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The National Newsmagazine

SPOTLIGHT

Dec 14-20, 2007

Garment Industry On The Brink Of Collapse

RPP Convention : **New Agenda**
EU Troika's Visit : **Western Concern**
Economy : **Bangladesh Trade Fair**

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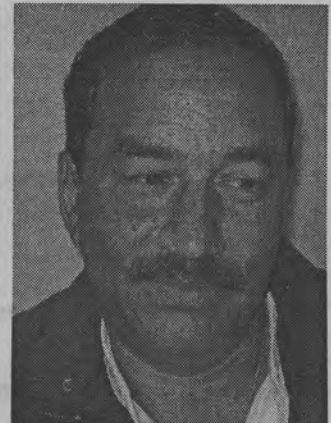
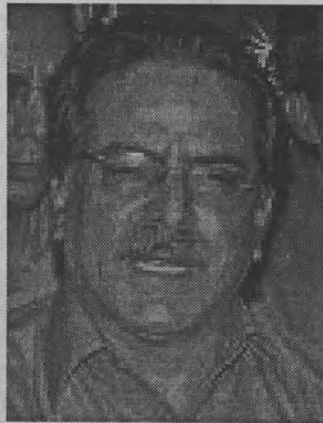


CONTENTS

	Page
LETTERS	3
NEWS NOTES	4
BRIEFS	6
OPINION : Dr. Ananda Bahadur Thapa	7
NATIONAL: Political Instability	10
ECONOMY: Growing Opportunity	19
EU TROIKA'S VISIT	20
BRITISH COUNCIL: End of History	21
BOOK: Art Of Compromise	22
QUOTE UNQUOTE/TRANSITION	23
ART : Taste of Mithila Art	24



COVER STORY: Disrobing The Economy The garment industry has been bleeding to death due to instability and indifference
Page 12



PRACHANDSPEAK: The Maoist supremo's royalists-nationalists bhai bhai call raises more questions than it answers
Page 15



INTERVIEW:
Prakash Koirala
Former minister Koirala talks at length about the current political situation
Page 16

SPOTLIGHT

THE WEEKLY NATIONAL NEWSMAGAZINE

Vol. 27, No 14, December 14, 2007
Mangsir 28, 2064

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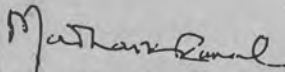
Cover Design : Digi-Tech Scanning & Pre-Press Pvt. Ltd.
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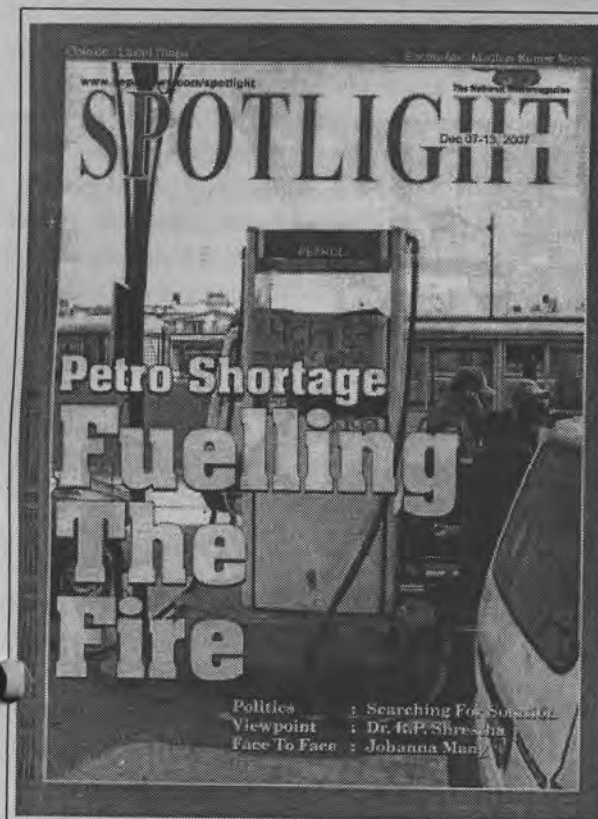
Distribution : R.B. News Paper Traders
New Road, Kathmandu, Nepal
Ph : 4232784, 2020247, 4244679
E-mail : rbnewspaper@hotmail.com

Printers : Printers World Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.
Maitidevi, Kathmandu
Ph : 4423904, 4426520

C.D.O.Regd. No
151/039-40
Postal Regd. No
42/61/62
U.S. Library of Congress
Catalogue No. 91-905060

“P olitics in Nepal seems getting out of control of senior politicians and becoming more muddled every passing day. The seven party alliance has failed to justify its undemocratic installation in the government. It has only helped to envelop the country in such a thick fog that it itself is unable to find a way out. The CPN-Maoists too are suffering under a delusion that they have assumed great political importance and can influence the course of Nepali politics in a decisive way. They have not realized that they are yet to prove their political credentials before the Nepali electorate. Their false sense of greatness has been thrust upon them by the Indian establishment during their decade long sanctuary in India when they were aided and abetted to mount violent insurgency against their own motherland resulting in senseless deaths of thousands of innocent Nepalis and destructions of billions of worth of invaluable infrastructures of the poor country. Besides, the glaring incompetence of Prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala to face the Maoist excesses has only helped to strengthen their delusion. Despite their commitment to join the peaceful political mainstream, the Maoists are not behaving the way they pledged to. And now the Madhesi group in the parliament and outside has given a new pointed twist to the already explosive Nepali politics. No ghost need com from the hell to tell us who is behind this sudden outburst of the Madhesis. There is no denying that the Madhesis have been discriminated, exploited and ignored by the rulers in Kathmandu- 104 years by the Ranas and another forty years by the Palace except for some insignificant steps by King Mahendra at integration. The grievances of the Madhesis are, indeed, genuine but the extreme actions planned by them cannot be said to be in their interest or of the country. If they want justice they must not fall in the trap of continuous process of destabilization of their poor motherland. King Gyanendra could have avoided such a predicament had he listened to wiser counsels. Apart from the historical causes, Prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala has to bear the responsibility for this ‘eruption’ of Madhesi resentment and rebellion. Of course, the Indian elements is always there. The breakaway group of the senior politicians of the Nepali Congress that has revolted against Girija Koirala’s stance about monarchy in Nepal has unequivocally proved that he is losing grip on his own party. Moreover, his uncalled for keenness in the sale of the Nepali embassy building in London not only smacks of corruption but has further manifested his senility and inability to attach priority to problems facing him. There is absolutely no law and order in the country, no security of life and property, no surety of safe travel and the capital has become stinking garbage dump. The prime minister cannot do anything except looking helplessly. As such, in the interest of the country, it is high time he made room for a younger man who could solve the nation’s problems in a more befitting manner. Girija Koirala could not rule the country gracefully, but if he retired gracefully it might still earn him some goodwill of his countrymen.


Madhav K. Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher



Highlight The Plight

The cover story on Petrol Shortage (December 7-13) was interesting as it highlighted the interruption of supply of petroleum products which have been creating problems in the valley. As prices of petroleum products in international market continue to rise, Nepal may have to face more severe situation in future. In the matter of one month, the prices of petroleum products jumped from US\$ 82 per barrel in October 2007 to nearly US\$ 100 in the month of last week of November. This has created many problems.

Rajen Lama
Bouddha

Look Towards Water Resources

With abundant water resources, Nepal can generate enough power by harnessing hydro power. We can reduce the dependency on petrol products by using more electrical vehicles, trains and other modes of transport. It is unfortunate to say that the country is yet to develop a long term strategy to produce alternative energy so that Nepal can survive on its own. For the rural parts of Nepal where the solar power is abundantly available, the government must encourage the solar power. This petroleum shortage is not only a bane but also a boon to the country. I hope the government will implement the plan for alternative energy.

Rakesh K.C.
Engineering Campus, Thapathali

Little Option

After reading your cover story on shortage of petroleum products, I have realized that the country like Nepal does have very little option in maintaining supply of petrol products. At a time when private sectors are allowed to enter in all different sectors to do business, it is necessary to make arrangement to ensure public private partnership in the supply of petroleum products. Although Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) has little to do with the prices of petroleum products, we have been blaming NOC for the entire crisis. One cannot solve the crisis of petroleum shortage as long as the prices are not fixed in accordance with the market price. As Nepal needs to invest more money in health and education sector, it is not rational to provide subsidy in petroleum products.

Ritesh Shrestha
Nepal Commerce Campus,
Minbhawan Kathmandu

Sincere Interest

I really appreciate the international community's concern to poor people of Nepal. At a time when almost all major donor agencies from western countries have been spending money to hold the



election for Constituent Assembly, Austrian Development Cooperation has shown its interest to support development projects in Nepal. I would like to thank Johanna Mang for her commitment to the poor people of Nepal. We are encouraged by Mang's positive outlook towards Nepal.

Bindu Limbu,
Montréal Canada, via e-mail

Interview Expose

Prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala was completely exposed in his interview given to Spotlight. He showed that he does not have any courage to take responsibility for his misdoings. Everyone knows how Koirala became a factor of political destabilization in Nepal. Under his leadership, Nepal has seen worse period in its history. He enjoyed all the power in the name of people but he made former justice Laxman Aryal as an scapegoat. Not only in the major corruption scandals like Dhamija and Lauda, prime minister Koirala was also involved in the sell out of the nation by bringing out new citizenship act to pave the way for foreigners to acquire Nepalese citizenship. In the history of Nepal, Koirala will be portrayed as a quisling and betrayer to the nation. Koirala is a person all should hate as he betrayed his brother B.P. Koirala, his father Krishna Prasad Koirala and finally his own nation.

Subodh Khanal
London, via e-mail

Prachanda Gives A Week's Ultimatum To End Deadlock

Maoist chairman Prachanda has said that if the current deadlock is not broken within a week, then his party will start considering changing the leadership of the government. Stating that the constitutional crisis will set in if the constitution is not amended within the month of Mangsir, Prachanda said that would lead to growth in anarchy. Addressing the meeting of Muslim Mukti Morcha in Bhairahawa, Prachanda said current talks with Nepali Congress (NC) were going through 'ups and downs.' The NC and Maoists have still not reached understanding over the issue of declaring republic and adopting fully proportional representation system.

Compiled from reports

Bhattarai Claims Election Will Be Useless If Maoists Lose

A senior Maoist leader has said that there is no use of holding election, which the Maoists will lose. "What kind of election will that be where the Maoists



who have established progressive political demands will lose?" asked Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, the Maoist number two. Dr. Bhattarai stated that since all of his party's political demands have been established, the Maoists must win the election to implement them, reports Kantipur FM. Speaking at an interaction in the capital, Saturday (December 8), he said that the election, which the

Maoists lose, will be nothing but 'a drama quite like the one staged by King Gyanendra.' He claimed that all the progressive political demands like Constituent Assembly, proportional representation, Dalit Janajati rights etc were established by his party. Dr. Bhattarai also defended his party chairman Prachanda's recent controversial remark on forging alliance with nationalists close to the King. "Our chairman had said that since the republic is coming, it would be necessary to bring on board the nationalist forces close to the King so that they will not create commotion after republic is established," he said. "For national unity, yesterday's parliamentary forces, monarchists and revolutionaries all should come together. Only then can a new Nepal be realized," Dr. Bhattarai asserted. *Nepalnews.com reports*

King Cannot Stage A Comeback: Thapa

Surya Bahadur Thapa, former prime minister and president of Rastriya Janashakti Party (RJP), has ruled out the possibility of the King staging a comeback amid prolonging uncertainty. Talking to reporters after RJP's crucial meeting (Dec 8), Thapa said that the government must hold election within Chaitra, Baisakh or Jestha months (till mid-June, 2008). "The government must hold election within Chaitra, Baisakh or Jestha. If not, the country will be in grave trouble," he said. Thapa also refused to react to Prachanda's call for nationalists' alliance. "At a time when we find leaders withdrawing or refuting their statements hours after they make it, let us wait for seven days for that remark to mature. Then I will react," he said. *Compiled from reports*

MJF, RPP In Agitation Mood

Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) led by Upendra Yadav and a disgruntled faction of the Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Anandidevi) led by Rajendra Mahato

announced the formation of a new Madhesi front on Friday (Dec 7). They also threatened to unleash street movement beginning December 30. At a function organized in the capital, Friday, Yadav demanded formation of a new government to hold the election. "The interim government and the interim parliament have lost their legitimacy. A new government should be formed to hold the election by discussing with civil society," he said. Mahato, on the other hand, spit venom at the government and the parties. "The state has been adopting divide and rule policy to split the Madhesi community," he accused. The two parties said the formation of the new front was the result of their wider consultation with experts recently in Kathmandu. They said the new front will start peaceful demonstrations across the country to put pressure on the government and the seven parties to hold the constituent assembly election and implement the agreements reached earlier. Their main demands include an autonomous Madhes state. Earlier, on Thursday, another faction of MJF led by Bhagyanath Gupta had also similarly announced formation of a front including Dalit Janajati Party, Madhesi Loktantrik Morcha and Loktantrik Madhesi Morcha and threatened to unleash street protests. Meanwhile, the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) has also warned to resume street protests if the seven parties fail to find a



way out of the current political deadlock and hold the election at the earliest. *Compiled from reports*

Sitaula Takes Exception To Prachanda's Remark

Home Minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula has said that his 'illusions'

regarding Prachanda's 'nationalist' credentials have evaporated following his remark favouring taking on board 'nationalist forces close to the King' in a broader alliance. "I thought Prachanda was a nationalist. But I was under an illusion," Sitaula told reporters in Bharatpur (Dec 7), adding, "It would be a grave mistake to see the monarchists as nationalists." Sitaula told reporters that monarchists can never be nationalists. "Seven parties are the biggest nationalists of the country today," he said. Sitaula said only those who love autocrats can support the monarchy. Sitaula also said that the election for Constituent Assembly (CA) can be held only under the leadership of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and no one else. Meanwhile, the daily adds that a day after Prachanda made the remark regarding forging alliance with nationalists close to the King, Maoist leader Krishna Bahadur Mahara, on Wednesday, held a meeting with Prakash Koirala, who used to be a minister in the erstwhile royal cabinet. Koirala revealed that it was his third meeting with Mahara. *Kantipur daily reports*

"Maoists Have Always Been Monarchists"

In the wake of reports that Maoist chairman Prachanda is interested in forging links with 'nationalists close to the King,' lawmakers have rapped the Maoists and charged that they have always remained monarchists. They also accused the Maoists of derailing the election at the eleventh hour by posing preconditions. Chitra Bahadur KC, leader of Rastriya Janamorchha, said it was useless for the Maoists to talk about forging links with 'pro-monarchy nationalists.' He said that Prachanda's remark was a continuation of their declared 'working alliance' with late King Birendra. "People close to the King are agents, brokers, capitalists and feudal. What do you mean by forging links with them?" KC asked. Nepali Congress (NC) MP Dilendra Prasad Badu

said Prachanda's remark was laying the ground for 'surprising polarization.' He said such remark would only add complications to the political situation. The Maoist lawmakers, however, remained silent despite fierce criticism of their party at the parliament on Wednesday. *Kantipur daily reports*

Maoist Leader Claims Of Evolving Links With US Government

CP Gajurel, the chief of the Maoists' international relations cell, claimed on Wednesday (Dec 7) that official correspondence between the party and the United States has started. Claiming that the party's foreign relations have improved significantly, Gajurel said, "For the first time, we've received a formal correspondence from the American Government"

Speaking at a function in the capital today, he said that informal talks with the US were underway and the US perspective via-a-vis the Maoists had changed drastically. Meanwhile, while he admitted that the concern of the international communities in the peace process was natural, Gajurel said, "The policy of interference from the Indian side is unacceptable." *Compiled from reports*

CEC Asks Leaders Not To Make False Promises On Election

The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) has appealed to the political leaders to refrain from making statements about holding election if they have no intention of doing so. "In June also they said they will hold election even though there were no acts and laws in place.

Similar thing happened in November when they continued to talk about election though they had no intention," CEC Bhojraj Pokharel told reporters, Wednesday. The CEC said that such empty rhetorics were only contributing to damage the credibility of the nation. "We are losing our credibility. Lets not do that," he said. *Compiled from reports*

Prachanda Complains Against Big Media Houses

Maoist chairman Prachanda, Tuesday, accused the Nepali press of planning to uproot the party by spreading wrong messages against it. "The Nepali press, especially some big media houses with wide circulations, do not want the Maoists to come to power. That is why they never stop sensitizing trivial issues related to our party," he said while addressing a two-day workshop on media freedom, organized by the Federation of Nepalese Journalists. He also said that those media houses are afraid that the Maoists might not let the media survive if they come to power. While the media houses are campaigning against the party, he said, the Maoists, in turn, are resisting such campaigns, which have become a threat for the survival of the party cadres. "It is unfortunate that a crisis of confidence has emerged between the party and the press," he said. Prachanda also underscored the need for the parties to unite to realize the dream of a new and democratic Nepal. "There is no alternative to peace and unity at this critical juncture," he said. He maintained that the CA election would have no meaning unless the issue is linked with the whole peace process. "We are not against the CA election. But any attempt to hold election amid the present uncertainty by overlooking other components of the peace process will be disrupted," he said. *The Himalayan Times daily reports* ■





COAS General Rukmangd Katuwal on the way to his official visit to Indian

THE NEPAL STOCK EXCHANGE (Nepse) index is approaching the 1000 mark. The index gained 70.37 points this past week and closed at 992.81 points – propelled particularly by the increase in share prices of development banks. In this past one week, transactions totaling Rs 692.7 million were made. Likewise, the value of total market capitalization also increased by Rs 22 billion to reach Rs 312 billion.

HOME MINISTER KRISHNA PRASAD SITAULA has revealed that only around 19,000 combatants of the Maoist's People's Liberation Army are going to be declared eligible for including into the national army. Speaking at a media program in Chitwan on Wednesday, Sitaula said the seven parties had already reached a consensus that only 19000 Maoist combatants would be eligible for formal military force after the completion of second phase verification by the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN). The second phase verification of the PLA is likely to be completed in the next two weeks, it is said. At the program 'Sajha Sawal' organized by the BBC Nepali Service and BBC World Trust Service, Sitaula further said that a committee constituted by the council of ministers upon receiving the final verification report from the UNMIN would take necessary decision on the future of the PLA.

DESPITE A SLUGGISH ECONOMIC GROWTH, Nepal is expecting a 14 percent rise in number of companies having annual turnover of more than Rs 250 million by the end of current fiscal year. According to a projection of Big Taxpayers Office (BTPO) under the Inland Revenue Department (IRD), number of big taxpayers will rise to 260 by mid-July next year

from 228 at present. According to the government, a company which has an annual turnover of Rs 250 million is a big taxpayer. The number of such big taxpayers grew by 10 percent to 228 in 2006-07 from 206 in 2005-06. With the rise in number of big taxpayers, the revenue collection has also gone up. BTPO collected Rs 12.14 billion tax in 2006-07, against its target of Rs 9.32 billion, while it has projected Rs 13.25 billion for the current fiscal year. The trend is satisfactory this year, too, as the collection has already exceeded the target of Rs 2.11 billion and has already posted Rs 2.67 billion during the first four months of the current fiscal year.

THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT is all set to build a new road within Nepali territory on the Nepal-China border from Syprubesi to Rasuwagadi in northern Nepal, within two years. Maheshwor Lal Shrestha, Senior Division Engineer at the Department of Roads (DoR), said the China government has already completed a survey and prepared the design for the

road. "The construction of the new road along the border with China will not only increase economic activities in Nepal, but also help boost trade and commerce between China and India," Shrestha said. According to him, once the road is built, it will be the shortest route for transportation of goods between China and India through Nepali territory. The nearest current border point is Tatopani in Sindhupalchowk district, but the Birjung-Kathamandu-Nuwakot-Rasuwagadhi route will be shorter than the route connecting the Tatopani checkpoint. "Nepal would be collecting revenues and the locals of Rasuwa would also be able to easily export their local products to China," he said. The total length of the new road is around 16 kms and is 4.5 meters wide. Out of the total width, China would gravel 3.5 meters. Eight big and three small bridges lie within the road where the total carriageway of the bridge is 7 meters. The road initially goes along Bhote Koshi that passes by Linlin and Timure villages that are situated 1,698 meters and on 1,736 meters above the sea level respectively. The road ends at 1,819 meter at Rasuwagadhi. According to Shrestha, the total estimated cost for construction of the road is around 165 million Yuan (NRs 1,419 million). The consultant and the contractor would be finalized by the end of this month and if they arrive here on time, the construction would start by the end of February 2008, he added. He said the DoR would be playing the role of Liaison office for the construction of the road. "All the skilled manpower would be hired from China and other laborers would be hired by the contractors on the basis of cost effectiveness," he stated, adding: "A bridge from Rasuwagadhi to Tibet would be constructed by the Chinese government later after the completion of the road." ■

IGNORANCE A THREAT TO KARNALI PROJECTS

▪ *Dr. AB Thapa*

Nobody believed when concerned officials in the ministry were told that the World Bank financed Karnali project study report has cautioned our government not to implement the 300 MW Upper Karnali project because it precludes the future development of the most attractive 4180 MW Upper Karnali storage project, which is beyond all doubts the best project for the generation on a large scale cheap peaking energy. There is a big market for such peaking energy in India. It can be easily exported to India to the great advantage of both India and Nepal.

Even now many concerned officials occupying top positions in the ministry do not understand the severity of the loss to the nation if the 300 MW Upper Karnali project is implemented. As a result, our government is still seen determined to engage a private developer to implement the 300 MW Upper Karnali project. There can be more than one reasons for such neglect of duty to serve in the interest of the country. One of them could be a simple reason. We never care to read project reports prepared spending a lot of time and energy by top foreign experts even if the study of such reports is vital for proper implementation of those projects. Such reports simply gather dust in the shelves of the departments or ministry.

Many of our decisions on important water resources related matters are faulty. As a result, our vital national interests are placed in jeopardy. It might not be wrong to say that we are in reality unaware of the great importance of our mega high dam projects to the development of our country.

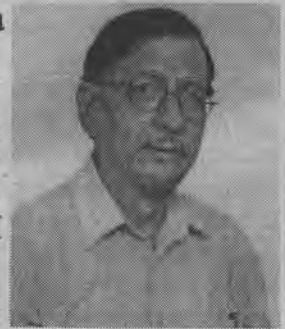
Opinion of Foreign Expert

It is quite unfortunate that on the one hand we are virtually ignorant about the complexity of water resources engineering problems, but on the other, we do not care to follow the advice of those who are very knowledgeable about our water resources projects. Let us take the case of the Karnali Chisapani project.

Some foreign experts deeply worried about our weaknesses have given us highly valuable advices. Mr. Paul D. Terrell from the Bechtel International of the USA, who was adviser consultant to the Karnali Chisapani Project, in an article published in the journal "HIMAL" has given Nepal few very important advices. (a) Nepal can decide NOT to build the Karnali Project, but Nepal alone cannot decide TO BUILD the project, (b) Nepal should beware of unintentional "give away" in hydro development, and not rush to compromise the optimum development for the sake of a quick deal, (c) The present institutions should be wary of giving away Nepali children's rightful inheritance.

Karnali Chisapani is a Gigantic Project

The proposed Karnali Chisapani Project is one of the largest in the world. In many ways it is comparable to the China's Three Gorges Project (TGP) which has been drawing since a long time the attention of the whole world because of the enormity of its size. The total storage volume of the Karnali Project reservoir is 39 billion cubic meters and similarly the total such volume of the TGP is also about 39 billion cubic meters. After the full development the total installed capacity of the Karnali Project power station is expected to be about 16 million KW. The installed capacity of the TGP would be only slightly greater. It would be 18 million KW. Both these projects can provide enormously large irrigation, flood control and navigation benefits. It is very interesting to compare the views of the peoples of China and Nepal about their projects.



Attitude of Chinese People to TGP

According to Lu Youmei, President of China Yangtze TGP Development Corporation, the Three Gorges Project has remained as a dream for the China for more than 70 years. Implementation of the TGR is seen as the greatest challenge before the Chinese people and that the country is seen to have spared nothing to fulfill the ambition of the Chinese people to harness the mighty Yangtze river even though it is taking such a long time.

Nepal in Complete Ignorance

Unfortunately Nepal is taking the matters concerning the Karnali Chisapani project very lightly. Even the decision makers whether they are economists or politicians or bureaucrats are seen to be hardly aware of the fact that we would have to greatly strengthen our ability and determination to overcome all sorts of difficulties if our vast water resource is to be developed in the interest of our country. Apart from a huge power benefit, the Karnali Chisapani Project is expected to provide enormously large downstream benefits. The share of downstream benefits to accrue to our country could be comparable to power benefit. Recovery of such downstream benefits is going to be the most important task which is not at all easy. We do not appear to be realizing the fact that a small country, like Nepal, should be very careful to ensure that our large water

resources projects earmarked for exporting electricity and water are developed in a way to provide maximum benefits to our country.

Karnali Project Extremely Attractive

The latest feasibility study of the Karnali High Dam Project had been carried out by the Himalayan Power Consultants, a joint venture of three Canadian consulting firms (Acres International Limited, SNC Inc., Shawinigan Engineering Co. Ltd.) and Ebasco Overseas Corp. of the United States. Experts from the Bechtel International (USA) had served as advisor consultant to supervise the study on behalf of our government. The feasibility study, financed by a loan from the International Development Agency (IDA) of the World Bank, commenced in 1986. After the completion of the feasibility study a single main report volume has been presented supported by more than twenty specialized annexes.

Karnali Chisapani Project has been found to be extremely attractive. It would be possible to generate power on a large scale to supply to the Indian market at low cost.

It is regarded that the cost of the Karnali power could be roughly half that of the alternative generation sources. It is pointed out in the feasibility study report that there are very few other sites in the world at which a river of this size could be so readily dammed and raised to such a big height.

Stored Water of Karnali Solely for Export

Nepal does not need to build Karnali or other very large storage dams to supply water for irrigation in Nepal. The natural flow of the Karnali river itself is more than sufficient to provide all the year round irrigation across the Western Terai. We have full right to draw water from the Karnali river for irrigation. Thus the stored Karnali water would be used to irrigate exclusively Indian territory.

Nepal Should not be Deprived of Downstream Benefits

As said earlier the Karnali Chisapani project has the potential to provide net irrigation benefits to India that would be comparable to power benefit. As far as Nepal is concerned our country will lose forever the opportunity to get a reasonable share of the irrigation and other downstream benefits to accrue to India if arrangements are not made to recover such benefits well in advance before taking the decision to implement the project.

Downstream Benefits Sharing Principles

Irrigation in India is going to be the major component of the downstream benefits from the Karnali Project. It is quite clear that Nepal must reach an agreement with India on benefit sharing before we take a decision to implement the project.

At present the upstream country Canada is receiving 50% of the net downstream benefits from the USA for the use of the regulated flow of the Columbia River after the construction of storage dams in Canada. Similarly, the landlocked Lesotho is receiving 56 percent of the net downstream benefit from the South African Republic. Nepal should do its homework to convince India to agree on terms of repayment to our country a reasonable percentage of the downstream irrigation benefit to accrue to the latter from the use of the regulated flow of the Karnali river. We should not commit the blunder by deciding to implement the Karnali Project before settling with India the downstream benefits issue.

Nepal Could Be Misled

Most of us particularly those at the decision making level are not yet fully aware of the enormity of the Karnali Project downstream benefits and the proportion of such benefits that Nepal could hopefully expect to recover from India if our government in all seriousness conducted negotiations with that country. In the past few multinationals even tried

without the slightest hesitation to misled our government into believing that the magnitude of the Karnali downstream benefits is very insignificant by comparison with the

power benefit. We were suggested to forget about the downstream benefits. Nepal should be very careful not to be misled by such extremely harmful deceptive advice of the private developers.

A Strategy

The Karnali, West Seti and Pancheshwor projects are in the same Karnali basin. There is already a network of unified irrigation canal system in Indian territory to draw regulated flow from these projects. Moreover, the electricity generated by future power stations of these projects would have to be supplied more or less to the same region. Nepal should, therefore, conduct a joint study of all these three projects to develop a common strategy to determine the best sequencing to implement these projects from our perspective taking into account the demand for power and irrigation in India.

In Conclusion

Nepal should directly hold discussions with India at the highest level to sort out downstream benefit issues. We can learn from the past experience of the USA and the Canada how such negotiations are conducted to reach agreement that would be in the interest of both the countries. We should forget about planting a multinational company between Nepal and India to finalize the deal between our two countries. ■

Nepal does not need to build Karnali or other very large storage dams to supply water for irrigation in Nepal. The natural flow of the Karnali river itself is more than sufficient to provide all the year round irrigation across the Western Terai.

RPP CONVENTION

At The Crossroads

The largest party outside the seven party fold holds a crucial convention promising to shed off its pro-monarchist credentials

By A CORRESPONDENT

The fourth national convention of Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) started in the capital early this week.

The convention holds significance amid moves to shed off the party's traditional pro-monarchist credentials.

On the eve of the party's convention, spokesperson Parshuram Khapung told media that the central committee had decided to put a proposal seeking amendment in the party statute to omit any reference to monarchy.

Khapung later said, "The party convention is the highest body and has the authority to accept or reject the proposal forwarded by the central committee. But we hope that it will pass the proposal."

Meanwhile, on Monday, the second day of the fourth national convention, Pashupati SJB Rana was re-elected as party president. Rana has been elected unopposed for the tenure of next five years.

On Tuesday, the convention is set to elect 25 members of the party central



RPP Convention: Shifting gears

committee. Remaining 25 members would then be nominated by the party president.

The RPP's Central Working Committee will have 51 members in total including party president. Over 70 people have filed their nominations for the election of 25 CWC positions.

Even as the party took tentative steps towards becoming 'monarchy-neutral' party, a section of the party's general convention representatives have proposed to the party president that the party should opt for referendum to decide on monarchy instead of completely shedding off the traditional policy. ■

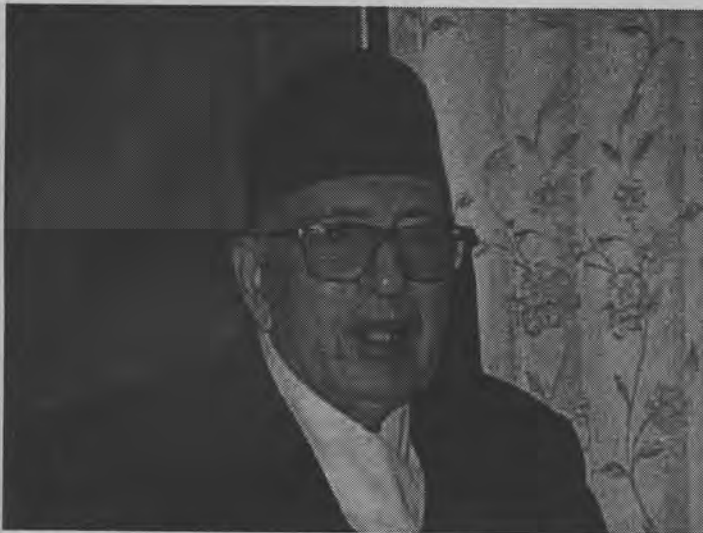
MADHESI MPs, MINISTER BOLT OUT

In what is seen as a blow to the strength of mainstream political parties, a couple of their leaders bolted out to form a new regional party. Nepali Congress (NC) senior leader and Minister for Science and Technology Mahantha Thakur, Hridayesh Tripathi, a lawmaker from Nepal Sadbhawana Party (Anandi Devi), Mahendra Yadav of CPN (UML) and Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) lawmaker Ram Chandra Raya announced their resignations on Monday.

They tendered their resignation to the parliament secretariat. They also quit their party posts. Similarly, five leaders from Terai - Sarbendra Nath Sukla of Rastriya Janashakti Party (RJP), Anish Ansari, Ram Chandra Kushwaha and Brishesh Chandra Lal of NC and Srikrishna Yadav of UML quit their party posts citing the same reasons. Organizing a press conference on Monday afternoon, the Madhesi leaders said they had decided to quit the parliament and their parties in response to the state's apathy towards solving the problems dogging the Terai people.

They also demanded that the interim government, interim parliament and the judiciary be reconstituted in order to make them inclusive in nature. They, however, said they were not espousing separatist agendas. Hridayesh Tripathi said they were going to start discussions on the possibility of forming a new party.

Later, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala summoned Mahantha Thakur to Baluwatar on Monday evening in an effort to convince him to return to the Nepali Congress (NC) fold. "Thakur was urged to withdraw resignation and return to the party fold. The Prime Minister assured him that the party would be paying attention towards the Terai problem," said Congress leader Dr. Minendra Rijal. Thakur, however, is learnt to have remained steadfast with his decision to part ways. ■



PM Koirala: Unstable mind ?

POLITICAL INSTABILITY Its Cause And Effects

From political leadership to political party and country's institutions, one can see the cause and effect of political instability

By KESHAB POUDEL

P rime minister Girija Prasad Koirala - who used to say that Maoists were groomed by Royal Palace - is now leading an alliance with them. Koirala is accused of carrying the Maoist agenda now.

CPN-Maoist leader Prachanda - whose party has already forced to postpone the elections of Constituent Assembly election on the ground that the royalists and monarchists are capable to disrupt elections - is now calling for the unity with the 'monarchist nationalist'.

Madhesi leader Mahanta Thakur and Hridayesh Tripathy - who hailed the present prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala as a statesman - are suddenly terming him as a betrayer to the people of Madhes.

These politicians are not alone whose unstable and unpredictable statements lead the headlines of country's major newspapers, radio and

Television everyday. All political leaders have been changing their stand frequently. Most importantly, they speak for republic whenever they see something goes wrong as if republic is panacea.

The country has been passing through a prolonged political instability since a long time. Politicians who were supposed to meet this challenge of instability are themselves making the people disgusted by their unstable political outlooks and actions. Either the political instability of the country is being reflected in the view of politicians or the politicians themselves are becoming the cause of political instability - the debate continues.

"To resolve this puzzle, one has to go through a series of events which pushed the country into the permanent stage of instability. Since 1950, major political events in Nepal have been determined more by conflicting interest

of Nepal's two neighbors than the internal factors. Soon after India's independence, Indian prime minister Nehru's government had assured the Rana regime for its continuity and 1950's Peace and Friendship Treaty was the outcome of that. However, the entry of Chinese troops into Tibet had brought a revolution in Nepal which was encouraged and aided by India," said a political analyst. "The drastic change of 1961 was also a result of ups and downs in India-China relationship when an elected government was abruptly dismissed with unseen abetments. A great upheaval was there in 1979 and 1990 and all these changes had the same kind of external linkage."

Changes in the world do not influence Nepal more than the changes in Nepal's neighborhood. Somehow or the other, any drastic change or upheaval in Nepal has their roots in the uneasiness between its two neighbors.

"So far greater concern and mistrust in India is China's

South Asia policy. These policies indicate a design to gain dominance, if not, mastery of South Asia, which India is bound to resist and resent. China's ambitions in the Indian Ocean are another source of worry in India. The Indian Ocean is now being described in Chinese circles as China's next frontier," writes Maharaja Krishna Rasgotra, former foreign secretary, and former Indian ambassador to Nepal, who came to Nepal in the 1949 for the first time in diplomatic assignment in his recently published book *The New Asian Dynamic Power*. He claimed that he knew "ins and outs of Nepalese politics and ins and outs of Nepali politicians." As the oldest hand of the South Block as Nepal expert even after his retirement from regular service, his concern and worry on China counts much in the present instability in Nepal.

China's scholars and officials too have similar concern on Nepal and clearly say security supremacy of another neighbor is unacceptable to them. "China will not remain spectator in case of any foreign intervention in Nepal. With the support from foreign countries, Nepal can become Dalai Lama's second largest base after India for anti China activities," said professor Wang in his interview to *Nepal National Weekly* (4 November, 2007).

Another scholar Wang Xiung in his book *Nepal's National Defense strategy*

and Nepal-China Relations writes Nepal's open border with India and formidable presence of Tibetan exiles in India is always a security threat to China. "China always sees Nepal's joining the security umbrellas with its other neighbor as threat to its own stability."

Taking all the factors into the mind, one has to reach to the conclusion that the continuing political instability in Nepal is not due only to the unstable mind of Nepal's politicians but they themselves are the victim of this continued political instability.

"In the last six decades of democratic experiments, many forms of governments have changed many a times. Leadership has been tested from King to the communist as a head of the executive and decision making. Several political parties have come into the power but all of them had the same record," said the analyst. "Politicians in the country are no doubt responsible for many omissions and commissions of several nature but they have never been left to decide their free will and with the consent of the people. All of them seem to be handicapped by unseen machinations of the conflicting parties in the neighborhood."

The great concern of the common people of Nepal at present is to have peace and stability though challenges of development are there as a question of survival. However, the peace and stability is elusive in Nepal looking at the security worries of Nepal's two neighbors.

Had political leaders have shown courage to follow national reconciliation as shown by legendary leader B.P. Koirala, the situation would have been different. However, political leaders, too, have been responsible for increasing conflict among themselves.

"It is a tragedy with Nepal that persons supposed to lead the country have become pawns in the hands of an expansionist power of the south," said the political analyst. Whether Nepal is declared a republic or remains a Kingdom, Nepal will not have peace and stability in long time to come. ■

NC POLITICS

Challenge for Leadership

From closed door meetings, a group of Nepali Congress leaders has finally come to the public expressing dissension over the present party line

By A CORRESPONDENT

"Enough is enough. We will defy the decision taken against the ideals and values of our party," thundered former home minister and Congress strongman Khum Bahadur Khadka. "Even Girijababu does not have the right to violate the mandate given by Mahasamiti."

When former minister Khadka was issuing threat to leadership, there was a moment of joy among more than five dozen MPs including former speaker of House of Representatives Taranath Ranabhat, former home minister Govinda Raj Joshi, former minister Bijaya Kumar Gachhadar, Chiranjibi Wagle and Binaya Dhoj Chand and two dozen other prominent Congress central committee members including Sunil Bhandari and Dr. Narayan Khadka along with more than three hundred other Congress members.

Organized by B.P. Koirala Study Center and chaired by Nepali Congress general secretary K.B. Gurung, all the speakers at the program held in the capital, Saturday, urged the present leadership to review their performance of joining the alliance with the Maoists.

"Our leader B.P. Koirala never joined any alliance with communist because any alliance with communist ultimately ruins Congress's centrist stand," said former home minister Govinda Raj Joshi. "At the cost of prestige of our party and Girijababu, Maoists are cleaning their image."

"In written and signed Comprehensive Peace Agreement, Maoists had agreed to return our seized properties but in reality vast majority of displaced persons are yet to get their own property back. Although I am general

secretary of Nepali Congress, I have not yet obtained my property," said general secretary K.B. Gurung. "One can easily guess what is the situation of other common people must be like."

One of the worries of the Congress hard core leaders was the decision of the present government to integrate Maoist guerrillas into the Nepali Army. "It is highly objectionable to integrate ideologically indoctrinated Maoist militia into Nepali Army. However,



Congress Leaders : Challenging leadership

without discussing it in our party, our home minister has already said that the process of integration is in final stage," said Joshi. "One can easily guess what will be our party's position in future when we have to face ideologically indoctrinated army."

Former speaker Taranath Ranabhat and Congress Central Committee member Sunil Kumar Bhandary were critical on the leadership for giving up Congress ideology of national reconciliation.

"How can we claim that our party is following the policy of national reconciliation when we have decided to give up our stand on constitutional monarchy - one of the main ingredients of B.P.'s national reconciliation," said former speaker Ranabhat. ■

GARMENT COLLAPSE

Disrobing The Economy

Once a shining sector of Nepal's booming export regime, the garment industry has taken a severe beating in the past few years. The downfall of the garment industry that happened in the wake of quota phase out with the expiration of Multi Fiber Agreement (MFA) in January, 2005, has now taken a big toll on the industry. Over 90 percent of the factories have pulled down their shutters unable to survive in the cutthroat competition at the international level and rapidly deteriorating politico-economic situation back home. Labor unrest, continuous strikes, lack of government efforts to revive the sector – all worked to the disadvantage of the industry. In a matter of few years, the industry has come down to its knees. It might be too late to revive the sector amid indifferent attitude demonstrated by the government. Its downfall, however, has led to the situation where tens of thousands of people had to lose their bread and butter

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

The story of Udaya Raj Pandey speaks volumes about the crest and trough through which the garment industry of Nepal had to pass through in the last few years.

A garment entrepreneur since last many years, Pandey's fortune had taken a dramatic rise during the time when garment was a booming business. From

a modest factory in Battisputali, this young entrepreneur built a sprawling garment complex called Serene Garments at Kappan on the north-eastern part of the capital valley.

However, in a matter of three years, Pandey lost the battle against internationally and domestically deteriorating environment.

And now this vivacious general secretary of Garment Association of Nepal (GAN) has closed down his factory. "I had to sell off the Kappan factory to pay back the loans of banks. The building has now been taken over by a college," said Pandey.

He, himself, is still clinging to the garment business so as not to lose the



Cargo complex at airport: No garment these days

client (importer) base. "I even went to India to fulfill my orders from there," he said.

"Things came to such a pass that at times we had to airlift the garments to supply them on time for the importers. Some of the importers – after seeing our situation – themselves decided not to place order with us as we were making huge losses in airlifting them," he added.

Another story that further exposes the pathetic situation of the industry is the building complex of GAN itself. Built two years ago by members by investing millions of rupees, the GAN complex at Naya Baneshwor is a swanky structure by Nepali standard. But, of late, as the industry lost its base and member entrepreneurs started abandoning the

sector, the GAN is compelled to lease out its ground floor to raise resources to cover its day-to-day administrative operation costs.

Quote Phase Out And Aftermath

After the Nepali garment industry lost the preferential treatment in its largest market – the United States – in 2005, the government officials and policy-makers failed to provide it with necessary assurances.

"In fact, since then the policy-makers started becoming negative about garment industry. They had concluded that this industry was a goner," Pandey said.

Although the industry did not

immediately die after the MFA expiration, the subsequent years witnessed rapid political destabilization and unrest in the country, which threw the industry's import schedule and timetable off the track.

Even after the initiation of peace process in April, 2006, this industry was plagued by industrial unrest as the Maoists found the workers' base in the industry as a fertile ground to recruit their cadres. They advanced revolutionary slogans and attractive slogans to incite the workers, which led to the ultimate collapse of the industry itself.

Rapid Fall

Till a few years ago there were 225 garment factories in the country with over



Garment worker: Business on downhill

Rs 6 billion of investment.

But now, Pandey says, only around seven to eight of them are functioning. "Many businessmen have shut down their factories. Some became bankrupt while others turned to other businesses," he said.

The garment industry used to provide direct and indirect employment to over 100,000 people in 2000. But now merely 10 to 15 thousand are employed by this sector.

More importantly, the garment sector used to provide jobs to illiterate and otherwise backward people – mostly women – since it needed little extra skills. As such, the downfall in this industry has

affected this vulnerable section the most.

Seven years ago, the garment industry used to export readymade garment worth \$170 to \$180 million annually. This has now come down to less than \$40 million.

Govt Response

A member of National Planning Commission (NPC) Dr. Pushpa Raj Rajkarnicar, who looks after the industry sector, said that the government does not currently have a specific policy to deal with garment.

"We don't have such specific policy to cater to the garment sector alone. But

we are, indeed, planning to revive the overall industrial sector of the country," Dr. Rajkarnicar said.

Even as the garment entrepreneurs have been continuously urging the government to take initiatives to ensure preferential market access from the United States government, nothing has materialized in this direction as yet.

Since over 80 percent of Nepal's garment exports are headed to the US market, enjoying preferential access there would mean a lot for the entrepreneurs. They have been demanding such access in the wake of preferential trade bill signed by the US government with Caribbean countries and some African nations.

Although at one time Nepal had lobbied along with Bangladesh seeking a trade bill providing preferential access to garments from Least Developed Countries, the efforts have not met with any success.

After the phase out of quota, countries like India, China, Vietnam and even Bangladesh have been doing well in the garment sector. However, Nepal has lagged behind. Things have come to such a pass now that the entire industry is on the verge of collapse.

Some policy makers indicate that since garment is not a sector with comparative advantage for Nepal, there should not be much attention towards developing it. They contend that since Nepal does not have forward and backward linkages required to sustain this industry, the country should go for sectors such as hydropower, tourism and agro products where it enjoys comparative advantages.

However, at a time when the country has been unable to provide job opportunities to its people, revival of the garment industry would create immense opportunities, particularly for the unskilled youths and women. When hundreds of Nepali youths are leaving for overseas employment everyday, this sector could have at least provided job opportunities to some of them within the country itself, say economists. ■

PRACHANDSPEAK

'Read My Lips'

The Maoist supremo's royalists-nationalists bhai bhai call raises more questions than it answers

By SUSHIL SHARMA

The Maoist chief Prachanda's call for unity with the "nationalist royalists" created a stir last week.

This has not died down yet.

Top Maoist leaders have been working overtime to explain the rationale of what some see as yet



Prachanda : Calling 'royalist nationalist'

another rhetoric of ever unpredictable Prachanda.

It is this unpredictability of the maverick Maoist leader that has deepened the cloud of confusion hovering around the Nepalese political sky.

Critics have pointed at the repeated double-speak of the Maoists in the past.

They were known to have kept a covert channel of communication with the king even as they had overtly been waging a war to overthrow the monarchy.

Although the Maoists have ruled out moves to retain the monarchy, eyebrows have been raised about the Maoist intentions.

Given the past track record of the Maoists, not many have been surprised by the latest Prachanda salvo; they are however at pains to explain the timing of the yet another turn-around in the Maoist posture.

Coming as it did close on the heels of the visit of a high level Chinese delegation led by influential Wang Jiarui, some were quick to see a link.

Said a veteran non-leftist politician, "The Chinese must have advised the Nepalese Maoists to seek unity with the royalists in a bid to counter the dubious Indian move in Nepal."

Others disagree. They point out that the wind is blowing in the opposite direction in Delhi as was also evident from a recent minor event with a significant message.

Even as a re-think on Delhi's Nepal policy is reportedly underway, some "royalist nationalists" had a pleasant surprise during their recent tour to the Indian capital.

"Two senior officials of the ousted royal regime, Ram Narayan Singh and Rabindra Chakravarty, and another key supporter, Nanda Kishor Ghiraiya, found the leaders of the Indian establishment more than keen and eager to meet them, listen and seek and offer advice," said a top leader of a monarchist party

According to him, "it was a turn-around from previous such visits aimed at lobbying for what looked like a lost case - saving the monarchy."

Even as the Maoists work overtime

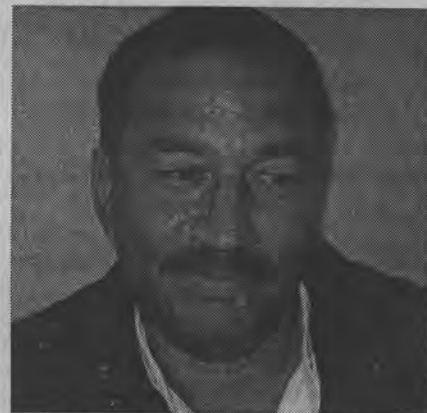
to reject any covert moves to save monarchy, the prominent royalist leader that they recently had met appeared to contradict them.

Said Prakash Koirala, who was a minister in the ousted royal regime, "Yes, they want to have a unity not just with the royalist nationalists but with the king himself."

Koirala's meeting with Prachanda's confidante and the Maoist spokesman, Krishna Bahadur Mahara, made the headlines last week.

Koirala discloses that Mahara came to see him even when the Maoists were in the seven-party government.

That was long before some of the top level Chinese delegations met the Nepalese Maoists to allegedly offer advice on unity with "nationalist royalists."



Kamal Thapa : 'Am I nationalist'

In any case, discernible analysts recall a recent interview of the Chinese ambassador in which he said that there had not been a formal government level contact with the Nepalese Maoist leaders.

There had been a series of informal and party level contacts, but "not on the government level" yet!

Why? Answered a Kathmandu editor with keen interest in the Chinese affairs, "The Chinese do not have a complete trust in the Nepalese Maoist leaders", some of whom, by their own admission, lived in India eight out of ten years of their armed struggle launched under the banner of the Chinese helmsman — Maozedung. ■

India has lost its ground in Nepal because of their own wrong policy

- PRAKASH KOIRALA

PRAKASH KOIRALA, son of the legendary leader, B.P. Koirala, is a politician with years of experience in turbulent Nepali politics. Koirala had been elected twice to the House of Representatives in the past. He became a minister in King Gyanendra's government also. He is in spotlight lately for the talks he had had with top Maoist leaders for what the latter see as an attempt to forge a unity among the nationalists. Koirala spoke to **KESHAB POUDEL** on Monday afternoon at his residence in Galfutar. Excerpts:

My relations with Mahara dates back to a long time. We were together in the first parliament in 1993. I had first met Mahara when he was minister and spokesman of the cabinet.

So, what did you discuss with the Maoist leaders? You reportedly met Krishna Bahadur Mahara at least thrice in recent months?

Current political leadership must understand that the country's situation is fluid and anything can happen any time.

How long can you keep on blaming the leadership? Haven't we seen the same thing during Panchayat system, multi party system and the royal regime?

What I am saying here is that all of the leaders have failed including leaders of multi party democracy.

After multi-party democracy, the King took over and he also failed. Now the present leaders are also facing same charges. Why is it so?

If you ask me, why the King failed, my reply would be that he did not fail because of the street agitation. He gave up power under pressure from India and the United States. At the request of Indian special envoy Karan Singh, the King handed over the power. What the King said was that if the international community gives assurance that the situation will improve, he would leave the power. But, the situation has further deteriorated.

But the political parties had been looking for a gesture of reconciliation from the king till the last minute. The king ignored them.

That is completely wrong. Then, as a minister I was asked to start dialogue with Kishunji and Girijabbau. But, what happened has happened. Let's leave that to history.

Your meeting with the Maoist leaders is shaking politics. What issues did you actually discuss with them?

My relations with Mahara dates back to a long time. We were together in the first parliament in 1993. I had first met Mahara when he was minister and spokesman of the cabinet. He wanted to renew the contact. When I asked him why he wanted to meet me, Mahara replied that our leaders do not know international situation. Thus, he wanted to know the implication of changing international scenario on Nepal. He totally agreed with my assessment.

What was your assessment then?

Ten years ago, India was a lone power in Nepal and it was quite influential. Many countries have entered into the fray now. I don't say it is only America, India and China. There are many other powers now. Why all of a sudden the energy-hungry America entered into Nepal and why their interests have grown in Nepal is not difficult to understand. The simple reason behind the growing American presence here is to contain the rise of China.

What specific issues did you discuss with Mahara?

What Mahara told me was that the Maoists want unity among all nationalist forces scattered in various parts. They see unity among nationalist forces as necessary to prevent political catastrophe. In an obvious reference to India and America, he wanted unity among nationalist forces to contain growing move by foreigners.

Did you meet Prachanda and Dr. Baburam Bhattarai?

No, I met Mahara only.

What kind of nationalists did Mahara mean? Did it also include the King?

It includes everybody including the King. They are also meeting other leaders. Mahara clearly said in his recent interview that if they can form unity with Girija Prasad Koirala, Dr. Shekhar Koirala and Sujata Koirala, why not with Prakash Koirala.

Till a few days ago, they accused Prakash Koirala as a feudal and a King's man? Why is there a sudden change?

All those utterances and remarks were given when they were in jungle and in exile. Now they realize the ground reality. It seems reality has bitten them now.

You were the person who once said that the Maoists were the puppets in the hands of India. You called Maoibaadi as are Raobadi during the prime ministership of P.V. Narsimha Rao. How did Raobadi turn into nationalists now?

It was the statement of twelve years ago. Maoists were pro-Indian so I termed them Raobadi. After joining open politics, Maoist leadership understood the reality. Now I see there is a rise of nationalists. Maoists are clearly divided in two camps. There are pro-Indian groups led by Dr. Baburam Bhattarai or Raobadi and another group is pro-Chinese. There is also a third group, which is pro-Scandinavian. I told Mahara that I don't trust Dr. Bhattarari. There are two lines - pro-Indian and pro-Chinese - that are in majority.

What about Prachanda?

Prachanda is now in the middle path as he is balancing both the sides.

How can you prove your arguments?

In the last one and half years, many Chinese delegations including scholars have visited Nepal. Influential Chinese scholar like Professor Wang even visited Maoist cantonment in Kamidanda. When Maoist leaders met with the Chinese, they complained that Indians were displacing them from terai. Chinese professor Wang said that China knows it. He warned China will be meeting India not in Nepal's terai but on the Mechi Bridge (on Nepal's eastern border with India's troubled north-eastern region). Chinese are not coming from Kodari now.

Maoist who waged armed struggle to overthrow monarchy in Nepal and they see the royalists as a feudal force and threat to democracy. Now, they say they want an alliance with nationalist monarchists like you? Don't you think they have betrayed the country in the past by launching war to weaken the monarchy and the state from foreign soil?

They have now realized the international games. They also see Indian moves to displace them from terai.

How can you trust them who have destroyed the statue of Prithivi Narayan Shah, the founder of the Nepali nation?

I don't know whether they met the King or whether the King trusts them. But I trust the Maoists.

What about their relations with the King?

I don't know.

Do you think Maoists now want to save the monarchy?

Yes. Maoists are well aware that it is only the monarchy that can protect them because internationally they will not get support. Maoists know that western countries will not support them.

Do you see any role for the King now?

He has a role to play. Even the international community wants a role for him. They don't want to see the King joining hands with China.

Given the past track record of the Maoists and their relations with India in signing 12 points pact, what is your basis to trust them?

The Maoists accepted India's proposal to sign twelve point agreements and joined the political mainstream when they were desperate to come out of the jungle. They took Indian strategy to come out in public but once they did it the Maoists realized the ground reality. Indians did not tolerate them.

So, had India continued to back the Maoists as in the past, the Maoists would not have disassociated from India?

It is correct. Even my father B.P. Koirala returned from exile in India following the pressure of Indira Gandhi. If this applied to BP, why can't it apply to the Maoists? Once again the reality bites.

How can you compare the Maoists and your father B.P. Koirala who even in his hard days in prison in 1964, had firmly held the view that



Nepal needs Kingship arguing that it is necessary to unify Nepal. Koirala in his own diary jail journal writes how country's interest guides him rather than personal disputes? However, Maoists are still demanding the overthrow of the monarchy and the establishment of a republic. How can you compare the Maoists with your father B.P?

I will tell you one thing straight. Again, I am repeating that reality bites. It is biting them. India and America both are biting them. Former US ambassador James Moriarty once told me that the credibility of political leaders had gone down in Nepalese masses whereas the constitutional monarchy was very popular. I asked if there is a coup, what would be your response. He replied that they would support the King. Why did Moriarty say that to me and why, all of a sudden, there was a U-turn. Americans wanted some kind of base. Why they needed such base? Because they are here to contain another rising power, China.

Do you mean that the King did not permit them to open the base?

That is right. If the Indians are toeing American policy in Nepal to contain China, China will teach a big lesson to Indians

Coming back to Nepal, as you used to say in the past that India is a major factor in Nepal but now is it America which is a key player here?

Along with America, many other countries have also entered into Nepal.

Have you met King Gyanendra recently?

I met him three months ago. He is normal. The King does not want to act.

Almost all political leaders, foreign diplomats and foreign officials said this King is a liar.

I don't believe that. I know this King well. He knows international situation very well. The mistakes of the King are that he wanted to have an independent policy between India and China. This was the reason he proposed China as an observer in SAARC. When the King tried to balance, Americans and Indians started to suspect that the present King to pro-Chinese.

During King Gyanendra's rule, Nepal agreed to permit opening of the Consulate General Office in Birgunj for India, Nepal permitted the Indian embassy to spend money on projects across the country including Terai and agreed to sign

He warned China will be meeting India not in Nepal's terai but on the Mechi Bridge (on Nepal's eastern border with India's troubled north-eastern region).

extradition treaty. The party-led governments did not dare to do those things which many saw as anti-national. But the king did it.

I don't think that is correct. If the King had made a bargain, he would not have to face such criticisms. What we need to look at is the King's actions and the opposition from the Indian media against the King.

If he was democratic, why did he dismiss elected prime minister and became absolute ruler?

It was the circumstances, which compelled him to act. When the country's constitutional process was derailed, he acted to bring the country on right track. His aim was to bring the country's democratic process back on the track.

But he repeatedly and deliberately ignored the persistent call for reconciliation with the parties. The Americans, the western countries and even Chinese leaders were asking him to reconcile with political parties?

The Americans opposed the King's move when the King denied them from opening some kind of base. Otherwise, Americans had supported the King when he exercised Article 127.

The royal takeover widened the gap between the political forces and the monarchy and made the king unpopular. Didn't it?

When the King took the step, I was in Mumbai.

Do you think India was not in favor of the King?

That is absolutely right. India was not in favor of the King. Indians were dead against the royal move from the beginning. They were angry with the King because he did not inform them in advance about his drastic step to impose state of emergency. At that time, I was in India and I read many articles and news in Indian media directed against the King. I had never read such low graded articles in Indian media against Nepalese monarch as if he was a pariah.

You keep on saying that in India, what the left hand does the right hand does not know. If that is the case, India's right hand might have been supporting the King, even as the left hand opposed him?

May be. That could be true.

If that is so, why did he take such step and tried to be a leader of a small coterie instead of becoming the monarch of twenty-three million people? His move ultimately tarnished the image of monarchy, bringing it to almost elimination?

We must give him the benefit of doubt. Based on my interactions with him, I find the present King as more democrat than his brother late King Birendra.

Many experts say it was the King's proposal for observer status for China in SAARC, which angered India?

That is not the only reason. Even before the summit, Indian media had vehemently opposed the King's moves. As we know, Indian media



cannot write against its national interest. If India had supported the King, Indian media would not have done so.

As you used to say in the past that India is the major player in Nepal and India opposes presence of any outside power in Nepal, do you now mean that America has replaced India in Nepal?

The situation is not like a decade ago when India was the only power. India is there but other international players are also active in Nepal. Even a country like Denmark has its own influence in Nepal. No single international power is in decisive position in Nepal at present. Thanks to the Indians, the UN came to Nepal. Nepal is now no more under the sole grip of India.

What is India's policy towards monarchy?

Nepal has already gone out of Indian grip. Their 60-years-long investment has been like putting water in the sand. The situation now is that Nepalese have become anti-Indian. No Nepali will speak against China. Just now a new regional party has been constituted in terai with the tacit backing from India. It shows that India wants to disintegrate Nepal. Opening up a new regional party in terai is a part of that strategy.

Why is India doing so?

As I said earlier one of India's problems is what its right hand does, left hand does not know. India has lost its ground in Nepal because of their own wrong policy towards Nepal.

What will be the Chinese response to such move?

Chinese have been repeatedly speaking that they will not interfere in the internal affairs of Nepal and that China respect Nepal's sovereignty. The new Chinese ambassador has clearly spelled out that China respects territorial integrity of Nepal. This means China will not tolerate any move to disintegrate Nepal.

How do you find Girjababu now?

Girjababu is nervous. He is worried what will happen after him.

Newspapers often report that you guide Dr. Shekhar Koirala and Sujata these days. What do you say?

They come to visit me. They are my cousins and both of them have their own mind and they don't need my guidance. ■

Nepal has already gone out of Indian grip. Their 60-years-long investment has been like putting water in the sand.



BANGLADESH TRADE FAIR

Growing Opportunity

Nepal and Bangladesh have lots of potentials to increase bilateral trade

By A CORRESPONDENT

After four days long hectic activities at Birendra International Convention Center (BICC), three-day Bangladesh Trade Fair came to an end showing high potential for bilateral trade growth. From garments to modern machinery parts, there is a market for Bangladesh's products.

Inaugurated by Speaker of Legislative Parliament Subas Chandra Nembang, one of the aims of the fair was to explore and boost Nepal-Bangladesh trade and economic ties. Despite several efforts, the volume of Nepal-Bangladesh trade is comparatively low.

With various products, 37 companies and firms from Bangladesh took part in the fair. People from different walks of life visited the exhibition showing interest in Bangladesh's products including garments and other machinery products.

In the last few years, some of the products from Bangladesh have already established their reputation. The cotton

and garments products of Bangladesh are very popular among Nepalese customers. Similarly, there is also possibility for Nepalese agriculture products to enter into the market of Bangladesh - particularly fruits, lentil and vegetables.

Along with India, Nepal also has transit treaty with Bangladesh and Nepal has been using Bangladesh's port to enhance Nepal's exports and imports to third country. However, Nepal is yet to completely utilize the transit facilities offered by Bangladesh through Phulbari corridor of India.

"Despite Bangladesh being one of the closet neighbors, bilateral trade has not been able to pick up. We believe improvement in transport connectivity and transit facility could increase the current trade volume," said Shyam Sunder Gupta, Minister for Industry, Commerce and Supplies.

As the industrialists from both the countries have been making efforts to increase the bilateral trade, trade fair provided a good opportunity to explore

the possibility to increase the volume of bilateral trade.

"The fair provided a common platform for private sector representatives from both the South Asian neighbors," said Imtiaz Ahmed, Bangladesh's envoy to Nepal. "Bilateral trade between the two countries have not picked up due to weak infrastructure and transit facility. The trade flow could improve once these problems are sorted out."

Nepal's industrialists hold the view that there should be a long term perspective to smoothen transport and transit related issues. "The transport and transit issues need to be addressed bilaterally and then tri-laterally," said industrialist and president of Confederation of Nepalese Industry Binod Kumar Chaudhary.

Industrialists from both the sides stressed the need for ensuring smooth transportation and easy transit facilities particularly on the corridor of the Indian side. Currently, Nepalese products have to pass through a very difficult process of custom checking in the Indian corridor before reaching to Bangladesh. The quality of road in Bangladesh side is not at par with the international standard. This has also discouraged Nepalese and Bangladesh's traders to carry out business and trade.

Along with organizing trade fair, CNI also organized an interaction program where Nepalese industrialists raised concerns about the high tariff rates in Bangladesh for Nepalese products. Nepalese industrialists also demanded duty free access to Nepalese products in Bangladesh.

"I agree that transport and transit at the corridor are the major factors impeding bilateral trade. Bangladesh has given due priority to increase trade volume with Nepal," said Mustafa Mohiuddin, joint secretary at the Ministry of Commerce, Bangladesh. "We are looking for a joint initiative on tourism promotion and package development." ■

'The Nepali people need to see a tangible improvement in their lives'

- EU Troika

This is the fourth visit to Nepal by an EU Troika. The visit comes at an extremely important juncture in Nepal's peace process and the Troika is pleased to offer continued EU support to the people of Nepal. The people of Nepal deserve a better future and it is the people of Nepal who should own and lead this peace process.

The Troika has had a busy and interesting programme including meetings with the Prime Minister, the Speaker and the Foreign, Home, and Peace Ministers. It also met representatives from various political parties; marginalised groups; civil society; human rights defenders; and the international community.

The November elections to Nepal's Constituent Assembly have been cancelled, denying the people the opportunity to express their views. Since then the peace process has lost its momentum. The EU, a long-term friend of Nepal, wants to see the peace process get back on track. Early elections and a mandate from the people are an essential component of the peace process. Repeated postponement of the elections erodes the credibility, and affects the process, of democratic transformation and legitimisation in Nepal.

The EU urges the Government and the political parties to honour the agreements and commitments already made. This should enable the people of Nepal to choose, without further delay, their own future and the manner of their governance through a free and fair process. The EU is ready to send an EU election observation mission to Nepal in order to support this process.

The Troika sees the need to rebuild confidence in the process. There is a need to have a clear commitment to elections and the peace process. The priority for all must be to rebuild confidence and work together towards credible elections. The Troika was given

assurances from all the parties, including the Maoists, that they are committed to peaceful elections, open to all and without intimidation.

Credible elections also require forward momentum on the key building blocks of the peace process. Throughout its meetings the Troika has heard about the deteriorating security situation. Lawlessness, notably in the Terai, is increasing; there has been severe violence between communities; many people live in fear and are prevented from going about their daily lives. There is a need to rebuild public confidence in



the police and to give the police the support to tackle these problems.

The Troika urges all parties to uphold the rule of law and to tackle impunity whether by State or non-State actors. Failing this, violence will continue and the peace process will be undermined. Impunity should not be left until later - it has to be tackled now if the peace process is to move forward. The EU encourages the Government to act on recent Supreme Court rulings concerning human rights abuses.

The Troika recognises the importance of addressing the future of former combatants. The current situation cannot continue indefinitely. In this content, discussion needs to begin, with a sense of urgency, on the future of Nepal's security forces. A managed process will be important to help build

trust between the negotiating parties.

It is important that the Government implements agreements that it has made with marginalised groups. We encourage this. If the threat of violence is to be reduced and credible elections held, the concerns of marginalised groups need to be addressed. A new Nepal needs to be an inclusive Nepal.

The peace process goes hand in hand with development. The Nepali people need to see a tangible improvement in their lives through better delivery of basic services. If their desire for change goes unfulfilled this will pose a serious threat to the long-term stability of Nepal. The EU, as Nepal's largest development partner, urges the Government to make development a priority now and into the future.

The EU supports the work of UNMIN in assisting the parties to hold credible elections and encourages the parties to make better use of UNMIN's expertise. The EU would support a Nepalese request for an extension of UNMIN's mandate.

The EU urges the political parties to remove the obstacles to early elections. Now is the time to show leadership, to restore trust in the political process. The interests of the Nepali people must come first; the EU stands ready to assist.

The Troika was led by HE Ambassador Pedro Moitinho de Almeida, Special Representative of the EU Presidency for Political Dialogues with 3rd Countries, Portugal. The European Commission was represented by Mr. Jean-Christian Rémond, Head of Unit for Nepal, Bhutan and India. The incoming Slovenia Presidency of the EU was represented by Mr Miklav• Borštnik, Charge d'Affaires a.i., Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia in New Delhi. The EU's High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy was represented by Mr Michael Swann, South Asia Desk Officer at the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU. ■
(Excerpts of EU Troika's statement at a press meet on December 6)

BRITISH COUNCIL

End of History

The closure of library service in British Council is a great loss to Nepalese scholars and students of all ages

By A CORRESPONDENT

British Council Nepal, which has the slogan of 'a new future, a new partner,' is ending its more than three decades long library service from next April transforming the present library into an ICT based learning center.

From children to elderly, politicians to teachers, British Council's well organized library remained the only excellent center of learning for many years. In the last few years, small children enjoyed a great privilege to visit the children's section.

From the coming April, all these incidents are going to be a part of history. The Council has already decided to transform the council into an ICT based learning Center.

"In re-focusing our work to where it can have the greatest impact, we want to ensure it does not happen at the expense of our current library users and customers," said John Fry, the British Council's Country Manager for Nepal.

According to the Council, the British Council's services in Nepal will enter into a new era next April when it launches its new Learning Centre, providing specialized training and self-development opportunities for educational professionals from schools, colleges and universities.

The new Learning Centre, which will open at the British Council's premises in Lainchaur, will be at the center of its work with partners in Nepal in providing training and building capacity that will affect over 10,000 primary school teachers, as well as helping shape the future of vocational education in the country.

The ICT-based Learning Centre will provide access to a wealth of resources both on-line and on CD-ROMs, with

access to top-quality books and learning materials in the English language for the people of Kathmandu".

"What we want to do is to invest our resources where they can provide most impact for Nepal. Increasingly, this will be providing access to specific resources for teachers and educationalists. We can dovetail learning resources from the UK to the exciting capacity-building projects which we will be undertaking in education and English in the next few years."



John Fry: Farewell Nepal

study space for 60 members at any one time. Users will have access to more than one million learning resources, with specialist guidance provided by trained staff to help meet their needs.

"The Learning Centre will take over the space of our existing library, which will close in mid-January. Our library services will be taken over by the Kathmandu Valley Public Library, which will inherit the majority of our books and other library stock."

The British Council will work in partnership with the Kathmandu Valley Public Library, helping them start up their library lending service, providing some funding for new materials, and cooperating on educational and cultural events, such as future visits of writers from the United Kingdom.

"By working together with the Kathmandu Valley Public Library, we want to ensure that there continues to be

"The Learning Centre will also serve students attending our language classes and IELTS candidates who have registered through us. Resources for these two groups will be temporarily transferred to the nearby Ambassador Hotel, while the current library space is closed for refurbishment from mid January to April."

For the liberals in Nepal, British Council and American Library provided as centers of learning the western democratic values and ideals even during the dark days of party less Panchayat. With the restoration of democracy, the library contribution was immense to provide knowledge to Nepalese intellectuals and students regarding evolution of parliamentary democracy in the United Kingdom. Whatever arguments British Council gives to justify its decision, the closure of library service is going to be a major set back to Nepal's education system. ■

BOOK

Course Of Compromise

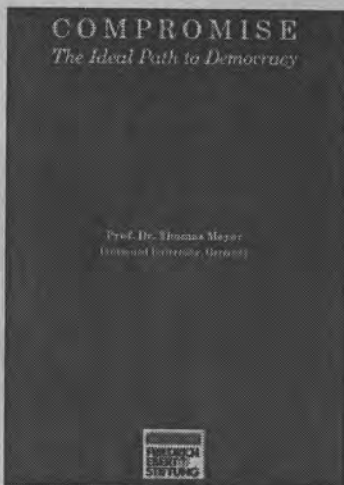
German Author Dr. Thomas Meyer sees the compromise as an ideal path of democracy

By A CORRESPONDENT

At a time when Nepal has been passing through a phase of political conflicts and dissensions among political parties, a German professor Dr. Thomas Meyer's recently published book can be a useful guide to find out ways to settle the dissensions in society.

After the success of People's Movement II, Nepalese political parties have been engaging in one or other kinds of negotiations but they are yet to find compromise solution to end the deadlock. The postponement of the Constituent Assembly Elections in November added more complications and political parties are now in the process of finding new solution.

Published by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) Nepal, the book is first of its kind which talks about the importance of compromise and consensus in the democratic political process. With the political change of



Compromise:
The Ideal Path to Democracy
By: Professor Dr. Thomas Meyer
Dortmund University, Germany
Published by: Friedrich Ebert
Stiftung (FES) Nepal
Price: Undisclosed
Pages: 38

1950, Nepal has seen many ups and downs in political process. The political process was frequently interrupted

It is not new to see differences of opinion in democracy but there are ways of solving dissensions and differences. Compromise is one of the basic ingredients of democracy where political parties with various ideologies and interests have to compete to promote their interests.

Democracy really means pluralism of ideas. Thus dissensions are natural in democratic society. "Democracy reflects the legitimacy of differences. It begins with compromise. A sound democracy depends on building a mechanism to balance the differences of society and formulation of rules to shape the habits, norms and behaviors that define the ability of citizens to govern their lives. The civic culture of a democratic state is shaped by the rational will of free and sovereign citizens and exercise of their rights and duties in public and private lives," writes Professor Dr. Meyer in his book. "In democracy, political parties, civil society and interest groups involve in various exercises of bargaining, negotiation and consensus-building to optimize the sharing of power and express willingness to abide by the rules of the game." ■

Restructuring Debate

Author Sanjaya Sherchan discusses the issue of change the present structure of Nepalese state

By A CORRESPONDENT

At a time when the Nepal does not have permanent constitution and there is no possibility to hold the elections for Constituent Assembly anytime soon, the country seems to have fallen into a prolonged phase of uncertainty.

Whenever there is political uncertainty, there are always issues like racial, linguistic, geographical and religious identity, power sharing and equality coming to surface. After successful Janadolan II and promulgation of new interim constitution, Nepal has already seen upsurge of such kinds of situation.

For a quite a long time, Nepal's social movement was dominated by the issues like Janjati, Dalits and women.

Remaking the Nepalese State

Sanjaya Sherchan

However, following the promulgation of interim Constitution in 2006, new groups emerged with a geographical identity of Madhesh. After the upsurge of Madhesh movement in February 2007, about half of the districts in the country's southern plain are virtually state-less as killing and abduction of common people increased.

As many books have already been

written in the recent years highlighting the issues of indigenous communities, social discrimination and marginalization, Sherchan's new book "Remaking Nepal", too, tries to concentrate on the same issues.

"I have attempted to put forward, as regards the present situation of the country, the perspective of the indigenous nationalities (to which I belong). The book delves into the issues the indigenous nationalities have raised, their grievances against the Nepalese state and their expectations for the future," the author says.

One of the interesting points of Sherchan's book is that it tries to cover various aspects in the process of making the Nepalese state. "The challenge today is to remake the Nepalese state so as to not only include the diverse and disparate voices of the Nepalese society in the polity but also to build bonds that can unite these voices in an inclusive whole," writes Sherchan. ■

"There are people close to the King who love the country very much. There can be an alliance with such nationalists."

Prachanda, Maoist chairman, favoring an alliance with nationalist forces.

"At a time when we find leaders withdrawing or refuting their statements hours after they make it, let us wait for seven days for that remark to mature. Then I will react."

Surya Bahadur Thapa, former prime minister and president of Rastriya Janashakti Party (RJP), refusing to react to Prachanda's remark.

"I thought Prachanda was a nationalist. But I was under an illusion. It would be a grave mistake to see the monarchists as nationalists."

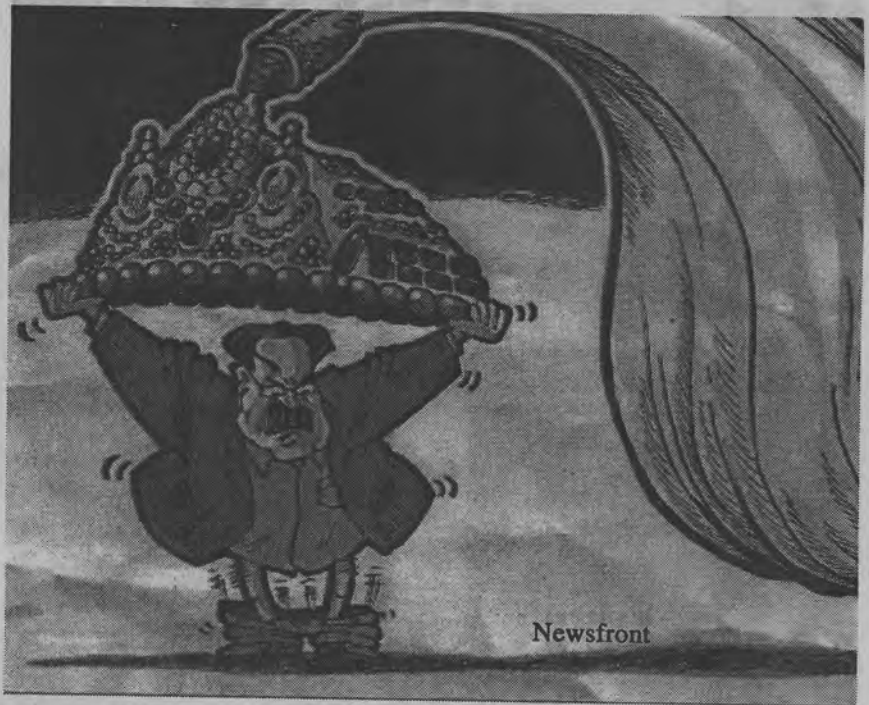
Krishna Sitaula, Home Minister, in Bharatpur.

"People close to the King are agents, brokers, capitalists and feudal. What do you mean by forging links with them?"

Chitra Bahadur KC, chief of Rastriya Jana Morcha, in the parliament.

"What kind of election will that be where the Maoists who have established progressive political demands will lose?"

Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, senior



Maoist leader, at an interaction program.

"The party leadership cannot go an inch beyond the decision of Mahasamiti."

Bijaya Gachhedar, central leader of Nepali Congress, cautioning the party leadership against agreeing to Maoist demands on immediate republic declaration and proportional representation system.

"The interim government and the

interim parliament have lost their legitimacy. A new government should be formed to hold the election by discussing with civil society."

Upendra Yadav, chief of Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF).

"If you do not have intention to hold election then for God's sake don't claim you want to hold it."

Bhojraj Pokharel, chief election commissioner, advising the political leaders to refrain from making false promises.

TRANSITION

RESIGNED: Mahanta Thakur, from the Minister of Environment, Science and Technology

Hridayesh Tripathy, Ramchandra Raya and Mahendra Raya Yadav, from membership of Legislative Parliament

APPOINTED: Bijaya Kanta Lal Karna, Nepalese Ambassador to Denmark, by Nepal Government

ON HOLD: The appointment of

Shailaja Acharya as the ambassador to India, by the government, on grounds of her ill health.

RETURNED: European Union Troika delegation led by Pedro Moitinho de Almeida, after completing a brief visit to Nepal.

ELECTED: Pashupati Sushrer Rana president of Rastriya Prajatantra Party



ARRIVED: United Nations Assistant Secretary-General Jane Holl Lute, in Nepal. Lute is the officer-in-charge of the UN Department of Field Support, responsible for personnel, finance and logistical support necessary to mount, direct, and sustain UN field-based peace operations world-wide.

AWARDED: Jeetman Basnet, with the Universal Human Rights Promotion Award 2007, by Indian Human Rights Organization.



Artist Suman :Creative work

EXPOSITION

Taste of Mithila Art

Drawn on divine inspiration, colorful Mithila art has its own character

By A CORRESPONDENT

In human civilization, painting and art play very important roles in identifying various stages of their evolution. Along with stone, metal and wood sculpture, the paintings also inherit certain traits of evolution.

Divided in three different geographical zones mountains, hill and plain, various ethnic groups living in all these areas in Nepal have their own style of paintings and arts. The uses of color as well as imagination are guided by their own surroundings.

Although nature, surroundings and human culture are different, one of basic similarities among them is the inspiration

they get for their work. For instance, the artists and painters living in the Himalayan region get inspiration from Mahayana Buddhism. However, the painters and artist from plain areas get inspiration from Hinduism.

Since the predominant inhabitants of the plain areas are Hindus; it is natural for them to look on Hindu epics and gods related to their culture and religion. Known as a birth place of Sita, consort of lord Rama, Mithila paintings draw inspiration from Rama's life. Mithila art also includes other themes. These are what one can see in Mithila Art Exhibition in Siddhartha Art Gallery.

Combination of varieties of color is one of the interesting things to see.

Inaugurated by country director of World Food Program Richard Ragan, the exhibition entitled Mithila Cosmos has over 35 paintings of SC Suman who painted these paintings during the last few years.

A student of science from Biratnagar, Suman has learnt the skill of painting Mithila art from his family members particularly his grandmother. "I was taught by my grand mother the way to paint," he said. In all his 35 paintings, artist Suman retains basic ingredients of Mithila art.

Most of the figure presented in the paintings is either related to nature or religious importance.

As a young artist, Suman also tries to break tradition as he paints on various issues including cultural part, terai's important festivals and nature. From human love to culture of terai, Suman paints all the different aspects. In his paintings one can see his inner feelings regarding the religion as most of the paintings are dedicated to Hindu gods.

Along with traditional color, artist Suman uses natural pigment, mixed media and acrylic on silk.

Till a few years ago, Mithila paintings were confined to the traditional religious festivals as they are drawn mostly on the time of festivals and other rituals like marriage. Thanks to the effort of various non-governmental organizations and initiation of local population, the Mithila art is popularized in the countrywide as well as internationally.

This is the reason the young person like Suman is also attracted to this field. The art and culture is not only the heritage of particular community but is also heritage of the country. Artists like Suman must be encouraged to involve in such creativity.

Nepal is one of the few countries in the world, which has such kind of diversity in terms of ethnicity, geography, culture, biology and environment. This diversity in geography is also reflected in diversity in art and craft. ■

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