

SPOTLIGHT

Nov. 21-27, 2008



Resurgence of Tourism

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POLITICS : Statute Calendar
BIMSTEC : Regional Hopes

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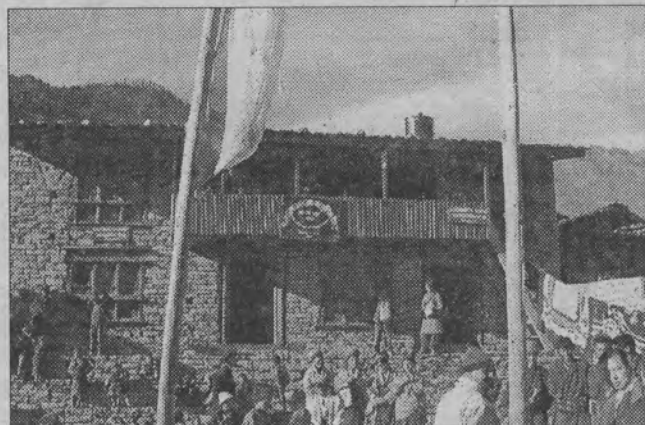
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The central leader of Nepali Congress, Joshi talks about the strategy of the opposition party

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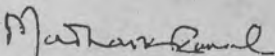
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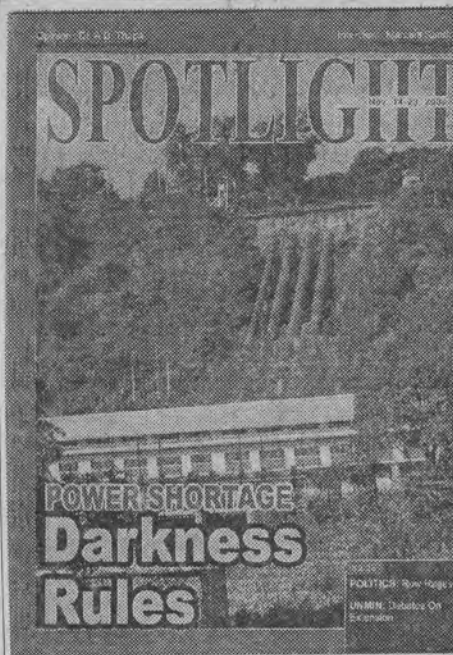
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Madhav K. Rimal
Chief Editor & Publisher

For a ruler to succeed, he needs wise, experienced and honest advisers. That a ruler is not the master but the servant of the people is a concept that dates back from Vedic era, at least in Nepal and India. Failure to listen to sane counsels, being obsessed with personal or partisan interests or insatiable ambitions, takes rulers to unthinkable abomination and even fatal ruin has been very clearly exemplified by recent events in the United States and Nepal. If the US President George W. Bush has been tarnished as one of the worse Presidents, King Gyanendra of Nepal has lost everything – his throne, his wealth and his social status. Prime minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal – Prachanda – who is completing his honeymoon days as the first chief executive of the republican Nepal, is facing a very precarious situation. Granted that he achieved the distinction with alien aid, but once he has attained the high position he must be able to behave like a patriotic Nepali. Prime minister Prachanda must have read Nepal's history and be aware that Nepal has always succumbed to an invisible force that has influenced her course of events. Anybody trying to outsmart that force not only faces grave dangers but unimaginable consequences. Consequently, we have been trying to advise the newcomers to power in Nepal, Comrade Prachanda and Company, to rise above personal and partisan interests and only pursue the interests of the country and the people. But, it seems like other arrogant politicians, Prachanda, too, does not like criticism and would not listen to wise advices. Regarding the Maoist combatants, we had suggested that in the interest of the country's defense, they can, in no way, be integrated in the Nepali army. The government has to find alternative institutions to adjust them. It is a pity why the Maoist leadership cannot see the reality. Even regarding returning the looted property to the legal owners, the stance taken by the Prime minister does not seem to be legal and reasonable. The government must use its influence, even force if necessary, to restore the looted property to the rightful owners. To compensate the owners by the taxpayers' money would be tantamount to rewarding the criminals, which no honest administration would or should ever do. How does the Deputy Prime minister find it legitimate, beggars our imagination? Perhaps, it is the reflection of his humbler antecedent. Anyway, as the chief executive, it becomes the total responsibility of Comrade Prachanda to respect the laws of the land, to defend the lives and property of the people, and above all, not to permit partisan interest to prevail over the interests of the state. Failure to do that will definitely invite trouble.



Wasted Water

Although Nepal is known for its abundant water resources, it seems to have no water to generate the power for itself. I don't understand why our politicians and businessmen have been talking about so much on the agenda of power export when they have failed to produce the power for internal use. Every nation has its own priority and the first priority should be to provide adequate power to its citizens. In a country which has failed to produce power for its own citizen, how can it talk about the need to export? I think this is the time to think about the power for internal use but not for the external use.

Jeevan Ram

Via email

Power Game

It was interesting to read the cover story on load shedding. As the country's major parties are engaged in power game, the problems like power cut seem to be nobody's priority. It is almost certain that the country has a long way to go to fulfill the growing demands of its citizens. As there are no major power projects on the pipe line and the demands of the electricity are growing, load shedding is going to be a way of life. If we want to have enough power, we must prepare for major power projects.

Sunder Tamang
Kalimati

Spent Time

It is unfortunate to know that the previous government of four parties wasted their valuable times without taking any major decision on hydropower projects. If that is true, somebody needs to take action against those who are responsible to push the country into dark period for such a long time. If we let everyone

go scoot free, people will be encouraged to violate the laws. As a media, it is your duty to name the names of such persons before public.

Sunita K.C

Via email

Lopsided View

Your article is one sided as you oppose all the views regarding the export of power. As all of us know that hydro power is the only available abundant source of Nepal and there is a big market next to our border. If we fail to grab this market of rising economic power, we will lose our opportunity. What we need to do is to work on both the sides. We need to invite foreign investors to build the power projects targeting Indian market and we also need to encourage private sector and NEA to build the power plants for internal consumption. I think Nepal has good potential for this.

Renu Upreti

Via email

Long Past

The persons who opposed the Arun III are responsible for the present state of electricity supply. From then civil society members to so called experts and finally the leaders of CPN-UML who played a crucial role to abort the Arun III, all should be brought to justice. Had Arun III been implemented, the country would not have faced this kind of power crisis. There are documents, which were used to wash the minds of the common people, and they are still available in archives. Someone needs to produce all those documents. Unfortunately, in one or the other way, all the persons who were anti Arun III were awarded by one or other means. As a commoner, what I understand is that the cancelation of Arun III is behind this saga of load shedding.

Rohini Shrestha

Via email

Plotting To Destabilize

Your cover story on constitution making was very interesting as it revealed all the important moments of Nepali politics and how Nepalese politicians played the game of constitution making and destabilized the whole political process. There is no solution for political problems as the constitution has nothing to do with the political system. As long as politicians and citizens, at large, do not have faith on constitution, constitution as a document cannot do anything. In a given situation, no constitution can guarantee the political stability in the country.

Bhopal Rai

Via email



Nepal Bank Won't Be Privatized: FM

Finance Minister Dr. Baburam Bhattarai has said that the government won't privatize Nepal Bank Limited (NBL) – the oldest and one of the largest commercial banks in the country. Due to willful defaulters of big volume of its loans, the NBL is being managed under financial sector reforms carried out with donor help. "Rest assured, the privatization is not necessary at this moment. It will be operated on the basis of public-private partnership," he said addressing the 72nd anniversary of NBL. The government currently owns 40 percent of NBL's shares. He also promised to take action against people responsible for the financial collapse of the bank in the past. Speaking at the program, Binod Atreya, coordinator of the management team of NBL, said that the financial health of the bank is recovering. He said that compared to previous year, the total deposits increased by 7 percent to reach Rs 42 billion while loan increased by 15 percent to reach Rs 16 billion. He said that the bank has recovered RS 860 million of bad debts. *Kantipur daily reports*

Don't Make Political Remarks, Prez Tells VP Jha

President Dr Ram Baran Yadav suggested Vice President Paramananda Jha not to make political remarks. Dr Yadav suggested Jha, who is apparently "puzzled" about his role, to give

statements staying within the boundary of constitution. The Vice President had reached the President's office at around 11.30 this morning to discuss their roles in drafting new constitution. It has been learnt that during the meeting the VP asked Dr Yadav about his role in the state affairs and expressed his concern over the delay in the constitution drafting. When asked about the meeting, Jha said that he met the President under regular process. VP Jha has gotten himself into controversy after he dubbed the newly-formed Army Integration Special Committee (AISC) unconstitutional. The high level mechanism of the CPN-UML and the CPN-Maoist had then criticized him and urged the Prime Minister to take action against him. *Compiled from reports*

Combatants Should Give Up Ideology To Join NA: Khanal

CPN-UML General Secretary Jhalanath Khanal Thursday (Nov 13) said that the Maoist combatants should give up the party's ideology and get committed to professional army before being integrated into the Nepal Army (NA). Khanal made it clear that only those Maoist combatants who meet the criteria can be integrated into the NA. The UML general secretary said that the Nepali Congress (NC) and the CPN-Maoist should not stick to their respective stances regarding the army integration. The opposition party NC has been opposing the idea of integrating the politically indoctrinated Maoist combatants into the national army, while the Maoists have been demanding for bulk integration of their combatants. Speaking to the media in Jhapa district Thursday en route to his home, district Illam, Khanal said that the combatants failing to meet the criteria for integration will be rehabilitated according to the seven-point agreement. The Herculean task of integration of Maoist combatants into the NA has become the bone of contention among the parties in recent times. *Compiled from reports*

Maoists, UML Agree To Reconstitute Army Integration Panel

The two main ruling partners, CPN Maoist and CPN (UML), Tuesday (Nov 11) reached an understanding to reconstitute the special committee for army integration and try to convince the Nepali Congress to join it. UML general secretary Jhala Nath Khanal speaking at a program in the capital Tuesday revealed that a meeting of the high-level coordination committee of the two parties held earlier today took this decision. According to him, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal has been given the responsibility to nominate the members of the special committee. He said policy issues concerning the army integration have already been agreed upon and added that the ultimatum given by the Nepal Congress with demands including dissolution of the committee and immediate return of properties seized by Maoists during wartime would only make matters complicated. Meanwhile, a member of the Maoist-UML coordination committee, said the two parties have agreed to carry out the army integration process as per the understanding signed by the seven parties that were part of a coalition. The meeting of the coordination committee decided to make efforts to take the NC into confidence for army integration, Dina Nath Sharma, a Maoist leader and member of the two-party committee, told reporters. *Compiled from reports*

RPP Nepal Also To Float Youth Wing

The pro-monarchy Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP-Nepal) has decided to float its youth wing by the name of Rastrabadi Yuba Morcha (Nationalist Youth Front). The meeting of the party's central committee held on Saturday (Nov 15) in Hetauda made the decision to form the youth wing claiming to shield the nationalism from 'current threats.' The party also decided to hold National Unity Campaign effectively from Gorkha beginning Poush 27 (January 11) – the day which was observed in the past as National Unity Day to mark the birth

anniversary of King Prithvi Narayan Shah, the founder of modern Nepal and Shah dynasty. The meeting also decided to develop cooperation, unity and front with like-minded nationalist parties and organizations. *Compiled from reports*

Chinese Military Delegation Arriving In Nepal Next Week

Amidst increasing tension among the political parties over integration and rehabilitation of the Maoist combatants, a high-level Chinese military delegation is scheduled to visit Nepal next week. During its five-day stay in Nepal, the Chinese officials will hold talks with political leaders on efforts being made for army integration. The delegation will meet Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Home Minister Bam Dev Gautam, Defense Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa, defense secretary Baman Prasad Neupane among others. The delegation will be led by a Major General of Chinese Army. *Nepalnews.com reports*

Loopholes In Bill On Disappearances

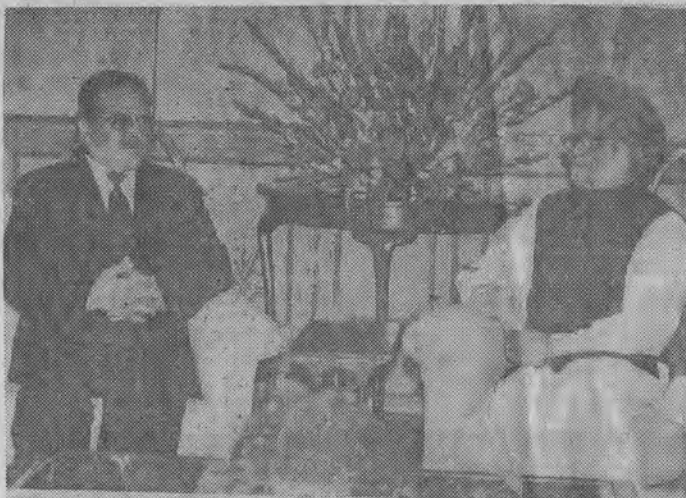
Legal luminaries and rights activists today pointed out loopholes in the proposed commission on disappearances under the Person Disappearance (Crime and Punishment) Bill, 2008 and suggested that it should be made impartial and given more teeth to deal with those responsible for forced disappearances. The Commission on Disappearances has been proposed to look into the incidents of disappearance that had occurred during the Maoist insurgency (from February 13, 1996 to November 21, 2006). Commenting on the draft Bill of Person Disappearance, 2008, member of the National Human Rights Commission Gauri Pradhan stressed the need to clearly mention that the government will not withdraw cases against those found guilty of forcible disappearances. The preliminary draft Bill, which was discussed at the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction in the presence of Peace Minister Janardan Sharma and Minister for Law, Justice and Constituent Assembly Dev Prasad

Gurung, has proposed that the office of the Attorney General will decide whether the person found guilty by the commission should be prosecuted. "It is of no use to set up such a commission if the Attorney General is the final authority to decide on prosecuting the person found guilty by the commission," said Pushpa Bhusal, a lawyer and Nepali Congress CA member. She said the commission would just remain as an ombudsman if it could do nothing against the perpetrator. She also suggested that the State should provide compensation to the victims. "What if the perpetrator is already dead, not living in the country or is not in a position to compensate the victim?" she questioned, adding that the State must take responsibility for addressing the grievances of the victims. The draft bill has proposed that the perpetrator would be liable to compensate the kin of those disappeared. Pradhan said jurisdiction of the commission on disappearances should be clear and there should not be any duplication of work between the commission on disappearance and the proposed Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which is also expected to deal with the cases of human rights violations and crime against humanity during the conflict. He informed that the NHRC had received 2,200 complaints of disappearances, and 970 such cases were yet to be settled. "The commission on disappearances must be clear if it will start work afresh or take NHRC's findings in its notice," he said. Dharma Raj Neupane, president of Nepal Maoist Victims' Association, stressed that there should be no ministers in a panel recommending the formation of the commission. Another lawyer, Satish Krishna Kharel, pointed out the need to treat the cases of disappearances as "continuous crime" and the commission should also include crime investigation expert in the team. Initiating the discussion, Peace and Reconstruction Minister Janardan Sharma said the Person Disappearance Bill, 2008, was

required to ensure independence and impartiality, accountability, end the culture of impunity, abide by the orders of court of law and provide compensation to the victims. Sharma also informed that the bill was prepared in line with Comprehensive Peace Accord, Interim Constitution, Common Minimum Program of the coalition government, agreements reached among political parties and Supreme Court's orders. *The Himalayan Times daily reports*

Gautam Wants To Remove Kings' Statues

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs Bam Dev Gautam on Saturday (Nov 15) said that the government would remove all statues of erstwhile kings from across the country and replace them with statues of national heroes. Laying down the foundation stone for the construction of Shankhadhar Sakhwa in Ratna Park on the occasion of 1129 Nepal Sambat, which was recently recognized by the government as the national era, Deputy Prime Minister Gautam said, "The government will remove all statues of ex-kings and maharajas and keep them in a museum for their preservation if the people extend their support in this regard." Ratna Park was renamed Shankhadhar Park on Saturday. However, Home Ministry officials said that they were unaware of any government decision with regard to removing kings' statues. During the function, Gautam also admitted that the modus operandi of the new government still remains the same as under the earlier systems. "The general public have not felt the change as the new government is still working in the same old manner," he said. He also added that people will start feeling the change within a few months as the government has at the moment been engaged in reviewing the existing mechanisms of the state. On the occasion, Home Minister Gautam reiterated that he will take all the steps necessary to establish law and order in the country. **Leading dailies report** ■



PM Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda (left) meets with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in New Delhi. Kantipur

THE MEETING OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY (CA)

also acting as the legislative parliament, Friday (Nov 14), passed the finance bill 2065. The bill was passed by majority. Meanwhile, the government has presented a bill on Sixth Amendment of the Interim Constitution. Minister for Law, Justice and CA Affairs Dev Gurung presented the bill, which seeks to make some changes in the eligibility of voters. As per the recent cabinet decision, the government is seeking to change the provision on voting age so as to allow any youth over 18 years to cast vote that year if he/she reaches the age by previous Chaitra (mid-April).

THE JOINT TRADE UNION Coordination Center (JTUCC) on Thursday (Nov 13) warned to launch protest demonstrations if the concerned stakeholders do not comply with the government decision to hike their salaries. The workers union has urged all concerned stakeholders to implement the basic salary fixed by the government at the earliest. Issuing a joint press release today, JTUCC, the group of eight different workers unions, has asked the entire employers to put into practice the basic salary fixed by the government. JTUCC has expressed its concern over the recent statements publicized by the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FNCCI) that they will not implement the basic salary fixed by the government. The workers union has also urged the FNCCI to play the role of a responsible organization.

THE SUPREME COURT HAS TURNED DOWN a plea for an interim order to prevent the implementation of the five percent 'education service tax' introduced by the government. In a preliminary ruling on the writ petition jointly filed by the Institutional Schools Association Nepal (ISAN), Nepal Law

Society and Guardians' Association, a division bench today announced that interim order is unnecessary in this case. The bench also stated that the new tax scheme is well within the authority of the government. Next hearing on the case will be on December 26. On November 2, the apex court had issued a show cause notice to concerned government authorities regarding the service tax which has been opposed by private school operators and guardians alike. The petitioners have said the tax is unjustifiable and should be revoked. They have also argued that the tax is against the constitutional provision which guarantees free education up to secondary level to every citizen. They moved the court after the Inland Revenue Department issued notices to private schools, urging them to comply with the tax policy.

THE WORLD BANK (WB) HAS ANNOUNCED that it would substantially increase financial support for developing countries, ahead of the G20 summit on Saturday (Nov 15). Its financial support includes the launch or expansion of four facilities for the crisis-hit private sector that is critical to employment, recovery and growth. According to the WB website, it's International Bank for Reconstruction and Development could make new commitments of up to US\$100 billion over the next three years. This year the lending is likely to triple to more than US\$35 billion compared to US\$13.5 billion last year. Meanwhile, the WB has lowered its growth forecast for developing country economies to 4.5 percent for 2009, compared to a previous projection of 6.4 percent, due to a combination of financial turmoil, slower exports and weaker commodity prices, according to the website. It expects high income country economies to contract by 0.1 percent next year while the world economy eke out only one percent growth. "Leaders meeting on Saturday to discuss the global financial crisis must not lose sight of the human crisis. As always, it is the poorest and most vulnerable that are the hardest hit," the website quoted WB Group President Robert B. Zoellick as saying. Current estimates suggest that a one percent decline in developing country growth rates pushes an additional 20 million people into poverty. Already 100 million people have been driven into poverty as a result of high food and fuel prices. "The global financial crisis, coming so soon after the food and fuel crises, is likely to hurt the poor most in developing countries," Zoellick said adding, "Working with the IMF, UN agencies, regional development banks and others, the World Bank Group is helping both governments and the private sector through lending, equity investments, innovative new tools, and safety net programs." ■

MEGAFAN OF THE KOSI RIVER ”

Dr. AB Thapa

Very recently the Kosi has again started to show its ugly face by unleashing a reign of terror against the peoples living in the vast flood plain of this river. Peoples of our region must be alarmed that our region is quickly heading for far worse Kosi flood disasters. We might be very close to the days when the swollen Kosi would permanently abandon its present course and it would be freely roaming over its vast eastern floodplain. The damages, that resulted from the recent bursting of the eastern embankment, would pale in comparison with the great losses of life and property consequent upon the coming catastrophic Kosi flooding. Even the distant West Bengal and Bangladesh lying on the old course of the Kosi might not be completely out of the Kosi flood danger.

The River

The Kosi River is the third largest Himalayan river after the Brahmaputra and the Indus. The Kosi tributaries rise in Tibet at heights above 7,000 meters. After traversing through Nepal and India it joins the Ganges River near Kursella. The three main tributaries of the Kosi River are the Sun-Kosi, Arun and Tamar.

They unite together at Tribeni. The Kosi for about 12 km downstream Tribeni flows in a deep mountain gorge before it debouches into the Terai plain at Chatra. The river further downstream Chatra builds up its plain by dividing into several channels spread over a width varying from 8 to 20 km. The bed slope of the Kosi near Chatra is about 1:1000. Such slope in the lowermost reach near the confluence with the Ganges is as low as 1:23000.

Hydrology

The drainage area of the Kosi at Tribeni is about 61,000 sq. km. The average annual flow of this river at Tribeni is 1614 cu. m/sec. The average annual flow of the Kosi is almost 3 times bigger than that of the Sutlaj at Bhakra. It is more than 4 times bigger than that of Colorado at Hoover dam, and it is only 36% less than that of the Nile at Aswan.

The maximum flood discharge of the Kosi recorded on 5/10/1968 was 25,853 cu. m./sec. The Kosi every year brings an enormous quantity of sediments. The average annual sediment load of the Kosi at Tribeni is about 120 million cum. m.

Kosi Megafan

The Kosi is regarded as one of the largest braided streams of the world, though the Kosi River is marked by distinct downstream changes in channel patterns. These patterns are gravel-sandy braided, sandy braided, straight, and meandering.

The Kosi fan is a flat floodplain. Within this mega-fan there are old courses now occupied by much smaller streams, lakes and dunes-like mounds. The shifting behaviour of the Kosi River was reported by Mookerjee in 1961 in the form of a map showing the positions of the Kosi channel at different times. Later, Holmes A. published this map in 1965.

The alluvial plain of the Kosi River between Chatra and Hanumannagar is triangular shaped. It is steeply sloped with its apex at Chatra. The river has formed a sub-circular mega-fan with a radius of about 60 km downstream of the barrage

The Kosi is regarded as one of the largest braided streams of the world, though the Kosi River is marked by distinct downstream changes in channel patterns. These patterns are gravel-sandy braided, sandy braided, straight, and meandering.

near Hannumannagar. The Kosi mega-fan covers an area of about 16,000 sq. km. which lies in North Bihar of India and Eastern Nepal

The Braided Channel

A braided river is relatively wide with poorly defined unstable banks, and is characterized by a steep shallow water course with multiple channel divisions around alluvial islands. Braiding is one of many patterns which can maintain quasi-equilibrium among the variables of discharge, sediment load, and transporting ability. Lane (1957) concluded that, generally, the two primary causes that may be responsible for the braided condition are: (1) the stream may be supplied with more sediment than it can carry resulting in deposition of a part of the load, and (2) steep slopes, which produce a wide shallow channel where bars and islands form readily.

Either of the above factors alone, or both in concert, could be responsible for a braided pattern. If the channel is overloaded with sediment, deposition occurs, the bed aggrades, and the slope of the channel increases in an effort to maintain a graded condition. As the channel steepens, the

velocity increases, multiple channels develop and cause the overall channel system to widen. The multiple channel, which form when bars of sediment accumulate within the main channel, are generally unstable and change position with both time and stage.

Another cause of braiding is if the banks are easily erodable. Where the banks are easily eroded, the stream widens at high flow and at low flow bars form which become stable. Thus islands are formed. In general, a braided channel has a steep slope, a large bed-material load in comparison with its suspended load, and a relatively small amount of silts and clays in the bed and banks. The braided streams have the characteristics that it is unstable, changes rapidly its alignment, and carries a large quantity of sediments. It is very wide and shallow even at flood flow. It is in general unpredictable.

Braiding Intensity and Rate of Sedimentation

In the post barrage period the Kosi River width has become broader in the reach just upstream of the barrage. When the discharge exceeds 8400 cumecs, which is fairly common, the whole area between the two embankments is submerged. The river silts up some of the already existing channels and islands on the one hand, and simultaneously dissects some other islands on the other hand, thus remoulding the whole river bed.

Sanyal(1980) and Gohain & Prakash have presented observations regarding the amount of sedimentation in the Kosi riverbed for the period 1955 to 1974. The channel was divided length-wise into six blocks of different lengths. Taking Chatra as the starting point. The downstream boundaries of various blocks fell at distances of 26, 40,; 60, 80, 104, and 122 km. Results of bed level changes for the period 1955 to 1963 and 1963 to 1974 for different blocks indicate that in the pre-barrage period almost the whole observed reach of the river was degrading. The rate of degradation, however, varied from one block to another. Construction of the barrage near Hannumannagar in 1960s has led to a high aggradations upstream of the barrage, but the area just downstream of the barrage has been marked by a small degradation. Further downstream, there has been an increased aggradations with distance from the barrage.

Variations in the intensity of braiding in the downstream direction at a particular time are found to be closely related to long-term relative rates of sedimentation. It has been observed in the degrading regions of the river bed that less the degradation the higher the braiding intensity. For aggrading regions, higher aggradation is marked by higher intensity of braiding. In general the aggrading reaches are characterized by higher braiding intensities than degrading reaches.

Abandoned Channels

The abandoned channels represent the vestiges of the old courses of the Kosi River. During its sweep over the fan, the Kosi River has left its imprint on the fan surface in the form of numerous abandoned channels, of which at least 16 distinct courses have been recognized. These channels

courses exhibit low sinuosity, though some of the small channels show a sharp sinuous pattern. Their width range between 0.75 and 2.2 km and they are covered mainly with sandy sediments. The old abandoned channel courses no longer carry flow from the Kosi River and are presently drained by ground water-fed streams. Most of these streams are perennial and flow along topographically low areas of the old abandoned courses. The streams have widths consistent with the present discharge characteristics, and have the meandering pattern.

The Uppermost Alluvial Plain

The alluvial plain lying at the top of the circular Kosi megafan is bounded by faults on both the eastern and western sides. Diamond-shaped bars and sub-channels can be recognized over most part of this mega-fan with the exception of a small area south of the Chatra. Bars covered with coarse to medium sands and channels are overlain by finer sand and silts. A small part of this plain is occupied by the Sunsari River, a ground water fed stream on the eastern side of the Kosi.

Inter-channel Areas

The inter-channel areas are highly disturbed due to human settlements and intensive agricultural practices adopted in this area. As a result, old channel bars and banks can not be easily recognized. There are settlements on the high level surfaces. Those high lands are underlain by coarse material. Some of the low-lying areas remain water-logged for most of the year. The surfacial sediments of the inter-channel are silty sands on the higher grounds, silts in large flat areas, and silty mud and organic materials in the swampy areas.

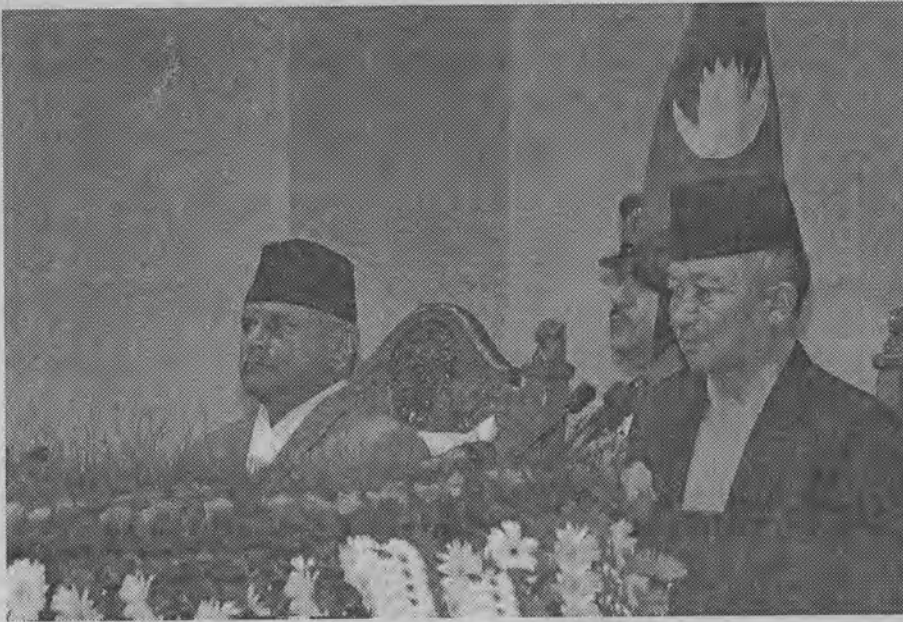
Low-lying Plain

There is a low-lying plain in the mid-fan area along the eastern side of the Eastern Embankment of the Kosi. It extends from Supaul to the west of Simri-Bakhtiarapur. This area remains water-logged during a substantial part of the year. The surfacial sediments of the area are silty muds with high organic content. It is regarded that seepage of water from active Kosi River, which is higher level as a result of sedimentation following the construction of the embankments, is the cause of water-logging in this area.

Southernmost Part of The Fan

The southernmost part of the Kosi fan is drained by north-south flowing groundwater fed streams which join the meandering Kosi River flowing eastwards at the bottom of the fan. Even at low flood discharges these streams merge into the Kosi river and result to flooding in adjoining areas on the fan. At peak floods, the Kosi submerges large parts of this plain. These areas are covered with thick deposits (over 3 m) of silts and muds.

(Dr. Thapa writes on water resources)



Constituent Assembly: Statute Calendar

CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

Statute Course

The CA passes regulation and calendar on constitution writing. But parties are still at odds on key issues

By SANJAYA DHAKAL

The last one week saw the CA take up the issue of constitution writing with much earnest. After months of facing criticism over delay in starting the process, the CA not only passed the much-awaited regulations defining the method of constitution writing but also fixed the calendar for the purpose.

As the CA chairman Subas Nemwang had promised, the passage of calendar on Sunday (Nov 16, Mangsir 1) has officially kicked off the process of writing the new statute through elected representatives.

On Friday (Nov 14), the CA had, unanimously, passed its regulation, which was presented by Narayan Man Bijukchee, the chairman of the committee formed to draft it.

The regulation could be passed after major parties agreed to omit any reference to the system of party whip. The regulation has provisions for various subject wise committees necessary to draft the new constitution.

The four major parties – including

three ruling parties Maoists, UML, MJF and opposition NC – decided last week to drop any reference to the 'disputed' issue of whip from the regulation. They made the decision after smaller parties including MJF and those based in Madhes demanded that the parties not be allowed to exercise whip on their members when deciding on important constitutional provisions, and, instead, allow the members to exercise their individual vote of conscience.

Subsequently, the CA adopted the detailed calendar. As per the calendar, the new constitution would be ready by May 2010. It also fixes time regarding the collection of public opinion and so on.

The election to the post of vice-chairman of the Constituent Assembly will take place on November 28.

Even as the regulatory hurdles for starting the process of constitution writing have been cleared, the political hurdles remain.

The gaps between the ruling Maoists and the opposition Nepali Congress (NC)

have grown in last few days.

Just as the CA was passing the calendar, the opposition leader and former prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala was accusing the Maoists of not giving priority to the process of writing new constitution.

On the other hand, the debate on army integration continues to rage on. While in Birgunj, senior NC leader Sher Bahadur Deuba ruled out the possibility of integrating Maoist combatants into national army.

Addressing a function in Panchthar, a district in eastern Nepal, general secretary of ruling coalition partner Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) Jhal Nath Khanal said that any Maoist combatant becoming NA chief was beyond imagination.

Amid such rhetorics, the calendar for constitution writing could face big challenges in the coming days.

Rift In Maoists!

In what appears as a serious crack within the Maoists, the party chairman Prachanda has faced a formidable challenge from his former mentor and senior party ideologue Mohan Baidya 'Kiran.'

On Monday (Nov 17), when the central committee meeting started in Bhaktapur, party chairman and prime minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' as well as senior party leader of Maoists, Mohan Baidya 'Kiran' registered two separate documents for discussion.

The two documents have been registered at a time when reports of rival factions jockeying for their own version of democratic republic and people's republic have been doing rounds.

Party spokesperson and Minister for Information Krishna Bahadur Mahara has said discussions over them will start from Wednesday (Nov 19). Earlier the faction led by Kiran had been sounding out that they would register a different document if Prachanda's document is not to their liking.

Reports say Prachanda's document backs competitive federal democratic republic while Kiran's document backs going for People's Republic. Talking to reporters after he emerged out of the meeting, PM Dahal said, "I have just registered my political report. On the nature of republic, (I have forwarded models of) parliamentary democracy, people's republic and transitional republic.

The different documents have been registered ahead of crucial National Conference of Party Cadres of the Maoists. ■



Shital Niwas: Period of institution-building

SHITAL NIWAS

All The President's Men

President Yadav and his men will have to rise to the occasion to build the institution of the office of the presidency

By SUSHIL SHARMA

The Shital Niwas at Maharajgunj has its own history. The red house has changed its colour several times over half a century.

Once a Rana palace, the spacious premises was later converted into a state guest house, playing host to a host of foreign dignitaries. It then went on to become the country's centre to conduct relations with other countries – the foreign ministry.

Even more significant moment awaits the Shital Niwas. Provided, of course, its new occupant rose to the occasion.

The building has been housing the office of Nepal's first commoner head of state for over three months now.

Obviously, of course, the presidential

'palace' has a great opportunity of filling a crucial institutional vacuum.

An institution in which the public can put faith in, and pin hopes, in times of crisis.

For this to materialize, the occupant of the Shital Niwas will have to act fast, smart and wise, without nurturing any kingly political ambition.

But taking three months just for appointing aides to the president towards setting up a functioning presidential office was not what one expected in building a new institution of the head of state.

However, better late than never. After a prolonged delay, President Ram Baran Yadav early this week made four key appointments.

He brought four seasoned professionals into his office.

A one-time aide to former prime minister Girija Prasad Koirala during his several stints at Baluwatar has been assigned to look after the political and foreign affairs at the president's office. A political science teacher, Hari Sharma, brings with him experience, knowledge and contacts.

In appointing a lawyer of national and international repute, Surya Dhungel, as his constitutional and legal aide, the president has inducted a man with thorough knowledge and practical experience of the subject at home and abroad, into his team.

In senior journalist, Rajendra Dahal, the president will find a competent advisor on media and public relations. The former editor of *Deshanter* and *Himal Khabarpatrika* has also the experience at the Press Council as its chairman.

And, former bureaucrat Vidhyadhar Mallik, fills in for advice on finance and administration. The former finance secretary who recently retired after over a quarter of century in the civil service too brings with him knowledge and experience.

That the constitution does not provide any executive role to the president effectively limits the role and scope of the presidential aides.

But as eyes and ears of the president, they will have their hands full with the job ahead in terms of building the institution of the presidency.

Helping the president discharge his constitutional obligations without an iota of partisan inkling and keeping it above any controversy will be their first and foremost job.

That will go a long way in earning the public faith and hope in the institution.

The bottom line: as one institution after another fell victim to chronic political instability in recent years, the main challenge ahead for building the much-touted new Nepal is building institutions – and consolidating them.



PM Dahal: Looking beyond South Asia

BIMSTEC

Regional Hopes

Nepal seeks to open up trade avenues with South East Asian countries through BIMSTEC

By SANJAYADHAKAL

The second summit of the BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Scientific, Technical and Economic Cooperation) concluded recently in India where, among others, Nepali Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda,' too, attended.

Upon his return home, the prime minister said to reporters, "We attach high priority to regional groupings like BIMSTEC."

In fact, ever since its conception and, later through its membership, Nepal has shown great interest in becoming a part of BIMSTEC, which counts Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Bhutan as members.

"BIMSTEC is a bridge between South Asian and South East Asian countries. As far as Nepal is concerned, we want to develop our trade and economic relations with the emerging South East Asian economy of Thailand,"

said Purushottam Ojha, Secretary at the Ministry of Commerce and Supplies.

The BIMSTEC Framework Agreement on Free Trade Area (FTA) had been adopted in 2004. And the group is currently engaged in negotiations to finalize time-bound tariff reductions (zero to five percent).

Unlike the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA), the BIMSTEC agreement includes, apart from Trade in Goods, the Trade in Services and Investment. There are also dispute settlement mechanisms in it.

"The BIMSTEC can be particularly beneficial to Nepal by including issues on tourism promotion, hydropower utilization, transport and transit," said Dr. Posh Raj Pandey, former member of the National Planning Commission (NPC).

The second summit of BIMSTEC concluded with the member states recognizing a range of areas of mutual cooperation including economic

development, climate change and combating international terrorism, transnational crime.

The declaration issued at the end of the summit stated that the state delegates recognized that given the geographical contiguity, abundant natural and human resources as well as rich historical and cultural heritage there is great potential for economic and social development which provides a sound basis for mutually beneficial cooperation.

"The leaders have taken note with satisfaction of the finalization of the BIMSTEC Convention on Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organized Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking," the declaration said.

It further said the leaders were convinced that through close cooperation the member countries can maximize the potential of their capabilities and resource endowments for economic and social development of our states and peoples and that the leaders also recognized the adverse impact of climate change on the lives and livelihoods of the populations and the serious threat it poses to the region and also reiterated their commitment to BIMSTEC as a regional cooperation grouping.

Addressing the summit, PM Dahal outlined poverty and lack of food security as the main challenge facing South Asia and called for a "shared commitment" and "concerted effort" to tackle it.

He also said that Nepal is ready to host an international conference on poverty reduction to address such regional development challenges. PM Dahal said Nepal has immense hydropower potential, and he invited investments from interested countries to tap its benefits.

The summit also accepted Nepal's proposal to host regional Tourism Center in Kathmandu.

However, not everyone is upbeat about the BIMSTEC. Given the track record of WTO and SAFTA, many are skeptical whether the BIMSTEC can deliver.

"I don't see many reasons to be excited. All of the members of BIMSTEC are developing countries and all of them face similar problems," said former vice chairman of NPC Dr. Shankar Sharma.

RESURGENCE OF TOURISM

Peace Dividend

If there is peace and stability and enough connecting flights from Nepal to other parts of the world, Nepal's tourism can rebound. This is what the trend of this year's tourist arrival has shown. After more than a decade of slump, Nepal's tourism industry rebounded back again. Although the intensity of political instability continues to make the situation fragile and unpredictable, it has not yet harmed the growing number of tourists. The upsurge in the tourism sector has been a welcome relief. At a time when Nepal's all other economic sector is going from good to bad, how the tourism rebound will bring contribute to economy remain to be seen

By KESHAB POUDEL

Prasiddha Bahadur Pandey, the newly elected president of Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN) is in a cheerful mood these days. Having suffered a prolonged recession in tourism

sector, this year's upsurge has made the entire hotel industry cheerful.

In an interaction with media recently, HAN president Pandey expressed hope that Nepalese hotel industry will not have to go through the previous bad patch

ever again.

"This year's booking is high and occupancies at the country's major hotels are good. After a long time, the tourism industry seems to be rolling back to its original shape," said Pandey.



Rural Tourism: Way To Go

Not only Pandey, president of HAN and owner of a star hotel, small lodge owners, too, have felt the joy of growing income from tourism. Binod Lama of Nagarkot lodge, a backpacker hotel, too, is very happy.

"I am too busy this year," said Lama, whose 20-bed lodge is almost full during the last two months. From small star hotels to non-star hotels and lodges of Nagarkot and Thamel, all did brisk business this year during the month of September and October. Even the month of November seems to be going well.

"For the last five years, my lodge was almost empty. This sudden upsurge in terms of tourists and earning helped a lot to pay back my dues to bank," said Lama.

Although the global economy has seen a major recession in recent months,

Nepal's tourism industry has not felt its any effect till now. "Law and order and other local situation determines our business more than the international situation," said Lama.

Known for its magnificent view of sun rise and sun set along with the Himalayan range from Mt. Everest to Dhawalagiri, Nagarkot attracts all kinds of tourists. From European to Indians, everyone loves Nagarkot.

With the completion of election for CA and formation of new Maoist government, the country has seen relative peace. From Everest base camp to Kathmandu valley, almost everything seems to be settled though there is possibility of revival of anarchism, street demonstrations again in the context of growing differences between major political parties.

"During ten years long violent conflict period, hoteliers used to request us to send tourists. Now the situation has reversed and as a tour operator we need to request them to manage a room for our guest," said Ramkaji Kone, president of Nepal Association of Travel and Tour Operators, at a recent press conference. "The situation in Kathmandu is that we have to send tourists to Nagarkot and Dhulikhel after accommodating them for a few days in capital," said Kone, who is organizing an international conference of travel and tour operators.

Popular destination of backpackers, the situation in Thamel, too, has changed as one can see growing tourist activities. After a long time of lull, there is sudden outburst. "There were a lot of tourists last year also but this year you cannot

find any room in Thamel. The closure of night club after 11 pm has help restore its glory," said manager of Tibet Guest House. "Occupancy in our hotel is almost hundred percent in the month of September and October. The booking in the month of November is also encouraging."

According to Nepal Tourism Board, the tourist arrival in the month of October set a record high: The tourist arrival in September was also much higher. Nepal regarded a Shangri-La for holiday makers with its Himalayan ranges, assortment of religious shrines and trekking spots, has recorded the highest tourist arrivals in eight years.

According to the Nepal Tourism Board figures released by the Immigration Office at the Tribhuvan International Airport indicate that 50,567 tourists visited Nepal in October, the highest in a single month since 2000.

Experts argue that the opening of two more casinos, a host of adventure sports like Everest skydiving and mountain biking as well as international music and film festivals have contributed to lure more foreign tourists.

The NTB said the total number of visitors till October 2008 reached 307,748 and if the October growth is any indication, by the year-end, it could catch up with the record situation in 1999 - when the country had hosted 421,000 visitors.

According to NTB, India remains the largest tourist-generating market for Nepal, registering a 14 percent growth in October. It has set the trend for South Asia with an overall positive growth of 26.3 percent. In this, Bangladesh and Pakistan registered growth respectively by 73.9 percent and 35.3 percent. Only Sri Lanka showed a decrease of 5.9 percent.

Other Asian countries like Singapore, Thailand, South Korea, Malaysia and China have maintained the upward trend with 150.4 percent, 53.2, 24.4, 23.2 and 1.6 percent growth respectively. However, Japan witnessed negative growth by 10.9 percent.



Tourists in city: Trickle down effect

Britain, Israel, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland and Sweden have also maintained the upward trend as well as the US and Canada. Only Italy and Spain registered decrease in arrival figures by 13.2 percent and 7.5 percent respectively.

Indian tourist arrival has begun to look up after it took the swift and sustained plunge since the 1999 hijacking of an Indian Airlines aircraft on way to New Delhi from Kathmandu.

After the plane hijacking, the royal e massacre in 2001, and the intensification of Maoist insurgency that killed over 13,000 people pushed

Nepal's tourism industry to the verge of collapse.

Three years after the comprehensive peace agreement with Maoists and the elections for CA and formation of government under their leadership, new positive message has gone out to the global tourism market and tourism has restarted to flourish in the country.

Nepal's tourism industry recorded its biggest growth in 2007, making it the most successful in seven years, thanks to the peace process with the Maoists and better air connections, tourism officials said.

"The total number of tourists arriving by air in 2007 was 27.1 percent higher

than in 2006; 360,350 visitors arrived in Nepal through Kathmandu airport, the highest since 2000,' the board said. The figure does not include visitors arriving overland from Tibet and India, but in December, authorities said more than 150,000 people had crossed overland into Nepal since January.

Although the air fare is still higher in Nepal, the good air connectivity with many destinations along with the operation of nine new international airlines to Nepal in 2007 pushed the growth of tourist arrival.' The major markets of Europe and North America recorded high growth in 2007: 46.8 percent for North America and 38 percent for Europe, the board said.

Arrivals from Asian countries also recorded growth of 49.4 percent with Chinese tourists leading the way with a surge in tourist arrivals of 120.9 percent.

Nearly 14,500 Chinese tourists visited Nepal in 2007, up from 6,500 in 2006. At a time when Nepal's trade deficits continue to grow, the tourism industry is one of Nepal's biggest foreign exchange earners, bringing in millions of dollars to the impoverished country and providing employment to hundreds of thousands of people.

Thanks to the intensification of insurgency, hundreds of tourism-related businesses and hotels had been closed and hundreds of workers including the porters were unemployed and most of them are now working in the Gulf and Malaysia. As the global recession is definite to reduce the demands for foreign workers, the tourism may support it.

Nepal Tourism Board holds the view that new airlines flying to Nepal and existing airlines' increasing capacities have helped rebound the tourism industry. "Increasing number of flights helped bring about the surge in the



Domestic Airlines: Good times are here

number of tourists," said a senior official with Nepal Tourism Board.

Despite the change in political system, the decade of 1990 performed well in terms of overall arrival of tourists. The years 1997, 1998 and 1999 were remarkable in terms of tourist arrival in Nepal. During these three years period, Nepal's tourism sector witnessed 429,857,463484 and 491,498 tourists arrival.

The new airlines like Air Arabia, GMG (Bangladesh), Korean Air, Silk Air, Dragon Air, Hong Kong Express, Orient Thai, China Southern and Etihad Airways have been providing services since April, 2007.

"Many new airlines want to start service in Nepal and existing ones want to increase their flight frequency," said Prachanda Man Shrestha, Chief Executive Officer of Nepal Tourism Board.

Looking at the surge of tourist some entrepreneurs are hoping to see their numbers touch about a million visitors in the year 2009 or 2010.

Had Nepal's own airline, Nepal Airline been equipped with new aircrafts,

it could have ensured reliable service; and the arrival would have gone much higher, say officials. However, Nepal Airlines is now flying its service with only two aircrafts.

Meanwhile, as the number of airlines increase, there is also the need to improve physical infrastructures of the Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA).

Thanks to the growing number of air service, it is virtually overcrowded now.

According to General Manager of the TIA, Mani Raj Upadhyay, not more than five airplanes can land in the TIA at a time. The crowd at day time could be diminished if the airport could be used round the clock.

The upsurge of the tourists has not only crowded the several five star hotels but also the small ones. Only 72 percent of rooms in hotel were occupied last year, but it has stepped up to 82 percent this year, said the Nepal Hotel Association. The HAN said that Nepal has capacity to accommodate over a million tourists.

"This Government Is Acting As A Single Party Government Led By Maoists"

Govinda Raj Joshi

After the lapse of nearly eight years, Nepali Congress is finally playing the role of main opposition party. Many so called intellectuals have opposed Nepali Congress leader Girija Prasad Koirala's decision to sit in opposition. One of the NC leaders who advocated that the party should stay in the opposition and former minister GOVINDA RAJ JOSHI spoke to SPOTLIGHT on these issues. Excerpts:

How do you find the political situation?

It is very unusual and very fluid situation as Maoists have been trying to push their own agenda which are against the democratic values and liberal society. For instances, there is law and constitution which guarantees the right of the people to uphold their rights, but Maoists are encroaching it.

How serious are Maoists to make the new constitution?

Maoists are not sincere to make constitution - what they want is to retain the power. I have not seen any sincere indication from Maoists to make the constitution.

At a time when Maoist leaders have been saying that your party is trying to derail the political process by opposing them, how can you blame Maoists?

If you watch their two months long activities, they have been trying to impose the populist programs. Threatening to nationalize the private education institutions, Maoist leader Dr. Baburam Bhattarai is destabilizing the education institution. Similarly, he introduced the regulation against the spirit of law to make restrictions on individual property. It is crystal clear what the priorities of the Maoists are.

It means you don't think the new constitution will be promulgated on time?

When the government led by Maoists does not take any initiative to make the constitution, how can one believe that the new constitution will be promulgate on stipulated time. According to the provision of interim constitution, there is a need to ratify all the articles of the constitution by two third majority of CA. If Maoists do not take Nepali Congress into confidence, making constitution is virtually impossible. Without a political consensus, it is virtually impossible to write the constitution.

Given the past record, the parties agree on all important issues in the last minute. Don't you

think this can happen once again at the last minute?

I cannot rule out this kind of possibility. Everything is possible in miracles. What I am talking about is the current ground situation. Making constitution is second priority of Maoists. This is just their strategy to capture the power.

As you said all parties need to develop certain consensus on constitution making, then why did your party raise minor issues like formation of the high level committee?

I also didn't see any reason behind our party leaders giving such high priority to that issue. As an opposition party, we need to challenge this constitutionally. Making such a minor question as a major issue was itself a mystery.

Whose duty is it to carry out the peace process to the logical end?

As Maoists are in the government, it is their duty to lead the peace process to logical end. It is the duty of Maoists to manage their combatants, implement the commitments to return the seized property and rehabilitation of displaced population.

How do you respond to the recent statement made by Maoist minister Dr. Baburam Bhattarai asking the private sector to move out their investment from education sector?

It has created panic in the country. At a time when the government is unable to recruit primary school teachers, it is no more than a foolish thing to think of nationalizing the private schools. I don't think a scholar like Dr. Bhattarai was a fool to speak these kinds of thing. There must be some big reason behind his statement.

Do you mean this is violation of law and constitution?

Yes, this is the violation of law and constitution. Dr. Bhattarai cannot speak against the constitution which guarantees the right to property. Grabbing land under threat is one thing but running the government requires certain obligations. The act cannot compel any individual to disclose his property when buying land. I don't understand how they can evade the law by introducing such regulations.

Is this Maoist government or three party government?

Though this is a coalition government of three parties, it is acting as a single party government led by Maoists. For instance, the education ministry is held by leader of Madhesi Janadhikar Forum but finance minister Dr. Baburam Bhattarai is issuing policy statements. Similarly, water resource ministry is held by CPN-UML, but Maoist ministers are interfering with it.

Why leaders of other parties are tolerating this interference then?

As Maoists are in the government, it is their duty to lead the peace process to logical end.



Either these ministers are helpless spectators or are under the influence of Maoists.

Isn't your party responsible for the present state of affairs?

Of course, we have committed mistakes. We must regret publicly our previous errors. Of course, most of the ministers of previous government who were close to Maoists too are now opposing the Maoists. If they want to oppose the Maoists, what they need to do is publicly own up their past mistakes. Otherwise, such Congress ministers do not have any moral authority to raise these kinds of issues.

What are the reasons behind the arrogance among the Maoist ministers?

I don't see any logic behind the arrogance in Maoist ministers. Either they are immature to run the government or they are influenced by somebody from behind. Otherwise, their political strength is not so strong.

How do you view the Maoists minister's unnecessary remarks?

Maoists have clear-cut agenda. They have destroyed physical infrastructures during the period of insurgency and now they are in power to create disorder in all the sectors including in education, industry and health.

What do the present political trend?

The political trends indicate that there is something wrong and the country is heading towards another accident. Even our leader Girijababu has made it clear that prolonging the constitutional vacuum may disturb whole system. The differences among major political parties indicate that there will be uncertainty in coming days.

How do you assess the role of your party leader Girija Prasad Koirala?

He is rightly performing his duty as a leader of opposition party. Somebody needs to be there to raise objections at the undemocratic behavior of Maoists. Girija Prasad Koirala has those kinds of guts.

The political trends indicate that there is something wrong and the country is heading towards another accident.

ESSAY

Obama and the 'American Dream'

American people have overwhelmingly endorsed the slogan of 'Hope' and 'Change' put forward by Barack Obama, but will he dare to re-examine the legacy left behind by his predecessors?

By Bhagirath Yogi

Wangari Maathai was a Kenyan student studying in US under the Kennedy airlift program in the sixties. She was based in a small college in Atchinson, Kansas, from 1960 to 1966. She recalls her journey in a Greyhound bus from New York to Kansas, shortly after arriving in the US. "Trying to get soda in Indiana, we saw a cafe, and crossed the road. But we were refused a drink. When we asked why, we were told it was because we were black," recalls Prof. Maathai, who was awarded Nobel Peace Prize in 2004 for her environmental campaign.

It may be less than five decades but USA—a beacon world over as a democratic country of free peoples—has made a long stride by electing Barack Obama—the first African-American—to the highest public office in the country.

"Change has come to America," Obama declared, addressing some 200,000 strong crowds of his cheering supporters on the night of November 4 at the Grant Park in Chicago. "If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible; who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time; who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer," said Obama, adding, "...All those who have wondered if America's beacon still burns as bright — tonight we proved once more that the true strength of our nation comes not from the might of our arms or the

scale of our wealth, but from the enduring power of our ideals: democracy, liberty, opportunity, and unyielding hope."

Challenges aplenty

As American people were taking part in a historic election that has generated hope across the world, Yubaraj Rai—a British Gurkha soldier—was killed in an enemy fire in the Musa Qala area of southern Afghanistan when the patrol he was part of came under attack. In Iraq, suicide bombers continued their attacks—though at low intensity.

As the new president will enter White House on January 20, he will come face to face with a number of problems of global proportions. Two wars (a hugely unpopular one in Iraq and a tough battle against the resurgent Taliban in Afghanistan), global financial crisis and search for new role by the world's largest economic and military power in the increasingly multi-polar world.

Those who have been watching the recent financial meltdown that started from sub-prime mortgage crisis in America point out that today's problems have their roots in the very foundation of a consumer society. The so-called "Earn or borrow, spend and enjoy" culture. Quoting writers like E. F. Schumaker, B P Koirala had said in the seventies that the level of consumption that the American society is used to is simply unsustainable.

Let's see how it is. Dr David



Obama: Inspiring figure

Suzuki, an environmental activist based in Canada, says that our planet is undergoing a biodiversity crisis. At least 16,000 species are threatened with extinction, including 12 per cent of birds, 23 per cent of mammals and 32 per cent of amphibians.

Now there is broad scientific agreement that environmental crisis caused due to human impacts from development, deforestation, pollution and climate change are destroying the homes and habitat of wildlife around the world.

It is but obvious that in the middle of ecological crisis, you can't enjoy an endless economic boom. In his highly acclaimed book, "Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered" published in 1973, E F Schumaker predicted the global financial and environmental crisis in a few decades if people mainly in the western societies did not change their way of living!

"Can such a system conceivably deal with the problems we are now having to face? The answer is self-evident: greed and envy demand continuous and limitless economic growth of a material kind, without proper regard for conservation, and this type of growth cannot possibly fit into a finite environment. We must therefore study the essential nature

of the private enterprise system and the possibilities of evolving an alternative system which might fit the new situation," wrote Schumaker.

But unfortunately, western societies, especially the United States of America, did not heed to such observations.

"Since the 1980s, Americans have consumed more than they produced—and they have made up the difference borrowing," wrote Fareed Zakariya, a well-known journalist and writer, in Newsweek magazine last month. "Two decades of easy money and innovative

been more hopeful than I am tonight that we will get there. I promise you – we as a people will get there," said Obama.

Watching the 'victory speech' on her television set thousands of miles away in Kenya, Wangari Maathai, felt as if the whole world was joining the cheering crowd in Chicago. "This is one of the most inspiring moments of my life. Americans have elected a person of extraordinary character and ability, who also happens to be black. It is a moment of greatness for all humanity," she wrote in the Guardian

climax. It is as if they had voted Roosevelt into office earlier, in 1930, and not in 1933," he added.

Analysts say Obama's willingness to compromise, emphasis on unity and stress on collaboration with nations around the world may help pave the way for credible change. "The most important thing that Barack Obama brings to the presidency is his willingness to reason. He won his presidency not as a black American but as a reasoning American who happened to be black," said Amartya Sen, a

"Since the 1980s, Americans have consumed more than they produced—and they have made up the difference borrowing," wrote Fareed Zakariya, a well-known journalist and writer, in Newsweek magazine last month. "Two decades of easy money and innovative financial products meant that virtually anyone could borrow any amount of money for any purpose....As the fantasies grew, so did household debt, from \$680 billion in 1974 to \$14 trillion today. The total has doubled in just the past seven years.

financial products meant that virtually anyone could borrow any amount of money for any purpose....As the fantasies grew, so did household debt, from \$680 billion in 1974 to \$14 trillion today. The total has doubled in just the past seven years. The average household owns 13 credit cards, and 40 percent of them carry a balance, up from 6 percent in 1970."

Hopes and aspirations

It may be impractical to think that a new President can shed the baggage of history overnight. Obama, too, conceded it in his 'victory speech.' "The road ahead will be long. Our climb will be steep. We may not get there in one year or even one term, but America – I have never

daily.

Niall Ferguson, a British historian, who also teaches at Harvard, agrees. "It was a very moving moment. It was similar to the release of Nelson Mandela. When Obama was born, in 1961, mixed marriages between blacks and whites were still illegal in one-third of the American states," Ferguson told Spiegel, a German magazine, recently.

"Obama can stimulate self-confidence because he is so calm and collected. He will not simply put an end to the crisis or ensure that banks lend money again. He is a politician, not the Messiah. But he can change the national mood. Americans are lucky that they were able to elect him now, just as the panic reached its

Nobel-prize winning economist.

According to Prof. Sen, reasoning also demands re-examination. Whether we are in Nairobi, Kathmandu or Washington DC, we are at the cross-roads of history. Charting out future course of action by re-examining our recent past will offer rays of hope not only for American people, but also for the mankind as a whole. That will be an effort worth making.

(Yogi was associated with Spotlight newsmagazine for over nine years. He is currently based in London and can be reached at bhagirath.yogi@gmail.com)

Book

Embracing Tight

The basic premise of Sanjay Upadhy's new book-- that "sixty years after British colonial rule, Nepal's struggle to shed its Raj-era shackles continues" - is a living account of the historical testament of Indo-Nepal relations

By Bipin Adhikari

Sanjay Upadhy's book "The Raj Lives: India in Nepal" [New Delhi: Vitasta Publishing Pvt, Ltd, 2008] is the latest addition on the current scholarship on Indo-Nepal relations and their vicissitudes.

Written with a noble objective of "cut[ting] through the "rhetoric and recriminations" in Indo-Nepal relations, the author, a matured journalist and scholar, also intends to "clear the way for a rational debate on what will continue to be a highly complex relationship." The author hopes to cultivate "a more dispassionate understanding of why India has acted in the way it has." Especially, on the later issues, the author intends to encourage his compatriots to have "a more dispassionate understanding.

The book comes in a very critical period of Nepal's history. This period is critical not just because Nepal is framing a new Constitution, and restructuring the state in a very troubled scenario. This period is critical also because the political state that maintained historical continuity of the Nepalese nation, its independence and sovereignty, and the institutions that resisted Indian interference in Nepal have also been dismantled.

The 12-point understanding reached between the insurgent Communist party of Nepal (Maoist) and the mainstream political parties protesting against the monarch (exercising executive powers to quell

the Maoist insurgency) have finally led to the abrogation of the 1990 Constitution; promulgation of a new (but 'loose') interim document to fill the vacuum, elections to the Constituent Assembly, and abolition of monarchy. The active Indian initiation and support - both of the politicians and of the Indian security agencies-- to achieve all these changes have not been any secret.

The Indian contribution not to put the monarchy on referendum; help provide Nepalese citizenship to more than two million Indian immigrants in Nepal, and to quell the national army on this issue has been remarkably successful. India has also helped the Maoists to form the government - after creating countervailing power in the plains of Nepal to check their ambitions (should it be needed). As the nation is passing through this transition, the new Prime Minister, Puspa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', has been kind to accept the status of the "special relations' between India and Nepal during his official visit to New Delhi last month.

The basic premise of Upadhy - i. e. [even] "sixty years after British colonialist rulers left the sub-continent, Nepal's struggle to shed its Raj-era shackles continues" - is a living account of the historical testament of Indo-Nepal relations. Upadhy starts examination of his premise with the analysis of the political, strategic environment of the

Himalayas in the second half of the 18th century leading to the institution of the modern Nepal. He links this process with the war with Tibet in 1791-92, the war with East India Company in 1814-15, which resulted in the ceding of all territories west of Mahakali river and east of Mechi river as well as the entire lowland jungles in the South to the Company, starting of the process of Nepal's political and psychological encirclement, and working with the British during both the World Wars in a bid to keep the country safe.

Upadhy deals with the period of instability between 1951-60, during which India acquired a very bad name in Nepal. The next thirty years was a story of open discord and quiet diplomacy, where India played so effectively pitting one force against the other, in a bid to prevail supreme in Nepal. Upadhy has analysed the mass movement of 1989-90, the dynamism and deficit of democracy in that period, in a subsequent chapter explaining the background behind evolution of the twin pillars (monarchy in multi-party system) theory. The last four chapters deal with the assassination of King Birendra and his family, the takeover of executive power by King Gyanendra at the height of the Maoist movement, and background for institution of democracy in the shadow of Mao. Finally, the author has reflections on post-Raj realism.

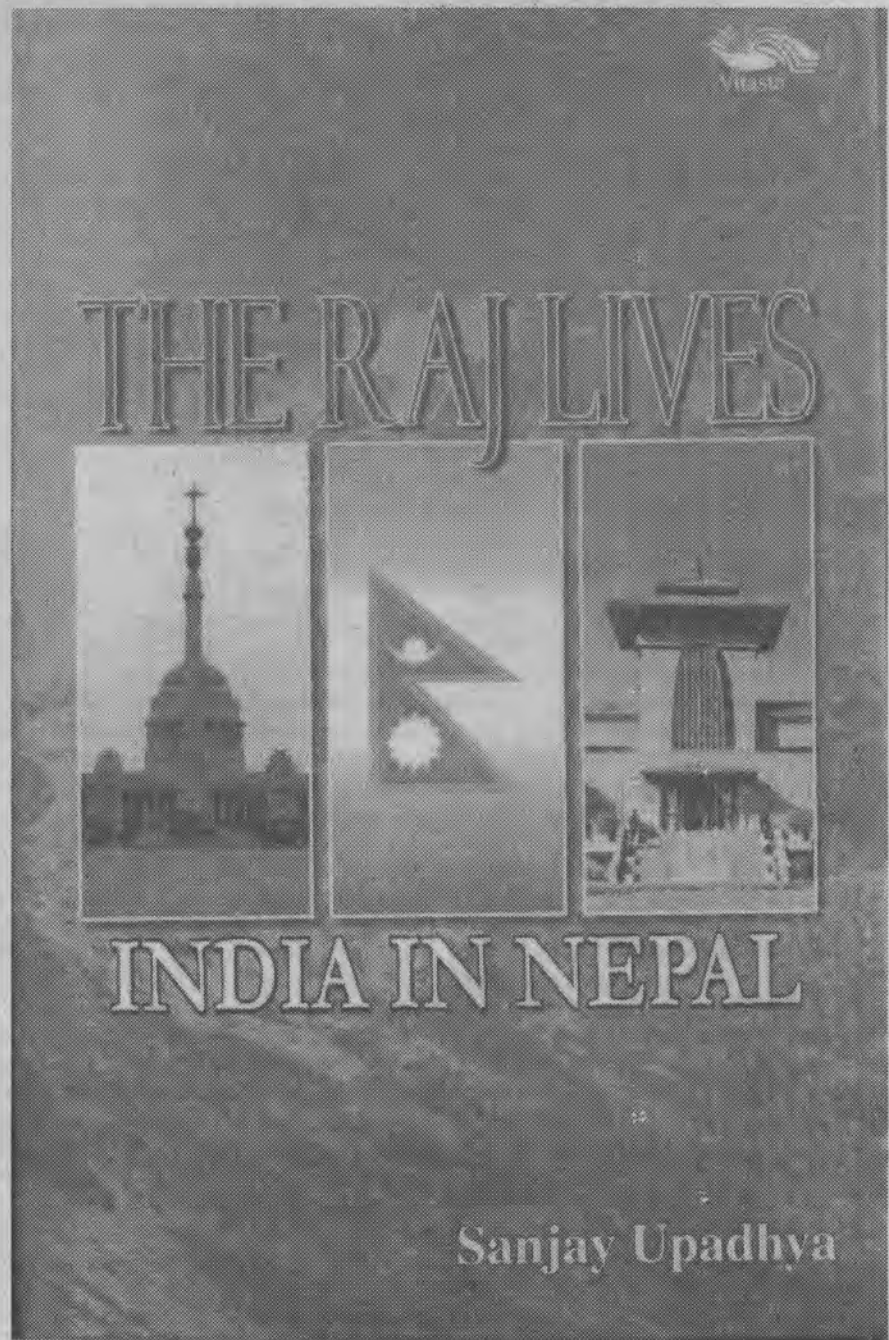
Upadhy is super in the analysis of the issues (including actions, attitudes ...etc) beforehand. He relies on authoritative sources. He is nowhere overbearing, nowhere taking sides on the issues that have been accumulated over the years, and certainly not expecting too much. His references about B. P. Koirala and King Birendra's handling of Indian

affairs are not adequate for sure. Much of these accounts have been published recently highlighting the Indian role in the movements and counter-movements in Nepal. King Gyanendra certainly abused the democratic process, but that certainly is not the reason why he has been dethroned.

Upadhyia has given benefit of doubt to India on so many issues that many others wouldn't give so easily - apparently in a bid to establish his impartiality. Additionally, the readers do not find much in this otherwise very thorough and comprehensive book about the agenda of Constituent Assembly and the role of Nepali Congress stalwart, Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, during this transition. But that does not minimize the great work that the author has done.

To sum up, it must be stated that any study of Indo-Nepal relations and its recent ramification will not be complete without reading this book thoroughly. Apart from being an objective analysis of the theme, *The Raj Prevails* also explains how Nepalese think about their core national concerns. This book is also an honest effort for the people who believe that it is possible for Nepal and India to have a just relationship in full recognition of each other's sovereignty, national independence and eagerness to grow as per the aspirations of their people. The alternative course is fraught with difficulties.

For that to happen, India must stop doing what Professor Leo E. Rose prophesied in 1973, and what turns out to be true after reading this book: "Some future Indian government may well conclude that the simplest solution to New Delhi's chronic problem with Nepal would be to replace the existing regime in



Katmandu with one considered more reliable by the Indian authorities. While this would probably prove counterproductive in the long run, it could be accomplished with relative ease in several ways: direct intervention by Indian troops; slightly disguised intervention through the use of the Gurkha units in the Indian army or ex-servicemen resident in India; indirect intervention through support

of a Nepali revolutionary movement; or an all-out economic blockade." Apparently, this is not helping out the troubled relationship.

(Dr Adhikari is a lawyer and can be reached at lawyers_inc_nepal@yahoo.com)

Courtesy: Global Nepali

Global Recession and Politics

Dr. Tilak Rawal



The Maoist led government came out with the annual plan, budget, for the fiscal year 2965/66, which appeared ambitious to many from several standpoints e.g. revenue collection (Rs 141 billion), growth target (7 percent), garnering external assistance to the tune of Rs 65 billion (loans and grants combined), etc. The total budgetary outlay of Rs. 236 billion was also found by many as an unrealistically high figure that would further fuel inflation in an economy which was experiencing an inflation of above 13 percent.

There were also some people, myself being one, who thought there was no harm in being little bit ambitious to pull the stagnating economy out of the mess that it was in for several years during the conflict and to provide relief to the most affected section of the community both in rural and urban areas. The Maoist ascendance to power, however, in addition to facing a high level of inflation, coincided with the time when the global economy began to show serious symptoms of recession.

Those in the know of world economic trends predict that the global output will grow by around 2.5 percent in the coming times and that 60 percent of the global economy is already in recession. It may be mentioned here that sharp rise in crude prices of oil is followed by global recession: it did happen three times in the past and it has happened now, too. The debate now should not be about whether the global economy is in recession or not, it should rather concentrate on whether there is any threat of current recession, which is going to be long and painful, maturing into depression as was the case in 1930, the period of Great Depression.

However long and painful the current recession may be, chances of depression occurring on a global scale are slim simply because unlike in 1930 there are institutions in place to intervene, even in the US, and governments all over the world are alert and have already initiated several monetary and fiscal measures towards easing liquidity crunch and encouraging slackening economic activities. Moreover, the constraining Gold Standard is not in place now.

Our two neighbors on the north and south are also affected by the global slow down and are trying their best to shorten the duration of this recession. India, which was growing by about 9 percent in recent times and will have to satisfy, as per official admittance, itself with 7 percent now, has been injecting liquidity into the market through periodic cuts in interest rate, cash reserve ratio, statutory liquidity ratio and repo rates. These measures by the monetary authority of India and persuasion by the

finance ministry there led to a reduction of 75 basis points in the primary lending rates of most banks.

Noteworthy here is the fact that the authority bent on mopping up liquidity from the market in the face of galloping inflation wasted no time in reversing their policies when inflation started moderating, less than 10 percent now, and the economy began to show signs of recession. Despite contraction in domestic demand, which many think is artificial and temporary, the combination of monetary and fiscal measures are likely to shorten the duration of recession in India, a nation on the path to becoming a global economic power.

China's growth in the past ranged between 10 to 12 percent per annum and its GDP approximates 99 and 76 percent of GDP of Germany and Japan, third and second largest economy in the world respectively. Some researchers had begun to think that even if the US economy, considered the sole engine of global growth, slides into a state of recession, rising domestic demand in China will prevent sliding into recession of the world economy.

Unfortunately, the case is different because China also is feeling the pinch of recession. In the recent past it experienced unprecedented level of inflation in recent times and now its exports are on a decline and there is some contraction in domestic demand, which if continued for long will negatively impact economies all over the world, mainly those in Southeast Asia. Since China has already harped on policies aimed at reducing cost of capital and enhancing domestic demand, let us hope that the authorities there succeed in improving the internal situation, which would eventually provide some relief to other ailing economies.

As mentioned earlier, the situation in Nepal was neither good in the past nor is it likely to be good in the near future. As far as performance of governments then and now is concerned, I find the current government little bit disadvantageously placed because the dispensation in the past had conflict to blame on for the lackluster performance of the economy and misery of the people but the Maoists, running the show now, have hardly anything, not even monarchy, to put the blame on. Incessant intra and inter party conflict and lack of cooperation amongst parties, albeit difficult to confess publicly by leaders, people feel will check economic progress in Nepal.

As far as implementation is concerned, Dr. Bhattarai may kindly remember that we are already into the fifth month of the current fiscal year and initial data available on different fronts are not encouraging. For

example, capital expenditure registered a decline of 40 percent, cash basis; in the first two months of this year compared to the corresponding period of last fy. Revenue collection has barely increased by 2 percentage point. Expected external inputs may not be available as expected, in the face of global recession.

Governments are contemplating implementing huge infrastructure projects when private sector is cutting on production of different items (automobiles to garments) to avoid inventory build up during a period of contracting domestic as well as external demand. Nothing of this kind is heard of in Nepal now, despite the emphasis, found in the budget for infrastructure development.

Notwithstanding sharp fall in fuel prices globally, down by about 60 percent from their peak of about US dollar 147 per barrel in July, and some adjustments here, people are still faced with high prices of essential commodities and commodity prices here have not gone down in the same pace as they have internationally. Thus, inflation not moderating and growth not peaking up as stated in the budget, we might end up finding ourselves in a situation of painful stagflation, high inflation combined with low growth, in the near future. Moreover, the strong base effect of last year when the economy surprisingly grew by 5.6 percent after years of disappointing growth, would make it difficult to achieve a 7 percent growth this year.

Those at the helm of affairs should remember that economic issues have taken precedence over political matters. People all over the world seem to be more concerned about their economic well being than other things. It may be noted that President Clinton survived Lewinski scandal mainly on account of superb performance of the US economy then: Putin of Russia became very popular because he had a major role in doing away with the poverty that was rampant in early 1990s; Helen Clark took the beating in recent elections in New Zealand on economic grounds and the reason behind recent electoral debacle of the republicans in the US presidential polls needs no elaboration.

Therefore it would be wise for the Maoists to concentrate on economic issues because a failure to perform economically would provide solid basis, with mass support, to try to dislodge the current dispensation by the end of the fiscal year, if not earlier.

(Dr. Rawal, a Constituent Assembly member, is an economic analyst)

"They (Indian leaders) did not advise anything. They just expressed their goodwill that the peace process and constitution writing in Nepal proceeds in the spirit of cooperation among parties here."

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda,' addressing a press meet in Kathmandu airport, after returning from his three-day India visit.

"I am saddened by the breach of understandings by the Maoists."

Girija Prasad Koirala, former prime minister and president of opposition Nepali Congress (NC).

"Unless we consolidate the ethnic and territorial integrity and prevent outside interference, we cannot build Nepali republic. That will only remain Bihari American republic not a Nepali republic."

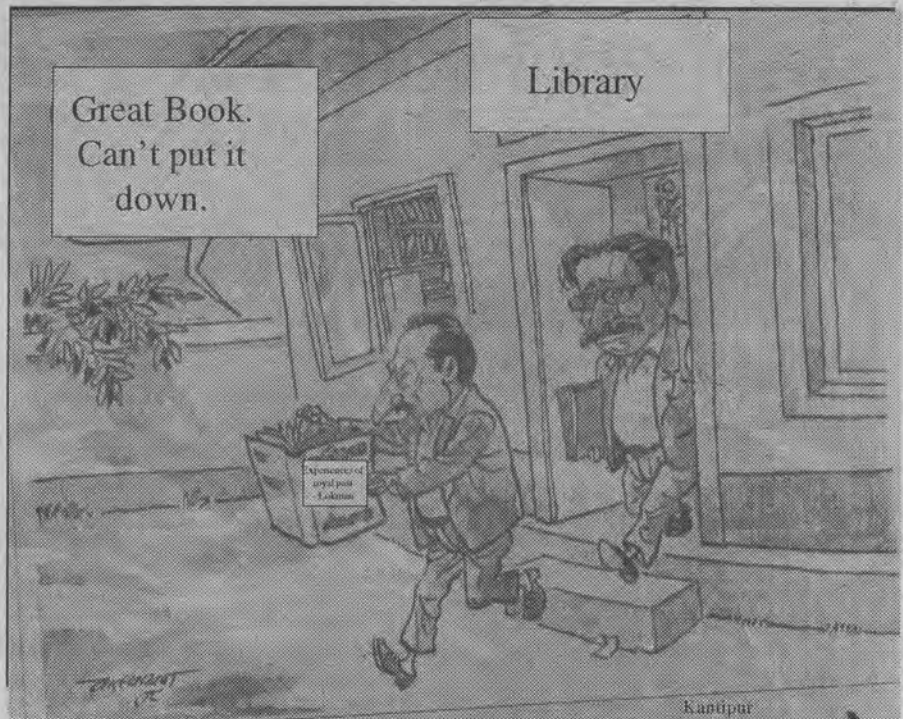
Ram Bahadur Thapa Badal, Defense Minister and senior leader of Maoists, in Janadisha.

"The Maoists should stop daydreaming about imposing one-party rule."

Sher Bahadur Deuba, former prime minister and senior leader of NC, addressing mass meeting in Birgunj.

"The government will remove all statues of ex-kings and maharajas and keep them in a museum for their preservation if the people extend their support in this regard."

Bamdev Gautam, Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister, addressing a public function.



"A continuous public pressure is necessary to ensure that the process of constitution writing sticks with the agreed timeline."

Subas Nemwang, chairman of the Constituent Assembly.

"I will neither fight for the position of general secretary (in the party's upcoming convention) nor do I want to become a ceremonial president of the party."

Madhav Kumar Nepal, former general secretary of Unified Marxist Leninist (UML), talking to reporters.

"It is not the intention of the government to allow the people to turn

their black money into white through the Voluntary Disclosure of Income scheme."

Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, finance minister, speaking at the Constituent Assembly.

"It is of no use to set up such a commission if the Attorney General is the final authority to decide on prosecuting the person found guilty by the commission."

Pushpa Bhusal, a lawyer and Nepali Congress CA member, pointing at loopholes in the draft bill on Commission on Disappearances, in *The Himalayan Times*.

TRANSITION

RETURNED: Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda,' home, after wrapping up three-day visit to India, where he attended the second summit of Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).

RENAMED: Ratna Park, as the Shankhadhar Park, by the government.

PASSED: The Constituent Assembly (CA) regulation, unanimously, by the CA.

The Finance Bill, by the CA acting as legislative assembly, by majority.

APPOINTED: Dinesh Prasad Pant, as the executive director of Nepal Administrative Staff College.

Sugat Ratna kansakar, as the executive director of Nepal Airlines Corporation (NAC).

Uttar Kumar Shrestha, as the general manager of Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA).

APPROVED: The proposal to set up regional Tourism Center in Kathmandu, by the summit of Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).

ARRIVED: Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, former president of India, on a two-day visit to Nepal.

Snippets From The American Trip

-Madhav Kumar Rimal

It is not only Pakistan, which is reluctant to play a more active role in South Asia. Even the other smaller nations like Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, too, suffer from similar psyche. India's size and might has turned the other countries in South Asia to almost her backyard, although this may not apply to Pakistan as it does to other countries.

As regards Nepal, even the non-resident Nepalis living in the United States think that Nepal's inability to withstand India's invisible pressures is one of the principal factors in her continued political instability and non

development. King Mahendra and King Birendra could have played a different role to mitigate India's domineering influence over Nepal. But they missed the bus. And the majority of the NRNs here have misapprehensions that the Narayan Hiti massacre of 2001 and the ultimate dissolution of monarchy in Nepal could have been averted had the monarchs read the writings on the walls correctly.

Even though many NRNs do still have a soft corner for their parent

country and might return if situation improved in Nepal and Nepal started behaving like a really sovereign independent country. A couple of quite affluent NRNs who seemed keen to come back to serve their own motherland, were frank enough to express their candid opinion that Nepal needs politicians of integrity who can take Nepal forward. Politicians who look

should invest their capital here. Most of them vehemently advocated about closing the open border between Nepal and India, which they think, is one of the principal reasons for Nepali political instability.

When asked what do they think about the United States policy of looking at Nepal through Indian

As regards Nepal, even the non-resident Nepalis living in the United States think that Nepal's inability to withstand India's invisible pressures is one of the principal factors in her continued political instability and non development. King Mahendra and King Birendra could have played a different role to mitigate India's domineering influence over Nepal. But they missed the bus. And the majority of the NRNs here have misapprehensions that the Narayan Hiti massacre of 2001 and the ultimate dissolution of monarchy in Nepal could have been averted had the monarchs read the writings on the walls correctly.

beyond their country to get to power or to stay there won't be able to lead the nation to a better future.

Talking about the Maoist movement in Nepal, they don't mince their words that "this is an exercise in futility, a dream of some wayward intellectuals which will be dashed on the hard rocks of reality – that is the dearth of patriotic politicians." Many NRNs want that Nepal government should give them the privilege of enjoying dual citizenship and concessions if it wants that they

eyes, they said, "it was one of the wrong foreign policies of Bush government." Indeed, all US governments would cater to their own national interest not bothering how it affects other nations. As such, no United States government would like to displease India for the sake of tiny Nepal. Still, if Nepal could play her cards well, there could be some reversal in its existing policies towards Nepal.

(Concluded)

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