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The National Newsmagazine

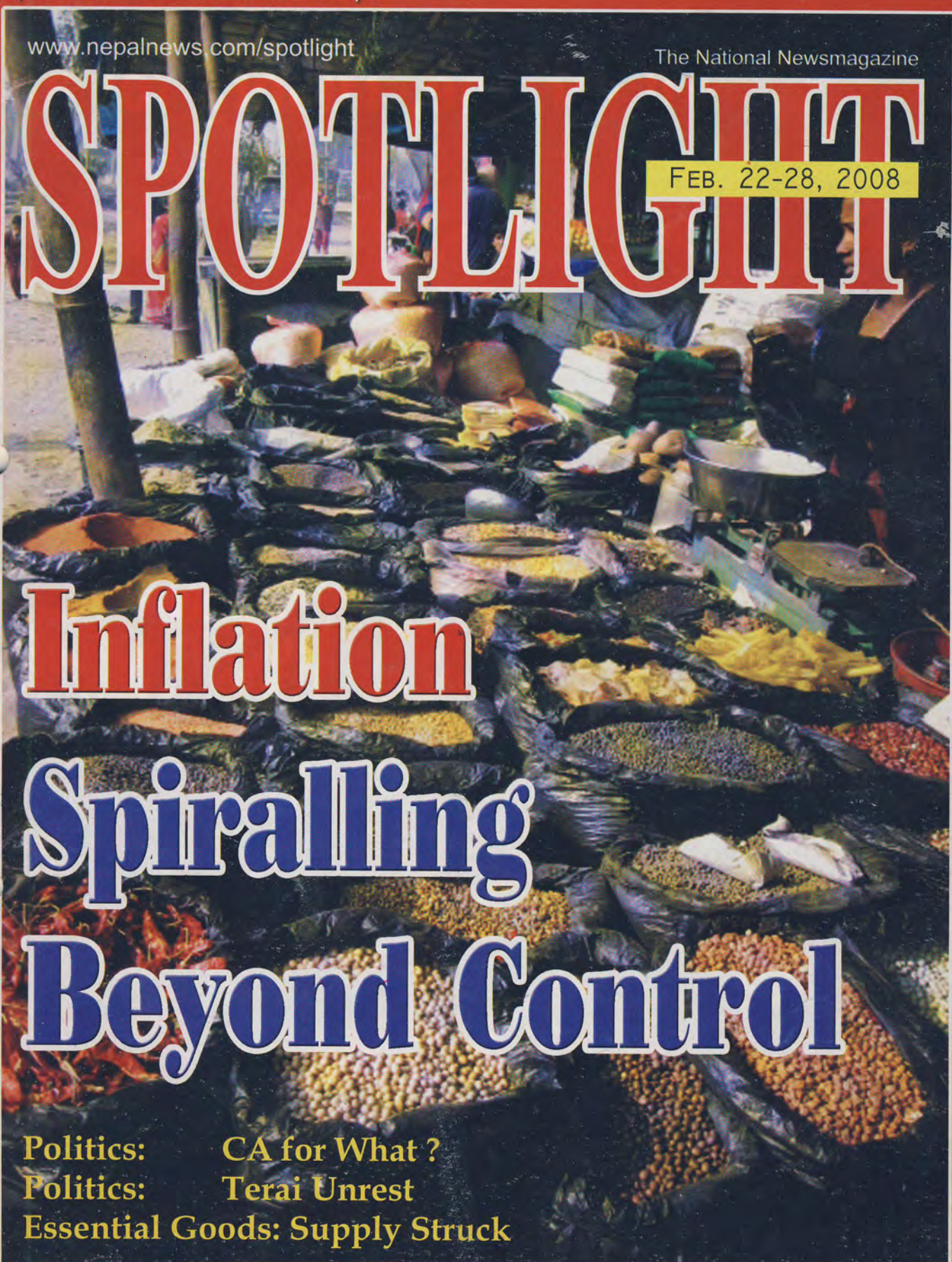
FEB. 22-28, 2008

SPOTLIGHT

Inflation Spiralling Beyond Control

Politics: CA for What?
Politics: Terai Unrest
Essential Goods: Supply Struck

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POLITICS :CA For What? Since the interim parliament of unelected leaders have already made all kinds of decision by amending the interim constitution, it is unclear for what purpose the CA is required

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FACE TO FACE:

UML Leader
Rajhu Panta and
MJF Leader
Upendra Yadav
spoke about
various issue
relating to CA



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SPOTLIGHT

THE WEEKLY NATIONAL NEWSMAGAZINE

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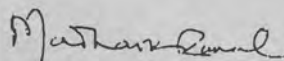
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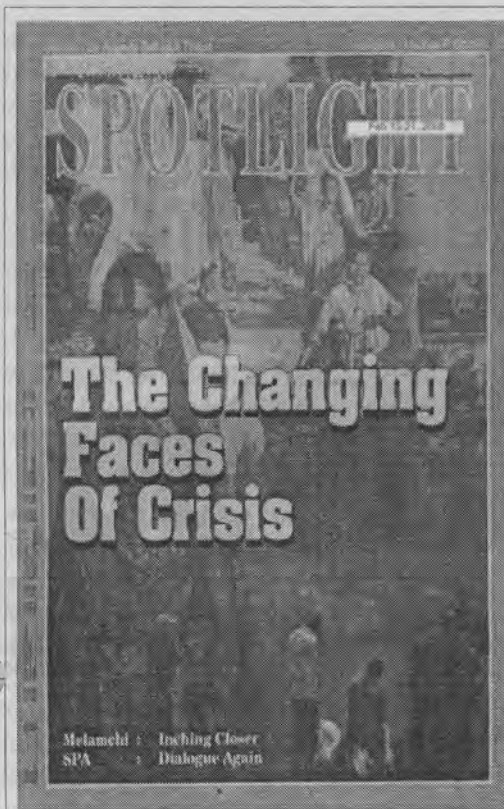
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“**T**his must be the worst time in our history if the country can avoid the impending disaster,” said a veteran politician on condition of anonymity. With a non-representative government of seven parties, with conflicting ideologies, in power, the country is facing imminent election to the assembly that will draft a people’s constitution. But the total absence of law and order throughout the country, the communal upsurge in the terai and the hills and the virtual embargo against the capital have generated serious misgivings amongst the millions of detached Nepalis that despite their vociferous protestations this government won’t be able to hold the elections. The challenges posed, specially by the Madhesis that unless their demands are met they won’t permit the elections to be held, do not seem to be empty threats. That some of the grievances of the Madhesis are most genuine cannot be disputed. Indeed, the Madhesis, the Dalits, and the Janjatis have been discriminated for decades. Their fighting for their just rights have to be respected. But, they must be alert and vigilant that they are not used by any interested power. These aggrieved people must be aware that they don’t become anybody’s pawns. They must be able to see through the danger underlying such sinister designs. These dangers might even lead to the disintegration of the country which no patriotic Nepali would like to happen. The situation in the country is too volatile for a peaceful atmosphere so very imperative for a free and fair election. The SPAM government is too incompetent to restore peace and normalcy in the country. Since the country needs a constitution with the greatest urgency, this void has severely affected the lives and destiny of the twenty six million poor Nepalis, elections to the constituent assembly must be held most expeditiously. Consequently, the need of the hour is a strong and patriotic government. The SPAM government has totally failed to govern, to provide even a semblance of security to the peoples and has mortgaged the dignity, honor and even the sovereignty of the proud nation. That the overwhelming millions of Nepalis have become disillusioned with the SPAM government and urgently demanding a change has become clearly evident by the calls recently given by Green Nepal Party and Jana Shakti Party not to contest the elections. Even though the media refused to air the views of the Green Nepal Party, it is no less true that it was the first party to boycott the elections on ground of increasing insecurity. Other political parties except the SPAM too are on line to make similar announcements. Since situation is getting out of hand every passing day, all patriotic Nepalis and all good friends of Nepal have to join hands to save the poor country from the total disaster lurking round the corner. This is the only way to guarantee the democratic polity the country is dreaming to achieve.


Madhav K. Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher



Changing Face

Your cover story on Nepal's changing face of crisis (February 15-21) was interesting and thought provoking. At a time when Nepal's two neighbors India and China are trying to defend their own security, it is natural for a country like Nepal to see this kind of situation. Nepal's two giant neighbors are sources of perennial insecurity in Nepal. But their concern is also an asset for Nepal to be an independent nation.

Karuna Rai

Hong Kong Via email

Country's Quest

Despite all the difficult years in history, Nepal's western friends have been making every effort to support the country's quest for all round development. From helping reduce the infant mortality rate to supporting local farmers, countries from Europe, the United States of America, Canada, Japan and Australia, all of them have been spending their

No Gain

I don't understand what India has gained in Nepal by making it unstable and anarchic. All of us know, it is not communist China but democratic India which backed and encouraged radical communist forces in Nepal. India promoted Nepalese Maoists to fulfill their security interests in Nepal. Unfortunately, now the well trained Maoists are going to be headache for India in near future. Nepal has already lost its stability but it will hurt India's security interest in long term. You have made very balanced analysis about Nepal's present situation.

Sandip Jha

Janakpur Via email

tax payers' money to uplift Nepal's poor people. At a time when the country has been heading to hold the election for CA, the donor communities have shown their complete support to Nepal. Your cover story (Seeking Succor February 8-14) has failed to highlight their vital contribution to uplift the lives of poor people of Nepal.

Shree Krishna Regmi

London Via-email

Cynicism Has No Answer

There are some cynical persons in Nepal who always criticize western countries despite their support to Nepal. At a time when western countries have been busy supporting Nepal, all should thank the foreign countries. All of us know that the United States, Japan and other western countries do not have any security and strategic interest in Nepal but what they want is uplift the life of rural poor.

Usha Lama

Via Email

Necessary As Institution

I agree with your argument that Nepalese people need monarchy as the institution of monarchy is not the property of any particular individual King. Thus, it is better for King to remain silent as people will defend Nepal's centuries-old institution given the chance for free and fair election. Of course, King Gyanendra has been maintaining his restraint for quite a long time. This has definitely increased the popularity of monarchy. More King Gyanendra remains silent, better for the future of monarchy in Nepal. I agree with the argument of your political analyst that although he spoke his mind this time, the most valuable advice to King Gyanendra would be to maintain restraint as much as possible in action as well as utterances.

Mahendra Rai

Via E-mail

Rational Perspective

After reading the interview of president of Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities Pasang Sherpa, I came to realize that he is very rational and well balanced person handling the questions very well. It is still uncertain whether the election for CA will be held or not. Sherpa, whose group called a number of general strikes a year ago, seems to be in determined mind this time to have the election for CA. I hope he will continue his stand in favor of election.

Urmella Subba

Perth Australia Via e-mail

Alternative Analysis

I really like to read the alternative analysis and views in Spotlight magazine. As a student living in United States, far away from home, Spotlight helps me keep update about Nepal situation. I hope in coming days you will make/balance between opinion, analysis and information.

Sudan Devkota

Austin, Texas Via-email



PM, SPA Articulate Their Bottom Line On Madhes Demands

The Prime Minister and the Seven Party Alliance have articulated their bottom line vis-à-vis the demands raised by agitating Madhesi groups. On Saturday (Feb 16), Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala made his intentions clear. "The demand for right to self determination, which jeopardizes the sovereignty and integrity of the nation, will not be acceptable even if any power of the world pressurizes," PM Koirala said, in Biratnagar, speaking at a program held to award journalists in memory of first death anniversary of his sister-in-law Nona Koirala. "The demand for one Madhes one province and right to self determination will be settled by the Constituent Assembly election," he added. The demand for single Madhes province and regional autonomy with right to self determination have been raised by major agitating groups in Madhes. Prime Minister's bottom line has come just two days after the visiting Indian leaders' delegation had told reporters in Kathmandu that PM was ready to fulfill all demands of Terai – "except inviting UN intervention and compromising on sovereignty." On Saturday itself, the meeting of the steering committee of the ruling SPA also made an important decision regarding the Madhes issue. "It has been agreed that no demand that

needs further amendment of the constitution can be addressed at this point," Leftist Front leader CP Mainali said. The SPA agreed that demands like right to self determination and changing the election system to ensure 50 percent of candidacies in closed-lists for

Madhesis, cannot be fulfilled. On other demands, the SPA has instructed the government to proceed with its talks with Madhesi leaders. As the leaders of United Madhesi Democratic Front (UMDF) have been warning of 'decisive agitation' in case their demands are not met immediately, the bottom line expressed by the PM and the SPA, analysts fear there could be further instability in Madhes region in the coming days affecting the April election. *nepalnews.com reports*

Impossible To Wait For Complete Peace For Election, Says Nepal

As Terai tensions have escalated, general secretary of Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) Madhav Kumar Nepal has said that it is impossible to wait for complete peace for election. Stating that most major demands of Madhes have already been fulfilled, Nepal said, "If there are attempts to derail it, the election will be held amid bombs and explosions." Speaking at a party program in Pokhara, Saturday (Feb 16), Nepal regretted at efforts made by 'some quarters'

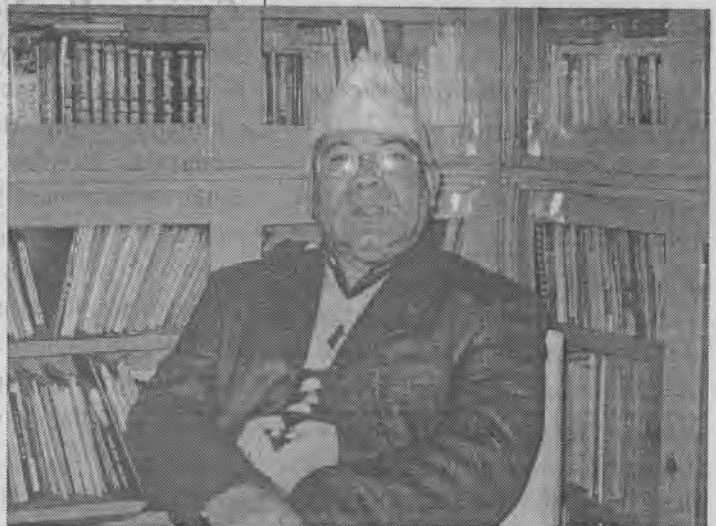
expressing distrust over election pointing at Terai situation. "If we want to hold election in complete peace, then we may not be able to hold it in ten years," he said, referring to regular elections being held in strife-torn regions of India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. "We have already reached to the stage of filing candidacies, we cannot back out from election at any cost," he added. Nepal, however, asked the government to take measures to improve law and order situation in Terai. *Compiled from reports*

Curfew In Bhaktapur

A person has been shot dead after he reportedly defied curfew in Bhaktapur city on Friday (Feb 15) night. The security personnel had opened fire after an unidentified youth defied the curfew in Golmadhi area of Bhaktapur city. He later succumbed to his wounds at Teaching Hospital in Maharajgunj. After the tension flared up following murder of a local youth on Wednesday night by unidentified assailants, the locals of Bhaktapur had protested and gheraoed district police office on Friday. As the scenes started to turn nastier, the local administration clamped curfew in city area from 7 pm Friday till 4 am Saturday. *Compiled from reports*

PM Says He Is Ready To Fulfill Terai Demands

In his meeting with the visiting delegation of senior leaders of India's ruling Congress (I) party, Thursday (Feb 15), Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala



revealed that he is ready to fulfill all demands of Terai. "He said in clear words that he is ready to meet all demands except two things. They are inviting United Nations for intervention and compromising on nation's sovereignty and integrity," Digvijaya Singh, general secretary of Congress (I) and leader of the delegation told reporters. At a press meet held before their departure after three-day visit which saw them holding talks with all the top leaders of the major political parties, Singh said that he remains confident about timely election. "We are going back with utmost satisfaction that everything is on course," said Veerappa Moily, a member of the delegation. Meanwhile, in response to a question if India could arrange 12-point-like agreement among dissenting Terai groups and the democratic forces, Singh said, "If such an opportunity is created and if both sides and all sides ask for such help, then being a brother, we will carry out our responsibility." In November of 2005, Maoists and then agitating political parties had inked 12-point agreement in New Delhi following which there was a people's movement in Nepal, which dislodged the King's government. Singh, however, ruled out any direct or indirect intervention by India. "The problem related to Madhes has to be solved by leaders of Nepal," he said. *Compiled from reports*

Prachanda Portrays CA As Final Battle

Maoist chairman Prachanda has said that his party is preparing to win the final battle in the form of Constituent Assembly (CA). "Since 1950, Nepali people have fought against imperialists and feudal. They have won the war but some battle still remains. The CA will be the final battle. We will contest the final battle in the form of CA in peaceful manner and win it," he said, while addressing the first election rally of the Maoists held in Kathmandu, Wednesday (Feb 13). The rally coincided with Maoist celebration of 13th anniversary



of "People's War." Prachanda accused 'reactionaries and imperialists' of conspiring to derail the election fearing Maoist win. "In Madhes, we can see how different outfits have mushroomed. It is strange to see such mushrooms sprouting against the party and movement that had fought for the rights of Madhes for last one decade," he said. The party, however, did not make public its election manifesto on Wednesday despite their earlier promise to do so. But its leaders did not lose the opportunity to present Prachanda as the first president of Nepal. "To implement new policy and new though, you will need new leadership. As such, the CPN-Maoist must lead the new Nepal and, therefore, we are committed (to make) our chairman comrade Prachanda as the first president of new Nepal," said Dr. Baburam Bhattarai. *Compiled from reports*

IB And RAW Passing Bucks In Nepal Issue: Ex RAW Official

A former senior official of India's Research & Analysis Wing (R&AW) has said that the external intelligence agency is engaged in a blame-game with another similar Indian outfit, Intelligence Bureau

(IB), when it comes to issues in areas bordering Nepal. Talking to Navin Singh Khadka of BBC Nepali Service, S Chandrashekharan, a former senior RAW official, who was with the Indian embassy in Kathmandu in the late 70s until early 80s, said, "Actually this side of the border, RAW has nothing to do with all that. It is the IB, which is handling everything." But he conceded that the two intelligence agencies do engage in passing bucks. "I am sure RAW will say it is not our job. If you ask the IB, they will say RAW is responsible for the other side of the border," he said, adding that

such overlapping had been happening for many years. Chandrashekharan who keeps coming to Kathmandu frequently and is a PhD on Nepal's river systems, said that Indian government will not be willing to arrest and hand over insurgent leaders leading their movement in Terai from Indian soil. "Those Madhesi leaders are gaining sympathies increasingly in the Indian side. I don't think anyone would arrest, say, Jwala Singh, because you will have to see the situation in India too." In the same program, a Chinese scholar expressed concern over RAW activities in Nepal's Terai. "We already know about terai situation. There may be some elements trying to take advantage of weak government. There was an article in one of the mass media alleging role of India's RAW. If that is true, it will worry us," said Hu Shisheng, who heads the South Asia Study Centre under the China Institute for Contemporary Relations. The RAW and IB activities and the Chinese scholar's response expressing concern has come at a time when Prime Minister Girja Prasad Koirala has gone on record stating publicly that the problem in Terai can be solved in minutes with India's help. *Nepalnews.com reports* ■



Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala at a function held by Nepal Council of World Affairs Gorkhapatra

FINANCE MINISTER DR RAM SHARAN MAHAT while inaugurating Microfinance Summit Nepal 2008, Thursday (Feb 14), assured government's support in promoting micro-credit as an effective tool in the fight against poverty. Urging micro-finance institutions (MFIs) to discourage unhealthy competition and bring uniformity in services with a higher-level of commitment to reach grassroots levels, he assured that the government would help spread micro-credit to every nook and corner of the country for sustainable socio-economic development. "These MFIs are turning the poor into micro-entrepreneurs," he said adding that micro-credit is playing a vital role in sustainable socio-economic development in poor countries. He laid stress on the need of MFIs and concerned development partners to expand their reach and activities to remote villages. "The government is ready to review its tax policy and tax rate, if the MFIs and micro-credit service providers firmly come up with programs to expand activities solely to the rural parts," he said. Acting governor of Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) Krishna Bahadur Manandhar said that the central bank does not have any plan to phase out deprived sector lending. "The beauty of micro-credit is its rate of repayment, which is almost 100 percent apart from participation of poor and women," he said. Dr Harihar Dev Pant, chairperson of the summit organizing committee and vice-chairperson of Centre for Microfinance Nepal, on the occasion, said micro-finance has been one of the few effective tools for poverty reduction. "However, in Nepal, its reach and activities have been limited mostly within some semi urban areas and Tarai districts," he said.

THE WORLD BANK, THE MAJOR FINANCIER of the financial sector reforms program in the country, has downgraded two of its projects citing dissatisfaction in their operation. A mission of the bank that had come to the country two weeks ago downgraded the two projects – Financial Sector Technical Assistance Project and Financial Sector Restructuring Project. They were downgraded because of slow pace of reforms and only partial achievement of their targets. Officials of Finance Ministry think that with their downgrade, the WB would now give lesser funding. In a recent report submitted by the bank, one of the reasons towards lack of required pace in their implementation has been pointed out to be the delay in settling the case against governor and a director of Nepal Rastra Bank. The case of irregularities filed by CIAA

against governor Bijayanath Bhattarai and director Surendra Pradhan has not yet been settled by the Special Court. The mission's report has also stated that the financial sector reforms program is suffering from leadership crisis. It has said that the downgraded projects could be upgraded if the concerned officials carry out the projects well. It has listed eight points as its recommendations. They include settling of case against governor quickly, handing over management of Nepal Bank Limited and Rastriya Banijya Bank to domestic teams and appointing ex-central bank officials in Loan Recovery Tribunal. The Financial Sector Restructuring Project will continue till September 2009 and has the total budget of \$ 75.5 million. Likewise, the Financial Sector Technical Assistance Project will continue till December, 2008 and has the total budget of \$ 26 million.

ATTORNEY GENERAL YAGYA MURTI BANJADE has said that there should be change in the current procedural to ensure swift justice. "(Current) Procedural is lengthy so it takes time for justice. We have suggested there should be new act for the procedural," Banjade said. His comments have come at a time when there have been complaints about lengthy process of justice dispensation in the country. In its latest annual report, the Office of the Attorney General has listed that out of 26,285 cases fought by government lawyers across the country in the fiscal year 2062/63, only 10,500 could be settled. The 2062/63 annual report of the Office of the Attorney General, which was presented, on Wednesday (Feb 13), to the Prime Minister, also lists that 9215 cases of crime had been filed with the police offices across the country during the period.

NEPAL HAS EXPERTISE AND INFRASTRUCTURE to start kidney transplantation. However, apathy of the Ministry of Health and Population has prevented the service from commencing, doctors said here at a press meet on Friday (Feb 15). "We have every kind of expertise and infrastructure for kidney transplant. However, the ministry is not serious about allowing hospitals to do so," said Dr Mahesh Khakurel, director of TU Teaching Hospital (TUTH). He said a transplant costing from Rs 800,000 to Rs 1.6 million in India would be available at Rs 250,000 in Nepal. According to Dr Khakurel, besides experts present in TUTH, Japan and Australia have assured they will share expertise if TUTH is allowed to start the service. Dr Rishi Kumar Kafle of National Kidney Center (NKC) said that to allow hospitals in Nepal to start providing the service, the ministry should take the initiative to amend Organ Transplant Act 2055 and Kidney Transplant Regulations 2058. According to Dr Kafle, the Regulations have a provision of jail term for life with property attachment if the kidney donor dies within three month of donation. However, the Regulations does not specify who is liable to such punishment. Bir Hospital has been issued authority to conduct transplants. But the first transplant carried out by the hospital failed. None of the doctors from around the world will carry out kidney transplant under Nepal's legal provisions, Dr Chop Lal Bhusal, chairperson of Nepal Medical Association said. According to TUTH, about 200 to 250 patients needing kidney transplant visit the hospital every year. Similarly, NKC refers about 70 patients to India for kidney transplantation every year. ■

HILLY PEOPLE'S INTEREST IN JEOPARDY

West Seti High Dam Controversy

• Dr. AB Thapa

In recent years even in India it has become extremely unpopular to talk of building large storage dams among the people living in the proximity of such dams. People living near dams like the Tehri or the Narmada are constantly fighting against the decision to implement those projects. There is a fierce opposition to construction of large dams despite the fact that those dams are absolutely necessary for India to meet the growing demand for irrigation, water supply and energy. Politicians, in India, are finding nowadays very hard to justify the decisions to build large dams. Surprisingly the view of our politicians is diametrically opposite.

Our politicians without feeling ashamed are seen telling the people lunatic ideas that those people living in the vicinity of the large dams, who might even be evicted from their ancestral homes and cultivated lands, should consider themselves blessed to have in their locality large storage dams such as the West Seti Dam. According to feasibility report the West Seti Dam is going to be highest dam of its type in the whole world and it is going to displace a large number of local people. Why our people must be strong devotee of large dams although we don't need to build them for our own use?

Politicians in Nepal, clearly with the intention of confusing general public, are seen falsely promising rapid economic development followed with great job opportunities in locations where high dam projects are going to be implemented to innocent local hill people ignorant of the fact that soon after the completion of the construction of such dam projects virtually all local activities cease and even the job of the operation of the gates provided to regulate water flow to generate electricity is controlled by persons at load dispatch centers located several hundred kilometers away from the project site.

Basin People in Canada Bitter About Projects

Columbia River dam projects have provided enormously large benefits to Canada. Apart from the direct power benefits generated at hydropower stations in Canada, that country received from the USA a big sum of money in return for flood control benefits to accrue to latter. On top of it, Canada is receiving in perpetuity from the USA in return for providing the water storage 50% of the additional power generated at 11 downstream hydropower station in the USA. Despite the fact that Canada took full advantages of the Columbia River dam projects, the people living in the

Columbia river basin are still feeling deep resentment at the way they were treated. The following are the excerpts from the Canadian reports published sometimes back.

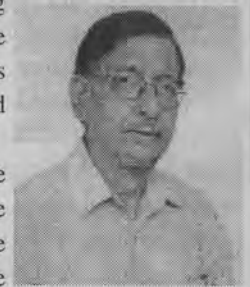
In 1967 an American resource economist had predicted that the Columbia River Treaty would provide an economic "shortfall" for the Columbia Basin. Today that loss is considered incalculable. If negative environmental and social impacts are considered the effects on the region are even more aggravated. The Basin bears the symptoms of the negative Treaty impacts with lower development and economic growth in many parts of the Basin, particularly those areas affected most directly by the reservoirs. The resentment and bitterness over how the region was treated thirty years ago is still in the minds and memories of many Basin residents.

The Treaty dams created four reservoirs flooding 60,000 hectares of land in the Columbia Basin. Included in the flooded land were dozens of small communities and thousands of acres of farmland and harvestable forest. The reservoirs damaged a regional fishery already crippled by the loss to other dams on the Columbia River. The flooding destroyed precious wildlife habitat and turned pristine natural lakes into huge fluctuating industrial reservoirs. The Arrow Lakes reservoir can rise and fall seven stories in height at the beach at Nakusp. During recent drought years Valemount residents had to drive more than twenty miles on lake bottom from their community dock on the Kinbasket reservoir to find water. As well as destroying potential wealth the reservoirs have acted as barriers to resource development in parts of the region. But perhaps the worst impacts were the human costs. Thirty years ago more than 2,300 Basin residents were uprooted and moved from their homes and, in many cases, their livelihoods to make way for the reservoirs.

Large Number of People Would be Evicted in Nepal

The valley bottoms of all major rivers in Nepal are extensively cultivated, with paddy, maize, cereals, pulses, mustard etc being the most common crops. Reservoir formation would eliminate these cultivated lands. There will be enormously large loss of agricultural production. Let us take the case of Gandak basin.

The areas to be submerged by storage reservoir proposed to be built in Gandak basin are densely populated. According



to 1979 UNDP study about 47,000 people would be displaced to implement the 360 MW Kali-Gandaki 2 storage project. Similarly according to 1979 UNDP study about 22,000 and 14,000 people would be displaced if the 180 MW Andhikhola and 460 MW Buri-Gandaki projects respectively are implemented. These are the storage projects selected by the Government to implement in near future.

Earthquakes and Dams

The geotectonic lines in Nepal which determine the geological structure of the Basin consist of two major thrusting faults; the Main Central Thrust (MCT) and the Main Boundary Fault (MBF). These faults extend in an east-west trend across Nepal, acting as the major division between formation groups.

The formation of a large reservoir overlying a tectonically active and faulted areas would lead to an increase in seismic events. An existing dam at Koyna in India was believed to have triggered an earthquake of magnitude 6.3.

Dams at the Centre of Controversy

Recently World Commission on Dams has published a report "Dams and Development". The report provides in-depth information on dams related issues. Few such issues are presented hereinafter.

Dams have made an important and significant contribution to human development, and the benefits derived from them have been considerable. In too many cases an unacceptable and often unnecessary price has been paid to secure those benefits, especially in social and environmental terms by people displaced and by natural environment.

Dams are at the centre of controversy, dispute, and even violent confrontation. There are many reasons largely related to the scale and scope of the dams and the impacts.

Local People Ruined

Large dams have significantly altered many of the world's river basins, with disruptive, lasting and usually involuntary impacts on the livelihoods and socio-cultural foundations of tens of millions of people living in the regions. The impacts of dam-building on people and livelihoods- both above and below dams- have been particularly devastating in Asia, Africa and Latin America, where existing river systems supported local economies and cultural way of life of a large population containing diverse communities.

Dams take a set of resources- a river and the lands along

its banks, generating food and livelihood for local people; and transform them into another set of resources- a reservoir, hydropower and irrigation, providing benefit to people living elsewhere. There is a lot of sense therefore in the saying that large dams export river and lands, removing them from the productive domain of one community to make them available to another.

Grand Coulee provides a vivid example. Native Americans were physically displaced by a project that provided power to industry and households in a city some 250 km away. Furthermore the water and land that had previously supported their livelihoods was dammed and diverted to provide white settlers with irrigated farming

Resettlement Problems

Resettlement for the large dams tends to be on a large scale than resettlement for other types of physical infrastructure. Roads and thermal power plants can be sited on marginal land whereas dams generally flood rich and fertile agriculture land.

Those resettled from dam or reservoir sites very often lose not only their homes but also their livelihoods. Relocation in rural settings where good land is already occupied can be problematic.

Rio Principle and Environment

In 1986 the

UN General

Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Development (DRD). It marked a significant step by the international community in developing a normative framework that specifies responsibilities in applying a human rights approach to development. It moved beyond the sphere of individual human rights to address relationships between different interest groups in society and their interaction with the state. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development adopted in June 1992 the Declaration usually known as the Rio Principles. Several of them are of immediate relevance to water and energy resources management. Principle 3 of that Declaration recognizes the right to development, but insists that it be met in an equitable way that considers future generations as well as present participants in development. Principle 4 of the Declaration insists that sustainable development requires environment to be integrated with the development process and form a central feature of the aim of that process. ■

Dams have made an important and significant contribution to human development, and the benefits derived from them have been considerable. In too many cases an unacceptable and often unnecessary price has been paid to secure those benefits, especially in social and environmental terms by people displaced and by natural environment.

SCARCITY OF ESSENTIALS

Supply Struck

Common consumers are facing difficulties, left and right, due to crippled supply system

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

Prabhat Sharma is a thirty-something youth who lives in Dhobighat. In recent days, he has become thorough frustrated with the politico-economic situation.

"My motorbike is lying idle in the house due to lack of petrol. I cannot move around freely because of crippled public transport system. Everyday there are eight hours of load-shedding and my family is worried about scarcity of cooking gas and essential foodstuffs. I don't even see a light at the end of this tunnel," he said.

Nepal, currently, is in the grip of severe energy crisis. The shortfall in hydropower has had damaging effect in the daily life of general public. This problem has worsened with the acute shortage of petroleum products.

The lack of fuel has been so severe that it has already started affecting education and health sector.

President of Private and Boarding Schools Organization of Nepal (PABSON) Bhoj Raj Shah has said that over 70 percent of schools have already shut down from this week as they their school buses have remained off the road.

"Problems are seen in diesel supply for school buses. Besides, even parents who drop their wards in schools are finding it difficult to bring their children to the school," said Shah.

Similarly affected is the health sector. Private hospitals and nursing homes are suffering from load-shedding coupled with lack of diesel to run generators.

Even government hospitals, which do not have to suffer from load shedding, are now facing consequences of fuel scarcity.

to suffer from traffic jam, now sport a deserted look. Taxi-drivers who have to earn their livelihood by driving their taxis are forced to wait for hours in front of fuel stations.

"We get fuel after staying in line overnight and for over eight to ten hours. Then also, we only get around 10 liters of fuel. This is a terrible blow to drivers who have to feed their families through

this business," said Saptalal Bijukchhe, a taxi driver.

Perhaps, the worst brunt is borne by housewives. In this current dry season, the Kathmanduites are already facing water crisis. On the top of that, when there is load shedding when the taps come alive, people are unable to draw water by using machines.

"There are so many problems. Water comes for two hours every two days and we need machines to draw water. When there is load shedding, we cannot draw water.

Sometimes we are left without a single drop of water. There is no cooking gas and fuel," said Nabina Mahara, a housewife from Koteshwore.

The government has been providing assurances after assurances. But the situation has not improved as yet.

Even as seven party leaders claim to make the forthcoming April election successful, many feel the worsening supply situation has cast doubt over their intention and ability. ■



Fruit vendors: Vanishing supplies

"We have three-four buses to ferry our medical and nursing staffs. These buses have stopped running in daytime as we need to save fuel. In night time we use them as many staffs have to come from as far as Bhaktapur. Our ambulances are standing in queue in fuel stations. We are also facing difficulties in bringing doctors on emergency calls," said Dr. Mahesh Khakurel, chief of the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital (TUTH).

The streets of the capital, which used



King Gyanendra : Silence Speaks

KING GYANENDRA

Silence Speaks

The beleaguered monarch appears to have learnt a hard lesson – at last. BY A CORRESPONDENT

By A CORRESPONDENT

Did wise sense ultimately prevail in the Narayanhiti?

Many were left wondering after king Gyanendra's virtual silence on the democracy day.

He defied speculations by not 'speaking out' on the D-day. There

was a traditional message, indeed.

But it did not sound more than a ritual – with the same old emphasis on national sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual harmony, equal distribution of democracy dividends etc.

Understandably, very few took a serious notice of it. And the palace was saved from what could have been yet another avoidable controversy.

At the same time, the people took notice of the royal silence.

Such a silence is the strength of the 250-year-old institution.

Pushed to the brink by recent political developments, one thought that the over-ambitious king had learnt the hard lessons.

Unfortunately, he had not – until recently. His nod to the publication of the chats-based interviews to a little-known Nepali weekly and the internationally known Japanese daily was enough of a proof.

There had been speculations that he would go further on the traditional democracy day. Like he did last year at his own peril.

This year, wise sense appears to have prevailed – at long last.

Gyanendra did not speak politics. That is not the business of a monarch who wishes to become a symbol of national unity.

The king spoke this year as any common citizen would do, in the current situation.

A citizen's king, that is.

But will it last? That is a million dollar question. Given the unpredictable person that king Gyanendra is. ■

Beloved countrymen,

As in previous years, we are celebrating this day as the 58th National Democracy Day. On this historic occasion, we would like to pay homage to our august grandfather His late Majesty King Tribhuvan, the architect of democracy in Nepal, the revered brave martyrs and all the Nepalese who laid down their lives for the cause of democracy.

While safeguarding Nepal's integrity, independence and nationalism, may we Nepalese achieve success in ensuring an environment wherein all can enjoy just and equitable share of the dividends of democracy as well as in building a prosperous and robust nation through the consolidation of the time-honored harmony existing amongst the Nepalese people.

May Lord Pashupatinath bless us all!

Jaya Nepal!

DIPLOMACY

The Poll Games

Players abound as uncertainty over the April elections deepens

By A CORRESPONDENT

So, the news is out. Ambassador Shiv Shanker Mukherjee's promotional transfer to the high commission in London will have to wait a few more weeks to take effect.

The most influential foreign diplomat in Kathmandu says, he has been asked by his government to stay back in Kathmandu until the April 10 elections.

Ostensibly, he has been instructed to use all his experiences, contacts and influences to ensure that the elections were not deferred again.

Having failed in his mission the last time, how Mukherjee will fare differently this time around is not clear yet.

His legitimacy warning to the Girija Prasad Koirala-led seven-party government did not work.

Instead, his predecessor – and now an influential advisor to prime minister Man Mohan Singh – had brushed aside such a warning during his last visit to Kathmandu, ahead of the November deadline of the CA polls.

“We have no business of issuing such a warning” Shyam Sharan had told reporters even as helpless ambassador Mukherjee looked on silently from the same dais at the

Dwarika Hotel's conference room.

Now, Shyam Sharan is being seen as a top contender to replace the retiring ambassador Ronen Sen in the high-profile Indian mission in Washington.



Mukherjee: Extended stay

But Mukherjee has been left guessing when he will be able to catch a flight to London. Given the deep uncertainty still hovering over the CA elections.

The elections would certainly be his top priority – for personal reasons as well.

The priorities of his adversaries in the South Block and the key players in the North Block may not



PM Koirala (Right) and Singh: Warm welcome

necessarily be the same.

The 10Janapath apparently has its own priority, given the message Sonia Gandhi's team gave during its recent Kathmandu stay.

The Digbijay Singh-led team reportedly was not upbeat about the April 10 polls.

According to the sources, the Congress (I) team spent more time discussing the spectre of a Chinese-penetrated Maoist takeover through the YCL-intimidated polls.

It was clearly in search of alternatives.

This search led the leader and the Madhya Pradesh 'raja' to stay for an extra 24 hours in the Yak n Yeti hotel, after other team members left for Delhi.

Most of the people he met and spoke during the extra stay happened to be those who are seen as hard critics of the Maoists and the soft sympathisers of the monarchy.

Sheer coincidence? May be not. ■

SURGING INFLATION

Alarm Bells

Ringling

One of the most pertinent indicators of the macro-economic stability, the rate of inflation, is showing dangerous trends of late. Because of its centrality, economists keep a close tab on the movement of inflation rate. And they are beginning to view with trepidation the recent northward rush of the inflation. Within past seven months, the rate of inflation has increased from 5.5 to 7.2 percent, say economists. This, according to them, does not augur well for the economic stability of the country at this critical juncture. The problem of rising market prices of essential goods has been exacerbated by the acute shortage of fuel. The unchecked inflation threatens to wreck the fundamentals of economy

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

Maya Gurung is a worried lady. Scouting the Kalimati Fruits and Vegetable Market – the largest wholesale market in the capital – for daily essentials, she is distressed by the sky-rocketing prices.

“For middle class and lower middle class families, the soaring market prices of vegetable and other foodstuffs have become number one problem,” she said.

“This problem affects us the most as we are faced with day-to-day crises in

our homes,” Gurung said.

Added Sumnima Jha, a housewife from Kalimati. “Prices of everything have increased. Earlier monthly budget of around Rs 2 to 3 thousand were enough to buy these essential goods. These days, it costs us over Rs 5 thousand,” she said.

Jha quipped at the lack of attention towards this plight faced by the common people of the country. “Everybody talks about election and election. Nobody is

paying attention to these issues.” She rues the continuous attention on politics, which, she says, is affecting the socio-economic situation in the country.

The surging inflation has destabilized the household budget of the middle and lower class families in the country.

“More than the prices of vegetables, the prices of essential foodstuffs such as rice, pulse, wheat and spices have increased,” said Janardan Acharya, a shopkeeper from Bhaktapur.



Green vegetables: Consumers in the red

"If you compare the prices of rice and pulses, you will be amazed to find how quickly they have increased," he said.

Apart from foodstuffs, the prices of fuel have also increased creating cascading effect. Besides, time and again, due to sudden and prolonged disruption in supply mechanism, the prices of goods increase.

All these hikes have hit the wholesale consumer price index, which the central bank calculates by studying the market situation in dozens of urban centers across the country.

Impact On Economy

Economists have warned that the rate of inflation could surge ahead breaking all past records in the recent years.

This fiscal year's (2007/08) budget had estimated that the rate of inflation would hover around 5.5 percent.

However, within last seven months, the rate has raced past 7.1 percent.

A renowned economist and a member of board of directors of Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) – the central bank – Dr. Bishwambher Pyakuryal fears that the unchecked inflation would be hurting the economy very badly in coming days.

He said that the rise in the price of petroleum products in the international market and tremendous growth in government expenditure has created big inflationary pressures threatening to destabilize the nation's macro-economic situation.

"In such a short period of the current fiscal year, the inflation rate has increased from 5.5 percent to 7.1 percent. This indicates that the trade deficit and budget deficit of the government will now increase astronomically. This will also affect government's resource allocation in the budget. Besides, the government will now not be able to invest in social sectors and it will not be

able to provide relief to the countrymen. The quality of lives of common people will deteriorate further and the nation will truly head towards the direction of failed state," warned Dr. Pyakuryal.

Apart from the disruptive effect of prolonged bandh He also points at the ubiquitous effect of Indian economy on Nepal. If Indian economy catches a cold, Nepalese economy suffers from pneumonia.

"If the Wholesale Price Index of India increases by ten percent, rate of inflation here increases by 4.7 percent. But, if narrow money supply is increased by 10 percent here, our inflation increases only by 4.3 percent. This means that more than our money supply, our inflation is affected by fluctuation in India's wholesale price index," Dr. Pyakuryal added.

Surging Expenditure

One of the reasons creating



Essential foodstuff : Skyrocketing price

inflationary pressures is the soaring expenses of the government, according to Dr. Pyakuryal.

The upcoming Constituent Assembly election, the increased need for spending in security arrangement, upkeep of Maoist cantonments and rising trend of government compensating people for various reasons have propelled the regular expenditure of the government.

For the purpose of holding CA elections alone, the government has allocated over Rs 6 billion – including for ensuring security arrangement.

Likewise, the 23-point agreement reached among the seven parties, too, have created additional financial burden on the government.

“Nepal perhaps never felt the greater need for external financial assistance than what is being felt, at present. And, I think, this is perhaps the most important time that our development partners can come forward with generous support,” the Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat had told the donors, a month ago just after the signing of the 23-point agreement.

However, despite such requests, the government, however, could not get enough commitments from the donors. The government had requested the donors to provide US\$ 47.8 million (over Rs 3 billion). But, as Finance Secretary Bidyadhar Mallik, revealed, they have only given commitment to provide around US\$ 30 million (less than Rs 2 billion).

According to the Finance Minister, the Nepal Peace Trust Fund (NPTF), which was created to mobilize international resources for facilitating the



Vehicles on the road: Struck by fuel crisis

peace process, at present, has “far too limited resources to meet our current and imminent requirements, which as per the current estimates stand at about 5.04 billion Nepalese Rupees (equivalent to USD 81.3 million). NPTF currently has external commitments available to the tune of USD 17.4 million. The shortfall, therefore, after government’s own commitment is about 47.8 USD million.”

While the officials at the Finance Ministry rush to pat each other’s back at the outstanding growth of revenue by

over 26 percent despite the turmoil in Terai, they try to under-play the spiraling growth in regular expenditures – which are growing at over 40 percent.

“The growth in government expenditures is far ahead than the revenue growth,” said Dr. Pyakuryal.

Role of NRB

Dr. Pyakuryal is also worried about the tendency to overlook the central bank in maintaining fiscal and monetary stability.

“It is the major task and duty of the central bank to keep the inflation under

control but the situation is such that there appear to be many central banks above the NRB. There are different government agencies and high-level committee that work above the NRB. The NRB has all the information and knows what should be done but it is not authorized to do the needful,” he quipped.

At a time when the economic growth rate of the country is stagnating at around 2 percent, the rush of inflation rate towards double digit is a worrying sign. ■

There is no way out other than to hold the election

-Raghuji Panta

A Member of Legislature-Parliament and member of CPN-UML central working committee RAGHUJI PANTA also heads the party's publicity department. As the future of country's election is uncertain, Panta stresses the need to hold it on schedule at any cost. Panta spoke to SPOTLIGHT on various issues. Excerpts:

How do you see the possibility of holding the election on April 10?

There is no way out other than to hold the election on April 10. According to reports received from various parts of the country, the atmosphere is conducive to hold the election and people are eager to elect their representatives.

At a time when normal life in terai and eastern parts of hill are completely paralyzed, how can you say that the situation is very conducive?

You cannot have perfect peace and absolute tranquility. Such opposition will be there all the time. Most of the parts are normal, these agitations are just confined to some urban areas.

When king's government made similar remarks. How do you look at the situation?

I will challenge the so called agitators led by Mahanta Thakur to face the people in elections I am certain that they don't have any mass base in terai. This is not my own subjective judgment but based on the reality.

Do you mean CPN-UML wants election even without addressing the issues raised by these parties?

What more do they need since seven party alliance has already invited them for talks and the government has also asked them to come to table to find out solution. If they continue their stand, we need to go for election. You cannot postpone the election all the time in the name of addressing the demands.

How do you see the demands raised by the United Madhesi Democratic Front?

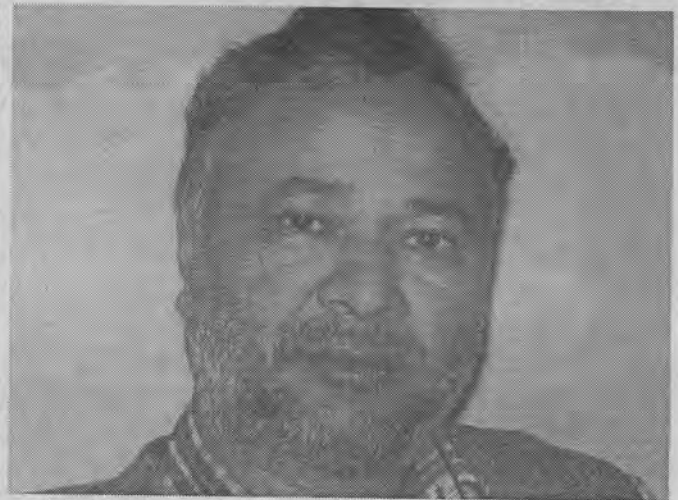
Our party has already cleared the stand that we cannot fulfill the demands that can jeopardize our national integrity and independence.

That means your party opposes the idea to create all Madhes as a single geographical unit?

That is absolutely right. There is no single place called Madhes. Various ethnic groups and linguistic groups are living in Madhes. For instance, there is a majority of population who live in Mithilanchal and there are Tharu dominated areas. I don't think it is reasonable to divide the country on the basis of regional unit.

But, the UDMF leaders have already made it clear that their bottom line for negotiations is one Madhes one Pradesh? How do you look at it?

Even our party has many leaders from Madhes who don't see these kinds of situation can bring any change in terai. It will create more trouble. The government needs to take stand on this matter. No one wants to see the fragmentation of the state.



Madhesis are saying that SPA needs to amend the constitution to fulfill their demand. How do you see the possibility to amend the constitution?

The period for the amendment of the constitution is over. Now, only the CA can decide the fate of the country. I don't think any party can prepare to fulfill demands raised by Mahanta Thakur and company who don't have support in grass root level in terai.

But, your party had accepted the Maoist demand to amend the constitution and include the clause to declare Nepal as a democratic federal republic?

The situation is different now. If we continue to amend the constitution on the ground that it will satisfy the political forces, we cannot hold the election in our life time. I firmly believe that there is no greater place than CA to decide on all the issues related to restructuring of the state.

If so, what is the sense in inviting the Madhesi leaders for negotiations?

We believe that there is peaceful way out for every problem. If we could convince Maoists to come to peaceful process, we can also do similar things with Madhes.

As your party is known as a party that frequently changes its stand, what is the guarantee that your party will stick to this?

CPN-UML has clear stand that it will not accept any demand that will harm national interest and national integration. We are ready to accept all other demands but there is no question to accept the demand of separatism.

When you have accepted Maoists as a partner when they too had demands for right to self determination for all the federal units, why are you opposing similar demands of regional groups? Is this a new ploy to have left unity for coming elections?

Our party has never accepted the demands of Maoists to give federal units with right to self determination. So far as the question of left unity is concerned, there needs to be a broader unity among all the political forces including republican Congress. ■

“We Are Not Anti-CA, But Govt Must Fulfill Our Demands First”

- Upendra Yadav

UPENDRA YADAV, coordinator of Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF), has been leading various stages of agitation in terai. His party recently joined United Madhesi Democratic Forum (UMDF). Yadav spoke to **SPOTLIGHT** on Terai issues. Excerpts:

What happened to the informal talks between your party and government?

Our team has not gone for talks but our team went there to apprise the government on our six points demand.

How do you see the response of the government?

We are very with the response of the government as they have not shown any sincere commitments to our request.

Do you see any possibility of breakthrough within a few days?

The ball is in the government's court. If the government suspends oppression in Madhes, there is possibility to move the negotiation forward.

Will your party submit candidates list?

We are not going to take part in the election process. If the situation remains unchanged, we will not take part in the election.

Is there any possibility of postponement of election programs?

Our talks have not entered towards that issue yet.

How do you see the possibility of your participation in the election for Constituent Assembly?

We are not anti-constituent assembly but what we want is meaningful election. There is no sense in participating in the election without fulfillment of genuine demands of Madhes.

Since prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala and seven party alliance leaders have agreed to fulfill the demands of Madhes, why do you need to call the general strike in terai?

They have been paying just lip service to our demands. Even the government led by seven party alliance used police force to suppress peaceful agitation in Madhesh and is shooting the agitators who are just demanding their rights. They have not fulfilled 22 points agreement signed with us and six point demands recently forwarded by us. We want the government to fulfill six points demands before holding the election for CA.

What does the government need to do?

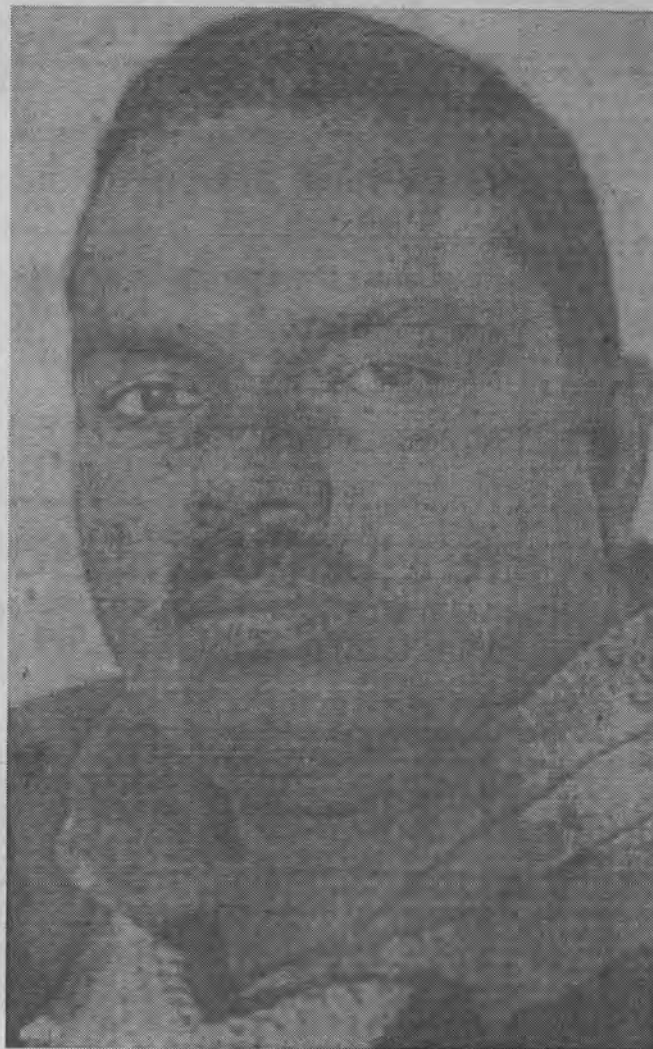
The government needs to amend the election laws which have certain mandatory provisions.

Earlier, Maoists forced the government to postpone the election arguing that they would participate in the election, which is meaningful. This time your party seems to be making similar efforts?

We don't have any intention to block the election process. It is the government which is responsible for the entire situation. We are not demanding the postponement of election but the government must solve the problems of Madhes.

It means there is a need to postpone the election and amend the interim constitution?

First of all, the government must address the demands raised



by Madhes agitation. If it is necessary, the government needs to amend the interim constitution. If it can amend the constitution to fulfill demands of Maoists, what is wrong in doing so to fulfill demands of Madhes?

So, the CA election will have to be deferred this time also?

If the government wants to hold the election on schedule, it must work actively and solve the problems of Madhes quickly.

Don't you think your party will have to take responsibility in case of postponement of election this time?

Had the government fulfilled our demands and executed the agreement signed with us, the situation would not have been like this. It is the government which is responsible for all the present circumstances.

Again, how do you see the possibility of holding the election on April 10?

As long as the government does not fulfill the demands of Madhes, there is no meaning of holding the election on April 10, 2008. ■



Supreme Court: Guarantor of constitutionalism

POLITICS

CA For What Purpose?

At a time when almost all major constitutional changes have been incorporated through the amendment in Interim Constitution, many ask one question: for what purpose do we need Constituent Assembly?

By KESHAB POUDEL

“We want all our demands including federal structure and Madhes as one single region with right to self determination before the

election for Constituent Assembly. If the government does not accept our demand, it will be meaningless to participate in the CA polls,” said Upendra Yadav, leader of Madhesi Janadhikar Forum

(MJF).

“The state must accept the right to federalism with the right to self determination. Otherwise, we will not allow holding the election for CA,” said Kishore Kumar Biswas, leader of United Republic Forum, an outfit of five ethnic groups.

As the date for the election is coming closer, all regional, political and ethnic groups want to fulfill their demands beforehand. “The election for CA will fulfill all the remaining demands of agitators,” said prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala.

The government of seven party alliance has amended the interim constitution three times in the past to fulfill the demands of agitating political parties, and regional groups. After last year’s upheaval, the government accepted the federal structure and Maoist pressure forced prime minister Koirala to declare Nepal as a federal republic through the amendment of the interim constitution.

“As all the high-sounding ideals to be achieved by the popularly elected Constituent Assembly are being introduced by the non-elected group of politicians in power, people like to know what remains there to be sorted out in the election for Constituent Assembly even if it is held. The process to resolve the constitutional differences through CA had already been derailed since the declaration of parliament of May 2006. Now the whole utility of having CA is being made irrelevant by bringing out amendments under the violent threat and duress,” said a political analyst. “Previously, it was under the coercion of Maoists. Now quite and peaceful population of Terai has come out in the open to get their demands fulfilled by the interim constitution following the same tactics as exercised by the Maoists.”

Although one cannot amend the basis laid down in the preamble of the constitution, politicians in power have already amended many of them including the question of republic or monarchy.

In a petition filed by advocate Achyut Prasad Kharel, Supreme Court’s single bench chaired by justice Sharada

Shrestha, on Monday (Feb 18), issued a show cause notice. In his petition, advocate Kharel argued that subsequent amendment of the constitution are against the basic features of the constitution. Thus they should be declared ultra vires through an interim order. The court, however, did not issue the interim order.

Whether Nepal will be monarchical or republic is a question related with the basic feature of the constitution as appearing in the original draft. The ruling parties under threat and duress conceded all the demands of the extremists, which were not in accordance with the popular opinion.

There is a provision in the present constitution, which highlights the need for CA. The preamble says, "In order to institutionalize the achievements of the revolution and movements till this date, we hereby promulgate this Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007 (2063), prepared through a political consensus and to be in force until a new Constitution framed by the Constituent Assembly."

According to a constitutional lawyer, no amendment against the basics, which is laid down in the preamble of constitution, can be justified. "The Supreme Court of Nepal has to follow the recognized principles of justice also. According to article 100 (1) of the constitution, the court has to follow the law and recognize principle of justice," said the political analyst. "Though it is a little bit late, this has been challenged in the supreme court. Now the burden is upon the court to fulfill its obligation towards the constitution."

Before bringing out the present interim constitution, the parliament had made a Declaration soon after the political change in May 2006, which was also a flagrant violation of the constitution.

A petition was filed in the Supreme Court by advocate Kharel with the help of a team of lawyers. It has not yet come to its final hearing. There are many precedents set by the court both here and in other countries during such circumstances.

An amendment of Indian constitution was challenged with a plea that the basic



Maoist workers: Dominating the Politics

structure of the constitution could not be amended in Indian Supreme Court. In its landmark decisions, the Supreme Court of India accepted the plea.

One of the judges from majority, Justice H.R. Khanna had made this scathing remark, "it would not be competent under the grab of amendment, for instance, to change the democratic government into dictatorship or hereditary monarchy nor would it be permissible to abolish the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. The secular character of the state according to which the state should not discriminate against any citizen on the ground of religion only cannot likewise be done away with. Provision regarding the amendment of the

constitution does not furnish pretence of subverting the structure of constitution nor can article 368 be so construed as to embody the death wish of the constitution or provide sanction for what may perhaps be called its lawful Hara-kiri."

Despite all such precedents, the interim parliament chaired by speaker Subas Nembang, who is also a lawyer, passed three proposals of amendment of the basics laid down in the interim constitution.

Nepal's History

Nepal is not a newly founded nation as it has a long history of independence and self rule with its own governing laws. In the process of modernization, the first



Interim Parliament: Rushing through important decisions

constitution was promulgated in 1947 by a liberal Rana ruler but it failed to come into operation due to the changed political situation. "Since then Nepal has gone through six different constitutions one after another but all succumbed to

political jolts and upheavals. Now as an interim arrangement, Nepal is practicing an Interim Constitution of Nepal 2006," said the analyst.

None of these Constitutions got adequate time to stabilize and evolve



Speaker Nemwang: Decisions before election

lasting rule of governance. "None of the political leaders of last agitation, who have role in the present governance - had any basic idea of constitution making or functioning of a constitutional system but through them the last constitution of 1990 was also scrapped without any logical justification," said the analyst.

As the political situation of the country is superseding the constitutional norms and process, one has to go through the wisdom of the political leadership in power. The original stand after the change in 2006 was to have a constituent assembly to resolve all political conflicts and reach to a consensus constitutional order through the CA. Politicians begun their innings in the power taking the oath of elegance through the King as according to the previous

constitution of 1990.

All the parties including the Maoists had agreed to go through that process to hold the election for CA as soon as possible but after subsequent events, the previous understanding with the King was violated by series of actions.

The elections were to be held within two months after that change but under different pretext, election had been postponed for three times. As things are developing, the election might be postponed for fourth time very soon.

To maintain the status in the power, they have amended the constitution three times without any constitutional check and balance. "A non-elected group of politicians have assumed all the powers of the state under unseen support and blessing as it is generally believed," said the analyst.

One is simply amazed by the ignorance of political leaders of this country in power who want to have all constitutional changes done before the CA election. The analyst argues that if they can bring every change through the amendment of interim constitution, for what purpose do they need CA? ■

GNP

Call for Election Boycott

Green Nepal Party (GNP) president Kuber Sharma demands neutral government to hold the free and fair election

By A CORRESPONDENT

At a time when the country's political situation is getting worse and law and order situation is deteriorating, Green Nepal Party (GNP) President Kuber Sharma announced that his party will boycott the election for Constituent Assembly and demanded dissolution of present interim parliament and formation of all party neutral government to hold free and fair election.

"In view of the increasing risk to the lives of voters and candidates our party will not participate in the election," said GNP president Sharma in a press conference organized in the capital.

"As long this unelected and nominated parliament is there and the government is run by seven party alliance, I don't see any possibility to hold the free and fair election," said Kuber Sharma. "Even there is no situation to go for canvassing as big parties particularly seven party workers

"The old order changed yielding place to new" wrote Alfred Tennyson, the English poet about two hundred years back. Nothing could be truer. Our people too have been struggling for a change. And a couple of years back came a great change but the politicians who grabbed power could not rise up to the occasion. Their self oriented politics, their unbridled ambition to stay in power sine die, their authoritarian behavior and intense intolerance of the opposition, their named corruption, their insensitive and inhuman attempts towards the demolition of our national heritages, culture and religion have impelled us—the Green Nepal party to raise our voices against such behavior and appeal to our aggrieved patriotic sisters and brothers of our country to join us to see our dear motherland from dishonor and destruction. The acute shortage of power, the petroleum products, even drinking water,



GNP leaders: At the press meet

are stopping the movements of leaders of opposition parties."

GNP leaders argue that they are not afraid to contest free and fair election.

sky rocketing prices of daily necessities, the total absence of law and order, the Chukka jams and bandha, the continuous loots, murders, extortions and abductions have not only made life of the common man most unsafe and miserable but turned it into absolute hell. The violent insurgency by the proponents of racialism, federalism and regionalism has weakened the solid structure of our national unity. In these circumstances no sane Nepali will risk life to go to polling booth to cast the vote. Even before the nominations are filed the big parties are disturbing the election campaign of other parties, big parties are using their muscle and money power on the one hand and talking about sharing of seats among themselves on the other. For that reason our party is demanding dissolution of interim parliament and government and to form a neutral government to conduct free, fair and

"In a situation when SPAM are controlling all the state resources to defeat opposition, there is no sense to go for election."

The GNP president also called international community to support Nepalese people's genuine wish to go for polls and express their opinion through peaceful election.

"The only way out for present political crisis is to end the dictatorship of seven parties," said Kuber Sharma.

impartial election. The interim government has not been able to govern. The village and district development committees are not able to carry out development works. The country is trapped in economic crisis. In view of the increasing risk to the lives of voters and candidates, our party will not participate in the election. Despite the absolute imperativeness of election to the Constituent Assembly, it is impossible to hold the elections n 10th April, 2008, in such a chaotic situation. Moreover, the servile behavior of our statesmen has turned our proud nation into a vassal state of our big neighbor in the south and this has got to be corrected at the earliest. As such, we all must join hands to change the government. I trust you all will not hesitate to come forward immediately to defend the sanctity and sovereignty of our dear country.

(Press statement issued by GNP President Kuber Sharma)

BOOK

Down The Memory Lane

Well-known writer and medical doctor Hemang Dixit's book reveals about the life after he survived a deadly attack

By A CORRESPONDENT

Dr. Hemang Dixit rightly chooses the name of the book as My 2 Innings as this book is about his life after a deadly attack by criminals. He had barely survived the attack.

"The event of 4th May 2006, about which a new chapter seemed justified, has added to the length of the book. After surviving the assault on my life, I felt that I was truly reborn," writes Dr. Dixit in his book. "It was as if the Gods were kind to me and as some of my well wishers remarked, Ishwar cupped his palms together to save you from what was certain death. I then thought this book which I planned to be authored, by both Hemang Dixit and Mani Dixit had a much later deadline."

He had luckily survived despite he was fired upon from a close range by criminals.

"The fact was that I was lucky to be alive. The doctors had at first thought that the bullet had gone out of the body, as it was not seen in the CT scan. But, there was no sign of it in the car. It was after repeated X-ray that two bullets were seen to be still lodged in my right upper arm and were taken out promptly. A trained marksman who had aimed for my head had surely fired these copper plated bullets," Dr. Dixit

narrates the events.

Having written numbers of books, Dr. Dixit, a well known pediatrician, has spent almost all his life in the medical field in Nepal serving tens of thousands of needy patients. He has also spent his long time in imparting education in medical institutions.

From the pioneer Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital



My 2 Innings

By Dr. Hemang Dixit

**Published by Makalu
Publication House, Dillibazar**

Price: Rs.150

Pages: 169

Mahrajgunj to Kathmandu Medical College Teaching Hospital now, Dr. Dixit dedicated his time to produce doctors and other medical man power in Nepal.

Unlike his previous books which were mostly his own imagination, this book is about what he faced in his real life. As a creative writer, Dr. Dixit, despite being himself a victim of such a deadly attack, is able to narrate and describe the situation.

Although the book begins from deadly attack on him by criminals, this book consists of narration about Dr. Dixit's lifetime and his achievements as well as his own experiences of isolated valley.

His schooling in India and his school days, his college days in United Kingdom and his meeting with various personalities including B.P. Koirala, Mr and Mrs Lain Singh Bangdel, Dr. Dixit sketches detailed events collected in his memory. He also narrates his meeting with former Indian prime minister late Rajiv Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi.

In the chapter Back to Square One, the book begins with his marriage life.

His with association with Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital and Kanti Children Hospital is very long as he was involved with TU Teaching Hospital since the agreement was signed to build the hospital.

Like all his other books, this is a very interesting book to read. Along with the experiences of Dr. Dixit, one can see the transformation of Kathmandu and the world. As a renowned pediatrician of Nepal, Dr. Dixit has made enormous contribution to Nepal. ■

“The demand for right to self determination, which jeopardizes the sovereignty and integrity of the nation, will not be acceptable even if any power of the world pressurizes.”

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, on his position regarding Madhes demands.

“Since 1950, Nepali people have fought against imperialists and feudal. They have won the war but some battle still remains. The CA will be the final battle. We will contest the final battle in the form of CA in peaceful manner and win it.”

Prachanda, Maoist chairman, addressing a mass meeting in the capital.

“If there are attempts to derail it, the election will be held amid bombs and explosions.”

Madhav Kumar Nepal, general secretary of Unified Marxist Leninist (UML), in Pokhara.

“If such an opportunity is created and if both sides and all sides ask for such help, then being a brother, we will carry out our responsibility.”

Digvijay Singh, general secretary of Congress (I) who led a delegation of senior leaders of ruling Congress party of India, in response to a question by journalists whether India could arrange 12-point-like agreement among dissenting Terai



groups and the democratic forces like it did between the Maoists and then agitating political parties in November, 2006.

“It has been agreed that no (Madhesi) demand that needs further amendment of the constitution can be addressed at this point.”

CP Mainali, chief of the United Leftist Front (ULF), explaining the decision of the steering committee of Seven Party Alliance.

“To implement new policy and new though, you will need new leadership. As such, the CPN-Maoist must lead the

new Nepal and, therefore, we are committed (to make) our chairman comrade Prachanda as the first president of new Nepal.”

Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, senior Maoist leader, addressing a mass meeting in the capital.

“These micro finance institutions (MFIs) are turning the poors into micro-entrepreneurs.” *

Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat, finance minister, lauding the contribution made by micro-credit in sustainable socio-economic development.

TRANSITION

DIED : Rotarian and founder of Mercantile Group Gopalraj Rajbhandari.

RETURNED: A four member delegation of senior leaders of ruling Congress (I) party of India, led by its general secretary Digvijay Singh and including Veerappa Moily, Union



Minister of State for Information, and MPs Shakeel Ahmad (Madhubani, Bihar) and Jitin Prasad (Shahajahanpur, Uttar Pradesh), after completing their three-day visit to Nepal.

Professor Helena Ranta (University of Helsinki) and Professor Pekka Saukko (University of Turku), two internationally acclaimed forensic anthropologists, after wrapping up their preliminary investigation aiding the National Human Rights Commission's study of suspected burial site in Shivapuri.

LEFT: Chandra Prakash Gajurek aka Gaurav, senior leader of Maoists, for India.

FORMED: A three-member talks team by the United Madhesi Democratic Front (UMDF) headed by Anil Kumar Jha of Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP) and including Mahendra Yadav of Terai Madhes Loktantrik Party (TMLP) and Ratneshwore Lal Kayastha of Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) as members.

ART

Show of Talent

Christian Salzgeber's paintings explain the world in its own way

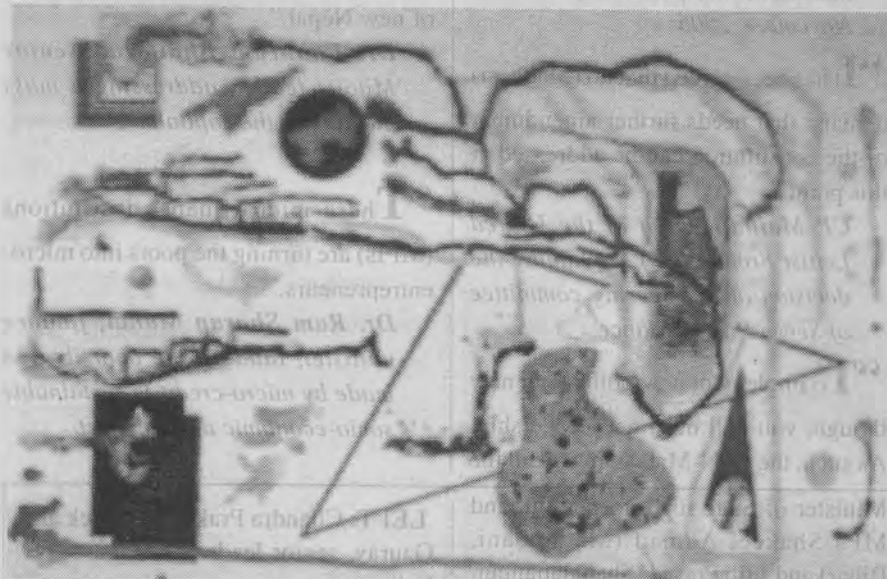
By A CORRESPONDENT

As the history human history is a history of transformation- the transformation of society, human behavior and their surroundings are a favorite subject for artists.

Although many artists have made efforts to explain the transformation, only a few of them are able to explicitly explain this theme. As complicated and

various ups and downs. There is friction as well as harmony in the process of change. The artist uses all primary colors and symbols to explain his own outlook of the metamorphosis.

Unlike other artists, the artist Christian Salzgeber has very creative and powerful way of expression. This is what is evident in the solo art exhibition. The paintings are full of meaning of



vague issues, there are tendencies to overlook on many important things.

Despite vague and abstract in theme, artist Christian is able to describe and explain through his brush and paintings these themes. The artist uses various signs and symbols to describe the process of change. As all of us know that human history is a history of full of transformation where one can see

metamorphosis. Artist has tried to give various gesture of metamorphosis in abstract manner.

The metamorphosis is itself an abstract incident. Every one has to pass through the process of metamorphosis and every one can see and feel the changes taking place in his/her surroundings or life. But only few can



explain it. For this, there is a need for concentration of mind as well as the creativity in thinking.

In broad theme like metamorphosis, artist Christian is able to describe and explain the process of change and transformation in surroundings through the combination of mind and colors.

Inaugurated by French Ambassador to Nepal Gilles Henry Garault, the exhibition Metamorphosis is being held at Indigo Gallery in Naxal.

The artist has used diverse media mainly acrylic on canvass to express concepts.

Christian's collections are varied - each of the paintings speak volumes about metamorphosis. The artist also makes efforts in the transformation in the paintings also. For the art lovers, the exhibition Metamorphosis will give a different kind of experience.

The exhibition will be on till March 9, 2008. ■

