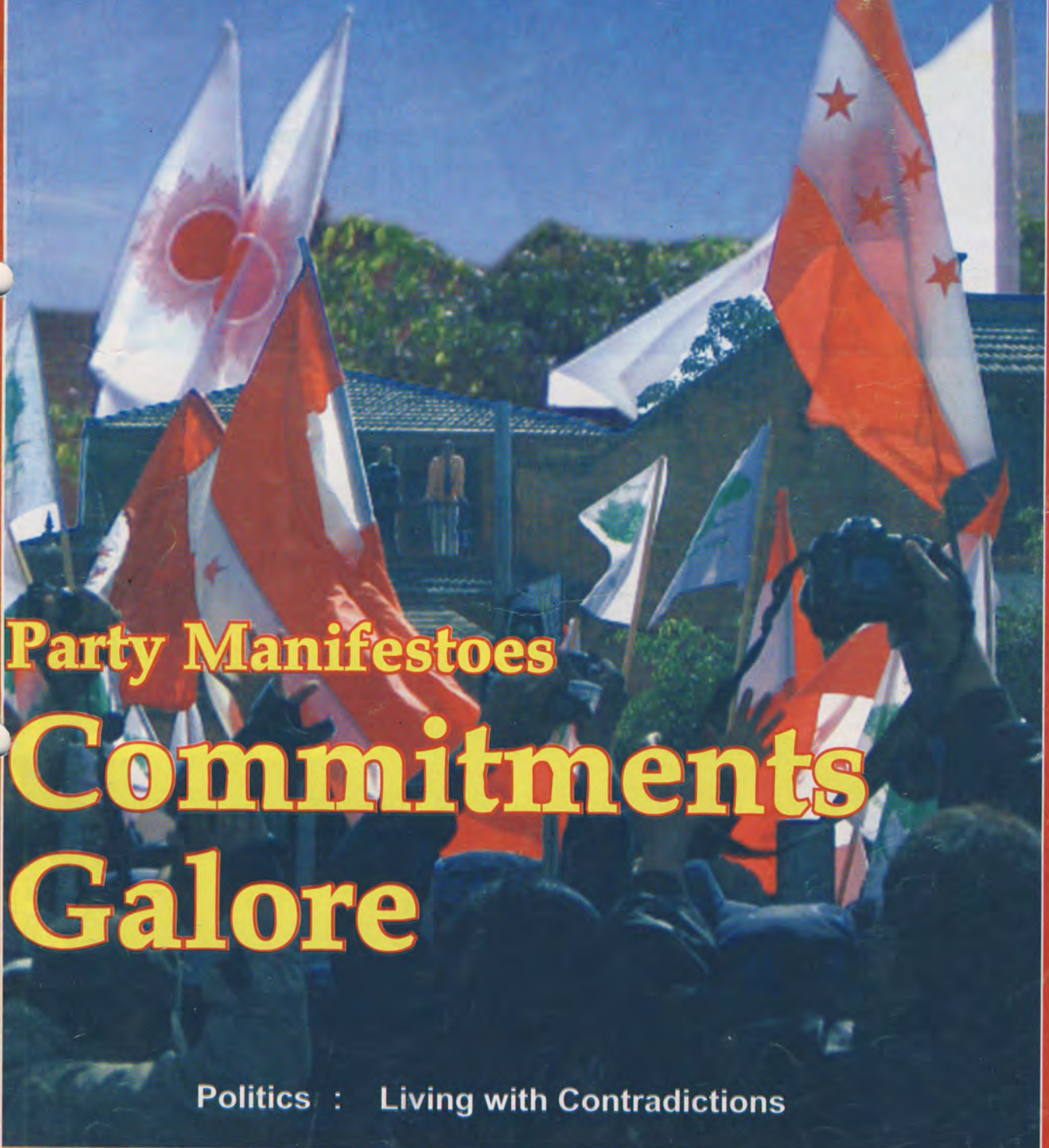


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The National Newsmagazine

SPOTLIGHT

March 14-20, 2008



Party Manifestoes Commitments Galore

Politics : Living with Contradictions

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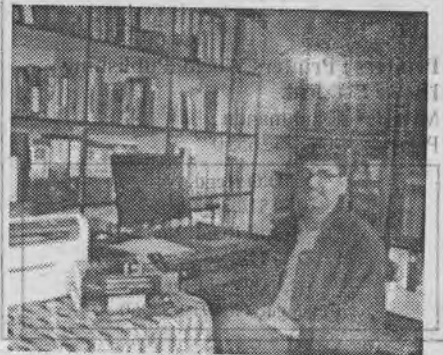
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SPOTLIGHT

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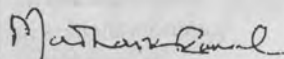
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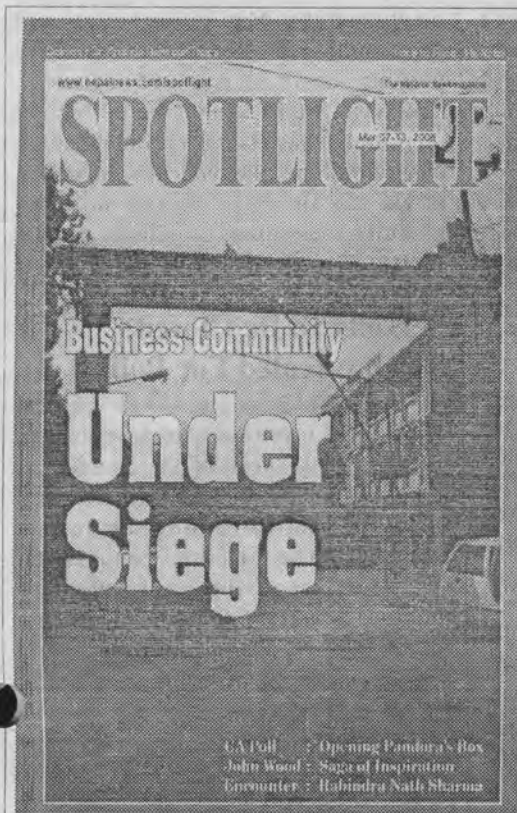
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With less than a month to go for the polls to the constituent assembly and no prospect of a neutral government to conduct the elections in a most free and fair manner, people's apprehensions are increasing hundred fold regarding the uncertainties looming on the horizon. A heterogeneous government of satellite political parties led by an incompetent leader who plays easy hostage to any bully cannot be expected to meet the rising expectations of the people. And this has been amply proved by the failure of the government to restore the houses and properties looted by the rebel forces during the long ten years of insurgency to their right full owners. Neither has the government succeed to inspire any confidence in the thousands of displaced persons to return to their homes and constituencies to exercise their fundamental rights of voting in the elections. Besides, the total absence of law and order and the continuous extortions, killings and kidnappings have rather aggravated the frustrations of the government to hold the elections in a peaceful manner. In such a volatile situation, the leading political parties have threatened to use their militant youths to influence the elections. And the government seems totally helpless to restrain them. This has only added to the anxieties and fears of the people. Even after all the preparations of the Election Commission and the repeated claims by the politicians that elections cannot be postponed now, a large section of the electorate still harbors severe misgivings. They say 'there are too many slips between the cup and the lips.' Be that is it may, we do feel the urgency of a people's constitution as soon as possible and as such, earnestly hope that the elections to the constituent assembly would not be postponed again. But the thought that these very politicians who have not blinked their eyes to mortgage our country's honor will again come to the fore if the elections are held, does impel us to wish that the elections be postponed as long an honest and patriotic leadership does not emerge. We don't know how long we shall have to wait for that to happen and we also don't know whether the country will be able to preserve its sovereignty till that time. It is, indeed, a great pity that those who can change the situation for the better don't feel the necessity and it might be too late when they wake up.


Madhav K. Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher



Too Much Pessimism

After reading your cover story on CA elections, I found that your views are too pessimistic and you seem to be biased against the election for CA. At a time when country's large number of population are eagerly waiting to vote in the election for CA, I don't think anybody can disrupt the poll this time. I am hopeful that the new constitution written by the CA will change the face of Nepal and end all kinds of discriminations. I hope you too will write articles showing the people that CA does not have any other alternative. By writing against the CA poll, you have been encouraging regressive forces who want to retain the power.

*Avaya Nepali
Melborne Australia
Via Email*

to hold the elections on schedule, the uncertainty still persists. The candidates of Seven Party Alliance are still threatening the candidates of other parties. It was very amazing to read the hostile statements of Maoist leader Prachanda who says that his party will capture the power through force in case of defeat in the election. Similar threat is coming from other constituents of seven party alliance. The election is still uncertain not because of other forces but because of behavior of leaders of seven party alliance.

*Sri Ram Bista
Sanepa*

No Rights

At a time when the country is heading towards the election and the status of the government is reduced just to a government with very little power, this government has no right to take major decision with far reaching consequences. Unfortunately, this government is selling out country's major power projects to the foreign companies. After selling out Upper Karnali project, it has recently decided to hand over another project Arun II. It is strange to see that none of the populist newspapers have shown any guts to write about the decision taken by minister of water resources Gyanendra Bahadur Karki and his team. Of course, Nepal needs more foreign investment and private sector investment is justifiable but why this government cannot wait for another few months to sign the agreements. Although water resource expert Ananda Bahadur Thapa has been exposing the deals, all other water resource experts, so called fanatic nationalist and communists, seem to be in no mood to raise the issue.

*Rabin Kandanga
Dhuran Via-email*

Lost Decade

It is very unfortunate that many communities have suffered a lot in the last one decade, whether during the period of Maoist insurgency or after the ceasefire. Your cover story Business Community: Under Siege (Mar 7-13) is a well written story. I agree with you that following a spate of attacks, abductions, extortion and even killings of members of their fraternity, the business community, as a whole, has been feeling the worst phase of insecurity and uncertainty. Although it was too late, the government has finally agreed to fulfill the demand of business community to have special force to deal with industrial insecurity.

*Shivaram Shrestha
S. K. Trader Indrachowk
Via Email*

Agitated Lot

Vice president of Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and

Industry, Kush Kumar Joshi, who has already announced to contest next elections for the presidentship of the federation, has rightly pointed out that the business community will not pay the tax, if the government doesn't pay attention to our call. It is true that business community needs special security when they are under attacks. From Maoists to other extremists in southern plain, all of them are still demanding extortion. The government has been talking about the need to establish industrial security force; the time has come to set up it. Otherwise, the confrontation between the government and industrialists seems inevitable.

*Jeevan Lama
Via Email*

Election Saga

It was interesting to read your cover story on The Elections Process Begins: What Next? (February 29- March 6). Despite the claims of political parties



Madhesi Reluctant To Join NA

Madhesi youths have given a cold response to the Nepali Army (NA)'s recent recruitment in Sarlahi district, the heart of Madhes. Of the 1,733 applications received for 953 rank and file at the NA's local Arjunban Battalion at Nawalpur recently, only 193 (11.1 percent) were from Madhesi. The figure is in sharp contrast to Madhesi leaders' claims that the NA was imposing an "unofficial ban" on Madhesi seeking to join the national army. One of the key demands of the terai parties during the last Madhes movement was group induction of Madhesi into the NA, and other state mechanisms. Besides Madhesi applicants, 171 were from indigenous groups (Tharu and Danuwar) and another 468 were Janjati. Likewise, 61 Pahade Dalit youths and 840 Brahmin and Chhetri had applied for the openings, according to an NA source. An army official said, "As very few Madhesi applied for the posts, the number selected is automatically low." According to the results published Wednesday, the battalion selected a total of 953 men for training, including 23 Madhesi. Similar is the picture at NA Headquarters. Out of 4,993 applicants received recently for officer level openings, only 76 (approximately 1.5 percent) were from Madhesi. Apart from Madhesi, 110 Pahade Dalit candidates have also applied. Here also, 3,883 (over 86 percent) applicants were Brahmin/Chhetri. The final results here are still awaited. Expert on Madhes issues Bhaskar Gautam terms this a "natural tendency" as there were few Madhesi in NA posts in the past. "As most semi-literate Nepalis often follow in the callings of their seniors, Madhesi youths

cannot be any exception since their seniors were not in the NA," he opines. He further says that the Madhesi parties, which are raising the issue now, should encourage Madhesi youths to join the army. The NA constituted two separate battalions of Kirantis and Madhesi some three years ago. Now it has two such additional battalions, of Gurungs and Magars. *Kantipur reports*

Prachanda says he doesn't know about dummy candidates

Maoist chairman Prachanda has claimed that he does not know anything about 'dummy candidates' said to have been fielded by his party in Kathmandu 10 constituency from where he is contesting in the April 10 election. Responding to media reports that 15 dummy candidates had been fielded to help Prachanda use extra resources - each candidate is allowed to spend certain amount and is availed of certain facility by the Election Commission - in his constituency, he said, "I have no idea of who have been fielded by whom." But he was angry at Election Commission for sending a letter demanding clarification from him. "The way in which EC has written a letter and circulated it has stunned me. Independent candidates can decide to contest anytime and from anywhere. I didn't even know about it," he said at a program held to unveil Maoist election manifesto in the capital, Friday. The EC had sent a letter demanding explanation from the Maoists regarding the media reports on dummy candidates. *Compiled from reports*

NA No To Recruitment Of Politically Indoctrinated

Nepali Army (NA) has said it will open its doors for recruitment of people based on worldwide standard. It has said no to the recruitment of politically active people. "All over the world, there are certain standards for recruitment in army, which includes physical, mental and educational qualifications," said Brigadier General Ramindra Chhetri, spokesperson of the NA. His comments have come amid pressures to integrate Maoist combatants into NA and recent agreement with the Madhesi regarding collective recruitment. "Nowhere it is

mentioned that Maoist combatants will be integrated into NA. Politically active persons cannot be recruited into army. Likewise, there cannot be collective recruitment based on some ethnic group or community," he said. He, however, added that any Nepali citizen fulfilling globally-recognized standards can be recruited into NA. *Compiled from reports*

Schools To Be Closed, Border Sealed For Polls

The government has asked educational institutions to close schools for one week ahead of the constituent assembly polls so that the teachers could be mobilized for public awareness campaign. The Election Commission (EC) had asked the government to mobilize at least 60,000 school teachers for raising awareness among the voters. The EC came up with this idea due to lack of sufficient number of government employees involved in awareness campaign. The teachers would be mobilized as volunteers. One male and one female teacher will be deployed in each VDC and municipality for the purpose. Usually, schools remain closed during this period, except some, marking the end of the academic session. Meanwhile, the border with India would be sealed from March 10 and additional barriers would be set up in all checkpoints. According to Indian media reports, a senior police officer said the border would be sealed in view of constituent assembly elections scheduled for a month later. Policemen in plain clothes would be deployed keeping in mind the sensitive nature of the border.

A meeting of senior officials of both the countries would be held before the elections for better coordination. Police officials from both countries have said vigil along the border had already started.

Nepalnews.com reports

Robbery At Norwegian Envoy's Residence

An armed group robbed Norwegian Ambassador to Nepal Tore Toreng's Bhaisepati residence Friday (Mar 7) night. According to police, the armed group of 25 robbers took control of the security personnel safeguarding at the residence located at Bhaisepati, Lalitpur before looting one laptop, Rs 40,000 and

clothes. A six-member team under the coordination of Police Inspector Saroj Khatri has been deployed to investigate and nab those involved in the robbery, Metropolitan Police Commissioner's Office informed. Kamala Bista, adviser to the Norwegian embassy, quoting ambassador Toreng, said the looters decamped with a computer and a mobile set from the residence. "It was not a big robbery," she said. Bista said the embassy had rented the house in January. The armed persons might have thought that the owner of the house, who is a jeweler, was residing in the house, she said. "I was told that the armed persons searched for jewellery inside the house," she said, adding, "The looters had an argument with security guard



when a guard told them that the house was rented by the Norwegian ambassador and that there were no valuables in the house. *Compiled from reports*

Govt Signs MoU Awarding Arun III To Sutlej

The government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with India's state-owned Sutlej Jal Vidyut Nigam (SJVN) awarding it with the 402 MW Arun III hydropower project. According to the MoU, the SJVN will have to provide 21.9 percent of power (88 MW) to Nepal free of any charge. That apart, the SJVN will need to pay 7.5 percent of its total income as royalty to the government. The government will also clamp 0.5 percent of export tax. Studies have shown that Arun III can generate 2.9 billion units of power during wet season and 1.55 billion units of power during dry season. The cost of its construction is estimated at US\$ 860 million. The MoU was signed by joint secretary at the Ministry of Water Resources Anup Kumar Upadhyaya and deputy manager of

SJVN Sanjay Upal. Upadhyaya has said that as per the understanding, Nepal can also buy as much of power generated from the project as it wants. "They can sell the power to India only after meeting our demands," he said. The MoU awards the project on build-own-operate-transfer basis to SJVN for 30 years. It needs to first fulfill specified conditions to receive survey license following which it can obtain generating license. The development of Arun III was earlier planned by the World Bank. However, in 1995, it was cancelled under stiff protests by some quarters who claimed it to be highly expensive and environment-unfriendly. *Nepalnews.com reports* ■

Businessmen Urge Parties To Raise Economic Issues In CA

Business community has appealed to the political parties to adequately raise economic issues at the Constituent Assembly (CA). National Business Initiative (NBI) had held an interaction, Friday (Mar 7), to push economic agenda at the center-stage of debates. The NBI also put forth 10-point paper soliciting support from wide spectrum of political parties. The paper includes expression of commitment against bandhs and strikes, creation of industrial peace and appeal for political parties to enter into partnership with business community, among others. The paper urges parties to express commitment not to call any bandh or strike for at least six months. Speaking at the program, Padma Jyoti, president of NBI, said business community favored peaceful political transition through the CA. Maoist leader Dr. Baburam Bhattarai said his party wanted to push self-reliant economy. "In order to protect the small economy, we need to control open border with India, which has a big economy," he said. Peace and Reconstruction Minister Ram Chandra Poudel accused Maoists of destroying the economic base of the country through their violence. "People were killed and infrastructures destroyed in the name of people's war. What did the Maoists get? Only development was stalled," he said. *Compiled from reports*

Entrepreneurs In Favor Of Multi VAT Rates

Private sector entrepreneurs have urged the government to introduce multi

Value Added Tax (VAT) rates. They have said that based on the nature of business, VAT rate should be fixed at 1, 4 and 13 percent. Currently, the government has imposed 13 percent VAT in all kinds of goods and services. The business entrepreneurs have said that single VAT rate has eroded competitive capacity of different products that are produced differently. This demand has been put forth to the Finance Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat following a joint study by Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), Nepal Chamber of Commerce (NCC), Confederation of Nepalese Industries (CNI) and Overseas Export Import Association. Entrepreneurs have claimed that despite imposing multi rate, the revenue collected by the government will not decrease. Pradeep Man Baidya, chairman of Income Tax and VAT Committee at FNCCI, said that revenue growth will continue to be 25.5 percent. He said that in 135 countries where VAT is imposed, 68 countries practice multi rates. *Kantipur daily reports*

Prince Harry Feels Safest With Gurkha Soldiers

Prince Harry of the UK, who had been in headlines for the last few days after his presence in Afghanistan was revealed, said there is 'no safer place to be than in the presence of Gurkhas'. For their part, Gurkhas praised the 23-year-old royal for his good manners while Harry described their goat-curries as "fantastic" following a stint at an operating base in the southern province of Helmand just 500m from Taliban positions, media reports say. "When you know you are with the Gurkhas I think there's no safer place to be, really," he said. Associated Press quoted him further, "They're all armed with kukhuris, so if they run out of ammunition they will charge you with their 'massive swords', as the enemy call them." Harry also praised food of Gurkhas soldiers - goat curries, chicken curries, terming it a good fun. Captain Yambahadur Rana of a Gurkha regiment said, "We are very lucky to have a prince on our team working with us. Definitely he's getting on very well with our boys and certainly in the Ops Room he works next to me and we have a very good working relationship," Rana added. *Compiled from reports*



First batch of 20 Bhutanese refugees leave for the US on resettlement plan *Kantipur*

PRIME MINISTER GIRIJA PRASAD KOIRALA visited Pashupatinath temple, in his capacity as the head of state, on the occasion of Shivaratri festival on Thursday (Mar 6) evening. Soon after Prime Minister Koirala returned from the temple, King Gyanendra along with Queen Komal reached the temple. The King has been stripped off not only political but also cultural rights since the change of April, 2006. Security situation was tightened during the visit of Prime Minister and the royal couple. The royal couple spent more than an hour in the temple. Meanwhile, Pashupati Area Development Trust officials have informed that over 300,000 devotees visited the temple on Thursday. Shivaratri is one of the biggest festival of Hindus. Tens of thousands of devotees from Nepal and India visit the temple on this day.

THE WELFARE FUND OF THE NEPALI ARMY has more than Rs 11.17 billion including outstanding amount of more than Rs 1.69 billion. According to information given during a press meet organized on Friday, Nepal Army said 16 roads have been constructed with the investment from the fund. Army officials said 17 more roads are on the cards and that the construction of two of them will start very soon. The army has also said investments have been made on health and education projects in various districts across the country. This is the second time Nepal Army publicized the status of welfare fund after immense pressure from former army personnel and political parties. Spokesperson of the Nepal Army Ramindra Chhetri said on the occasion that Nepal Army must not be politicized in the name of inclusion. He also said people influenced by political ideology will not be included into the armed force. Chhetri further said NA was ready to provide security to keys installments as police personnel have been dispatched for CA polls.

CHINA HAS ASSURED THAT IT WILL PROVIDE soft loan worth US\$ 187 million for building two hydropower projects that will sell electricity in the domestic market. The two power projects are 61 MW Upper Trishuli 3 'A' and 44 MW Upper Trishuli 3 'B'. A 9-member Chinese delegation that visited Nepal this week led by Assistant Minister for

Foreign Affairs He Yafei had told Nepalese authorities that China's Commerce Ministry would be told to provide the soft loan of US\$125 million for building the Upper Trishuli 3 'A' and US\$ 62 million for Upper Trishuli 3 'B'. The money is part of a US\$ 200 million concession credit committed to Nepal by China's state-owned Export-Import Bank in September 2006. The feasibility study for the two power projects has already started, according to NEA

officials. The construction work on the projects will start in next financial year and they will start generating electricity from 2011-12.

CHINA PROVIDED AIR-CARGO INSPECTION system to Nepal. Chinese ambassador to Nepal Zheng Xianglin handed over the assistance to finance secretary Vidyadhar Mallik Monday (Mar 3) in the presence of visiting Chinese assistant foreign minister He Yafei. Mallik and ambassador Xianglin signed the delivery and acceptance letter for PB2028 Air-cargo Inspection System granted by the Chinese government to Nepal. Under the assistance, X-ray machines worth Rs 1.4 million will be installed at the Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) cargo section that is expected to facilitate safe and smooth customs clearance process. The Chinese side formally delivered the equipment to Nepal after the inspection by officials of both the governments. The officials unanimously stated that the equipment meets the requirements. Issuing a press release, Nepal government has expressed its sincere appreciation to the Chinese government for its assistance and for continued assistance in socio-economic development of Nepal. The letter for assistance that the Chinese government would provide one set of PB2028 air-cargo inspection system to Nepal was signed in August 2006. The Chinese-NEUTECH Company has carried out the project and tested after installation. ■



On the occasion of 98th International Women's Day, Women's Guidance Association holds a big rally in Basantpur on March 8.

RIDICULOUS HANDLING OF WATER RESOURCES

My Humble Effort to Make a Few Corrections

• Dr. AB Thapa

In 1970s the construction of the Kulekhani High Dam Project was about to begin. I had horrible suspicion that the geology of the Kulekhani dam site area could be problematic. I published an article about that in the newspaper "The Rising Nepal". Some other local and foreign newspapers also carried partially the content of my article shortly thereafter. That news was very seriously taken up by the World Bank and our government. Much later on, I learnt that I was even going to be charged with criticizing the government decision. The case was dropped, when few of my colleagues stepped in to plead on my behalf. It is said that extra concrete grouting works and other measures were taken up to protect the river bed and the terraces just adjacent to the dam to ensure safety. Despite such limited measures, few years after the completion of the Kulekhani dam news came out of the blue that very wide cracks have already developed over an wide area adjacent to the intake structures on the right bank. It was the result of poor geology of the dam site. Indeed, the Kulekhani dam was on the verge of collapse.

Basis of My Prediction

My prediction about the geology of the Kulekhani site was based on my study of general characteristics of hydropower projects implemented in high hill regions. The study was a small part of my thesis for which I was awarded Ph.D. in 1966 in former Soviet Union. The main part of my Ph.D. thesis, however, was devoted to development of a new theory on hydraulics to be applied in design of underground hydropower. Prof. G.I. Krivchenko was guide to my Ph. D. research. Prof. Krivchenko had published the new ideas developed in my Ph.D. thesis including the updating in Russian language technical journal *Hydrotechnical Construction* in July, 1985. Immediately thereafter in 1989 American Society of Civil Engineers had included the findings published in the *hydrotechnical journal* in its Design Guidelines 1989, which is a document universally used for the design of hydropower station. This guideline book is used by engineers of our Water Resources Ministry also. It is available in Water and Energy Commission library.

An Ironic Twist To The Story

The misgivings I had about the poor geological conditions turned into the most grave reality. At that time I was heading the monitoring section of the Water Resources Ministry. Dr. John Cooper and Mr. Deepak Gyawali from WECS had visited the Kulekhani dam site to spend the weekend. They were shocked to find that the Kulekhani dam was at the risk of being washed away. We got the full reporting from them. It was feared that at any time in near future a very big portion of the right bank terrace along with the intake structure could plunge into the reservoir setting in motion a huge big mass of the reservoir water to overtop the dam. In a similar type of Vajont dam incident in Italy, the loss

of life was significant even though the dam was left standing after the overtopping because it was a concrete dam. However, the whole project was rendered useless after that incident. In case of the Kulekhani dam made of earthen core the whole dam body would be completely washed away after the overtopping.

I had to play the lead role on behalf of the ministry in expediting the civil works to save the Kulekhani dam. Leading experts from the USA, Australia and Japan were called in for consultation shortly thereafter. On their recommendations works such as the clearing of large volume of weathered materials, anchor bolting of huge masses of rocks to prevent sliding into the reservoir, provision of underground drainage system were carried out. Timely intervention on a massive scale helped to avert Kulekhani dam disaster.

Prime-Minister G.P. Koirala and Kosi Project

Nepal and India had reached an agreement to conduct detailed study of the Kosi High Dam Project in course of Prime-Minister G.P. Koirala's visit to New Delhi about 15 years ago. The joint communiqué issued at the end of the visit made reference only to the Kosi Dam Project. Nobody in the Nepalese team visiting Delhi and even those in Nepal could have ever imagined that there is a direct link between the Kosi Dam Project and other two projects, viz. Sun-Kosi Dam Project and the Navigation Canal Project. The idea of Kosi canal waterway had not even been conceived. The Kosi Dam Study Agreement had aroused at that time a lot of controversy within the Water Resources Ministry.

Salt And Oil Supply Would Be Shut Off

I raised the Kosi dam issue within the Water Resources Ministry to emphasize categorically that under no circumstances the Kosi Dam Project study should be allowed to be dissociated from the study of the above mentioned other two projects. My firm stand on the Kosi dam issue even angered many of my colleagues within the ministry. Some of them were charging me how dare I overrule the decision of the two prime ministers by obstructing to conduct the study of the Kosi Dam Project. Some of them were saying that I was acting foolishly to anger our southern neighbour. They considered that my suggestions were highly provocative and Nepal might be forced to face dire consequences. As a result, salt and oil supply to our country could be shut off.

Finally, my firm stand on the Kosi dam issue paid off. My concept to conduct simultaneously the studies of the Kosi Dam Project, the Sun-Kosi Dam Project and the Navigation Canal Study was at last endorsed



with great reluctance. It was agreed to be made the agenda for the joint meeting of the representatives of the governments of Nepal and India. Nobody in our government had truly believed that my concept of the proposed study would stand the slightest chance to be approved by both the countries. Despite such reservations of my colleagues in the ministry, I succeeded in convincing representatives of the Government of India to accept my concept in a bilateral negotiation held in Kathmandu in 1997. Many people in our Government and also in media were greatly astonished when they learnt that India has endorsed Nepalese proposal. Some of them were not ready to believe that India would have accepted Nepal's proposal for conducting the studies of the Sun-Kosi Dam Project and Kosi Canal Waterway and thus they did not hesitate to oppose the 1997 Indo-Nepal Accord on Kosi study. It took them quite a long time to be convinced that the 1997 Indo-Nepal Accord on Kosi Study was genuinely in the interest of Nepal. However, quite a few might still be in confusion about the significance of the proposed study. I

had prepared on my own fairly extensive special reports on the Sun-Kosi Project, Kosi Dam Project and the Kosi Canal Waterway without spending a single dime of the government money.

Those reports were prepared well ahead of the joint meeting to explain the new concept of the above described three projects. Those documents are in the WECS library.

Outcome of the 1997 Meeting

There was not much discussion about the scale of the Kosi High Dam Project in the 1997 Indo-Nepal Kosi Study Meeting. Nevertheless, both sides knew perfectly well that the Kosi High Dam Project is going to be one of the biggest in the whole world. The following three key issues were raised in the meeting. They were the Kosi flood control, Sun-Kosi Dam Project and Kosi navigation canal. India agreed to accept our proposal on all three issues.

Until the 1997 meeting the Indian Government was seen to be drifting away from the facts that it is absolutely indispensable to provide storage dams in the basin to prevent the Kosi flood disaster. The Indian Government was saying that the Kosi flood control problem has already been resolved after the completion of the construction of embankments on both sides of the Kosi River. So right at the outset of the meeting held in Kathmandu to finalize the Kosi Study Agreement, I had to give a brief presentation on Kosi flood problems. The presentation was quite helpful in explaining our viewpoint on Kosi development. Later on in course of discussions the leader of the Indian team expressed off the record that from that time on they are fully convinced of the fact that the biggest benefit to accrue from the Kosi development would be the flood control

The study to construct the Kosi High Dam is now firmly tied up with the provision of a navigation canal about 165 km long, and out of it a 120 km long section of such navigation canal would be in Indian territory. The proposed navigation canal would be linking Nepal with the seaport through Ganges, Bhagirathi and Hoogly rivers

It has been almost explicitly agreed that the commencement of the construction of the Kosi High Dam would be contingent upon the prior implementation of the Sun-Kosi High Dam Project on technical grounds. The Sun-Kosi High Dam Project, regarded to be benefiting almost exclusively Nepal, prominently figured in the talks to finalize the 1997 Kosi Study Agreement. Indian side had wanted somehow to exclude the Sun-Kosi Dam Project from the Kosi development study. They did not want to get bogged down into the relatively big Sun-Kosi Dam Project. Ultimately the Indian side was convinced that it is no more possible to sideline the prior implementation of the Sun-Kosi Dam Project despite the fact that it would be a project to serve almost exclusively Nepal. They

were clearly explained that the Kosi Dam Project and the Sun-Kosi Dam Project would be mutually exclusive if the Kosi High Project is implemented first. They fully realized the fact that the construction of the

Kosi dam would be further delayed if the construction of the Sun-Kosi Dam Project is not completed in time. As a result, the Indian side even agreed to provide financial assistance to carry out expeditiously the detailed study of the Sun-Kosi Dam Project also.

Water Resources Ministry's Horrifying Decision

Two prime-ministers, one of them the present Prime Minister of Nepal Mr. G. P. Koirala, had signed an agreement to conduct detailed feasibility study of the Kosi dam project which is expected to be one of the largest multipurpose water resources projects in the whole world. The project is considered indispensable to save the life and property of millions in Nepal, India and also Bangladesh. It is also proposed to provide as a component of this giant project a navigation canal linking Nepal with the Ganges waterway. Such canal will help to connect our country with the seaport. The project is expected to provide enormously large irrigation and power benefits also.

Unfortunately our Ministry of Water Resources does not seem to realize the extent of the damage to entire nation if the Kosi dam project is not handled with great care. At present one wing of the Ministry of Water Resources and Indian experts have started to conduct jointly the detailed study of the Kosi project. At this very time to the great horror of everybody another wing of the same Water Resources Ministry without the slightest hesitation is busy to devastate the proposed Kosi dam project by allowing a private developer to conduct detailed feasibility study to implement the Lower Arun Project. Ministry of Water Resources knows perfectly well that the Kosi Dam Project and the Lower Arun Project are mutually exclusive. ■

Two prime-ministers, one of them the present Prime Minister of Nepal Mr. G. P. Koirala, had signed an agreement to conduct detailed feasibility study of the Kosi dam project which is expected to be one of the largest multipurpose water resources projects in the whole world.



Bijukchhe with PM: Melting differences

POLITICS

Living With Contradictions

From ideological ground to practical politics, leaders exhibit alarming degree of contradictions

By KESHAB POUDEL

It's posture is still that of a radical revolutionary party of proletariat but Communist Part of Nepal Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) nominated leading industrialist Binod Kumar Chaudhary and another businessman Niranjan Tibdewala as its candidate (under PR list) for the coming CA polls.

According to preamble of CPN-UML, the party is a political representative institution of the Nepalese proletariat and working class. Marxism-Leninism is the guiding principle of this party and its maximum goal is socialism and communism. However, it is strange to see the party, which vows to eliminate capitalist, feudal and reactionaries, is moving ahead under the banner carried by two capitalists Chaudhary and Tibdewala.

With an aim to establish state for proletariat and peasant through armed revolution, the predecessors of CPN-UML the CPN-ML and Coordination Committee of Jhapa was set up in 1971. Based on the ideology of peasant armed revolution to achieve Naulo Janbad (New People's Democracy), the party practiced the radical Maoist path like the present CPN-Maoist killing a number of innocent people in eastern city Jhapa for the 'cause of revolution.'

According to the preamble of CPN-ML, one cannot achieve the right of proletariat and peasant through peaceful means. The party believes that only through the armed struggle can it capture of state power through revolution. The long term People's War is the only way to encourage people for armed uprising,

it believed then.

As CPN-UML's ideology is yet to transform, nobody knows what inspired top industrialist Chaudhary to carry the banner of CPN-UML. "Political parties need good managerial skill. I accepted the offer of CPN-UML hoping that I can contribute in the management side of the party," said Chaudhary in his interview to Kantipur Television.

Although this is very unusual, one can see plenty of such contradictions in Nepali politics where politicians are living with contradictions.

CPN-UML's case is not new. Similarly, a retired general of Royal Nepal Army Kumar Fudung, and a retired Major Indrajeet Rai are nominated as candidates for CA by the CPN-Maoist. Likewise, former zonal commissioners and royalists Jonden Ukyab and Surya Bahadur Sen Oli have also joined the Maoists.

The CPN Maoist—which waged war claiming itself as a party of peasant and proletariat. Preamble of CPN-Maoist says that only through the armed struggle, the true liberation of the people is possible and the feudal, reactionary force which is backed by Royal Nepal Army is the real enemy of people.

However, CPN-Maoist has nominated the former reactionaries and the commanders of their number one enemy as front runners for the revolution. Nobody knows how such non-ideological alliance is possible.

"CPN-Maoist wants to have alliance with nationalist monarchists to liberate the country from expansionist foreign elements," thundered Maoist leader Prachanda justifying the inclusion of the persons who had affiliation with previous system.

CPN-UML and CPN-Maoist have been talking about the party's ideology and have shown loyalty towards leaders like Lenin, Stalin and Mao whose mother countries themselves have already abandoned their ideologies.

The Maoists declared that their aim is to defeat reactionary, feudalist and royalist through the violent revolution. They justified their rebellion and killing of more than 15000 innocent people as a struggle to liberate the proletariat. "It is the duty of revolutionary to physically eliminate collaborators of reactionaries, feudalist and royalist," said their document.

Similar contradictions are there in leading Madhesi leaders like Mahanta Thakur, Bijaya Kumar Gachhedar and Jaya Prakash Ananda Gupta. For Thakur, Gachhedar and Gupta, Nepali Congress played important role in their personality building and political formation.

At a time when they left the party, these kinds of ideological association mattered the least. "We have contributed a lot to strengthen the party but now the time has come to defend the rights of Madhes and Madhesi," said former general secretary of Nepali Congress Gachhedar.

In fact, they were not emotionally attached with the Congress. Had that been so they would not have so abruptly dissociated with and confronted their own leader Girija Prasad Koirala who was till some time back eulogized as Helmsman of the democracy.

Contradictions Within NC

Nepali Congress has glorious history as it was consistent throughout its history standing for constitutional monarchy. Nepali Congress waged armed struggle three times in its history in 1951, 1961 and 1971 but all the time it was never deviated from its ideology of constitutional monarchy.

Although it had such a long experience and consistent ideology behind it, Nepali Congress joined hands with radical Maoists baptizing itself into anti-monarchist force recently. It forced other parties to change track.

One may ask the question: What was its point of departure? As recorded in his book, *Simple Conviction: My Struggle for Peace and Democracy* published in 2007 Girija Prasad Koirala



Maoist leaders: Contradictions Continue

has revealed that he was determined to abolish monarchy soon after the decision of King Gyanendra to dissolve the House of Representatives in May, 2002.

"I concluded that monarchy was to end with the dissolution of parliament. Monarchy seemed to be at its deathbed, owing to King Gyanendra's folly." (See *Simple Conviction* Page 73).

However, compelled by prevailing circumstances, Koirala reached into an understanding with the King to bring the changes in 2006, April. He took oath of office as a prime minister by the King in the Royal Palace. But soon after that Koirala changed his stand and turned his back to the King within few weeks.

After becoming prime minister Koirala, he led the parliament in a declaration which could be regarded as the breach of trust with the King. The proclamation was completely against the agreement of April 25 that led to royal proclamation by which a dissolved parliament was restored.

That was not the end of drama. The same house, restored by the Royal Proclamation promulgated an interim constitution, which already has seen its three subsequent amendments with drastic implications including

declaring Nepal as a republic.

Unlike the previous constitution which had consensus support of all the people expressed through three subsequent parliamentary elections, the present interim constitution is interim in all sense having no consensus except compulsions and coercions.

The people have a compulsion to survive in adverse situation. The country has enough problems of poverty, illiteracy, growing unemployment in rural as well as urban areas, which are producing their harmful side effects.

"A country having so much goodwill and fame for tolerant and law abiding character is now coming out every day with event of crimes including robberies, extortions and abductions. There can be a long list of illustrations of such unpleasant situation in the country mostly due to enlarged specter of instability. Such instability has many facets – some internal and some external too," said a political analyst.

"Politicians, too, have their private as well as public feelings and postures. In private, they have the same feeling like others. Each politician expresses anguish and frustration to his confidantes. But whenever they come



UML leaders: Left, right, left...

out to their organized postures in public, they make politics inconsistent and ridiculously insensitive," observed the analyst.

"We will capture the power at any cost. We will not bow down to any force," said Maoist leader Prachanda. They speak such heavy rhetoric and ideals but the next day, they enter into fishy deals with persons with contrasting characters and leaning.

Nepali politicians have shown that they are quite compromising, elastic, resilient and reconciliatory than any political leaders of South Asia. None of the South Asian countries can get of the South Asian politicians of so heterogeneous characters colliding as well as compromising with each other.

The ruling alliance parties have anti-monarchical posture but in the words of a monarchist democrat Rabindranath Sharma, a monarchy in the palace and republic in Singh Durbar is working side by side under a broad framework.

Even within the alliance of ruling SPA, some leaders agreed to sign all the agreements but they enjoyed complete freedom to criticize them at the extent of terming others as quisling.

Leader of the United Left Front C.P. Mainali and leader of Nepal

Peasant and Worker Party Narayan Man Bijjukcche have already set the examples. There is hardcore unity in seven parties, which tolerates its dissenters to speak ill against its programs and create confusions in the



Congress, Maoist and Leftist leaders: Sharing a table

people regarding their nationalist credentials and political honesty.

"From 12 points agreement to recent agreement signed with Madhesi groups, three major parties in alliance worked under the guideline of India.

Under the disguise of bulk recruitment in the army, India wants to infiltrate its trained army into Nepali Army," said Narayan Man Bijjukcche in his interview in Samaya weekly.

CP Mainali writes Nepal is in the process of Victimization and Humanization. "In the name of federal state with the right to self determination, India is trying to break terai and absorb it into its own territory," said Mainali to Samaya weekly.

Despite their public opposition at the agreements, Bijukcche and Mainali signed all these agreements sharing all the constitutional and power dividend of seven party alliance. These two leaders, who are trying to give different postures, accusing leaders of three main parties, still join the meetings of SPA without any hesitation.

Members of same caravan are telling the people their just opposite destination in the journey.

There is a combination of left with

right and right with left. The center to the left and center to the right, too, have joined either side without any hesitation. There is no basic for politics, which is neck-deep in contradictions. ■

CA FEVER

Commitments Galore

As the election for the Constituent Assembly (CA) is less than one month away, the political parties have intensified their campaigns. One after another, the bigger political parties have released their election manifestoes. Since stakes are higher this time than in the previous parliamentary elections, the parties have also adjusted their manifestoes by expressing their views regarding fundamental elements and structure of state. In an environment still filled with unease, the parties have tried to assure the voters that this time they are dead serious about the election. From political transformation to economic miracle, the parties have made tall commitments to entice the voters.

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

Following a sudden turn-around of Madhesi agitation, which was withdrawn after the signing of the eight-point pact with the government, the entire country is witnessing the gradual build-up of election atmosphere. Parties have started girding up their loins and launching headstrong their electoral rallies and campaigns across the country.

In a matter of one week, major political parties have started releasing election manifestoes. From Maoists to

UML and from RPP to other smaller parties, all have brought out their manifestoes. The only remaining big party Nepali Congress (NC), too, has said that it will make its manifesto public within this week.

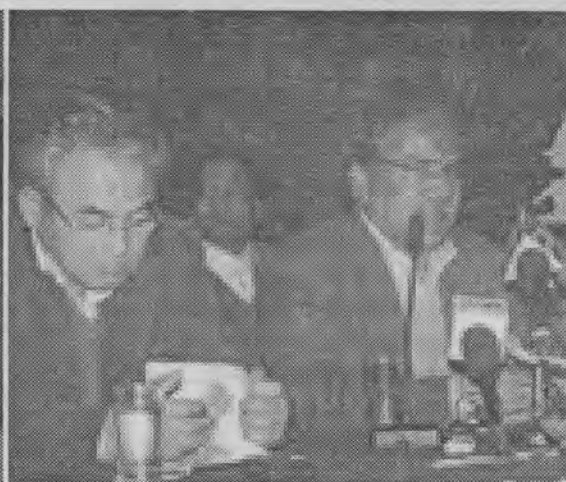
In their manifestoes, most parties – except the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP-Nepal) – have sought to usher in republic with some (RPP, RJP) choosing to remain silent on the issue.

Congress Question

Although the Nepali Congress (NC) had not released its manifesto till this story went to press (Tuesday, March 11 morning), a senior leader of the party had said that the document will follow what was decided by the Maha Samiti meeting held a few months ago.

“The party manifesto will be based on the decision of the Maha Samiti,” said Dr. Minendra Rijal.

The Maha Samiti had decided that



UML leaders (left) and Maoist leaders presenting their respective manifestoes: Promising the sky

the Congress will advocate democratic republic. Following the Maha Samiti, which also united two Congress parties, its only founding leader Krishna Prasad Bhattarai had resigned from the party saying he was dissatisfied with the decision to opt for republic – which he said was against the traditional ideal of the six-decades-old party.

As Dr. Rijal said the NC will be proposing democratic republic and federalism as well as advocating liberal economy.

Maoist Plan

The Maoists have proposed to make their party chairman Prachanda as the

autonomous provinces and two sub-provinces with right to self-determination.

Along with a redrawn map of Nepal dividing the country into federal units based on ethnicity and geography, the manifesto intends to appoint an interim President and a new transitional government after the election.

“New leadership is needed to implement new thought and to build new Nepal,” clarified Dr. Baburam Bhattarai.

Dr. Bhattarai elaborated the economic policies of the party saying that new transitional economic policy should be adopted to develop the domestic industrial capitalism.

“To develop the national industrial capitalism, a new transitional economy is required, which, if implemented will increase the per capita income from \$ 300 to \$3000 in ten years and to \$10,000 in twenty years and in forty years, Nepal will be counted among one of the most prosperous countries in the world,” claimed Bhattarai, who was the chief of the team that drafted the manifesto.

He added that the party has a policy to promote public-private partnership. The Maoist manifesto says 10,000 megawatt hydroelectricity will be generated in the next 10 years, and drinking water will be made available to

the entire population in within five years period.

Likewise, the party has set another major target: ending illiteracy in just five years. The manifesto also suggests that basic health care will be available to everybody if the party makes it to the power.

Republican Nepal will be a secular state with self-sufficient economy while the country’s relation with India and China will be based on panchasheel, the manifesto says. The party has also vowed to strictly regulate the border with India and end the tradition of recruiting Nepali youths in foreign army, and annul the Nepal-India friendship treaty 1950.

In the manifesto, the Maoists have expressed commitment to respecting internationally accepted human rights laws and guaranteeing fundamental rights of the citizens.

UML Angle

The Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) has also stressed on democratic republic in its manifesto. The party general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal said establishing ‘federal democratic republic’ and building of strong and prosperous Nepal is the main focus of their manifesto.

“The main thing is to settle the issue of 240-years-old monarchy. We must defeat all monarchists,” Nepal said.

In its manifesto, the party has said that the Prime Minister should be directly elected by the people and be checked by



PM Koirala: Focused on CA?

first president of republican Nepal.

Unveiling their official campaigning for the forthcoming April election, the Maoists released their 39-page manifesto which promises a ‘federal republic under presidential system.’

The Maoists have proposed 11

elected parliament. "The president will be titular head of state," he said. Earlier, the Maoists had forwarded manifesto, which stated that president will be the executive chief.

"The UML will go for federal units, which will be divided based on concentration/density of language, ethnic group, region, history and socio-economic status. We think that the actual number of such federal units should be decided after wider consultations and through the State Restructuring Committee," he said.

On the economy, the UML general secretary said that they will strengthen public, private and cooperative sectors as pillars of economy. He also said that the party will give adequate attention to development education, health, tourism, and water resources.

"We have already published Vision Nepal document, which elaborates our 20 year perspective plan for economic development," he said.

Others' Concerns

Apart from the big fishes, other parties have also started releasing their manifestoes. The Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), fringe leftist outfits and others have started the process.

The RPP has said it favors restructuring of the state with guarantee of 'inclusive multiparty democracy'. The RPP manifesto also stresses that the state be restructured by ensuring fair representation of ethnic communities, Madhesis and people from different regions in the proposed 'state restructuring commission'.

The party of former Panchayati leaders has said that the fate of monarchy should be decided by the people and not by the parties, and described the declaration of the republic prior to the CA polls as an autocratic move of the seven-party alliance.

The Madhesi parties including Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF), Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP) and Terai Madhes Loktantrik Party (TMLP) are yet to release their manifestoes.

However, they have made it amply clear during the recent agitation that they will be proposing Madhes province with the right to self determination and



NC workers: Election fever running high

decentralization of power to the province.

Similarities And Dissimilarities

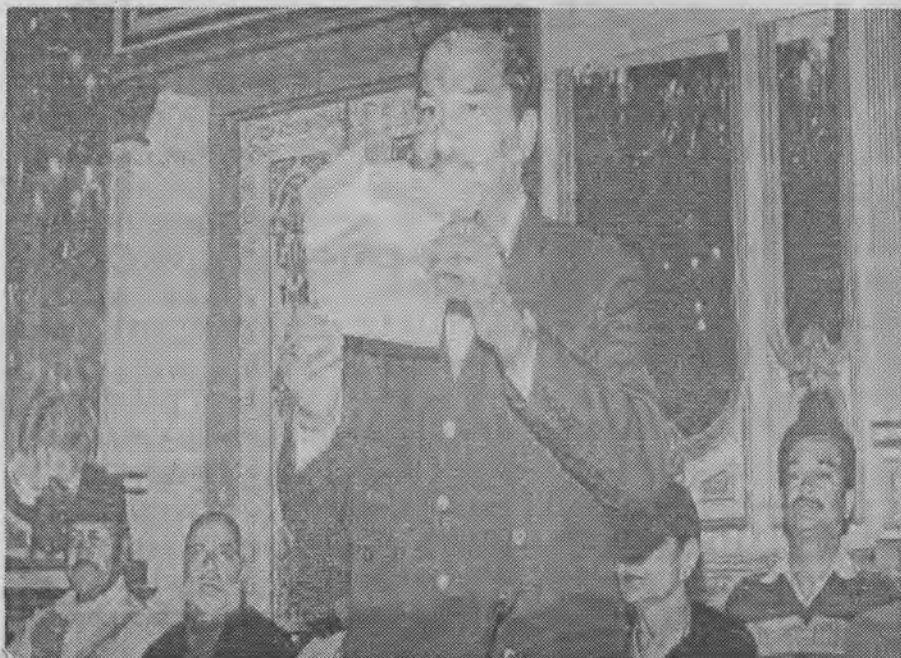
The manifestoes of major parties have numerous points of similarities as well as dissimilarities. The two largest communist parties – UML and Maoists – differ on the major point of what kind of head of state they prefer.

While the Maoists have backed presidential form of governance, the UML has supported making prime minister as the chief executive with president just acting as titular head. The NC is said to have proposed prime ministerial system of governance.

On the issue of restructuring of state also, the major parties have put forth different positions.

The Maoists have gone to the extent of actually dividing up the federal units. The UML has said that the number and nature of such units will have to be decided following wider understanding and through the proposed State Restructuring Commission. The NC has also said it favors federalism but has not clarified much.

That apart, the parties have also put forth wide ranging economic policies making tall promises. As the clock ticks on, the parties have hit the road running holding election rallies across the country appearing confident of the certainty of the CA election. Will they be third time lucky? The answer is anybody's guess. ■



RPP Nepal President Thapa : Releasing manifesto

CA ELECTIONS

Deteriorating Law and Order

Election Commission points out the need to improve the law and order situation before holding the election for CA

By A CORRESPONDENT

Minister without portfolio, Sujata Koirala reportedly complained to prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala about the deteriorating law and order situation in her constituency in Sunsari 5 where armed outfits are roaming around threatening her voters.

"Despite all these irritants, I have been in door to door campaign in my constituency," said Koirala. "I am assuring my voters that there will be peace and nobody can stop them from voting."

Former home minister Govinda Raj Joshi, a candidate from Tanahu Constituency no 1 is facing another kind of problem as Maoist cadres have been threatening his voters saying that they will be severely punished in case they go to polling booths.

Joshi, who has been working in the district for last 35 years, has been launching his election campaign. "I have

been working now to remove the fear from the minds of voters created by Maoists in the last twelve years," said Joshi.

Acting president of Nepal Congress Sushi Koirala complained that Maoist cadres and armed outfits are threatening the voters in his constituency in Banke district. "The Maoist should immediately stop disrupting electoral campaigns of other political parties," said Koirala in Banke. People are enthusiastic about the polls despite poor security situation and pressure from the Maoists."

Similar is the situation faced by many other party candidates. Maoist cadres barred RPP leader Pashupati Sumsher Rana from visiting his constituency in Sindhupalchowk district from where he is contesting this election. A group of

Maoist cadres tried to physically attack him recently.

"I was barred by Maoist cadres who

came there with guns and Khukuri," said Rana at a press conference. "If we are not allowed to visit our constituency, there is no sense of holding the election."

On Tuesday, Maoist cadres barred workers of Surya Bahadur Thapa-led Rastriya Janashakti Party (RJP) from entering into Dhankuta district where they were headed to campaign in favor of their party leader. The Maoist cadres looted them and threatened them not to set their feet in the district in future.

After receiving a series of complaints from various candidates, the Election Commission issued a notice to the government asking it to maintain law and order situation in the country.

"The government needs to ensure the law and order situation in the country," said the spokesman of Election Commission. "We feel there is a need to provide more security to the candidates and voters."

Prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala and home minister Krishna Prasad Sitaula however have their own version. "You won't have complete security like in the past," said home minister Sitaula. "The government has to work in a very limited resources and manpower."

At a time when candidates of other parties have been talking about the need to improve the law and order situation, RPP-Nepal president Kamal Thapa, leader of country's only party which is openly advocating constitutional monarchy and Hindu Kingdom, unveiled his party manifesto.

"Whatever circumstances may come, we are ready to face the elections. Our vision is clear on the forms of government as we want to see constitutional monarchy in the country." If we are allowed to campaign, we will go to the voters with our ideology."

As candidates in southern plains are frequently receiving life threats and facing abductions while Maoist cadres are still threatening others in hill areas, the challenge for the forthcoming election on security front is still huge. ■

“Knowing federalism as a concept is one thing; but devising it as a workable model for Nepal is quite another”

– Bipin Adhikari

A consulting lawyer and constitutional analyst, Bipin Adhikari is a keen observer of the ongoing transitional process in Nepal. The Commentary on the Nepalese Constitution that he co-authored with other constitutional lawyers in 1998 remains an outstanding piece of work on the 1990 Constitution and Nepal's experiment with constitutionalism. A doctor of constitutional law, Adhikari spoke to SPOTLIGHT about the issue of federalism that Nepal has been confronting in recent months. Excerpts:

Even the countries like Canada and the United States, which have built on federalism as forerunners in this area have outstanding problems to be resolved. What India has achieved by now has also been achieved with continued dedication and commitment. It takes years to develop a workable system.

How do you see the rule of law situation in the country?

It is undoubtedly pathetic. There is lawlessness, wariness and lack of due process everywhere. The concept of legality seems to have become a fairy tale.

Why is the situation like this?

There are many reasons. But this situation mainly owes to the system of unlimited government that has been installed in the country. It is bringing changes through means that are not legal or legitimate.

Some lawyers argue that there is already an interim Constitution and a representative legislature, although not elected, to check the government?

If constitutionalism merely meant having a written constitution, then virtually every country could claim to be constitutional, as every country that has a written Constitution does. The main question is – ‘does the interim constitution check anybody?’ ‘does it restrain exercise of power, protect our freedoms and safeguard our national interests?’ Constitutional institutions work when there are separation of powers, checks and balance, rule of law, judicial review, periodic elections, ombudsman and effective and independent constitutional bodies. The interim constitution is devoid of these institutions. It does not seek to prevent the government from abusing the power of the state. Everybody knows that it

is not the legislature which decides; it only rubber-stamps what has been brought to it from outside.

What type of federal system you recommend for Nepal?

I don't think there is any perfect model. Perfection is a goal. Even the countries like Canada and the United States, which have built on federalism as forerunners in this area have outstanding problems to be resolved. What India has achieved by now has also been achieved with continued dedication and commitment. It takes years to develop a workable system. You need sincerity and genuine commitment.

Do the 7-party government, the Maoists and other political constituencies have that sincerity and commitment ...?

Is it not clear to you that the idea of federalism has come in Nepal not as a development tool, but as a strategic prescription from outside?

Ours has been a small unitary state since long. It has already developed enough historical, political, geographical, and emotional ties among our people. There are geographical, environmental and infrastructural realities behind the unitary character of the state. Our natural and cultural eco-system is so closely connected. Equally strong is the aspiration of our people to continue living as an independent and indivisible country, and with distinct national identity. This is not to deny the problems that we need to address. They are there. But it is not necessary to build on wrong arguments to establish a right case.

What is the right case then?

We need to continue with the unitary character of the state. The demand of the time is to identify the problems the unitary state has created in all subtleties, and then discuss whether federalism is what is necessary to

deal with the situation; or there are other efficient ways to handle them. One must understand that federalism cannot be a remedy for all ills of our society. Especially, it is a hapless tool when the politicians are vile and have little national interest to protect.

What makes federalism different from the 'devolution of power' in your opinion?

There is nothing in words like 'federalism' and 'devolution.' The real issue is what do you want? What is your purpose? Do you want to take the country back to the 17th century Malla and Khas principalities in order to deal with issues that are smaller than the size of the remedy being prescribed? Or your purpose is only to bring those people and areas in the mainstream, which are still left behind in the process of our political development.

How do you see the British experience with devolution of powers? Can we learn something from them?

Well, we can always learn from those who have more experience and skills. The United Kingdom has historically been a unitary state with efforts to devolve power to its different territories according to the necessity. The powers of the central government have been devolved to Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, London and Elected Mayors according to their specific requirements. But there is a strong unitary character even now.

Can you elaborate further?

What I mean is devolution was not a part of a grand constitutional design in the UK; rather the approach in each case needs to be understood in relation to their situations. In fact, the devolution legislation has produced an asymmetrical distribution of powers in the country. For example, the extent of powers given to the Scottish Parliament and the Assemblies to Wales and Northern Ireland are different. The Northern Ireland Assembly has also lawmaking powers, but over more restricted policy areas. The form of London-wide government is different than both these types. By way of contrast, Wales has been closely integrated with England for the purpose of law and administration. They were very clear about their problems; and the solutions they fashioned were



also case sensitive. Each devolution statute includes elaborate safeguards to prevent sovereignty from being undermined.

How is the relationship between the centre and the units coordinated in this scheme of devolution?

As far as I know, the coordination of administration between central and devolved government has been managed to a large extent without resort to legislation but by means of a series of informal agreements. But the system has been underpinned by a secure financial base. Each of these territories has been able to count upon a consistent overall level of funding. That has helped devolution significantly.

What is the alternative for Nepal then?

Knowing federalism as a concept is one thing; but devising it as a model that can satisfy all constituencies and can also work in practice is quite another. Therefore, it is good to build on our own experience as a unitary state. It has always been a functioning system. There are some lessons learnt; and efforts could be made to reform it. Some interventions at the constitutional level to respond to some of our problems could be necessary. But most of the problems of devolution of power could be handled through an enhanced local self-government system. It can not only restrain exercise of power and protect our freedoms, but also make the transition manageable and safeguard our national interests. There is wisdom in the proverb – "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush."

Therefore, it is good to build on our own experience as a unitary state. It has always been a functioning system. There are some lessons learnt; and efforts could be made to reform it. Some interventions at the constitutional level to respond to some of our problems could be necessary. But most of the problems of devolution of power could be handled through an enhanced local self-government system

“ADB Is Focused On Spreading Peace Dividend”

-Sultan Hafeez Rahman

Asian Development Bank (ADB) Deputy Director General of the South Asia Department, **SULTAN HAFEEZ RAHMAN** recently visited Nepal. Before leaving the country after completing six day visit to Nepal, Rahman, who previously served as the Country Representative to ADB's Mission in Nepal, spoke to the press. Excerpts:

What is the focus of Asian Development Bank in Nepal?

Our main focus is on development agenda of the country and on the need to bring the peace dividend to the people and spread that across the country. We feel that it is extremely important for the benefit of the peace process, lasting peace should be felt by the people at the grass root level. We are pleased that the government is committed to address on these main issues.

How do you see the elections for CA?

We know that the Constituent Assembly election is now scheduled and the country is in the grip of election fever leading up to the 10th of April. We all hope it will be historic day for Nepal and that new era will have begun during which Nepal will be able to adjust some of the long standing issues which have held Nepal back both economically and in some ways politically. We know that in a situation like this, the whole country is very hard pressed. It will go through a very difficult test.

What is the position of ADB regarding the development projects?

From ADB's side as a development institution, we have always been on the side of Nepal to try to be reliable partner and we have been trying to continue our assistance at this difficult period and to give meaning to the political process in economic term. So from our point of view, we will be working closely with the government and we will be watching very closely as well on what happens.

What is your impression about the government?

I am very pleased to say that the government is committed on the issues and trying to protect whatever gains there have been made in the developmental process till now. The gains in the reform process that is taking place in very difficult circumstances.

What is the performance of ADB assisted projects?

In fact, the performance of our project has increased in the last two years very significantly. We are very pleased to say

that we are doing well in most parts. We are also pleased that ADB assisted projects are doing well throughout the country. We are urging all stake holders in Nepal's development process to understand that as a development organization, we are committed to development and we should be allowed to implement our development projects unhindered so that the people across the country from east to west and north to south continue to get the benefits of our projects.

What is the status of country strategy program?

We prepared the country strategy program - which basically governs our assistance to Nepal for five years period - last time in 2003. Actually, it was approved in 2004. Given that, there have been a lot of changes in Nepal including a historical political change; we feel that we need a review of that strategy.

How ADB sees its relations with Nepal?

ADB attaches very high value relationship with Nepal. We know that the country is going through a major transition. In February, our vice president visited Nepal for donor consultation meeting and now I am here. This is an attempt on our part to try to keep abreast as much as possible on the changing situation in Nepal and to see how it is evolving and also to keep assessing our projects. We want that there will be more such high level visits in the remaining parts of this year.

How is the ADB supporting the Interim Plan?

Interim plan is in most way meant for development during interim period. Of course, according to proposal, the funding for interim period is very large. We are doing our best to continue assistance. I believe other development partners are also looking very closely at various parts of the plan. One of the key purposes of the donors meeting you had in February was precisely to discuss these kinds of issues. Asian Development Bank provided technical support in the formulation of interim plan.

What role the ADB is playing in the development of West Seti Hydro power project?

We have involved much more on West Seti hydropower project over the past year or so. The bulk of this work is done by our private sector department. The details of the financing thing has not yet clarified or worked out. To bring the project of this magnitude and to get going closer, it will take time. After all, a very large foreign investment is involved in the project. As far as I can tell you, our involvement in this project



is just over one year old. We are still facilitating the project and we are helping the financial issues to make it possible. Without the support from the organization like ADB in the picture, it would be difficult in the environment especially at this stage to attract that kind of foreign investment.

How does the ADB link Melamchi and Kathmandu Valley Water Supply Project?

Melamchi and Kathmandu Valley Water Supply Project are twins and interrelated. They cannot be separated.

How is the progress on Melamchi Project?

Despite lots of ups and downs over almost seven years period, Asian Development Bank has remained with the project and the only reason for that is because we feel that this is an important project. We feel that this is the only economically viable long term solution to solve Kathmandu valley's acute water crisis. We don't want this water crisis to further deteriorate. ADB wants to be forward looking. We are reasonably pleased with what we are seeing at this stage.

Have you met with the government officials?

I have had productive discussions with the Ministry of Physical Planning and Works on the recently restructured Melamchi Water Supply Project. The Government has shown strong commitment for and ownership of the Melamchi project and we appreciate the fact that a major part of the sector reforms has been achieved despite the challenges.

How flexible has the ADB been on this?

ADB has shown flexibility at several critical stages during project implementation given the importance of bringing increased water supplies to the Kathmandu Valley. However, now that the ADB Board has approved the restructuring, it is vitally important that the project be implemented in line with agreed principles, and in particular that the newly created water institutions are allowed to operate independently and free of political interference. These principles will have to be strictly adhered to for ADB to continue supporting the project ■



Prachanda: Serious

PRACHANDA

In Two Minds

A pre-poll invitation from a key neighbouring country leaves the Maoist chief in a dilemma

By SUSHIL SHARMA

Deep differences have cropped up within the Maoist leaderships over a proposed visit of Prachanda to India.

He along with Baburam Bhattarai and two others are said to have been invited.

There have been no official words yet.

Given the sensitivities of the issue, many do not want to talk about it.

A senior leader said that the issue has not even been brought before the central committee.

He however admitted differences did exist. The reluctant young dissident leader refused to explain.

Another senior leader, Mohan Baidya 'Kiran' confirmed that there had been an invitation. He did not specify a date.

"Chairman Prachanda himself told me about it a month ago", he said. "I do not know the other details."

At a meeting with the mediapersons last week, Prachanda beat a different note.

"Yes, there is an invitation. It had been there since I went to Delhi to attend a Hindustan Times conference more than a year ago," he said in reply to a pointed question.

The debate in the Maoist leaderships is said to have centered on the wisdom of undertaking such a visit ahead of the constituent assembly elections.

Some cautioned that the move would be counter-productive.

They suspect yet another 'ambush'. The reference was to the widely quoted Prachanda remark following, by his own admission, his seventh visit to the Indian embassy in Kathmandu in less than a year.

Others see in the proposed visit an opportunity to clear Delhi's mistrust of the former rebel outfit.

They believe that this will help improve the increasingly uncertain Maoist prospects at the April hustings.

Said a high-profile journalist after a recent meeting with the Maoist chief, "Prachanda is caught in two minds." ■

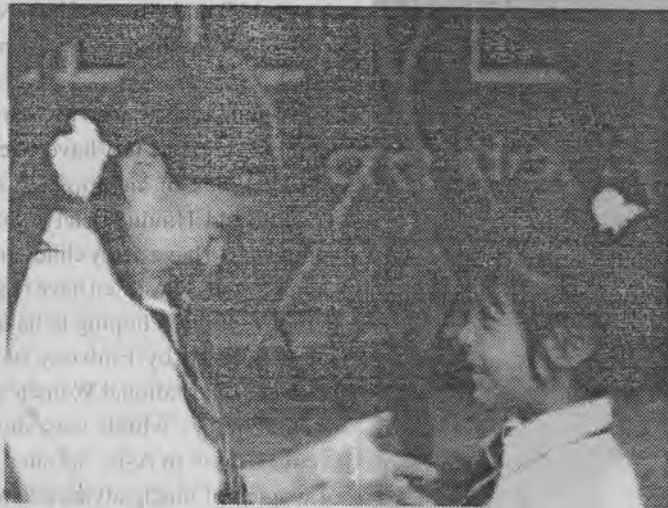
OVER 4000 CANDIDATES FILE CANDIDACIES

Two thousand and nineteen candidates from various political parties have filed candidacies in 236 constituencies of seventy-three districts for the first-past-the-post system of the April 10 constituent assembly election on Thursday, according to Election Commission. Earlier, 2191 candidates had filed their candidacies at 240 constituencies on February 25.

Later some of those candidates withdrew their candidacies. As per the EC's final list, a total of 4021 candidates have filed their nominations for the direct election. Of them, 387 are women candidates.

Parties filing nominations at the district election offices include Surya Bahadur Thapa led Rastriya Janashakti Party (RJP), pro-monarchist Rastriya Prajatantra Party-Nepal (RPP-Nepal) and the allies of the United Democratic Madhesi Front (UDMF) – Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF), Terai Madhes Loktantrik Party (TMLP) and Sadbhawana Party (SP). Nepal Samata Party, Nawa Janabadi Morcha and Kirat Workers Party also filed their nominations. There were a number of independent candidates filing nominations in various districts. RJP chairman Thapa registered his candidacy from Dhakuta-2 while RPP-Nepal chairman Kamal Thapa confirmed his nomination from two districts, Kathmandu-5 and Makwanpur-3. Similarly, MJF chairman Upendra Yadav registered his candidacy in Sunsari-5 and Morang-5 while TMLP chairman Mahantha Thakur and SP's Rajendra Mahato filed candidacies in Sarlahi-6 and Sarlahi-4 respectively. TMLP leader Hridayesh Tripathi will contest the election from Nawalparasi-6.

The Election Commission (EC) had given one more day for the parties who had missed the earlier deadline for filing their nominations. The government had requested for more time for filing nominations after reaching agreements with agitating groups of Terai and eastern hills. The EC has said the final list of candidacies for the first-past-the-post system would be published on March 9.



Students: Global dimension

GLOBAL SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

Sharing Experiences

Under the global Partnership Program, Nepalese teachers will get international exposure by visiting schools in the United Kingdom

By A CORRESPONDENT

For Pushpa Singh, principle of Kanti Ishori Shishu Vidyalya, it was a great opportunity to learn new teaching skills and managing academic environment. Although she has been in the profession of teaching for quite a long time, the experiences she learned during her stay in the United Kingdom are valuable.

"This program is very important as I believe the partnership program will help and give the children of both the partner schools a chance to develop friendship and joy of sharing each other's culture and life," said Singh.

Not only the Principle Singh, many other Nepalese teachers who recently visited the United Kingdom under the global partnership program enjoyed similar experiences and exciting moments. The children of Nepalese schools - who already have partners in the United Kingdom - have made friends through writing letter.

Students of both the countries share their culture, religions and ways of life. "This is a good way to give the students and teachers exposure to international

education system," said Shanker Prasad Pandey, Secretary at the Ministry of Sports and Education.

From new teaching skills to managing academic environment, school teachers from Nepal got opportunity to learn many things from schools of the United Kingdom.

"Our experiences have shown that this is a good way to share things about both the countries," said country director of British Council Nepal. "We will encourage Nepalese schools from remote parts of Nepal to join this program."

Seven school teachers from Nepal will visit partner schools in the United Kingdom this year to learn and share the teaching methods. During their visit, they will hold face to face meetings with the UK teachers and develop plans for joint curricular activities for their schools on global themes.

This visit is a part of a grant awarded by DFID Global School Partnerships (DGSP) which is delivered by a consortium of the British Council, Cambridge Education Foundation, UKOWLA and VSO. The program is

funded by UK's Department for International Development's (DFID).

The DFID Global School Partnership Program provides opportunities to teachers to explore an exciting and innovative ways to motivate learning and is an effort to make students participate as global citizens. Shuvatra School, St. Xavier's School and Neptune Boarding School were the cluster schools from Nepal to receive this global curriculum grant in 2004 with their partner schools in UK viz., Hendon School, Whitefield school and King Alfred School.

DFID Global Partnership Programs aims to raise young people's awareness on global development issues and equip them with the skills and knowledge to become active global citizens. It is a dynamic way for schools in Nepal to be exposed to global dimension as it provides opportunities for professional development, grants and advices to enable the development of joint curricular projects with their partners.

Shree Garma Secondary School of Solukhumbu in Nepal is the one of the schools recently involved in the partnership which has received a reciprocal visit grant. Similarly, Ms. Pushpa Singh, Principle of Kanti Ishwori Shishu Vidyalya, Ms. Kamala Pageni from Balodaya English Boarding School, Pokhara, visited their partner schools at St. Giles, Wrexham Wales and Sir Christopher Hattan School in the UK in 2007.

After the visit Ms. Pushpa Singh says, "I believe the partnership program will help and give the children of both the partner school a chance to develop friendship and joy of sharing each other's culture, lifestyle, religion as well as creating a world of global citizens so as to understand how the world works economically, politically, socially, culturally, technologically and environmentally."

The visit takes place for a minimum of five days and the teachers can observe and conduct classes in their partner school. After completing the reciprocal visits, teachers from both sides sign a partnership agreement and get involved in joint curriculum activities as agreed. ■



Shalm: Reality bites

ISRAELI DOCUMENTARY

Women's Hardships

Directed by Shosh Shalm, the Israeli documentary 'Be Fruitful and Multiply' reveals how difficult the life is in Israeli society

By A CORRESPONDENT

At a time when Nepalese women celebrated International Women Day urging the needs to protect the rights of women who have suffered from all kinds of discrimination, an Israeli documentary film directed by Shosh Shalm depicted the life of Israeli women who gave birth to too many children.

The documentary begins with a story of a woman from Jerusalem who has 16 children. Thanks to the wrong notion that a woman has to serve the god via the womb, the women in Ultra-Orthodox Jewish community are compelled to have many babies.

Besides taking care of children, these women have to look after the household chores. Their most valuable part of time is spent on growing children and taking their care hoping to serve the

god via womb.

In the 52-minutes long documentary, the director asks the question how does it feel to have been pregnant or breastfeeding for 25 out of 26 years of married life? And the director also tries to give answer through the characters depicted in the documentary.

Based on the suffering of real actors and their own experiences of child bearing and taking care of household, the director Shalm, a well known documentary director of Israel, has shown the real picture of the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish women.

"My documentary is based on extensive research on the conditions of Jewish women having many children. This is the experience of these women who agreed to share their difficulties with their countrymen as well as rest of

the world," said director Shalm who came to Nepal at the Invitation of Embassy of Israel.

Nepali women- who live in rural parts of the country - too have been facing similar kinds of situation. In orthodox Muslim and Hindu society, women are compelled to have many children. In many cases, Nepalese women have to give birth to many children hoping to have a boy.

Organized by Embassy of Israel to mark the International Women's Day, the documentary- which was shown as a premier show in Asia, narrates the story of women of much advanced and literate world.

Many questions regarding the life and rights of women's reproductive rights are posed openly and directly for the first time in this film and they expose the consequences of the commandment Be fruitful and multiply - the mother of all Mitzvot- upon the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish woman.

Based on the life of Mitzvot, the story narrates the most difficult parts of the life of women and her social responsibility and child bearing. Director Mrs. Shalm is able to convey the message how the act of giving birth to many children spoils the life of woman as well as the economic and other difficulties they have to face as consequences.

The center of Mitzvot life is pregnancy, child birth and constant nursing. She does not have the freedom to determine the course of her life but what she serves is God via womb.

"This film -which is dedicated to protect women's reproductive rights- also helps to understand the state of women of Israel," said Ambassador of Israel Dan Stav. "This was the first premier show in Asia."

The director interviews children, their work and their life in growing up in such big families.

"I am very happy to say that I am able to project the life and real situation of those women who found no one to tell their own stories regarding the myth of serving gods through her womb," said director Shalm. ■

“They (armed outfits) will have to come under the existing umbrella of agreement with the Madhesi groups. The government will work strongly to ensure law and order for the election.”

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, addressing a press meet, in Biratnagar.

“I have no idea who have filed candidature in my area. People can certainly file independent candidacies.” Prachanda, Maoist chairman, saying he has no knowledge that his party has fielded over one dozen ‘independent candidates’ from the Kathmandu 10 constituency – from where he is contesting – to help him win the election.

“The main thing is to settle the issue of 240-years-old monarchy. We must defeat all monarchists.”

Madhav Kumar Nepal, general secretary of the Unified Marxist Leninist (UML), releasing party manifesto.

“Nepal can become one of the richest countries of the world in forty years.”

Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, senior Maoist leader, claiming that his party has introduced progressive economic policies to change the face of the nation.

“People were killed and infrastructures destroyed in the name of people’s war. What did the Maoists get? Only development was stalled.”



Ram Chandra Poudel, Peace and Reconstruction Minister, accusing Maoists of destroying the economic base of the country through their violence.

“If the Maoists continue such atrocities, I don’t think the CA election can be held in free and fair manner.”

Pashupati SJB Rana, president of Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), complaining that he was obstructed by Maoist cadres from campaigning in his constituency, at a press meet.

“When you know you are with the

Gurkhas I think there’s no safer place to be, really. They’re all armed with kukhuris, so if they run out of ammunition they will charge you with their ‘massive swords’, as the enemy call them.”

Prince Harry of the United Kingdom, after his brief stay with Gurkhas in Afghanistan, in the Associated Press.

“All over the world, there are certain standards for recruitment in army, which includes physical, mental and educational qualifications.”

Brigadier General Ramindra Chhetri, spokesperson of the NA, at a press meet.

TRANSITION

UNVEILED: Election manifestoes for the April 10 Constituent Assembly (CA) election, by the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), Maoists and Unified Marxist Leninist (UML).

RETURNED: Sahana Pradhan, Minister for Foreign Affairs, after completing her visit to Geneva where

he attended the meeting of Human Rights Council.

FOUND GUILTY: The probe panel formed by seven parties to investigate the assault of Nepali Congress leader Dilendra Prasad Badu, in Darchula district, found Maoists guilty of the attack.

OBSTRUCTED: Pashupati SJB Rana, president of Rastriya Prajatantra

Party (RPP), from campaigning in his constituency in Sindhupalchowk district, by cadres of Maoists.

RELEASED: Brij Bihari Shukla, a candidate representing People’s Front party at the Kapilbastu-3 constituency, by unknown gang.

ROBBED: The residence of Norwegian ambassador Tore Toreng, by unknown gang.

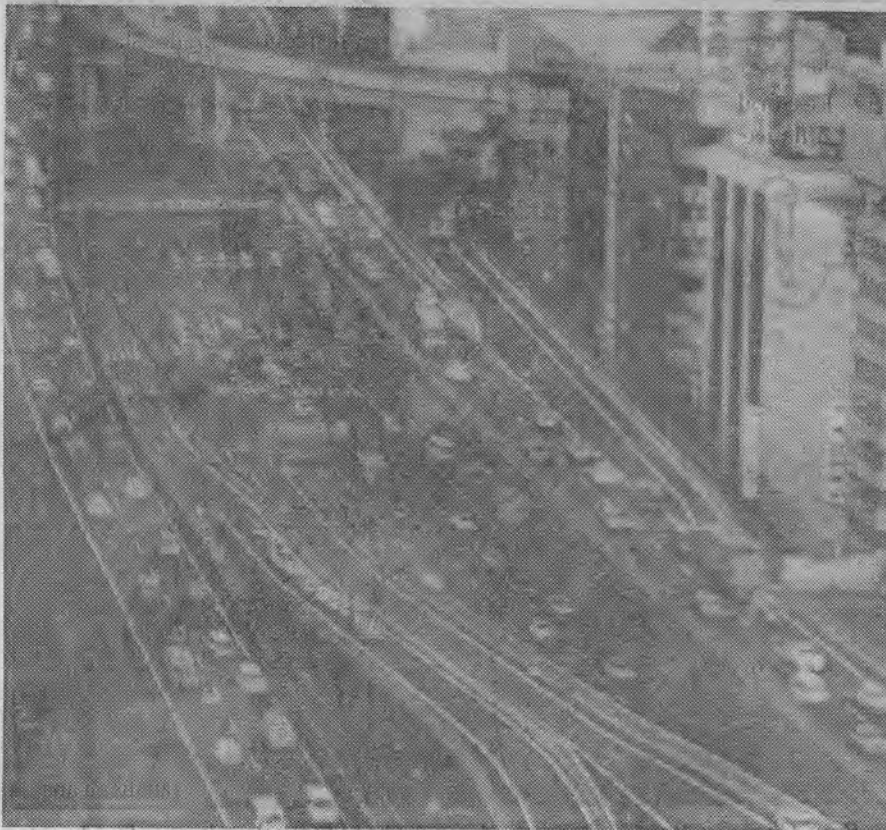


PHOTO EXHIBITION

Hidden Japan

Japanese photographer Kijuro Yahagi's photos disclose many hidden sides of Japan's life, culture, nature and society

By A CORRESPONDENT

Whenever one talks about Japan and its development, common people visualize Japan as a country of tall buildings, fastest moving bullet train and other such technological miracles.

After watching the photographs taken by Kijuro Yahagi, a renowned Japanese photographer, one can have different outlook as his photographs, though consists of some photos of big cities and traffic, represent the hidden sides of Japan, like its rural surrounding, traditional houses, mountains, green paddy fields and so on.

From bustling busy cities with traffic jams to simple rural life, renowned Japanese photographer Kijuro Yahagi captures the things which most of other photographers have not shown interest

towards.

"Mr. Kijuro Yahagi, Japanese photographer who achieved numerous prestigious awards in Japan and abroad, took the photographs displayed in today's exhibition. The photographer had extensively traveled to some 20,000 kilometers throughout Japan and compiled a photo collection, 'Hidden Japan - Shizen ni Hisomu Nihon,'" said Japanese ambassador to Nepal Tatsuo Mizuno. "Mr. Yahagi's photographs represent animistic scenes involving natural features and objects like mountains, rocks, stones and trees as well as sceneries such as gardens, fields surrounded by mountains, large cities full of hurrying pedestrians, traffic jams. Every picture brings to the surface glimpses of various aspects of Japan. In

other words, the exhibition represents Japan as it is."

Organized by the Embassy of Japan, Japanese Universities Alumni Association, Nepal and Japanese Language Teachers Association, Nepal, the exhibition has more than 51 photographs pasted at the wall of Embassy of Japan Panipokhari.

It helps people of Nepal enjoy a wide range of Japanese landscape and culture.

Supported by the Japan Foundation, an organization dedicated to the promotion of academic and cultural exchange among Japan and other countries of the world, the photo exhibition will remain open for public till March 19.

"The art of photography is the common language of the world. It has no boundaries and is enjoyed by the people regardless of their nationalities. It fosters mutual understanding and respect among people of the globe," said Japanese ambassador to Nepal, Mizuno.

Inaugurated jointly by Japanese ambassador to Nepal Mizuno and chief executive officer of Nepal Tourism Board, the photo exhibited at the exhibition site speaks volume about many unknown aspects about Japan.

Japanese landscape is so diverse that one can find snow capped mountains, sea, plain lands, green forests as well as other natural beauties.

Known for its speed of modernizing the cities making them world's greatest known for superb technologies, Japan also retains its traditional way of life. From old houses with traditional architecture to its unique way of planting rice, one can see all kinds of diversity in Japan.

Some of the photographs like terrace of lands, mountain roads and traditional houses also reminds Nepalese about the commonalities.

"I sincerely hope that the exhibition will serve not only as an introduction of representative works of Mr. Kijuro Yahagi but also will provide an ample opportunity for Nepalese viewers and photographers to enjoy various Japanese landscape and culture," said Japanese ambassador Mizuno. ■

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