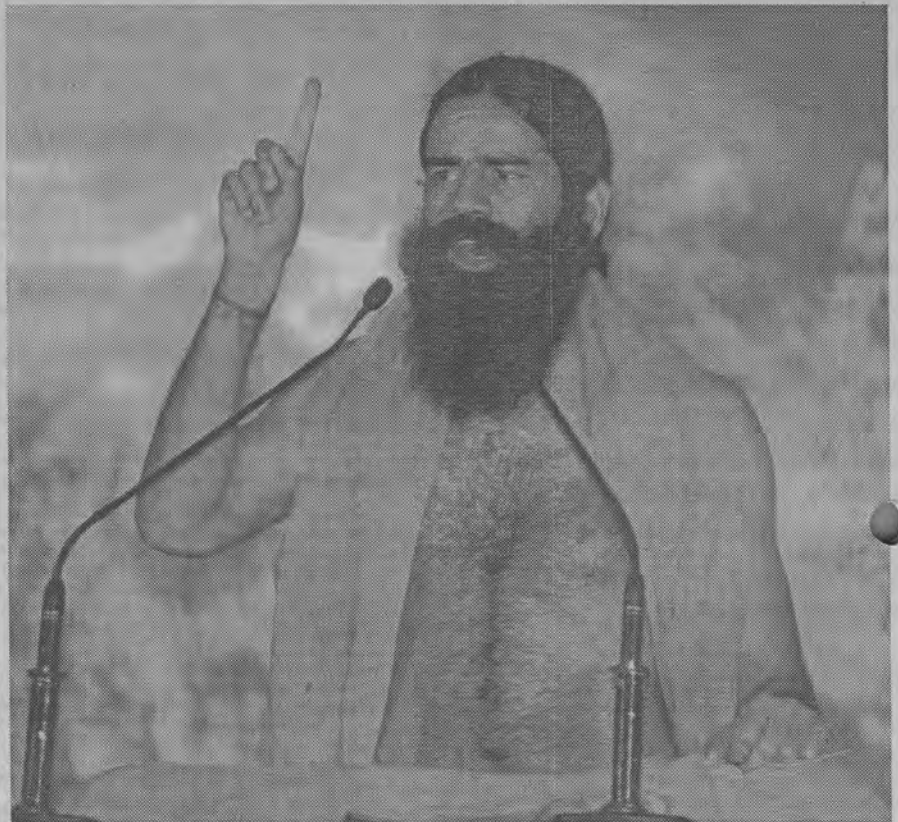
Swami Ramdev has been teaching different techniques of Yoga, which he says are a guide to healthy living style.

health treatments.

Those who follow Ramdev's yoga techniques claim to have been cured of many diseases. "I used to suffer muscular pains before. But yoga has helped me a lot," said Rohini Sharma, a housewife from Kumaripati who follows the yoga from television.

Likewise, many people have said their diabetes, blood pressure and hypertension have been brought to control by regular Yoga work-outs.

In eastern philosophy, Yoga has a high significance. In the past, learned saints, sadhus and yogis used to follow different techniques of Yoga. The significance of Swami Ramdev is that he has delivered Yoga to the common people.



Swami Ramdev: Huge following Photo: Newsfront

He says that he promotes healthy living style of tens of millions of people coming even from middle and lower class who otherwise will need to spend huge amount of money on

In the present day world of consumerism and globalization, people can develop healthy lifestyle and positive thinking by properly following such techniques. ■

BOOK

Indian Gurkha League

Dr. Rajesh Gautam and Shivahar Singh Pradhan explain the contribution made by founder of All India Gurkha League Thakur Chandan Singh

By A CORRESPONDENT

Many people of Nepalese origin have made contributions to the political movements in India. Thakur Chandan Singh, founder of All India Gurkha League, is one of them.

From recognizing Nepal's own identity to carrying out other social campaigns, this man made great contributions but only a few people have made efforts to highlight his contributions and role in promoting Nepali literature and culture in India.

Based on in-depth study and research, the book on Thakur Chandan Singh reveals many important historical events that have taken place in India. By establishing All India Gurkha League, Thakur organized Indians of Nepali origin living in different parts of India.

Written by Professor Dr. Rajesh Gautam and Shivahar Singh Pradhan 'Pagal', this book also highlights various phases of India's struggle for independence and other political and constitutional development.

Born in Deharadun of India, Thakur Chandan Singh served in various positions in India. From lawyer to soldier, Thakur Chandan Singh participated as an activist for Indian independence. As a follower of Mahatma Gandhi, Thakur Chandan Singh was also put into prison for his role in Quit India movement.

Although he is an Indian citizen of Nepali origin, Thakur Chandan Singh supported Nepalese political parties to overthrow Rana regime. Thakur Chandan Singh argued that Nepal needed constitutional monarchy. He demanded this in 1928 - long before

Based on in-depth study and research, the book on Thakur Chandan Singh reveals many important historical events that have taken place in India. By establishing All India Gurkha League, Thakur organized Indians of Nepali origin living in different parts of India.

**THAKUR CHANDAN SINGH RA
UNKO YOGDAN**

**(Thakur Chandan Singh and His
Contribution) Founder of All India
Gurkha League**

Author:

**Professor Dr. Rajesh Gautam and
Sivahar Singh Pradhan Pagal**

Published by:

**All India Nepali Language
Committee, Deharadun,**

Uttaranchal, India

Price: Rs. 200.00

and Rs.300.00

the revolution of 1950.

Along with generating political, social, literary and other awareness among Indian Nepalis, Thakur Chandan Singh also made similar efforts to generate awareness among Nepalis who were living under an autocratic Rana regime.

From publishing newspapers in India in Nepali language, Thakur Chandan Singh held several positions in Indian National Congress and fought against British rule. He also made contribution to raise living condition of Indians of Nepali origin.

The book is not only about the contributions and sacrifices of Thakur Chandan Singh but is also full of documents and other materials related to the history of Nepalis of Indian origin. Published by All India Nepali Language Committee Dehardun, Uttaranchal India, this book is very interesting to read for scholars as well as Nepalis living all over the world.

Thanks to the efforts made by Dr. Gautam and Pagal, who have collected materials from various parts of India as well as Nepal, the book has documented important personality of history. The books shows that Thakur Chandan Singh was a great scholar, litterateur, and a dedicated political activist.

The book includes relevant documents and letters and other such materials giving an authentic and genuine picture of struggle of Nepalis of Indian origin.

In every society, there are some people who make such contributions, which places them in the golden annals of history. Thakur Chandan Singh is one of them. ■

“I Am Cautiously Optimistic”

- Shahid Mallik

UK Minister for International Development SHAHID MALLIK recently visited Nepal. Mallik, who also went to Biratnagar, met with various political leaders and other stakeholders during his three-day visit to Nepal. The day when Mallik arrived in Nepal, Maoist pulled out from the government and the country headed towards uncertain course. Before leaving Nepal, British minister addressed a press conference. Excerpts of his press meet:

On Elections for Constituent Assembly

All parties in Nepal should participate in the Constituent Assembly elections in November because credible elections offer the best hope of maintaining peace and development. The people of Nepal have been waiting to decide their own constitution for more than 50 years. It would be heartbreaking to get this close and to snatch it away from them once again. If election is not held, people will lose their confidence in the peace process. Our wishes are with them.

Commitment for Peace Process

I met prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala and Maoist Leader Dr. Baburam Bhattarai and spoke to them about the disappointment in Nepal and across the world at the news that the Maoists have left the government. Both of them told me that they are committed to making the peace process work and hold the elections for Constituent Assembly. I am cautiously optimistic that over the coming days or week, there will be a breakthrough.

Urging to Participate

I strongly urge all political parties to participate in the elections. All the stakeholders must come together including Janjatis, marginalized groups, Madhesis and Dalit. After my visit to

Kathmandu and Biratnagar and meeting with people of various walks of life, I got impression that people want to vote in November elections because they want peace, security and prosperity.

On Visit to Biratnagar

I met teachers, nurses, students and people from various walks of life and representatives of political parties. They are very much enthusiastic to see the elections for Constituent Assembly.

On Maoist Decision

It is very disappointing decision of Maoists to pull out from the government. However, I am equally encouraged by Dr. Bhattarai who gave firm commitment to the peace process and elections. Dr. Bhattarai told me that he is meeting with prime minister and a close negotiation is taking place. If Maoists finds win-win situation, they will take part in the elections. Earlier, when my colleague came here Maoists had joined the government, and when I was here this time, the Maoists quit the government.

On People's Expectations

Expectations of the people are very high. The elections should be free, fair and representative of diversity of this country. We have confidence in people and peace process. Our policy is to help peace process move forward. We committed to the friendship and prosperity of Nepal. Britain will give a second tranche of \$ 8 million to the Nepal Peace Trust Fund, including support for the elections. This is a part of the overall \$26 million for the Peace and Trust Fund announced earlier this year. Our policy is to help peace process move forward. We committed to the friendship and the prosperity of Nepal.

On Development

People and development must go together and DFID is committed for that.

DFID's budget in Nepal for 2006/07 totaled \$74 million and will rise to \$86 million in 2007/08 an additional \$6.4 million in debt relief was provided



in April this year, followed by \$2 million in August. November 22nd should not just be about winning elections but about winning the peace. Those who I met during my visit have said how much their lives have changed for the better since fighting stopped. Peace and development go hand in hand. We urge the Government to move forward with both. The UK as a significant development partner is committed to provide support in the years ahead. Our priority is with the political process as well as development. One cannot neglect development. We are urging political parties to focus on development process. Political process and development are mutually reinforcing and they can go together.

On Peaceful and Stable Nepal

United Kingdom wants to see peaceful and stable Nepal as Nepal is one of the most beautiful countries of the world. There is an immense possibility for tourism promotion. Working in Northern Ireland and Palestine Peace process, I find that peace is always fragile. The future of Nepal doesn't just belong to an elite minority but to all the people of Nepal.

On UK's Commitment

United Kingdom has been a very close friend of Nepal for the last two hundred years. UK remains with Nepal in good times and bad times. We will continue to support the peace process and to hold the elections for Constituent Assembly. ■

GIRIJA PRASAD KOIRALA

Count Down Begins

Despite sacrificing political ideology and beliefs and distorting B.P. Koirala's national reconciliation policy, countdown for prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala's government begins

By KESHAB POUDEL

"I may not be there as a prime minister as I am 85 years old. I may give up my present responsibility at any time. I am ready to sacrifice everything," said prime minister and Nepali Congress president Girija Prasad Koirala addressing party's Mahasamiti meeting.

Till a year ago, Girija Prasad Koirala was regarded as the supreme leader of not only his party but all the eight agitating parties and there was no alternative to his leadership. Despite doing so many compromises with his own ideological beliefs and faith even to the extent of distorting his own brother B.P. Koirala's ideology of national reconciliation, octogenarian leader and prime minister Koirala seems to have become a liability now to his backers.

Those statements neither came from his conscience nor were indicative of his sacrifice. Koirala, a politician with long history of having wielded power, might have seen undercurrent moves orchestrated against him by various internal and external political forces. Although Koirala is now the leader of unified Nepali Congress with such strong backing, he actually seems have become weaker.

Maoists, one of the closest allies of Koirala, have already declared that they want a change in the leadership. Even India has categorically said that Koirala will lose his legitimacy in case he fails to hold the elections in November. At a time when Maoists have already announced agitation programs to disrupt the polls and have said they will summon special session of parliament, Koirala's days in power seem to be numbered.

Maoist leaders have said that the time has come now to oust Koirala as he is no more trustworthy. They have said they will bring no-confidence motion against

him. Moist leader Prachanda also said, "We need a new agreement and new leader."

Prime minister Koirala, who has shown enthusiasm publicly in favor of party unity, revealed to some of his colleagues that Sher Bahadur Deuba is going to be the next prime minister.

If Koirala knows about the entire political move, what compelled him to distort the national reconciliation policy propounded by his own brother B.P. Koirala? For more than 30 years, national reconciliation propounded by B.P. Koirala had two vital elements – reconciliation between democratic forces and the King.

"This is a complete perversion of B.P.'s national reconciliation," said Sunil Bhandari, a member of Nepali Congress Central Working Committee. "I never thought that I had to see such a situation in my life," he said.

Whatever his political compulsions, the interpretation given by Girija Prasad Koirala, who has had such a long history of struggle to restore the democratic process and attachment with his brother BP, has ruined his own credibility, prestige and political ideology.

"There was a historical dialogue of B.P. Koirala with King Mahendra before royal take over in 1960 which is still in the general knowledge of people in Nepal. King Mahendra proposed B.P. Koirala that either you rule through the parliamentary mandate and I would go into oblivion or let me rule and you keep yourself aside. In response to that B.P. said neither I alone can manage the situation nor you alone can do it. For the betterment of the county and people, both the forces –the popular institution of parliament as well as traditionally respected institution of monarchy have



PM Koirala : Power game

to work together. B.P. told the King that there could be third way only at the peril of the country and the people. B.P. raised the arms for the restoration of democracy but never relinquished his faith upon the institution of monarchy," said a political analyst, who was very close with B.P. Koirala.

In the last period of his life, B.P. was more convinced of his adherence to constitutional monarchy. He said during his final days when he was battling cancer, "Monarchy is necessary not only for Nepali Congress but for all who want to protect the country". (See King, Nationalism and Politics page: 158)

There is a very strong view of resentment among the sympathizers of Nepali Congress that Girija Prasad Koirala will be remembered as the betrayer of his brother as well as nation's vital interest.

How paradoxical is the present situation in this part of the world. Nepal where a democratic party with such a long history for its support to monarchy is leading a move to remove monarchy. However, Hun Sen, a communist prime minister of Cambodia realized the necessity of traditional institution of monarchy and pursued the King to resume his traditional status and the King reluctantly agreed to cooperate with the prime minister in the national interest.

Similarly, in Afghanistan, the late King Zahir Shaha was requested to legitimize the democratic regime. He came to Afghanistan despite his age and ill health and the people given him the same respect and regards like in the past.

Nepal is going through an experiment in which Koirala a person who took the oath of allegiance from the King, has undone that and is trying to destroy the age-old traditional institution of monarchy. ■

INDIAN IDOL III

Power Of Music

Prashant Tamang's six month long successful campaign for the Indian Idol lifts the spirits of Nepali community

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

The midnight of September 23 brought untold happiness to millions of Nepalis all over the world. The victory of Prashant Tamang – a 24-year-old constable with Kolkata Police – was much more than winning a talent show. It marked a coming of age of Nepali-speaking community in India. Their own lad from the hills had become the Indian Idol.

For other Nepalis spread across the world, the victory was a sweet one as 'one of their own community' had grabbed such a huge success at the mainstream Indian competition.

Their happiness became evident when at the middle of the night, groups of youngsters came out to the streets, spontaneously, celebrating Prashant's win.

Such cross-border sentimental attachment based on language or origin, however, is nothing new in South Asian region. Recent examples of Indian media going gaga over the achievement of American astronauts Sunita Williams and Kalpana Chawala are few examples.

Prashant Tamang bagged the coveted title by defeating Amit Paul from Shillong, Meghalaya.

Both Amit and Prashant hailed from marginalized regions of India and both had enjoyed dedicated backing of their respective community. While Prashant was the darling of Nepali-speaking community living in Darjeeling, Kurseong, Kalimpong, Siliguri, Sikkim, Assam and other big cities of India, Amit was named brand ambassador by the chief minister of Meghalaya where he was feted for bridging the communal divide.

In the end, Prashant elbowed out his 'friend and competitor' Amit as he enjoyed huge public backing. The title was settled on the basis of popular voting through SMS and phone. The organizers at Sony Television informed that they received record votes crossing 70 million.

Javed Akhtar, renowned lyricist and one of the judges of the show, summed up the campaign of Amit and Prashant beautifully on the Grand Finale day when he said, "Amit and Prashant have shown us that India not only consists of these big cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Bangalore and so on. India is much more than them."



Prashant: At the pinnacle *Photo: Kantipur*

When he was forced to go for the audition for Indian Idol by his friends at the orchestra in Kolkata Police seven months ago, little did Prashant know what lay in the store for him ahead. Although untrained, his melodious voice, genteel personality and down-to-earth attitude attracted the judges enough for him to be considered as one of the 13 finalists. Week after week, these finalists had to bite the dust one after another. But Prashant never had to worry as his voice had already enamored millions of members of his community who raised funds and ran campaigns to catapult him to the top.

Prashant's craze had swept Darjeeling, Sikkim and other areas where Nepali-speaking people live. Tens of thousands of people had camped in Darjeeling since last one week with the aim of continuously voting for him.

Local administration in Darjeeling and Sikkim state government had done whatever they could to facilitate maximum voting for Prashant. Hundreds of Nepalis regularly visited Darjeeling and other border Indian towns to send SMS for Prashant.

Prashant Tamang has won IRs 10 million worth music contract with Sony Television, a brand new car and other gifts.

And in another good news for his fans, Prashant Tamang is scheduled to perform live in Nepal. In an event

organized by Surya Nepal (P) Ltd, Prashant will perform live on September 29 and 30. Accompanied by two other Indian Idol finalists Ankita Mishra and Deepali Kishore along with Nepali pop singer Nima Rumba, Prashant will perform live in St. Xavier's ground in Jawalakhel, Lalitpur on September 29 followed by another performance in Pokhara on September 30.

Having become a glue to bring together all Nepali-speaking people, Prashant ended up lifting the spirits of millions of youths and sending an important message home – they, too, can dare to dream and dream big. ■

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