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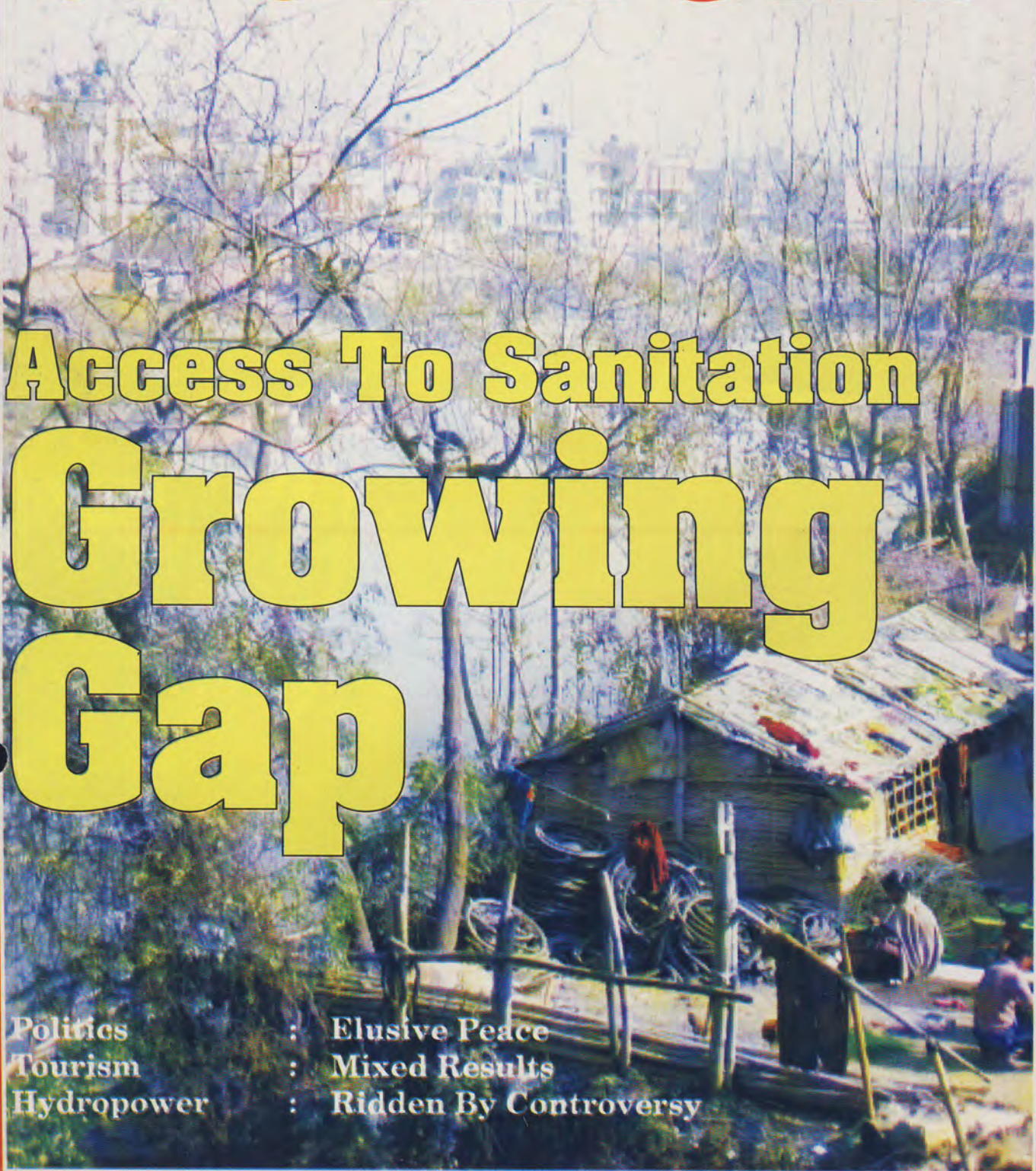
The National Newsmagazine

SPOTLIGHT

Jan 11-17, 2008

Access To Sanitation Growing Gap

Politics : Elusive Peace
 Tourism : Mixed Results
 Hydropower : Ridden By Controversy



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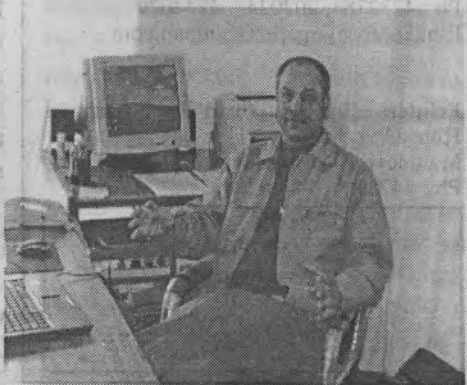


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SPOTLIGHT

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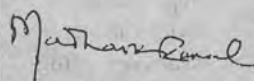
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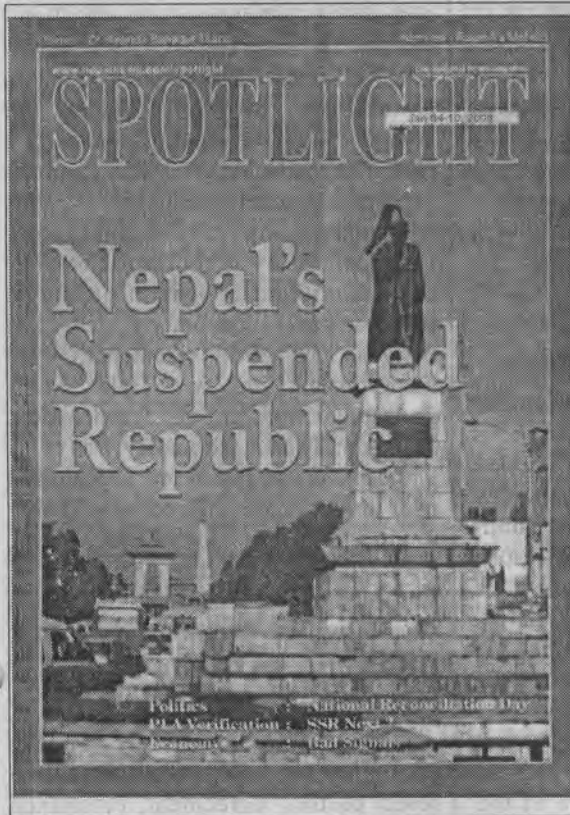
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The enthusiasm for the elections to the Constituent Assembly shown by the SPAM is said to be a sham. It is being reported that since they all have lost all credibility with the common people, they are apprehensive that their presence in the constituent assembly might be much less than expected. The overwhelming majority of the Nepalis have experienced how the SPAM regime, in the last twenty months, have trampled upon all the rights of the opposition, have sidelined all democratic norms and behaviors and ruled the country in the most authoritarian manner overstepping all legal and constitutional mandates. Although SPAM is an organization of eight parties, the three bigger parties the Nepali Congress, the CPN(Maoists) and the CPN (UML) are dominating all the five trying to pull the government its own way and in the process, pushing the country towards total destruction. The government is so weak that it cannot stop all the fissiparous tendencies working to destabilize the country leading to disintegration. There are only two powers that can save the rot. One is internal and other is external. The internal power is the overwhelming mass of patriotic Nepalis and the external power is India- the mother of all political destabilization in South Asia. South Asia has the potential of becoming a strong power house, both economically and politically. But great India's narrow minded attitude of dominating the region has turned it into the poorest region of the world. If India does not bring in immediate change in her policies towards her smaller neighbors, the days might not be far when she herself might have to face disintegration. Consequently, India has to realize now that patriotic Nepalis would always be their better friends than their lackeys and hangers-on. India also cannot overlook that the only way to earn the goodwill, regard and gratitude of Nepalis as well as other smaller neighbors is to be sincerely sensitive to their problems and stop fishing in their troubled waters. They would do well to learn from the great Chinese how to behave with their smaller neighbors. It is, indeed, a great pity that such a big and mighty India has not been able to win friends around her vicinity. The appropriate time has come for India to repair the damage. Nepal is embarking upon her ambitious plan of drafting a people's constitution and without India's sincere cooperation it might stay an utopian dream. This small mountain country is embroiled in political turmoils, impossible to be solved without genuine help and cooperation of India and Nepal's other good friends. As prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala said a few days back," if India wants the Madhesh problem can be solved in a minute." Perhaps, he never spoke a better truth. As such, India has to come forward with a big heart and help her small but good friend find her way to economic development. Nepal's other good friends too have to stop looking at Nepal through borrowed eyes. They too have to realize that backing wrong, lame and weak horses will not assist anyone achieve his mission. By sincerely helping the poor people of Nepal these big countries will not only add a feather to the caps but also prove to other smaller and poorer countries that they are neither hypocritical nor selfish. And it is the most opportune time for all patriotic Nepalis to unite and give a sound thrashing to all the anti-national forces and warn the SPAM that they are fighting a loosing battle as it is a fight between the SPAM and the Nepali people, and people never loose. And it is the most opportune time to reassure Nepal's security forces that the patriotic Nepalis will always stand shoulder to shoulder with them to defend the integrity and sovereignty of their dear motherland.



Madhav K. Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher



Interesting Spin

Your cover story Nepal's Suspended Republic (January 4-10) is interesting and revealing. After reading your cover story, I now realize that seven party leaders know how to fool the people. After passing the constitutional amendment bill, the seven party leaders also showed that they don't care about the people's wishes. Like any military dictator, they are no more than a bunch of dictators who do not hesitate to take any decision by themselves. The cover story has rightly exposed their double face.

*Renu Lama
Chabahil*

Disappointing Perspective

I am disappointed to read your cover story on Suspended Republic. Since interim parliament has already amended the interim constitution declaring Nepal as a federal, republican democratic state, I cannot accept with you that the MPs have retained monarchy. As home minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula rightly pointed out that no one can stop Nepal from turning into republic, I was amazed at the story in a magazine like yours. Your cover story is biased and partial and supports the monarchy.

*Bhavani Nepali
Kamaladi*

Autocratic March

By amending the interim constitution and placing conditions on the Constituent Assembly, leaders of seven party alliance have shown that they are no more than a bunch of autocrats and they don't believe in the wisdom of people. In the name of mandate of people, seven party leaders have been taking all the decision curtailing the right of the people. After amending the constitution, seven party alliance has made it clear that the forthcoming CA will be no more than a rubber stamp to endorse their wish.

*Umesh Rai
Dharan*

True Reconciliation

Reading your story on National Reconciliation: A Day to Remember (Spotlight January 4-10), I felt how great B.P. was as he had correctly predicted the result of giving up national reconciliation by his party. I don't think there is any politician right now in Nepal who can match with B.P. Koirala who sacrificed his life for the politics based on morality and ideology. Had he sacrificed his morality and ideology, he would have become prime minister all his life. Whatever the cost he had to face in his personal life, B.P. upheld his ideals and morality in politics. Although he had seen many ups and downs in his long political career, B.P. Koirala never compromised with national interest. He is a great patriot statesman of Nepal. His prediction has now come true. "I don't have any alternative to the present line of national reconciliation in my mind. I don't think of any alternative to reconciliation. It is just unthinkable. For that would bring about disintegration of our country," - he had so truly said. As soon as his brother G.P. Koirala compromised everything for power, the country is now on the verge of

disintegration.

*Deepak Heerachan
Melbourne, Australia Via-email*

Warming Globe

At a time when Nepal has been facing serious consequences of global warming, Nepalese policy makers have no time to talk and discuss about its future implications. Being agriculture-based country; change in the climate may have adverse effect on the life of tens of thousands of farmers. Furthermore, the rise of temperature may result in outburst of glaciers which will inevitably damage Nepal's infrastructures. The time has now come for policy makers to do something to prevent disaster in future.

*Deepika Gurung
London Via-email*

Focus On Development

We have already spent too much time talking and reading about politics. A magazine like Spotlight needs to focus more on developmental, economic and environmental issues. I am very frustrated to read politics all the time.

Daman K.C.

Baneshowr Via-email

Mahato's Comments

It was very interesting to read interview of Rajendra Mahato. He is honest enough to speak what his intentions and motives are. There are many objectionable remarks in Mahato's



interview. But, such interview helps a lot to read the mindset of a Madhesi leader. At a time when prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala, a pahadi, has been working as a pawn to destroy Nepal, Mahato's remarks are too weak. You need to give more space to Madhesi leaders like Mahato so that people of Madhes can know them better.

*Saeed Ansari
Biratnagar, Via-email*



Nepal Comes Down Hard Against Prachanda

A day after Maoist chairman Prachanda visited a pro-UML student injured by Young Communist League (YCL) cadres in a hospital in Kathmandu, ostensibly to show his concern, general secretary of UML Madhav Kumar Nepal has said that he still doubts if the concerns were real or mere 'crocodile tears.' "(Their) cadres are running amok beating left and right and their leaders express concern and say they are sorry. I don't know if that is real or mere crocodile tear," he said referring to Prachanda's visit to Teaching Hospital on Friday (Jan 4) to meet with Deepak Gautam. Gautam, a member of UML-affiliated All Nepal National Free Students Union (ANNFSU) had been seriously injured by YCL cadres in Kavre district a few days ago. Nepal also criticized ANNFSU for 'wailing' before Prachanda. The ANNFSU delegation had met with Prachanda to complain about YCL attack. "There is no meaning in sending delegations. People should be mobilized and such things should be exposed. A party whose public image is tarnished will be a dead party," Nepal said, addressing a program by the UML youth wing Democratic National Youth Federation on Saturday. Meanwhile, on Saturday, a group of Maoist workers in Sankhuwasabha thrashed an official of National Investigation Department, Amrit Thapa. *Nepalnews.com reports*

Three Killed In Bus Mishap

Three persons were killed including the principal of a school when a bus carrying students and teachers returning from a picnic in Kakani met with an accident near Okharpauwa on Saturday (Jan 05) evening. The bus carrying 77

students of Secret Heart Academy of Swayambhu fell down the road injuring 57 students. Some of them are said to be in serious condition. Principal Sushila Shakya, teacher Pramila Rai and a student Mohan Lungeli died in the accident, according to police. Police suspect that the driver, who is still absconding, was driving under the influence of alcohol. *Compiled from reports*

Maoists Begin Crucial Meet

The Maoist central committee meeting has kicked off at a resort at Phulbari of Kavre district Saturday (Jan 05) morning to plot the party's strategy in the run-up to the Constituent Assembly (CA) elections. The Maoist central meet is due to design the party's three-month long electoral campaign, manifesto, selection of the party's candidates and strategies to consolidate the party's base besides discussing other issues such as the impact of controversial activities of the party's fraternal organizations and integration of the Maoist People's Liberation Army into the national army. Maoist Chairman Prachanda has tabled his political report on the first day of the meeting. Party spokesman and Minister for Information and Communications Krishna Bahadur Mahara informed that the report dwells on the implementation of the 23-point agreement among the top SPA leaders, other pressing political issues and preparations for the elections. Another Maoist source said that the three-day meeting is expected to form a panel led by Prachanda to select the candidates for the election. The discussion on the political report started after the regional and departmental in-charges reported on the party's activities in their respective areas to the leadership. *Kantipur reports*

Thakur's Party Submits 11-Point Demands To Pm

The newly launched Terai-Madhes Democratic Party has submitted 11-point demands to Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala on Thursday. "We are struggling for liberation. We want autonomy. We will not surrender," Mahantha Thakur, chief of the party, later told reporters. The demands put forth by the party include constitutional guarantee of autonomy

with right to self determination for Terai-Madhes region; declaring 42 people killed during last year's Madhes agitation as martyrs; providing relief and compensation to injured; formation of a new independent commission to probe alleged atrocities during Madhes agitation; recruitment of Madhesi people in Nepali Army proportional to their population; and allocation of budget based on population, among others. The party has asked the government to fulfill the demands within two weeks or face protest agitation. The chief of the party, Mahantha Thakur, led a delegation of his party leaders to Baluwatar and handed over the demands. Till recently, Thakur used to be a close aide of PM Koirala. He resigned as Agriculture Minister and as leader of Nepali Congress (NC) to float a new party. *Nepalnews.com reports*

Differences Within Maoists

On Army Integration

After the combatants at the cantonments expressed displeasure at the seven parties' agreement, Prachanda summoned Kali Bahadur Kham aka Bibidh, third division commander of Maoists People's Liberation Army (PLA). Leaders like Ram Bahadur Thapa aka Badal have expressed their



disagreement with the agreement among seven parties to integrate PLA combatants verified (by the UNMIN) by providing them with salaries, and sending home those who are not verified. He and another leader Netra Bikram Chand aka Biplav had gone to fourth division cantonment in Nawalparasi subsequently. "We will return only after liberation. If anyone tries to make us return before liberation, they will themselves have to return from the government," Biplav, also known as a hardliner within Maoists, has said. "There have been many reactions saying that the

agreement should not have mentioned that disqualified ones will be returned home," said another Maoist deputy commander Chandra Dev Khanal aka Baldev. Leaders have said the Maoist central committee will discuss this issue on Saturday. "Rather than on election, the difference is on army integration," said a source. Leaders like Badal, Biplav and Kiran (Mohan Baidya) are of the opinion that they can help by staying outside the government. Owing to the differences, Maheshwor Dahal – who is said to be close to Badal and Biplav – has not returned to his position of advisor of Ministry of Information and Communication even though the party has said all should return to their respective positions (before the Maoists resigned from the government).

Kantipur daily reports

Rizal Says Bhutan Polls An Eyewash

Bhutanese leader Tek Nath Rizal on Wednesday (Jan 2) labeled the elections for National Council conducted in Bhutan on Monday as "yet another attempt" at eyewash. "The election is unfair since thousands of Nepali speaking people, who were not provided with the No Objection CertificateS were barred from voting," Rizal told The Himalayan Times daily. Saying that the Bhutan government has done yet another injustice to the Nepali-speaking community inside Bhutan and the refugees here, Rizal termed all political parties who won election as King's men responsible for ethnic cleansing. Rizal also blamed the international community for curtailing the rights of the Bhutanese people in the name of resettlement at a time when Bhutan government had "admitted" that the refugees in the camps of Jhapa and Morang were Bhutanis. Two days after the first democratic exercise in Bhutan, the Association of Press Freedom Activists Bhutan said the election had to incorporate the spirit of the people and address their demands. "Low voter turnout proved people's annoyance with the autocratic ruler," a statement issued by APFA said on Wednesday, adding that voter turnout was less than 40 percent. A large populace was denied Voter Photo Identity Cards on various grounds. APFA states that the VPICs were issued to those



who produced No Objection Certificate (NOC), which was issued by Royal Bhutan Police. "Many who supported 1990 and 1997 demonstrations were denied VPICs," the statement adds. "The election will not pave the way for democracy in Bhutan but will be used to violate people's rights. Expect more ethnic cleansing policies from these selected people," adds APFA. Meanwhile, reports say that two Nepali-speaking candidates have emerged winners in the election.

Dr Mani Kumar Rai and Justin Gurung who had contested from Samchi and Chirang constituencies, respectively, have won the election held for the National Council or upper house of Bhutan by convincingly beating their closest contestants. *Compiled from reports*

Prachanda Says PLA Integration Dialogue Is Going On

Maoist chairman Prachanda has claimed that his party is in talks at high level with seven parties on the issue of integrating Maoist People's Liberation Army (PLA) into Nepali Army (NA). According to a Maoist leader who was present at a function organized by the PLA third division where Prachanda spoke, he said the armies would be integrated 'on a group basis.' Prachanda also directed his commanders to create an environment conducive for CA election. *Leading dailies report*

RPP-Nepal Launched Agitation

The Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP-Nepal) has decided to launch agitation against what it calls as 'totalitarian and dictatorial regime of the seven parties.'

The RPP-Nepal led by Rabindra Nath Sharma is known as a pro-monarchy party. It has decided to kick off its agitation by holding peaceful demonstration in the capital on January 7. The party has said it opposes the 'hijacking' of people's authority by the seven parties by declaring republic through nominated parliament. The party has claimed that movement for republic has caused agitation in Terai leading to a situation where the region is on the verge of disintegration. Sharma has said that people are in favour of monarchy in Terai. He said that the Constituent Assembly (CA) election will not be held even in mid-April. Sharma said that only revolution or referendum can decide on monarchy. *nepalnews.com reports*

EC Wants Date

The Election Commission (EC) has urged the government to immediately fix the date of election and make all its machineries election-oriented. The EC officials including Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Bhojraj Pokharel met with Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, Tuesday (Jan 1), and urged him to do so. PM Koirala told EC officials that election date will soon be fixed after necessary laws are passed. The EC has also told the government that it needs 90 days to prepare for the election once all the necessary laws are passed. The government has already tabled bills to amend CA Member Election Act, EC Act, and Voters List Act at the parliament. The amendments are necessary to incorporate latest agreement among seven parties to increase PR portion within the mixed election system. The EC officials have also underscored the necessity of ensure full security to create environment conducive for polls.



PM Koirala meeting with business community

Photo : G.P.

FOLLOWING A BRIEF BUT TENSE STANDOFF, Maoist-nominee Matrika Yadav took oath of office in Maithili language on Wednesday (Jan 2). Minister for Forest and Soil Conservation Matrika Yadav took oath after briefly boycotting the swearing-in ceremony insisting that he would take oath only in Maithili, his mother tongue. Yadav had walked out of the State Hall, Singha Durbar — where the swearing ceremony was in progress — upon being informed by Chief Secretary Bhoj Raj Ghimire that there was no provision in the constitution to administer oath in languages other than Nepali. The disgruntled minister even refused to receive the telephone call from his party chairman Prachanda, who reportedly told other Maoist leaders present at the ceremony to convince him to abide by the rule. While leaving, he blamed Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala of being insensitive towards the rights of Madhesi people. However, after sometime, he agreed to take the oath of office, reading out his oath in Maithali. Yadav, one of the five Maoist ministers inducted in the interim cabinet on Sunday, was out of the capital on Monday when other newly-appointed ministers were sworn in. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Koirala administered the oath of office to labor minister Ramesh Lekhak who was promoted on Sunday to a full minister. Lekhak was also out of town on Monday.

FOR THE FOURTH TIME, the Special Court on Wednesday (Jan 2) deferred its verdict on the case of suspended Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) governor Bijay Nath Bhattarai. The Court registrar Lekhnath Poudel informed that the hearing of the case has now been rescheduled for January 13 since “a judge looking into the case was on leave” on Wednesday. Bhattarai and another senior NRB official, Surendra Man Pradhan, have been accused of embezzling Rs 195.319 million that Nepal had received in foreign aid for financial sector reform project. The Commission for Investigation for Abuse of Authority (CIAA) had filed cases against Bhattarai and co-accused Pradhan in June 29, 2007.

THE 309 MW STRONG UPPER TAMAKOSI project is going to be developed with domestic investment. Led by Employees Provident Fund (EPF), other domestic banks,

financial institutions and general public will invest in this project. Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) had announced last year that the project will be developed using domestic capital. After the Finance Ministry authorized EPF to invest in the project, the EPF is now going to ink a deal with NEA within a week. The EPF will invest up to 25 percent in the project. Based in Lamabagar of Dolakha district, the project is expected to be completed in five years. According to ministry sources, of the total expected cost of the project at Rs 26 billion, the EPF

will put in Rs 12 billion, banks and financial institutions will invest Rs 4 billion and banks and general public will invest Rs 8 billion and the rest will be raised through issuing debentures/bonds. The EPF, which has the capital of Rs 60 billion, will invest Rs 12 billion in the project — Rs 10 billion as loan and Rs 2 billion as share investment of its depositors. This project is considered as one of the most economically attractive one and can generate electricity at 1.6 US cents or Rs 1.12 per unit.

THE ELECTION COMMISSION (EC) on Wednesday (Jan 2) held a meeting with government secretaries over the forthcoming Constituent Assembly (CA) election. In presence of other commissioners, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Bhojraj Pokharel urged the secretaries to keep resources at their disposal on the standby mode and to issue necessary instruction to all officials working under them to lend maximum help to election activities. Pokharel also said that he expected all officials to fully abide by the election code of conduct once it is enforced. He also urged secretaries to appoint a contact official in each ministry to deal with election. At the interaction program, secretaries expressed commitment to provide all necessary help. They said they will accord topmost priority to the CA election. Compiled from reports

THE PRICE OF GOLD HAS INCREASED rapidly reaching to a record level on Thursday. The price of gold has reached to Rs 20,200 per tola. Following the footsteps of rising gold price in international market, domestic market also saw the price reaching record levels. In the international market, the price of gold has reached to \$855.10 per ounce — highest in last 27 years. “Domestic prices have increased due to fluctuation in international market,” said Tejratna Shakya, president of Nepal Gold Silver Traders Association. As oil prices have increased and dollar has weakened, investors have turned to gold as safer bet, pushing its price. Meanwhile, due to high price rise, demand for gold has decreased in the country. Wholesale trade has decreased by 10 to 15 percent while retail trade has come down almost to zero, said Rajendra Kumar Shakya of RK Jewelers. ■

INDIA ENSLAVED WHILE NEPAL REMAINED FREE

■Mrs. Laxmi Thapa

Jawaharlal. Nehru has expressed in an extremely touching way the pitiable condition of Indians under the British rule in this famous book "The Discovery of India" first published in 1946. He has written that the Indians were living in enslaved condition in their own country until 1947 when India became a free country. The text from his book is presented hereinafter.

"In Bombay there is a well-known club which did not allow and so far as I know, does not allow, an Indian (except as a servant) even in its visitors' room, even though he might be a ruling prince or a captain of industry."

"Racialism in India is not so much English versus Indian; it is European as opposed to Asiatic. In India every European, be he German, or Pole, or Rumanian, he is automatically a member of the ruling race. Railway carriages, station retiring-rooms, benches in parks, etc., marked "Europeans Only". This is bad enough in South Africa or elsewhere, but to have to put up with it in one's own country is a humiliating and exasperating reminder of one's enslaved condition."

"Bengal had the first full experience of British rule in India. That rule began with outright plunder and a land revenue system which extracted the uttermost farthing not only from the living but also from the dead cultivators."

"A gold lust unequalled since the hysteria that took hold of the Spaniards of Cortes' and Pizarro's age filled the English mind. Bengal in particular was not to know peace again until she has been bled white. It was pure loot. This process was called trade later on but that made little difference. And it must be remembered that this lasted, under various names and under different forms, not for a few years but for generations."

Dark Age of British Expansion

The way new territories in South Asia were brought under British control and ruled in those days had provoked even the British public. British Parliament had gone completely against it.

The Marquis Wellesley became in 1798 the next British Governor-General of India. In 1798 the French fleet was defeated by the British admiral Horatio Nelson significantly weakening its strength. After the 1798 naval victory British rulers in India must have felt that France would not anymore be able to pose a serious threat to further expansion of the British Empire in South Asia. Britain started the task of further expansion of its territory.

Governor General Wellesley played decisive role in the expansion of the British Empire in India. Colonel

Wellesley, the younger brother of the Marquis Wellesley, had also come to India. Colonel Wellesley had fought under General Harris in the battles to defeat Tippu Sultan.

Colonel Wellesley defeated Marathas at Assaye in 1803. He again defeated them at Argaum the same year.

Colonel Wellesley afterwards became Sir Arthur Wellesley, and then Duke of Wellington who defeated Napoleon in Waterloo Battle. Later on he became the Prime Minister of the Great Britain.

Oude Nawab Cedes Do-ab to Britain

Governor General Wellesley used every possible means to expand British Empire in South Asia. Wellesley asked the Nawab of Oude to agree, like the Nizam, to cede to Britain some of his territories in exchange for British protection. At first the Nawab would not agree, but at length, when he saw there was no use of trying to resist,

he gave in. British army was sent to Oude, and to pay for it the Nawab gave up the Do-ab or the country between the Jamuna and the Ganges. Meanwhile Wellesley

turned his attention to

Delhi. In 1803, General Gerard Lake captured Delhi and Agra.

It was very clear that British rulers in India did not want Nepal to become a strong power. They must have realized that sooner or later they would have to wage a war against Nepal. British forces were virtually on the alert in the west after the Wellesley's conquest of the North India. However, British rulers must not have liked to risk getting caught in battles against Nepal in unknown high mountain terrains without penetrating into Nepal's defense system in advance.

Nepal United to Defend Freedom

At a time when almost the whole South Asian region was being swiftly converted into the colony of the European countries, Nepal was able to rise from a scratch to be a formidable Himalayan power within a very short time. Nepal had gathered enough strength to move forward to protect the peoples dwelling in this vast region from external threats. However, the build up of Nepalese strength brought her on a collision course with the colonial power of that time. Colonial power Great Britain had good reason to fear that if the Nepalese build up continued for some time, the colonial rule of Britain could soon come to an end in South Asia much the same way as in the North America a short time before.

It was very clear that British rulers in India did not want Nepal to become a strong power. They must have realized that sooner or later they would have to wage a war against Nepal.

Unification Stood the Severest Test

The process of unification of the Himalayan region started by Prithivinarayan Shah had spread like wild fire across the Himalayan region. In 1792 a war broke between China and Nepal. It was the most unfortunate event for the newly emerged Great Nepal. Most of the troops stationed in the western part of the country had to be pulled back to defend the capital Kathmandu. The Chinese offensive was directed straight towards the capital. China has remained a major superpower all along and thus the Chinese attack might have at that time badly shaken the people living across the entire Himalayan region. There could not be other better opportunity for those opposed to the unification campaign to break away and again form independent states. But even during this period of great threat to the Himalayan unity except for few minor incidences nothing untoward happened that could seriously undermine the integrity of the Great Nepal. Thus the Himalayan unity stood the severest test and encouraged those fighting for the cause of such unity not to be complacent about the achievements; there was still a lot to be done.

Sacrifice of Nepalese People

It was early 1810s. Great Britain was the most powerful country in the whole world. Its vast empire had already stretched across all five continents. Britain finally decided to implement its plan to make Nepal also one of its colonies. Nepal was attacked without formally declaring war. Britain hoped that Nepal could be quickly subdued in a blitzkrieg invasion.

Needless to say that those were the worst days in the history of our country. The war stretched over a period of three calendar years in sharp contrast to the expectation of the British Government. Nepal bravely defended its independence. Many patriotic Nepali laid down their life in the battles fought against the British. Our enemy was forced to abandon its grand design to enslave Nepal though we lost some of our territories.

Our forefathers were able to protect the honor of our country while almost all other countries in Asia and Africa failed. Nepal was able to defend its independence because of our forefathers' great sacrifice. They must have visualized that their great sacrifice would be paid off. They might have been hoping that their descendants would not have to be humiliated by colonial rulers of those days if they bravely defended their country.

We Should Be Ashamed

Nepal was in the avant garde among the countries succeeding to defend themselves from the threat of being enslaved by colonial powers. At that time there was no other country to help us. Our country alone had to face the intruder many times superior to us in strength. In this struggle a large number of patriotic Nepali had to sacrifice their life. But those of us living now should be ashamed that we could not live up to the expectation of our forefathers to transform Nepal into a reasonably developed country, despite the fact that at present the world situation is quite conducive for it. ■



Minister Poudel : TRC row

TRC

Call For Essential Debates

The OHCHR-Nepal has called for broad-based consultations before forming the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

By A CORRESPONDENT

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR-Nepal) has expressed concerns about what it considers as hasty steps towards forming the important TRC.

"OHCHR-Nepal is concerned that a TRC might be established before essential, broad-based public consultations can be completed. The Office has confirmed that the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction is planning to submit draft legislation to Cabinet within weeks, a timetable which would not allow for adequate consultations," states a press release by the Office.

OHCHR-Nepal Representative Richard Bennett, in a letter to the Ministry on Friday, emphasized that the "process cannot be rushed, and that without broad nationwide consultations of all stakeholders – including victims – there is a risk that the TRC established would be neither effective nor legitimate."

The OHCHR-Nepal has urged the Ministry to delay submitting the draft bill and establishing the commission, and has asked the Government to amend the 23-point agreement signed by the political parties on 23 December if necessary to permit the postponement.

"It also encourages the Government to design and implement a comprehensive strategy for broad-based national consultations. The strategy should be designed with the input of experts and stakeholders such as human rights experts, victims' representatives, community and religious leaders, academics, judges and experts on reconciliation."

The OHCHR-Nepal has also asked to ensure broad geographic reach, including of both rural and urban areas; broad participation of stakeholders, in particular victims and those communities most affected by the conflict, and; suitable arrangements to facilitate input from all categories of persons, taking into account confidentiality and security considerations. ■

NEIGHBOURS

Exploring Alternatives?

The neighbourly search for forces of stability appears to have mounted amidst a volatile transition in Nepal

By SUSHIL SHARMA

Less than a month after a visit to India, the Nepalese army chief, Rukmangad Katwal, is on a tour of China,

The China tour has not created ripples as it did during his sojourn in India.

On the surface of it, both visits were routine and traditional.

But circumstances have made both visits lot more meaningful and significant.

Katwal's Beijing sojourn has come ahead of the long-pending visit by his boss, the defence minister and the prime minister, Girija Prasad Koirala.

Koirala was supposed to have travelled across the Himalayas earlier this year.

The tour has not taken place yet, nor has the planned visit of the Maoist chief Prachanda.

Said a senior Maoist leader after his last visit to China, the Chinese are keen to roll red carpet for Prachanda. "But they do not want to do it before playing host to Koirala."

For reasons best known to them the two top leaders of the shaky seven-party alliance have not been able to make it yet.

But as the two big neighbours stress on stability as Nepal struggles through a critical transition, the top general of the country's only in-tact institution has done it.

Katwal's India tour was originally supposed to cover a function of a ceremonial nature at the north western hill town, Deharadun.

As he stood his ground for a fully official visit and treatment on par with his Indian counterpart, he had his way

SPOTLIGHT/January 11, 2008

Understandably what made headlines was his flat refusal to integrate the "politically indoctrinated" fighters into the "non political and professional" Nepali national army.

What largely went unnoticed, for reasons difficult to explain, was his warning on the threat to the country's sovereignty, independence and the territorial integrity.



Nepal Army Chief Katwal leaving to China: Friendly visit

following the direct intervention of his Indian counterpart and personal friend Deepak Kapoor.

Katwal flew to Delhi from Dehradun.

Even as he had been meeting Kapoor and other influential civilian and security officials in Delhi, top Maoist leaders including Prachanda back home talked about clandestine meetings with senior Nepalese generals.

The claims did not last long.

Immediately upon Katwal's return from Delhi, the Nepalese army issued a strong-worded press statement refuting the Maoist claims.

Before leaving for Beijing, Katwal went one step ahead and decided to speak himself, instead of letting the press statement speak.

As Katwal left for Mao's land, he made it clear that there would be no room for Mao's armed disciples of Nepal in the national army.

It is on the latter count that the Chinese have been more than anxious lately, as can be unfailingly observed in recent public statements by normally press-shy Chinese leaders, diplomats and academics.

The shrewd and politically highly agile chief of the professional national army echoed that concern before boarding a Beijing-bound flight.

"National flags are being burnt today", Katwal said in reference to events in some Terai districts.

Recent reports suggest that China has taken the situation in the Nepal Terai as "unusual and unnatural."

Clearly, as the twice postponed constituent assembly elections still remain uncertain with the credibility of the political leaders fast eroding by the day, the army finds itself at a centre stage.

Both neighbours appear to reconcile to this and chalking out strategies accordingly. ■



Prithvi Narayan Shah: Reminding reality

POLITICS

Elusive Peace

Anyone can diagnose the source of destabilization but nobody has the prescription to cure it

By KESHAB POUDEL

As Machiavelli once said it is very difficult to diagnosis Tuberculosis (TB) in early stage but it is very easy to cure it then; and it is very easy to diagnose but difficult to cure the disease when it is at the last stage. So is the political situation of Nepal.

When B.P. Koirala diagnosed the

source of prolonged political instability and urged political forces for unity among themselves to preempt it, he could not find a supporter even in his own party. Ruling Panchas termed B.P.'s national reconciliation as a foreign-inspired slogan and his party followers saw reconciliation as a surrender to Panchayat and the King.

In his life time, B.P. reminded that Nepal needed reconciliation between the King and democratic forces. Whether in his message from death bed or through his interviews to Indian journalist Bhola Chatterjee, Koirala always upheld the view that alternative to reconciliation is unthinkable. For that would bring about our disintegration, he said.

People talk much about B. P.'s national reconciliation these days. From Congress leader Krishna Prasad Bhattarai to Girija Prasad Koirala to Kamal Thapa and Rabindra Nath Sharma, from two opposite sides of political spectrum - they are all telling about the relevance of national reconciliation.

As it is said there are no permanent friends and no permanent enemies in politics, former Panchayati activists like Kamal Thapa and Rabindra Nath Sharma have now appeared closer to B.P.'s thesis of national reconciliation than B.P.'s own brother G. P. Koirala and his followers.

"B.P had visualized the whole area of South Asia as a zone of turmoil and because of that, a small country like Nepal- which is situated between two big giants - needed a broader national unity to uphold its integrity and independence. It is the basic tenant of the policy of national reconciliation," said a political analyst, who was very close to B.P. Koirala. "People talk more about the threat to the national integrity and independence these days than in the past. This kind of dangerous operation against Nepal was not visible at that time and the whole country had an ideal mosaic of multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-linguistic commitments. That seems to have been completely shattered and now, even a layman in the street is worried much about the peace and stability of the country than his own personal problem."

Although in public meetings, politicians harp radical slogans, they all express, in private conversation, same worries and concerns about the peace and stability of the country and, thus, its integrity and independence.

"Feeling the pulse of the people, politicians have occasionally expressed the concern about the peace and stability of the country. But, unfortunately whenever they take their organized political postures, they are carried away

by a machination of destabilization reluctantly and helplessly," said the analyst.

Peace and stability is public agenda for politicians now. From prime minister to Maoist leader, they want peace. "Our foremost important work is to restore peace and stability," said prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala.

Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal aka Prachanda, too, made similar calls. "We need peace and stability in the country. There is a threat to our national identity from external power," said Prachanda, who came over ground from decade long armed insurgency following a 12-point agreement signed in New Delhi with seven party leaders.

Similar comments come from Congress and CPN-UML leader. "Our priority should be to restore peace in the country. Otherwise, we cannot preserve our national integrity and independence," said CPN-UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal.

Beside these leaders of major political parties, there are other parties, with smaller roles and insignificant impacts, who have also been expressing greater worries than their bigger allies. Former deputy prime minister Amik Sherchan, Naryanman Bijukchhe and Chitra Bahadur K.C of United People's Front are openly accusing India for its role in meddling in Nepali politics.

"Seven Party Alliances are compelled to sign the agreement under the Indian pressure. We all know how Indian officials are actively meddling our politics," said Mohan Bikram Singh, CPN-Masal leader.

All can see that the source of crisis in Nepali politics lies not in Nepal but across the border. "Unfortunately, Nepal lacks a large hearted and good neighborly attitude from India. Again remembering B.P. Koirala's much talked about interview to the India's weekly Dinman, where Koirala had said that India does not have a large heart as its size," said the political analyst.

"India's Nepal policy has two facets: security with stability; and adjustments to democratic change. India does not find many problems in the Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1990 but, Nepali politicians try to project their nationalistic image by raising the issues of the same treaty. They also want India's favor when they need. But continue to apply the same old strategy of trying to corner it by kneejerk response to criticism from

various quarters," writes Lok Raj Baral in his article in (The Himalayan Times January 8 2008)

Nepal has many liberal and dependable well wishers in the democratic countries of the world. They have done enough on their part to salvage Nepal from this crisis of unstable politics - which is characterized by all kinds of unruly agitations, violence and separatist tendencies.

"Now the pertinent question is regarding the correct diagnosis and correct treatment of the problem. A decade back Maoists thought that parliamentary institution was hoax and therefore they raised the arms against the smoothly functioning parliamentary democracy.

"In early days, people thought that Maoists had linkages with International Revolutionary Movement (RIM) and Shining Path of Peru. Nowadays when Maoists have become successful to get a share in the parliament as well as in the government, nobody talks about RIM and Shining Path. There are reports now in most of the newspaper regarding their stay in India and their links with Indian agencies," said the analyst.

To understand the nature of crisis more explicitly, one has to go through the worries and concerns of Nepal's two closest neighbors, as both of them want guarantee of their security from Nepal.

Founder of Nepal King Prithivi Narayan Shaha illustrating Nepal as a yam between two boulders had indicated the coming difficulties and vulnerabilities of Nepal to survive as an independent nation.

"Nepal would not have survived with its long history and long continuity of political identity in the absence of any one of these two. Instability occasionally erupts in Nepal of insurmountable dimension like the present one. The present one has been the most disastrous and widespread than any time in the past because of the developed technology and easy accessibility. But this is not a completely new phenomenon in Nepal," said the political analyst.



BP Koirala: Unity for survival

American scholar late Leo E. Rose, in his book Nepal: Strategy For Survival in 1971, writes, "to Kathmandu, the current potentialities of external domination and subversion are not very different in kind - though they may be in degree - from those with which Nepali governments have had to contend for at least two centuries. And if the problems are not particularly new, neither is the repertory of response devised by the Kathmandu authorities."

Nepal has survived despite all brunt and scratches. There is a great interaction going on with whole of the world community through all kinds of technological support from aviation to electronic means. This may be the reason skyline in Nepal has two contradictory scenarios. On the one hand, there has been killings and signs of annihilation but at the same time the whole country is vibrating with economic activities and mass awareness.

As Nepal's two neighbors have yet to settle their differences, peace has been elusive in the country. "Unless India and China repair their damaged relations of early 1960s, Nepal has to go through a prolonged instability as its geo-strategic position is yet to become a yam between two boulders," said the analyst. ■

ACCESS TO SANITATION

Widening Gap

With the increase of sanitation and hygienic coverage in the last one decade, many health-related problems have subsided. However, more than 13,000 children still die due to various water-borne diseases caused by inadequate sanitation facilities. Besides, there is a wide gap between rich and poor as eighty percent of rich population have access to sanitation against 13 percent of poor. As Nepal is celebrating year 2008 as an International Year of Sanitation, the challenge lying ahead is how the sanitation coverage can be increased in rural as well as urban areas. At a time when annual budget allocated by the government towards sanitation is negligible, Nepal's programs rely on the support of international communities as well as local NGOs

By KESHAB POUDEL

For Dhanu Ram, a Dalit of Sunsari district, construction of toilet has brought a new life and prestige in his locality. At the cost of about Rs. 2500 (US\$ 35), Ram had constructed a toilet with support from Nepal Water for Health (NEWAH) at his home two years ago.

One of the changes, he has seen in his life in subsequent years is that Ram and his family have not visited nearby sub-health post or a hospital in Biratnagar in the last one year. In the

past, Ram used to visit sub-health post almost every day carrying his children to treat various stomach-related ailments, diarrhea and high fever. The toilet has brought a drastic change in the health of his family. Father of three children, Ram's social status has also changed as local people who used to discard him earlier for being a dirty fellow, now embrace him.

For Ram's family, the toilet is now the symbol of pride and dignity in a

village where latrine is regarded as a facility preserved for the high cast and affluent families.

"I had hardly realized that cleaning locality and building latrine could transform my social status and make my children healthy and strong," said Ram. Others living in the area also have similar experiences.

Thanks to the implementation of Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) by Water Aid Nepal and Nepal



River pollution: Urban challenge

Water for Health (NEWAH), one can see drastic improvement in the sanitation system in villages like Khapte Tole, Baiya, Pachira, Bhalua, Simaborna, Simarriya and other villages of Sunsari district. NEWAH has already implemented such projects in Morang, Banke, Dhading and Gorkha districts.

Similarly, organizations like UNICEF, OXFAM-Nepal, IDS-Nepal, ECARDS-Nepal, and Rural Reconstruction Nepal have implemented this program. According to Millennium Development Goals Needs Assessment for Nepal, there are more than 20 international donor agencies that are active in the water supply and sanitation sector.

According to Department of Drinking Water and Sewerage, annually, 148,000 latrines are constructed in the country or, on average, 405 a day. But, it is still not enough to increase the

coverage of sanitation to all by 2017. Nepal needs to construct 879 latrines a day to attain that target.

Negligible Budget

Most of the budget allocated by the government is directed towards drinking water, while increasing sanitation coverage seems to fall under the responsibility of donor agencies, INGOs and local NGOs. According to the red book - Nepal government's budget allocation book 2007-2008 - there is no separate budget for sanitation, though this is one of the major MDGs.

Under the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project, the World Bank approved a credit for US\$25.3 million in June 2004. The United Kingdom, Asian Development Bank and Water Aid Nepal are currently working on it.

Although Nepal has made some significant improvements in sanitation coverage, Ram is among less than 20

percent of rural population who have access to latrine. The practices of rampant open-air defecation, particularly in terai, has badly contaminated the water poodles and put the public health at stake.

Although Nepal is in a position to achieve the MDG target of sanitation by 2015, there is a need for greater efforts to achieve hundred percent sanitation coverage goal set by the government by 2017. "We can achieve MDGs target. Our national target should be geared towards meeting national target not only for the MDGs" said Umesh Pandey, director of NEWAH.

Implemented by Water Aid Nepal and its partner Nepal Water for Health (NEWAH), the Community-Led Total Sanitation CLTS has made some progress in rural parts of Nepal, particularly in eastern region.

Cause of Concern

A study conducted by United Nation



Discussion on sanitation : Widening gap

Children Fund in 2005 revealed that 13,000 children under the five years of age, die of diarrhoea disease caused due to poor hygiene and sanitation. Nepal continues to bear the loss of some Rs 10 billion each year in terms of health expense, loss of productivity and adverse poor hygiene, and environment sanitation.

Solid waste and waster water problems are growing rapidly as there is massive population influx into urban areas in the recent years. The rate of growth of per capita waste is also growing coupled with poor drainage affecting safe water.

UNICEF reported that a safe water supply can reduce morbidity by 15 percent; latrine use can reduce morbidity by 35 percent. Hand washing practice can reduce morbidity by 43 percent and child mortality by 33 percent.

If present trend is maintained, the

sanitation coverage will reach to 60 percent of the total population against the MDG target of 53 percent by 2015. Nepal needs to increase the construction of latrines from 148,000 to 320,000 per year, for the purpose.

Growing Gap

The gap is growing between rich and poor and between urban and rural areas. Only twenty one percent of rural population has access to sanitation against 53 percent of urban population. Eighty percent of rich population has access to sanitation against 13 percent poor.

More than eighty percent of diseases in Nepal are caused by low quality of water and inaccessibility of sanitation. Although only 6 percent of population had access to sanitation in 1990, it has now reached to 46 percent. Nepal is planning to provide sanitation facilities to 53 percent of population by

2015 and to all population by 2017.

"We have set a very good target but we need to do some very hard work to achieve it," said Suman Kumar Sharma, joint secretary at Ministry of Works and Physical Planning. "We can reduce heavy burden on health by increasing sanitation coverage."

Because of inadequate latrines, in public schools, many girl students drop out at early stage. Only 41 percent of schools have toilets and only 26 percent have separate toilets for girl students.

Despite increase in the coverage of sanitation, only 46 percent of the population like Ram use toilets and remaining 54 percent population still use open space for relieving themselves. In urban areas, sewerage and solid waster management is getting worse. As there is a lack of permanent land-fill site, there are frequent cases of uncollected solid waste lying in different parts of cities

threatening the public health.

From rural to urban areas, poor are suffering a lot as they have to bear the risk of poor sewerage and sanitation facilities. They are even compelled to drink contaminated water.

"As we are celebrating year 2008 as a sanitation year, we have to set our target to fill gap between rich and poor," said Umakanta Jha, Secretary at the Ministry of Physical Planning and Works.

Thanks to more focus on drinking water, the coverage of sanitation has not expanded. At present, 76 percent population had facilities for drinking water whereas 46 percent of population had sanitation. There is a gap now of about 30 percent. According to a study, less than 20 percent of population has access to sanitation in one third of 75 districts.

"Our experiences have already shown that we can bring tangible change in the life of common people by increasing the sanitation coverage. Our aim must be now on to increase the coverage in the rural and urban areas," said Sanjaya Adhikary, Country Representative of Water Aid Nepal. "Water Aid Nepal has

already implemented a number of sanitation programs targeting the poor."

From community to the policy making, hygiene and sanitation is least prioritized. And investment in water and sanitation is inadequate to keep up with the overall rise in global aid.

In a country like Nepal where overwhelming people are at health risk because of not washing their hands before taking food, it is a major challenge to educate the people and generate awareness than increasing the coverage of sanitation.

As sanitation involves all the important institutions of the state, one of the challenges is to have a coordinating body. From Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Local Development, Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare to the Ministry of Works and Physical Planning, all have their own programs on sanitation. What is lacking at present is the coordination among them.

"Coordination is one of the major challenges. The International Sanitation Year 2008 will develop institutional mechanism to coordinate among various



Ram : Access to latrin

organizations working in the sanitation area," said secretary Jha.

In the last one decade, Nepal has achieved tremendous success in increasing the sanitation coverage reducing the health risk. However, the growing gap of coverage between rich and poor and urban and rural areas is a major challenge. ■



Garbage crisis: Dirty capital

'National sanitation coverage is very poor'

- SANJAYA ADHIKARY

Infant mortality will continue to remain high; children will continue to suffer from water borne diseases putting an unnecessary burden on health service time off school will result in failed educational opportunities and missed economic opportunities.

SANJAYA ADHIKARY, country representative of WaterAid Nepal, a UK based International Non-governmental Organization, has a long experiences in working in the areas of water and sanitation. As Nepal is celebrating 2008 as the year of Sanitation, Adhikary spoke to **SPOTLIGHT** on various issues related to water and sanitation. Excerpts:

How do you see the progress in access to sanitation? Will it meet the MDG target?

Nepal appears to be on track to meet its MDG targets in water supply (coverage figure is widely contested due to differing definition however), but is a long way off track to meet the target for sanitation. National sanitation coverage is very poor at 46% with socio-cultural and economic factors accounting for the lowest coverage rate in South Asia. As per the Government estimates, one third of the 75 districts have sanitation coverage below 20% of which 10 districts are in the Terai and 14 in the hills and mountains. Assuming business as usual, the sanitation target will be missed in Nepal.

And what that means is?

Infant mortality will continue to remain high; children will continue to suffer from water borne diseases putting an unnecessary burden on health service time off school will result in failed educational opportunities and missed economic opportunities. Girls often drop out of school at puberty due to lack of privacy and decent sanitation facilities. In summary, poverty reduction will continue to be undermined and other MDGs will not be realized. The rate of progress to enhance access to sanitation, therefore, will have to be accelerated.

What are the challenges ahead to increase access to sanitation?

Despite its importance to public health improvements, poverty reduction and environmental protection, safe sanitation has had a low profile when compared to water supply. In other words, sanitation is "neglected" and suffers from lack of "political will".

What are the challenges?

The key challenges are At the policy level

as well at the program level? At the policy level sanitation is usually seen as a symptom of poverty rather than a driver of poverty reduction. Financing to sanitation is insufficient and is allocated in non-transparent way. From an institutional perspective, the sector is highly fragmented with responsibilities split (competing rather) between several Ministries thus creating confusion over roles and responsibilities.

What is the situation at the Programme level?

At the program level Demand for sanitation is not well expressed or understood and Supply side solutions have failed and demand led programmes are difficult to get right.

Sustainable sanitation does not stop at just enhancing access to sanitation but the need to consider the total sanitation; and different challenges in the rural and urban context.

What do you suggest?

Sanitation therefore needs to be put on the political and development agenda in a more challenging manner as sustained access to clean water and sanitation are closely linked at institutional, policy and implementation levels.

What do you think is the role of INGOs like WaterAid and other NGOs in advancing sanitation?

WaterAid Nepal firmly believes that it is the state's responsibility to promote access to sanitation. The role of INGOs/NGOs is to contribute to experiment, innovate and replicate successful lessons. To this end, WAN undertakes research, advocacy and influence work as well as supports its development partners in good service delivery to provide access to some of the hardest to reach and serve the unserved. As a learning organization, WaterAid Nepal also seeks to develop, test and support implementation of new approaches and helps to promote them so as to achieve scaling-up.

What is the level of contribution?

With modest contribution (estimated to be around 5%) in the sector, we know that we must use the experiences gained for meaningful engagement in the sector and influencing work.

You will agree, service delivery alone will not



bring about systemic change although it is critical for the lives of the poor people it reaches and provides the experience needed for effective practice and policy influence.

As Nepal is celebrating year 2008 as an International Year of Sanitation, what should be the priority for Nepal?

The International Year of Sanitation gives us all an opportunity to act to tackle the sanitation crisis – a crisis not only of disease and poverty, but of inequity and human dignity. The recent evidence suggests that sanitation brings the greatest public health return of any policy intervention.

What the areas of your engagement?

As a specialized INGO on water and sanitation, WaterAid Nepal engages with its development partners and sector stakeholders, including the Government and donors, to raise awareness of sanitation issues – health, social and economic - across a broad spectrum of audiences and to thereby push the sector to the forefront of national and international political agenda.

What do you need to do maximize the opportunity?

To maximize the opportunity of 2008 as the International Year of Sanitation, WaterAid Nepal calls for action. The calls include: development of a national sanitation master plan recognizing the right of all people to sanitation; Preparation of an urban sanitation and water policy in consultation with civil society; Publication of an annual plan, targets, and financing required while ensuring sufficient budget allocation including a separate budget line on sanitation;

What are other areas?

Enhancing collaboration between sector stakeholders including with education, health, academia and media; adopting minimum standards in declaring areas “totally sanitized”; publishing annual performance reports for discussion with civil society and public scrutiny; Creating an enabling environment to share, learn, and replicate and scale up many successes in the sector; and ensuring that every school and public institutions have disabled and gender friendly sanitation access ■

To maximize the opportunity of 2008 as the International Year of Sanitation, WaterAid Nepal calls for action.



Rush of Tourist : Crowded shop

TOURISM GROWTH

Mixed Bag

Even as record number of travelers visited Nepal in 2007, the trickle-down effect has not yet been felt

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

Raju Gandharva is a player of traditional musical instrument called Sarangi. He roams around Thamel area playing melodious tones and looking for tips from generous tourists.

This year while statistics have shown that record number of tourists – over half a million – came to Nepal, people like Gandharva are not too encouraged.

“Yes, there were tourists. But I could

earn only as much as to feed myself,” he said.

Similar is the response of small and medium traders in Thamel – the important tourism hub in the country.

Surendra Bajracharya, a trader of pashmina shawls, said that though increased numbers of tourists have come, their businesses have not flourished.

“It is true that the number of tourists have increased. More tourists have come

but they come to Kathmandu and immediately leave for trekking or for other places, return back and then head to their home country. They have not been spending money in shopping,” Bajracharya rued.

Sharing his sentiment, trader of handicraft and thanka items Arjun Kumar Shrestha said, “There has not been marked improvement in our sales as we had expected due to the revival of tourism.”

“Quality Tourism”

One of the problems of tourism in Nepal, as pointed out by Nepal Tourism Board’s director Subas Niraula, is the lack of tourists who spend much. Niraula said that on average, a tourist stays for nine to ten days and spends around \$50 a day – which is quite less.

It is important, he says, to lure more tourists who will spend more. “Right now we have just reached base camp in terms of attracting tourists. After years of slump, tourism has finally recovered. This is a major psychological victory for all of us. In the coming days we will need to promote tourism in a manner so as to maximize our economic benefits,” he said.

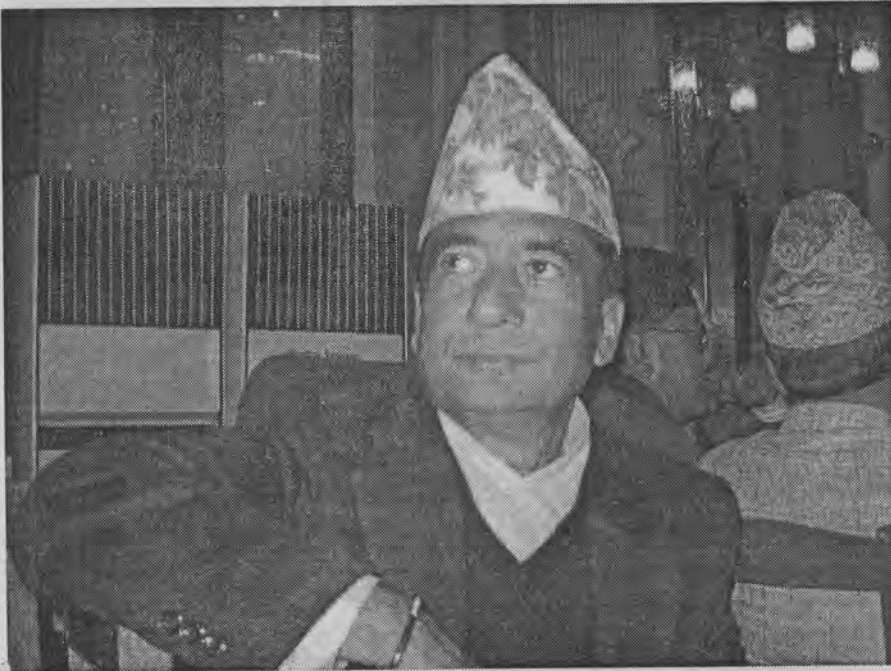
The tourist arrival has set a new record in 2007 by reaching half a million mark. While over 360,000 tourists came by air, around 150,000 came by land route.

Earlier, it was in 1999 when 491,000 tourists had come to Nepal. The Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) has come out with a statement saying that the year 2007 saw growth of 27.1 percent in the arrival of tourists by air. The board has said that in the month of December alone, the arrival grew by 13 percent.

The NTB statement says that the arrival figure for 2007 reached 360,350 – an all time high since 2000 and against 283,516 in 2006. “In 2000, the number of visitors arriving Nepal by air was 376914. Since then, it has continued to plummet due to various socio-political reasons,” the NTB statement says.

“One of the main reasons for inspiring growth in 2007 in tourist arrivals is the ongoing peace process and political stability in the country. Another reason is the good air connectivity with many destinations ushered in by the operation of nine new international airlines to Nepal in 2007,” it says.

The board has expected that the year 2008 will be very promising for Nepalese travel trade “as more new airlines are coming and existing airlines are also extending their flight frequency to Nepal.” ■



Minister Karki : Decisions on controversy

WATER RESOURCE

Bogged Down By Controversies

Water resource continues to be a magnet of controversy as Maoists raise fresh objection over proposed hydro projects

By SANJAY DHAKAL

On the very day they re-entered the government, Maoists have kicked another controversy in the water resource – the magnet of controversies in the country.

As the cabinet meeting held a day before Maoists' re-entry in the cabinet had decided to award two mega projects to foreign companies, the Maoist Minister Krishna Bahadur Mahara said his party smelled conspiracy in the whole process and threatened to derail it until a wider political understanding was reached on the issue.

However, despite their opposition, Minister for Water Resources Gyanendra Bahadur Karki has said that the government will proceed with the Arun III and Upper Karnali projects.

Addressing a press meet at the Water Resources Ministry, on Sunday, Karki said, "We have gone through the grilling by the parliamentary committees on

Natural Resource and Finance where there were representations of the Maoists, as well. We think that since these projects are guided by national interest, there will not be any opposition by them."

Karki informed that the cabinet has authorised the ministry to go ahead with awarding the projects in such a manner that only one project will be awarded to a company/investor. He said that the cabinet has instructed them to hold talks with the companies, which have garnered maximum number of points in a list compiled by a taskforce formed to analyse their proposals, to extract maximum free energy from them.

In line with the cabinet decision, the Ministry has formed a four member dialogue committee headed by Anup Kumar Upadhyaya, spokesperson at the Ministry and including Rajendra Kishore Chhetry (joint secretary, Water and energy Commission), Sunil Bahadur Malla

(deputy director general, Department of Electricity Development) and Uttar Kumar Shrestha (deputy director general, Nepal Electricity Authority) as members.

Likewise, the government will obtain Rs 100,000 per MW before giving survey license to any company. The earlier task force headed by former finance secretary Bhanu Acharya has given highest points to GMR Energy Limited of India for both Arun III (402 MW) and Upper Karnali (300 MW). The government expects to obtain around 124 MW of free power from Arun III and Upper Karnali.

Minister Karki also informed that as regards the third project Budhi Gandaki (600 MW), the government will re-open international competition since there were not any attractive proposals in the first round.

Load Shedding Woes

As the demand for power has risen with the onset of winter, the supply has declined due to receding water flow in rivers. Citing this reason, the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) has decided to increase load shedding hours beginning Sunday.

The NEA has started clamping two and a half hours of load shedding everyday from Sunday (Jan 06). Each household will now face load shedding of fifteen hours a week – up from six hours - with each household enjoying a day without power cut in a week. The new schedule also includes power cuts in morning time.

The NEA officials have said that they face demands for 720 MW power while they can supply only 480 MW at present. The government expects load shedding woes can be lessened once it starts importing 40 MW of power from India from second week of January. But the import from India still looks uncertain as yet.

While the country is reeling under severe load shedding, Minister Karki has claimed that the government is planning to generate 5000 MW of power in coming ten years.

Karki said that the government intends to attract investors to develop the power. He said that if money and technology were available, Nepal can immediately develop 43,000 MW of power. ■

“Government’s Role Is To Guarantee The Service

-Ram Kumar Shrestha

RAM KUMAR SHRESTHA is a well known public health experts of Nepal. Recognized by global health summit as Vitamin A Sherpa, Shrestha has traveled around the world as a community health expert. Executive director of Nepal Technical Assistance Group (NTAG), Shrestha’s major contribution is the mobilization of community volunteer health workers to provide Vitamin A capsules to millions of Nepali children. Despite suffering from political instability and bloody insurgency in the last twelve years, distribution of Vitamin capsules was never disturbed. Shrestha spoke to **KESHAB POUDEL** on various issues of community health. Excerpts:

As an internationally renowned public health expert working in various parts of the world, what has inspired you to be in Nepal?

This is my own country which gave me enormous opportunity to be an expert. I feel very proud to say that a program of such a small country could make such an impact in the world health sector.

At a time when many Nepalese experts like you are giving out pessimistic views about Nepal, why are you so positive?

Every country has its own problems. What we need to do is to serve the country and people living in remote parts of the country? I am optimistic because we Nepalese have the capability to make everything possible. Nepal’s community health program and Female Community Health Volunteer has already won world recognition. This is a pride for all of us.

Don’t you feel frustration and pessimism looking at country’s

unstable and chaotic situation?

A person’s ability and capability can be tested in such a crucial time. Everybody will come when things are alright. When you work for the community deprived of all facilities saving the lives of people, you feel optimism.

How much disturbance have you felt in your programs?

Frankly speaking, Nepal’s political instability and disturbance have not created any trouble to our program. For instance, Vitamin A distribution program is going on smoothly and all political forces and groups have been supporting us.

What is the reason behind it?

In our program, communities are involved. We distributed Vitamin A capsules to all children living throughout the country. Every family, whether rich or poor, knows that by administering a simple capsule, you can save your children.

How responsive are Nepalese communities?

I have already worked in a dozen of countries including in India but Nepalese community have some basic qualities, which others do not have. Nepalese communities whether in Terai, Pahad or Himal, there are more harmony than conflict as people respect religious sentiments and existence of others.

Don’t you see the growing violence in southern terai and other parts of Nepal as an end to such harmony?

One cannot deny the fact that there are incidences of violence but forces of harmony are still powerful in Nepalese community. Recently, I also witnessed violence in terai when I was

on the way to Biratnagar from Rajbiraj; some miscreants killed a government official. There are some problems in southern terai. So far as the relations in the community are concerned, there is still harmony at large scale.

If political situation continues to be unstable, how do you see the future of the programs like Vitamin A distribution and immunization?

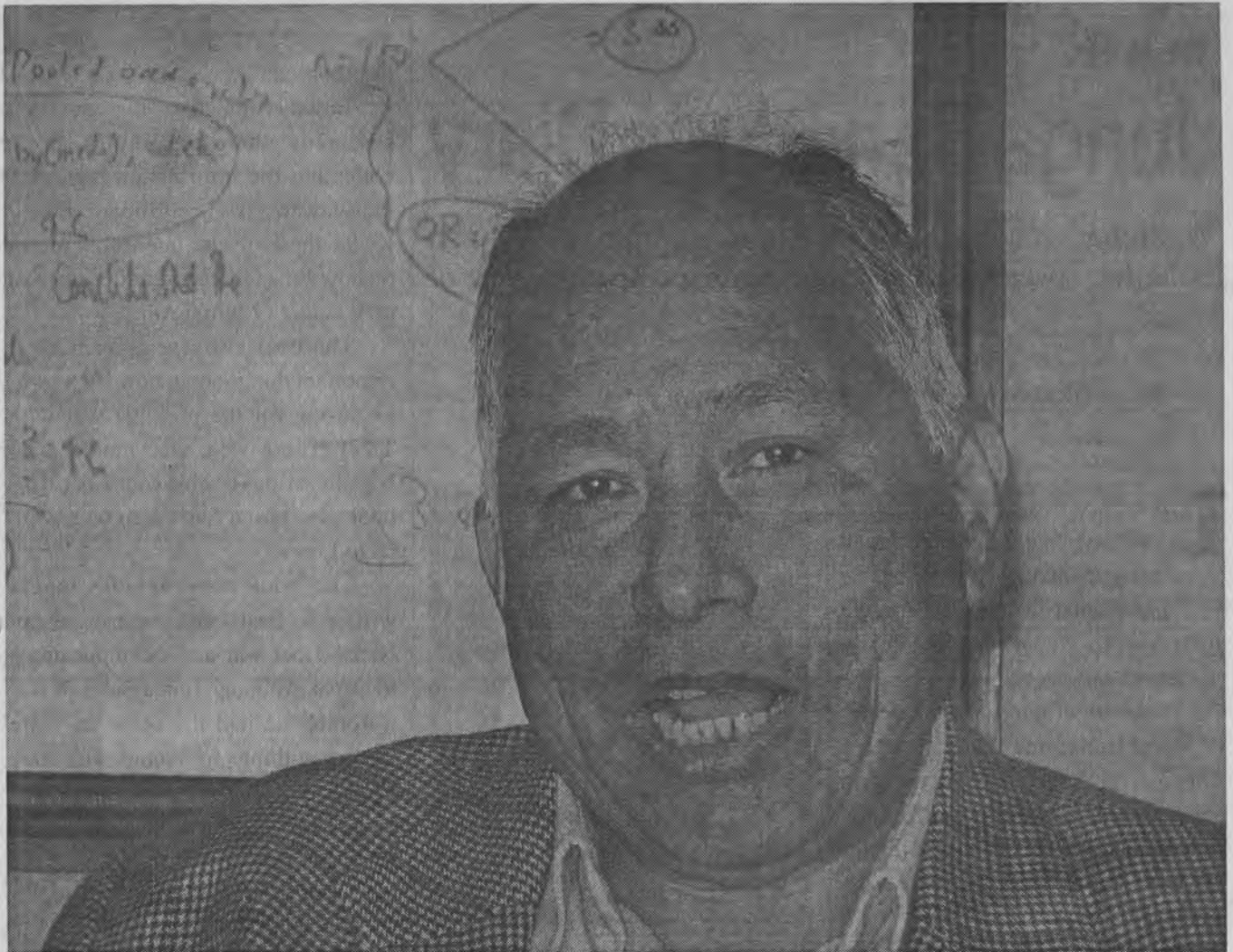
I am certain that the programs will continue. Politics in the center has nothing to do it. As these programs are managed by communities for their broader benefits, they will do it. The ownership of these programs is with the community and family. Had these programs had any link with the government, these programs might not have produced successful results.

After successfully implementing a program to mobilize community through the Female Community Health Volunteers to provide Vitamin A, on what new programs are you working now?

Nepal has shown the world that it has capacity to bring out model programs. I am considering carrying out another program to make family responsive in health services. As the government has already established various types of health units up to the ward level and provides minimum medicines, the role of non-governmental organization is now to take families up to the service center. Now the government’s role is to guarantee the service and community’s role is to bring family up to the service center.

What is the basis of your concept?

Government needs to provide technical staffs, medicines and other



logistics. As the government cannot go to each and every house to see the families, social and community organizations need to generate awareness in communities regarding the services. If we develop these kinds of relationship, we can address the issues of underserved population. Community and family needs to be responsible to acquire the service and government needs to be responsible to provide the service.

What is the state of the programs now?

Vitamin A capsule distribution program is going very smoothly. In early days, there was a need for motivation. Now they have developed ownership. Community has already taken ownership and FCHVs have been doing effective work.

What is the status of MDGs regarding child health?

Nepal still lags far behind in many sectors of MDGs. Communities involvement can make a lot of difference. For instance, Nepal is very close to achieve the MDG goal in children mortality. This is going to be possible because of successful programs of Vitamin A capsules distribution and other immunization programs. It seems that Nepal is going to be a country, which will achieve this target by 2015. If we provide support to FCHVs; we will be able to achieve other goals also.

How is it going to be possible?

When we started the program, infant mortality was per 171 per 1000. However, the recently published DHS report reveals that the child mortality

is 61 per 1000. This was possible not only because of the vitamin A but there are also many contributing factors. The role played by FCHVs is highly important. There are 49000 volunteers now.

How do donor agencies see your programs?

Every country has been talking about this. Many countries of the world are in no position to achieve the MDGs. All the countries have government machineries but they don't have community level machinery. They are unable to reach in coverage. Nepal has the model and way for the mobilization of community. If we provide Vitamin A capsules twice a year and retain coverage of 96 percent, we can save 15000-20000 children. ■

BOOK

Junga Bahadur's Diary

Written by scholar Kamal Dixit, the new book on Junga Bahadur reveals many important aspects of history of Nepal

By A CORRESPONDENT

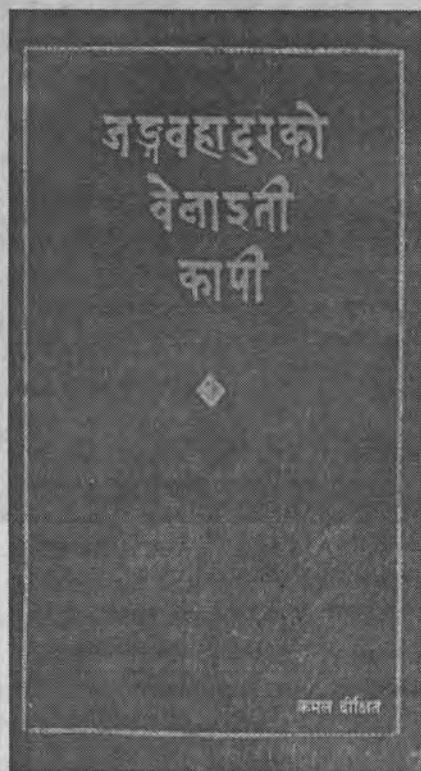
In the last two hundreds years of history, Nepal has gone through many ups and downs. During this period that marked its struggle for survival, Nepal has seen many leaders of various clans.

From rise of queens to the center of power to rise and fall of Bhimsen Thapa, Nepal's history is full of tragic and mysterious events. The factional fighting in the palace politics virtually pushed Nepal into the brink of collapse.

Although many historians have their own version of personality and capability of Junga Bahadur, the rise of Junga Bahadur helped to maintain unity of Nepal as an independent nation. Of course, he was a founder of Rana oligarchy in Nepal - who ruled Nepal ruthlessly for 104 years - but he had made enormous contribution to Nepal.

Many books have been published in Nepal regarding the rise and fall of Rana regime and rise and fall of Junga Bahadur but only a few authors have published books which have evaluated the period objectively and impartially.

In his recently published book Junga Bahadurko Belayati Kapi, Nepal's prominent litterateur Kamal Dixit - who has already written two books previously on Junga Bahadur -



**Jangabahadurko Belayati
Kapi
(Jangabahadur's Belayati
Diary)**

**Written by: Kamal Dixit
Edited by: Rajendra Dahal
Published by: Jagdamba
Publication, Lalitpur**

**Price: Rs. 400.00 (hard
copy) Rs. 300.00**

(paper back)

Pages: 262

has revealed many more new information.

Based on his diary, the new book has many interesting things. From collecting the information regarding the way to go to pilgrimage Badri-Kedar, there are also interesting pieces on how Junga Bahadur drafted the first civil code or Muluki Ain.

This book also reveals many other important things about how Nepal was preparing for the possible war with Tibet. There were also incidents of Nepal's serious trouble with Tibet. This book also has a route map on how to go to Lhasa.

The book also includes letters written to East-India company about Nepal-Tibet war and its implications to Nepal. Although Junga Bahadur was illiterate, he had the sense to write important things for record. This may be the reason why Junga Bahadur asked some of his secretaries to write the events.

Based on the articles published in Himal Magazine, Kamal Dixit's new book is also full of interesting stories related with Junga Bahadur Rana. The book is edited by Rajendra Dahal.

Although it is now out of print, author Dixit's earlier book Junga Geeta is also very interesting

Nepal's recorded history is not very old, most of the history books were written on the basis of hear and say. From history of Kirat period to founder of Rana oligarchy Junga Bahadur Rana, Nepal's history is full of distorted versions.

After reading his letters, one can easily draw the conclusion that Junga Bahadur was a shrewd leader as well as a man of dedication. By publishing this book, Dixit has made a great contribution by revealing important aspects of historic personalities. ■

“(T)heir) cadres are running amok beating left and right and their leaders express concern and say they are sorry. I don’t know if that is real or mere crocodile tear.”

Madhav Kumar Nepal, referring to Maoist chairman Prachanda’s visit to Teaching Hospital to meet with Deepak Gautam, a pro-UML student who was seriously injured by cadres of Maoist-affiliated YCL.

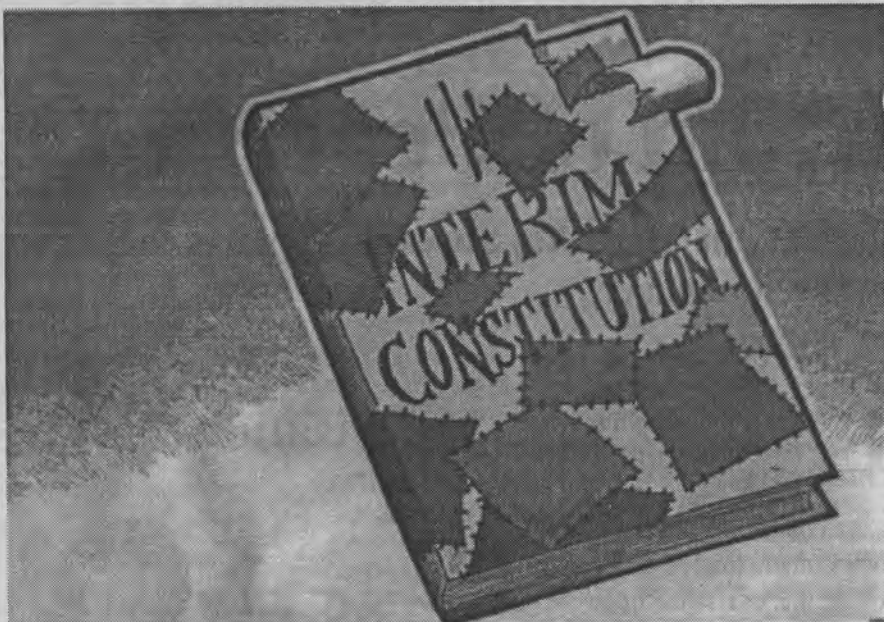
“T)o serve Nepal and Nepalis is our dharma and occupation, but the army should be kept above any ism, political ideology and motivation. “

General Rookmangud Katawal, chief of army staff, Nepali Army, before he left for a weeklong visit to China.

“W)e are struggling for liberation. We want autonomy. We will not surrender.”

Mahantha Thakur, chief of the Tera-Madhes Democratic Party, after submitting a list of demands to the Prime Minister.

“O)ur party is fully committed to election. The CA election will now depend on how other parties behave. We are fully committed to take part in it.”



Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Information and Communication Minister, and Maoist spokesperson.

“W)e will return only after liberation. If anyone tries to make us return before liberation, they will themselves have to return from the government.”

Netra Bikram Chand aka Biplav, a hardliner within Maoists, in Kantipur.

“I)am not trying to create a scene here. I just want to establish the right to my mother-tongue.”

Matrika Yadav, a Maoist-nominee, after refusing to take oath in Nepali language, when he was sworn in as Minister for Forest and Soil Conservation.

“T)he election is unfair since thousands of Nepali speaking people, who were not provided with the No Objection Certificates were barred from voting.”

Tek Nath Rizal, a Bhutanese refugee leader, in response to the election held in Bhutan last week, in The Himalayan Times.

TRANSITION



SWORN IN: Matrika Yadav, as the Minister for Forest and Soil Conservation, and Ramesh Lekhak, as Minister for Labor and Transport Management, by Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala.

LEFT: General Rookmangud Katawal, chief of army staff, Nepali Army, for a weeklong visit to China, at the invitation of Chinese Army.

APPOINTED: Govinda Bahadur Thapa and KB Limbu, as chairman and managing director, respectively, of the Nepal Airlines Corporation.

KILLED: Three persons including principal Sushila Shakya, teacher Pramila Rai and a student Mohan Lungeli of a school in Kathmandu when a bus carrying students and teachers returning from a picnic in Kakani met with an accident near Okharpauwa on Saturday (Jan 05) evening.

SUSPENDED: The crucial central committee meeting of the Maoists, for two days, after it passed chairman Prachanda’s political resolution.

EXTENDED: The date for registering a political party for contesting in the upcoming Constituent Assembly (CA), till January 14.

DEFERRED: The decision on the case of suspended Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) governor Bijay Nath Bhattarai, by the Special Court, for the fourth time.

ART

Mind of Peace

Artist Gajendra Man Shrestha explores the way for mental peace

By A CORRESPONDENT

Every human being has desire to live in peace. Every body wants peace in mind as well as peace in their surrounding environment but it is not always easy to find that out. In the quest for peace, human beings spend their time and energy going from place to place.

At a time when the country has been passing through a violent, anarchic and uncertain situation, like all the people of different professions, artist Gajendra Man Shrestha is also troubled by the lack of peace. And he has chosen the topic of peace in his 18th solo art exhibition.

Like all other common people, mental as well as physical environment always play important role to set the destiny. Common people can just feel it but the artist and poets can explain it through various means.

Disturbing environment is not going to affect human society only, it will also affect the life of other species of our environment. This is what artist Gajendra Shrestha perceives in his arts.

Artist Shrestha advocates the love towards other animals in the planet. He argues that they should be given complete freedom to enjoy and share their own environment. He pursues for non-violent attitude towards them.

Through the two species bird and fish, artist Shrestha elaborates his theme of peace. According to the artist, one gets peace if there is peace for all beings of the environment where



people live. As an artist, he wants to show the world that complete peace is the need of all the beings.

Exhibited at Light and Shade Art Gallery at Thamel, artist Shrestha who used to paint on figurative fish paintings earlier, this time advocates inclusiveness in an attentive being's respective realm of life.

According to artist Shrestha, all other beings also need inclusiveness like people in the present loktantric set-up. He wants to give rights of fish in water and bird in the air which human beings conceive for them in the land. He argues that human should be given rights in the land to leave peacefully so as the birds in the air and fish in the water.

His imagination and concerns about the deteriorating quality of our nature and environment are expressed by the birds and fishes. There is pollution and noise in the air



and similarly the water is no more pure and suitable for fish.

Artist Shrestha uses various colors to explain his imagination in his art work with perfect harmony. He uses soft bright hues mainly green, yellow and purple which produce the good quality of paintings. In mixing various colors, artist Shrestha has shown his mastery. Though the fishes are motionless in the paintings, Shrestha's colors show as if they are quickly swimming in the water. The qualities of fishes are very smooth thanks to the colors he uses in paintings.

Although the color of water ranges from blue to red and purple as the color of fishes, one can find the eyes of fishes in a mood of meditation inhaling a peaceful air. As their different nature, birds appear in different moods. The birds highlight distinct ways for peace. All the birds lightly float in the air to express their desire for peace.

Like in the past solo exhibition, artist Shrestha has once again proved that he has the capability and imagination to describe the situation by comparing with other beings of our environment.

The exhibition will continue till January 15. ■

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