

# BHUTAN TODAY-II

## Increasing Confidence In Foreign Affairs

ON the foreign affairs front, Bhutan is showing a great deal of confidence in dealing with its neighbours, Western countries, the UN and multilateral agencies. When significant reforms were introduced in the political system in July 1998, Lyonpo Jigmi Yozer Thinley became the kingdom's foreign minister for a five-year term and, thanks to his securing the highest number of votes, he also became the Thrizin (chairman, equivalent to Prime Minister) of the Lhengye Zhungtshog for one year.

His education in the US and training as secretary under His Majesty the King inspired him to bring about significant reforms in his ministry. DASHO UGYEN TSHERING, hitherto Bhutan's permanent representative at the UN, was brought back to Thimphu as the Kingdom's foreign secretary and his experience and skill has stood the kingdom in good stead. Mr SONAM TOBDEN RABGYE, earlier Bhutan's Ambassador to Kuwait, was appointed director, multilateral department in the ministry of foreign affairs. Mr DAW PENJO, earlier Bhutan's counsellor in India, was appointed director, bilateral department. Likewise, Mr SANGAY DORJEE, who had earlier served in various Southeast Asian countries, was appointed head of the policy coordination division.

### NEPAL TIES

The restructuring has made the ministry's performance more efficient. A sub-system of Bhutanese Ambassadors' conference was also introduced under the new dispensation. So far three such conferences have taken place. The main purpose of the Ambassadors' conference is to facilitate their interactions with various significant segments of Bhutanese society.

Bhutan became a member of the UN in 1971, and this has laid the foundation for cooperation with the international organisation and its specialised agencies. Bhutan has served in many important bodies such as Ecosoc, Commission on Human Rights, Chairmanship of Third Committee, President of Unctad, Executive Board of Unicef and WHO, and is currently one of the vice presidents of the general assembly. Bhutan has been a strong supporter of issues important to developing countries, which include environmental conservation, sustainable development, human

rights and other social issues. In 1973, Bhutan became a member of the non-aligned movement. Since then it has continued to support the principles on which the movement was founded. Bhutan believes that the movement will continue to retain its relevance and importance in today's world if it makes efforts to redefine the role. King Jigme Singye Wangchuck says that the non-aligned movement "could now best serve the in-

terests of its members by giving greater attention to economic issues". He also stresses that it has "been demonstrated frequently at various international fora that while economic and military might may not rest with the members, the strength of the movement lies in its numbers and collective political will". Besides, Bhutan has been associated with Saarc from its outset (1985).

Bhutan's increasing confidence in foreign affairs is visible in

with China has not been an easy affair. The area of the disputed territory has become very small in comparison to the past. But the remaining portion is of crucial significance for China in strategic terms.

China has been, for a long time now, insisting on establishing diplomatic ties. Bhutan does not deem to be psychologically ready for that. So beneficial are Bhutan's ties with India on the economic front that the former does not wish to play the China card, as is done by Nepal from time to time.

Every session of the Tshogdu sees its members expressing concern over delay in demarcating the boundary finally. The Royal government, on its part, has to stress patience and perseverance, in view of China's power and prowess. For a couple of years, intrusion by the Tibetan graziers has not occurred, but one cannot be very sure of the continuation of this state of affairs. One wishes that the two Asian states are able to resolve the boundary question. Chi-

na could show to the international community that it believes in magnanimity in dealing with its small and non-nuclear neighbour.

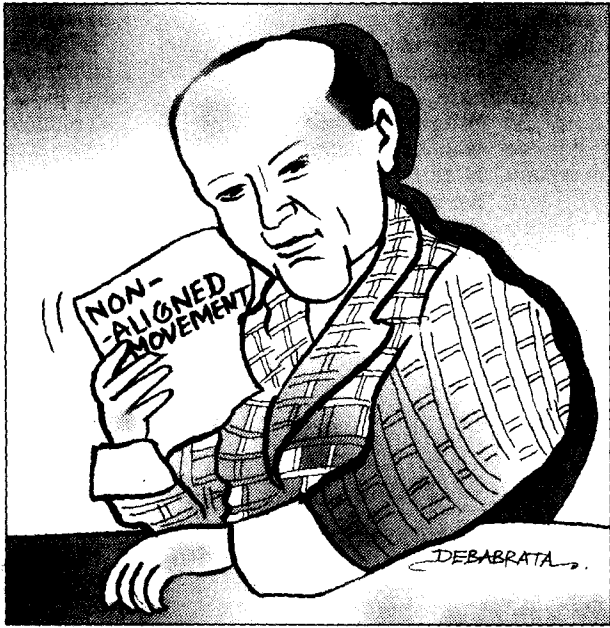
### INDIA'S ROLE

Bhutan's ties with India present an ideal example of how a big and a small country can not only coexist but also cooperate. India is one country with which Bhutan has absolutely problem-free relations. Even the camps of Bodo and Ulfa militants in Bhutan have not affected the traditionally strong ties adversely.

On its part, India has been very careful to take into account the sensitivity of a small neighbour. India's ambassadors to Bhutan have always tried their best to ensure that the country's diplomacy does not hurt the Bhutanese psyche. The present incumbent, HE KS JASROTHIA, has been performing his role in that framework. King Jigme Singye and Jasrothia meet frequently.

Indian assistance to Bhutan began with the inception of Bhutan's planned development in 1961. The first two plans were entirely financed by India. The volume of India's assistance to Bhutan has steadily increased over the years, from Rs 10.7 crores in the First Five-year plan to Rs 900 crores in the Ninth plan (which would conclude in 2003). True, Bhutan has significantly diversified its source of foreign aid over the last three decades, India continues to remain the principal donor.

Indian cooperation is mainly visible in areas such as education, health, hydropower development, agriculture, and roads. It is against this backdrop that His Royal Highness Crown Prince DASHO JIGME KHESSAR NAMGYAL WANGCHUCK is visiting India.



its dealing with the refugee problem, in particular. Identification of genuine refugees in Nepal's camps jointly by officials of the two sides began in February. The process so far has been quite smooth — especially so when Bhutan did not have any such experience.

Visits by Nepali Ambassador to Bhutan, Dr Bhekh Bahadur Thapa and Kathmandu Mayor to Thimphu have helped the two Himalayan landlocked states come closer. A meeting between Jigmi Thinley and Nepali foreign minister Chakra Prasad Bastola, due soon, is bound to bring the two constitutional monarchial South Asian states closer. This would, without doubt, not only improve the situation on the bilateral front, but also on the regional plane.

### CHINA BORDER

Since 1984, Bhutan has been dealing with the giant, the People's Republic of China, even though the two do not have formal diplomatic relations. The problem of the boundary demarcation between Bhutan and its northern neighbour is yet to be resolved. Between 1984 and 2000, the two states have held 14 rounds of talks in Beijing and Thimphu. The 14th round of talks was held in Beijing on 20-27 November 2000.

The 15th round of talks is slated in Thimphu soon. During the 12th round of Sino-Bhutanese talks in Beijing in 1998, the two governments signed an agreement on maintenance of peace and tranquility in Bhutan-China border areas, pending final settlement of the boundary question.

True, the regular border and boundary-demarcation talks with China in Thimphu and Beijing provide a good opportunity for the giant and the small country to interact on a variety of issues, but dealing

THE STATE

20 AUG 2001

# Indian bus burns in Nepal rebel rage

FROM DAMAKANT JAYSHI  
AND AGENCIES

218 H-8-Nepal  
Kathmandu, Nov. 25: As Nepal stood on the edge of a state of emergency, Maoists set ablaze an Indian school's bus in the continuing spiral of violence in the kingdom.

The Maoists targeted the bus belonging to the Delhi Public School to protest the singing of the Indian national anthem at the institution.

This is the first sign of a backlash against India, which has often been the target of resentment in the kingdom, in the latest wave of Maoist attacks. The Maoists had killed at least 45 people in weekend attacks that ended a four-month-old truce.

A PTI report said activists of the students' wing of the Maoists attacked the bus at a village near Dharan, around 500 km from here, when it was returning to the school after dropping the children. Sunday is a working day for students and officials outside Kathmandu.

Another report said Nepalese police seized a bus carrying explosives in Kapilvastu, 300 km west of here, which bore an Indian number plate and came from across the border. Police sources said the bus contained a large quantity of gelatin, detonators and safety fuse wires. Two persons have been arrested.

Kathmandu was rife with speculation today that the government might declare a state of emergency tomorrow.

A minister who took part in a Cabinet meeting today said an Ordinance has been prepared and Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba is likely to recommend to King Gyanendra to impose emergency despite deep divisions within the ruling Nepali Congress.

The murmurs of dissent in the ruling party came amid reports of a fresh ambush by Maoist rebels. The extremists killed five policemen in an ambush today.

A state of emergency will help the government mobilise the army to crush the guerrillas, who launched their rebellion five years ago and want to topple the constitutional monarchy and set up a republic. Nepal has so far used mainly police to fight the rebellion, which has claimed more than 1,850 lives.

A top government official said police in Kathmandu had detained a senior leader and some followers of the Maoists, who are led by underground leader Prachanda. They take their inspiration from Mao's Shining Path guerrillas and are active mainly in large but remote western areas.

QUOTE

THE TELEGRAPH

20 AUG 2001

## Nepal to outlaw caste discrimination

17/8 11/8/01  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

KATHMANDU, Aug. 16. - The Nepalese government today said it would outlaw discrimination against lower-caste Hindus and pledged to pass a law ending the centuries-old system that deems certain people "untouchable."

"Effective from this day the practice of untouchability and any discrimination based on it will be considered a crime punishable by a severe sentence," Prime Minister, Mr Sher Bahadur Deuba told the Parliament. But he didn't say what punishment the crime will invite.

The Opposition said the move was a powerful step to push Nepal out of its global isolation and choking poverty.

"This is a remarkable and daring decision by the government," said Mr Bharat Mohan Adhikari, a member of Nepal's main Opposition party, said.

The Constitution, drafted in 1990, bars discrimination based on sex, religion and race. But laws to enforce these provisions are yet to be implemented.

Mr Deuba said the government would soon present a Bill in Parliament to ensure an end to the caste system. He also announced the formation of a national commission for the welfare of Dalits.

THE STATESMAN

17 AUG 2001

# Nepal Maoists force pro-poor reforms

HR 11  
1978

Keshav Pradhan  
Kathmandu, August 16

TROUBLED BY Maoist insurgency, Nepal today announced radical changes in its laws pertaining to land reforms, poverty, untouchability and gender discrimination. The announcement comes barely a day after the underground Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) formed a three-member committee to hold negotiations with the Government. Earlier, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba had invited the rebels, fighting for a Republican state since 1996, for talks immediately after he took charge from G. P. Koirala on June 22. Deuba, in a sudden announcement in Parliament, banned transfer of land, including sale and purchase, until the Government enacts a law providing land to landless and extremely poor people during the ongoing Budget session. He remarked, "We are going to implement some of the programmes initiated by the late B. P. Koirala in 1959." B. P. Koirala, one of the founders of the ruling Nepali Congress, a social democratic party, was Nepal's first elected Prime Minister. Deuba sought support of all parties, including mainstream Communists, for preservation of the system of multi-party constitutional monarchy. Both ruling and Communist members greeted him at the end of his speech. He declared as a



AFP PHOTO

The Nepal Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba, announces a special socio-economic programme at Parliament in Kathmandu on Thursday.

"criminal act" denial of entry of lower caste people into places of worship. An Act banning untouchability will be passed in the current session. Deuba said a similar Act would be introduced to give women rights over parental property. This is despite the fact that several Hindu organisations are against giving such rights to women. Speaking firmly, he said, "We will take stringent measures to check exploitation of and violence against women." For this he

proposed to set a national commission for women soon. Deuba said the government would provide land and houses to all kamaiyas (bonded labour) freed last year. He promised to introduce a 25-year project for education and uplift of janjatis (ethnic groups of mongoloid stock), a large section of whom has joined the Maoist rebellion.

The Prime Minister said property of public servants would be confiscated if they were found to be involved in corruption.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

17 AUG 2



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# Bid to unite Nepal's <sup>UP</sup> Left parties

Keshav Pradhan  
Kathmandu, August 7

98

NEPAL'S MAJOR Opposition, the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist), has initiated a move to unite main-line Left parties.

Nepalese Leftists have been divided into nearly a dozen groups since the beginning of the Communist movement in the kingdom in 1949.

The UML central committee yesterday decided to hold talks for unification with the Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist Leninist), the Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist), the Communist Party of Nepal (United), the Communist Party of Nepal (Unity Centre), the Communist Party of Nepal (Masal), the Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist Leninist Maoist) and the Nepal Mazdoor Kisan Party.

The last four are regarded as the most radical among the mainstream parties. On the other hand, the CPN (Marxist Leninist) came into existence three years ago when a section of UML leaders left their party following differences over the controversial India-Nepal Mahakali Treaty on water resources. The rebels alleged that the agreement was loaded in Delhi's favour.

Currently, the UML, like other Left factions, has been agitating for demolition of a controversial embankment in Uttar Pradesh that it alleges pose a threat to Lumbini- the Buddha's birth-place- and 18 Nepalese villages.

Moreover, it is basically the Communists' relentless campaign on corruption and Maoist issue that forced G. P. Koirala to step down as Prime Minister. CPN (ML) publicity chief D. Bhattarai welcomed the UML move.

**Bills passed:** Nepal's House of Parliament passed two controversial security Bills today amid strong protest from Opposition parties, adds PTI. The ruling Nepali Congress passed the Armed Police Force (APF) and Public Security Regulations (PSR) Bills despite strong Opposition pressure. The main Opposition Nepal Communist Party-United Marxist and Leninist lawmakers had walked out in protest.

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THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

8 AUG 2001

# Communists breathe fire at Nepal King

HF-11  
578

**Keshav Pradhan**  
Kathmandu, August 4

AS UNDERGROUND Maoists prepare to hold talks with the Government, mainstream Communist parties have trained their guns on King Gyanendra and India.

Student activists of the major Opposition Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist), UML in short, burnt an effigy of Indian Prime Minister A B Vajpayee here last evening, demanding demolition of a controversial embankment in Uttar Pradesh. Nepal fears that the embankment will flood Lumbini, the birthplace of Gautam Buddha.

Significantly, the anti-Vajpayee demonstration took place on the penultimate day of the three-day secretary level talks between the two countries on trade and transit. Commerce secretary Provir Sengupta is the leader of

the Indian contingent.

Resentment is brewing also against a hydel project in Uttaranchal's Pithoragarh district that the Nepalese allege poses a threat to their territory.

Opening a new front, the UML and the Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist Leninist), another mainline party known as CPN (ML), have strongly sought nationalisation of the late King Birendra's property and restriction on the present Monarch's business activities.

This is in sharp contrast to the silence maintained by Maoist insurgents on the palace ever since they accepted Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's talks offer a fortnight ago.

Raising the issue of royal property in Parliament, UML member Pradeep Gewali yesterday warned, "Overindulgence in enjoyment may repeat the June 1 incident (massacre of King Birendra and his family). Can

any common businessman compete with the King who has tax exemption" Gewali sought nationalisation of the late King's property to save the palace from such disaster in the future.

This comes close on the heels of Wednesday's meeting between the King and CPN (ML) general secretary Vamdev Gautam. A CPN(ML) leader said during the meeting Gautam sought nationalisation of King Birendra's property and conversion of Tribhuvan Sadan (part of the palace where the massacre took place) as a museum dedicated to the late monarch.

King Birendra owned palaces and other property, including land, in Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, Lalitpur, Kaski and Nuwakot districts.

On the other hand, his successor is believed to be running a vehicle import firm, a five-star hotel group, a tea estate and a dozen industrial units.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

5 AUG 2001

## Deuba for peace with Maoists

Kathmandu, August 3

NEPALI PRIME Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba is pulling out all stops to ensure that the ceasefire called by Maoist guerrillas last month becomes permanent.

A congenial atmosphere is being created before peace talks between the Government and the Maoists, who have been fighting to establish a republic in Nepal. The Government decided to release 10 Maoist workers on Wednesday. Last week it had released 15 Maoist workers. The rebels have also released some policemen in Maoist captivity in response.

Padma Ratna Tuladhar, who acted as Government emissary six months ago during the Government-Maoist talks that were aborted later, said peace is possible this time around. Tuladhar, who played a key role in mediating between the two parties this time as well, said: "Both sides appear to be committed to solving this problem peacefully and the recent decisions are an indication of that."

IANS

## Nepal revokes ban on property deals

Keshav Pradhan  
Kathmandu, August 3

NEPAL HAS withdrawn a ban on the sale and purchase of property of about 30,000 people, mostly of Indian origin, whose citizenship certificates were declared invalid by its Supreme Court last week on procedural grounds.

This comes in the wake of strong protests by the Nepal Sadbhavna Party (NSP), the lone political organisation of Nepalese of Indian origin, known as madhesias here.

Referring to the lifting of the ban, NSP president Gajendra Narayan Singh, said, "It seems Nepal continues to have a feudal rule that passes edicts without caring for the people." He added, "First, the Government issued an order to freeze the property, though the court had cancelled the citizenship certificates merely on procedural grounds. Now, it has come up with another edict to restore the rights of the hapless people over their own property."

Mounting pressure on the

Government, NSP president Gajendra Narayan Singh today said, "Our MPs will continue to protest and boycott Parliament till the Government admits all those whose certificates have been cancelled as Nepalese nationals."

Supporting this demand, the NSP, which has five members in the Lower House, boycotted Parliament yesterday and today. Singh disclosed that home minister Khum Bahadur Khadka met him at his (Singh's) residence yesterday. He said, "I clearly told him that the government should try to solve the citizenship issue once and for all."

Singh also offered to mobilise other political parties to bring about an amendment to the Constitution that, at the moment, provides citizenship to only those people whose fathers have Nepalese citizenship.

He said, "Instead of descent, the electoral rolls of 1980 must be made the basis for granting citizenship." There are about 35 lakh people awaiting citizenship for a long time.

# Nepalese Indians seek change in constitution

Keshav Pradhan  
Kathmandu, Aug 1

THE NEPAL Sadbhavna Party (NSP), a political organisation of the Nepalese of Indian origin, has sought constitutional amendment to settle the long-standing dispute over the non-issuance of citizenship to the members of the community, who are widely known as Madhesias.

This follows last week's Supreme Court verdict that declared citizenship certificates of about 30,000 people issued in 1997 as null and void on procedural grounds.

The cancelled certificates were issued directly by a citizenship committee set up by the then coalition Government of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist), the Rashtriya Prajatantra Party and the NSP. Most of them belonged to people living in the Nepalese terai bordering Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

2/8  
The court, however, upheld about 4,000 certificates that had been duly signed by chief district officers after being issued by the committee. Approval of the chief district officers is a must according to the Nepalese laws.

NSP president Gajendra Narayan Singh said, "Keeping all this in mind, we want to amend the present Constitution that has blocked granting of citizenship to Madhesias who are the aborigines of the terai."

Singh claimed that Madhesias formed about 75 per cent of the estimated 35 lakh people waiting for citizenship for decades.

He said, "Madhesias should not be deprived of their birth right just because there are some Indians who also try to acquire Nepalese citizenship." The Madhesia community basically comprises Maithili, Avadhi, Bhojpuri and Hindi-speaking people.

Singh remarked, "The NSP is planning to launch a mass agitation soon. We face discrimination in every field, be it employment, development or politics."

According to him, the first step to end "the discrimination against the Madhesias" is to do away with the system of granting citizenship on grounds of descent. The 1990 Constitution provides citizenship to only those who fathers possess Nepalese citizenship certificates.

Singh questioned, "How can most Madhesias whose fathers had not been able to acquire citizenship because of similar discrimination before 1990 apply for citizenship now?"

He demanded that citizenship be given on the basis of the electoral rolls that were prepared for the 1980 referendum on the system of Government. He added, "We want citizenship for all those who are born in Nepal."

## Portillistas come out for Clarke

KENNETH CLARKE'S campaign for the Tory leadership received a boost yesterday when nine leading supporters of Michael Portillo came out in support of him.

The nine, including Andrew Mackay, Stephen Dorrell and Damian Green, announced that they regarded Clarke as the candidate "best placed to win over lost Conservative voters". Earlier, Clarke had said the public was right to put better public services ahead of tax cuts.

The move came as the contenders were about to enter their holiday truce. Clarke and Iain Duncan Smith have agreed that neither will give any interviews during the next two weeks.

The nine said they accepted Clarke's assurances that he would "appoint a shadow cabinet reflecting the predominant Eurosceptic view of MPs and allow free debate and a free vote on the subject of the euro". Their endorsement, in a letter to the *Daily Telegraph*, may have some impact on ordinary party activists worried that Clarke's pro-euro views could split the parliamentary party.

Reuters, London

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 2 AUG 2001

# Maoists come out of the shell, hold meeting

Keshav Pradhan  
Kathmandu, July 30

NEPAL'S FIVE-AND-A-HALF-YEAR-OLD bloody Maoist insurgency is at the crossroads. A day after their party leadership supported the system of pluralistic politics, activists of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) last evening came overground to hold their first public meeting in this ancient temple city.

A large number of local residents gathered at Indrachowk, close to the Old Palace Square, to listen to Maoist leaders whom they had not seen or heard before. All through the programme, police merely watched from a distance.

Again, it was at this spot that the rebels had a few weeks ago planted bombs with posters denouncing King Gyanendra and the then Prime Minister G P Koirala.

Since Koirala's ouster last week, guns have fallen silent in the hill districts where clashes between the insurgents and security forces had become a regular feature. At the moment, about 60 police personnel are held captive by the rebels in the western district of Rolpa for three weeks. The Maoists control most of western Nepal districts.

Those who spread the message of "people's war" and "republic" at the meeting were representatives of the CPN (Maoist)'s sister organisations—the Akhil Nepal Rashtriya

Swatantra Vidyarthi Union (Krantikari), Newa Khala, Nepal Dalit Janmukti Morcha, Nepal Trade Union Mahasangh, Nepal Krantikari Mahila Sangh and Akhil Nepal Kisan Sangh (Krantikari).

The meeting took place amid reports about the presence of Maoist ideologue Mohan Vaidya and military strategist Ram Bahadur Thapa in the capital.

Vidyarthi Union general secretary Purna Poudyal said there is no alternative to the establishment of a Republic as the entire Nepalese population supports this demand. While appreciating the new Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's initiatives for dialogue with the Maoist leadership, he warned, "There will be civil war if the new Government follows Koirala's policies."

Other speakers demanded that the forthcoming dialogue be used as a means to draft a new Republican Constitution.

On the other hand, Deuba, who took charge last week with a promise to end the Maoist problem, has been busy meeting senior political leaders to evolve a common approach to the issue.

So far, he has held discussions with ruling Nepali Congress general secretary Sushil Koirala, Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist) general secretary Madhav Nepal and Rashtriya Prajatantra Party chief Surya Bahadur Thapa.

## UNITE AND RULE

### Deuba's work cut out for Nepal development

WITH the Nepali Congress a house divided, there was little prospect of a consensus candidate as GP Koirala's successor. Of the two who contested the NC parliamentary party leadership, Sher Bahadur Deuba won, which is something of a relief since he does not belong to the Koirala camp. His opponent Sushil Koirala, general secretary of the party, is close to the former prime minister. The Opposition, particularly the Maoists, had made it clear that the new incumbent should be someone with vision. Soon after Koirala's resignation they freed some of the policemen they were holding hostage and for whose release the Koirala government had sought the army's help. It is surprising that they should go about killing even when Deuba was being formally installed as new Prime Minister. Much is expected of Deuba and he must clear Nepal of the mess created by Maoists since February 1996. The eighth Prime Minister since 1990, Deuba is a second generation leader who earlier headed a three-party coalition for about 18 months but was a mere puppet in the hands of Koirala who criticised his functioning, particularly after he gave a Communist member a ministerial berth for a favour received. Deuba also headed a high power committee appointed by former Prime Minister KP Bhattarai to prepare to meet the Maoist challenge but which received no support from the Koirala administration and was wound up.

Nepal must catch up on development hindered by years of political instability. Eighty per cent of the country's 22 million citizens have an annual per capita income of about Rs 9,000. Water resources are begging to be properly harnessed and there is no lack of donor countries if their confidence can be regained. For starters, even if Koirala was an unpopular prime minister, his government's determination to resolve economic problems through consensus deserves attention.

# Rebels hold key to Deuba fate

Keshav Pradhan  
Kathmandu, July 24

THE FATE of the new Nepalese Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba, remains as uncertain as that of his predecessors, despite his initial success in making the Maoist insurgents temporarily halt their armed campaign for a republic.

Deuba, who took over as the Prime Minister on Sunday with a promise to end the Maoist problem, on Monday unilaterally announced stopping of anti-insurgency operations by the Government forces. This, he described, as a step towards creating a conducive atmosphere for dialogue with the Maoists.

Within hours, the underground Maoist chief Pushpaka-

mal Dahal, alias Prachand, also asked his guerrillas to suspend all their armed operations. He termed Deuba's elevation as Prime Minister as a "positive development" and a "victory over fascist forces headed by G P Koirala."

Deuba, along with his mentor and former Prime Minister K P Bhattarai, was instrumental in pulling down Koirala as the Prime Minister for corruption and the rising Communist militancy.

Prior to this, Koirala, who is also the president of the ruling Nepali Congress, had overthrown Bhattarai last year for the latter's failure to contain the insurgency.

The announcements of Deuba and Prachand, that have raised

hopes for peace at least for the time being, came less than 12 hours after the Maoists shot dead 17 police personnel in a western Nepal village and declared the establishment of a people's Government in the eastern district of Dolakha.

Since the beginning of the insurgency, the rebels have set up such parallel administrations in at least 40 of the kingdom's 75 districts.

Human rights organisations and political parties, including the mainstream Communists, have welcomed the cessation of the armed conflict between the Maoists and the Government forces.

While out of power, Deuba, as head of the nine-member Committee for the Settlement of the

Maoist Problem, conducted several rounds of negotiations with the rebels last year. As a fall out of intra-party conflict, Koirala later dissolved the committee to conduct the dialogue in his own initiative.

As Prime Minister, Deuba, whose wife Arzoo Rana is related to Queen Komal, cannot run negotiations on his terms only. For the Maoists have certain demands that neither he nor any other mainstream party can easily accept.

The most important of them is the formation of a new constituent Assembly to draft a new Republican Constitution. As a warning, a pro-Maoist Journal, Janadesh, today wrote, "If Deuba behaves like Koirala, he will end up like Koirala only."



Maoist rebels perform at a cultural programme for the residents of Rakedada village, about 120 km east of Kathmandu.

HINDUSTAN  
20 JUL 2007

# Nepal govt, rebels announce truce



Mr Sher Bahadur Deuba

REUTERS

KATHMANDU, July 23. — The Nepal government and Maoist rebels today said they would stop offensives against

each other to pave way for peace talks.

"Instructions have already been given to security personnel not to carry out any action (against the rebels)," Nepal's new Prime Minister, Mr Sher Bahadur Deuba, said in a statement on state radio.

"Other steps necessary to create an atmosphere of confidence for talks will be taken soon."

The Maoist party said it also had suspended offensive actions as a first step towards peace talks. Maoist party chief, Prachanda urged guerrilla fighters "to suspend all offensive actions for the present to create an atmosphere for talks" with the government.

Neither side said how long the truce would last.

## MAOISTS KILL 20 COPS

KATHMANDU, July 23. — In three separate incidents since Saturday, Maoist rebels killed 20 policemen, a senior government official said.

The Bajura chief district officer said the rebels attacked a police camp near Pandusen village yesterday afternoon and killed 15 policemen. Out of the 53 policemen at the post, 34 were safe, three were missing and one was seriously injured. Police reinforcements had been rushed to the affected area.

In another incident on Saturday night, the Maoists attacked a police station at Simle village in Tehrathum district, 250 km east of Kathmandu, and killed two policemen.

Fifteen hours later, they ambushed a group of policemen who had gone to the site for rescue operations and killed three of them.

The killings occurred even as Mr Sher Bahadur Deuba was sworn in as the Prime Minister, following the resignation of Mr Girija Prasad Koirala, whom the Maoists considered their arch enemy. — DPA

Earlier, the Prime Minister, in a radio broadcast, urged Maoist rebels to cease their militant activities.

Mr Deuba's message to the rebels was broadcast over the state radio.

There was no immediate response from the Maoists to the appeal — the first by Mr since he was chosen on Sunday by deputies of the centrist Nepali Congress to succeed Mr Girija Prasad Koirala.

Mr Girija Prasad Koirala had been under mounting pressure to quit from his own party and

the opposition for failing to quell the revolt and his exit had been demanded by the Maoists as a prerequisite for talks.

Mr Deuba said yesterday his first priority was to end the Maoists' campaign to install a one-party communist republic in the poverty-stricken nation. The 55-year-old seasoned politician is seen as a more flexible leader than Mr Girija Prasad Koirala.

Mr said he would try to "evolve a common approach with the opposition parties in parliament and outside".



# NEPAL

## MAOIST SHADOW HANGS LARGE OVER KOIRALA SUCCESSOR

**A**CCORDING to G.P. Koirala, and he said this many times publicly, his biggest worry was what would happen if he quit as the country's prime minister. He has quit, and Sher Bahadur Deuba has taken over as the new PM.

The Congress Working Committee chaired by Koirala (he is also the party president) met at his Bahadur residence, which he will be vacating in a couple of days, and extracted a promise from him that he would extend support to his successor — whether the latter was chosen by consensus or by division of votes.

It appears that Koirala has done what he promised on Saturday, and that should at least allay fear among the general public that Nepal is headed for another phase of political instability.

With the party still controlled by Koirala, striking a balance between the party and running the government effectively will be the key to survival of new prime minister Deuba.

Sher Bahadur Deuba who defeated his only opponent and Koirala's cousin and party general secretary Sushil Koirala by 72 votes, is known as a flexible leader who is accommodating toward the opposition parties. During his tenure he managed to cling on to power by putting together an unwieldy coalition government. The other important issue, of course, is the Maoist problem. Among the three key factors which led to Koirala's exit was the six-year-old insurgency that has claimed more than 1,700 lives and his failure to deal with it. The other two factors were corruption charges and the allegation that his family ran the government by remote control.

According to deputy leader of the main opposition party, Communist Party of Nepal, United Marxist Leninist (CPN-

# He's gone but not his mess

Nepal has got a new prime minister in place of G.P. Koirala. But nothing else has changed, points out editor of Nepal's largest daily, Kantipur, YUBARAJ GHIMIRE, who was arrested for treason by the Koirala government after the royal massacre

UMML), K.P. Oli, the new prime minister will have to work out a certain national programme or a common minimum agenda in view of the precarious situation the country is in. He and many others share the view that at least on the question of making an attempt for a dialogue with the Maoists, the government needs to represent a wider mandate.

Koirala's exit could be a step in that direction. A top-level Maoist source confirmed that with the Congress leader gone, possibilities for a political

**Koirala's Maoist legacy will be a burden for the new PM, feel party analysts. He has a big job ahead and with Koirala still calling the shots in the party, it will be quite an uphill task**

dialogue between the two sides of the conflict could be explored. However, he adds, if G.P. Koirala: His statement that he would extend support to his successor has come as relief

98-7 22/7



Koirala is succeeded by an own camp follower, sharing the same approach and belief on how to deal with the insurgency, the peace dream could be stillborn.

That Nepal can't afford the violence is more than obvious. The deteriorating law and order situation and escalation in Maoist violence have caused a major setback to the tourism industry, resulting in a sharp decline in the number of tourists coming to the country and in foreign exchange earnings. NGOs and many developmental projects have been targeted for extortion and asked to stop working by insurgents. "It will be a dangerous situation to continue. Both the government and Maoists should declare at least a month's ceasefire and explore how the conflict can be resolved," says Oli. Deuba agrees and says he can take the peace initiative forward, if not to its logical end, immediately. If instilling a sense of security, which will be measured by the success (or failure) to solve the Maoist problem, remains the biggest challenge on the domestic front for any new government, maintaining a balanced relationship with the two giant neighbours India and China is a crucial test. There is another thing the new PM has to remember, and this lies much closer home. He has to win the support of the highly polarised and faction-ridden ruling Congress party, something that Koirala failed to do.

# Deuba wins power race

Keshav Pradhan  
Kathmandu, July 22

THE NEPALI Congress today elected Sher Bahadur Deuba the new Prime Minister of Nepal as the cycle of political vendetta continued unabated in the ruling party.

Deuba, who was ousted by the outgoing Prime Minister G P Koirala in 1997, becomes the kingdom's 11th Prime Minister since the restoration of multi-party democracy in 1990.

Ironically, he defeated Nepali Congress general secretary Shushil Koirala, a nephew of G P Koirala, by 72 to 40 votes to regain power.

Before this, Deuba's mentor and former Prime Minister K P Bhattarai removed G P Koirala from power four times.

In a tit-for-tat action, G P Koirala usurped power from Bhattarai in March 2000, accusing him of failing to contain the Maoist rebellion.

Incidentally, Deuba's comeback was also marked by the



Sher Bahadur Deuba (right) shares a joke with Shushil Koirala, whom he defeated in the race for the prime ministerial post.

killing of four police personnel by communist insurgents in Tehrathum in eastern Nepal late last night.

Minutes after he was declared elected, a beaming Deuba

announced, "I will give top priority to settlement of the Maoist problem."

Deuba thanked G P Koirala for "sacrificing his post for the sake of the country's interests".

# Race begins for Nepal PM post

**Keshav Pradhan**  
*Kathmandu, July 20*

THE FACTION-RIDDEN Nepali Congress (NC) today said it would go in for an election of the new Prime Minister only if it failed to find a consensus candidate to succeed G P Koirala who stepped down as Prime Minister yesterday.

The ruling party felt the need for a consensus candidate after infighting forced two Prime Ministers—K P Bhattarai and G P Koirala—out of office since it came to power in May 1999. To avoid a repetition of this, the NC's central working committee this morning began an exercise to find a consensus candidate. Party general secretary Sushil Koirala said, "First, we'll try to achieve consensus on the Prime

Minister's successor. If this does not happen, we will choose him through an election, most probably by Sunday or Monday." The party formed a three-member committee headed by former minister Basudev Risal to conduct the election. There are four probable candidates—Sushil Koirala, foreign minister Chakra Prasad Bastola, former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and R.C. Poudyal (who quit as deputy prime Minister last week)—for the post. The first two are related to G. P. Koirala, who surprised many by quitting despite having the support of the majority of MPs and working committee members, he said he would help the party reach a consensus on his successor. NC leaders declined to say whether they have any name in mind as a

unanimous candidate. Sushil Koirala said, "The process has just begun." Asked whether K P Bhattarai will be made the consensus candidate, he answered, "Mr Bhattarai has already said he would allow a new generation leader to take over the reins of the country."

However, Sushil Koirala, who stood by G. P. Koirala through thick and thin, said he would definitely contest for the post if there was no consensus on the next Prime Minister. He refused to comment on whether he would be G. P. Koirala's choice in the event of an election.

This apart, former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, a Bhattarai loyalist, has begun lobbying for the post. Earlier, he had unsuccessfully contested against

G. P. Koirala for the posts of Prime Minister and party president. His meeting with Indian ambassador to Nepal Deb Kumar Mukherjee yesterday has created considerable sensation. Indian embassy officials, however, described the meeting as "routine."

Emboldened by G. P. Koirala's resignation, the Communists further mounted pressure on the NC. The underground Maoists warned that they would oppose any Prime Minister propped up by G. P. Koirala.

The major Opposition Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist), which had been so long seeking only the ouster of the Prime Minister, demanded total change in policy and structure of the Government.

THE HINDUSTAN

✓  
Nepal ruling party selects 3-man panel to oversee election

1-3 217  
**Koirala nephew in PM race**

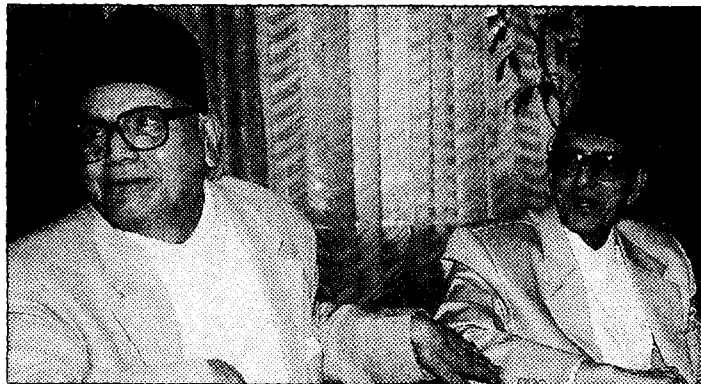
FROM DAMAKANT JAYSHI

**Kathmandu, July 20:** An emergency meeting of the Central Working Committee (CWC) of the ruling Nepali Congress Party today decided to hold the election for Koirala's successor on Sunday if the party failed to select the heir unanimously by then.

The sudden meeting this morning followed the resignation of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala yesterday amidst increasing pressure on him to quit both from within his own party.

General secretary of the party Sushil Koirala, nephew of caretaker Premier Koirala and one of the candidates for the PM's post, said after the meeting that the CWC had formed a three-member election committee to oversee the election. The committee comprises of Upper House MP Vasudev Risal as convener and two CWC members. Former party spokesperson Narhari Acharya is the observer.

Filing of nomination papers,



**Outgoing Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala (right) with senior leader Krishna Prasad Bhattarai before an emergency meeting at Baluwatar, Kathmandu. (AFP)**

scrutiny and withdrawal of nominations, the election and the result will be completed on Sunday.

Koirala said the party would first seek a candidate through consensus rather than through election. "We all want the new leader to be a unanimous choice. However, if no consensus is reached, then elections will be held."

The new leader will be known by Sunday evening. According to the party constitution, the leader of the parliamentary party has to secure at least 51 per cent of the total votes (57 out of 113 in this case). If no candidate gets the magical figure, the top two candidates will lock horns in the second decisive round.

According to the state run Radio Nepal, the caretaker Prime Minister has assured the CWC that he would support the new choice, whether the candidate is elected or selected. Koirala, with at least 45 MPs to back his choice, is in the enviable position of a kingmaker.

According to party leaders in the CWC, Koirala said the multi-party parliamentary system was under attack from ultra Leftist and Rightist forces. He was responding to minister Govind Raj Joshi's statement that the army had not acted as per the government's command on tackling Maoist insurgents.

Besides Sushil Koirala and foreign and home minister Chakra Prasad Bastola from the Koirala camp, Sher Bahadur Deuba is the likely candidate from the other faction backed by former Prime Minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai. Deuba, himself a former PM, is considered by many to be the dark horse in the race for the Prime Minister's post.

## MAOISTS IN NEPAL

5-6 Army's use a bad precedent WJ

IN February 1996 when Maoist insurgents killed about six people in one of Nepal's poorest districts, politicians dismissed it as an isolated incident. Since then over 1,800 have been killed and insurgents have infiltrated every part of the Himalayan kingdom. The situation in some districts is so bad that youths are said to have fled their villages for fear of being forced to join the rebels, leaving women to plough the land and even carry their dead to the cremation ground. Political instability is the root cause. No government - as many as seven in less than a decade - has tried to tackle this insurgency head on. GP Koirala was against introducing an anti-terrorist act, preferring to counter insurgency by strengthening the district administration. His thinking was correct to some extent since to enforce stringent laws an adequate police force is required, which the country does not have. Born of economic deprivation, Nepal's Maoists are a different lot. Unlike their counterparts in India, they are willing to talk. The high-power committee appointed by the KP Bhattarai government to ascertain the views of different political parties to prepare a common strategy, reportedly "violated" the terms by trying to negotiate directly with the insurgents, much to Koirala's disapproval.

It is not clear how the government wants to handle the situation since the Maoists have declined to talk unless Koirala steps down; a condition that has been met with his resignation. But by using the Army for the first time for internal security, the government has set a bad precedent. The late King Birendra was opposed to using troops against his own people as he realised the armed uprising resulted from abject poverty and wanted to deal with it accordingly. However sentimental, his was a hand that ruled wisely and his reading of the situation deserves closer scrutiny.

THE STATESMAN

# Embattled Nepal PM <sup>Dr</sup> quits under party pressure <sup>2007</sup>

KATHMANDU: Beset by Maoist insurgency, a bribery scandal and recriminations about the royal family massacre, Nepal's Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala resigned on Thursday.

Mr Koirala announced his resignation on state radio which said King Gyanendra had asked him to stay in office until a new government was formed. A new Prime Minister is likely to be sworn in on Monday, political sources said.

Earlier on Thursday, about half the MPs from the ruling Nepali Congress (NC) gave Mr Koirala one day's time to quit or face being ousted in a party vote.

The premier has been under intense pressure from both parliament and Maoist insurgents since King Birendra and nine other members of the royal family were gunned down on June 1.

"Our parliamentary system has become the victim of plans devised by terrorists from within and outside the country," Mr Koirala said in his resignation announcement.

"The only way out to control

such destructive forces is to forge mutual understanding among the political parties, civil society and citizens," said Mr Koirala, alluding to the political fighting that has marked his 17-month tenure.

The opposition had demanded Mr Koirala's resignation over the security lapse that led to the palace massacre, the government's alleged involvement in a bribery scandal linked to the national airline, and escalating violence by Maoist rebels.

Last week, the rebels had attacked a police station in Nepal's remote and mountainous mid-west and held hostage 70 policemen. For the first time, Mr Koirala ordered the army into an operation against the rebels, but they were unable to rescue the policemen.

More than 1,600 rebels, security personnel and civilians have been killed in the Maoist insurgency since it began in 1996. The rebels, who model themselves after Peru's Shining Path guerrillas, have intensified their attacks on the police in the past few weeks, kidnapping the entire staff of remote village police stations.



G.P. Koirala

# Koirala resigns as PM

ASSOCIATED PRESS

KATHMANDU, July 19. - Beset by a Maoist insurgency, a bribery scandal and recriminations over the royal family massacre, Nepal's Prime Minister, Mr Girija Prasad Koirala, resigned today.

"I have decided to resign as the Prime Minister, giving priority to solving the challenges faced by the nation," he said over the state-run radio and television.

Mr Koirala, whose most recent term lasted 15 months, has been Prime Minister for most of the 10 years since Nepal has had a democratic government.

He handed his resignation to King Gyanendra at the Narayanhity Palace.

The Opposition parties have been seeking his resignation since the beginning of the year over alleged bribery in the leasing of a jetliner for the state-run Royal Nepal Airlines from Austria's Lauda Air.



Mr Koirala: bowing to pressure

The civil aviation minister, Tarini Dutta Chataut, has resigned and been summoned before the Kathmandu district court on charges of financial irregularities while signing the deal.

The interior minister and deputy Prime Minister, Mr Ram Chandra Poudel, resigned on 13 July, citing differences with Mr Koirala over handling of the insurgency.

Last week, Maoist rebels attacked a police station in Nep-

al's remote and mountainous mid-west and held hostage 70 policemen. For the first time, Mr Koirala ordered the army into an operation against the rebels, but they were unable to rescue the policemen.

More than 1,600 rebels, securitymen and civilians have been killed in the insurgency.

Since the Maoists began their campaign for a Communist republic in 1996, the army had not helped the police because many people felt the army should not attack Nepalis.

Newspaper reports have said that although the army had surrounded the village where the police were held captive, the rebels escaped with their hostages.

"The government's poor planning made the army's position weak... It boosted the rebels' morale," said Mr Khadga Prasad Oli of the united Marxist-Leninist Communist Party of Nepal.

■ Editorial: Maoists in Nepal, page 6

# 'Maoist rebels escape with all hostages'

BY BINAJ GURUBACHARYA

Kathmandu, July 18: Maoist rebels holding 70 policemen hostage in a village in central Nepal have escaped with their captives despite security forces having had the area under siege since last week, a newspaper reported on Wednesday.

Hundreds of soldiers who had surrounded Nuwa village in Nepal's remote Rolpa district, were deployed to block all possible exits out of the area, the

Nepali-language *Kantipur* daily reported.

Rolpa, 350 km west of the capital, Kathmandu, is one of four districts in Nepal where the rebels have a strong presence and run parallel governments. An official at the defence ministry said soldiers continued to lay siege around Nuwa where they believe rebels are still holding the hostages.

"The security forces have made all the preparations for advancing against the terrorists

and have tightened their siege on the area where they are keeping the abducted policemen," said a statement by the interior security ministry.

A reporter with the *Kantipur*

## NEPAL

daily, Nepal's largest newspaper, who reached the area despite a government ban on reporters there, wrote that the rebels had moved with their hostages to nearby Gauri vil-

lage, en route to a safe area. On Sunday, the rebels organised a brief rally at Gauri village where they displayed the captured policemen, the daily said.

"The captured policemen are in a place far from Nuwa village and it would take some time for us to interrogate them. We can't say when they would be released," the newspaper quoted a rebel area commander, identified as Anil, as saying.

The operation is the royal Nepal Army's first against the

Maoist rebels since they began their insurrection five years ago. Nepal had been using the police against the rebels until the government and the monarchy recently approved the use of the Army as well. Previously, many people had opposed such a move, saying the Army should not get involved in internal affairs or attack fellow Nepalis.

More than 1,600 rebels, security personnel and civilians have been killed in the insurgency since it began in 1996. (AP)

# Nepal rebels ready for talks if Koirala resigns

Kathmandu, July 18: Maoist rebels in Nepal are ready to hold talks to seek to end a bloody five-year revolt if Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala resigns, a Maoist rebel leader said in a newspaper article on Wednesday.

The offer came a week after the rebels kidnapped 70 policemen on a raid on a security post in a remote area of western Nepal and seized arms and ammunition.

The Maoists, fighting to topple the Himalayan state's constitutional monarchy, have stepped up their attacks on the police outposts since the massacre of nearly the entire royal family early last month by the late King Birendra's eldest son.

"There's no question that our party will not be prepared for talks if Girija (Prasad Koirala) is removed and there's a minimum atmosphere of confidence," Mr Prachanda, chairman of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), said on the opinion page of the leading Nepal daily, *Kantipur*.

Late on Tuesday, government soldiers had closed in on the Maoist rebels who have held the 70 policemen hostage in a remote Himalayan area since last Thursday.

It said the security personal had "completed preparations for action" but did not say what steps the army might take. Officials have said soldiers were under orders to exercise maximum restraint and free the

hostages without bloodshed. Government officials were not immediately available for comment on Wednesday on the progress of the rescue operation.

Mr Koirala said on Tuesday the government was ready for talks with the rebels to end the rebellion that had claimed about 1,750 lives in more than five years.

But Mr Prachanda accused the Prime Minister of stalling past initiatives for dialogues and refused a meeting with the government headed by Mr Koirala, a staunch anti-Communist. "We don't see any possibility of talks while Girija (Prasad Koirala) remains in power," Mr Prachanda said in the article.

Mr Prachanda did not say what comprised

the "minimum atmosphere of confidence". But in the past the group had demanded the government provide information about rebel leaders who it says have "disappeared" during the conflict and begin releasing its jailed comrades.

In October last year, then deputy prime minister Ram Chandra Poudel met rebel leader Rabindra Shrestha informally but formal talks were aborted because of controversy over the release of two jailed members of the Maoist group. Poudel quit last week from the government over differences with the 78-year-old Koirala on how to tackle the Maoist violence that has now spread to most areas of impoverished Nepal. (Reuters)



# Maoists want Koirala to go before talks



Mr Girija Prasad Koirala

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

KATHMANDU, July 16. - The Maoist insurgents are willing to talk with the government if the Prime Minister, Mr Girija Prasad Koirala, resigns, a Nepalese mediator today said.

"I have received signals from the Maoist high command expressing their readiness to hold dialogue, with minimum conditions including the Prime Minister's resignation, with either the new government or the rul-

ing Nepali Congress," Mr Padma Ratna Tuladhar said.

"The Maoists have made it clear that they will not hold dialogue with Koirala's government and they want him to step down so that the dialogue can start soon," Mr Tuladhar said.

Mr Tuladhar heads the independent five-member People's Peace Process Committee. He said he would convey the Maoists' message to a government minister.

The Maoists, who are

fighting to topple Nepal's constitutional monarchy, had agreed in principle earlier this year to hold talks with the government, but the process ended after the massacre of the royal family.

The army continues to besiege the far western village of Nuwa, where some 1,500 rebels are holed up. They reportedly hold 71 police officers they kidnapped on Thursday. More than 1,700 people have been killed since the Maoists launched their insurgency in 1996.

# Nepal closes in on rebels

**Kathmandu, July 16 (Reuters):** Nepal said today that soldiers will start moving in to free 70 policemen held hostage by Maoist rebels in a remote area of the Himalayan kingdom.

The police were kidnapped last Thursday when Maoists raided a police station in the mountainous district of Rolpa, the latest in a string of deadly guerrilla attacks on police posts.

The government said the army had sealed off the area in the Himalayan foothills region where the Maoists were keeping the captives and was "strengthening its position".

"Unless the policemen are released, the soldiers will be forced to close in on the area where the rebels are holding the policemen," the home (interior) ministry said in a statement. It did not say when the soldiers might begin the operation.

A government official said the soldiers were under orders to exercise maximum restraint to avoid bloodshed. Neither side has

reported any casualties since the mass abduction.

Meanwhile, a statement from the rebels said all the captured police were safe. It said the captives would be freed only after jailed Maoists were released.

"All police personnel held by us are safe," a Maoist leader, Diwakar, said in the statement.

The Maoists said at the weekend they had encircled the soldiers and only let them go after they promised not to fight the rebels. But a government official today dismissed the statement as rebel propaganda.

Several human right groups have offered to help negotiate.

"We're ready to mediate between the two sides to resolve the problem peacefully," Padma Ratna Tuladhar, chief of the Forum for the Protection of Human Rights, told Reuters.



Koirala

Discord in the government over how best to tackle the Maoist revolt prompted Nepal's then home (interior) minister, Ram Chandra Poudel, to quit last week over differences with Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala.

The Maoists have stepped up a violent campaign to topple the poverty-stricken Himalayan state's constitutional monarchy since the massacre of nearly all of Nepal's royal family on June 1. They have killed dozens of policemen in the last few weeks.

The decision to send in troops to free the policemen marks the first time the government has deployed the army against the rebels.

The police have been responsible until now for fighting the rebels, who launched a bloody struggle for a one-party commu-

nist republic early in 1996. The violence has so far claimed about 1,750 lives.

The government said the soldiers had been told to free the policemen without bloodshed.

"Our men are making efforts to free the policemen peacefully," defence secretary Padam Kumar Acharya said.

A Nepalese mediator said today that Maoist insurgents were willing to talk with the government if Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala resigns.

"I have received signals from the Maoist high command expressing their readiness to hold dialogue, with minimum conditions including the resignation of the premier, with either the new government or trusted men of the ruling Nepali Congress," Padma Ratna Tuladhar said.

"The Maoists have made it clear that they will not hold dialogue with Koirala's government and they want him to step down so that the dialogue can start soon," Tuladhar told AFP.

# Nepal heading for prolonged political turmoil

By Mahendra Ved

**The Times of India News Service**  
KATHMANDU: Nepal may be in for a prolonged political turmoil with the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) deployed for the first time to take on the Maoists. Between 60 and 100 political activists have been killed

following heavy deployment in Rolpa and other districts in the remote mid-west region.

Well placed sources say an estimated 2,000 troops have joined the battle against the Maoists who claim to have set up parallel governments in rural areas. The number may go up if the confrontation per-

sists. The uncertainty has heightened because of the crisis facing the government of Girija Prasad Koirala. The beleaguered Premier has offered to step down next week.

An intense debate is now on in Kathmandu's political establishment. He may get a reprieve if there is no agreement on a successor.

There is as yet no evidence of a direct hand of the royal palace behind the army action. No formal statement has come from the army or any of the government quarters.

This is the normal course. But it is possible to draw inferences from the fact that the Maoists killed 43 policemen across the country on

the king's birthday. They have ignored his call for a dialogue made in his address to Parliament.

While the Maoists have spared the common people and not confronted the army, they have killed policemen and government officials to strengthen their parallel administrations.

# Nepal rebels set terms for captured cops' release

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

KATHMANDU, July 14. — Nepal's Maoists said today they were prepared to release the 71 policemen they captured three days ago if the government agreed to free Maoist activists from jail.

In a statement, their leader, Puspa Kamal Dahal alias Prachand, said the abducted police had been designated prisoners of war.

The rebels claimed there were hundreds of Maoist activists in jail in Nepal and demanded they also be treated

as prisoners of war.

"We are willing to release the abducted policemen if the government releases Maoist activists detained in jails," the statement said.

In a separate statement, Prachand added: "We will not attack the army as long as it does not attack us first, but if it does, we will retaliate."

"Since the beginning, we have been following our policy of not attacking the army first but if it does we will not keep quiet."

He also said the late King Birendra was a generous

monarch who had hesitated to use the army against the Maoists.

Birendra was shot dead along with eight other members of the royal family at the hands of his son Crown Prince Dipendra on 1. His brother Gyanendra took over the throne.

The Maoists have been sharply critical of Gyanendra, seen as tougher on the insurgents than Birendra, who never ordered the army to fight the Maoists in the large parts of rural Nepal they control.

THE STATE

## Nepal Dy PM quits, Maoists fire at army chopper

Keshav Pradhan  
Kathmandu, July 13

NEPALESE DEPUTY Prime Minister and Home Minister Ram Chandra Poudyal resigned from the Government today owning moral responsibility for the deteriorating law and order situation in the country following stepped-up attacks by Maoist rebels.

Today, the insurgents fired at a helicopter of the Royal Nepalese Army, which was flying over Rolpa district on a mission to rescue the 71 policemen kidnapped by the rebels yesterday. The pilot of the chopper was injured when a bullet pierced the glass window and hit him.

Over the past few days, the ruling Nepali Congress has come in for sharp criticism in Parliament by the Opposition over not only the rebel attacks but also such issues as the Budget. Some members even pulled up the GP Koirala Government for failing to stop India's interference in Nepal's internal affairs.

Far from silencing the Opposition, Poudyal's sudden resignation had sparked speculation about a rift in the Nepali Congress over the question of how to tackle the Maoists.

The ultras, on their part, have made it clear that they will not talk to the Government as long as Girija Prasad Koirala heads the Nepali Congress Government.

# Nepal army steps in, Maoist battle erupts

**Kathmandu, July 13 (AFP):** Maoist rebels shot down a military helicopter today amid heavy fighting that left several dead and marked the first time Nepal's army has seen direct combat with the insurgents, an army source said.

Three army officers, one identified as Captain Binayak Singh, were injured when the helicopter was shot down in western Nepal, the source said. The troops were flown to a military hospital in Kathmandu.

Unofficial reports said five soldiers were injured in the helicopter shooting.

The Royal Nepal Army was mobilised for the first time against the Maoists to search for 71 policemen captured by the rebels last morning. "They have

already started a search operation for the policemen," spokesman Gopendra Bahadur Pandey said.

Police reinforcements had reached the site of the attack in Rolpa district, a home (interior) ministry spokesman said.

"During the army operation, several people were killed but the first information received in Kathmandu did not specify whether they were Maoists or civilians of the area," a parliamentary source said.

The army of which new King Gyanendra is supreme commander, had in the past not been deployed against the Maoists because of sharp criticism by opposition politicians.

The Maoists claimed had responsibility for capturing the 71 policemen as well as killing two

others over the past few days.

The Maoists also attacked a local cooperative centre at Banepa, 26 km east of Kathmandu, and stole 300,000 rupees before setting fire to ledgers and other documents, a home ministry official said.

He added that rebels had also attacked the administrative wing of a small hydropower project at Khopasi, 38 km of Kathmandu, again setting fire to all the official documents and books.

More than 1,700 people have died since the Maoists launched their "people's war" against the constitutional monarchy in 1996.

The rebels have increased their attacks since King Birendra and eight other royals were massacred June 1, allegedly by crown prince Dipendra.

The Maoists have accused officials of a cover-up over the massacre, calling it a "planned murder" and labelling the investigation by a two-member committee a "stage-managed and inaccurate report."

They have also been sharply critical of Gyanendra, seen as tougher on the insurgents than his late brother Birendra, who never ordered the army to fight the Maoists in the large parts of rural Nepal they control.

At the weekend, the Maoists killed 41 policemen during attacks on checkpoints in three different areas.

The rebels have also planted at least 15 bombs in and around Kathmandu in recent weeks.

Yesterday, a Maoist-called nationwide strike to protest tough

new security laws brought the normally busy capital to a grinding halt, with most shops, offices and public transportation shut down.

## Deputy PM quits

Nepal's deputy Prime Minister, Ram Chandra Poudel, resigned from the government today following differences with the Prime Minister on how to contain an upsurge in Maoist violence in the Himalayan kingdom.

"In recent days the country has seen a spurt in Maoist violence and many people have been killed. This cannot continue," Poudel, who is in charge of the home (interior) ministry, told parliament.

"The Prime Minister did not agree to my suggestion on how to

resolve the (Maoist) problem nor did he provide any solution. I have resigned since it is not proper to continue in such a confusing situation," Poudel, whose ministry is responsible for containing Maoist violence, added.

Poudel accused Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala of failing to tackle the increased Maoist violence after last month's massacre of almost the entire royal family.

Poudel's resignation will not jeopardise the government immediately but will pose a fresh problem for the already embattled Prime Minister. Dissident members of the ruling Nepali Congress party and Opposition groups are pressing Koirala to resign for failing to control corruption and fight the Maoist violence.

THE TELEGRAPH

13

# Maoists capture 71 police officers in Nepal

**Kathmandu, July 12 (AFP)** Maoist guerrillas today captured 71 policemen in Nepal after an attack on a police post which also left one officer dead, home ministry officials said.

The attack on the post in the village of Holery, in the far northwest of the country, took place this morning as a general strike called by the Maoist rebels paralysed much of Nepal.

"A fairly large number of armed Maoists suddenly attacked the Holery police post manned by a force of 73, killing one policeman and gravely injuring another one," a home ministry spokesman said.

The police fired back at the rebels, thought to number around 300, for over 90 minutes before surrendering with arms and ammunition, he said.

The Maoists then took the 71 policemen to an unknown destination, the spokesman said.

In a separate incident another policeman was killed in a suspected Maoist attack at the Harichowk police post in the Baglung district, 325 kilometres west of Kathmandu, he said.

Five policemen were missing. In what appeared to be coordinated attacks across the country,

two other police posts were targeted. Rithak police post at Bajhang, 348 km southwest of Kathmandu, was attacked by a bomb thrown by rebels, while another post at Kurchaudi Danda, 425 km west of the capital also came under fire.

Police said Maoists also broke into a bank in Dhunge village and looted 35,000 rupees before burning bank documents and ledger books.

# Nepal ready for talks with Maoist rebels

58-5  
9/2  
Hi for Nepal  
REUTERS

KATHMANDU, July 8. - Nepal said today it was ready for peace talks with the Maoist rebels to end an anti-government insurgency, a day after 41 policemen were shot dead by the guerrillas.

"The government is always ready for talks to end the violence but the other side (the rebel group) is not serious for the meeting," The Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Ram Chandra Poudel, said.

Mr Poudel, who is in charge of the home (interior) ministry, said the Himalayan kingdom's social democrat government had sent "feelers for talks" but the Maoists had not responded. Mr Poudel's comments came after the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) rebels killed 41 police officers and a civilian in a string of attacks at security posts across the mountainous kingdom late on Friday.

The toll was the highest number of police killed in a day since the Maoists began their rebellion in 1996 to try and topple the Himalayan kingdom's constitutional monarchy. The insurgency has claimed about 1,750 lives.

The Maoists have stepped up their violence since last month's massacre of virtually the entire royal family by the crown prince, who then shot himself.

The Prime Minister, Mr Girija Prasad Koirala, has come under pressure from the Opposition to resign for failing to contain the violence and for delays in informing the country about the royal massacre.

Mr Poudel described the Maoist violence as an "attack on democracy" and urged all political parties to unite against the rebels who seem to be supported by many impoverished villagers still struggling against feudalism.

In the past, the rebels have said they were ready for talks but demanded an all-party con-

ference and an interim government to prepare a new constitution to end the violence.

And after the latest killings, analysts don't expect the rebels, who model themselves on Peru's Shining Path guerrillas, to meet the government any time soon.

"Talks had been stalled even before the palace massacre and there is now less chance for a meeting because the Maoists are busy in capitalising in the confusion and the government is still in shock," said Kunda Dixit, editor of the *Nepali Times* weekly.

Maoists claim responsibility: The Maoist insurgents claimed responsibility today for the deaths of the policemen and called for support of their efforts to overthrow the government, adds AFP.

In a statement, the Maoist leader, Mr Pushpa Kamal Dahal, alias Prachand, congratulated the militants on the "successful" operations launched in three districts on Friday, as Nepal marked the 55th birthday of new King Gyanendra.

Prachand also acknowledged some Maoist casualties in the fighting but did not give details. Unofficial reports said at least 15 Maoists were killed.

In the statement, Prachand called on all "progressive forces" to ally with the Maoists to bring down the government, and warned militants may be planning retaliation against them.

Nepal's Home Ministry today confirmed the deaths of 41 policemen, including an inspector and three sergeants, and five rebels in the clashes.

The Home Secretary, Mr Shreekanth Regmi, strongly condemned the killings and accused the Maoists of killing six policemen after they had surrendered following a three-hour gunfight in the Gulmi district, 270 km southwest of Kathmandu.

The Maoists locked the surrendered policemen in a room with their hands tied behind their backs before killing them, he said.

THE STATESMAN



## Nepal 'ready' for talks with Maoist

rebels 9/12

**KATHMANDU, JULY 8.** Nepal said today it was ready for peace talks with the Maoist rebels to end anti-government insurgency, a day after a large number of policemen were shot dead by the guerrillas.

"The government is always ready for talks to end the violence but the other side (the rebel group) is not serious for the moment," the Deputy Prime Minister Mr. Ram Chandra Poudel, told Reuters. Mr. Poudel, who is in charge of the Home (interior) Ministry, said the kingdom's Social Democrat Government has sent "feelers for talks" but the Maoists had not responded. Mr. Poudel's comments came after the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) rebels killed police officers and a civilian in a string of attacks at security posts across the mountainous kingdom on Friday.

The toll was the highest since the Maoists began their rebellion in 1996 to try and topple the kingdom's constitutional monarch. The insurgency has so far claimed about 1,750 lives. The Maoists have stepped up their violence since last month's massacre of the entire royal family.

# Maoist rebels kill 41 cops in Nepal

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

KATHMANDU, July 7. — Maoist rebels killed at least 41 policemen while using guns and bombs to assault police posts in three incidents at Nuwakot, Lamjung and Gulmi districts of western Nepal in the biggest Maoist attack since the royal palace massacre of 1 June in which King Birendra and most of his family died.

Police said the rebels attacked Bichaur Police Post in Lamjung at 2.30 a.m. and the ensuing gun battle killed 21 policemen including an inspector.

At least 10 law enforcement officers were eliminated at Taruka Post in Nuwakot, 80 km north-west of here and as many died last night at Bami-taxar in Gulmi district, about 260 km west of Kathmandu.

The posts were destroyed and weapons looted, accord-

ing to Radio Nepal.

At least 10 people, including six cops and three rebels, were killed in two encounters in Tanahun and Rolpa districts last week.

The rebels kidnapped 34 policemen in Banke and Pyuthan in western Nepal on Thursday. They have called a nation-wide strike on 12 July and galvanised their activities throughout the country for the past week.

The Maoists planted bombs in various places of the capital over the past few days. One device exploded near the Prime Minister's residence on Thursday. However nobody was injured.

More than 1,600 people have been killed since the beginning of the Maoist insurgency in 1996. They want to establish a Communist system replacing the present constitutional monarchy.

THE STATESMAN

# At the crossroads

**N**EPAL seems to be recognising and reconciling to the nitty-gritty of politics in the aftermath of the 1 June assassinations in Narayanhity Palace, Kathmandu. Though praises are not being showered on him from any quarters, the new King, Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, is being accepted as a *fait accompli*. On his part, the 12th Shah King seems to have understood the existing Nepalese psyche and, is trying not to do anything that would pull him and the Nepalese throne in controversial directions.

While the new king took no time in proclaiming Princess Komal Rajya Lakshmi Devi Shah as the new queen, he is yet to declare his only son, controversy-ridden Prince Paras, as the Crown Prince.

This *per se* seems to have sent the message that King Gyanendra is moving with care and caution. Of course, he cannot evade a decision on this front indefinitely. After making a rather hasty statement in his capacity as the Regent of the then King, Dipendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, that the 1 June killings were the outcome of an automatic weapon's getting switched on, King Gyanendra has made only measured statements of various aspects of the kingdom's life.

In truth, he has rather been reserved and reticent overall.

This does not, though, imply that things are hunky-dory in Nepalese politics today. For instance, in a significant move, the Opposition Communist Party of Nepal Marxist-Leninist (ML), on 20 June, asked King Gyanendra to declare assets. The new king reportedly has high stakes in a leading five-star hotel in Kathmandu, a major tobacco firm, besides a vibrant trading company, and a tea garden in eastern Nepal, among others.

This development seems rather surprising in as much as it was widely believed that the ML had good relations with Prince Gyanendra. Probably, the ML thinks it is time to improve its image in the kingdom's politics. Not insignificantly, the party does not have any seat in the Lower (popular) House of Parliament or Pratinidhi Sabha.

Its general secretary, Bamdev Gautam, had been the Deputy Prime Minister twice. This indicates that in politics no one can take anybody for granted.

Not less disturbingly, the main Nepalese Opposition party - the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) - on 21 June said it would cooperate with the government if Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala resigned.

Relevantly, the UML has 70 MPs in the 205-member Pratinidhi Sabha. UML leader Bharat Mohan Adhikari, brother of the late Prime Minister Man Mohan Adhikari, said: "If he resigns, we will not say anything against the government for at least six months." Mr Adhikari, indeed, said Mr Koirala should have quit after the 1 June royal massacre.

He also criticised the government for enforcing the Public Security Regulation Act, suppressing the people's fundamental and democratic rights and threatening the multi-party

The politics of confrontation and the increasing clout of the Maoists in Nepal demand that King Gyanendra's role is not undermined as a titular head. While the king has stressed friendly ties with India, the kingdom needs to be much more up-front about bilateral treaties. India, on its part, can try showing more diplomatic maturity, writes PARMANAND



Nepal's new Queen Komal leaving the military hospital last week. King Gyanendra is to her right. The queen had suffered gunshot wounds during the palace massacre. — AP/PTI

parliamentary system, while Nepal was in mourning.

Introducing the element of political excitement, Mr Adhikari said the UML had not demanded a national or interim government and it honoured the parliamentary majority of the governing Nepali Congress, but stressed that Mr Koirala must step down.

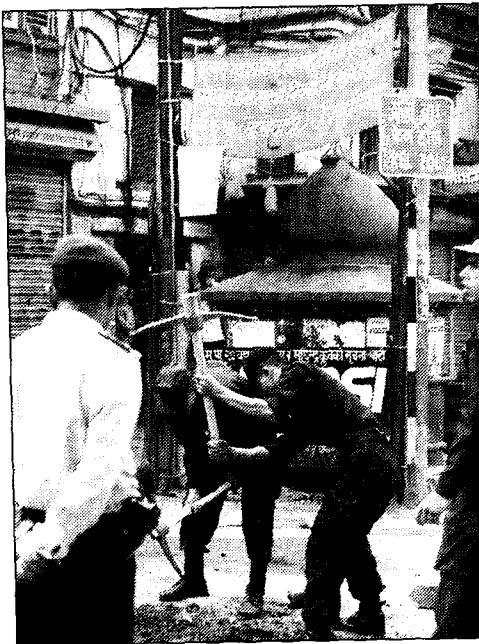
The UML had not allowed even a single sitting of the last (19th) parliamentary session to be held, insisting on the resignation of Mr Koirala for his alleged involvement in an aircraft deal.

Its withdrawal from the Inquiry Commission - to which UML general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal was nominated - set up to probe the slayings, says much about its mindset. And it is against this backdrop that the 20th session of parliament is slated soon.

Efforts are afoot for coordination between the Nepali Congress, the Rashtriya Prajatantra Party and the Nepal Sadbhavana Party during the forthcoming session. It may not, though, necessarily see an end to the growing politics of confrontation.

It is under circumstances like these that even a titular head of state assumes a role and significance. Sadly, Nepalese political parties are yet to learn the basic rules of the game.

The multi-party parliamentary democracy is already 11 years old in its present phase. Competitive multi-party democracy was also in existence during 1951-60. And most of the parliamentarians have had one kind of training or other in



Nepalese policemen digging a trench to defuse three small explosives, booby-traps hanging with the red banner of the Maoists in Kathmandu last Thursday. — AP/PTI

India. Prime Minister Koirala might have faltered on various counts, but he alone enjoys the support of the majority in the Nepali Congress and parliament.

The Catch-22 situation obviously creates a fertile ground for the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist), which has been launching "People's War" in various parts of Nepal for the past five years now.

Their influence has increased; and in four western districts, they are virtually running the administration.

Worse, about 1,800 people have died in the past five years in Maoist-related violence. After King Birendra's assassination, their dialectics are becoming more sharp, sophisticated and dangerous.

A serious political consensus

among various parliamentary parties alone can effectively deal with the situation. But any such consensus is elusive. In one of his earliest addresses to the kingdom, King Gyanendra had stressed that he would strive to strengthen ties between Nepal and India - as was sought to be done by his slain brother and predecessor. This should help arrest speculation - at least, for the time being.

Otherwise, international or regional politics, is a wheels-within-wheels business.

In another significant development, Nepal's Ambassador to India, Dr Bhekh Bahadur Thapa who was the country's finance minister during the panchayat days and who has remained close to the elements in the palace, in a statement on 3 June, dismissed speculation that the change of guard in the palace would effect Indo-Nepalese ties.

Dr Thapa said the ties were age-old, and had stood the test of time. Describing the ties as "people-centric", the ambassador averred: "The structure of friendship between India and Nepal doesn't rest at one place".

Dr Thapa's statement is reassuring. On its part, India, which surrounds Nepal in the south, east and west, has shown great political and diplomatic maturity in the aftermath of the assassinations.

President KR Narayanan and Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee were quick to send their condolence messages. India did not lag behind in promising all kinds of help in

the hour of grief and crisis.

And yet, India was careful not to be seen as an imposed guardian. This seems to have been well appreciated in various segments of Nepalese society.

Truth to tell, though, Indo-Nepalese ties have rarely been ideal and problem-free. Some analysts feel there are so many similarities on the cultural, social and religious planes that some amount of anti-Indianism alone gives the Nepalese separate identity.

Some also feel that Nepalese nationalism *per se* is based, to great extent, on anti-Indianism. While on the one hand, India cannot downsize itself, it cannot also undo the variety of progress in the fields of science, technology, defence *et al.*

But on the other, it must never be oblivious of the fact that despite all kinds of similarities and commonalities with India, Nepal has always been sovereign, independent state.

Indian diplomacy has got to show more maturity. On their part, the Nepalese would do well to realise, too, that India cannot be taken for granted.

Though there is no provision for any amendment in the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship - which governs bilateral ties between the two governments, to a great extent - India has shown its accommodative attitude and approach by listening to Nepal's suggestions and demands vis-a-vis the treaty.

Nepal probably needs to be more up-front and transparent on the issue, and the issue should not be raised often with a view to playing to the gallery and generating anti-India feelings.

I do not think India's security will be jeopardised in the absence of this treaty.

From the Tanakpur Agreement (1991) to the Mahakali Treaty (1996), the two south Asian neighbours have covered long distances on the front of cooperation in power generation. But the concerted impacts are yet to be felt.

A Joint Working Office to make the Mahakali Treaty a working reality was set up in Kathmandu in December 1999. Field officials have been surveying places related to the treaty. Progress has been made in the preparation of the draft political resolution and it is expected to be ready by December.

But at times, the main Opposition party, the UML, tries to put obstacles in the completion of works related to the project. It may lead to delay in one very significant component of economic cooperation between the two in becoming a concrete and mutually beneficial reality.

The two countries have begun talking on the Treaty of Trade which is to expire in December. India feels that there are some problems regarding the rule of origin.

There should not, though, be a problem in sorting out minor irritants and renewing the treaty after their removal.

In this era of globalisation, India and Nepal can afford to be indifferent to each other on the economic front only to their disadvantage.

(The author is Hon. Director, South Asian Studies Foundation, New Delhi.)

The last supper at the royal palace

# Nepal on the edge

12-8-96  
It was that old fox, essayist Walter Bagehot, living in an age which saw Victorian imperium at its efflorescence, who analysed the institution of monarchy best. "Above all things," he said, "royalty is to be revered, and if you begin to poke about it you cannot reverence it...its mystery is its life. We must not let daylight upon magic." This unrepentant monarchist knew well enough that, ultimately, royalty is just elaborate subterfuge. It heeded the ceaseless strife of the 20th century, the people's century, to let daylight upon that often diabolic magic.

The circumstances of the last supper at Kathmandu's Narayan Hity Royal Palace last week may remain shrouded in mystery, as the palace lords and their spin meisters seek to recast the massacre of the royal family in a fashion that would do the least damage to an institution which is already under grave threat. But these efforts notwithstanding, Nepal's Bloody Friday may well be one of those turning points in the history of the nation — an event so comprehensive in scope, so decisive in impact, that there can be no turning back.

Despite Nepal's decade-old engagement with democracy and the transformation of the king from being an absolute ruler to a constitutional one, there can be no denying that monarchy continues to play a crucial role in the public life of the nation. The huge crowds on Kathmandu's streets on the day of the funerals, the spontaneous shaving of heads as symbolic of personal bereavement and the intermittent beating of breasts speak of a deeply perceived loss, at least for some.

Even the casual visitor to Kathmandu cannot but notice photographs of the royal family on the walls of shops and private homes and pause awhile at the towering gates of the royal place on Durbar Marg — one of the few luxuriant patches of opulence amidst the encircling urban squalor of Kathmandu. In fact, any account of the history of Nepal is invariably bound with that of the royal

family and usually begins with the year 1768, when King Prithvi Narayan Shah, from the small kingdom of the Gorkha, set upon the Kathmandu Valley and conquered it from the Newaris.

The narrative will, of course, also include the Kot massacre of 1846, which saw the rise of the Ranas — the line of hereditary prime ministers, who exercised absolute power for the next 100 years. The Ranas reduced the king to a titular head and controlled the people through a complex code, the caste-based *Muluki Ain*, or Law of the Nation. But, interestingly, even the Ranas' assiduously cultivated the idea of the king as the incarnation of Lord Vishnu, since monarchy was

sought to retain more powers with the king. Incidentally, the new king, Gyanendra, is believed to have played a pivotal role in trying to counter the democracy movement. It took over a year for this process to play itself out — from Democracy Day, February 18, 1990, when people took to the streets demanding a democratic political order, to May 12, 1991, when multi-party elections were held under a new constitution.



PAMELA PHILIPOSE

The debates on the role of the king thrown up in that interregnum could provide clues to Nepal's future trajectory. Basically, three points of view emerged. The Communists, who enjoyed a significant presence in the political space, wanted a clean

the royal family was not required to pay taxes. Once democracy was instituted, the palace was quick to claim it as its brainchild. As one of King Birendra's courtiers had remarked at that time, "The king is very conscious that his family is there to serve the interests of the Nepalese people."

But Nepal's tragedy is that no force, not the kings, nor the Ranas, nor indeed its elected governments, have served the interests of the people. Part of the problem is the extractive nature of its economy. Nepal is divided into three ecological zones: the terai, the hills and the mountains. The terai region, largely comprising the Kathmandu Valley and its environs, has been the locus of all development in the country, albeit of the most unplanned kind. This region feeds in turn on the hills where roughly half the population ekes out a living. If the Ranas and the kings didn't invest in the lives of the hill people, neither did the 10 elected governments that came and went over the last 10 years, with the partial exception of the Congress government of B.P. Koirala, which tried to introduce land reform in 1959 but was soon dismissed for its pains. Today, the centuries-old exploitative order remains relatively intact and the fact that Maoism has a stronger base in Nepal than anywhere else, testifies to that.

Development activists have argued that unless the hills are brought centre-stage, unless its rich natural resources, especially its *jala shakti* or water, are used, not to feed the monstrous appetites of the people in the plains, but to transform the lives of its people, nothing will change. In 1994, D. Gyawali, a water engineer, commented thus in an article in the Kathmandu-based magazine, *Himal*. "Today, it is the hefty commissions in making large purchases for development projects, or renting out state patronage through licences and permits, that is driving the newly forming political elite from hard but correct decisions on behalf of the people... Nepal's elites are the gods that have failed." His words still ring true.

**Any account of Nepali history is bound with that of the royal family and begins with the year 1768, when King Prithvi Narayan Shah conquered the Kathmandu Valley**

seen to be a useful device to achieve social cohesion in a multi-ethnic, multilingual society like that of Nepal.

The mid-20th century witnessed the end of Rana rule, but it wasn't until 1990 that Prithvi Narayan Shah's descendant, the recently assassinated King Birendra, had to face his moment in daylight — forced to decide between initiating major political reform or facing the wrath of a people clamouring not just for democracy but an end to palace corruption and abuse of power. King Birendra's response to those turbulent days, termed as 'spring awakening' by Martin Hoftun and William Raeper in their definitive account of that period, was extremely cautious. He didn't give up power at the first whiff of resistance but waited it out till the last. The palace even came up with an alternative constitution, which

break with the past and an end to monarchy. The Nepali Congress wished to retain the institution while denying the king any real power. The palace envisaged sovereignty remaining with the king "and the people". The big question of that period, which still hasn't quite gone away, is whether the palace will ever try and snatch its power back, like King Mahendra had done in 1960 after an experiment with partial democracy. On the other hand, the monarchy being overthrown for all time under a future Communist dispensation is also within the realm of possibility.

In any case, the constitution of 1990 put a democratically elected parliament in place, even as it made a token bow to monarchy. Its preamble began with the full Sanskrit title of the king, which covered half a page, and it also stated that

*H. G. Nepal*  
**Gyanendra sacks six royal guards** *5/5 1/7*

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**

KATHMANDU, July 3. — King Gyanendra has sacked six royal guards for not preventing the 1 June palace massacre, a report said today.

The King dismissed "six aides-de-camp of King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya and crown prince Dipendra. Four others were strongly warned and seven were transferred to the Army headquarters," said the Nepali-language daily, *Rajdhani*, quoting a palace official.

Those who received "strong warnings" included two senior army officials, the newspaper said. Opposition parties had been demanding reprimands against security officials on duty at the palace on 1 June.

An official probe revealed that Prince Dipendra had shot dead nine members of his family at Friday dinner before turning the gun on himself. A separate report by former principal military secretary, General Shanta Kumar Malla, said the six aides-de-camps and 11 others on duty had failed in their responsibility to protect the family.

# Nepal's newest headache, grumbling Gurkhas

JESSE PESTA  
POKHARA, NEPAL

**T**O the list of Nepal's woes, including a royal massacre and a Maoist uprising, add this one: restless Gurkhas.

Nepalese mercenaries who have fought for the British for nearly 200 years, Gurkhas are feared the world over, partly because the British spread the story that Gurkhas couldn't draw their trademark curved knives, kukris, without drawing blood, preferably by severing a head.

Gurkhas fought in the British empire's First War of Indian Independence, two of three Afghan Wars, both world wars, and more recently, Kosovo. In 1910 they guarded the body of King Edward VII as he lay in state. Today, Gurkhas serve as occasional orderlies to Queen Elizabeth II, and retired Gurkhas protect the leaders of Singapore and Brunei.

But back home, some Gurkhas are turning into a headache for their own government. Their complaints underscore the pressures on Nepal's 10-year-old democracy. It isn't just that the country is remote, feudalistic and poor; the Nepalese increasingly expect the government to work for them.

Consider Capt Man Bahadur Gurung, the deputy mayor of the backpacker haven of Pokhara. He served 31 years for the British, fighting communism in 1950s and 1960s in what is now Malaysia and Indonesia.

Today, he's a communist himself. Standing in his office, he points to a portrait of the general secretary of the United Marxist-Leninists, Nepal's main opposition party. "Some people say Karl Marx is still alive and lives in Nepal. This man is Karl Marx," he says approvingly.

One of Capt. Gurung's causes is a group called Gurkha Army Ex-Service-men's Organisation, or Gaeso, a sort of ground zero for Gurkhas who are unhappy with British treatment and the

Nepal government's response. Gaeso recently filed a case with the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, claiming Gurkhas are subject to racial discrimination by the U.K. because their pensions are lower than those of British army regiments.

Gaeso's Pokhara headquarters, near a major British recruitment camp, is plastered with big blue-and-white signboards: "Equal Danger, Equal Reward," says one. Across the street at Gaeso's women's auxiliary, the Gurkha Army Ex-Woman Organisation, a sign says, "We Fought 200 Years for British Sovereignty, In Return We Got Pain, Nothing More."

The group's willingness to pressure the U.K. is nettlesome for Nepal. Gurkha paychecks bring in valuable foreign currency. "If you press too hard, the British will decide to get rid of these troublemakers," worries Deepak Gurung, leader of a rival Gurkha group with similar objectives but which dislikes Gaeso's confrontational style.

Inside Gaeso headquarters, a half-dozen vets grumble. One man says after fighting for eight years in the 1960s, he now lives on 3,000 Nepalese rupees a month he earns running errands for Gaeso. "I fought for the British," he says. "No welfare, no pension."

Gurkhas take their name from the village of Gorkha, where a Nepalese prince first allowed the British to recruit his subjects in the 1800s. The British East India Co. had just defeated Nepal in a war, but admired their foes. The Nepalese were strong and loyal, and according to a 100-year-old recruitment handbook, they even ate faster than Indian recruits, shunning elaborate Hindu mealtime rituals.

Today the British still employ about 3,800 Gurkhas, partly because it's becoming harder to recruit at home. About a year ago, the U.K. boosted Gurkha pay by as much as 183 per cent, bringing it in line with the British soldiers' pay. Pensions remain lower, but most Gurkhas

are discharged after only 15 years, leaving time for a second career. British officials say:

The British also provide health care in Nepalese villages, run a charity that helps vets who are unable to work, build village schools and carve lifeline trails to vets' homes. Gurkhas come mostly from a few ethnic minorities in the mountains (which is why so many are named Gurung).

A few decades ago vets were satisfied with moving back to villages after serving mostly in Southeast Asia, which was then undeveloped like Nepal. But in today's post-colonial world, most serve in the U.K. — and village life pales in comparison. "We're living in the IT age. I've seen the world," says Vishnu Gurung, a 45-year-old ex-serviceman who returned a year ago. He came from a mountain hamlet, but since then he has lived in the U.K. and Hong Kong. "We don't want to go back where we started."

Instead, many go to Pokhara. This buffalo grazing ground is today a Gurkha boomtown. Modern stone buildings are sprouting by the hundreds. Pokhara recently went from zero to four FM stations in three months.

Some Gurkhas go into business. Vishnu Gurung owns a lakeside restaurant. Fewa Park, catering to trekkers heading for the snowcapped Annapurnas that tower over this town of 100,000. Nearty is the Gurkha Lodge, the Hotel Gorkha, the Gurkha Heaven Hotel, and My Gurkha's Restaurant.

But ex-soldiers making second careers in Nepal are the exception. Eighty per cent of the population gets its livelihood from subsistence farming, and professional jobs are almost non-existent. Specialised Gurkha employment agencies mainly offer more jobs abroad. At one agency, a map on the wall has pins showing some options: land-mine clearance in Mozambique; bank security in the Solomon Islands. The ex-soldiers work overseas, and their families stay behind, where many fall prey to modern



## Former Gurkha soldiers making second careers in Nepal is the exception, where professional jobs are almost non-existent

problems creeping into Nepal: children who take drugs, scam artists who trick unsuspecting wives to invest the family savings in pyramid schemes.

Gurkha frustrations were given an outlet a decade ago when Nepal's then-king (the one recently massacred) instituted full democracy, allowing social activism and press freedoms. A publication called *Gurkha Soldier Voice* heralded the arrival of Gaeso, which took a leftist slant. Three years ago, it started getting support from the World Federation of Democratic Youth, a group that used to be known as a Soviet front.

Pokhara's deputy mayor Man Bahadur Gurung, a Gaeso adviser, says he's drawn to communism as a remedy for government corruption and ineffec-

tiveness. "The morale of the public is very low," he says, "and it's only made worse by the recent royal massacre." He asks: If the government can't protect the king, how can it protect anyone else?

The deputy mayor isn't a Maoist, but there are suggestions that a small number of Gurkhas or their families may be helping the Maoists. Some former Gurkhas who served in the Indian army have joined the Maoists as fighters, human-rights and military experts say.

Along Pokhara's lakefront, support for Maoists' violent tactics is nil. Restaurateur Vishnu Gurung looks around his empty eatery — tourists fled after the royal slaughter — and says, "Political turmoil is bad for business."

(From: The Wall Street Journal)

# Koirala stands up to Opposition pressure



**Keshav Pradhan**  
*Kathmandu, May 30*

HT-11  
2015

NEPALESE PRIME Minister G P Koirala today reasserted his authority over the ruling Nepali Congress (NC) in the face of mounting pressure from party dissidents as well as Opposition parties for his ouster.

A day after the end of a three-day Communist-backed strike that paralysed the kingdom till yesterday, Koirala, as the NC president, nominated his trusted aide, Sushil Koirala, as general secretary of the ruling party. Besides, he put nine leaders, including two of his relatives (foreign minister C P Bastola and Lila Koirala) on the central committee.

The Prime Minister's action indicates that he is preparing to take on all those who want to sack him. He had put the nomination of Sushil Koirala on hold since the party's national convention in January because of objections from the dissidents.

As Sushil Koirala himself stated, "We want Koirala to lead the Government as well as the party for the sake of democracy and the well-being of the Nepalese people." He described as "politically motivated" the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority's recent decision to caution the Prime Minister in a disputed aircraft deal with Austria's Lauda Air.

Since December last, a number of NC parliamentarians, including former Prime Minister K P Bhattarai, have sought G P Koirala's resignation over the deal. Besides, Opposition parties, especially the Communists and the Rashtriya Prajatantra Party, did not allow Parliament to function throughout the winter session over the issue.

What has worsened the situation is the Communists' refusal to hold dialogue with the Prime Minister. Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist) spokesman Pradeep Nepal said, "We are ready to accept any other person as Prime Minister, but not G P Koirala. The longer he stays in power, the more the country will suffer."

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES



# Nepal parties for greater say in palace affairs

Keshav Pradhan  
Kathmandu, June 26

NEPALESE POLITICIANS are trying to tighten their grip over the palace whose hallowed image appears to have developed cracks since the June 1 massacre of King Birendra and his family.

The ruling Nepali Congress, which has always supported the concept of constitutional monarchy since its inception 55 years ago, has taken the lead in seeking some control over palace affairs, hitherto solely run by the King.

A week after the party held discussions over the issue, its ideologue and spokesman Narhari Acharya, in a newspaper article today, demanded that Parliament be allowed to take up issues like the selection of the King's successor and the conduct of the royal family.

Framed in 1990 after the restoration of multiparty democracy, Nepal's Constitution, gives the Monarch the sole right to choose his successor. It does not allow any Constitutional body to raise questions about the conduct of the royalties. Most Nepalese parties are against having Prince Paras, King Gyanendra's only son, as the Crown Prince because of his alleged involvement in at least three hit-and-run

road mishaps. The Monarch has put on hold the proclamation of his son as his successor.

Acharya explained, "Earlier, the Monarch was allowed to have such authority because the palace commanded immense faith and respect among the people. The June 1 massacre has created a situation that calls for a rethink on such provisions."

The Nepalese have not taken kindly to reports (as provided by the inquiry commission on the massacre) about the use of narcotics and heavy weapons by members of the royal family. Earlier, unlike the British, they did not take much interest in the activities of the royalties.

It is possibly because of this that King Gyanendra set up a five-member team headed by former military secretary Gen. Shanta Kumar Malla to study the palace's security system. The team is reported to have recommended prohibition on the use of narcotics and firearms by the royalties within the palace.

Earlier, King Gyanendra became the first Monarch to throw open the palace for questioning by commoners after he constituted the inquiry commission. Far from satisfied, the Communist Party of Nepal (M-L) urged the new King to dispel doubts about the massacre.

HR 11  
27/6



# Koirala for ban on aggressive political programmes

Keshav Pradhan  
Kathmandu, June 25

H.S. MPD  
THREE WEEKS after imposing stringent security rules, Nepalese Prime Minister GP Koirala today called for suspension of all aggressive political programmes for 10 years.

Koirala put this proposal before the Opposition, which has been seeking his resignation, on the opening day of the Budget session of Parliament.

Earlier, Opposition MPs had marched into the national secretariat complex with placards seeking his ouster for corruption and inefficiency. In sharp contrast, both ruling Nepali Congress (NC) and Opposition members showered praise on

## 'PALACE STAFF OVERLOOKED DIPENDRA'S DRUG USE'

HP-11 26/6  
A PROBE has said palace staff failed to report that Prince Dipendra illegally used drugs, a newspaper reported on Monday. The panel set up by King Gyanendra to review the palace security said rules were in place obliging palace staff to report any illegal drug use by royal family members to their superiors but they failed to follow them, the *Rasdhani* daily said. There was no comment available immediately from the palace. The prince mixed hashish and another unnamed drug in a cigarette before embarking on the shooting spree, another panel probing the cause of the bloodbath said in a report released earlier. It added he had been using hashish for at least a year.

Reuters, Kathmandu

King Gyanendra for pledging support to constitutional multi-party democracy.

Koirala said: "It is my responsibility to end the prevailing anarchic situation that has posed a serious threat to the country's social and economic life. I want to

create a national consensus on 14 programmes that I place before you. For this, I am ready to make any kind of sacrifice."

He then went on to propose that all parties pledge not to hold strikes and other political programmes for 10 years to

make Nepal economically strong. The NC has already declared that it will not call any strike in the future.

He also sought the Opposition's help for proper implementation of the integrated security and development programme initiated by his government in Maoist-hit areas.

Koirala emphasised the need for a clear definition of the Prime Minister's powers.

Despite Koirala's prevent appeal, the Opposition stuck to its gun. Making a dig at the Prime Minister, Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist) general secretary and leader of the Opposition Madhav Nepal said, "We will listen to you if you step down first."

THE HINDUSTAN

26 JUN 2004

# Nepal communists to launch fresh stir against Koirala

HT Correspondent  
Kathmandu, June 24

COINCIDING WITH the beginning of the Budget session of Parliament tomorrow, Maoist insurgents and mainstream communists in Nepal will launch fresh campaigns against Prime Minister GP Koirala over issues ranging from promulgation of new security rules to the royal massacre.

King Gyanendra is likely to deliver his maiden speech in Parliament on June 29.

To begin with, the Maoists will tomorrow burn copies of the security rules that allow detention of any person suspected of working against Nepal's sovereignty, integrity and public peace. They will later organise demonstrations and awareness meetings and a Nepal bandh (the likely date is July 12.)

The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) chairman, Prachand, aka Pushpakamal Dahal, in a statement, said: "By imposing the security rules, the Government has exposed its own anti-national and fascist tendencies. This comes at a time when people are still shocked and angry over the massacre carried out by the agents of foreign reactionary forces."

By imposing the security rules, the Government has exposed its own anti-national and fascist tendencies. This comes at a time when people are still shocked and angry over the massacre carried out by the agents of foreign reactionary forces."

On the other hand, a front of nine mainline Left parties will submit a protest letter to Koirala tomorrow seeking withdrawal of the security laws.

At a meeting at Bhaktapur yesterday, it alleged that the new rules were imposed only to suppress the Communists.

The major Opposition, Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist), popularly called UML, will also organise

protest programmes. Its decision to renew the demand for Koirala's removal may again stall the House proceedings. Throughout the winter session, the UML, along with other Opposition parties, did not allow Parliament to run even for a day, seeking the Prime Minister's resignation over a controversial aircraft deal.

"The demand for the resignation of the Prime Minister is well justified," said UML standing committee member KP Oli. Opposition leaders have taken exception to the Government's failure to timely inform the people about the royal massacre. The Prime Minister is in charge of palace affairs.

In the face of such strong opposition, the ruling Nepali Congress has called a meeting of its MPs this afternoon to chalk out its strategy.

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# Maoists strike in Nepal districts

Keshav Pradhan  
Kathmandu, June 18

MAOIST INSURGENTS have launched armed attacks in a number of districts, including Morang, where Prime Minister G P Koirala hails from, after the shradh ceremony of the slain King Birendra on Saturday.

The attacks come close on the heels of the Maoists' rejection of the report prepared by the commission of inquiry on the June 1 massacre at the palace. The two-member commission was set up by King Gyanendra after he ascended the throne on June 3.

According to reports, Communist guerrillas tried to take over a police post at Phurkot in Kalikot district in western

Nepal early this morning. Efforts are on to send police reinforcements there.

The rebels, who were so far mostly confined to the western region, yesterday exploded a bomb at a school in the eastern district of Bhojpur. Similar explosions reportedly damaged three business establishments in Biratnagar, Koirala's hometown.

There was tension in neighbouring Dharan where the rebels bombed a police picket on Saturday. One policeman was injured. Bomb attacks on police posts were reported from Jhapa that borders Darjeeling

**Palace security:** King Gyanendra has initiated a move to improve security within and outside the palace.

A team headed by former principal security secretary (palace), Gen Shanta Kumar Malla, will study ways to arrange for full-proof security at Narayanhity Palace. It is likely to prepare its report within a day or two. There are over 2000 royal guards.

Parliament is likely take up the inquiry report and security lapses at the palace that led to the killing of King Birendra and his family, when its budget session begins on July 25.

The major Opposition, the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) has been seeking a debate on the report. Earlier, it refused to join the commission, describing its constitution as "undemocratic."

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES



# Nepal Opposition calls for palace reforms

By K.G. SURESH

Kathmandu, June 17: The main Opposition Communist Party of Nepal on Sunday called for reforms in the prevailing social conduct and traditional practices of the palace in tune with the present times even as the police arrested an MP for terming the June 1 massacre as a "conspiracy."

In an apparent reference to the charges of alcoholism, gun culture and drug addiction made against late Crown Prince Dipendra in the report of the high-level panel which probed the June 1 palace massacre, Mr Jhlanath Khanal, senior leader of the CPN (UML) said that the incident has exposed the weakness in the social conduct, par-

Prasad Koirala government for its ineffective role in dealing with the tragic incident.

"The government remained as a helpless spectator and it seemed as if everyone was trying to shy away from taking responsibility. This type of attitude is very grave and dangerous for any democratic system," it said.

The party also criticised the findings of the high-level

panel headed by Chief Justice K.P. Upadhyaya for failing to render a concrete and logical conclusion to the gruesome killings. Meanwhile, a legislator belonging to the National Peoples Front, Mr Navaraj Subedi, was arrested while addressing a public meeting in central Kath-

mandu on Saturday, for allegedly terming the massacre as a conspiracy, english daily *Space Time* said. Four other cadres of the party were also reportedly arrested.

The situation in the Himalayan kingdom, which was rocked by large-scale violence in the wake of the palace massacre, has returned to normal and no untoward incident has been reported after the report of the official probe was made public on Thursday, superintendent of police Sagar Thapalia said.

Schools, colleges and universities are scheduled to open from Monday. Meanwhile, according to a palace spokesman, the health of Queen Komal and other royals is making satisfactory and steady progress. (PTI)

# Palace massacre delays peace talks with Maoists

Kathmandu, June 17: The murder of King Birendra has set back possible talks between the government in Nepal and the Maoist underground movement, a mediator between the two sides said on Sunday.

Mr Padma Ratna Tuladhara acts as a go-between for Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala's government and the Maoist rebels who control large parts of rural Nepal.

The Maoists have been fighting a "people's war" since 1996 to overthrow the constitutional monarchy and replace it with a republic. More than 1,600 people have died in the insurgency.

Mr Tuladhara said the fragile relationship between the two sides had disintegrated since the royal palace massacre on June 1, which left the king and nine other royals dead and propelled King Birendra's brother Gyanendra onto the throne.

Mr Tuladhara, a member of Nepal's human rights commission, said the two sides had recently agreed in principle to meet each other for talks.

"Before the tragedy of the killings there was movement towards dialogue between the two sides," he said. But after the massacre, the Maoists released a statement saying that King Gyanendra and the Prime Minister were behind the killings. They called for the Army and the people to join forces with them to overthrow the government. (AFP)

## SPOTLIGHT

# Decision to name Dipendra King questioned

Keshav Pradhan  
Kathmandu, June 17

1876

THE GHOSTS of the Nepal palace massacre refuse to die. Even as his ascension to the throne remains controversial, King Gyanendra now faces the daunting task of parrying questions raised by his people about his predecessor.

A debate is raging in Nepal over the legitimacy of the Raj Parishad's decision to proclaim the late Crown Prince Dipendra as King since the commission of inquiry on Thursday held him responsible for the killings.

A Marxist-Leninist leader said: "It will take a long time for the palace and the Raj Parishad to convince people about their decision to make Dipendra the King." However, a Raj Parishad member said: "We followed tradition to make him the King. The throne cannot remain empty. King Birendra was no more but his successor was alive. The Crown Prince was not dead biologically."

This is not enough to convince all those who regard the inquiry report as eyewash. "Why can't the palace now strip Dipendra of his royal title since the commission has proved him guilty?" demanded a communist leader.

Meanwhile, a senior military doctor has claimed that no trace of alcohol was found in the blood samples Prince Dipendra.

According to a pro-left weekly here, when news of the killings reached GP Koirala, he thought it was military coup and called A B Vajpayee for help. The latter offered him military assistance, if necessary. The report has been dismissed as "baseless" by the Nepal Government and the Indian embassy here.

Related reports on Page 11

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

# Maoist twist to the massacre tale

Keshav Pradhan

Kathmandu, June 16

DID THE slain King Birendra try to shoot Crown Prince Dipendra after being hit by bullets allegedly fired by his son? Was Birendra assassinated because he tried to patch-up with Maoist insurgents who want to turn Nepal into a Republic?

These questions are haunting the people of the Himalayan Kingdom ever since the publication of the inquiry report on the June 1 palace massacre and an interview of Maoist chief Prachand, aka Pushpakamal Dahal, published in a local daily.

Despite having reservations about the credibility of the inquiry report, the people have taken note of certain statements made by Prince Paras (King Gyanendra's son who would now be the Crown Prince) and Princess Shova (King Birendra's sister) in their depositions before the commission of inquiry.

In the report, Prince Paras claimed, "The Crown Prince threw away a 9-mm MP-5 automatic sub-machinegun after he shot the King and went out. The King (who was hit by bullets) picked up the gun before the Crown Prince could return to shoot the others for the second time."

Paras, who miraculously escaped unhurt, added, "At that point, Princess Shova took away the gun from the King and



AFP PHOTO

A file photograph of Prince Paras.

dropped it on the ground after taking out its magazine. She must have thought that was the only weapon Dipendra had with him. But I had seen the Crown Prince armed with four weapons."

Princess Shova was quoted in the report as saying, "Initially, I thought it was a misfire. My brother was trying to get up. I said, 'Leave that', and snatched it (the gun) from him."

Prince Paras described the dispute over Dipendra's marriage to Devyani Rana as the motive behind the massacre. He explained, "When I met the Crown Prince at the palace, he said he had already spoken to Queen Aishwarya and Queen Mother Ratna about his marriage and would speak to the King on Sunday (June 3)."

However, Rajiv Shahi, a survivor and son-in-law of Dhirendra (King Birendra's younger brother), had last week told the media that there was no discussion about the Crown Prince's marriage that evening.

In a more startling revelation, Maoist chief Prachand said in an interview to the daily *Nepal Samacharpatra*, "Dhirendra met us a few days before the killings. He told us King Birendra wanted to meet us. We could not have any such direct meeting immediately because of some technical reasons. He also apprised us about King Birendra's views about our struggle." Prachand added, "According to Dhirendra, King Birendra viewed our struggle as a patriotic movement... We thought Birendra could play the role of Norodom Shianouk."

Another report on Page II

SATURDAY, JUNE 16, 2001

## NEPAL'S MOMENT OF INTROSPECTION

A PROBE PANEL in Nepal has outlined the scene of King Birendra's assassination in a massacre of royal dignitaries that took place in his palace on June 1. In determining the facts of the regicidal tragedy, the investigating committee is of the view that the slain monarch's son and Crown Prince Dipendra was the "sole" assassin. The two-member panel has, however, left the mystery unresolved in several key areas of inexorable doubts. Surely, what Nepal needs the most at this stage is absolute calm, and it certainly redounds to the credit of the Nepalese citizens that their first reaction is one of subdued scepticism, which may be interpreted by the country's leaders as a subtle hint of acceptance of the latest findings. Crucially, though, the high-power committee does not throw much light on the motives that might have driven Prince Dipendra, who too died as a result of the carnage, to such heinous depravity. Nor has the panel drawn a definitive picture about the circumstances in which Prince Dipendra, who later lay in a state of coma as the uncrowned king for nearly two days, had sustained the grievous wounds that finally caused his death. Remaining still under some shadow of doubt are the initial "eyewitness accounts" about the prince ending his murderous spree by shooting himself with the same powerful weapons that he brandished to kill his parents and other royal relatives. By concluding that the Prince had acted alone, the committee has, of course, indicated that he was to blame for his death, too.

The committee's investigative reconstruction of Nepal's traumatic crisis has not enhanced the credibility of the probe itself. It is, nonetheless, arguable in a highly subtle form of logic that the panel may have also redeemed its prestige by refraining from going beyond the ascertainable facts. Yet, the panel's findings have been greeted with a degree of scepticism in some political circles in Nepal, while the authorities seem inclined

to pronounce the ghoulish chapter closed. In essence, the committee has identified Prince Dipendra as the only stalking gunman, who was actually under the debilitating influence of drugs and alcohol at the time "eyewitnesses" of various ranks in the palace saw him draw blood in a bizarre act of serial-killing. Now, Nepal's sceptical politicians and a number of ordinary people alike want to know how a man in a terribly drunken state could have mustered the physical stamina to wield heavy weapons and use them to deadly effect. The doubts are spawned by the very minutia outlined by the investigators in their report.

189.10 15/6  
The present monarch, King Gyanendra, who ascended the throne after the demise of the uncrowned Dipendra, is obviously keen that Nepal does not inflict a political crisis upon itself in these circumstances. Now, the anti-monarchist rebels, who practise a Nepalese creed of people's war in a 'Maoist' fashion, have not been blamed by the panel for the present uncertainties. Yet, the democratic political leadership, already divided over the manner in which the regicide-probe was ordered, cannot be oblivious to the 'Maoist' challenge to contemporary Nepalese polity. While the new monarch, too, will be judged by the manner in which he might view Nepal's tryst with democracy, the elected leaders may find it necessary to try and evolve a new balance of power within the country's polity. The rise of the 'Maoist' group and its perceived anti-U.S. and anti-India orientations have already become a matter of serious concern to some key sections of the international community. Whether or not China can serve as an inspiration for the Nepalese 'Maoists' in the evolving context of Beijing's new politics, Kathmandu will do well to set its political house in order as quickly as possible in the present context of a national introspection.

THE HINDU

KATHMANDU



## King's Commission

The report of the two-member fact-finding commission on the June 1 massacre of the royal family in Nepal contains no surprises. As anticipated, there is no substantial departure in the official version from the story that has already reached the Himalayan kingdom in dribs and drabs — that a drunken crown prince Dipendra gunned down his parents and other royals. Besides confirming eyewitness accounts of what happened that fateful Friday night, the report also hints at a relationship between Devyani Rana and the young prince. The new angle, if at all there is one, is that Dipendra spoke to his lady friend at least four times that night. However, this does not in any way explain the murderous rage that followed. Indeed, much like the eyewitness accounts, the report leaves unanswered a host of questions: Was Dipendra shot or did he kill himself? Where were the security staff? What role did Paras, king Gyanendra's son, play? However, to dwell on these aspects interminably might be to further fuel speculation and feed the rumour mills that thrive in Kathmandu. Ever since the killings, Nepal has been awash with conspiracy theories, with suspicion directed largely against the new king and his son. In such an atmosphere of distrust, there is a danger of miscreants stepping in to muddy the waters some more.

It is to be expected that potential trouble-makers like the Maoists will exploit the infirmities and gaps in the probe panel's report to spread disaffection against the elected government. In the prevailing volatile situation, this could set the nascent democracy on a perilous course. There is no dispute that the political class thrown up by the struggle for democracy has given a dismal account of itself in the last 10 years of multi-party government: Not only has economic deprivation deepened but increasingly the disenchantment with political parties has led to either a nostalgic yearning for a return to monarchic authority or a perverse rooting for the methods of the Maoists. For all their venality and failure to strengthen democracy, the political parties represent the middle and moderate ground between these two extremes. Hence, it is of paramount importance that every effort is made to ensure that democracy is not derailed at this critical juncture. The full truth of the royal massacre may never be known. Even in more evolved democracies with entrenched institutions and processes, investigations of assassinations have not been conclusive. Be it the killing of John Kennedy or Indira Gandhi, successive enquiries and trials have not cleared up the mystery of the causes and circumstances of the tragedy. The Nepal tragedy differs from what happened in India and the US in one respect: The assassinations in India and the US caused momentary disquiet but did not endanger democracy. In stark contrast, tiny Nepal is poised on a knife's edge: The prevailing atmosphere of fear and uncertainty is exactly what extra-parliamentary forces need to foment violence with a view to deliberately provoking the army to be called out. Such a conflict can only come with its inevitable consequences for peace and political democracy. Nepal must swiftly put this tragedy behind it and move on — both for the sake of its people and in the interest of maintaining the delicate equilibrium between parliament and the palace.

## Ghimire, two others released

KATHMANDU, JUNE 15. Mr. Yubraj Ghimire, editor of the mass-circulated Nepalese daily *Kantipur*, and two others arrested last week on sedition charges were today released on bail by a special court here.

A three-judge bench, presided over by Mr. Justice Mohan Prakash Sitaula, released Mr. Ghimire, the managing director of the publication, Mr. Kailash Siohiya and the director, Mr. Binod Raj Gyawali, after a day-long hearing. The court asked Mr. Ghimire to deposit Rs. 2000 as security.

The three were arrested last Wednesday following the publication of an article in *Kantipur* by the underground Maoist leader, Mr. Baburam Bhattarai, alleging a nexus between India's intelligence agency, RAW, the U.S. CIA and the palace behind the June 1 massacre of the royal members.

Mr. Bhattarai and the publication's chairman, Mr. Hemraj Gyawali, were declared absconders by the court as they had failed to appear before it.

Coming out of the court, Mr. Ghimire told reporters, "It is just the beginning of the legal battle. The court has rejected the Government's plea for our custody."

### The bitter truth

A day after the report of the official probe into the palace massacre was made public, people here are slowly coming to terms with the findings that their late Crown Prince Dipendra had gunned down his father and other royal members, even as the media and political leaders appealed for calm.

"The situation in the Kathmandu valley is normal and no untoward incident has been reported so far. Nevertheless, the police force has been put on high alert," the Superintendent of Police, Mr. Sagar Thapalia, told PTI.

Shops, which had downed shutters early last evening apprehending violence, opened in the morning with people going about their routine.

Though the probe findings were on the expected lines, people who had earlier refused to buy the theory of Dipendra's involvement in the killings are now saying "it could be true".

"We knew it was coming but why did they have to cast so many aspersions on a dead man, that he was an alcoholic and drug addict," wondered a fan of the Crown Prince.

"It is not easy to digest, but how long can you disbelieve" asked Mr. Shamsheer Thapa, a guard at a hotel in Khichakhopri.

The provocation behind Dipendra's act and how he himself was killed, aspects on which the probe shed little light, are being heatedly debated in every street corner.

### Panel to study report

The Nepal Government today set up a committee headed by the Chief Secretary to study the report of the official probe into the palace massacre and suggest means to implement its recommendations that included strengthening the security of the palace. The state-run Nepal radio said the five-member Secretary-level committee had been asked to submit its report to the Cabinet within five days.

# Report names Dipendra as sole killer

Keshav Pradhan  
Kathmandu, June 14

KP 57p

THE PANEL, probing the June 1 palace massacre in Nepal to-night named a "drunk" Crown Prince Dipendra as the man "solely" responsible for killing King Birendra, Queen Aishwariya and seven other royals.

Dipendra had spoken thrice to his girlfriend Devyani Rana on the mobile phone a little before the shooting spree, it said.

But Taranath Ranabhatt, one of the two members of the commission and Speaker of Nepal's Parliament who read out a synopsis of the report at a televised press meet at Singh Durbar, added a disclaimer of sorts: "We are merely presenting the findings based on observations from the spot, materials, scientific tests and interrogation of witnesses and (the) victims (who survived). This is not the commission's verdict. The commission merely worked within the periphery of the terms and references set by the King."

Ranabhatt, accompanied by Keshav Prasad Upadhyaya, panel chairman and Chief Justice of Nepal's Supreme Court, refused to answer any questions.

The report said Dipendra, in Army fatigues fired indiscriminately at members of the royal family who had been relaxing after dinner in the billiard room of the palace. It did not say whether Dipendra had shot himself as claimed by an eyewitness and some royal relatives.

The report said Dipendra first shot King Birendra and then his mother Queen Aishwariya and the other royals. Dipendra had "consumed alcohol and smoked cigarettes laced with opium before he walked into the billiard room and gunned the royals," it said.

Before this, the Crown Prince had made three calls to Devyani from his cell phone. In the last, he told to Devyani, "I am now



Chief Justice Keshav Prasad Upadhyaya hands over the probe panel's report on the palace massacre to King Gyanendra at Narayanhity Royal Palace in Kathmandu on Thursday.

about to sleep. Good night. We will talk tomorrow." The report was silent on Dipendra's motive.

The weapons used by him, including a 9 mm sub-machine gun, a 12 bore French gun, 5.56 calibre rifle were displayed at the Press meet.

#### Devyani talks

The 200-page report said Devyani in her telephonic tape-recorded interview to Nepal's envoy to India B. B. Thapa had spoken of "a close relationship with Dipendra". The tape was

used as evidence by the panel.

Her parents told the panel that there was contact between Dipendra and Devyani. But Devyani refused to detail her conversation with Dipendra, saying "they were matters concerning her personal affair and she did not want to say anything about them," the report said.

#### Gory reminders

During its visit of the massacre site, the probe team had found brain tissues, a few teeth and jaws, red *tika*, two ear pins,

broken pieces of red glass bangles and blood stains where the Queen was shot. No cartridge cases other than those used by Dipendra were found at the site.

Ranabhatt said Dipendra had come for the customary Friday night dinner at 7.30 pm high on his "favourite grouse whiskey". He then asked an aide for cigarettes laced with opium and an unidentified black substance.

Tipsy, he was swaying from side to side and was taken to his quarters by his bodyguard, broken



Priest Bharat Saitkora, dressed as King Dipendra, in a traditional ceremony to exorcise the ghost of the dead monarch.

ther Nirajan, Prince Paras and another relative, the report said.

Dipendra then made a phone call to Devyani in Kathmandu. She telephoned some of Dipendra's aides telling them that the Crown Prince's speech sounded slurred. "Is he somewhat unwell?" she asked the aides.

The aides then went looking for the Crown Prince and found him sprawled on the ground, trying to take off his clothes. They helped him. Next, Dipendra proceeded to the bathroom. After

coming out, he ordered the aides to retire to their rooms, the report quoted an orderly as saying. He later came down in army fatigues to the billiard room and began the shooting spree, it said.

#### US concern

US ambassador to Nepal Ralph Frank has expressed concern that anti-Indian, anti-US and pro-China Marxists are "on a roll" in Nepal after the royal massacre. Armed Maoist guerrillas were advancing with "no visible opposition in the rural areas."

# Dipendra did it: report

KATHMANDU, JUNE 14. The official probe into Nepal's palace massacre tonight held the late King Dipendra 'solely' responsible for the killing of his father Birendra, Queen Aishwarya and seven other royals and said he spoke to his girlfriend, Ms. Devyani Rana, thrice on mobile phone shortly before the shooting spree.

The two-member probe panel, set up by King Gyanendra, in its report made public, said a 'drunk' Dipendra in army fatigues fired indiscriminately at the royal family members who were relaxing in the billiard room of Narayan Hiti Palace after dinner on June 1, echoing the eyewitness and other accounts which most Nepalese refuse to buy. The panel, headed by the Chief Justice, Mr. Keshab Prasad Upadhyaya, did not say whether Dipendra, who later died in hospital, had shot himself.

The report, released by the Parliament Speaker, Mr Taranath Rana Bhat, a member of the panel, at a televised press conference, said Dipendra shot his father Birendra first, then his mother followed by the other royals.

Coming in the backdrop of heightened security across Nepal rocked by widespread violence in the wake of the massacre, the report said Dipendra had "consumed alcohol and smoked cigarettes laced with opium before he walked into the billiard room and gunned the royals."

The Prime Minister, Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala, the Leader of the Opposition and general secretary of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxists-Leninists), Mr. Madhav Kumar Nepal, former premiers and heads of the various constitutional bodies, were present when Mr. Rana Bhat read out the report.

## U.S. warns Maoists 'on roll'

The U.S. Ambassador to Nepal, Mr. Ralph Frank, has warned that anti-Indian, anti-American and pro-China Marxists are 'on a roll' in the Himalayan Kingdom after



A Brahmin priest, dressed as Nepal's late King Dipendra, rides into "exile" atop an elephant in Kathmandu on Thursday. The symbolic ceremony is performed to banish the late King's 'ghost' from the capital. — AP (Report on Page 14)

the palace massacre. Armed Maoist guerillas are advancing with "no visible opposition in the rural areas" and trying to exploit

the vacuum left by the murdered royals, Mr. Frank told the *Washington Times*.— AFP, PTI, UNI

More reports on Page 14

11-10

# King's Counsel

## Nepal Needs New Vision Statement

14/6

By NARAYANI GANESH

WITH the conclusion of the traditional *katto* ceremony in Kathmandu, a Hindu priest symbolically exorcised the Himalayan kingdom of the ghost of the murdered king, Birendra. Another significant symbolism was that the frail and elderly priest ritually took upon himself all the woes of the beleaguered monarchy. Nepal can now go one step further. Both the democratically elected parliament and the present king, Gyanendra, can together, exorcise the kingdom of the troublesome political and socio-economic ghosts of the past and give Nepal a progressive and modern makeover.

A new partnership between Nepal's monarchy and the popularly elected government will go a long way in ensuring people's participation. The fear of the so-called Maoist rebels and the elite's perceived contempt for the marginalised, especially those living in far-flung areas, have compounded the deep divide between the haves and the have-nots.

A large section of the Nepali youth are underemployed. Earnings are low and time hangs heavy on their hands. Most areas of Nepal suffer from lack of essential services and communication facilities. At the other end is the privileged class, exemplified by a deified monarchy, albeit a constitutional one. Elected governments have come and gone with the frequency and ferocity of a Himalayan thunderstorm, leaving governance in a shambles. All this has provided a fertile ground for resentment and rebellion. In bazaars and backlanes, the smallest spark of rumour can kindle a conflagration waiting to happen. The Maoists have sought to channelise and capitalise on these popular outbursts. However, the red banner in Nepal today has no backing from China, its supposedly one-time ideological mentor. Today's Beijing is more interested in markets than in Maoism.

The scenario bears a startling resemblance to Kashmir. The same neglect, inadequate development, practically no infrastructure, unemployment and underemployment, official apathy and rampant corruption. The other co-relation is that both Nepal and Kashmir put all their eggs in one basket: Tourism. Income from tourism and the benefits of its ripple effects are indeed, considerable. But what happens when there is a conflict situation — internal or external? The economy, crafted entirely around one industry and sustained only in peace conditions, falls easy victim to a cycle of riots and their repercussions.

Is there a way out of this seeming mess? Yes, if Nepal learns to see itself as something much more than just an exotic destination, more than

a Shangrila of rajas and ranis, gods and goddesses, sacred peaks and enchanted valleys. Like a burst from an automatic weapon, the exigencies of the 21st century can shatter the fragile idyll — as indeed, they have done. Many among the mourning public have declared that they now feel "orphaned" with the death of king Birendra and queen Aishwarya. At the other extreme you have rebels who reportedly want even the constitutional monarchy abolished.

In many areas, local administration is notable for its total absence. Hence, there is an immediate need to resurrect village-level administrative units, disbanded after the abolition of absolute monarchy. Instead of treating panchayati raj as a pariah and an extension of an autocratic monarchy, a new form of panchayat government based on democratic participation needs to be encouraged.

The introduction of a new system

### IN BRIEF

- Palace and parliament must make common cause against poverty and political adventurism
- Nepal must see itself as more than just an exotic tourist destination
- Local government needs to be revived
- An IT bond with India will promote the knowledge industry and open new windows to the world.

of self-governance at the grassroots level will not only exorcise ghosts from the past but in fact help win the confidence of the people. What we have today is the phenomenon of frustrated groups of locals becoming laws unto themselves. In several places on the tourist routes, it is common to find them manning makeshift checkpoints, collecting 'toll charges' from passing vehicles. The local constabulary willingly turns a blind eye, in all likelihood having been bribed into complicity.

One way to kickstart the development process would be to set up joint-venture educational institutions all over Nepal, with the help of friendly neighbours like India. The obvious starting point is Information Technology, the great new equaliser. India has an internationally acknowledged headstart in the knowledge industry and boasts a vast pool of IT institutes and talent who will only be too happy to set up shop in Nepal to mutual advantage.

India's privately-run IT institutions have done a yeoman's service in making the new industry available to a wide spectrum of people across the country. They have transformed education in Tamil Nadu by offering courses in government schools. During the day, school children are taught on these computers and after school hours, the institute runs its private coaching centre here, recovering costs and carrying on with its business.

Why IT? Because it is an industry that is non-polluting and offers connectivity of crucial importance in a country whose mountainous terrain and lack of infrastructure are the greatest bottlenecks to communication, commerce and progress. IT will also help ensure greater coordination in governance and facilitate an interactive development process. Better communication ensures a freer flow of reliable information in the absence of which rumour mills flourish. More than anything else, information is the first step to the gaining of self-confidence and empowerment, the two most effective antidotes to the age-old tyrannies of superstition, prejudice and ignorance.

Other fields could similarly benefit from such partnerships, like imparting training in subjects as varied as medicine, engineering and technical disciplines. However, Indo-Nepal cooperation in this area is already evident at Pokhara, one of the most beautiful tourist destinations in Nepal. Here, the renowned Kasturba Gandhi Medical College, Manipal Trust of Karnataka has established a full-fledged medical college. More such joint ventures will surely help channelise both official and unofficial efforts towards building a constructive future for this remote kingdom as well as provide other countries the opportunity to contribute and collaborate in completely non-political endeavours.

King Gyanendra, under the umbrella of parliament, can forge a new partnership with the people of Nepal by making a public vision statement, spelling out the government's plans for a vigorous campaign against the twin threats of abject poverty and the political adventurism it can beget. India should be only too happy to participate in knowledge-enhancing ventures in Nepal. After all, the two countries share a common heritage and culture that goes back to thousands of years. Indo-Nepal ties transcend any political or economic tectonic shifts. By invoking the tradition of centuries of pleasant cultural and social exchanges, India and Nepal can now strengthen their friendship by coming together in the field of knowledge-enhancement.

# Crisis and change in the kingdom

J.N. DIXIT

9-10 1996

**B**y the time this column appears, there would be more speculations and revelations about the tragic assassination of King Birendra of Nepal and other members of his family on June 1. On the one hand, the tragedy depicts the fragile emotional framework within which Nepal's royal family functions, and on the other hand, it has significant implications for Nepal's domestic politics for some time to come. But first, a deductive analysis of what must have happened on June 1 based on information available so far, and of the manner in which the government of Nepal dealt with the tragedy in its immediate aftermath.

There is general agreement that the crown prince, Dipendra, assassinated the king and other members of the family in a state of high emotional stress, though some doubts have been expressed about this because the suicidal wound which he inflicted upon himself had its entry point on the left side of his temple while he was a right-handed man. In any case, the killings were committed by one of the persons present during the royal family's evening gathering where no outsider could have been there.

That Dipendra was the perpetrator of the violence has been confirmed by surviving members of the royal family. That King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya did not have a harmonious relationship with the crown prince because of his lifestyle was generally known. King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya, despite all their royal privileges, were a reserved, sober and generally conservative couple. Prince Dipendra, on the other hand, was a person in more modern and feisty mode. His coming home reportedly in a state of inebriation and the resulting admonitions from his parents might have triggered off the ghastly violent reaction. One, of course, is curious as to why he spared Prince Paras, son of the present king, Gyanendra, while he practically massacred or wounded everybody else present at the family gathering.

**T**he end result is the complete elimination of the main branch of the ruling family founded by King Prithvi Narain Shah more than two centuries ago. In a long term perspective, the killing of King Birendra is the second most significant political event in Nepal in the last 51 years. The previous one being King Tribhuvan's seeking refuge in the Indian embassy from the Ranas and the restoration of monarchy in Nepal with Indian help.

The manner in which the Nepalese authorities dealt with the crisis was both bizarre and confused. First of all, they refused to accept or acknowledge the unvarnished direct reports about the assassination which emanated from the

palace immediately after the killings, specially about Prince Dipendra's role. Then there was the explanation that an automatic weapon was accidentally triggered off, because of which the members of the royal family, including the king, were killed.

The ineptitude of these explanations and their being half-baked and confused reactions were obvious. First, what was the logic of an automatic weapon being available at an evening gathering of the royal family? Second, such weapons have safety latches. How did they get into firing position? Third, how is it that an accidental triggering off of such a gun could precisely target the king who was in a different room, other members of the royal family who were in an adjoining hall and the queen and one of the princes, who were killed in a garden outside the room? Was the gun accidentally fired self-mobile?

**N**obody believed the first official explanation. There is fairly reliable information that the guns used were either Israeli Uzi or an AK-47, and an M-16 automatic rifle. A pistol was used by Prince Dipendra to kill himself. Regardless of the constitutional or political justification of Prince Dipendra being designated the king of Nepal while he was still in a coma was even more bizarre. It was perhaps an attempted exercise to exonerate him from the violence which he reportedly perpetrated. This became an abortive attempt with Dipendra also passing away King Birendra's younger brother, Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah, has been enthroned as the king of Nepal.

Initial reports indicate that he is not an entirely popular choice, but he is the unavoidable choice given the laws of monarchical succession in Nepal. General reports are that he is a more gregarious and well-read person compared to King Birendra. He also has a reputation of having a more assertive personality and a decisive approach to issues compared to the late king. Though interested and knowledgeable about the politics of Nepal and the world, he kept aloof from the political management of the kingdom during his brother's reign. He is known to be a man having clear views and convictions. Becoming the monarch is not likely to change his personality.

The question — the answer to which only time will tell — is how he will adjust to becoming a constitutional monarch, the role bequeathed to him by his late brother. The prime ministers of Nepal would certainly have to deal with a more assertive personality in Gyanendra compared to his predecessor, who consciously transformed himself from an absolute to a constitutional monarch.

There are two questions which need answers. What is the kind of Nepal that Gyanendra will have to manage? And

what is the kind of Nepal India would have to deal with in the aftermath of this violent tragedy? The obvious and foremost challenge that King Gyanendra faces is to continue the tradition of being a constitutional monarch which King Birendra created and assiduously nurtured over the last decade and more. He will have to cope with pressures advocating his assuming greater authority in

tween the standards of living in the Kathmandu valley on the one hand, and the rest of Nepal on the other, is a destabilizing factor. In fact, when compared to the manner in which Nepal's political parties are functioning, the two factors stabilizing Nepalese politics are the monarchy and the armed forces, stability being dependent on the relationship between the monarchy and the armed



the face of internal political uncertainties. Resisting these advocacies in the interest of nurturing democracy would be the most significant responsibility of King Gyanendra.

Though democracy stood restored from 1990 in Nepal, Nepalese politics has been highly volatile. Political parties are faction-ridden with bewilderingly numerous ideological orientations and political motives. There have been 10 governments in Nepal during the last 11 years, alternating between the Congress Party, the Communist Party and coalitions of that country. Nepal remains one of the least developed countries in the world with problems of unemployment, illiteracy, low productivity and lack of infrastructure, all reflected in the low per capita income of roughly \$ 214 per annum.

Nepal has been subject to political violence, especially over the last three to four years with the Maoist wing of the Communist Party advocating the overthrow of the monarchy and the creation of a republic. Nepal also has to cope with the problem of Nepalese refugees who have migrated to Nepal from Bhutan under political pressure. Disparities be-

**By no stretch of the imagination would anybody in India have desired the elimination of the late king of Nepal**

forces high command and their jointly being supportive of the processes of evolving democracy in Nepal.

To respond to the second question about Indian concerns, we should do whatever we can to disprove the absurd charges levelled by the Communist Party (Maoist) that the assassination of King Birendra was the result of an Indian conspiracy. By no stretch of the imagination would anybody in India have desired the elimination of the late king. He was highly respected by the Indian establishment and by Indian political circles.

He was greatly admired for the role he played in nurturing democracy in Nepal. He was the major positive influence in improving Indo-Nepalese rela-

tions after the difficulties which our relations went through in the late Eighties till 1991. Theories about Indian conspiracies and collaboration between the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States and Indian intelligence agencies are fanciful hallucinations of motivated and mendacious political circles in Nepal. There has been criticism both in Nepal and in India about India recognizing King Gyanendra and offering whatever assistance the prime minister, G.P. Koirala, needed.

**T**he criticism is not justified. King Gyanendra ascended the throne with the consent and endorsement of the cabinet and all the political parties of Nepal, except the Maoists. India's not recognizing the king would have created a major crisis in Indo-Nepalese relations. The Indian decision was both necessary and logical. India has rightly not commented on the investigative commission and so on appointed by the Nepalese government to report on the assassination. The Communist Party of Nepal withdrawing from the inquiry commission nominated by King Gyanendra is a purely political and partisan decision, confirming the party's political agenda and its perceptions regarding Nepal's public opinion on the issue. In any case, this is an internal affair of Nepal. One, however, is convinced that full facts regarding the assassination should be ascertained and made public to avoid political controversy and from India's point of view, to prevent any misunderstanding between India and Nepal, given the Nepalese Maoists' allegations regarding India.

Nepal's importance to India remains undiminished. It is an important buffer state between India and China. A cooperative relationship with Nepal is essential to prevent Indian separatist movements and Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence from using Nepal as a base for fomenting centrifugal impulses in India. Nepal's stability and Nepal's friendship is therefore of great importance to India. The prospects of cooperation in the sharing of hydro-electric power and for trade are potentially enormous.

India should also be willing to extend cooperation to Nepal (subject, of course, to Nepal's wishes in the matter) to build up Nepal's economic infrastructure and technological capacities. We should be willing to provide Nepal with trade and transit facilities to overcome Nepal's landlocked status to the maximum extent possible. The minor territorial disputes that exist with Nepal should be resolved in a spirit of mutual accommodation. Signals to this effect should be conveyed to the new king and to the government of Nepal.

**A** moment of crisis is also a moment of change. India should utilize the opportunity to signal its willingness to be innovative and constructive in structuring a new relationship with Nepal given the new monarch who has come to power.

# Nepal returns to work

7-6  
1976  
► FROM PAGE 1

The International Press Institute (IPI), the global network of editors and media executives, today issued a press release condemning the Nepal government's decision to arrest the three. "In any democratic society, the media plays a crucial role of informing the public, such a role involves the right to express opinion, especially where no further factual information has been provided," the IPI release said.

Demanding the release of the detainees, the IPI said: "IPI calls upon the Nepal government to uphold its Constitution that expressly guarantees freedom of the media."

Over 350 working journalists, local and Kathmandu-based foreign correspondents, marched from New Road to the police superintendent's office carrying placards denouncing the government's action. "We want to enjoy press freedom under the democratic constitution," they said in their letter to the police. "We severely condemn this step taken at a time when the press is being established as an industry in Nepal and politics is in the process of being democratised and we also express our solidarity with journalists placed under detention," the letter added.

All major political parties, including the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist), Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), Samyukta Jana Morcha Nepal and Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist-Leninist), have also condemned the arrests.

After an 11-day mourning, Kathmandu today returned to work as banks, schools and government offices opened for the first time since the carnage of June 1. The special probe commission investigating the killings is likely to finalise its report on Thursday, but government sources have said it will only be made public next Monday, once King Gyanendra has had the chance to study it.

Few Nepalese expect it to conclude anything other than what witnesses have already said — that Crown Prince Dipendra, who became king while he lay in a coma, gunned down his family in a drunken rage apparently sparked by his parents' opposition to his choice of bride.

## UK warning

British citizens have been advised against travelling to Nepal until further notice. The foreign office said violence could break out after the inquiry panel's report on the killings is published.

THE TELEGRAPH



# Maoists moot interim *Shah's* Govt with Left forces

Keshav Pradhan  
Kathmandu, June 12

HAILING THE slain King Birendra as "a patriot who never bowed before India", Maoist insurgents have proposed to form an interim government of Left, republican and patriotic forces in the Hindu kingdom.

Since the beginning of their "people's war" for a Republic in February 1996, the rebels belonging to the underground Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) have set up parallel administrations in over 20 districts, mostly in poverty-stricken western Nepal. Since April, it has made inroads into villages around the Kathmandu valley following Mao Zedong's encircling-town-with-villages strategy.

CPN (Maoist) chairman Prachand, in a statement published in a pro-Communist weekly today, said, "The proposed interim government will formally establish a people's Republic here as kingship practically ceases to exist now."

Without naming any one, the statement said, "Patriotic Nepalese can never, legally or ethically, accept the main villain of the massacre at the palace."

It described Prime Minister G. P. Koirala as "the most servile person who is trying to give legitimacy to the perpetrators of



A file photograph of Maoist rebels at Piscar, a remote mountain village 200km from Kathmandu,

the massacre." It ruled out the possibility of the two-member commission of inquiry, set up to probe the June 1 killings, bringing out the truth.

Madhav Nepal, Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist) general secretary and leader of the Opposition in Parliament, said, "We are just going through their statement." His party is a staunch supporter of constitutional monarchy.

The Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist Leninist) had earlier asked for a national government comprising the Maoists to resolve problems arising out of the latter's rebellion. A leader of the party said, "We wanted a national government to solve the existing problems, not to end the present system."

The Maoist chief alleged that the palace killings were a result of "the move of the US to encircle China and India's attempts to promote its expansionist interests in Nepal." (For quite some time, Nepalese Communists have been wary of the growing friendship between Washington and Delhi.)

Addressing the Royal Nepalese Army, the Maoist leader said, "So long you protected King Birendra and other patriots. Now, it is time for you to take part in the formation of the interim government."

Speculation has been rife over the nature of relationship between the palace and the Communist rebels ever since Rameshnath Pandey, a royal nominee in Parliament, secretly met the Maoist chief a couple of months ago.

Since the palace massacre, the rebels have been claiming that the slain monarch was against the deployment of the army against them.

Paris, June 12

LEILA PAHLAVI (31), daughter of the late Shah of Iran, died in London after a long period of depression, her mother, the former Empress Farah, announced on Monday.

Farah, who lives in Paris, said in a statement her daughter died in her sleep on Sunday night. She did not reveal the cause of death.

"For the past few years, Leila has been very depressed," the former empress said.

"Time had not healed her wounds. Exiled at the age of nine, she never surmounted the death of her father, His Majesty Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi, to whom she was particularly close."

The Shah, who was driven from Iran in January 1979 by the Islamic revolution led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, died in Egypt in 1980.

Farah said her daughter had never forgotten "the injustice and the dramatic condition of her departure... She could not stand living far from Iran and shared wholeheartedly the suffering of her countrymen."

Leila was born on March 27, 1970, the youngest of the Shah's four children.

In an interview with Spain's *Hola* magazine last September, she said she missed her homeland. "I have lived almost all my life abroad, but I've stayed just as Iranian as if I had never left my country."

Reuters



# Monarchy should go: Maoists

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

KATHMANDU, June 12. — The underground Maoist rebels in Nepal today called for an end to monarchy and establishment of an interim government in the Himalayan kingdom. This even as Opposition parties made a scathing attack on the GP Koirala government over its handling of the palace massacre and sought a national consensus to deal with the crisis.

According to *Janadesh*, a Maoist mouthpiece, the politburo of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) presided by its supreme leader Comrade Prachand passed a resolution announcing the end of monarchy in Nepal.

Alleging that as part of their conspiracy to corner China, American imperialists and Indian colonialists in collusion with

the palace had conspired to eliminate King Birendra, who was an "obstacle" in their path, the party said constitutionally and morally, the new monarch has no stature to occupy the high office, the weekly said.

Giving a virtual call to revolt, the Maoists, who control large territory in Nepal, also called upon the royal army to join hands with patriotic, democratic and Leftist forces in the formation of an interim government, it said.

Leaders of Opposition parties launched a broadside against the Koirala-led Nepali Congress government charging it with mishandling the situation in the aftermath of the palace massacre and not taking the Opposition into confidence.

The government totally failed in managing information and handling the funeral procession

of the royals and protests.

The situation in Nepal is serious and there is a genuine need for consensus among the political parties. The government should call an all-party meeting to discuss the state of the nation, the former foreign minister and Rashtriya Prajatantra Party leader, Mr Kamal Thapa, said.

**Scribes remanded till Friday:** A Nepal court has told the government it had until Friday to file formal charges against three top newspaper executives arrested last week on suspicion of sedition, a senior employee of the top-selling daily said, adds Reuters.

The court today ordered that the three men, including Yuvaraj Ghimire remain in custody until Friday.

■ Govt offices reopen in Nepal, page 9

# Nepal: Implications for India



- ↳ Is this the beginning of the end of monarchy in Nepal?
- ↳ Will an unpopular monarch depend for support on external allies?
- ↳ If so, what does this imply for India's security and bilateral relations?

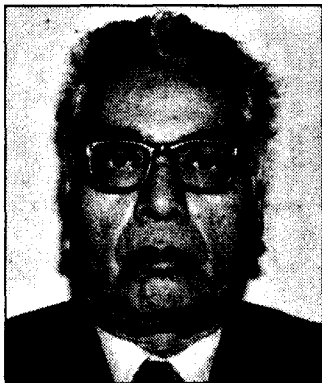
**Professor Kalim Bahadur**  
*South Asian Studies,*  
*JNU*

Nepal has been swept as if by a tornado during the last week. The royalty which dates back to the late eighteenth century has had a chequered history. The monarchy which had been converted into a puppet of the Rana rule for more than a century was emancipated in 1950 with the intervention of Jawaharlal Nehru. After a brief democracy lasting a year, King Mahendra dismissed B P Koirala's democratically elected government in 1960 and then followed three decades of autocratic regime of the King and his Panchayat Raj. It was only the united struggle led by the Nepali Congress and the Leftists that made it possible in 1990 to establish the democratic system. True, King Birendra had proposed a promonarchic Constitution based on the discredited Panchayat system but ultimately he relented and Nepal was proclaimed a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, democratic, independent, indivisible, sovereign, Hindu and Constitutional Monarchy. This was possible only because of the positive role played by the late King Birendra who, respecting the popular will, accepted the reality and the strength of the democratic movement and agreed to the constitutional reforms and thus helped in the restoration of parliamentary democratic political system in the country.

All through the ups and downs of history, the monarchy in Nepal has enjoyed great loyalty and prestige among the people. What traumatised the people of Nepal was that the true facts were not being revealed to them. The allegation that the massacre was perpetrated by the Crown Prince Dipendra is widely disbelieved. Prince Gyanendra's enthronement is also being resented. It was only after several days of public outcry and violent demonstrations that an inquiry committee has been appointed. This gave rise to all sorts of conspiracy theories. All this has seriously damaged the monarchy. The new King Gyanendra will have the challenging task of restoring the legitimacy of the monarchy.

The political commitments of King Gyanendra to monarchy and postures against democratic systems are causes of concern. The people of Nepal are politically conscious and they have won their fight against autocracy and for democratic rights after a prolonged struggle. They would not allow foreign intervention in their domestic affairs and they would oppose any attempt to revive the King Mahendra type of autocratic system in the country.

A landlocked country sandwiched between two mighty and large countries like China and India has to maintain its relations with its neighbours with great care. The large neighbours of Nepal between themselves have an uneasy relationship. It was King Mahendra who had cultivated relations with China. In 1988 Nepal had an arms deal with China. Nepal had also proposed a Zone of Peace Proposal which was seen in India as attempt to cut Nepal's stake in security and



natural relations with India. During the recent years Pakistan has also shown interest in the developments in Nepal and has increased its activities in the area as indicated by the Indian Airline hijacking case in December 1999. Therefore, these elements may support an unpopular monarch in the Kingdom in their own interest and to create a wedge between Nepal and India. In this background India's concern at the developments in Nepal could be well grounded. India and Nepal are two neighbours closely related to each other in many ways. The closeness of the two countries has provided a special dimension to their relations. Indo-Nepal relations have been through many ups and downs. The Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship, 1950, issues of trade and transit, the Tanakpur project, etc., have been milestones in the relationship between the two countries but have also been issues of contention and controversies. The present developments in Nepal, where monarchy has been weakened and the elected government has failed to control and manage the political crisis, and where a Maoist armed insurgency is spreading, and the entire population is confused and disenchanted, certainly cause concern.

Western Nepal is currently wracked

**Aravinda R Deo**  
*Former Indian Ambassador*  
*to Nepal*

The massacre of King Birendra and his family no doubt marks a major, if most unfortunate, milestone in that kingdom's history. It is not that countries of South Asia are strangers to such gory incidents, but this is a first in that an entire branch of the Royal family was wiped out in a massacre the blame for which is being put at the doorstep of one who himself is now dead.

The bullets that brought down King Birendra and his entire immediate family have also shot a few question marks at the very institution of monarchy in Nepal, looked upon as the one institution that held together the ethnic, religious and cultural diversity of its people.

Today, more than ever before, the institution of monarchy faces an unprecedented challenge. In today's world even monarchs need a variant of their people's mandate and that can come only by winning their trust and confidence. Gone are the days of invoking the divine right of kings. The new monarch's priority ought to be regaining his people's trust by a style of governance informed by sagacity, integrity and transparency. Undoubtedly, King Gyanendra is fully aware of this and would choose his own methods for securing the institution of a constitutional monarchy. Multi-party democracy could perhaps provide him with the best instrument and interface for stabilising Nepal.

What kind of allies would be need? More than allies he needs assured support of genuine friends. A remark attributed to Prithvi Narayan Shah — the founder of Shah dynasty — that Nepal is a yam caught between two stones (he was referring to the two empires: China and British India) deserves to be recalled at this hour. It should not be beyond Nepal's ingenuity to manage its relations with both India and China keeping in mind geographical and historical realities. Nepal's friendship with one need not exclude friendship with the other. But Nepal should take into account security sensitivities of its neighbours in its own interest.

by an insurgency-like situation referred to as Maoist guerrilla activity by the media both in Nepal and outside. The self-styled Maoists make no secret of their desire to do away with bourgeois democracy and would like nothing more than an interregnum of turmoil and ferment before achieving their final objective doing away with monarchy. The course of an insurgency can be as unpredictable as of Himalayan rivers in spate. Both can play havoc and neither the fury of nature nor the extremist fervour of an insurgency can be controlled easily once it is unleashed and is in full flood.



Given Nepal's geographical location and unique relationship with India marked by an open border and unrestricted access for Nepali goods to Indian markets, any prospect of instability in Nepal cannot but ring alarm bells in India. The land-mass of Nepal in flux could provide a safe haven for anti-Indian forces of all hues including foreign terrorists, anti-social

and criminal elements. Drugs, guns and goons can flow freely into India from across Nepal posing a very serious problem for managers of India's security.

That is why the government of India must watch with special interest how the political situation in Nepal develops. It is as much in India's enlightened self-interest as in Nepal's to have a stable and economically progressing Nepal. India must therefore help in every possible way Nepal's rapid economic and infrastructure growth without compromising on the essential components of its own political, commercial, economic and security concerns. Nepal's Parliamentary democracy cannot thrive under economically arid and deprived conditions. It has an obligation to fulfil the common man's political and economic aspirations and inter alia provide a valuable shield for a constitutional monarchy.

The government of India needs to focus on Nepal afresh and keep its mind focussed for years to come. Its record is far from encouraging. Indian policy towards all its neighbours needs to be consistent, marked by a positive but firm attitude without being provocative. Unfortunately, India is far too often vacillating and when it acts it is often provocative without being firm.

**C Uday Bhaskar**  
*Deputy Director,*  
*IDSA, New Delhi*

An unstable Nepal would be inherently detrimental to India's comprehensive security and related stability, and this abiding reality of the subcontinent cannot be ignored. In the past decade, the monarchy in Nepal as represented by the late King Birendra played a significant and visionary role in stabilising the internal socio-political dynamic in the mountain kingdom as it made a tentative transition from an absolute to a constitutional monarchy.

However, the bloody killings of June 1 and the anger and sorrow this tragedy has unleashed among the Nepali people will have a long-term influence on the nature of the relationship between the monarchy and the nascent democratic ethos in Nepal. The manner in which the assassination of the

Royal family has been re-constructed and the many gray areas that still need to be addressed will determine the kind of response that the new King Gyanendra will generate among his people. This to my mind will be crucial in defining the ambience of the post-Birendra monarchy in Nepal.

I do not believe that the events of June 1 will mark the beginning of the end of the monarchy in Nepal. The institution of the monarchy in Nepal goes beyond its political salience and has a deep socio-religious symbolism wherein the reigning monarch is seen as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, a principal deity in the Hindu pantheon. The new king and his son will need to earn the respect and affection of his people to revert to the rhythms nurtured by his late brother. To that extent there is an inherent contradiction in the current situation in that while the institution of the monarchy continues to be deified and venerated in the collective Nepali psyche, the current incumbent is perceived differently. If this tension between the ruler and his people festers, it could prove malignant in the long-term.

The possibility of an unpopular monarch soliciting external support may not be a valid proposition in the

present times. Presuming that participatory politics will rise up to the present challenge, one may infer that the monarch will function within the parameters of the constitutional role that has since evolved. In such an exigency, the ability of an unpopular monarch to actively seek external support to bolster his reign in the face of popular disaffection would be remote.

The alternative scenario is the possibility of the ruling establishment in Nepal — that is the elected political leaders and the monarchy not being able to contain and calm the current societal turbulence. In such an exigency, the



prevailing unrest could adversely impact those parts of India contiguous to Nepal. However, one hopes that this scenario would not unfold.

The security dimension for India as regards Nepal is complex and is impelled by the distinctive geography of this land-locked Hindu kingdom. Nepal is the buffer between two Asian giants, India and

China. At one level the anxiety in Delhi about Nepal has its genesis in the strategic perceptions of British India in the 19th century that was deeply conscious of the China factor. This particular card has been played by Kathmandu in the past vis-à-vis its relations with India but the late King Birendra resolved this irritant with deft diplomacy and sagacity. While China is a perennial challenge to India, recent trends suggest that Beijing itself may not encourage any such zero sum approaches in the region.

What is of greater concern to India is the latent anti-India feeling in Nepal: witness the Hritihik Roshan incident. In the last decade, as part of a complex pattern of low intensity conflict and religious extremism aimed against India, the periphery has been used to sustain such activities. The Pakistani ISI is perceived to be very active in Nepal and the hijacking of the Indian Airlines flight from Kathmandu in December 1999 is case in point. It is not incidental that the Indian ministry of defence report notes: "The use of Nepalese territory by external vested interests inimical to the friendly relations between India and Nepal has also engaged the attention of the two governments." This attention must be focussed and appropriate to the need of the hour.

...which also resulted in injuries to a civilian.

## Nepal to hold editor

■ Continued from Page 1

first appearance in court since being detained on June 6 on sedition charges. Mr Ghimire is the editor of Nepal's most influential newspaper, Kantipur. Along with him, the paper's publishing executives Kailash Sirohiya and Binod Raj Gyawali were also detained. The three were initially charged with sedition for printing an article by a rebel Maoist leader which talked about a palace conspiracy to kill the late King Birendra. But the charges have since been scaled down to "anti-state offences" which, lawyers say, is a vague charge. Immediately after the judges gave the decision, the police rushed the three to the government attorney's office to record their statements in preparation for Friday.

Washington wants editor freed, sends diplomat to watch hearing

# US gets ringside view of Nepal

FROM PROBIR PRAMANIK AND AGENCIES



Yubhraj (Reuters)

Kathmandu, June 12: Within hours of saying that it wanted Nepal to free a newspaper editor and two officials arrested on sedition charges after the palace massacre, the United States today sent a diplomat from its mission here to observe the first court appearance of the three.

Yubhraj Ghimire, editor of *Kantipur*, along with the publication's managing director Kailash Sirohiya and director Binod Raj Gyawali, was taken into custody on Wednesday after the paper — the largest-circulated Nepali language daily — printed an article by Maoist leader Babu Ram Bhattarai, who alleged that India's Research and Analysis Wing had connived with King Gyanendra to wipe out the royal family.

After a four-hour hearing, a special district court remanded the three in police custody for three more days for further questioning. The government has been given until 9.30 am on Friday to file formal charges against them. If found guilty,

they could face up to three years in prison.

Asking the Nepal government to release the editor and the officials, US state department spokesman Richard Boucher said in Washington: "We are following this case closely and we have urged the government of Nepal to free the journalists. We consider free press to be an essential element of a healthy democracy."

"In recent years, the Nepali press has become much more independent in its reporting, and we've seen that independence as a good sign for Nepal's future," he added.

Ghimire, who appeared calm and composed, told reporters that he and his colleagues were being treated "nicely" in the VIP cell at the Kathmandu district police headquarters at the historic Hanuman Dhoka square.

Political parties, journalist federations and human rights organisation have called for the release of the arrested trio.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 ►

## Nepal probe panel given extension

KATHMANDU, JUNE 10. The high-level committee, probing the June 1 killing of Nepal's King Birendra and several other royal family members was today given a four-day extension to gather more evidence, palace sources said.

The two-member committee, headed by the Chief Justice, Mr. K.P. Upadhyaya, was to have submitted its report today after a three-day probe.

The extension was given by King Gyanendra to allow the panel to gather more evidence and complete its inquiry, the sources said. During its investigations that began on Friday, a week after the massacre, the committee visited the shooting site at Narayanhiti Palace and the Birendra Military Hospital where the survivors are being treated, besides talking to royals, including Queen Komal Rajya Lakshmi Devi and other witnesses.

The committee's work was delayed following the resignation of the Opposition leader, Mr. Madhav Nepal, from it, questioning constitutional procedures that led to its appointment by the new King following wide-spread vio-

lence by protesters demanding an impartial inquiry into the killings.

Meanwhile, normality returned to the Valley and people were awaiting the probe finding. Nevertheless, police and Army personnel maintained a strict vigil to prevent untoward incidents.

However, few expect the panel to conclude anything other than that the King and Queen and seven of their relatives were gunned down in a drunken rage by Crown Prince Dipendra.

But the wait for a verdict is fuelling speculation and uncertainty in the Himalayan kingdom, where discussing the revered royal family in anything other than hallowed terms is considered taboo.

Officially, the June 1 massacre remains an accident caused by an exploding automatic weapon, but witnesses have already gone public to describe how they saw Prince Dipendra mow down his family before shooting himself. On Sunday, crowds began gathering early to sign condolence books at the palace and lay flowers at a makeshift shrine opposite its imposing steel gates. — PTI, Reuters

See also Page 13

# Andhra concerned over Maoist insurgency in Nepal

STANLEY THEODORE  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

HYDERABAD, June 10. — Andhra Pradesh is concerned that the rising Maoist insurgency in Nepal and the recent regicide would lead to heightened Naxalite activity in the state.

The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) is waging a "protracted armed struggle" against the monarchy, which is similar to the one waged by its ally, the Peoples War Group, here against the state.

A rise in Left wing insurgency in Nepal is certain to come as shot in the arm for the PWG, which has been pushed onto the defensive by a sustained and informed offensive strategy by the state police over the past couple of years. The PWG now can be assured of help, specifically in terms of weaponry and explosives, from a

strengthened extremist ally.

To shake off the defensive impression, PWG has changed its tactics from targeting high profile names to eliminating individual targets — like ordinary political functionaries or policemen. Twenty eight such murders have been committed since January. Six TDP, two Congress and a BJP leader have been killed. Six others were killed after being branded as police informers.

Meanwhile, USA, also concerned with the insurgency scenario, has deputed its acting assistant secretary of state for South Asian affairs, Mr Alan Eastham, to visit Delhi and later Kathmandu to make a first hand assessment of the situation in Nepal.

This was in the wake of a bloody rampage by the CPN since January, including an ambush attempt in February that almost killed Nepal's Chief Justice. The severity forced Amnesty

International to urge the CPN in April to respect human rights and not to kill innocent people. Now the prevailing disillusionment after the royal killings and a shaken administration is conducive for the militants to make further ground, especially as Nepal continues to suffer from highly fractious politics, Intelligence sources said.

Weak policing, inadequate laws, ill-trained police force and a predominant feeling of unrest is the perfect setting for an underground revolutionary activity to flourish. Nepal, as of today, presents this textbook like situation for a surge in Left wing extremism, senior officials said.

Today the CPN is regarded as one of the most successful Left wing underground organisations in the world. They have achieved more than the 30-year-old PWG, despite the latter spreading to other states. The CPN is

active in two thirds of the kingdom — 50 of the 75 districts, up from half that number in 1997 — and is growing.

The CPN has also begun enlisting international support, after drawing from the PWG's Internet initiative. In early May, both these outfits were assured support by a dozen Marxist-Leninist-Maoist revolutionary parties from Belgium, Brazil, Chad, Mexico, Philippines among others, during an International Communist seminar in Brussels.

Moreover, the collaboration established between the PWG and the CPN to further their "protracted peoples' war" has unnerved the state authorities. Over two years back, both outfits had formed the Indo-Nepal Border Committee, where the Nepal unit would smuggle arms into the country for Indian Naxalites and the PWG in turn would train the Nepal insurgents in guerrilla warfare.

Both outfits have agreed to form a "revolutionary corridor" from Nepal to Telangana to facilitate the smuggling of weapons and explosives. It would run through the jungle tracts of North Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Bihar into Nepal. To top this, Intelligence agencies suspect that the ISI is actively assisting the CPN with arms and explosives.

Nepal's government, however, on noting its weaknesses deputed two top ranking officials six months back to study Andhra Pradesh's anti-extremist operations. These two officials spent considerable time with the anti-Naxalite intelligence agency and also the elite Greyhounds commando unit, drawn specially for anti-Naxalite operations.

This follows a pact between the two countries during a visit by the Union foreign minister, Mr Jaswant Singh, to Kathmandu in September 1999.

THE STATESMAN

1999 JUN 10

# Nepal's probe panel gets 4-day extension

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

KATHMANDU, June 10. - The high-level committee, probing the 1 June killing of King Birendra and eight other royals, was today given a four-day extension to gather more evidence, palace sources said.

The two-member committee, headed by Supreme Court Chief Justice Mr KP Upadhyaya, was to have submitted its report today after a three-day probe.

The extension was given by King Gyanendra to allow the panel to gather more evidence and complete its inquiry, the sources said. The committee has been armed with sweeping powers to examine royal witnesses and carry out ballistic tests of weapons used.

The committee's work was delayed following the resignation of the leader of the Opposition, Mr Madhav Nepal, from it, questioning Constitutional procedures that led to its appointment by the new King after widespread violence by protestors demanding an impar-

tial inquiry in the palace killings.

**Monarchy's future:** The massacre will force a re-think of the monarchy's future and its relationship with the government and people, Nepal's foreign minister, Mr Chakra Prasad Bastola, said, adds AFP.

Mr Bastola admitted that the unprecedented nature of the tragedy had caught everybody unawares, leading to damaging "gaps" in the gathering and

■ **Andhra concerned over Maoist insurgency in Nepal, page 8**

sharing of information.

"The whole country was taken by surprise," Mr Bastola said, adding that lessons had to be learned across the board, with the future role of the monarchy itself examined. "Until now, it was not an issue at all. We simply had one monarch after another to succeed," he said.

"Now, we must start thinking about it. Such a big turn of events compels us to think about the future."

Mr Bastola argued that public antagonism towards the new King had been fuelled by the emergence of a "Diana syndrome" in the wake of King Birendra's death.

"The image of King Birendra in the past week has shot up and the contrast with Gyanendra's past image as a hardliner has blurred reality," the foreign minister said.

**'It was cocaine':** The Crown Prince Dipendra brutally gunned down his family after hinging on cocaine and whisky following an ultimatum from his father, King Birendra, issued four days earlier to choose between the throne and the woman he loved, the media reported here today.

**Last words:** "Kay gardeko?" (What have you done?) were the last words of King Birendra after being shot, the latest of issue of *Time* magazine says.

"Dipendra just looked at his father- he said nothing- and squeezed the trigger once," the magazine quotes 77-year-old Ravi Shumsher Rana, an uncle of the Crown Prince, as saying.

THE STATESMAN

# Nepal foreign minister puts monarchy under scanner

Keshav Pradhan & Agencies  
Kathmandu, June 10

IN A CLEAR indication of the growing distance between the Government and the monarchy, Nepal Foreign Minister Chakra Prasad Bastola today said the palace massacre would force a re-think of the monarchy's future and its relationship with the Government and people.

The nuanced caveat came on a day the new King bought some time for the inquiry commission, extending its tenure by four days. It was supposed to complete its report by this evening.

Bastola admitted that the unprecedented incident had caught everybody unawares, leading to damaging "gaps" in the gathering and sharing of information.

There were lessons to be learnt from the tragedy, he said, adding that the monarchy's future role needed to be examined. "Until now, it was not an issue. We simply had one monarch after another. Now we must start thinking about it."

He argued that public antago-

## GIFT ELEPHANT GOES WILD

THE HIGHLY superstitious Nepalese are worried about their future as news spread that one of the two elephants to be gifted to the Brahmins who cremated the royal family, ran amok and killed a woman on Saturday. According to the tradition, the Palace gives expensive gifts to the Brahmins who perform the last rites for a royal member on the 11th day of his death. They are later sent out of the Kathmandu valley to live the rest of their lives incognito.

HTC, Kathmandu

nism towards the new King had been fuelled by the emergence of a "Diana syndrome" in the wake of King Birendra's death. "His image had shot up in the past weeks and the contrast with King Gyanendra's past image as a hardliner has blurred reality."

Meanwhile, former Nepalese Prime Minister Lokendra Bahadur Chand suggested the formation of a "national Government" to instil confidence among people in the wake of the mas-

sacre, even as he scoffed at rumours that the new King was anti-democracy. He said the Maoist propaganda alleging an Indian hand behind the killings was unfortunate and that Nepal would not be allowed to become a base for anti-India activity.

As the veil of secrecy continued to shroud the inquiry commission, people in Kathmandu spent the day offering prayers and food to the portraits of the slain royal couple today. More elaborate rituals will take place tomorrow, the 11th day of the King's death.

A few hundred students held a silent rally demanding a "fair inquiry". Few expect a proper probe by the inquiry commission despite the extension of its tenure.

Amid the fast shrinking faith in the panel, local papers have published different theories about the massacre. One prominent magazine close to the ruling Nepali Congress has claimed Crown Prince Dipendra's body bore four types of bullets. Some journals even blame India for the killings.



# Thunder in the mountains

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Pr. 81 Nepal

**T**HE JUNE 1 killing of almost the entire royal family, which has triggered shock, anger, confusion and grief, has left Nepal at the crossroads. The new monarch, King Gyanendra, known to be assertive and decisive, could begin to play a more influential role in the nation's politics, possibly within the framework of the existing multi-party system.

Despite the prominence given to the Prime Minister and the elected Government, the king has traditionally enjoyed great influence over Nepal's military and the police. It will not be surprising if King Gyanendra exercises his clout over these institutions, though the man on the street, after rejecting panchayati raj which had given absolute powers to the monarch, is in no mood to tolerate a new round of authoritarianism.

While the emotionally surcharged atmosphere in the streets has been against the new king, the brunt of the protests are directed at his son, Prince Paras, who is seen as a spoilt and ill-tempered youngster.

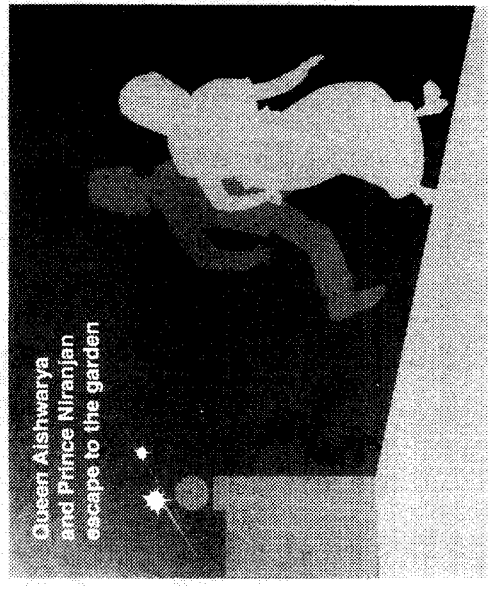
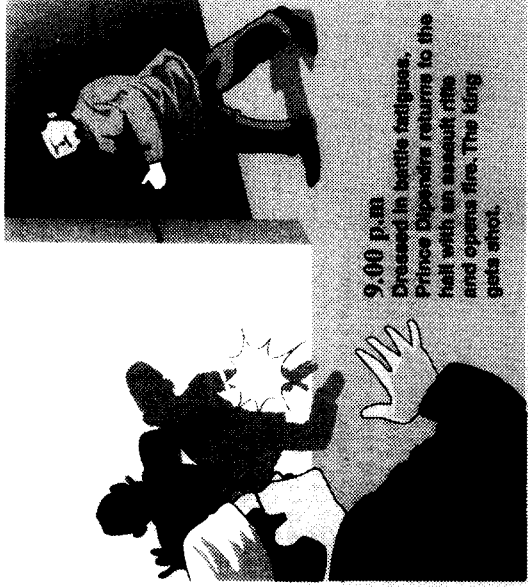
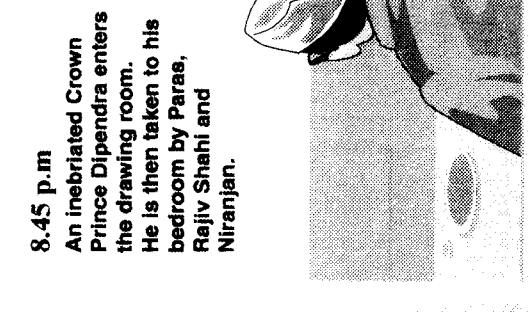
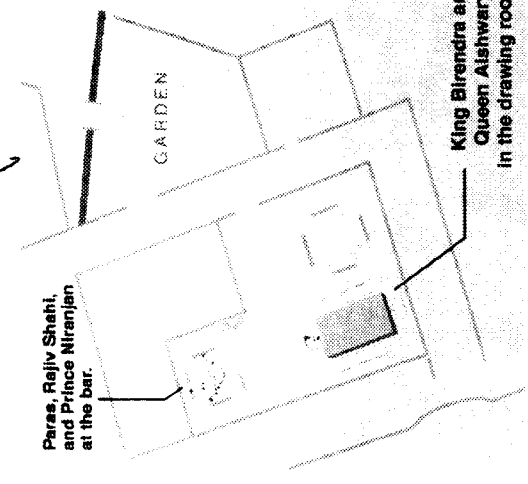
King Gyanendra, however, has apparently begun to consolidate his hold on the throne. For instance, he has been promised support by all the mainstream political parties after he declared his commitment to uphold constitutional monarchy and the multi-party system.

International reactions have also been favourable, adding to his legitimacy. India, for instance, has promised him complete support, at a delicate moment when the embattled monarch is looking for powerful allies.

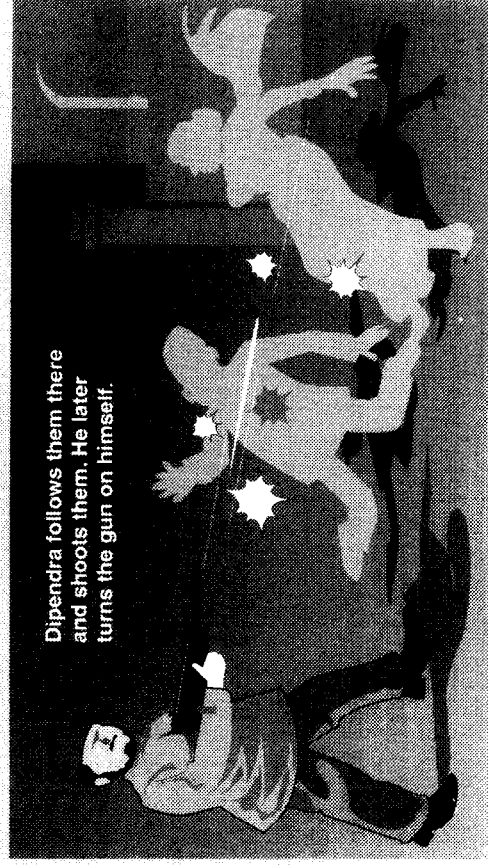
King Gyanendra's ascension to the throne comes at a particularly sensitive time when the Nepali state is under great stress. Wracked by internal dissension, the Nepali Congress, led by the Prime Minister Mr. G.P. Koirala, is finding it hard to govern.

The Koirala faction, which includes Mr. Sushil Koirala, the party's general secretary, is being challenged by the camp of the former Prime Minister, Mr. K.P. Bhattarai. This group includes another former Prime Minister, Mr. Sher Bahadur Deuba, and Mr. Kumbh Bahadur Khadka. Behind the internal wrangling lies an overwhelming demand by the party's younger generation for access to the levers of power.

The Nepali Congress is also being strongly challenged by the main communist party, the CPN (UML). A rash of strikes demanding Mr. Koirala's resignation rocked Nepal



**This graphic recreates the scene as described by Capt. Rajiv Shahi, a member of the royal family, who was one of the witnesses to the killings. Capt. Shahi's description of the scene leaves several questions unanswered. However there are other conflicting versions.**



Graphic by Varghese Kallada

after a probe raised questions about the Prime Minister's possible involvement in a controversial aircraft deal recently.

Though the CPN (UML) appears to be in better shape than the Nepali Congress, it is not without its share of feuds. In fact, the CPN (UML) leader, Mr. Mohan Kumar, could have himself become Prime Minister had not his one time ally, Mr. Bamdev Gautam, deserted him at the crunch.

Adding to the problems of the Nepali state is the challenge from the Maoists who, since they launched their armed struggle in 1996, are making major inroads in the countryside. With four districts in mid-western Nepal as their hub, the Maoists, or more formally the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), are now active in 35 of the 75 districts.

Their activities have so far affected two-thirds of Nepal's 24 million population and resulted in around

2,000 deaths. After making gains in the rural areas, the Maoists are now keen to acquire a higher national and international profile.

At least three recent attempts have been made by them to capture an airport, while Government officials have been kidnapped from time to time. The Maoists are led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal or 'Prachanda', and Baburam Bhattarai, an architect and a former student of New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University.

There have, however, been recent reports about a rift between the more moderate Bhattarai and 'Prachanda', who is believed to a hardliner and the party theoretician. The Maoists appear to be setting up their own institutions including a Central Military Commission, which was formed in 1998. In terms of tactics, the Maoists take their cue from Peru's "Shining Path" guerrillas.

affiliate of the American Revolutionary Communist Party. They also have close ties with the People's War Group, which is active in five Indian States and the Maoist Communist Centre (MCC), which is influential in Bihar.

With a core strength of around 2,500, backed by a 10,000-strong militia, the Maoists have drawn on the expertise of ex-Indian and British Army Gurkhas. They operate largely in areas where these retired soldiers reside in substantial numbers.

Despite Mr. Bhattarai's resignation last March as Prime Minister on the issue, the Government in Nepal has

**With political chaos rocking Nepal, King Gyanendra has his task cut out. If he exerts himself to stabilise Nepal, he is likely to find enough international support from powerful**

neighbours such as India, and possibly the United States.

India, is likely to back him for its own strategic reasons. Nepal continues to remain a buffer between China and India. Hence, political instability in the mountain kingdom can be inimical to India's interests. As it is, India is not too enamoured of the Maoists as it has been a prime target of their verbal attacks.

Of late, Nepal has been used for launching subversive activity, especially in India's Northeast. A strong central authority in Kathmandu which is willing to crack down on subversive forces will naturally be in India's interest.

"For India, the preservation of the institution of monarchy is vital for it has begun to view it as a stabilising force in Nepal," an academic in Kathmandu said.

As for the U.S.' stakes in King Gyanendra, opinion in Kathmandu is divided. Some feel that the American interest is limited — confined to ensuring that Nepal is not used as a base for smuggling narcotics and money-laundering. Others, citing the Bush administration's interest in China, disagree. They say the U.S. could see Nepal as a possible base for Tibetan resistance against China.

Apart from an initial faux pas when King Gyanendra as regent described the slayings in the Narayanhiti palace as an "accident", he has made some constructive moves which will help him consolidate. His declaration of commitment to constitutional monarchy and a multiparty system has gone down well with the major political parties.

In response, the ruling Nepali Congress has been effusive in its support for the new monarch. His intention of forming a representative committee in which all the major political parties are involved is seen here as a shrewd move. But the inquiry into the killings is likely to run into rough weather on account of public sentiment.

Since at the street level the late King Dipendra's innocence in the murder of his family has been pre-judged, political parties will find it hard to endorse any findings which go against this mood. As of now, the establishment here appears to be engaged in a Herculean media management exercise to influence people to accept that the late King Dipendra may indeed have been the killer.

As Prince Paras remains the target of public anger, the new monarch

has done his bit to keep him out of the limelight. Contrary to the royal practice, King Gyanendra declined to name Prince Paras his successor during his investiture.

The new king is also under some pressure to de-link himself from some of his earlier commercial ventures. According to the Nepalese media, King Gyanendra has a stake in one of the leading five star hotels in Kathmandu, a cigarette factory, a trading company and a tea garden in eastern Nepal. His network with the business establishment has come under public scrutiny, after his elevation as monarch.

In a front page story, *Kathmandu Post*, a leading English daily, wrote quoting an academic from Tribhuvan University that "his (the king's) business interests and engagements are no more in conformity with the role as monarch. So it would be in the best interest of the country and his own image to renounce his involvement from business".

King Gyanendra's involvement in business can be traced to the pre-democracy phase. Under the panchayati raj system, the Army was handled by King Birendra while the other brother, the late Prince Dhirendra, was in charge of the police. It was up to the then Prince Gyanendra to take care of commerce.

His association with Nepal's commercial elite apparently encouraged him to acquire a stake in business. King Gyanendra is also believed to be well acquainted with the Indian Marwari trading community in Nepal. He is also known to be an environmentalist and has successfully run the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation.

After successfully combating street violence which rocked Kathmandu for two days, King Gyanendra may strengthen his hold in the coming days. But his real challenge is far from over and will come from the Maoists.

Preliminary indications are that King Gyanendra may be more assertive against the ultra-left. The arrest of the influential editor, Mr. Yubraj Ghimire, for publishing an article of the Maoist leader, Baburam Bhattarai, is the first major indication that a crackdown against the Maoists maybe in the offing.

It remains to be seen whether he succeeds in this "battle which may not be fought so much on the streets of Kathmandu but in the jungles and mountains of mid-western Nepal".



# Communists declare support to Gyanendra

By Atul Aneja

**KATHMANDU, JUNE 8.** Anticipating an unpopular verdict on Monday from the two-member inquiry committee, probing the royal massacre in Nepal, political formations here are busy considering options which are in tune with the public sentiment, and yet, if possible, palatable to the monarchy.

The mainstream political party, CPN (UML), was the first to send a positive signal to King Gyanendra today. In a formal resolution, the party central committee, declared full support to the King, with the expectation that he would uphold constitutional monarchy and multi-party democracy. "We have put on record our appreciation of the first royal address and the commitment given in that to uphold constitutional monarchy and multi-party democracy," the party standing committee member, Mr. Jhala Nath Khanal, said.

Similar sentiments were expressed by the former Prime Minister, Mr. K. P. Bhattarai, of the Nepali Congress. Talking to newsmen, Mr. Bhattarai said the new King deserved support from all sections after his pledge to uphold constitutional monarchy and multi-party system.

With all the main political parties supporting King Gyanendra, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists), which is demanding an end to monarchy under a republican framework, stands isolated.

Internal meeting of most parties, including that of the Nepali Congress, began in the backdrop of the inquiry which began today. The Supreme Court Chief Justice, Mr. Keshav Prasad Upadhyaya, who heads the two-member panel, said the investigation would not be influenced by media reports.

He has apparently taken exception to Thursday's press conference in which an eye-witness, Capt. Raja Sahi, pinned the blame for the royal massacre on late King Dipendra, who was the Crown Prince at the time of the massacre. (According to official sources, the Army subsequently

ordered a court of inquiry as the press meet, it is claimed, was held without its consent). Mr. Upadhyaya also maintained that the probe would examine the witness and the royal staff and take the help of forensic experts, wherever required.

The committee, which began investigations at 8 a.m., visited the massacre spot in Narayanhiti palace. The members' schedule included a visit to the military hospital to interview doctors and nurses who attended to the victims. However, the committee is fundamentally handicapped as bodies of none of the victims underwent an autopsy.

Discussions within political parties, which gathered momentum today, focussed on the fallout of the anticipated findings of the committee. It was assumed by parties across the political spectrum that the committee was, indeed, likely to blame King Dipendra for the killings.

By Atul Aneja

**KATHMANDU, JUNE 8.** The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) has not established any contact with the Government after last Friday's regicide in the Narayanhiti palace, raising fears that a new round of confrontation with the new dispensation here may be at hand.

In a conversation with *The Hindu*, Mr. Padma Ratna Tuladhar, who is mediating a dialogue between the Government and the Maoists said that there was no contact with the latter after last week's palace massacre.

There were unconfirmed reports later in the evening however, that the Maoists had held a public meeting in the outskirts of Kathmandu today. As in the past, a small group of the rebels also sought to distribute pamphlets at a prominent location in the capital.

Nepal watchers are keeping

Such a declaration is expected to stir peoples' emotions which could find expression in various ways. One view, prevailing particularly among Left intellectuals, is that rioting in the streets will be more volatile.

"The inquiry committee is expected to hold Dipendra responsible. That will result in a reaction which will be much more violent," says Mr. Padma Ratna Tuladhar, an intellectual who is also the mediator between the Government and the Maoists.

Captain Sahi's press conference may become one of the factors which could fuel street violence, he maintains. "The press conference was sponsored by the palace. It would otherwise be the responsibility of the King to stop these activities as it would influence the (working of) the committee."

The conduct of the press conference before the committee concluded its task has also been

criticised by the Foreign Minister, Mr. Chakra Prasad Bastola. According to another view, the committee's findings may not trigger violence as the element of spontaneity witnessed on Monday has now abated. Besides, there does not appear to be a political force which can mobilise public sentiment as most of the mainstream political parties have backed the new monarch so far.

A third view is that the limited number of Maoist sympathisers may be able to provide rudimentary leadership to bring popular resentment into the open. In spite of the existence of various scenarios, the Government mood is somewhat upbeat, as key leaders of the Nepali Congress are confident of tackling street violence. In fact, there is talk within the party of uniting its various factions which are controlled either by the Prime Minister, Mr. G. P. Koirala, or his principal rival, Mr. K. P. Bhattarai.

## No contact with Maoists after massacre

tabs on the Maoists as they represent the only political force which has not supported King Gyanendra on account of their fundamental differences with Nepal's constitutional monarchy and multi-party system. In fact, they have sharply attacked the new King in a newspaper article which led to the arrest of its editor, Mr. Yubraj Ghimire.

With four mid-western districts as the epicentre, the Maoists are currently active in 35 of Nepal's 75 districts. Their activities since 1996 have led to the killing of over 2,000 people. Keen to acquire a higher national and international profile, the Maoists have made three attempts to capture an airport. They have been accused of planning to kill the Chief Justice of Nepal.

The activities of the Maoists are of concern to India as they have established close contacts with the People's War Group (PWG) which is now active in five

Indian States. The Indian security establishment is also worried about reports of collaboration between the Maoists and the Pakistani intelligence in Nepal. While it is clear that contacts between them are active, transfer of material help from the Pakistani side to the Maoists is yet to be established, authoritative sources say.

Asked whether a new round of confrontation between the Maoists and the Government in Nepal was imminent, Mr. Tuladhar declined to give a definite answer. According to him, it is possible that contact between them will be re-established first. But a more hardline approach by the Government, where the Army is used against the Maoists is not inconceivable in the future. This according to him is possible because of the "rigid and conservative disposition of both the Prime Minister, Mr. G.P. Koirala and the new monarch".

New Delhi must deal with the ruler in Kathmandu as friend and partner

# Everybody loves a king

SUNANDA K. DATTA-RAY

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**N**o matter who reigns in Kathmandu, New Delhi must deal with him as friend and partner. An understanding of his sensibilities would be useful though no one knows better than Atal Bihari Vajpayee that a ruler cannot be held to views that he expounded before coming to power. India's task would become easier if it also identifies and strengthens those representative elements in Nepal whose legitimate interests reflect those of the nation as a whole, and need this country's co-operation for fruition.

Much is being written about King Birendra's goodwill for India. Personal relations with him were less abrasive than between his father, King Mahendra, and Jawaharlal Nehru or Indira Gandhi. He did not try as vigorously to stomp India with the China card. But his peace zone proposal rejected India's security strategies, while the argument that Nepal belonged to central, not south, Asia was a further attempt to distance it from India. It is no secret either that the late monarch could stand on his dignity, once declining to have breakfast with Mrs Gandhi, apparently for reasons of *amour propre*.

Relations began to improve only after the 1990 revolution clipped the wings of royal absolutism. Claims that the world's only Hindu monarchy mellowed further when the Bharatiya Janata Party came to power may be attributable to the latter's religious label. Jaswant Singh's own *durbari* connections, especially in the extended Rana network, and his familiarity with the arcane intricacies of court life, undoubtedly helped. But the decisive factor was the shift in the kingdom's internal polity. Always an astute man, King Birendra realized soon enough that a constitutional monarch who has to deal with an assertive cabinet and populist parliamentarians can only benefit from the support of the region's most important parliamentary democracy. In aligning himself with India, he must have hoped to steal a march over his principal adversaries at home.

Paradoxically, the rebel Maoist thesis of an inevitable war against India also reflects this assessment. No wonder the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), naturally abetted by Pakistani troublemakers, is trying to blame India for the palace massacre. Comrade Prachanda and his lieutenant, Baburam Bhattarai, know that if the kingdom of Nepal, which they are committed to destroying, is cornered, it can turn only to India for its survival. The Maoists must, therefore, stoke the fires of resentment against India at all levels and in every manner, even to the extent of advancing such a fanciful and non-Marxist explanation for their country's tragedy.

**H**appily, Wednesday's arrests in Kathmandu confirmed the royal government's awareness that it cannot afford to tolerate such dangerous mischief. India's response must ensure the continued confidence of king and people, making clear to both that it will do everything possible to succour the political and economic institutions that make for stability. That means the throne which is of "the soil", as Girija Prasad Koirala once put it, as well as the democratic polity



Throne of the soil

that gives the monarchy contemporary weightage and reflects national aspirations, and, finally, the plans and projects to create an infrastructure that will attract desperately needed investment.

Unfortunately, the BJP lacked the confidence insouciance of P.V. Narasimha Rao who told King Birendra that he would treat the king as a sovereign if the king in turn did not try to treat him as a subject. Instead, bowled over by a gush of royal graciousness and egged on by celebrities with links with the royal family, Vajpayee's government tried to cultivate the palace at the expense of more dependable ties with politicians. The truism that everybody loves a king reinforced the calculation that one man is more easily influenced than a clutch of contrary politicians. Even now, cloying references to royal divinity — one Indian ambassador even prostrated himself at the feet of Vishnu's supposed *avatar* — overlook the fact that this was always a political ploy.

Nepal's autonomous principalities succumbed to Prithvi Narayan Shah in 1769 not because they revered him as a living god but because he chopped off the noses and lips of all the inhabitants of one defi-

ant state and warned the people of another that they would lose their right hands as well. The Vishnu legend enhanced the new and very ungodly Shah dynasty's prestige. Later, the Ranas cunningly promoted it to isolate the throne and concentrate all power in their own hands.

Irrespective of this charming notion, the monarch deserves the courtesy and respect due to a head of state, and more. He has come to personify a multiethnic nation; many believe that only the throne holds it together. But by reportedly bypassing the prime minister and government to directly invite the king to be the chief guest on Republic Day, India infringed propriety. Worse, such shortsighted sycophancy can only weaken and alienate Kathmandu's political establishment without making permanent friends in the palace.

Such stratagems are not without precedent. In Sikkim, too, for years Indian diplomats flattered and courted the Chogyal while surreptitiously encouraging Sikkimese politicians only just enough so that they could be a thorn in his side and no more. New Delhi swung over to the politicians with a deafening roll of de-

mocratic drums only when two things became clear. First, the Chogyal would not be cajoled into compromising what he saw as Sikkim's rights. Second, Kazi Lendup Dorji and other politicians would meekly do as they were bid.

Similar games are not possible in sovereign Nepal where India is, technically at least, only another foreign power without even the residual treaty right that it can claim in Bhutan. Touchily, Kathmandu will not allow the term "special relationship". While Nepalese monarchs are determinedly indifferent to an Indian prime minister's frowns and smiles, Nepal's politicians have not forgotten the vigour with which Nehru suppressed the Nepal Congress's armed insurrection in December 1950 because he wanted to negotiate settlement with the Ranas.

**I**n private conversation, Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala could be very scathing about the Indian government and its methods and objectives. The palace has many complaints against the first prime minister, but the charge of being an Indian agent was not among them. That itself warned against the simplification of assuming that even if Nepalese politicians are not exactly New Delhi's creatures, they are better disposed towards India than the palace. They are probably less petulant and prickly, and should be India's natural allies. But a series of protests in the kingdom over relatively minor irritants illustrates how quick every Nepalese is to take offence at the least suggestion of disparagement. Perhaps the top gives the lead but the bottom is eager enough to follow.

Unredeemed by religious affinity or kinship ties, this aspect of the big country-small country, donor-recipient syndrome presents India with its biggest challenge in the Himalayan kingdom. The rebuff to New Delhi's offer to send a high-level condolence delegation suggests that a murky succession recalling the Nepalese tradition of liquidating all claimants from previous dynasties — the ruthless *nirvang* concept — may have compounded the complex. Rumoured links between the palace and the Maoists as well as Gurkha militants in India are, however, far less worrying than the obscurity into which Nepal's elected prime minister and cabinet seem to have retreated in the face of what is a national and international — not just a palace — crisis. The people's elected representatives cannot afford to surrender the lead, for the mix of feudalism and poverty is precisely what the Maoists are exploiting.

**S**tability demands economic growth and an equitable power balance in Kathmandu. Recalling how King Birendra changed after 1990, an effectively broad-based administration would also be in India's interest. As King Mahendra discovered to his chagrin, India alone can help with funds, economic exchanges, expertise, trade and investment. China is not a viable alternative.

A new reign should mark a new beginning. King Gyanendra should have no cause for complaint against his country's principal benefactor.

With mainline politicians discredited and the new king under a shadow, Nepal looks for an alternative

# Red star over Kathmandu

HR 8 9/6

BY KESHAV PRADHAN

**T**HREE KINGS in four days. Never in modern history has any nation seen such a quick change of order as in Nepal, the world's only Hindu kingdom, since the massacre of King Birendra and his family on June 1. The mantle moved back and forth from one generation to another: Crown Prince Dipendra succeeded his father Birendra. Prince Gyanendra succeeded his nephew, King Dipendra.

This unusually rapid change of guard comes at a time when the landlocked nation's experiment with democracy under a constitutional monarchy is passing through a difficult phase. People are living in fear of a take-over either by the royals or the Maoists as mainline politicians have become symbols of corruption and instability. They have seen the fall of elected governments eight times since the reintroduction of the democratic system in 1990. Nepal's first experiment with democracy that began in 1950 failed in 1960 when King Mahendra imprisoned Prime Minister Bishesar Prasad Koirala and his ministers allegedly for causing a threat to national unity and independence.

The pace of development in Nepal, one of the world's poorest nations, has been abysmally slow. The country's per capita income has been hovering around \$ 200 since many years. Adding to its woes, corruption, inefficiency and lawlessness have become the hallmark of all governments. As government after government has let them down, people have become restive and disillusioned. A large section have begun to look for new alternatives. One of them being the people's war waged by the underground Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) since 1996.

Village after village is falling to the Maoists who have set up parallel administrations in about 20 districts. They have banned singing of the national anthem that glorifies the king and teaching of Sanskrit as a compulsory subject in school. The government, in a panic reaction, has deployed the Royal Nepalese Army in Maoist-controlled areas to carry out what it calls 'integrated security and development programme'.

Differences between the government and opposition parties have become so sharp that the chances of solving even a minor issue looks remote. The kingdom has seen a string of *bandhs* and agitations in winter. The communist parties want Koirala to step down before holding any dialogue to end the stalemate caused by a controversial aircraft deal with an Austrian firm. Due to this issue, Parliament did not function even for a day in the winter session.

Ironically, King Birendra was the only silver lining in such a depressing situa-



STREET FIGHTER: A protester battles it out with policemen in Kathmandu

tion. He alone retained his political credibility over the past 10 years. He looked more democratic than all the democrats who had spent most of their lives fighting for democracy. Not once did he interfere in the work of the elected government. His adherence to the principles of constitutional monarchy helped him strengthen the institution of kingship whose future had appeared uncertain when the multi-party system was restored a decade ago.

Against this backdrop, the most important question before the Nepalese, traumatised as they are by the killings, is how to cope with the changes brought about by the assassination of King Birendra.

Hemmed in between two huge neighbours, the tiny kingdom with a population of 23 million has always suffered from an identity crisis, more so because of its close cultural and religious affinity with India. Keeping this in mind, King Birendra had launched a campaign in the Eighties to turn Nepal into a zone of peace to avoid external interference. The campaign, which came to an end after the restoration of multi-party democracy, did not receive India's support though over a hundred nations, including China, had condoned it. Most Nepalese still feel that Delhi blocked the campaign to keep Nepal within its sphere of influence.

The Nepalese under King Birendra seldom missed any opportunity to project their distinct identity — be it at the United Nations, in the Non-Aligned Movement, the Saarc or the Bao convention (Asian version of the European Union). Hence, in death, he aroused a feeling of respect even in the hearts of the underground Maoists who have been waging a

'people's war' to turn the kingdom into a republic since 1996. Maoist chief Prachand, in a brief announcement, has hailed him for his patriotism. The communist radicals believe that the slain king became a victim of national and international conspiracies.

In recent months, people had begun to look up to King Birendra for help as the democratic forces had failed to deliver. They were seen as constantly fighting with each other to capture power by hook or crook. Indeed, the Royal Nepalese Army personnel, who are blindly loyal to the palace, were reluctant to go into action against the Maoists because of their lack of faith in the elected government. The communist rebels also wanted a representative of the king to take part in their future talks with the government. The first round of dialogue between the two broke down in October 2000.

To most Nepalese, the institution of kingship which binds their multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-lingual society for about 230 years, is as sacred as a temple. This is one of the reasons why they remained loyal to the palace and protested against the ~~horrible massacre~~. All political parties unconditionally accepted the change of guard at the palace even as people wanted to know how they lost their ruler who led their march into modernity for 30 years. Demonstrations against the new monarch, his son Prince Paras, and Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, that rocked Kathmandu have indicated that the palace will be under strict public vigil.

Throughout the Eighties, people did not show much interest in reports about

Dipendra's drug addiction. On the contrary, they are now deeply disturbed about Paras, who is destined to become the next crown prince. In August 2000, communist MPs demanded that Paras be stripped of his royal title after he allegedly killed a popular singer in a hit-and-run road mishap near the palace.

Who is responsible for the massacre? The people are confused and suspicious. Most Nepalese find it hard to stomach the eyewitness accounts given by some royal family members accusing Dipendra of parricide/regicide. Significantly, the survivors of the shootout at the palace chose to spill the beans just before the high-level commission of inquiry set up by the new king began investigating the case. This has raised doubts about the relevance of the commission in a case that involves the royalty only. The Nepalese Constitution has given the palace the sole right to decide on any subject related to the royalty.

As it is, Baburam Bhattarai, number two in the Maoist hierarchy, has compared the killings at the palace to the 1846 Kot carnage in which the Ranas slaughtered 150 army generals and royal officials to usurp power from the Shahs. They established an oligarchy that continued till 1950 when King Tribhuvan, King Birendra's grandfather, and parties like the Nepali Congress, revolted against the last Rana Prime Minister, Mohun Shumsher.

The comparison appears to have created more problems for the Koirala government than the new king. The police crackdown on a popular vernacular daily that published the Maoist leader's views has raised questions about the government's commitment to freedom of expression. The paper has been at loggerheads with Koirala over its exposure of alleged financial irregularities committed by his government.

The transformation of King Birendra from an absolute monarch to a constitutional head was smooth. Now, all eyes are trained on how the new king steps into his brother's shoes. Most Nepalese believe that he will not deviate from his pledge to follow his brother's ideals. He has promised to work according to the tradition of the Shah dynasty — rule with popular consent. There seems to be little choice for him on this count, just as the people have no other option but to accept monarchy.

Considering the shadow under which he became king, King Gyanendra will find the crown burdensome. It becomes heavier when he faces questions on raging controversies involving his son Paras, who has rubbed the communists (both mainstream and Maoists) on the wrong side. As a confused Nepal mourns and protests, it's going to be a crown of thorns for the new king in Kathmandu.

# Palace should open up: Nepal foreign minister

REUTERS & PTI

KATHMANDU, June 8. - Nepal's foreign minister, Mr Chakra Prasad Bastola, today said the palace killings and the confusion and riots that followed showed that a communication gap existed between the secretive palace and the people.

A commission comprising the Chief Justice and the Lower House Speaker has been appointed to investigate last week's slaughter, which officials first said was an accident.

Mr Bastola, said that according to law, custom and practice, palace affairs were not public knowledge.

Mr Bastola said that the commission was the first step towards bringing the royal family closer to the common man.

**Shahi being grilled:** There were reports that the military was questioning a survivor,

Capt Rajiv Shahi, an eye-witness, for "unauthorisedly" going public with his version of events.

Sources said Capt Shahi, a military doctor, could face a court of inquiry for "unauthorisedly" holding a press conference yesterday where he narrated the sequence of events.

The sources said he'd been detained by Army authorities since being a serving officer he had violated Army rules by speaking to the press without authorisation.

However, there was no official confirmation of his having been detained and inquiry being instituted against him.

Quoting a military and a palace official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, AP news agency said Capt Shahi hadn't been authorised to speak out.

They, however, declined to say whether if Capt Shahi was in custody, the agency said.

Attempts to contact Capt Shahi both at his residence and at the military hospital did not succeed.

**Truth stuns Nepal:** Nepal was in a state of shock today as the kingdom's newspapers - for the first time - published details of the massacre of almost the entire royal family and named the late crown prince as the killer.

**Press curbs denied:** Nepal's foreign minister, Mr Bastola, denied accusations that Nepal was muzzling press freedom following the arrest of *Kantipur* editor Yuvaraj Ghimire and two top managers of paper's publishing company. He, however, said authorities could not tolerate articles urging insurrection.

The arrest of the editor and two directors of *Kantipur* on charges of sedition came after Nepal was thrown into turmoil by a palace massacre last week in which most of the royal family was killed.

THE STATESMAN

# Shahi under fire for courting media

11-1  
9/6

11-81  
10/21

By Mahendra Ved

The Times of India News Service

KATHMANDU: Army captain Rajiv Rai Shahi, a relative of the deceased king and an eye-witness to last Friday's palace killings,

who recently addressed a hastily convened media conference here to give his version of events, was understood to have been questioned by the army chief,

General Prajwal Shamsheer Jung Bahadur Rana, and his

army superiors for speaking without permission.

Reports, which were however unconfirmed, indicated that he might face a court-martial. However, political observers here say Captain Shahi could not have talked to the media without a signal from higher quarters. The talk of action against him could there-

fore be a smokescreen.

Captain Shahi's media conference appears to have goaded the government, that many here believe has been numbed by events, into taking action. Foreign minister Chandrika Prasad Bastola said nobody should speak out of turn. Anything to be said about last Friday's events should be before the inquiry panel.

Mr Bastola told a TV channel that the government was "extremely unhappy" and disap-

proved of anybody on its rolls "giving this opinion or that" without permission. The investigative committee was the only forum where this should be done. The inquiry committee, which began its work at 8 a.m. on Friday, was understood to have entered the royal palace and the venue of the killings



Capt. Rajiv Shahi

# Nepal editor's arrest linked to Koirala criticism

**FROM PROBIR PRAMANIK**

**Kathmandu, June 7:** The guard stops you at the gate of the Kathmandu police headquarters in 350-year-old Hanuman Dhoka Square. While you wait, a Royal Nepal Police constable runs up to the officer on duty with a slip that has your name and organisation on it in Nepali and English. Once cleared, you climb the grimy stairs to the second floor waiting room. To wait longer.

The police inspector announces that the "VIP" detainees are having lunch. Forty-five long minutes later, you are led to the "VIP" cell — a seven feet by 10 feet cell. The lone barred window in the cell overlooks the front courtyard of the 15th century Hanuman Dhoka Palace of the Shah Dynasty — the scene of the gory Kot carnage of 1846.

The "VIP" detainees — editor Yubhraj Ghimire, managing director Kailash Sirohiya and director Binod Raj Gyawali of Nepal's largest circulated language daily Kantipur — are sitting on the bare floor.

The three, picked up by plainclothes policemen armed with arrest warrants from the Subidhanagar office on the outskirts of Kathmandu yesterday, were this morning handed other arrest charges. They were earlier charged with treason for publishing an "anti-monarchy" article written by an underground Maoist leader.

A stoic Ghimire, who has worked with **The Telegraph**, says the arrests are the outcome of the ongoing confrontation with the Girija Prasad Koirala-led Nepali Congress government.

"It is not the first time that we have carried a bylined article by the underground Maoist leader Dr Baburam Bhattarai. Bhattarai's articles are regularly carried by other dailies in Nepal. But never before were arrests made. It is our newspaper's policy to carry "uncensored" articles on the op-edit page," he adds.

Terming the arrests as vindictive, *Kantipur* news editor Narayan Wagle claims the government was looking for a chance to act against the publication.

"We had carried two front-page editorials demanding the

resignation of the corrupt and inefficient Koirala government. One was published in January, criticising the government's failure to contain the guerrilla Maoist organisation, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), which attacked the Dailikh police outpost and gunned down 32 police personnel," Wagle said.

"We had carried another front-page editorial exposing the Koirala government's corrupt dealing in the Landa Aircraft case. We had questioned the role of the government in leasing the aircraft from the Australian firm for the Nepal national carrier - the Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation," the news editor said.

The article had highlighted the discrepancies in the deal after the Commission of Investigation of Abuse of Authority questioned Prime Minister Koirala on the issue.

The Nepal media has lodged a strong protest against the government's efforts to gag the press. In a statement today, the Federation of Nepalese Journalist Associations, an umbrella organisation of journalists, said: "We are shocked.... The arrests have come as a major attack on the freedom of press in Nepal.... It is impossible to run a democracy by gagging the press."

The man on the street is shy of commenting on the arrests. "Yes, I feel the government is trying to settle scores with the newspaper as it has the tendency to openly attack the government. But on the arrests, I would rather not comment," said Binod Lama, a taxi driver.

But political leaders cutting across parties have condemned the crackdown on the Kantipur. The spokesman of Nepal's main Opposition party, the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), Pradip Nepal, said: "This is the first deplorable assault on press freedom in Nepal. It is anti-democratic and unconstitutional." The CPN(UML) has demanded the immediate release of the three.

A statement by rebel Nepali Congress leader and former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba has exposed the divide over the issue even within the ruling party.

THE TELEGRAPH



# Survivor brother-in-law points at Dipendra

## Vajpayee fine after Ranawat encore

HT Correspondent  
Kathmandu, June 7

DIPENDRA IS a cold-blooded murderer who killed his family in a fit of drunken frenzy, says a member of the royal family. For the first time since the massacre, one of the slain King's relatives today gave an eyewitness account of what happened on that fateful Friday night, repeating the official version.

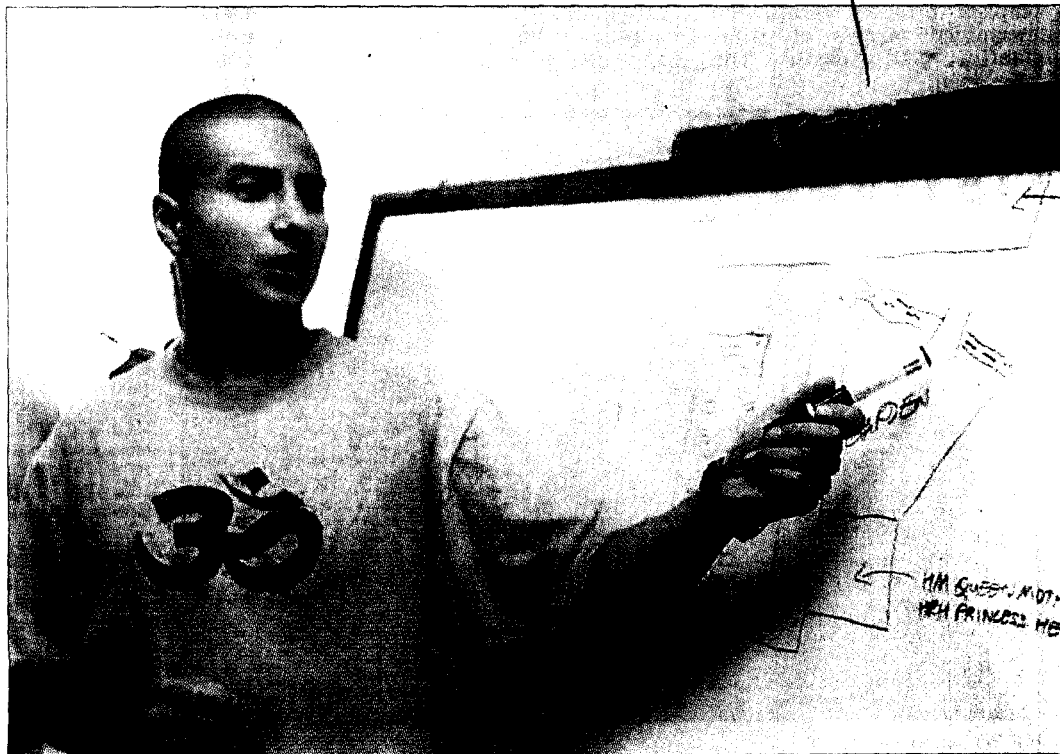
Captain Rajiv Shahi, an army doctor and son-in-law of Dharendra — the late monarch's youngest brother — who was present at the royal dinner at Narayanhity Palace but escaped unhurt, told reporters today that though he did not know the motive behind the killings, it was indeed Dipendra who did it.

Coincidentally, Shahi held the press conference — at the military hospital where the victims were brought that night — the day the inquiry commission set up by King Gyanendra began working. His move to go public is being viewed in certain quarters here as tantamount to influencing the probe.

Dressed in a casual T-shirt and jeans, the 30-year-old Shahi was visibly shaken as he gave a graphic description of the massacre. He said he reached the palace around 7.45 pm that night. Others had already gathered, but the King was yet to arrive.

Birendra stepped in at 8.15 pm into the hall. Dipendra arrived soon after, sozzled. He could hardly stand and was stammering, but greeted the King and the Queen. Seeing his condition, Shahi, Prince Nirajan — Birendra's youngest son — and Gyanendra's son Paras helped him reach his quarters on the first floor.

About 45 minutes later, when Shahi stepped outside into the garden, he heard a gunshot from



AJAY AGGARWAL/HINDUSTAN TIMES

Rajiv Shahi explains the sequence of events to reporters in Kathmandu on Thursday.

the hall and cries of 'call a doctor, the King has been shot'. He rushed in to find Birendra collapsing on a billiards table and bleeding profusely. "Being a doctor, I ran across the room to him, took off my coat and held it against the neck from where blood was gushing out. I saw Dipendra holding two assault rifles. The King told me that he had been shot in the neck and stomach.

Shahi claimed he saw Dipendra walking out of the hall. He then came back and shot Dharendra in the chest when he asked Dipendra why he had killed the King. Dipendra, said Shahi, walked in and out of the hall four to five times, killing people every time he came back.

Queen Aishwarya and Nirajan had by then run out of the hall into the garden. They were killed there.

At this juncture, Paras is believed to have pleaded with Dipendra to spare the rest. As for Shahi, he jumped out from the window and alerted the ADCs. Shahi said Dipendra shot himself though he did not see that happen. Dipendra's body was found in the garden. Shahi said the mayhem lasted 15 minutes, adding that the first thing he did was rush to the Army Hospital and alert the doctors.

This story has raised many eyebrows. First, could a man so drunk that he could hardly stand come back with two heavy rifles and pick up his targets one

by one? Second, as Shahi himself put it, Dipendra kept coming in and out of the hall several times. Isn't it normal for the others to run for cover in the interim?

But more important, what were the ADCs, who were in a room just outside, doing all the while? There are even specially trained troops patrolling the road outside. The carnage lasted for 15 minutes, yet no one intervened.

Could it be that Dipendra came out of his room hearing gunshots? That perhaps explains why he was so heavily armed. And that he was gunned down probably from the left.

Remember the bullet wound was on Dipendra's left temple though he was a right-hander.

HT Correspondent  
Mumbai, June 7

THE PRIME Minister was successfully operated upon for a right knee implant today and the prognosis was as good as in October 2000, when he underwent similar surgery on his left knee.

Dr C Ranawat, who performed the operation this morning, said the PM was responding well and would be put on physiotherapy in two or three days. "This will depend on the level of pain and how he is coping on that day."

The operation began at 9 am and took an hour and 10 minutes. Atal Bihari Vajpayee was awake throughout the procedure since he was anaesthetised only from waist down. "Had the operation theatre at Breach Candy been equipped with the facilities, he could have even watched the operation," Dr Ranawat told reporters.

No visitor will be allowed to meet the PM for three days. Vajpayee's left knee is now healed. "The implant is working fine. With the right knee joint implant surgery going fine as well, we hope he will be able to walk freely now," the doctor said.

The doctor parried all queries about his Padma Bhushan for the earlier surgery on the PM and laughed away suggestions that he might now be given a Bharat Ratna for the encore.

The PM's Press Officer Ashok Tandon said Vajpayee kept his date with Amitabh Bachchan on KBC on Wednesday. After a vegetarian dinner at 8.30 pm, he flipped through some files looking at news updates—particularly on Nepal—before switching to KBC.

He went to bed around 10.30 pm and woke up around 6 am to receive an early caller, L K Advani. He received bouquets from the President and messages from Sonia Gandhi, Manmohan Singh, Chandrababu Naidu and Sheikh Hasina.

# Maoists up and ready after royal massacre

Pramit Pal Chaudhuri *HP-11*  
New Delhi, June 7

A KING in crisis, a democracy surviving massacre and public outcry. Only Nepal's third force, its Maoist guerrillas, see a window of opportunity. Though they reportedly control five of Nepal's 75 districts and operate in 50 others, the Maoists have stuck to the rocky west and north. The present demonstrations offer a wave of urban anger, which the guerrillas hope to use to set up, for the first time, pockets of influence in Kathmandu.

The Maoist strategy has been to harness public suspicions about the royal massacre and direct it against their enemies. First, they have cast doubts on King Gyanendra's legitimacy by suddenly coming out in praise for the late King Birendra. Second, they have sought to organise street riots in

*reput* the capital. "Maoists on motorcycles," summed up one foreign diplomat. Third, they have reportedly diverted some of the blame towards India.

Both Indian and foreign diplomatic sources agree the Maoists are far from ragbag. Though underfunded, lightly armed and numbering possibly as few as 5,000, they have worked to a plan and shown ruthless discipline.

Since they were forced out of democratic politics in 1996, the Maoists have chipped away at Kathmandu's authority rather than take on the Nepalese State directly. They move into areas, destroy symbols of State authority replacing them with their own systems. Sources say Government presence in some of the districts that Kathmandu claims to "control" is little more than a single police station in the district capital.

*8/6* In textbook guerrilla tactics, the Maoists also attack attempts by aid agencies and NGOs to operate in the rural areas. Civil servants who are interested in helping the poor are killed, or have their kneecaps broken by hammers. The guerrillas' instincts are totalitarian.

The degree of external influence is probably exaggerated. The Maoists are a direct product of Nepal's poverty. The various centres of political power can barely see beyond Kathmandu valley. Even the Unified Marxist-Leninists are dominated by the same Chetris and Bahuns who control the Nepal Congress. A decade of democracy has yet to place one Dalit Nepalese in Parliament. The Maoist leadership draws heavily from the Magars, a Dalit mountain group.

The guerrillas admit to holding regular meetings with mem-

bers of the MCC of Bihar and the PWG of AP. But these groups can do much more than provide ideas. And Nepal's guerrillas prefer to cite Peru's murderous Shining Path Maoists as their role model. There is little evidence of Pakistani support. The ISI should know that a Maoist takeover would mean an end to their madrassa network in Terai. The guerrillas despise Dengist China. However, supplies of North Korean bullion and arms have been intercepted.

Though the fourth phase of their insurgency calls for setting up Maoist-controlled areas, most observers doubt they will try to take over Kathmandu. They don't even attack foreign trekkers. The Maoists will probably concentrate on setting up cells and recruiting cadre from the city. And wait and watch till the right moment arrives.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES



# Deceptive calm in Nepal

By Atul Aneja

**KATHMANDU, JUNE 6.** With the main political parties united on preserving Nepal's constitutional monarchy, King Gyanendra appears to have warded off the first serious challenge to his authority.

After two days of curfew and violence, the capital today acquired a semblance of normality. The Army, deployed in considerable strength since Monday, was virtually withdrawn to the barracks, though riot police were positioned at key road junctions. The flagship Nepal Airlines, which had suspended its flights since Friday, resumed operations this afternoon. A precautionary night curfew between 9 p.m. and 3 a.m. was, nevertheless, ordered.

Nepal watchers, however, caution that the calm on the streets may be deceptive, but acknowledge that an element of "spontaneity" which marked street violence in the last two days was abating. But with political parties expressing a stake in the status quo, chances of large-scale organised protests may be receding.

The ruling establishment appears to be making another attempt to secure the support of the CPN(UML), main opposition party. Moves are afoot to reconstitute an expanded inquiry committee to probe the slayings of King Birendra and several members of his family on Friday last. Besides the Chief Justice, Mr. Keshav Upadhyay, and the Speaker, Mr. Taranath Ranabhat, a more representative inquiry is likely to include Mr. P. C. Lohani, a former Foreign Minister and member of the pro-palace Rashtriya Prajanttra Party, Mr. Sushil Koirala, a loy-

alist of the Prime Minister, Mr. G. P. Koirala, and Mr. Bharat Mohan i, CPN(UML) chief whip. The commission, if required, will be allowed to seek assistance of specialists from the security forces.

## Procedural hurdle

As of now, the obstacle to the formation of a new committee is procedural. The CPN(UML), citing the 1990 Constitution, is demanding that the orders for the probe be passed only by an elect-

## Crackdown on media

By Atul Aneja

**KATHMANDU, JUNE 6.** The Nepal police today arrested Mr. Yuvraj Ghimire, the editor of a prominent Nepali daily for publishing, a lead article by a top Maoist leader, Mr. Baburam Bhattarai, in today's edition. Another editor belonging to *Janasta*, presumably a pro-Maoist newspaper, was also taken into custody.

According to authoritative sources, Mr. Ghimire, who edits *Kanthipur*, a sister publication of the English daily, *Kathmandu Post* can be charged with treason.

The article by Mr. Bhattarai which was published in *Kanthipur* has described the late King Birendra as a patriot who has been a victim of a conspiracy hatched by the Indian intelligence and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

Mr. Ghimire is a well known-journalist who had earlier worked in India for magazines such as *Outlook* and *India Today* as well as the daily, *The Indian Express*.

ed government. It had, therefore, on Tuesday declined to participate in the inquiry as it had been constituted the previous night by the King. While a meeting of the Cabinet, where the differences between the Palace and the Communists were expected to be reconciled, did not take place, the Prime Minister, the Chief Justice and the Speaker called on King Gyanendra to discuss the subject.

Once an understanding with the Communists, as is likely, over the formation of the committee is reached, King Gyanendra, in all probability, will acquire the support of all mainstream political parties so long as he continues to uphold the multiparty system. In fact, the ruling Nepali Congress, notwithstanding its deep internal divisions, has already expressed its whole-hearted support to King Gyanendra in anticipation of the latter's commitment to multiparty democracy and constitutional monarchy. India's expression of support for King Gyanendra at the highest levels may have also encouraged political parties here to back the new monarch.

## Bid to isolate Maoists?

With the interests of mainstream parties converging on the platform of constitutional monarchy, the stage has been set for the isolation of the Maoists, who have been demanding a republican Constitution.

When contacted by *The Hindu*, a senior Communist leader, Mr. Jhala Nath Khanal, said a common understanding between the CPN(UML) and the Maoists was not possible until the latter gave up their struggle.

More reports on Pages 13,14

THE HINDU



**N**EPAL, one of the world's most important buffer states, has long been the battleground where its two powerful neighbours, India and China, compete for influence. Each is now worried that the turmoil unleashed by the massacre of the Nepalese royal family on Friday will push Nepal into the arms of the other.

For years, India has dominated Nepal. It controls access to the ports through which all the country's trade must pass, supplies vital fuel and foodstuffs and can at any moment use its power to put pressure on the Kathmandu government. The Nepalese resent this hegemony.

Already, an embarrassed political establishment is trying to deflect popular anger at the royal killings on to India. Conspiracy theories abound on the streets of Kathmandu as one claiming that India masterminded the event to gain control and stem any rapprochement between Nepal and China.

Western diplomats discount all such stories as far-fetched and improbable. Few Nepalese were convinced by the claim that Crown Prince Dipendra would suddenly explode with fury and kill his family over a girl, although this was the unanimous account of police, doctors and palace insiders immediately

after the killings. Confusion turned to fury with the arrival of the official palace account on Sunday that the deaths were an accident and that the automatic weapons had

simply gone off at the dinner table with, apparently, no one to blame. Some suspicions centred on Gyanendra, King Birendra's brother, who was crowned king on Monday. Though no-one has managed to provide a credible reason why Gyanendra would want to see his brother dead, many were suspicious that he was not present at the family gathering on Friday and that his widely hated son Paras, who has a reputation for drunkenness and misbehaviour with guns, was there yet survived.

According to one early account, he walked a drunken Dipendra back to his bedroom to calm him down before the Crown Prince donned combat fatigues, armed himself with two automatic weapons and returned to the family gathering with lethal intent.

In a country where intrigue dominates the body politic and forces such as the Maoist rebels take full advantage of any



**W**HEN the gods fall out, mortals tremble. Nepal is today convulsed with fear for the future. The royal family's quasi-divine status as the world's last Hindu monarchy has not saved their kingdom from a terrible grief and a bleak future. When a family quarrel ends in such a bloodbath, the Nepalese see omens of savage times ahead. With little but beauty to export, Nepal, a country nestling among the world's highest peaks, has long been deep in the valleys of world statistics.

It is one of the 10 poorest countries on earth. Average incomes are only \$140 a year. Life expectancy is about 55, and infant mortality is high: 98 deaths per 1,000 live births. There is only one doctor for every 16,000 people. And with the population growing rapidly and limited agricultural land carved in terraces on the precipitous mountain walls, there is little wealth to be generated for the four out of five people who still live on agriculture.

Social unrest is growing. Maoists are plotting revolution. And a divided political class, now gripped by rumour,

ambition and stupefaction as it tries to restore calm to a shattered society. For years, Nepal was closed to the outside world. The Rana family, the powerful hereditary prime ministers for almost a century - from whom, ironically, the late Queen Aishwarya came and into which Crown Prince Dipendra wanted to marry against the furious opposition of his mother - had long forbidden all entry to Nepal, a policy reinforced in the years after the British left India.

Nepal had relied on the old Raj for protection against its foreign and domestic enemies. The British recruited Gurkhas from the Himalayan kingdom, but were otherwise a barrier against interference. The Ranas probably calculated Nepal was too weak and too backward to be opened up to outsiders. But in its mountain fastness, intrigue and political conflict were never far away.

The Ranas began to abandon Nepal's isolation even as they faced demands for democracy. The Nepalese royal family, which had been eclipsed for many years by the Rana family, reasserted itself, and its full sovereignty was restored in 1950. But politicians

hoping for reform and members of the Nepali Congress party who saw a chance for a democratic system enjoyed short-lived power: King Mahendra, the late King Birendra's father, imposed an absolutist monarchy in a 1962 constitution, supported by China and India.

But opening up the country was the catalyst for further turmoil. The Nepalese saw how badly they lived. The contrast between the educated elite and poor peasants was striking, especially to outsiders. In 1970, Duke of Gloucester represented the Queen at the late king's wedding. It was a glittering occasion: dignitaries from all over the world flew in for four days of colourful ceremonies and ritual. No expense was spared to provide them with lavish hospitality. The national budget was virtually drained. The Nepalese, however, were smiling, hospitable and seemingly peaceable - the perfect example of the "happy poor".

It did not take long for the world's hippies to discover the kingdom - and in they flooded, the long-haired and unwashed children of the rich West, looking for drugs, mystic philosophy and a change from the routine at home. They brought an unwelcome new view of the outside world. With them came other influences - traders, UN development officials, education and Cold War politics.

Nepal, strategically perched between Maoist China and non-aligned India, was buffeted by both. While India could make things difficult for Nepal by holding up goods destined for Nepal in Indian ports, it could also insist on the Nepalese pursuing policies that suit Delhi. China could and did infiltrate revolutionaries into a society that looked ripe for revolution. Maoism began to preach about inequalities. For years it made little headway in a feudal and loyal society.

But Maoist groups are now the



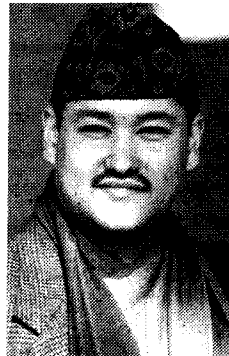
main political challenge to the monarchy and to the ruling establishment. King Birendra inherited a country with few options when he succeeded his father in 1972. He attempted to keep going the "panchayat" system of guided democracy. It did not work. That year there were riots in Kathmandu, and on several other occasions the King's power was challenged, culminating in an uprising in 1990 that forced him to cede all his political power and become instead a constitutional monarch. He may have done so reluctantly, but he did so successfully. Despite predictions, the monarchy survived. The King established himself around the world, forging close personal links with the British monarchy and with statesmen who visited Nepal. But politics remained turbulent.

Communism in Nepal is hardly the classic mould recognised in the West. There is virtually no urban proletariat. There is no way that the religious Nepalese, 89 per cent Hindu and 5 per cent Buddhist, would abandon their traditional way of life guided by ritual and respect for family and kin. Communist rule made little difference to Nepal's social structures. And after a while power returned to Congress leaders. Prime Minister, Girija Prasad Koirala, was elected nine months ago, but has not been able to bring political calm. The Opposition has boycotted parliament for the past six months. Last week,

# In a state of flux

In Nepal, intrigue dominates the body politic and forces such as the Maoist rebels take advantage of uncertainty to create instability. Half-facts quickly turn into rumours and then

certainties. Liberals see the hand of conservative forces in the royal massacre. They believe the democratic experiment has failed. Left-wingers say these forces may have wanted to see King Birendra replaced by a more conservative monarch less sympathetic to the pro-democracy movement, write **STEPHEN FARRELL** and **MICHAEL BINYON**



Clockwise from top left: The bodies of King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya and other relatives being cremated on the banks of the Bagmati river in Kathmandu on Saturday; the newly anointed King Gyanendra; his son and the new Crown Prince Paras Shah; the late Crown Prince Dipendra. Below: Nepalese youths through the streets of Kathmandu, mourning the killing of the royal family and (inset) the late king and queen in a file photograph. - AP/PTI

ago has failed in the wake of the growing Maoist rebellion. These forces, Left-wingers believe, may have wanted to see Birendra replaced by a more conservative monarch less sympathetic to the pro-democracy movement and likely to take a more robust approach than Birendra to the use of emergency powers granted to the monarch.

"There are various versions for what might have happened, but even the most rational of people do not want to abandon any of them," said one historian. "We have not yet seen any thorough investigation. We have not heard any witness accounts from survivors. Until we do, we will have to reserve judgment."

Waiting in the wings of this Himalayan drama are the Maoist insurgents, a home-grown guerrilla group based in the

countryside that for six years has waged a "people's war" and left 1,700 Nepalese dead.

The Maoists, now strong in almost all the country's provinces, may use the moment to challenge the new king and his government. The Maoist uprising has affected all 75 districts of the country, and five are virtually under the rebels' control. By last December, they had set up their own "people's government" there, strictly limiting access to outsiders, charging levies from households and setting off explosions in at least two factories owned by Indian multinationals. For a largely peaceful society, Maoist violence has been numbing. Well armed and financed from bank raids, the insurgents frequently storm police stations. In April they overran two police posts in

western Nepal, killing 70 policemen, many in cold-blooded executions.

The Maoists burst on the scene only in 1996, emerging from a series of splits in the Nepalese Communist Party. Its origins however go back earlier, to the time when King Mahendra seized absolute power and banned all political parties in 1960. One faction wanted to work with the King, the other with parliament and these roughly corresponded to the Sino-Soviet split, with the pro-king faction allied to Moscow. The demands of today's Maoist fighters, numbering up to 10,000 and including experienced fighters, are classic Communism: an end to royal privileges, a new constitution, abrogation of the friendship treaty with India, nationalisation of property and secularism. They were presented as an ultimatum to the Congress-dominated government in Kathmandu in 1996; four days before

the deadline, the uprising began. Police tactics against the Maoists have been heavy-handed, with many documented reports of arbitrary arrests and torture. This has increased support for them in the countryside, and among human rights champions; they were also quick to inflame ethnic discontent among Nepal's many different groups and exploit disillusion that there has been little visible change or social progress in the countryside.

The new King and his government will have to confront this problem quickly. He may find help from both India and China. So keen are they both to maintain Nepal's precarious political balance that they are likely to do whatever they can to help restore calm and normality. And that includes China offering help to beat the Maoists.

- The Times, London.

## Buffer buffeted

The main problem for Nepal, which is one of the 10 poorest countries on earth, is that it has no clearly sustainable economic future

consolidating their power in the countryside. The many ethnic groups, which lived in harmony for years, threaten now to open up differences and disputes. The main problem for the country is that it has no clearly sustainable economic future. Its main natural resource is water. This offers huge hydroelectric potential, and Nepal can export electricity to India - but oil would be more valuable. It also has timber and agriculture, producing rice, wheat, jute, maize, sugar and oilseed - hardly the products to pay for development. Industry consists mainly of light industries making consumer goods - cigarettes, clothing, soap, sugar, wool carpets, gems, jute, wood, leather and cement.

Nepal would be a tourists' paradise. But tourism it is not yet on a scale to sustain a population of 22 million, growing by 2.4 per cent a year. Political quarrels in developing countries are usually economic. Growth in Nepal has been slow - only 1.9 per cent in 1997-98. But the weekend massacre of the royal family has overshadowed and compounded any argument about Nepal's development. The Nepalese are intensely influenced by astral conjunctions, omens and natural phenomena. King Birendra's wedding almost had to be cancelled because a minor earthquake a few evenings earlier was seen as ominous; his coronation did not take place until 1975 because the astral combinations were not favourable. For those frustrated by such fatalism, the death of most members of the royal family, the most spectacular killing of a dynasty since the shooting of Tsar Nicholas II of Russia in 1918, removes a symbol of stability and continuity. Outsiders will now be desperate to reinforce stability. Nepal is probably the best exam-

ple of a buffer state in the world: its neutrality is vital to both India and China. As a pro-Western state in Asia, it has been an important contributor to regional stability at a time when the Afghan virus threatened to bring disruption to all poor, traditional societies. Deciding how to bolster Nepal will be difficult. The labyrinthine intrigues in the Narayanhiti Palace have their equivalent in other parts of society. What then should the royal

figurehead do to ensure stability at home and confidence abroad? Can Nepal's beauty, the bravery that underpinned the performance of the Gurkhas in the British Army, and the loyalty of its people be harnessed to hold the kingdom together?

The bullets have ricocheted beyond the palace walls. The Nepalese are waiting to see where else they have hit.

- The Times, London.

# Left skips probe panel, puts king Gyanendra in spot

By Siddharth Varadarajan  
The Times of India News Service

KATHMANDU: Curfew was reimposed here at 12 noon on Tuesday as the government grappled to deal with the main opposition party's refusal to participate in the investigative commission announced by King Gyanendra on Monday to probe Friday's massacre at the royal palace.

In what was seen in political circles as a shrewd move to make the commission credible in the public eye, King Gyanendra had made Communist leader Madhav Kumar Nepal a member of the three-man panel and given them three days to submit their report. The Communists' refusal to play ball is a stunning political reversal for Nepal's new king—a vote of no-confidence against him personally and in his promise to be transparent about what had transpired at the palace on that crucial night.

Mr Nepal's decision has clearly been taken with one eye fixed on the frosty reception the king's initiative has received from the people at large. In a bald statement that sought refuge in legalese, the Left leader said that while the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist) believed in the 1990 constitution and the rule of law, the committee set up by the king was not in accordance with the constitution or judicial propriety and, hence, he would not be taking part in its work. The sub-text of the statement was obvious. If the public had already decided the investigation would be a "cover-up", the Communists would obviously not like to be

tarnished by associating with it.

Mr Nepal's rejection could well inject a destabilising political dimension to the ongoing turmoil in the Himalayan kingdom. People are angry at the crowning of King Gyanendra and are convinced there is a "deep conspiracy" behind the shootout last week.

Although the streets were relatively empty on Tuesday morning and no untoward incidents were reported, those who

came together to pay floral tributes to the late King Birendra once again told journalists they believed King Gyanendra and his son Paras were behind the massacre. "There is no way Gyanendra's committee will report the truth," said one angry man. "India is still investigating the killing of Rajiv Gandhi ten years later. How will the truth come out in three days?"

People are also angry at the way the Indian media, especially Zee TV, has covered the tragedy. "Without any proof, it is wrong for you to have blamed Crown Prince Dipendra," said a man to the general approval of those around him. The Zee crew is moving around with police protection and, at least on two occasions, Indian TV reporters have been surrounded by angry youths.

Interestingly, cable operators here—who stopped relaying all entertainment channels the day after the palace massacre as a mark of respect for the dead—have now stopped relaying Indian news channels as well, although it is not clear whether this is due to any official diktat.

## Delhi holds out hand of friendship

By Seema Guha

**NEW DELHI: Ever since the grim tragedy unfolded in Nepal on Friday, India has been going out of its way to send reassuring signals to its Himalayan neighbour. On Tuesday, the signals came from the highest quarters—President K.R. Narayanan and Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, in condolence messages to King Gyanendra and Prime Minister G.P. Koirala respectively.**

**The tone of both letters was similar. India was a friend and shared Nepal's grim loss. New Delhi was confident that Nepal would overcome its current problems to put behind "this national tragedy".**

► Narayanan's assurance to king, Page 7

cially Zee TV, has covered the tragedy. "Without any proof, it is wrong for you to have blamed Crown Prince Dipendra," said a man to the general approval of those around him. The Zee crew is moving around with police protection and, at least on two occasions, Indian TV reporters have been surrounded by angry youths.

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THE TIMES OF INDIA

7 6 2001

# Troubled Nepal fights violence with curfew

## AGENCIES

KATHMANDU, June 5. Violence erupted again in Nepal early this morning, forcing the authorities to clamp a 12-hour curfew in Kathmandu and Lalitpur from noon.

Police fired in the air, burst tear-gas shells and lathi-charged to disperse protesters demanding to know the names of the "real culprits" behind the royal carnage. They demanded that they be hanged. Three persons were injured in firing.

The three-man panel, set up by King Gyanendra yesterday to probe the massacre, suffered a setback today, even before it could convene its first meeting. One of the members, Mr Madhav Kumar Nepal, resigned from the panel saying the panel was unconstitutional.

Mr Nepal, Communist Party of Nepal (UML) general secretary, said in a statement that there were "duly laid down procedures" for the setting up of such panels. "These have not been followed." The CPN-UML said the panel should have been set up by the Prime Minister

rather than the King.

The other panel members are the the Supreme Court Chief Justice, Mr Keshav Prasad Upadhyay, and Parliament Speaker, Mr Tara Nath Rana Bhat. The panel has been asked to submit its report within three days. Yesterday, the King had said the report would set at rest speculations over the killings.

Soon after the prohibitory orders clamped yesterday afternoon were relaxed at 5 a.m., mourning citizens, carrying portraits of King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya, marched in Kathmandu streets.

Mobs threw stones at police at several places and blocked roads by trees, uprooted roadside railings and burnt tyres.

Around 10 a.m., vans carrying riot police fanned out in Kathmandu and Lalitpur announcing reimposition of curfew from noon to midnight. Those violating the curfew would be imprisoned for a month or could even be shot. The streets were deserted 15 minutes before the dead-

line.

The DIG, Mr Om Bikram Rana, said more than 200 protesters had been detained for violating curfew.

Though reports of protests poured in from across the kingdom, prohibitory orders have been imposed in only two cities.

Authorities said at least two people were killed and 19 injured in riots yesterday, just hours after King Gyanendra was enthroned. Unconfirmed

reports said seven people were killed in police firing in Kathmandu valley.

The home ministry has set up a special cell to stop rumour-mongering, which, it said, was largely responsible for the violence.

The general secretary of the ruling Nepali Congress, Mr Sushil Koirala, has accused "anti-democracy forces", including underground Maoist rebels and extreme Right-wingers, of trying to create anarchy.

In his first TV address to an

angry nation, King Gyanendra had appealed to the people good senses. "It has been the tradition of the Shah dynasty to rule the country on the basis of people's aspirations and support. I'm confident I'll receive the co-operation from all to fulfil this commitment."

Political parties too have urged people to be calm and patient till Thursday, when the probe panel is expected to submit its findings.

The staff at the British embassy in Kathmandu have rescued 26 tourists trapped at the airport because of the violence. A four-vehicle convoy picked up 23 Britons, two Canadians and a Bengali and dropped them at a guest house in Kathmandu.

**Queen's condition:** The condition of Queen Komal Rajya Devi Shah, wounded in the palace firing, has improved. She was shifted from the Army hospital to a Kathmandu clinic yesterday. The condition of Prince Gorakh Shumshere Jung Bahadur Rana, husband of Princess Shruti who was killed in the shooting, was said to be "stable and improving".

■ Editorial: King sized problem, page 6  
■ More reports on pages 4 & 8



# KING'S COMMISSION FACES FIXING CHARGE

2011 HPI 6/6



Riot police remove road blocks put up by demonstrators in Kathmandu on Tuesday.

PTI PHOTO

## Opposition leader washes hands of bloodbath probe

Keshav Pradhan  
Kathmandu, June 5

KING GYANENDRA failed to stem popular anger with his regime despite ordering an inquiry into the palace massacre. The commission of inquiry ran into rough weather today as one of its members, Opposition leader and general secretary of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) Madhav Nepal declined to join it because it had been constituted without consulting the Cabinet.

Madhav Nepal's reluctance to join the probe was perhaps sparked by the fact that the Chief Justice, who heads the commission, is a political appointee. He is reportedly close to the Nepal Congress.

UML spokesman Pradeep Nepal said, "We want a commission that is formed according to the principles of democracy and constitutional monarchy."

Though the new King promised to abide by democratic principles, most Nepalese leaders and the people were sceptical about the inquiry commission, its brief tenure — all of three days — creating a crisis of credibility.

Given the veil of secrecy that still obscures the truth behind the massacre, there is widespread suspicion that the commission will have no option other than naming Dipendra as the man who killed his father and other family members. And the people are not willing to buy that theory.

A communist leader gave voice to the popular mood. "Will the King allow the questioning of the Queen and his son Prince Paras by the commission? If he

does so, he'll set a precedence that may go against the palace's interests in the future."

The ruling Nepali Congress, however, welcomed the commission. "Can there be a commission higher than this?" said NC general secretary Sushil Koirala. He said his party had been seeking a high-level commission right from the beginning.

But curfew had to be, finally, reimposed in Kathmandu today after a five-hour hiatus, to contain public disturbances. Two people reportedly died in today's clashes. Prime Minister G P Koirala tried to limit the damage by convening a meeting of legal experts and political representatives, including Madhav Nepal, to discuss the legitimacy of the commission set up by King Gyanendra.

But that was not enough to appease the people. They took to the streets again. In the twin temple cities of Kathmandu and Patan, people rioted, throwing stones at security personnel, burning tyres and digging up roads to press their demand that King Birendra's killer be brought to book.

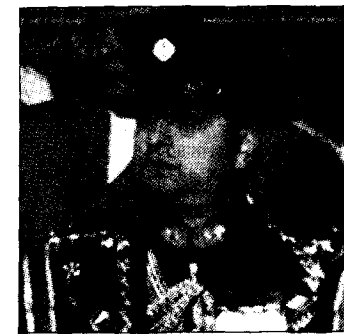
The police responded by lathi-charging and tear-gassing protestors. They also threatened that those who violated the curfew would be imprisoned, or shot if they resisted arrest.

Though it seems that King Gyanendra and his unpopular son will find it difficult to win the trust of the people, who want the truth about the massacre, he found some support from India.

President K R Narayanan and Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee sent messages to the King and Nepal's Prime Minister promising that India would help Nepal in its effort to overcome this great tragedy.

"My Government looks forward to working with Your Majesty's Government to intensify mutually beneficial cooperation between our two countries," Narayanan said in a letter to King Gyanendra.

Vajpayee too wrote to the King, saying, "We would like you to know that in this hour of national sorrow, India and its people are with the Kingdom of Nepal."



## Parties get ideas, King gets headache

Rajiv Bagchi  
Kathmandu, June 5

LEADER OF the Opposition in Parliament Madhav Nepal's refusal to join the inquiry committee set up by the King yesterday to probe the massacre at Narayanhity Palace may be the first signs of defiance of a royal decree by elected representatives, but the tension between the two have been building up since the bloody Friday night.

Political observers here say though the Nepali Congress has welcomed the move by the new King, there are voices of dissent within the ruling party who are questioning the Government's decision to associate with such an unpopular decision.

However, the Nepali Congress Government can claim victory of sorts in the first round of its battle with the monarch by forcing the King to announce an unprecedented inquiry into the affairs of the palace.

Apparently, gauging the rebellious mood of the people, who started questioning the silence of politicians to the killings, the Nepali Congress debated the issue at a meeting on June 2.

Most of those present there said since the Government represented popular aspirations, it should demand an investigation into the massacre. But Prime Minister G P Koirala advised caution and restraint.

However, the near-revolt on the streets forced Koirala's hands. Besides, Madhav Nepal, who is a general-secretary of the Communist Party of Nepal (UML), had gone on air saying "only an investigation could end the turmoil". There was always the chance that the Marxists, which ruled the country once, could use the opportunity to turn the tide against the Government.

At an emergency meeting of the Nepali Congress, it was decided that the party would now take a stand.

The day before Gyanendra was crowned king, Koirala declared that the only way to end the confusion was to order a probe, something that the new monarch announced soon after walking into Narayanhiti.

Relations between King Gyanendra and the Government had soured even before the crowning ceremony. The palace made it be known to the Government that it was unhappy with the manner in which the Koirala regime handled the crisis.

Sources said the King was upset with the mass protests against him on the day of the coronation. The palace held that the ugly scenes, especially outside the palace, could have been avoided had the administration acted swiftly. Curfew was imposed only after people threatened to storm the palace.

There were also differences between the palace and the Government on whether prohibitory orders were to be issued today.

Apparently, the palace was now dealing directly with the military and the police under the pretext that this was an emergency situation. The Government felt that clamping curfew today would prove counter-productive, but the palace prevailed on the administration to impose restrictions, citing security reasons.

A Nepali Congress leader said such differences are bound to increase in the future, especially since Gyanendra was never known to be a great sympathiser of democratic forces unlike his slain elder brother.

He was a staunch critic of his elder brother and in close circles even blamed Birendra for ushering in multi-party democracy in Nepal and creating instability. It is perhaps prophetic that Madhav Nepal has quit the inquiry committee saying, "It was not formed in a democratic way. There were no consultations between the palace and the political parties on it."

# Institution of monarchy in Nepal can no longer be taken for granted

By Jal Taraporevala  
**MUMBAI:** The fatal shooting of a number of members of the Nepal royal family has focused attention on the future of the institution of monarchy in the Himalayan kingdom. The factors which contributed to the success of the royal tradition in the past—the conservative character of society in Nepal, the historical roots of monarchy in the country and the role of the king as a symbol of unity and a watchdog of the democratic process—can, however, no longer be taken for granted.

Some of the explanations put out by the privy council and the palace in the aftermath of the killings underscore just how little the monarchy has adapted to the changing requirements of the modern age.

These explanations were aimed at calming pent-up emotions and smoothing the path to the succession of Gyanendra to the throne.

Nevertheless, the statements have only fuelled rumours and unwittingly provided propaganda ammunition to critics of the system. As Nepalese society inevitably opens up to outside influences, the royal family will come under increasing pressure to respond to changing social perceptions if it is not to lose credibility.

The killings come at an especially delicate political juncture for Nepal. Frequent political infighting, underlying social tensions and increasing economic hardships have contributed to the current

fragility of democracy in Nepal.

The ruling Nepali Congress is virtually split down the middle. The main opposition Communist Party of Nepal (UML) is not that favourably disposed towards the institution of monarchy, partly on ideological grounds and partly because of the perception in its ranks that the palace has sometimes worked against its interests in the past.

Public anger has frequently been directed against the political parties and not the palace since, under the 1990 multi-party constitution, the king wields only limited powers. How far the palace escapes serious public criticism in the future will hinge on a number of factors. These

## NEWS ANALYSIS

include the scale of the socio-economic challenges facing the country, the image projected by the royal family and the extent to which the palace is seen to be playing a neutral role in overseeing the functioning of the democratic machinery of state. King Gyanendra's task is not rendered easy by the fact that he strongly opposed the introduction of multi-party democracy 11 years ago.

Maoist rebels, who are committed to the overthrow of the monarchy in Nepal, have recently stepped up their attacks in the west of the country. Unless the underlying causes which have fuelled this Maoist insurgency are effectively tackled, the rebels could well find fertile ground to extend their activities to other parts of the country.

# Noblesse oblige in Nepal

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576

ONE need not scoff at the notions of *noblesse oblige* that have clearly dominated the thinking of the Nepalese establishment in dealing with the ghastly events that took place in the Royal Palace on that fateful night of 1 June. It was only in living memory that the monarch looked upon as a reincarnation of Vishnu gave way to popular demand and allowed an elected parliament and a government headed by the Prime Minister who would also be responsible to elected representatives. The most plausible recital of events suggests that it was crown prince Dipendra in an inebriated state, aggravated by what is known of his temper, stormed out of the dining room and returned in military fatigues and an automatic weapon and while clearly not in full possession of his faculties wiped out almost the entire Royal family, including his parents, the King and Queen, before turning the weapon on himself. The queen mother escaped as she was in another room answering a telephone call. The immediate provocation seems to have been his desire to marry someone whom his mother considered not entirely suitable, moreover the timing was disapproved by astrologers. The details are personal and private but spare a thought for the poor child who, wrongly, must feel responsible for it all. There may be variations on the theme.

C R IRANI

## CAVEAT

TWO official announcements in quick succession reflect the dilemma faced by the Court. The first suggested that an automatic weapon went off accidentally or perhaps exploded. The second from the Regent, Prince Gyanendra, a tricky customer at the best of times, was that the firing was *accidental*. We are left to suppose that either the explosion was so selective that it only targeted individuals and a large number at that, or that the victims presented themselves in serial order before an automatic weapon that knew when to begin and when to stop. The dilemma facing the Nepalese Court or the equivalent of a privy council was real. King Birendra had to be succeeded by his son; if it was the latter who pulled the trigger, how would you explain his elevation to the throne. Reports that he was on a life support system were intended to give the palace time they needed. Now that Dipendra too is dead and Prince Regent Gyanendra crowned within hours, a new situation arises.

This is not the only worry. In recent

times Nepal has become the happy hunting ground for China, for Pakistan and for intriguers of all descriptions, including Subhas Ghisingh, our friend in Darjeeling, apart from the traditional Indian influence dictated by geography and close relations between neighbours with bonds of culture and religion but also with problems between them. Gyanendra and Birendra, although brothers, were poles apart, and with Gyanendra crowned King, India has cause for greater concern.

There are reports that Indian newspapers were burnt in Kathmandu. It is reasonable to suppose that people were expressing their resentment that newspapers were not telling the whole story. If other newspapers had been available in any quantity they would have been burnt too. The impatience with suppression of the truth, increased with the floating of improbable explanations, must be real. In this time and age, people want to know the truth and Nepalese are alert and conscious enough of their rights to demand that they be told what happened. It is a common error to assume that people are willing to be treated like backward children who cannot be trusted to know the whole truth because it is inconvenient or too tragic or too disturbing.

The largest Opposition party in Nepal is Communist and although they support the monarchy, except for a rump that wants a republican constitution, the Nepalese can take it. And the truth will be out despite all the efforts being made to spoon feed the populace with carefully doctored morsels of the story. For instance, questions will be asked what were the palace staff doing while the carnage was going on? Surely there were a number of servants at the dinner, there would have been the King's ADCs and other staff; there would have been some security.

THE temptation to fish in troubled waters especially on the part of Nepal's neighbours inimical to India will be real and must be countered. This will require all of India's tact, firmness and diplomacy. Fortunately, our current Ambassador to Kathmandu is skilled and experienced and can be trusted to acquit himself well for his country. But it will not be easy. Gyanendra has no time for democracy and Koirala does not lack statecraft.

The Nepalese must be sure that India will stand by Nepal and her people.

# Gurkhas mourn in UK

London, June 4 (Reuters): Hundreds of Gurkha soldiers, among the most feared in the world, staged a poignant ceremony today to mourn Nepal's massacred royal family.

Some 800 members of the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Gurkha Rifles paraded at Sir John Moore barracks in Shorncliffe, southern England, and, in sombre mood and with flags at half-mast, laid flowers around portraits of Nepal's slain king and queen.

Their commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Ian Thomas, said he had briefed his men about the situation in Kathmandu. At a simple ceremony, Thomas told his men: "We must look to our elite traditions and strong bond as a regiment to pull us through and get on with life."

The Gurkhas' mood was "inevitably sombre", Thomas said. "There was a degree of profound shock."

Gurkhas from Nepal have served in the British army for nearly 200 years, in actions ranging from 19th century colonial campaigns to the 1982 Falklands War.

Ten of the 26 Victoria Crosses — Britain's highest award for gallantry — awarded to the Indian Army in World War II were won by Gurkhas though they made up only a fifth of the Indian forces.

Renowned as fiercely loyal and tough fighters, they fired the first shots of the UN peacekeeping mission to East Timor in 1999. Earlier in the same year, they spearheaded the Nato push into Kosovo. "My company opened the border and marched in," said Thomas.

The status of the Gurkhas as part of both the British and Indian armies was formalised in a 1947 tripartite agreement between Nepal, Britain and India. Britain first encountered

Gurkhas in the Anglo-Nepalese war of 1814. Gurkha fighters, said a British officer at the time, were equipped with fearsome curved kukri knives "which they used for cutting branches as well as carving up their enemies".

They still do. But the widespread story that blood must always be spilled whenever a Gurkha draws his kukri is not strictly true, explained Thomas. "That is a myth we happily perpetuate in the minds of our enemies," he said.

Thomas said his men had been excused all but essential duties on Monday to allow them a day of mourning for their revered king and queen.

Thomas said the morale of his Gurkhas was holding up and they would be continuing with training for a peacekeeping mission to Bosnia.

"We are professional soldiers," he said. "We'll just get on with it."



A Gurkha soldier carries flowers at a memorial parade in the UK. (AFP)



MILOVA ROY CHAUDHURY  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, June 4. — It has become difficult to discount suggestions of a palace coup in Nepal, given the circumstances surrounding the massacre of the royal family.

Many observers, including diplomats in Kathmandu, say there are enough indications to suggest that what transpired at Narayanhity Palace on Friday night was not just a crime of passion but a well-thought-out coup to instal Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah on the throne.

"The crown prince was technically dead on Friday night, and Gyanendra's statement yesterday about the "accidental" firing of the weapon was aimed at giving himself le-

# Was it a coup?

gitimacy, by seemingly absolving Dipendra of regicide and of slaying of his parents," a source said. "Actually, the young fellow was egged on to commit the crime, and then he was shot in the head and back, by his cousin," (Gyanendra's son, Prince Paras, who was present at the dinner but left the room conveniently just before the bloodbath). Gyanendra was in Pokhara and his wife, Mrs Komal Rajya Laxmi, though present at the dinner table, sustained only minor injuries and is reportedly out of danger.

"It was a well-planned conspiracy. The Army chief was reportedly not even present during the royal couple's funeral. The absence of any credible theory that covers all the details of the crime, and the fact that the political establishment has chosen to maintain complete silence over the horrific events has

raised eyebrows and lent further credence to the widespread speculation of a palace coup.

Observers say the speed at which the royal family members bodies were cremated (even before the realisation had crept in), speaks of Gyanendra's overweening ambition. He has always envied his brother's popularity, and "didn't even want to give people a chance to mourn their beloved monarch," an official said. "In the absence of the son, the brother should have lit the pyre, but he (Gyanendra) didn't accord his elder brother that respect."

Some observers fear that Gyanendra's accession to the throne may lead to violence that could threaten the fragile polity of the Himalayan kingdom.

THE STATESMAN

TUESDAY, JUNE 5, 2001

## NEPAL'S HOUR OF SORROW

410-10

THE SHOCK WAVES over the unexplained assassination of King Birendra, an immensely popular constitutional monarch, have caused a violent crisis of confusion that threatens to engulf Nepal's democratic political system as well. An eerie saga of a regicidal carnage has deepened into a mystery, with the highly emotive events of the royal succession on Monday serving as a changing context for the rising popular unrest. A number of royal dignitaries, including King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya, lost their lives in a mass slaughter that occurred inside the palace last week. Aggravating the tragedy were the subsequent reports about the hospitalisation of Prince Dipendra in a critical condition in the specific context of suspicions about his involvement as the assassin. As the slain monarch's designated heir, Prince Dipendra was quickly proclaimed the king too. He remained uncrowned for nearly two days thereafter until his death on Monday, although the palace and the political authorities took care in the meantime to deflect the blame from him for a treasonable offence. Yet, the imposition of a curfew for King Dipendra's funeral is an overwhelmingly sad commentary on the disturbed state of the nation. It is in Nepal's enlightened interest to put its house back in order as quickly as possible. Indeed, the international community, led by India, has expressed much empathy.

Yet, Nepal is struggling to come to terms with the rapid changes at the helm. The groundswell of popular anger, manifest in spontaneous rioting over the suspicions of a cover-up, has not been immediately reversed by the crowning of Prince Gyanendra — slain King Birendra's brother — as the constitutional monarch following King Dipendra's death in hospital. In fact, the unusual security alert that punctuated the coronation on Monday seems to have only heightened the country's sense of a spiralling crisis over its sorrow. While independent reports from Kathmandu spoke of a public protest

9/6

against Prince Gyanendra's ascension to the throne, he rightly sought to soothe the widespread indignation with a solemn assurance that his brother's gruesome murder would be investigated with a view to making the findings known to the people. In a gesture of goodwill towards the citizens, King Gyanendra explained that constitutional and legal difficulties had prevented him from being explicit earlier about the manner in which his brother had died. The new king, the second in two days, was now referring to his own previous statement that an accidental shooting inside the palace had accounted for the killings of King Birendra and several others of the royal entourage. For the ordinary Nepalese, who deeply revere late King Birendra for having remained a patron of democracy after being forced to give up absolute power, what will matter the most is a transparent probe. The investigation should answer all questions about the ghoulis tragedy with convincing credibility.

While King Gyanendra has certainly struck the right note about unravelling the facts of the tragedy, his own earlier version of an accidental shooting is no longer the final word on the issue. In a sense, the constitutional difficulty, which the new king has now spoken of, may only revive the tale of a king being killed by a crown prince. It will also stoke concerns about why the latest monarch had, while serving as a regent, chosen to talk of an accident at all in the first place. These and other related posers will need to be addressed by the palace and the civilian political establishment alike. The Prime Minister, Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala, is already under fire for having failed to ensure the security of a titular but influential king. Nepal's political order offers the monarch a considerable strategic space as an opinion-maker. It is in this sense that India and others will need to know the opinions of the new king on such key matters as Nepal's ties with its big neighbours.

THE HINDU

JUNE 5, 2001

# 195 YEARS LATER: FLASHBACK TO 1806 PLOT

BY PUSHPA ADHIKARI

Kathmandu, June 4: A parallel is being drawn between a plot hatched in 1806 by a Nepali Prime Minister to grab power and Friday's massacre of the kingdom's royal family, with both killings being traced to internal feuds in the palace.

The first recorded massacre for power in Nepal's history occurred in 1806 after the assassination of King Rana Bahadur Shah. The then Prime Minister, Bhimsen Thapa, used the king's assassination to liquidate all potential rivals among court officials by implicating them, on the basis of trumped-up charges, in the plot against the Rana Bahadur's life.

A total of 93 persons, 16 women and 77 men, lost their lives as a result of Thapa's machinations to grab power. Thapa later declared the 18-month-old prince Rajendra the new king and the youngest wife of the slain Rana Bahadur, the 12-year-old Tripurasundari, regent to the throne and started ruling the country.

A senior Nepali historian has found similarity between the 1806 massacre and the assassination Friday evening of 12 members of the royal family, including King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya.

Birendra and the others were allegedly gunned down by former Crown Prince Dipendra following an argument over his choice of bride. The crown prince then reportedly attempted suicide. Prince Gyanendra, Birendra's brother who has been appointed regent, has claimed the deaths were caused by the accidental discharge of an automatic weapon.

"There could be many more deaths inside the palace which have not been reported so far but could be recorded in history for generations to come," the historian said on condition of anonymity. "The regent Gyanendra is known for his differences with the slain King Birendra over the handling of affairs of state. Birendra's liberal attitude towards democracy and his decision to become a constitutional monarch were not liked by many in the palace," the historian said.

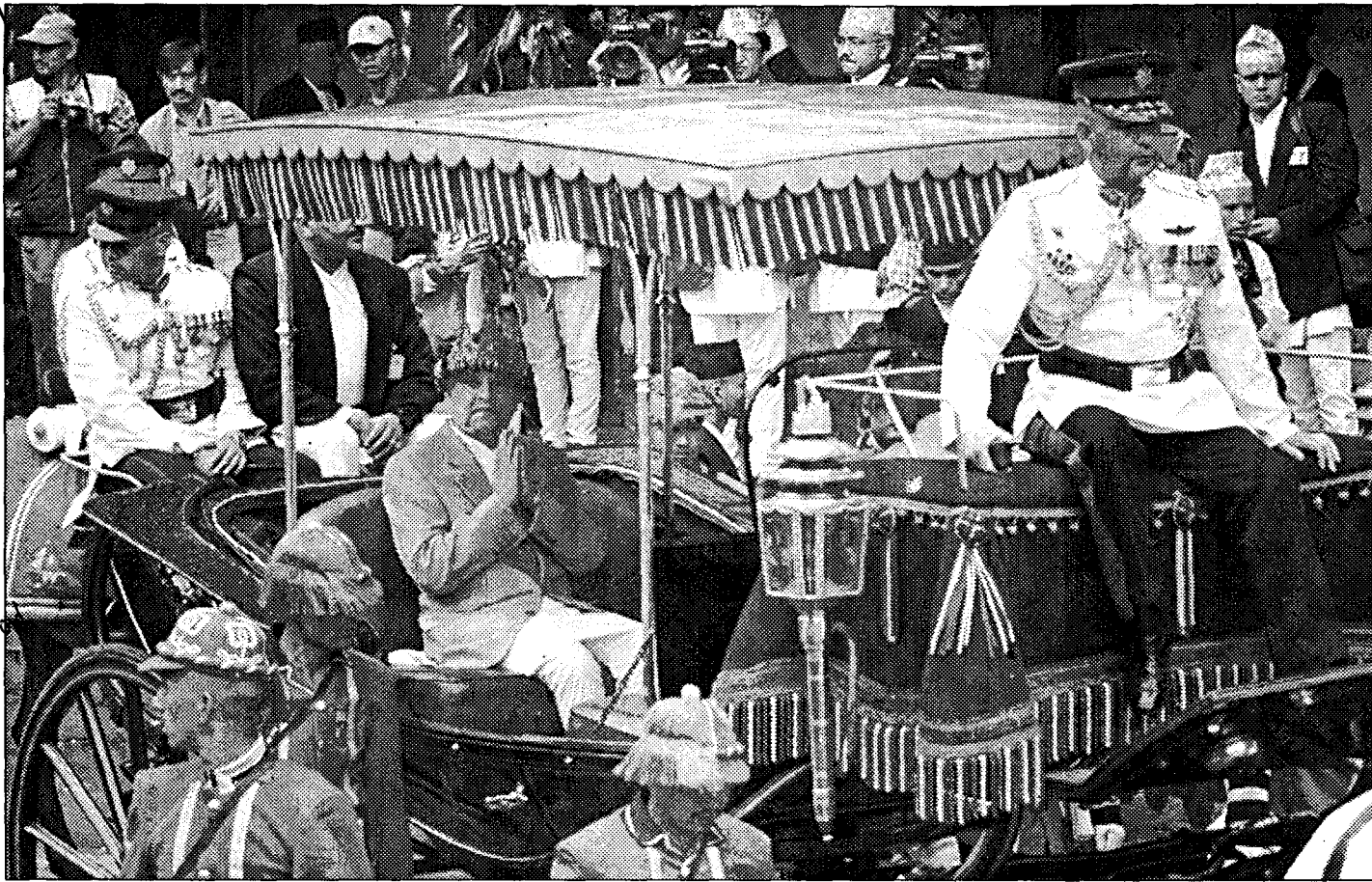
"In the palace, royal guards do not allow anybody to carry weapons in the presence of the king. Since the dinner hall, where the massacre reportedly took place, is in a different block from where crown prince Dipendra reportedly brought the guns he used, why and under whose instructions did the royal guards allow Dipendra to move around with weapons?" the historian said.

It was reported in the local media that Dipendra went out of the dining hall and returned with an automatic rifle before firing indiscriminately at members of the royal family.

"The emphasis is being put on the regent's absence at the scene but it seems impossible that the royal family would discuss the issue of the crown prince's marriage in the absence of Prince Gyanendra, one of the most influential members of the royal family," the historian stated.

"The escape of Queen Mother Ratna, who was also present in the dining hall, has further complicated the issue as she, as well as the regent, are known for their not too liberal attitudes towards the current political system," he added. King Gyanendra was out of the national capital at the time of the massacre and did not attend the dinner, a formal once-a-month gathering of the ruling family.

King Gyanendra has issued a statement saying, "According to the information received by us, (the royal family members) were seriously injured in an accidental firing from an automatic weapon." (Indo-Asian News Service)



ROYAL CARRIAGE: Nepal's newly-crowned King Gyanendra greets people from a carriage in front of the Hanuman Palace in Kathmandu on Monday. Nepal proclaimed its second king in two days on Monday, naming regent Prince Gyanendra as monarch following a mysterious palace massacre which rocked Nepal to its foundations. (Reuters)

## Gyanendra must win people's support

Kathmandu, June 4: Nepal's newly-crowned King Gyanendra and Queen Komal will have to work to win the support of the Nepalese people that King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya enjoyed before they were shot dead with six others in the Friday night Royal Palace massacre.

Gyanendra, 53, is the younger brother of the slain king and Komal the younger sister of the slain queen.

The new king is mainly known for his keen interest in nature and wildlife conservation activities. He is chairman of the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation and

has worked on behalf of the World Wildlife Fund.

King Gyanendra has also been critical of the system of democracy his brother established 11 years ago after a series of bloody protest demonstrations on the grounds that many politicians are corrupt and Nepal is still an impoverished country.

Gyanendra's family has been hit by a number of headline-grabbing scandals involving his son, paras, who is next in the line of succession. Paras has been involved in a number of fatal car accidents which many Nepalese felt were

never fully explained because of his ties to the royal family.

Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev was born on July 1947 as the second son of then Crown Prince Mahendra and Crown Princess Indra Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah. In 1950 at the age of three, he first became king of Nepal when the autocratic Rana clan of Nepalese prime ministers installed him as monarch after King Tribhuvan and the rest of the royal family joined forces with pro-democracy groups and fled to India.

But the manoeuvre by the Rana clan failed and the coronation of

the three-year-old Gyanendra was annulled.

Gyanendra was sent with two brothers, including Birendra, to a catholic missionary school in Darjeeling, India. He completed his studies there in 1956. And later studied at Cambridge, England.

He enjoys reading and as a youth played hockey and cricket. Like his brother, Birendra, he married a daughter of the Rana clan, moves that helped ease the rivalry between the two dynasties.

Gyanendra and Komal, who were married in 1970, have two children, Prince Paras, and a daughter, Princess Perana. (DPA)

## RSS suspects conspiracy behind Nepal royal killings

BY OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, June 4: Even as the Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee made it clear that the Indian government did not subscribe to any conspiracy theory over the killings of royal family members in Nepal, RSS chief K.S. Sudarshan described the killings as a "conspiracy to embitter, friendly Indo-Nepal ties."

The Prime Minister said that "India does not subscribe to any conspiracy theory and would provide all possible cooperation."

Mr Vajpayee said that the government was "studying the developments in Nepal and are confident that the situation will improve." He remarked: "I have spoken to the Nepalese Prime Minister and we have assured them of our cooperation."

However, the head of the Sangh Parivar, Mr Sudarshan, appeared to be convinced of a conspiracy angle in the killings. In a statement issued by the RSS, Mr Sudarshan claimed that the killings were the handiwork of those who wanted to "embitter Nepal's ties with India." The RSS chief felt that since Nepal was a "Hindu Rashtra," the "anti-Hindu elements could be behind the killings." For the RSS chief, "King Birendra was considered incarnation of Lord Vishnu."

He observed that during the past few years there had been an upsurge of anti-Hindu feelings in Nepal. It can be mentioned that during the Hrithik Roshan controversy in Nepal, the RSS and its mouthpiece had talked about "anti-Hindu movements being planned by the ISI elements."

THE ASIAN AGE

7-5 JUN 2001

DIPENDRA IS DEAD, GYANENDRA CROWNED KING

# Riots erupt in Kathmandu

By Atul Aneja

KATHMANDU, JUNE 4. A wave of protests rocked Kathmandu after the fatally-wounded King Dipendra was declared dead and Prince Gyanendra enthroned as Nepal's new monarch.

(According to a PTI report, two persons were killed in police firing and lathicharge while 19 were injured. A 25-year-old youth was shot dead by the police as about 2,000 people defied curfew this evening and gathered in Koteswar near the airport while another died of injuries sustained when police lathicharged protesters out-

side the Hanumandhoka palace.)  
So intense is the resentment against the new royal lineage that a confrontation between the royalty and a highly-politicised mass opposition cannot be ruled out. Much will now depend on the stance adopted by the monarchy and the G. P. Koirala Government towards the simmering turbulence.

The use of excessive force may be viewed by some, especially within the monarchy, as an option to tackle the groundswell of unrest. This may only, if at all, work in the short run because the adoption of an authoritarian course is likely to deepen the already visible polarisation between the new monarchy and a large section of the population, analysts say.

Prince Dhirendra, injured in Friday's shootout, died in hospital taking the number of royals dead to 10, including King Dipendra, authoritative sources said.

The main target of today's protests was the new King's son Paras, widely perceived as a brash youngster, and King Gyanendra himself. The common perception was that both may have had a hand in Friday's massacre while the late King Dipendra was merely made a scapegoat.

Slogan-shouting protesters who had gathered on the main roads leading to the palace demanded "death for the actual killers". The slogans, to a somewhat lesser degree, also targeted the Prime Minister, Mr. G.P. Koirala, and his Home Minister. The anger against Mr. Koirala is on account of his perceived inability to "face the people and offer a cogent explanation" on what actually transpired in the Narayanahiti Palace on Friday night.

Aware that the lack of transparency and the specious explanation rendered by King Gyanendra yesterday that the incident was a mere accident had ignited public passions, the Government here began a dam-



**AMGRY FACE OF NEPAL: Protesters dispersing after police fired teargas shells at them in Kathmandu on Monday.** — AP

age-control exercise. King Gyanendra, in an address to the nation, made a passionate plea for calm and promised a thorough inquiry, while Mr. Koirala and the opposition CPN (UML) leader, Mr. Madhav Nepal, appealed for calm over State television. A Home Ministry statement promised to reveal all facts related to the episode at an appropriate time.

## Judicial probe

KATHMANDU, JUNE 4. Bowing to public demand, Nepal's King Gyanendra today ordered a judicial inquiry into the massacre of virtually the entire royal family.

"We have constituted a three-man commission of inquiry headed by the Chief Justice Keshav Prasad Upadhyaya to investigate the circumstances leading to the tragic incident," the King said in a statement broadcast on State radio.

The panel would submit its report to him within three days, the King said.

Other members of the commission are Parliament Speaker, Mr. Tara Nath Rana Bhat, and the Leader of the Opposition in the House, Mr. Madhav Kumar, of the Communist Party of Nepal (UML). — PTI

**Bid to block King's motorcade: Page 12**



**Nepal's new King Gyanendra greeting officials after being enthroned in Kathmandu on Monday.** — AP

# Maoists seem to be the only gainers from Nepal crisis

By Manoj Joshi

NEW DELHI: The protests, firings and curfew that have marked King Gyanendra's accession to the Nepalese throne is an ill-omen, riding on the back of a calamity. India, which shares a 1,700-km open border with the Himalayan kingdom, is worried over the developments in Nepal.

In a land where the literacy rate is a little over 25 per cent, the monarchy has been deeply revered and has served the practical role of keeping the disparate people of the mountain kingdom united. The inability of Nepalese political parties to make parliamentary democracy work has only served to highlight this role. But the circumstances of Gyanendra's accession are bound to weaken the authority of the constitutional head of state vis-a-vis Nepal's factious parties as well as the people of the country.

The only gainers at this point appear to be the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), whose underground chief Prachanda declared in a statement on Sunday that the massacre "portrays the end of the present political system". The party abandoned the parliamentary path for the gun in 1996, and has since embarked on an insurgency which has taken 1,700 lives and which, according to intelligence assessments, has intensified markedly this year. The Maoists wield great influence among the student groups of Kath-

mandu and it is no secret that they have formed the core of the protests related to India, be it against the teaching of Sanskrit in schools or Hrithik Roshan movies.

Sources say that the visceral hatred of the Maoists for India has persuaded them to strike up an opportunist alliance with Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence. For the past decade or so, the ISI has used Kathmandu as a staging area for sending agents and explosives into India. Indications that the Maoists

are playing their cards carefully come from Prachanda's statement which termed the killing of King Birendra and other members of the royal family as a "pre-planned massacre". The statement praised King Birendra for his "patriotic" and liberal attitudes and attacked Prime Minister G.P. Koirala, and "the India capitalist, hegemonist rulers".

Though the party demands a new constitution, its goal is to overthrow monarchy and replace it with a one-party state. The Maoists control five of Nepal's 75 districts and are active in 50 more. The epicentre of the insurgency lies in the mid-western hill districts of Nepal, including Pokhara. The movement has thousands of well trained cadres who are following the classic Maoist strategy of striking roots in the rural area and building up impressive strength to overwhelm Kathmandu.

NEWS ANALYSIS

# Caretaker king claims murders were accidental

Dirk Beveridge

KATMANDU 3 JUNE

NEPAL'S CARETAKER king said on Sunday said eight members of the royal family were shot to death by accident, despite official reports saying the crown prince had killed his relatives in a dispute over his wedding plans.

The tragedy has left this Himalayan nation with a new king — who some allege was the gunman — clinging to life and raised questions about where the monarchy goes from here.

Crown Prince Dipendra — who became the formal king upon the death of his revered, soft-spoken father — was pictured in royal attire on page one of the government newspaper, *The Rising Nepal*. But the 29-year-old remains in critical condition in a hospital and his uncle, Prince Gyanendra, is acting king in his place.

Gyanendra issued a statement Sunday blaming "accidental firing of an automatic weapon" for the death of King Birendra, the queen and six other royals Friday. But he did not say who fired the weapon or explain how such an accident could have happened. Government officials and senior military sources inside the palace have maintained the royals were killed by Dipendra who then turned his gun on himself.

By mentioning the gunfire, Prince Gyanendra went further than *The Rising Nepal*, which referred to "an unanticipated incident." Government officials were unavailable for comment on Sunday as a five-day mourning has been declared.

Senior military and palace sources said on Sunday that the crown prince shot the family and then himself. Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala said late on Saturday that the government will investigate the killings in an apparent attempt to appease an angry public that is doubtful of both



HOW GREEN WAS MY VALLEY: An undated file photo of Prince Dipendra raising a toast to a visiting dignitary in Kathmandu. — Reuters

explanations. Many suspect the government's involvement in the deaths.

"I want to assure the people that the truth and facts of this incident will be made public," he said.

However, Nepal's constitution allows only the king to launch an investigation. "An inquiry commission will be formed only by the king, not the government," Govind Raj Joshi, the most senior government minister after Koirala said. "The government does not have any role to investigate this."

Mr Joshi said the country — already suffering from a Maoist insurgency and opposition demands that Koirala resign over a government bribery scandal —

would overcome the tragedy.

Koirala visited Dipendra and three injured royal family members in the military hospital on Sunday. "The condition of King Dipendra is extremely critical," the prime minister told state-run radio. The report did not say whether Dipendra was still on life support, as reported on Saturday.

Many ordinary Nepalis refuse to believe the crown prince slaughtered the royal family. Yet many said they found it difficult to accept the seriously wounded crown prince as their king.

Eight people died in the attack Friday night and three were injured. Details have remained sketchy. — AP

*The Economic Times*

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# Himalayan Challenge

The shock and outrage over the killing of king Birendra and his family members and the outbursts of grief by the hundreds of thousands who thronged the funeral procession attest to the monarchy's strong, unifying hold over the Nepalese people. The cries of "Long live our beloved king" that rent the air on the monarch's last journey is evidence enough of his overwhelming grip over people's hearts and minds even though he had ceded political power 11 years ago. The advent of political democracy and Birendra's own acceptance of his role as a constitutional monarch did little to diminish the affection in which he was held by the Nepalese. Indeed, in the Himalayan kingdom, the king is venerated as an incarnation of Vishnu; as the supreme symbol of spiritual and cultural confluence. While political mortals ran the administration, the monarch remained the sole sustainer, a lofty figure of continuity who transcended the murky world of parliamentary politics. Little wonder, then, that his popularity actually soared in the aftermath of the mass protests that eventually led to the installation of a multi-party electoral system. Unfortunately for Nepal, the nascent, if a little too vibrant, democracy has been dogged ever since by corruption and political skulduggery. As regimes quickly changed — 10 governments in 10 years — development was badly affected, and growing pauperisation and violence only gave rise to more despair than hope. Ironically, the wilful indifference of the new political class to economic priorities and issues of governance seemed only to strengthen the bonds of an alienated people — who saw themselves as abandoned in the new political order — with the monarchy which remained the only enduring symbol of stability.

In Nepal's hour of grief, the tragedy should awaken the politicians — who have fouled the democratic pitch — to their mandated responsibilities. This is the most serious political challenge to confront Nepal after the monarchy became a casualty of popular protests. The hard-won democracy is today endangered by the rising power and appeal of the Maoists, who recently enforced a three-day bandh and earlier ordered the closure of schools. If despite the numerous encounters and killings, the Maoists appear to be gaining, it is because of the government's failure to tackle poverty, corruption, exploitation and mismanagement that have kept the Nepalese poor. There is no reason for such unmitigated poverty in Nepal with its rich abundance of natural resources and hard-working people. Yet, there has been little economic development during the 10 years of multi-party government. The march of the Maoists cannot be halted by the use of paramilitary forces alone. Their predatory power can be broken only by eliminating the conditions of underdevelopment and deprivation in which they thrive and find support. It is time the squabbling politicians woke up to the country's potential and expectations. In this hour of trauma, Nepal's friends can only hope that the death of Birendra will act as a much-needed purge to rid the kingdom's benighted polity of the many toxins — corruption, venality, maladministration, self-aggrandisement, petty factionalism, to name a few — that have vitiated this infant democracy.

# Gun went off accidentally, says Nepal government

By Siddharth Varadarajan  
The Times of India News Service

KATHMANDU: In the first official admission that late King Birendra and seven other members of Nepal's royal family died of gunshot wounds, Prime Minister G.P. Koirala and Prince Gyanendra, the regent, said in virtually identical statements that the tragedy occurred when an automatic rifle went off "accidentally". They did not, however, say who fired the gun or provide any details of the circumstances leading up to the incident.

Thousands of people gathered outside the gates of Nepal's royal palace on Sunday, the first full day of national mourning for King Birendra and other members of the royal family. While Kathmandu remained calm, there were a few spontaneous demonstrations — raucous but peaceful — near the royal palace in the evening, with youths demanding that the killer of King Birendra be hanged.

As the people sought to come to terms with the tragedy, the air was thick with talks about conspiracy. A royalist group, Rashtriya Milan Kendra, accused the government of being involved in the massacre.

Prior to the broadcast of Prince Gyanendra's statement on Radio Nepal on Sunday morning, the official radio and television stations here only spoke of the *swargarohan* (demise) of King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya, not even mentioning the cause of death. The government-owned newspaper, *Rising Nepal*, spoke

cryptically of "an unanticipated incident".

Some reports today suggested that King Dipendra, who is on life support system in the army hospital, was injured on the back, contrary to Saturday's report that he shot himself in the temple. Presumably attempting to set at rest the speculation about the role of King Dipendra in the shooting and persistent rumours that the new king is clinically dead, the regent stressed the constitutionality of the royal succession. He also said King Dipendra was in critical condition and undergoing treatment.

In his statement, Mr Koirala said, "According to the information we have, the incident happened by an accidental firing of an automatic weapon, seriously injuring the king, the queen, the crown prince and members of the royal family. They were rushed to the hospital, where, despite the efforts of the doctors, the king and the queen passed away."

Though the official account has finally begun to catch up with unofficial reports that King Dipendra shot and killed his parents and other members of his family in a dispute over his choice of the 22-year-old Devyani Rana as bride, it would be extremely difficult for the government to go beyond its current position given the fact that Dipendra is now the king of Nepal.

In fact, one of the issues being discussed at the street level is the legal implications of patricide-regicide in a constitutional monarchy.

As can be imagined, opinions are divided. Some people feel that now Dipendra is king, no stigma can be attached to the route he followed. Others, however, strongly feel that King Dipendra cannot be above the 1990 constitution and that should he recover, he must be prosecuted for the crime he is thought to have committed.

So far, the public mood towards King Dipendra is ambivalent. A mercurial man with a reputation for the unpredictable, he had recently begun to cultivate a softer public persona by taking an interest in sports and public issues like AIDS. Nevertheless, he was far, far less popular than his father Birendra. A small section of those who turned out to witness the royal funeral procession on Saturday did demand that the guilty be punished and shouted slogans against Mr Koirala. It is hard to gauge the extent to which such a call would have popular backing.

It is almost as if the government and the people of Nepal have gone into denial. The only painless way out of this terrible moral predicament would be for King Dipendra to die. If, indeed, he is clinically dead, the decision on whether to take him off the life support system will have to be made by Prince Gyanendra, who would then automatically take over as king. Analysts here expect that after the passage of a "reasonable" amount of time, this is in fact what will finally happen.

► See Edit: Himalayan Challenge, Page 8



# Birendra's Nepal

## The Once and Forever Kingdom

By DUBBY BHAGAT

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*1/16*  
AFTER the funeral of king Birendra Bir Bikram Shah on Saturday night, the immediate grief that swept the country turned to formal mourning and a degree of introspection. Old stories were retold.

On a visit to Germany as crown prince, Birendra broke protocol and asked his German liaison officer to show him "typical" Germany. The protocol officer called Bonn, told them the prince would not be showing up for his scheduled opening of an art gallery, and took the youth instead to his farm house. After spending several days there Birendra confided to his host, "Some day you will help me to make my country like this." The protocol officer retired, became an expert on containing leprosy, but continued advising Birendra, by now king of Nepal.

It was king Birendra who asked the Germans to restore the city of Bhaktapur when asked what he wanted as a wedding gift. The city, which won a heritage award, is regarded by the Germans as a leading project in their 50 years of international aid.

And it was king Birendra who insisted that all students do a stint of teaching in the villages of Nepal, before they graduated. Every year the king would take his court out to different parts of the country to get to know the problems of his people better. His courtiers did not always appreciate such initiatives. It is rumoured that once when the king insisted he see an experimental farm he opened some years earlier, cauliflowers were uprooted from elsewhere and planted in time for the royal visit.

Other royal reforms included an effort towards transparency in the social system as well as in the role of royal family members and their business ventures. Such controversial steps could not succeed at the time and the king found that the palace was an institution that enveloped him and was often quicksand for the ideals he stood for.

Back then, the king set himself a punishing schedule. Courtiers saw him working late, as he answered petitions or asked his aides to inquire into cases requiring his attention. Palace protocol came between him and those he wished to talk to, but sometimes he forced a gap in the wall around him and became for a brief moment his "friendly outgoing" self, as a friend from his school days described him.

In those early days, an air of

Camelot prevailed. Harvard-educated king Birendra gathered about him a Brains Trust who advised and supported him. One among them met the Indian press yesterday in order to pay his tributes to the slain king. He had barely started to relive those times, when tears choked him. He is Nepal's ambassador to India, Bhekh Bahadur Thapa.

"He was too kind and kindness and kingship don't go together," said one long-time resident referring to the time the king acceded (some say too easily) to the will of his people who wanted a constitutional monarchy and democracy. And as that nascent democracy foundered and many nostalgically harked back to the past, almost everyone agreed that, "His Majesty is the only one in Nepal who abides by the constitution."

Nepal, since the king was crowned in 1975, has always made a distinction between the palace and

### IN BRIEF

- King Birendra touched the people in a way uncommon among royalty
- Nepal has always distinguished between the king and the palace
- Thanks to the coterie around him, the king was increasingly isolated

the king. In that difference lay the realisation that all that emanated from the palace was not the king's desire, wish or aspiration. Indeed, once an aide to the king remarked, "What are we going to do about all the king's men?" And it is now generally believed that it was his coterie that brought him down and, some say, was responsible, however indirectly, for his death.

The shooting in the palace occurred because of a feeling in the coterie that a young lady the crown prince was seeing was of the wrong lineage or not good enough. It is believed that the king himself never expressed his views. The lady in question is educated, poised, wonderfully human and the daughter of a loyalist. Seen as Vishnu in his Hindu avatar and Lokeshwar by his Buddhist subjects, king Birendra probably leaned towards the Buddhist deity, who rather than hurt anyone would retire within himself.

At his coronation, the young king asked that his friends be interviewed rather than he himself. The

picture that emerged was of a sensitive man concerned about his subjects, aware of their poverty and determined to serve them as against ruling them. Court intrigue that swirled about him had him first bewildered and then withdrawing. But his concern for his subjects remained even as recently as a few months ago when he visited a restaurant and apologised for being late.

Delays in the affairs of state are not allowed, and taking a page from king Birendra's book, the privy council has quickly appointed prince Dipendra — controversy and all — no doubt so that the newly founded constitution was adhered to as closely as possible. The constitution did not account for a tragedy of so vast a magnitude. The council also wanted to allay the conspiracy theories that abounded because the mind had to make sense of randomness and chaos, and come to grips with the turmoil that possessed Nepal.

While king Dipendra struggles for life on support systems, the able prince Gyanendra is prince regent. He is the pragmatist visionary to his brother's unfettered idealism, he is an intellectual with his feet firmly amidst the grass roots of his country and if anyone can rise above intrigue, and weld together the warring factions of Nepal's new-found democracy, prince Gyanendra can.

His detractors have labelled him anti-Indian. He is assuredly not. He will listen to anyone who he sees as having resonance and cerebral worth. It is for India to provide such a person to manage the fragile relationship between the two countries. Ambassador Deb Mukharjee would be ideal but his tenure is time-bound, and it is such inflexibility that is in itself an irritant, indeed, that gave rise to the initial cracks between the two nations.

King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah has found peace from the wrangling and "fitful fever", that had him more and more isolated. In Nepal, it is believed that good kings will be reborn. As the dust slowly settles on the tragedy, Nepalis gather beneath the Pipalbot (the Pipal tree where news papers have traditionally been sold) and reassure themselves that king Birendra Bir Bikram Shah, like one of his ancestors, will be reborn, and another golden page in Nepal's history will be written.

(Dubby Bhagat, who went to cover the coronation of His Majesty King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah, now lives and works in Nepal).

THE TIMES OF INDIA

MONDAY, JUNE 4, 2001

## 21/6 THE TRAGEDY IN NEPAL 11-81-12

THE MACABRE MASSACRE of King Birendra of Nepal and several other ranking scions of the royal order, including Queen Aishwarya, has left the constitutional monarchy of the poor Himalayan state in utter disarray. Compounding the ghoulish tragedy is the official ambivalence about a flurry of independent reports suggesting the involvement of Crown Prince Dipendra as the assailant. First, the prince was reported to have tried to kill himself with the weapon that he used to murder his popular parents and close relatives on Friday night. This version has since been disputed, with the palace and the Prime Minister, Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala, now claiming that the killings were the result of an "accidental shooting". Yet, the authorities have refrained from saying how or by whom the grisly "accident" had been caused. So, it seems to be a bizarre adherence to some interpretation of 'constitutional' propriety that the State Council, which concerns itself with royal matters, should have named Prince Dipendra as the new King, despite the doubts over his alleged involvement in a treasonable crime. As the prince is said to be critically ill, perhaps even 'clinically dead', the slain King's brother, Prince Gyanendra, has been assigned to perform the functions of the monarch. The first accounts of the gruesome conversion of a palace chamber into a killing field indicated that Prince Dipendra, the designated heir to the throne, had presumably killed his parents in a rage over their opposition to his choice of a bride from an aristocratic family.

The scale of the mass slaughter of the Nepalese royal brigade is widely seen to match the monarchical executions that Lenin ordered in Russia in the early part of last century. Even in the absence of clear evidence about the murder motives in Nepal at this time, the two are not politically comparable at all. There has also been no serious suggestion by official Nepal at this time that the so-called Maoist guerillas of the Himalayan kingdom might have had something to do with the slaying of King Birendra. Indeed,

the assassinated monarch enjoyed an enormous degree of acceptability among the ordinary Nepalese citizens. A unique high point of his long reign was the people-friendly role that he played to facilitate Nepal's transformation into a constitutional monarchy with a democratic core in 1990. This was particularly significant in the context of his earlier penchant for not only a large dose of absolute monarchy but also the panchayat system of governance which could at best be regarded only as a half-way step towards modern democracy of a non-ideological kind. As the promulgations of the Panchayat Constitution in 1962 and the Royal Constitution in 1959 had preceded Birendra's reign, he rightly earned political colours as the patron of Nepalese democracy.

The latest carnage in Kathmandu might spark an unusually serious debate over republicanism in Nepal. Even before this palace upheaval, the present elected Government, headed by Mr. Koirala, had found itself in considerable political difficulties over several issues, including charges of corruption and a security challenge traceable to the growing influence of the Maoist People's War activists, who clamour for 'social justice'. However, the Koirala administration will need to brace itself for possible new challenges in the context of a climate of confusion that could be caused by the king's passing. Nepal's internal political problems in the ongoing democratic era have often been heightened by deep ideological contentions over basic policy issues. Another complication is a peculiar siege-mentality of the Nepalese politicians who tend to worry about the overwhelming strategic presence of India and China in their immediate neighbourhood. While Kathmandu often appears keen to do a balancing act in its foreign policy in respect of New Delhi and Beijing, Nepal's internal agendas are not also devoid altogether of security issues of concern to its big neighbours. Yet, as the Koirala administration seeks to weather the current palace crisis, Nepal should be able to count on the goodwill of India and other neighbours.

# Nepal's Crown Prince shoots King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya and siblings over love affair

# A ROYAL MASSACRE



File photograph of King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya with their children, Princess Shruti, Crown Prince Dipendra (face circled) and Prince Nirajan. — AP/PTI

## President, Advani call off visit

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, June 2. — As a gesture of its highest regard, India had originally planned to send the President, Mr KR Narayanan, and the home minister, Mr LK Advani, to Kathmandu for the funeral, but called off their visit when informed that the Palace would not be receiving any delegation.

It was not clear why even the Indian Ambassador to Nepal, based at Kathmandu, was asked to stay away from the last rites. Since Nepali TV was not televising the funeral proceedings, details of the event were not available.

The Union Cabinet met in an emergency session this evening to pass a condolence resolution

at the tragedy that had befallen the kingdom of Nepal.

Expressing deep shock over the unfortunate and untimely demise of the King of Nepal, Queen Aishwarya and other members of the royal family, the government also announced a three-day state mourning. The Cabinet observed a brief silence in respect to the departed souls, the external affairs minister, Mr Jaswant Singh, said.

The condolence resolution, conveyed to the Nepalese government, said: "As a neighbour and close friend, in this hour of Nepal's grief, we share the feelings of immense sorrow of Her Majesty the Queen Mother, members of the royal family and

■ See VISIT: page 10

521 316  
Nepal State Council has named Crown Prince Dipendra, battling for life in hospital, the King and the late King's brother, Prince Gyanendra, the Regent. Bodies of the royal couple were cremated on Saturday night. Nepalese protesting over the killings stoned Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala's car

AGENCIES

KATHMANDU, June 2. — Nepal's Crown Prince Dipendra shot dead the King, Queen and nine other people, at least six of them members of the royal family, before turning the gun on himself last night.

The incident occurred at 11 p.m. when the royal family sat for dinner at Narayanhity Palace. The reason behind the massacre was said to be the Queen's objection to Dipendra's choice of his bride and also his insistence to marry now.

The State Council, following constitutional provisions, has named Dipendra the King, though he is in a state of coma at the military hospital. Because of his inability to carry out the royal functions for now, the Council has named Prince Gyanendra, the late King's younger brother, the Regent.

"Since the King passed away, the Council declared Crown Prince Dipendra as the King of Nepal. But since the Crown Prince is in the hospital and is mentally and physically unsuit-

able to carry out his duties, the State Council appoints Prince Gyanendra as assistant to the Crown," the Council said.

Besides Birendra (55), who ascended the throne in 1972, and Aishwarya (51), the dead were their younger son Nirajan (22), daughter Shruti (25), Princess Sharada Shaha and Princess Shanti Singh (both sisters of Birendra), Kumar Khadga Bikram Shah (Princess Sharada's husband) and Princess Jayanti Shah (Birendra's cousin). Three others killed have not been identified.

The Council said three injured were Gorakh Bikram (Princess Shruti's husband), Komal Shah (Birendra's cousin) and Prince Dharendra (Birendra's youngest brother).

A shocked and grief-stricken Nepal tonight bid a tearful farewell to the royal couple as their bodies were consigned to flames near the Pashupatinath temple on the banks of Bagmati river. The bodies of Nirajan, Shruti and Jayanti were cremated too.

As the funeral pyres of Birendra and Aishwarya were lit by a royal high priest, buglers sounded the Last Post and artillery guns boomed in salute.

Considering the suddenness and magnitude of the tragedy, the kingdom dispensed with the formality of inviting foreign dignitaries to the funeral. Even ambassadors posted in Kathmandu were left out.

Deputy Prime Minister Ram Chandra Paudel, has been quoted as saying that Dipendra was responsible for the killings. "It was the Crown Prince", AFP quoted him as saying.

Sources said Dipendra had a heated argument with his parents at the dining table over his marriage plans and was asked to leave because he was drunk.

Birendra reportedly threat-

ing 35, his father would die.

She was also opposed to Dipendra's choice of bride, a daughter of a former minister and member of the Rana family that ruled Nepal till 1951.

As the argument continued, Dipendra rushed out of the dining hall only to return shortly with an assault rifle and a pistol and shoot the royal members. Palace staff rushed the victims to the Royal Nepal Army Hospital at Chhauni where most of them were declared dead.

A five-day state mourning has been declared in Nepal and the national flag will fly at half-mast for 13 days as a mark of respect to the royal couple.

Nepalese heard of the tragedy this morning, nearly 17 hours after it took place, when the chairman of the Royal Privy Council, Keshar Jung Rayamajhi, went on Radio Nepal and Nepal Television to announce the royal couple's demise.

"We announce death of His Majesty King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev on the 19 of Jyestha 2058 at 21.15 in the evening.

According to the 2046 Constitution of Nepal and the laws of succession and according to the grand traditions we declare that His Majesty's eldest son, Crown Prince Dipendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev will be the King of Nepal as of the evening of 19 Jyestha 2058," Rayamajhi said in a choking voice.

Thousands of people lined up the 10 km stretch from the Birendra hospital, where the bodies had been kept, to the cremation site.

### Protests

Several hundred people protested in Kathmandu over the killings while no official version was released on what exactly

■ See MASSACRE: page 10

## Dipendra's love Vijayaraje's granddaughter

NILOVA ROY CHAUDHURY  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, June 2. — The young lady for whose affections almost the entire Nepal royal family was massacred last night has close links with India and is probably being brought to this country "shortly" for her safety, sources said today.

Ms Devyani Rana is the granddaughter of Vijayaraje Scindia, and the niece of Mrs Vasundhararaje, minister of state in the NDA government, and Congress leader Mr Madhavrao Scindia, senior officials in Kathmandu said. Devyani, described as "a lovely girl" in her mid 20's, is the daughter of Mr Pashupati Rana, a member of the Nepali Prajatantrik Socialist Party who was a Cabinet member in a previous government.

The Crown Prince of Nepal, Dipendra, had been pursuing her relentlessly and wanted to marry her despite opposition from his mother.

"The poor girl does not deserve the notoriety that has been thrust on her," an official said. "She must be in a state of shock."

Ironically, astrologers, had apparently warned King Birendra against allowing his son to marry before the age of 35, failing which the family faced annihilation.

"There has been internal political dissension in the country, but nobody imagined something like this would happen to King Birendra who was immensely popular," India's ambassador to Nepal, Mr Deb Mukharji, said. "It's tragic and shocking."



Crowds outside the royal palace in Kathmandu on Saturday after hearing the news of the assassinations. — AP/PTI (More photographs, reports on pages 10 & 11)

SIX OTHER ROYALS ALSO GUNNED DOWN; DIPENDRA SHOOTS HIMSELF

# Nepal King, Queen shot dead by Crown Prince Dipendra

H & M P  
110-1  
26/6

**KATHMANDU, JUNE 2.** In a shocking incident last night, Nepal's Crown Prince Dipendra gunned down his parents, King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya, and six other members of the royal family before shooting himself. The Crown Prince, battling for life in hospital today, was named the new monarch of the tiny Himalayan kingdom.

Sources said the 29-year-old Crown Prince fired indiscriminately in a fit of rage as the royal family sat for dinner at the Narayan Hity palace around 11 p.m. (local time) last night following arguments over his marriage plans.

Prince Dipendra, who is in a coma and on a life-support system in the military hospital, was named the King by the Government State Council, despite uncertainty over his condition as per constitutional provisions. His uncle and younger brother of King Birendra, Prince Gyanendra, was declared "regent". Prince Gyanendra was out of town at the time of the shootout.

"Since the King passed away, the Council declared Crown Prince Dipendra the King. But since the Crown Prince is in hospital and is mentally and physically unsuitable to carry out his duties, the State Council appoints

Prince Gyanendra as assistant to the Crown," a council statement said.

Besides the 55-year-old King and Queen Aishwarya, 51, their younger son Prince Nirajan, 22, daughter Princess Shruti, 25,



Prince Gyanendra... named Regent

Princess Sharada Shaha and Princess Shanti Singh, sisters of the late King, Kumar Khadga Bikram Shah, Princess Sharada's husband, and Princess Jayanti Shah,

cousin of the late King, were shot dead. Three others injured in the shootout were Gorakh Bikram (Princess Shruti's husband), Komal Shah, the late King's cousin and Prince Dharendra, the King's youngest brother. Sources said the Crown Prince had an argument with his parents at the dining table over his plans to get married and was asked to retire since he was reportedly in an inebriated state. The King is believed to have threatened Prince Dipendra that he would be bypassed in the line of succession in favour of his younger brother if he did not bow to the wishes of the Queen on the choice of his bride.

## Heated exchanges

As the heated exchanges continued, the Prince stormed out of the dining hall but soon returned in battle fatigues with an assault rifle and a pistol and opened fire indiscriminately, the sources said.

The Queen was reportedly opposed to his decision to marry because of a warning by astrologers that if he got married and begot children before turning 35 his father would die. The Queen wanted him to wait for six more years. There were also reports that the Queen was opposed to his choice of the bride, a daughter of a former minister and member of the aristocratic Rana family that had



A file picture of the Nepali royal family: King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya with their children (from left) Princess Shruti, Crown Prince Dipendra and Prince Nirajan. — PTI

ruled Nepal till 1951. A five-day state mourning has been declared in Nepal and the national flag will fly at half-mast for 13 days as a mark of respect to the couple.

## PM's car stoned

Late in the evening, the Prime Minister, Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala's car was stoned by an angry mob outside the military hospital as the funeral cortege carrying the bodies of slain King and Queen and three other immediate members of the royal family left for the site of the cremation.

According to police, a big stone was hurled at Mr. Koirala's car but he escaped unhurt.

A few arrests have been made in this connection, they said. Some agitated youths also made vain attempts to manhandle some Ministers.

## Security tightened

A report from Patna said security was beefed up along the Indo-Nepal border in Bihar following the killings. The Bihar Home Commissioner, Mr. U. N. Panjyay, said the security forces were keeping a close watch on the movement of vehicles and people along the border area. The situation was, however, under control, he added. — PTI

World leaders mourn: Page 8

## Shock and disbelief

**KATHMANDU, JUNE 2.** Nepalis were in shock on Saturday after the King and Queen were shot dead and their family massacred, but few could believe official reports that they were killed by Crown Prince Dipendra.

Hundreds of anxious Nepalis gathered near the royal palace demanding to be told the truth and booing armed police who kept them from the palace. "Our king, our land is dearer to us than our lives," the crowd shouted. "Tell us the real truth."

Some in the crowd called for the Prime Minister, Mr. G. P. Koirala, to be hanged for keeping the "truth under wraps". At one point, police charged

with batons, causing a minor stampede. The crowd gathered again minutes later as police nervously clutched their guns.

"How could it happen in the high-security palace? It is baffling," said Mr. Rajendra Dahal, editor of a fortnightly magazine. "There are a lot of questions still unanswered."

The city was calm but tense as it prepared for the state funeral. Thousands of mourners poured on to the streets. Some waved the national flag, many watched from windows overlooking the route to the palace. Police diverted traffic away from the palace whose gates remained closed.

THE HINDU

3 JUN 2001

OBITUARY/ KING BIRENDRA (1945 - 2001)

# Visionary & friend of India

King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev was a visionary who firmly believed in close and cordial relations with India and other South Asian neighbours.

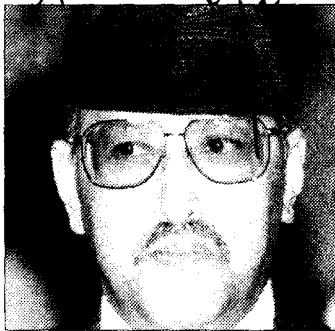
Born on 28 December 1945, to King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev and Indra Rajya Lakshmi Devi Shah, young Birendra went to St Joseph's School in Darjeeling. He was a student of Eton College in Britain, the University of Tokyo in Japan and Harvard University in USA.

He married Queen Aishwarya in February 1970.

King Birendra, who played an active role in the establishment of the Saarc, ascended the throne on 31 January 1972 after his father's death. He ruled Nepal for three decades, first as an absolute monarch and from 1990 as a Constitutional monarch.

He visited India for the first time in October 1973 and China two months later. He had expressed his desire and willingness to give new impetus to strengthen ties with these two next-door neighbours.

Throughout the 1970s, the King sought to expedite eco-



King Birendra

conomic development programmes while maintaining a "non-party" political system established by his father. The results were disappointing on both accounts, and by 1979, a systemic crisis was evident.

To combat the first serious political challenge to the monarchy since 1960, King Birendra announced in May 1979 a national referendum to decide between a non-party and multi-party political system.

However, in the referendum held in May 1980, political groups supporting the existing non-party system won by a relatively small margin of 55 per cent.

King Birendra decided to

retain the 1962 Constitution but liberalise the political system by providing for direct popular elections to the National Assembly. Elections were held on a "partyless" basis but many candidates began openly representing political parties.

In April 1990, King Birendra lifted the ban on political parties, abrogated the more repressive security ordinances and on 16 April, appointed an interim government, thus paving way for major political reforms. Nepal, thus, became a constitutional monarchy and a multi-party parliamentary system.

The royal couple had three children - Crown Prince Dipendra was born on 27 June 1971, Princess Shruti - 15 October 1976 and Prince Nirajan - 6 November 1978.

Queen Aishwarya, born on 7 November 1949, in Kathmandu, was the eldest daughter of a lieutenant-general in the Nepalese army. She received her education in India and Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu. She worked to increase opportunities for women in Nepal.



# World mourns royal carnage in Nepal

NEW DELHI: India on Saturday expressed deep shock over the "tragic and untimely" demise of King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya and other members of the royal family of Nepal, saying, "India grieves with Nepal over the national tragedy."

The central government has announced a three-day state mourning as a mark of respect for the King and his family.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee spoke to his Nepali counterpart Girija Prasad Koirala on Saturday morning following reports of the assassination. "The government and the people of India are stunned and deeply shocked at the tragic and untimely demise of the King and other members of his family. Our heart goes out to the people of Nepal in this hour of grief. India grieves with Nepal," he said. "We pray for the departed souls and that Nepal and its people be bestowed the courage and strength to bear this unprecedented personal loss and national tragedy."

"As a close neighbour and friend, India conveys its heartfelt condolences to the mourning nation of the royal kingdom of Nepal and to the members of the royal family," external affairs minister Jaswant Singh said in a brief statement after a meeting of the cabinet committee on security to take stock of the situation in Nepal.

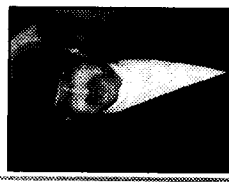
The Union cabinet on Saturday described the untimely demise of King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya

and members of the royal family of Nepal as a "very great tragedy", saying it was "an irreparable loss" for the Himalayan kingdom. A cabinet resolution said India stood by the people of Nepal in "this hour of national grief".

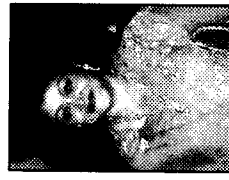
UN secretary general Kofi Annan said he was "profoundly shocked" by the assassination and called for calm in the country. Ex-

Flags are flying half mast at Britain's royal residences, government buildings and military establishments.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, in a message to Nepal's Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, said, "The late King was an ardent lover of democracy and under his able patronage representative democracy has been



King Birendra



Queen Aishwarya



Prince Dipendra



Gyanendra

tending his "heartfelt condolences to the people of Nepal," Mr Annan called for "calm and stability in this difficult period".

In a statement from Camp David, U.S. President George W. Bush said, "I am deeply saddened and shocked at King Birendra's death. I also mourn the loss of Queen Aishwarya and other family members and extend my deepest sympathies to the King's extended family."

In London, Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Charles expressed their sadness at the news of the royal massacre in Nepal. "They are aware of the incidents and are deeply shocked and saddened," a Buckingham Palace spokesman said.

"stabilising role in Nepalese politics" party general secretary Narendra Modi said, "He maintained Nepal's close links with India. As the only Hindu kingdom in the world, Nepal's religious, cultural and civilisational connections with India have been deep and extensive."

Sikkim chief minister Pawan Chamling, who was in Kolkata, expressed "shock and dismay" over the brutal killing of King Birendra of Nepal and his family members. "It is a tragic incident. I condole the passing away of the only Hindu king of the world. I pray his soul rest in peace," Mr Chamling said. The Sikkim chief minister said violence could not be a solution for any problem.

In Orissa, queen Bharati Rajyalaxmi Bhanj Deo, paternal aunt of the slain King of Nepal, expressed shock over the brutal killing of the royal family at Kathmandu. "We are trying to contact the royal palace in Nepal but have not been successful," the 71-year-old queen said. Queen Rajyalaxmi, the daughter of late Nepal king Tribhuban Bir Bikram Shah Dev and sister of former king Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev had married the former king of Mayurbhanj, Pradip Chandra Bhanj Deo.

Fr Leo Forestel, who taught King Birendra at St. Joseph's School at Darjeeling in the '50s, burst into tears when he heard the news. "I pray to God may his soul rest in peace," Fr. Forestal, now 72 and re-

tired, said. (Agencies)

INDIA

# SUPPER CARNAGE WIPES OUT NEPAL FIRST FAMILY

Keshav Pradhan  
Kathmandu, June 2

THOSE WHO heard the gunshots, saw screaming birds fleeing the palace grounds to take shelter in trees on the periphery. That's all. Except the reports of the rifle that killed most of Nepal's Royalty, nothing much has been heard about what happened at the family dinner in Kathmandu's Narayanhity Durbar. On the day after, the palace wears a veil of secrecy. Nepal, a shroud of mourning.

King Birendra is dead. Shot allegedly by his eldest son. And a stunned Nepal today named the fratricidal prince Dipendra the new king. But Dipendra lies "brain dead" at the Birendra military hospital. The 29-year-old prince had shot himself after the supper massacre. He survives only because he is on life support.

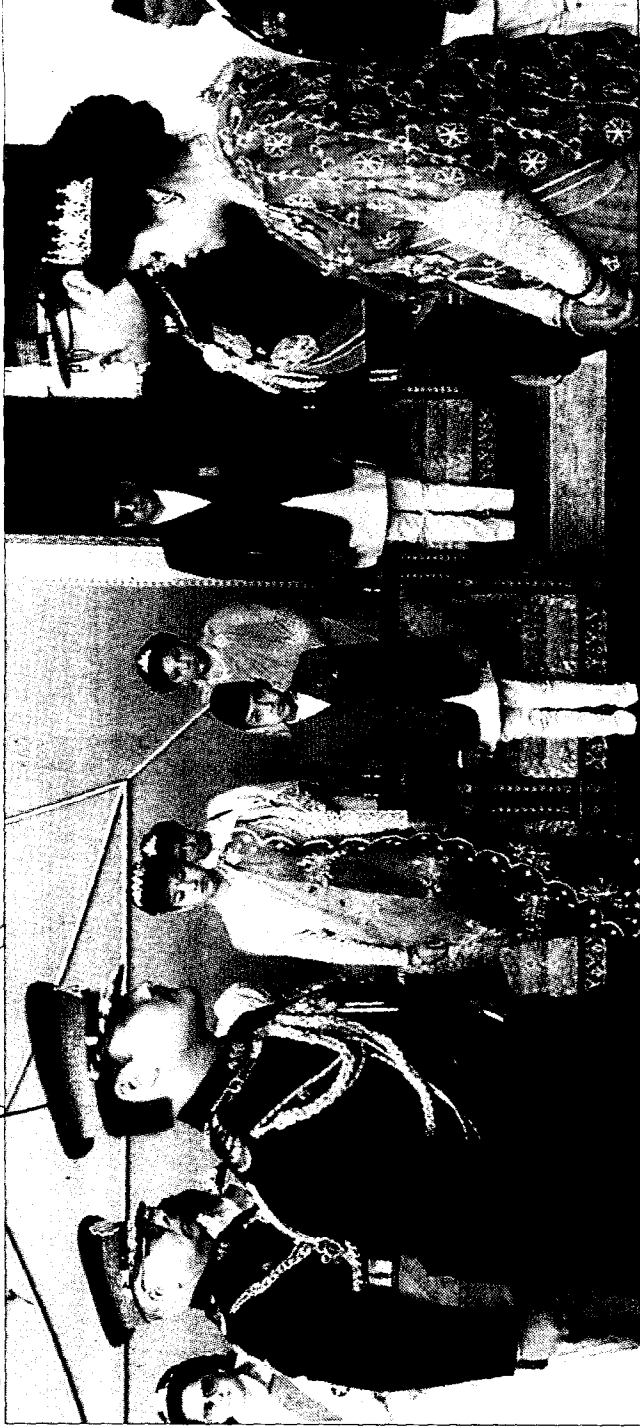
The truth about what happened at the palace last night may pass with him. Here is what is official. Nepal's Raj Parishad (privy council) made a brief announcement this afternoon, saying that king Birendra died

## THE CURSE

Nepalese people believe that a curse on the Shah dynasty is in place because of which no king crossed 60.

- Birendra (1945-2001) lived to be 56
- Manendra (1920-1972) lived to be 52
- Tribhuvan (1806-1855) lived to be 49
- Prithvi Bir Bikram (1875-1911) lived to be 36
- Trailokya Bikram Shah (1847-1878) lived to be 31
- Surendra Bikram Shah (1829-1881) lived to be 52

at 9.15 on the night of June 1. The council also said that since



REUTERS

IN HAPPIER TIMES: File photo of Nepal's King Birendra (second from right) and Queen Aishwarya (right) decorating crown prince Dipendra (second from left) during his Coming of Age ceremony at the royal palace in Kathmandu in 1990.

Dipendra was not "physically able to take care of affairs of state", and both Queen Aishwarya and prince Nirajan (Birendra's younger son) were also dead, the late king's younger brother prince Gyanendra was nominated regent.

The announcement didn't make any reference to who else was killed besides the royal couple and prince Nirajan or to what happened at the palace. There are several stories doing the rounds. The one that has gained the most currency is as follows. At a routine family dinner, the crown prince allegedly got into an altercation with the rest of the family over his choice of a bride. Dipendra was apparently involved with a former Nepal minister's daughter, who also belonged to the aristocratic Rana family that ruled Nepal till 1951.

The argument became heated and the angry (and possibly inebriated) left the room in a huff. He returned wearing battle fatigues, brandishing a pistol and an assault rifle. And in a matter of minutes he was spraying bullets at the rest of his family. The scene was so horrific that the prince's sister, princess Shruti may have died of a heart attack even before she was hit by a bullet. Prince Gyanendra was away in Pokhara at the time the massacre took place, but his son Paras was there: he managed to escape unhurt.

Once the enormity of what he had done had sunk in, Dipendra apparently went to the temple in the palace grounds. After that, he had just one thing left to do:



AFP PHOTO

A file photo of Crown Prince Dipendra Bir Vikram Shah Dev examining an automatic rifle in a Pakistan ordnance factory at Wah.

best scenario for India. The new regent isn't favourably disposed towards India. He holds India responsible for fomenting the pro-democracy movement in his country.

But it was in the death of his elder brother that a slogan that hasn't been heard in Nepal in the eleven years since the advent of multi-party democracy in the country. Those who lined the streets of Kathmandu to say goodbye to Birendra on his final journey cried: *Hamro pyara raja zindabad* (Long live our beloved king).

On Page 11

- Regent known for hardline stance on India
- Tearful farewell for pyaara raja
- Eton double: Clean dad, drunken son

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

3 JUN 2001

# Gyanendra

► FROM PAGE 1 *H&A - Nepal*  
The wily British acquiesced in the Rana perfidy.

Nepal's history may well have been different if Nehru had not put his foot down. India's first Prime Minister said nothing would change and that India recognised no one but Tribhuvan as Nepal's king.

It was one of the earliest assertions of India's pre-eminence in all of South Asia, which has continued to this day despite attempts to introduce various doctrines to undermine New Delhi's importance and occasional compromises.

The stand-off continued for two months, but ultimately, the Ranas and the British gave in. The sovereignty of the crown was restored, but Tribhuvan allowed the Nepali Congress to form a government, ending the Rana dictatorship. The process of democratisation continued with the enactment of a multi-party constitution in 1959. But the Ranas continued to plot.

A year later, after the Nepali Congress won the elections, King Mahendra organised a constitutional coup, suspended parliament and introduced the non-party panchayat system.

The rest is history, the saddest chapter of which, is now unfolding in Kathmandu with the assassinations.

# Left-out lad who could be king again

FROM K.P. NAYAR *H&A - Nepal*

Washington, June 2: In the world's only Hindu kingdom, history repeats itself not every four or five years, but after a full half century.

At the sprawling Indian embassy in Kathmandu, one of the biggest embassy compounds anywhere in the world, officials burned midnight oil last night, poring over archived documents, yellow with age, which told a little-known story of Nepal's regent, Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev.

If Crown Prince Dipendra does not survive the suicide attempt, Gyanendra will be formally proclaimed king. It will then be the second time that Gyanendra becomes king. The first time was 51 years ago, when he was just about four years old.

Those were the days when the Ranas, the hereditary prime ministers, were more powerful than the king and ran Nepal like a Shangri-La with little contact with



Gyanendra (AFP)

the world outside. King Tribhuvan, a visionary and a liberal, was chafing under the restraints imposed on him by his own ministers, but he could do very little. The Ranas had been in absolute control for over a century, and although Britain had formally recognised Nepal's independence in 1923, Whitehall was still running Kathmandu by proxy in collusion with the Rana clan.

In 1950, Tribhuvan decided to work with the Nepali Congress, whose leadership was in exile in India, to rein in the Ranas and create some sort of a democracy. But the Ranas discovered Tribhuvan's plan and confined him to the palace.

Virtually under house arrest, Tribhuvan one day pleaded with his prime minister that he be allowed to take his consort, children and grandchildren on a family picnic. Reluctantly, and after much discussion, the Ranas relented. What followed was high drama.

The Indian embassy was then located at Sheetal Nivas, an imposing structure in Kathmandu that now houses Nepal's foreign ministry.

As the royal picnic group was banished in front of Sheetal Nivas, the gates of the Indian embassy swung open and into the embassy drove the vehicle carrying King Tribhuvan and his family. As part of plans made in absolute secrecy in New Delhi with the approval of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Tribhuvan and his royal entourage sought refuge at the embassy.

Among those who fled to the embassy that sunny morning in Kathmandu along with King Tribhuvan was the queen, Crown Prince Mahendra and all the little princes and princesses, except one. In the midst of secret arrangements to flee the palace, the royal couple forgot to take Prince Gyanendra, then just under four, along with them.

The Ranas, who discovered Tribhuvan's new plot too late, found young Gyanendra wandering about in the royal palace without anyone to care for him.

They promptly caught him and proclaimed him king of

THE TELEGRAPH

THE TELEGRAPH

3 JUN 2001





# NEPAL PARALYSED BY STRIKE

BY SUMAN PRADHAN

**Kathmandu, May 27:** The Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal was virtually shut down on Sunday as a nation-wide strike called by Opposition Communists went into effect, forcing down businesses, schools and transportation networks to close down. And this was only the first day.

Called by an alliance of six left parties, including the main Opposition Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), to force scandal-tainted Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala to resign, the strike is being stretched for two additional days with a brief respite on Wednesday.

On Thursday again, an alliance of various indigenous ethnic communities has called a similar strike to protest the government's language policies, turning this week into one of the most disruptive weeks in Nepal's recent history.

From early on Sunday, bands of Opposition supporters roamed around Kathmandu, the capital, chanting slogans against Mr

Koirala and demanding his resignation. A violent mob set fire to a motorcycle at the Chabahil neighbourhood. A government spokesman said that half a dozen vehicles were destroyed by protesters throughout the nation.

Meanwhile, at least one person was reported killed in the northern district of Lamjung, according to the police. The circumstances of the death was not immediately clear.

Other incidents of violence have also been reported from districts and towns in other parts of this Hindu Kingdom, though no great damage has so far been reported.

Reports arriving at this time say that groups of Communist demonstrators have been holding protests in various towns. Vehicles have been forced off the roads and commuters warned to stay home to avoid trouble. The communists are demanding that Mr Koirala step down for his alleged role in the controversial leasing of a jetliner from Landa Air of Austria by the national carrier Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation.



**ALL FIRED UP:** Protesters block a street in Kathmandu on Sunday demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala over the government's alleged involvement in a bribery scandal. (AP)

THE ADVANCE  
13 MAY 2001



# 'Maoists take control of four districts in Nepal'

**Kathmandu, May 20:** Maoist rebels, waging a guerrilla war for the past five years, have declared that at least four districts of this Himalayan nation are under their control and have set up local administration there, news reports said on Sunday.

The rebels declared that four districts in the remote mid-western hills were under their control at a mass rally on Wednesday attended by over 20,000 people in Bhawang in Rolpa district, 400 km west of the capital Kathmandu.

The *Kathmandu Post* quoted a rebel leader identified only as Manohar as saying that the districts under their control include Rolpa, Rukum, Jajarkot and Salyan, where the rebels have a strong influence.

Reports say that the rebels have set up a parallel administration in these districts to collect taxes and decide on disputes and other court cases.

The rebels began their campaign in these four districts in 1996.

Police presence has been limited to the district headquarters, giving rebels control of villages in the remote mountainous areas.

The government has not been able to quell the insurgency, and has announced that it would move the Army into these districts next month.

The rebels said that they held elections in April to elect the representatives in the four districts.

Rebel leaders accused the government of initiating a civil war by deciding to move the troops but said they were ready to face the Army.

Maoist rebels, who model themselves after Peru's Shining Path guerrillas, began their campaign in 1996.

The rebels are active in 29 of Nepal's 75 districts. Insurgency has claimed 1,600 lives in Nepal in the last five years.

The guerrillas have said they are fighting to end Nepal's constitutional monarchy and dismantle the feudal structure that remains in parts of the country. (AP)



**MEN IN ARMS:** Heavily-armed Maoist rebels gather at Bhawang village in Rolpa district, 400 km west of Kathmandu, on Wednesday. The Maoists declared to a gathering of over 20,000 people that they were in control of at least four districts in Nepal and have set up their own elected administration. (AP)

# Zhu ends Nepal tour, renews old ties

BY SUMAN PRADHAN

**Kathmandu, May 16:** The three-day official visit to Nepal by Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji ended on Wednesday as the visiting dignitary left Kathmandu for the next leg of his four-nation tour.

As expected, Mr Rongji's visit dwelt more on building the traditional ties between China and the Himalayan Kingdom, focusing specifically on trade and investment. However, issues of concern to China, particularly the political activity of exiled Tibetans in Nepal, were also discussed, official sources said. The Chinese

leader spent most of his visit in meeting high level government and political leaders, including an audience with King Birendra. He also spent a part of his time sight-seeing the cultural and architectural wonders of Kathmandu Valley.

A satisfied Rongji said during a press conference that he was happy to be in Nepal and to promote the goodwill between the two countries. "I hope my visit will contribute to closer friendship and cooperation between our two countries and peoples and to elevating China-Nepal relations on to a higher level," he said.

He needn't have worried.

Nepal's diverse media and commentators have been remarkably one-voiced in praising the visit for "strengthening ties."

The highlight of the visit was the signing of six agreements that call for assistance from China to Nepal on various fields such as the construction of a road that links Kathmandu to the Tibetan border, setting up of a polytechnic institute and building a hospital in Kathmandu. China and Nepal also agreed to curtail double taxation on trade.

Nepali leaders say, economic cooperation from China, particularly investments in tourism and

agriculture, would help offset the huge trade imbalance against Nepal. This impoverished kingdom has a lopsided trade deficit with China of over Rs 12 billion.

"We think this can be addressed to some extent by promoting tourism in Nepal by Chinese tourists," foreign minister Chakra Prasad Bastola had said just before Mr Rongji's visit. The Chinese Premier himself was supportive of the idea during official talks with Prime Minister Girija Prasad

Koirala, pointing out that China had already agreed to put Nepal in its list of tourist destinations approved for its people.

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# Maoist students dare Koirala to punish them for school attacks

*Himalayan*  
**Keshav Pradhan**

*HR-11*  
Kathmandu, May 16

A PRO-MAOIST students' union has dared the Koirala Government to take action against it for last week's attacks on two Indian-owned elite schools here that evoked strong protests from India.

Speaking in front of Nepalese Education Minister Amod Upadhyaya in a face-to-face programme, Akhil Nepal Rashtriya Swatantra Vidhyarthi Union president Devendra Parajuli yesterday said, "Unlike other organisations, we do not deny what we have done. We're ready to face any kind of punishment for this."

The firebrand student leader claimed, "We took action against these schools to stop preaching the message of Mera Bharat Mahan. We cannot keep quiet when the choice before us is

*17/5*  
between *rashtravad* (patriotism) and *rashtriya-gaddari* (betrayal against nation)."

He criticised the Government for allegedly allowing the Delhi Public School to run its branch at Dharan in eastern Nepal on a commercial basis. He claimed that the school was set up for the children of staff of the BP Koirala Institute for Medical Sciences and Research (which incidentally is set up by India).

On May 8, pro-Maoist students raided, ransacked and beat up some of the Indian staff at Rupy's International School and Elite Co-ed School here, seeking a 50 per cent cut in the fees. They also singled out the schools for "commercialising" education. A sizeable number of private schools are owned by Indians.

Taking exception to this, the Indian embassy on Friday asked Nepal to provide security to Indians and their property. Mobs

accusing film star Hrithik Roshan of making offensive remarks on Nepal attacked business establishments run by Indian nationals and Nepalese of Indian origin for three days in December.

Notwithstanding all this, Upadhyaya refrained from making any comment on the student leader's challenge. He, however, invited the union for talks to discuss its 15-point charter of demands that include totally free education, abolition of Sanskrit as a compulsory subject and a ban on the singing of the national anthem that basically glorifies the King.

About 8,000 private schools with over 10 lakh pupils have remained shut since Monday after the union began a weeklong bandh in support of its demands that aim at radical reformation of the kingdom's education system.

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THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

11 MAY 2006

# Red carpet for Zhu in Nepal

*G 3 1995*  
**Kathmandu, May 14 (Reuters):** Nepal rolled out a red carpet today for Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji, whose three-day visit has been billed as an opportunity to breathe some life into the Himalayan kingdom's puny trade with its northern neighbour.

Anxious for the first visit by a Chinese Premier in 12 years to go smoothly, Nepal told its 20,000-strong community of Tibetan exiles last week that it would not allow them to stage protests.

A 19-gun salute boomed and Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala greeted Zhu as he arrived at the airport from Pakistan for the second leg of a five-nation tour that also includes the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

Zhu was also received by five bouquet-bearing girls, a traditional Nepali welcome, and Gurkha soldiers of the Royal Nepal Army presented a guard of honour.

"My visit to Nepal is aimed at consolidating our traditional friendship and intensifying mutually beneficial cooperation," Zhu said in a statement.

Foreign ministry spokesman Gyan Chandra Acharya said that the two sides would focus on promoting trade and economic cooperation and were expected to sign six agreements — among them one on the construction of a road linking Kathmandu with

Tibet.

There would also be pacts on the establishment of an institute for technical training and avoidance of double-taxation to promote Chinese investment, which stood at 848 million rupees (\$11.34 million) in 1999.

China is the fifth-largest investor in Nepal after India, the US, Britain and Norway and provides about \$10 million in aid for the impoverished landlocked country every year.

Nepal exported goods worth just 1.86 million rupees (\$25,000) to mainland China in fiscal 1999/00, while its imports from China were 8.341 billion rupees (\$111.59 million).

Officials said Nepal was keen to promote exports to narrow a trade gap which had more than doubled in two years and would be even wider if barter trade with Tibet was included in the data.

THE TELEGRAPH

15 MAY 2001

# Nepal stresses Tibet trade on eve of China PM visit

Keshav Pradhan  
Kathmandu, May 11

WITH CHINESE Prime Minister Zhu Rongji's visit just three days away, Nepal today reiterated its commitment not to allow Tibetans to use its soil against China. At the same time, it said it favours opening of four more passes to Tibet for trans-border trade.

Nepalese Foreign Minister Chakra Prasad Bastola said, "Nepal's trade with Tibet is both old and traditional. We want to retain this when we go in for modernisation of our trade links with China." He added that Beijing "is also trying to understand this aspect of interaction between Tibet and Nepal." Nepal's trade deficit with China is about Rs 1200 crore.

There are altogether 21 passes between Nepal and Tibet that share a common ethnic and religious bond in the border region. Of them, only three

Kodari, Yari and Rasua are opened for trade. Similar business is conducted also through Walangchugola, a pass located near the Tibet-Nepal-Sikkim tri-junction that is yet to receive official recognition.

For quite some time, Kathmandu has been campaigning for Mugu, Thingar, Mustang and Chimathangha passes. However, Beijing has so far agreed to open the latter two only.

During Zhu's three-day tour beginning on May 14, China and Nepal will sign a treaty on the construction of the proposed Rasua-Shabrubesi road. This will be the second road connecting Tibet and Nepal after the Kodari Highway whose construction in the 60s created resentment in India.

Earlier, Chinese ambassador to Nepal Zeng Xuyong clarified that the friendship between Kathmandu and Beijing "is not aimed at any third country".

## ZHU REACHES PAK

Zhu on Friday arrived in Pakistan on a four-day visit. "I have come to visit the friendly country of Pakistan with the profound friendly sentiments of the Chinese people towards the people of Pakistan... I am convinced this visit will further consolidate and strengthen the traditional friendship between China and Pakistan and help to promote steadily the China-Pakistan partnership of all-round cooperation."

PTI, Islamabad

On the use of Nepalese territory by the 17th Karmapa during his flight to India last year, Xuyong said: "He has left China for some religious purposes. We will not allow anyone to exploit this for other purposes."

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

12 MAY 2001

# Quit buzz as Koirala faces probe

Keshav Pradhan  
Kathmandu, May 3

40-11  
A/C

NEPAL'S COMMISSION for Investigation of Abuse of Authority's decision to question Prime Minister G P Koirala over a controversial aircraft deal has sparked speculation about the future of his one-year-old Government.

As Nepalese dailies reported about the possibility of the Prime Minister's resignation this morning, his close confidante and powerful Nepali Congress (NC) leader Sushil Koirala described such reports as "baseless."

Since last evening when news about the commission's decision became public, the Nepalese capital was abuzz with rumours about the Prime Minister stepping down immediately.

On April 26, the Commission, besides sending two top Royal Nepalese Airlines Corporation

(RNAC) officials to police custody, ordered confinement of former tourism minister Tarinidutt Chataut in the capital. His passport was also impounded.

Chataut had resigned from the Government after the commission began investigation in February after Opposition parties as well as a section of the NC alleged financial irregularities in the aircraft deal signed between the RNAC and Lauda, an Austrian firm in September last.

Sushil Koirala, a former NC general secretary, said, "There is no question of the Prime Minister stepping down as there is no case against him. The Cabinet and party MPs do not want him to quit." He alleged, "Extreme rightist and leftist forces are trying to destroy the institution of democracy by spreading rumours about the Prime Minister."

Soon after he received a ques-

tionnaire from the commission seeking his explanation about the deal yesterday, the Prime Minister held meetings with his Cabinet colleagues and MPs. He is most likely to send in his reply today.

A fortnight ago, when Communist parties began a street agitation against him, the Prime Minister himself declared that he would step down only if he is charge-sheeted.

Earlier in December last, NC parliamentarians loyal to former Prime Minister K P Bhattarai had sought G P Koirala's ouster, alleging his involvement in the deal that allowed the RNAC to hire a Boeing from Lauda. This apart, Opposition parties, barring the Nepal Sadbhavana Party (an organisation of the Nepalese of Indian origin), did not allow Parliament to run even for a day throughout its winter session, seeking the Prime Minister's resignation over the deal.

THE HINDU

- 4 MAY 2001



# Pak.-Maoist nexus in Nepal revealed

By Atul Aneja

**NEW DELHI, APRIL 24.** Investigations following the detention of the Pakistani First Secretary, Mr. Mohammad Arshad Cheema, are beginning to reveal a growing nexus between Islamabad and Maoist rebels in Nepal.

Mr. Cheema was detained and expelled from Nepal after 16 kg of RDX explosives were recovered from his rented accommodation in Kathmandu. Besides, Sachel International, a Pakistani highway construction firm, whose antecedents are now suspect, is

operated from the first floor of the same building.

According to highly-placed sources in the government, it is now becoming clear that Mr. Cheema was involved in striking a deal, worth around Rs. 25 lakhs with a Nepalese citizen for the RDX recovered from his residence. These powerful explosives, once sold, were meant for use by the Maoist rebels who are battling the government in Kathmandu.

Mr. Cheema's name as the lynchpin in funneling RDX from Nepal had cropped up earlier. He

had been linked to an unsuccessful attempt in 1998 by a Sikh militant to smuggle large quantities of RDX into India from Kathmandu's Tribhuvan airport.

Investigations related to the credentials of Sachel International are also making some headway. On the face of it, Sachel International is involved in the construction of 90 km road from Pokhara to Mulguni in Nepal.

But the project has been inordinately delayed and this has led to suspicions that the slippages are deliberate. The company, in fact,

may only be a front for Pakistani intelligence and wants to overstay to carry out covert activity in Nepal which is likely to be directed against India, sources allege.

In fact, it is now learnt that Sachel International has taken special interest in employing ex-Indian army Gurkhas, with the likely purpose of gathering intelligence on India.

The link-up between the Maoists and the Pakistani intelligence has severe negative consequences for political stability in Nepal. The possession of deadly

explosives and weaponry will further fuel the raging insurgency and enhance the threat to the Government in Nepal.

The Maoists are already active in 45 out of 75 districts of Nepal. The epicentre of the insurgency lies in the mid-western hill districts of Nepal including Pokhara, an area where Sachel International, incidentally, is also operating.

India is concerned about the creeping instability in Nepal on account of its negative impact on national security.

# Nepal panel sees no plot in anti-Hrithik riots

Keshav Pradhan  
Kathmandu, April 24

A JUDICIAL commission in Nepal has ruled out the possibility of any conspiracy, internal or external, in the anti-Hrithik Roshan riots that rocked Kathmandu in December.

A judicial commission in Nepal has ruled out the possibility of any conspiracy, internal or external, in the anti-Hrithik Roshan riots that rocked Kath-

mandu for three days in December. Deputy Prime Minister R. C. Poudyal, who also holds the Home portfolio, today said, "The Commission's report does not talk about any conspiracy. It has described the entire episode as a spontaneous outburst of feeling."

After the riots broke out, there was talk of a conspiracy involving the ISI and Mumbai mafia including the Dubai-based underworld don Dawood

Ibrahim, to fan passions against people of Indian origin.

Six people, all Nepalese, had died and property owned by Indian nationals and Nepalese of Indian origin was destroyed in the violence that broke out after rumours spread about Hrithik Roshan making offensive remarks on Nepal and its people.

The three-member commission, set up on February 8, submitted the report to the Government a fortnight ago. Poudyal

said the commission had identified Chitwan Post, a smalltime vernacular journal published from Chitwan in central Nepal, as the first paper to report the Bollywood star's alleged comments.

He said, "The commission has recommended strong and effective measures to preserve communal harmony and unity in the kingdom." The Government, he said, is still studying the nearly 50-page report.



THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

25 APR 2001

In poverty-stricken Nepal, under a discredited regime, its advantage Left

# Great leap forward

BY KESHAV PRADHAN

FOR NEPALESE communists, it's no longer a case of one-step-forward-two-steps-back. It is now, in Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) chief Prachand's words, time to make a Great Leap Forward.

Never before in their 50-year-old history were the underground Reds so confident about their strength. The stark failure of mainline democratic forces since the restoration of multi-party democracy in 1990 has given a fillip to their movement that could never take off earlier because of disunity.

As in the case of their Indian counterparts, Nepalese communists have spent their energies in ideological factionalism for decades. At the moment, they are split into over a dozen factions. The mainstream Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), better known as UML, has the distinction of being the world's first communist party to form a national government, that too under a king, through elections in 1994. Before this nine-month stint in power, the communists under the Samyukta Vam Morcha, a front of seven Left factions, had run an interim government along with the Nepali Congress (NC) in 1990 to frame the present democratic Constitution.

Later, the UML again became a member of a similar national government headed by the NC to conduct the 1999 general elections. However, the breaking away of the Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist-Leninist) from the UML before the polls deprived the latter of a chance to regain power. Nevertheless, the communists' share of votes was more than that of the ruling NC.

Factors like poverty, deprivation, bad governance and political instability have over the years helped the communists emerge as a formidable force. While the Maoists have launched a fierce 'People's War' since February 1996 to establish a republic, the CPN(M-L), an aggressive mainline party, wants a national government comprising all parties, including the Maoists, to frame a new Constitution. The UML, the largest Left faction, has since April 15 taken control of streets in Kathmandu and other major towns to press for the resignation of Prime Minister G.P. Koirala on grounds of corruption.

In the last 10 years, the kingdom has seen eight governments established with the help of money power and political treachery. This has made a negative impact in popular consciousness about the credibility of democracy for which the people fought against the palace for 30 long years. No matter how much the king and the NC defend the existing system, majority of the population in Nepal have been looking for an alternative arrange-



THE FIRE WITHIN: Leftist protest in Nepal

ment. This could be either under the radical Maoists or mainstream communists.

What has frustrated the people even more is the fact that no government has sincerely tried to improve their lot, despite the abysmal conditions of human survival. Nepal's per capita income still hovers around \$ 200, one of the lowest in the world. The ceaseless pattern of migration to other countries for employment, especially to India, has remained the same as it was 150 years ago. Since industry has not developed much, foreign aid is crucial.

In a country of 23 million people, just about four lakh students are enrolled in secondary schools. The total number of hospital beds in 1998-99 was 4,955. Primary schooling is almost non-existent.

The feeling of deprivation and neglect has begun to turn into caste and ethnic rivalry. At least 61 hill ethnic groups, comprising about 40 per cent of the population, have united to fight against what they describe as 'upper caste Hindu domination'. They complain that higher caste people have grabbed government jobs and parliamentary seats disproportionate to their number.

They are against the teaching of Sanskrit in schools. They have decided to describe themselves as 'non-Hindus' in the coming census, thereby threatening to wipe out Nepal's identity as the world's only Hindu kingdom.

The social ethos has undergone a radical change as people with some formal education use politics as a means to climb the social ladder. This has bred rampant corruption in society. Almost all governments since 1990 have been involved in

financial irregularities. For instance, a controversial aircraft deal recently led to the resignation of tourism minister T. Chataut and Royal Nepal Airlines chairman H. Shrestha. The fact that the national airliner has had 10 different heads in 11 years proves that there is no consistency in government policy.

Such socio-political-economic conflicts have come in handy for the Maoists to intensify their movement. The party, which has ties with the People's War Group and the Maoist Communist Centre in India, has managed to rope in a large number of ethnic Magars and Gurungs who together dominate the Gorkha regiments in India and Britain. Earlier, communist parties drew their cadres mainly from Brahmin and Newar communities.

Human rights organisations have expressed concern about the involvement of minors as guerrillas (a worldwide trend) by the Maoists. They have also charged the government with committing excesses on villagers.

The Maoists have set up parallel administrations in several districts in western Nepal. It has extended its operations to eastern districts also, stretching till the Bengal border. Following Mao Zedong's strategy of 'encircling towns with villages', it has made inroads into villages around the Kathmandu valley.

The Maoists have banned singing of the national anthem that glorifies the king and teaching of Sanskrit in scores of government schools. This, despite the fact that their chairman, Pushpakamal Dahal, aka Comrade Prachand, himself is a Brahmin. They have also pressed for totally free education.

Desertions of posts by police personnel in Maoist-hit areas have forced the government to take action against 16 deserters. The government has raised an armed police force through an ordinance as the UML and its communist allies like the Rashtriya Jan Morcha (RJM), the Samyukta Jan Morcha (SJM) and the Nepal Mazdoor Kisan Party (NMKP) foiled its move to enact a bill in Parliament in this regard. They are also dead against the government's proposal to use the Royal Nepalese army against the Maoists.

The power struggle within the NC has slowed down the efforts to contain the rebellion that Koirala had used to take over power from K.P. Bhattarai last year. Koirala refused to extend the term of a committee set up by Bhattarai to conduct negotiations with the Maoists. The committee was headed by S.B. Deuba, a Bhattarai protégé who has now emerged as a strong contender for prime ministership. In a tit-for-tat policy, both Bhattarai and Deuba have remained detached from the official moves to tackle the Maoists.

Besides, government employees are reluctant to serve in remote areas. These rural regions are extremely poor. People survive mainly on maize. Rice is eaten only on major festivals like Dussehra.

Emboldened by the success of the armed rebellion, Prachand has initiated a new line called 'Prachandpath' inspired by a mix of Marxism, Leninism, Maoism and the Shining Path strategy of Peru, proposing 'three great leaps': revolutionary programmes, launching of the final assault and involvement of millions of people in the war and in the subsequent development process.

The 46-year-old rebel has also proposed a Soviet Union-like confederation of south Asian nations like Nepal, India and Bangladesh. This may become a stumbling block in his efforts to unify the kingdom's communists. This is because most of them have used 'Indian hegemony' as a weapon to expand their base. The Maoists have also focused on 'Indian political and cultural expansionism' when they began the 'People's War' with a 40-point charter of demands. They had sought abrogation of the 1950 Indo-Nepal Treaty.

Meanwhile, a secret meeting between Prachand and Rameshnath Pandey, a royal nominee in Parliament, has sparked off speculation about how the palace views the insurgency. The Maoist chief, who has met two mainstream communist leaders, has turned down Koirala's requests for talks.

Amidst this stalemate, the red star over Nepal is still flickering and strong. The government is on the back foot. And the Maoists are preparing for their great leap forward.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

21 APR 2001

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# Nepal insurgency worries India, U.S.

By C. Raja Mohan

**NEW DELHI, APRIL 19.** The two-day visit to Nepal by a senior U.S. State Department official reflects the growing international concern about the rising Maoist insurgency and a deepening political crisis in that country.

The acting U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs, Mr. Alan Eastham, left India today for two days of consultations in Nepal.

While the public attention has been focused on Mr. Eastham's talks in Islamabad and New Delhi, diplomatic observers here say his trip to Nepal may be far more significant. The political developments in Nepal figured prominently in the talks between Mr. Eastham and his interlocutors in the Foreign Office here. India and the United States discussed their shared concerns about peace and stability within Nepal.

Mr. Eastham, who had served earlier in Nepal, is expected to make a first-hand assessment of the troubled situation in the Himalayan Kingdom.

Both India and the U.S. are worried about the rapid growth of the Maoist insurgency across a large part of the country. In many districts the Maoists have ousted local authorities from positions of power and are now raising taxes, dispensing justice and maintaining security.

HD-19 2019  
The recent murder of 60 policemen and an earlier near successful assassination attempt against the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court have demonstrated the new clout of the insurgents and demoralised the ill-equipped security forces. The divisions within the ruling Nepal Congress and the confrontation on the streets between the Government and the opposition parties which are demanding the resignation of the Prime Minister, Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala, have severely strained Kathmandu's ability to cope with insurgency.

In any case, the fractious democratic politics in Kathmandu has proven to be a weak counter to the Maoist insurgency feeding on deep disaffection among the people. Meanwhile questions are being raised about the very survival of democracy in Nepal and talk is widespread about a coup.

Indian and American concerns on Nepal are also shared by the European Union. In a statement issued at Brussels last week, the EU expressed "profound concern" at the "serious escalation of violence" in the context of the "Maoist insurgency in Nepal".

Reflecting on the threat to democratic governance in Nepal, the EU urged "to exercise full respect for human rights in the search for a solution, and to strengthen democracy and rule of law in Nepal".

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## 456 MAOIST MENACE 19/4 Koirala's dilly-dallying will prove catastrophic

**H**AD Maoist activities in Nepal's interior hill districts been nipped in the bud the administration would not have faced with the predicament it finds itself in today. Since first striking in February 1996, they have killed more than 1,600 people, the latest being the massacre this month of 78, of whom 60 were police personnel. Rebels determined to set up a republic have already destroyed telecommunication and TV towers worth crores of rupees and hindered the construction of national highways, forcing the authorities to hand the task to the army. There had been disturbing reports of youths fleeing their villages for fear of being forced to join the rebel force. Even if GP Koirala had supported Surya Bahadur Thapa government's proposal in 1998 for an anti-terrorist act, that could not have helped as experience elsewhere has shown that the problems spawned by poverty and economic deprivation cannot be solved militarily or by force. Koirala correctly opted for conciliation, arguing that insurgency is the result of apathy, prolonged administrative neglect and lack of development. The expectation was that the eight-member commission formed during the KP Bhattarai regime might make some progress, but it failed allegedly because of Koirala's indifference towards a dialogue.

What the Prime Minister has in mind is not clear but the consequences of his dilly-dallying are likely to be catastrophic for the country and government as well. The insurgents are persecuting poor and innocent villagers without realising that they are pursuing an anti-Mao course. There is undoubtedly a need for rejuvenating the high-level commission and also involving all parties to find a solution.

19 APR 2001

# Nepal PM's call for dialogue rejected

BY GOPAL SHARMA

**Kathmandu, April 17:** Nepal's Opposition party, on Tuesday, rejected Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala's call for a dialogue to resolve an escalating row over an aircraft leasing deal and vowed to continue fighting for his resignation.

The embattled Prime Minister asked Opposition parties on Monday to take part in a meeting to end the deadlock over alleged irregularities in the deal by state-owned Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation to lease a Boeing 767 aircraft from Austria's Lauda Air.

"We don't think the government is serious about the talks," leader of the main opposition

Communist Unified Marxist-Leninist party Madhav Kumar Nepal said. "He (Koirala) keeps opposition leaders in detention and calls for talks. We doubt his intention," Mr Nepal said.

Authorities detained Mr Nepal and several other communist members of Parliament on Monday as they tried to stop Prime Minister Koirala from entering his office. Mr Nepal, who was released later on Monday, said the opposition leaders were detained in an "unpolitical, undemocratic and uncultured way" and pledged to continue holding anti-government demonstrations and rallies to press for Prime Minister Koirala's resignation.

Opposition parties have disrupted Parliament

for nearly two months over the row.

Civil aviation minister Tarini Dutta Chataut quit in January over the decision by Royal Nepal Airlines to lease the aircraft from Lauda Air without issuing a public tender as required by law. An independent commission is probing the matter. The carrier said earlier tender calls were unsuccessful and it urgently needed the aircraft for its international expansion.

Prime Minister Koirala, who denies any wrongdoing, says he is ready to quit if charged by a court. The 78-year-old Koirala came to power in March last year vowing to fight corruption, provide good government and stamp out a bloody Maoist insurgency that has claimed 1,664 lives. (Reuters)

THE ASIAN AGE

Protesters throw stones at the police in a Kathmandu street on Monday. They were demanding the resignation of the Nepal Prime Minister, Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala.

## Nepal PM's car stoned, 130 protesters held

400-14  
1074  
KATHMANDU, APRIL 16. Over 130 communist party members were today arrested in Nepal after the car of the Prime Minister, Mr. Girija Prasad Koirala, was stoned in a protest to demand he quit, police said.

Around 10,000 activists, mainly from the Opposition Nepal Communist Party-United Marxist and Leninist (NCP-UML), took to the streets amid tight security in Kathmandu to demand Mr. Koirala's resignation.

A stone was lobbed at the Prime Minister's car as it was approaching his office, a Home Ministry official said.

Police then used tear gas to disperse the protesters, witnesses said. Police said they arrested more than 130 NCP-UML leaders, MPs and activists. "At least 24 lawmakers from our party including the top leaders have been arrested by the police along with dozens of our supporters," the NCP-UML politburo member, Mr. Pradeep Nepal, later said.

The Home Ministry official added that "no ugly incidents took place and the Prime Minister went to his office without being obstructed."

A police spokesman said: "The NCP-UML had planned to stop the Prime Minister's car and pull him out in protest of his alleged involvement in the aircraft lease scam." Mr. Koirala is under investigation for corruption relating to a controversial aircraft lease deal but has denied any wrongdoing.

The protest was part of a NCP-UML plan to cordon off the streets leading to Mr. Koirala's office until he resigned.

The protest was backed by five other splinter communist groups, including the NCP-Marxist, Leninist and Maoist (NCP-MLM), the Nepal Peasants and Workers' Party (NPWP), the National People's Front (NPF), the United People's Front-Nepal (UPF) and NCP-United. — AFP

THE HINDU

17 APR 2001

# Koirala turns to Palace to fight Maoists

Keshav Pradhan  
Kathmandu, April 10

THE NEPALESE Government is desperately trying to rope in the palace in its fight against Maoist insurgents, some of who even tried to enter Kathmandu valley last evening.

Barely 12 hours after his meeting with King Birendra, Prime Minister G P Koirala today strongly supported his Cabinet's proposal for the deployment of the Royal Nepalese Army against Communist rebels.

He said, "Why can't we use the Army here when it can serve in different countries as UN peace-keepers?"

During his meeting with the monarch, who solely commands the loyalty of the Army, Koirala is believed to have discussed the Cabinet proposal as well as the fate of two important ordinances related to the formation of an armed police and the creation of posts of zonal commissioners. The ordinances, which lapsed on Sunday, are waiting for royal assent for re-promulgation.

There is a lurking fear in the ruling Nepali Congress (NC) about the palace, whose wings were clipped when the new democratic Constitution was implemented in 1990, using the Maoist issue to reassert its lost powers.

This feeling grew further after Rameshnath Pandey, a royal nominee in Parliament, last week secretly met Maoist chief Pushpakamal Dahal who has been leading the six-year-old insurgency to turn the kingdom into a Republic.

To mount pressure on the palace, Koirala even got the proposal sanctioned by the ruling party's central working committee just before he visited the palace.

Asked what is stopping the Army from going into action, Koirala said, "It's something secret and I cannot tell you."



Girija Prasad Koirala

He, however, added, "Democracy is safe here, though I don't know what will happen to me." At the moment, he is under tremendous pressure from within and outside his party to step down on the issue of Maoist rebellion and corruption charges.

Despite this, he remarked, "I'm hopeful of overcoming these challenges. The Maoists can never achieve their goal through violence. One day they will have to come to the negotiating table."

Koirala admitted that the rebels tried to attack a police post at Nanglebhare on the periphery of the Kathmandu valley. Asked how safe is the Nepalese capital, he quipped, "As safe as Heaven."

There are reports about the rebels setting up a parallel administration in a number of districts in western Nepal. They have stepped up their campaign in districts surrounding the Kathmandu valley. Yesterday, police opened fire on a meeting of pro-Maoist peasants near Shanischaray bordering Darjeeling in the east. One person died and several others were injured in the incident.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

11 APR 2001



## Red star flickers over Nepal <sup>the 8th MPD #18</sup>

THE NEPAL government has been under pressure from the Maoists for a considerable period of time. It has always viewed the militant activities of these extra-parliamentary communists as a serious security threat. Till now, a stalemate of sorts had prevailed in the relationship between the two, with the overall balance being in the government's favour. In the past week or so, however, the Maoists appear to have gone on a rampage, bombing a police post in western Nepal and killing scores of policemen. A minister's house was also bombed. These have coincided with a Maoist-led general strike which brought the country to a standstill, according to a western news agency report.

Although the Maoists enjoy a marked presence in the landlocked country, it is reasonably clear that the recent dramatic developments may have proved difficult to orchestrate if the rebel leadership had not tapped into the general mood of discontent in the Himalayan kingdom. The winter session of Parliament was prorogued last week after being deadlocked for nearly two months, with not a single day's business transacted in the wake of the opposition demand that Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala should resign following allegations of financial irregularities. Thousands of people have

staged anti-Koirala protests in Kathmandu on Sunday. Mr Koirala's difficulty is that while the key opposition elements are united on this issue, his own party is divided on the question of who should lead it. Indeed, serious personality-related factionalism has been an abiding feature of the Nepali Congress for long. As a result, the country has seen a quick turnover of Prime Ministers.

Mr Koirala has responded to the disturbed conditions by declaring an emergency in the districts most affected by Maoist activities. While taking firm steps to bring the situation under control, the Prime Minister will be better off by also concentrating on the political aspect. The Maoists have offered talks contingent on the formation of an interim government and bringing about a change in the Constitution. The scope of the latter demand is not entirely clear in a country which switched over from being a monarchy to a multi-party democracy after a hard struggle only 10 years ago. In recent years, Nepal has sought India's help in tackling the Maoists. Quite appropriately, New Delhi has approached the issue with a great deal of caution. For strategic reasons, India must hope that the political equilibrium in Nepal will be restored soon and the lawless elements are brought under control.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

10 APR 2001

# Nepal Govt sceptical of rebel talks offer

## Red terror grips Hindu kingdom

Kathmandu, April 8

NEPAL'S MAOISTS on Sunday said they were ready to enter into talks with the Government which could pave the way for ending the decades-long insurgency in the country. The Government while expressing eagerness to join the rebels at the peace table, said the Maoists were "not honest" about the offer.

Nepal Communist Party-Maoists (NCP-M) president Prachanda said in a statement that his party was ready to negotiate and called on the Government to create an atmosphere conducive to talks. The move comes just days after the Maoists launched their most fierce offensive since the insurgency began in 1996—nearly 72 policemen and scores others were gunned down in various parts of the kingdom.

"If the Government continues its suppression and conspiracy, our next move will be even more vigorous for which, it will have to bear the consequences," Prachanda warned.

The rebels want changes in the constitution and to take part in a national Government. Stating that the present Nepali Congress Government had lost confidence in its own party members, Prachanda said his party did not believe the nation's burning issues would be solved just by holding talks.

Deputy Prime Minister Ram Chandra Poudel said on Sunday "the Government is always ready for talks." "But they (the rebels) are not honest for the meeting." The rebels' recent violence showed they were not serious about holding a dialogue, he said. "If they are serious for the meeting why are they killing people?"

Poudel, who also heads Interior Ministry, did not comment on Saturday's fresh call by Maoist party leader Prachanda for a meeting. The rebel leader said his party was ready for talks with "all parties" to help form an interim Government and prepare a new Constitution. He did not elaborate.

**Agencies**

Keshav Pradhan  
Kathmandu, April 8

THE WORLD'S only Hindu kingdom is in danger of sliding into political anarchy as the Communists have launched a three-pronged attack on its Government and Constitution.

At a time when Maoist insurgents (fighting for a Republic) have been taking over village after village, the major Opposition Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), better known as UML, has decided to begin a popular agitation from tomorrow when Nepal celebrates the 11th anniversary of the restoration of multi-party democracy.

The more aggressive Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist Leninist) has for quite some time hampered normal life with frequent strikes.

Ruling Nepali Congress (NC)

spokesman Narhari Acharya today accused the Opposition of "letting down the country and people by causing a stalemate in Parliament."

The Opposition did not allow two ordinances including one for the creation of posts of zonal commissioners to contain the Maoist rebellion to be passed by Parliament in the winter session that ended this week.

The Maoists have lately extended the ban on singing the national anthem that glorifies the King, in Government schools in Kathmandu.

Their impact has been growing all too fast. The Government had to initiate action against two officers and 15 police personnel for surrendering to the Maoists in neighbouring Dhading district on Tuesday.

Reports say the Maoists have set up a parallel administration complete with law courts, pris-

ons and community farming in at least 20 districts in western Nepal.

UML general secretary Madhav Nepal said, "The Government cannot solve any issue as long as it is headed by Mr Koirala."

A senior CPN (ML) leader remarked, "Though divided, the Communists have gained the upper hand this time. It will be very difficult for the Government to face them in jungles, streets and Parliament."

Communists of different hues had polled more votes than the NC in the 1999 general elections.

The interecine power struggle in the NC has only made matters worse. A section of the party owing allegiance to former Prime Minister K P Bhattarai has been seeking Koirala's resignation on grounds of corruption and inefficiency.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

9 APR 2001

# Nepal Maoists kill 29 cops

5-12  
8/4

H-88  
report

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

KATHMANDU, April 7. — Maoist rebels struck late last night in a central mid-western Nepali district killing 47 people including 29 policemen.

According to a police spokesperson here, the armed rebels attacked a police post at Naummle village in the Dailekh district in large numbers. They overwhelmed the 72-man police striking force based there after almost a three-hour-long gun battle.

The police force gave up the fight after the Maoists bombed the post levelling it to the ground. Force commander, police inspector Dhruva Prasad Dabal and 28 other cops were killed in the encounter in which "at least two civilian casualties also occurred," the spokesperson said.

There was no immediate report about the Maoist casualties in the attack, in which 12 police personnel were "seriously injured."

The fate of another 11 cops was "unknown" and they were believed to have been taken captives by the rebels who looted the police post of weapons and ammunition before fleeing into the nearby forested mountain area.

The Dailekh incident is yet another chapter in the recently increased Maoist activity involving attacks on police striking force posts. On Monday last the rebels struck in the mid-western Rukum and



**A police officer injured in the 3 April Maoists' attack being taken into a helicopter at Rumunkot in Nepal. Thirty-five policemen were killed in the attack — AP/PTI**

north-central Dolakha districts killing 36 policemen.

The Maoists have been setting off explosions at selected targets which include residences of ruling Nepali Congress leaders and former senior police officials. The bomb attacks have, however, claim-

ed no casualties.

The underground Maoists launched an armed "peoples' war" in Nepal six years ago for the establishment of a republican state as opposed to the present constitutional monarchy in a multi-party parliamentary democracy.

THE STATESMAN

28 APR 2001

# EYE ON NEPAL-II

## Seeking Manoeuvrability In Trade And Diplomacy

By PARMANAND

AFTER entering the new millennium, Nepal and India seem palpably conscious of the need to strengthen their age-old ties in the changing circumstances. This became quite obvious during the talks the Nepalese foreign secretary, Narayan Shamsher Thapa, had with his Indian counterparts. The two sides chose the opportunity to have detailed discussions on the entire gamut of bilateral relationships.

In truth, the seeds for the talks were sown during the last official visit by Girija Prasad Koirala to India last year. There is, indeed, nothing improper in realising that India and Nepal should not take each other for granted. Both should appreciate each other's sentiments and aspirations as far as possible.

Not unexpectedly, the two sides focussed most prominently on the 1950 Treaty for Peace and Friendship. Indeed, it also turned out to be the opportunity when the two sides discussed the question of amending or updating the 1950 Treaty. Initially, India seemed to have taken it as an act of playing to the gallery by Nepali politicians. Subsequently, India also began to take the matter seriously.

Not unexpectedly, the two sides focussed most prominently on the 1950 Treaty for Peace and Friendship. Indeed, it also turned out to be the opportunity when the two sides discussed the question of amending or updating the 1950 Treaty. Initially, India seemed to have taken it as an act of playing to the gallery by Nepali politicians. Subsequently, India also began to take the matter seriously.

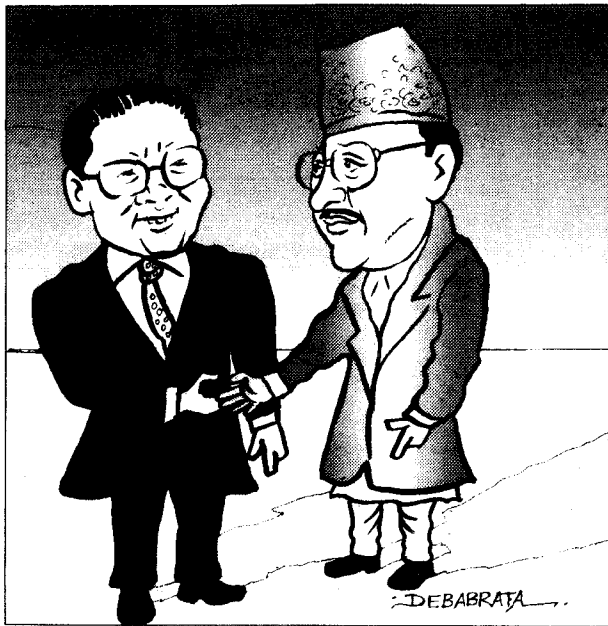
### OBSOLETE TREATY

There is no provision in the Treaty, though, for any revision or update per se. Will the 1950 Treaty be finally scrapped then? The idea seemed to be unthinkable even a couple of years ago. But now India — even if sotto voce — seems to be getting ready for this eventuality. Article 10 of the Treaty signed on 31 July 1950 in Kathmandu by HE Mr Chandreshwar Prasad Narain Singh, Ambassador of India in Nepal, and Mohan Shamsher Jung Bahadur Rana, the last hereditary Rana Prime Minister of the Kingdom, says: "This Treaty shall remain in force until it is terminated by either party by giving one year's notice". Apparently, India is waiting for Nepal to suggest that the treaty be abrogated.

If many in Nepal think that this Treaty is not in keeping with the changing circumstances, many in India say it is well nigh a dead letter now. If some in Nepal feel that the Treaty's provisions at times compromise Nepal's sovereign status, some in India stress that the security provisions have for long remained only on paper. Statements emanating from Darjeeling's Nepalese leaders and even West Bengal's Urban Development Minister, Ashok Bhattacharya, suggest how the Treaty in its present form creates a variety of problems.

In any case, if the non-renewal of the Indo-Bangladesh Treaty of cooperation, friendship and peace in March 1997 has in no way adversely affected the ties between the two South Asian states, there is no reason to suggest that the same cannot happen in the case of Indo-Nepal ties. Inter-

tingly, in April 1995, the then Nepali Prime Minister, Man Mohan Adhikari had said: "We want to review certain clauses (of the 1950 Indo-Nepalese Friendship treaty) and update them so that they reflect the present-day reality". Speaking at the same time, the then Nepali Congress Supreme Leader, Ganesh Man Singh, had said: "Even if God tries to bring revolutionary changes in the Indo-Nepal relationship, He cannot, since the ties are



based on the wolf and lamb principle."

Notwithstanding talk about the Treaty, trade between the two South Asian states has increased. There are, indeed, further possibilities of enhancing the volume of trade. The two sides are becoming more conscious of this now. It is a different matter that several unsavoury happenings have made several Indian investors in Nepal reconsider their proposals. Improvement in the law and order situation in Nepal is bound to improve things again.

Quite appropriately, Indian and Nepalese sides have also decided to expand cooperation to control unauthorised trade across the border. The Nepal border is often alleged to be used for smuggling of Chinese goods to India. Complaints have surfaced recently that a huge quantity of Chinese goods are flooding the Indian market. Indeed, this complaint was in sharp focus during the recently concluded visit by former Chinese premier and currently chairman of the standing committee of the National People's Congress, Li Peng.

### CHINESE LINKS

India and Nepal have also agreed that the joint working group on the boundary would meet shortly. In fact, the joint technical-level boundary committee has been asked to complete the work on the demarcation of the boundary from east to west within the agreed time-frame as directed by the two Prime Ministers. India has asked Nepal to request the commission investigating the disturbances related to the alleged remarks made by a popular Indian actor to look into "the genesis of the problem, who was behind it and also ways and means to prevent such incidents in the future". Indian external affairs minister Jaswant Singh is likely to visit Nepal soon. Nepali home secretary Sri Kant Regmi is likely to visit India soon.

Too much of closeness with, and dependence on India, King Mahendra had thought, was not good for Nepal's identity and sovereignty. Even after stressing the principle of "equidistance" from its two giant neighbours, Nepal would try to move closer to China — and would also play the China card vis-a-vis India. Needless to stress, it stood the powers that be in good stead, and even contributed to the hampering of democracy in the Kingdom particularly after the 1960s.

Things changed subsequently.

China realised the futility of supporting an administration that lacked political legitimacy. Unlike in the 1960s, it did not come to the rescue in the 1990s. After a decade of democracy in the kingdom, China is trying to protect its economic interests in Nepal. King Birendra's visit to China has taken place at a time when impoverished Nepal is looking for role models to pattern its development efforts. The Chinese economic model, according to some observers, is of special significance in this connection.

### OUTBOUND

Relevantly, King Birendra first reached Bao, Hainan province, where an Asian regional economic conference modelled along the annual World Economic Forum held at Davos began on 27 February. King Birendra addressed the Forum as the guest of honour. He subsequently visited Beijing where the Chinese President, Jiang Zemin, accorded him a state welcome. The importance of Sino-Nepalese friendship was stressed by both the heads of state.

In this era of globalisation, the PRC is helping various projects in Nepal. No less significantly, Nepal is moving in the direction of promoting its tourism by wooing Chinese. This process began when it was realised that the number of Indian tourists is declining fast. On its part, China has responded by declaring Nepal as a "favoured outbound destination from 2002". Pradeep Raj Pandey, chief executive officer, Nepal Tourism Board, said in an interview recently that Nepal and China were on the verge of signing a comprehensive declaration that would see a substantial increase in the number of Chinese tourists. Pandey added that except for the issue of currency, all other major formalities have been worked out.

Nepal might be facing problems on the domestic front but it is seeking to increase its manoeuvrability in trade and diplomacy. Overall, the linkage of domestic and foreign politics always remains a constant factor in every country. The mountain kingdom cannot be expected to do well in foreign affairs and international trade without solving the problems of law and order, corruption, political confrontations and, above all, instability.

(C6)

# Arrest a pointer to crackdown on ISI

By Atul Aneja

HPD-1A 14/9  
**NEW DELHI, APRIL 13.** In the arrest of the Pakistani First Secretary in Kathmandu, Mohammed Arshad Cheema, and the recovery of 16 kgs of RDX from his residence, the Nepalese authorities appear to have launched a coordinated strike against the anti-India operations launched by the ISI from the Himalayan kingdom.

The RDX was allegedly seized from the cupboard of Mr. Cheema's rented accommodation at New Baneshwar. The ground floor of the building also reportedly housed the office of Sachel Engineering, run by a Pakistani national, Mr. Hussein Cheema. A highway construction company, Sachel Engineering maintained a stretch of road around Pokhara in western Nepal.

It is not the first time Mr. Arshad Cheema's name has been associated with subversion. Long suspected by Indian authorities as the ISI's station chief, he was reportedly accused by the Inspector General of Police in the Nepalese Government of handing over 30 kgs of RDX to a Sikh militant in 1998. Mr. Cheema's role in the hijacking of IC-814 had also figured prominently. According to sources, he along with two of his associates, Zia Ansari and Abdul Rais Khan - a Nepali Muslim - was spotted at Tribhuvan Airport on the day of the hijack-

ing in suspicious circumstances.

In a related development, the Nepalese authorities have on 'technical grounds' denied licence to Space-Time, a TV network allegedly funded by the Pakistani intelligence. Space-Time network has been seen as the hub for launching anti-India propaganda. Its role was particularly conspicuous in fanning recent anti-India riots by publicising fictitious remarks attributed to the Indian actor Mr. Hritik Roshan.

The tussle revolving around the Space-Time network has been visible for some time now. According to sources, Mirza Dilhad Beg, the

## NEW ANALYSIS

founder of the network and a former minister known for his proximity to the Pakistanis, was allegedly killed by members of the Chotta Rajan gang of the Mumbai underworld. The Space-Time network is now run by Jamim Shah, who is said to be of Kashmiri descent. An earlier ban on Space-Time was lifted by the Nepali authorities, which led to the resignation of the Nepalese Information Minister then.

Sources point out that the ISI in Nepal has played a key role in coordinating subversion against India after the demolition of the Babri Masjid. The demolition deeply divided the

Mumbai underworld on communal lines. This division found expression in retaliatory Mumbai blasts. The investigations which were launched in Mumbai, as a result, led to the flight of one section of its underworld, including Dawood Ibrahim and Chotta Shakeel, first to the United Arab Emirates. But the UAE served as a temporary haven and part of this group in the UAE fled to Karachi while another section went to Nepal.

In Nepal, the Mumbai underworld established contact with the ISI. Consequently, the underworld-ISI nexus allegedly cultivated a large network of smugglers, businessmen, bureaucrats and politicians and spilt them successfully. While a section of the establishment continued to support India, an influential segment also became part of growing "Pakistani constituency" in Nepal.

The shifting elite loyalties was also reflected in the change in character of smuggling operations from Nepal. Not surprisingly, RDX was included in the smuggling list which prominently came to light in 1998.

After the crackdown by Bangladesh, Nepal increasingly became a source for sending explosives and weapons to India's troubled north-east. Some of these supplies also reach Bhutan, another militant stronghold across the Siliguri corridor, a narrow neck which joins the entire North-East to the rest of India.

14/9

14/9

# Pak protests diplomat's arrest

REUTERS

KATHMANDU, April 13. — Pakistan issued a protest to Nepal on Friday after the detention of one of its diplomats in connection with the seizure of explosives in Kathmandu.

Police said last evening they had recovered 16.2 kg of powerful explosives from a house and detained Muhammad Arshad Cheema, first secretary at the Pakistan embassy, and his wife.

A Nepali foreign ministry spokesman said Mr Cheema was being "interrogated" but would not provide further details. Pakistan said the detention breached diplomatic convention.

"It has been repeatedly urged to the Nepalese authorities that such an action constitutes a clear violation of the Vienna convention and that adherence to its provisions is in the interest of the conduct of diplomatic relations between states," the Pakistan embassy said in a statement.



**EXPLOSIVE ISSUE: Nepal police arrest Pakistan's first secretary Muhammad Arshad Cheema (right) in Kathmandu on Thursday night. — AP/PTI**

Last evening, the Rastriya Samachar Samiti news agency quoted a police official as saying the seized explosives, similar to rapid detonating explosive, was capable of causing huge damage. India had ac-

cused Pakistan of using Nepal for anti-India activities, a charge denied by Islamabad. Nepal said it does not allow its soil to be used for hostile activities against any of its neighbours.

THE STATESMAN

14 APR 2001

# EYE ON NEPAL-I

## The Disturbing Domestic Scene

**P**RIME Minister Girija Prasad Koirala will very soon complete one year in office. He had much earlier achieved the distinction of becoming the Kingdom's Prime Minister four times in the post-multiparty democracy phase that began in April 1990. He has been in office for the longest period during this time and yet, ironically, his tenure has proved to be more tumultuous than that of any other incumbent.

The 19th session of the bicameral Parliament comprising the lower house, the Pratinidhi Sabha, and the upper house, the Rashtriya Sabha began in Parliament Building in the Singha Durbar on 8 February. Bad and negative omens were visible on the opening day. Opposition MPs of both houses, excluding those belonging to the Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP) and the Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist-Leninist), entered the Parliament Building in a joint procession, shouting slogans, calling for the Prime Minister's resignation.

### DEADLOCK

It is a different matter that in his welcome speech, Taranath Ranabhat, Speaker of the Pratinidhi Sabha, stressed the need for understanding among the political parties in order to consolidate democracy and accelerate the pace of development. Opposition MPs, excluding those of the NSP, obstructed the proceedings throughout the week in support of their demand for the resignation of Koirala, alleging that he was involved in irregularities in the RNAC-Lauda Air jet lease deal. The Speaker tried to break the deadlock by calling an all-party meeting in his chamber, but his efforts were of no avail. On 16 February, Koirala began his own efforts to end the deadlock, by meeting several Opposition leaders, and requesting their cooperation in running the parliamentary proceedings smoothly. But his efforts, too, came to naught.

To make matters worse, on 19 February, the situation took an ugly turn after the Speaker called on the minister for culture, tourism and civil aviation, Omkar Prasad Shrestha, to make a statement on the RNAC-Lauda deal. When the minister moved towards the rostrum, an UML MP rushed up behind him and assaulted him. Needless to say, he could not make any statement. On the same day, at a press conference, Shrestha described the Lauda Air deal as "transparent". He also disclosed that the RNAC would issue a white paper on the deal soon. On the other hand, both the NC and the UML MPs, on the same

The author is Hon. Director, South Asian Studies Foundation, New Delhi.

By PARMANAND

day, accused one another of "stooping to unparliamentary behaviour".

Things were no better outside the House. In a rather bizarre move, His Majesty King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, the head of state, on 20 February, sought the opinion of the Supreme Court on whether or not Section 2 of the Nepal Citizenship (6th Amendment) Bill, passed by the Pratinidhi Sabha on 26 July 2000 as a money bill, was consistent with

a republican constitution, but the concept of an all-party interim government generally does enthuse political leaders in Nepal. It is rather unfortunate that Government-Maoist talks to end the violence have not become a reality, notwithstanding statements by both sides from time to time.

While the hoi polloi are suffering, the influence of the Maoists is on the increase. Terror is spreading even in areas earlier supposed to be otherwise peaceful. This has adversely affected tourism and investment.

Amidst these developments, support to Koirala has come from the most unexpected quarters. At the 19 February meeting of the central working committee of the NC, former Prime Minister and a prominent Koirala-detractor, KP Bhattarai said: "At this moment all NC MPs should realise the seriousness of the situation and present themselves unitedly in the House. I had asked GP

Koirala to give up one of the two posts, but, in the present context, that issue is irrelevant". Nothing could have been more satisfactory for the Prime Minister at this crucial juncture.

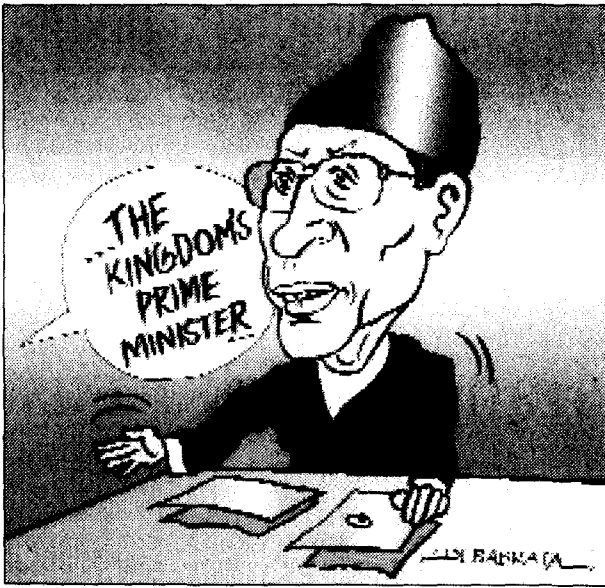
### ACCOMMODATING

On his part, Girija Prasad Koirala, both in his capacity as the Kingdom's Prime Minister and president of the NC, has tried to become as accommodative as possible. Indeed, even his old and habitual critics in the party have begun to realise this. Using his power of nomination to the CWC, he already has nominated KP Bhattarai and Sher Bahadur Deuba. It seems to have augured well. That he has done so despite his overwhelming victory at the general convention of the party at Pokhara speaks volumes for his new accommodative mood. He is preparing the ground for the *dosro pusta* (second generation) leadership.

Amidst these developments, the NSP — the people of Indian origin living mainly in the Terai (plains) — began its *rathayatra* from Jhapa under the leadership of party president Gajendra Narayan Singh on 18 February. Seeking to promote "peace and mutual goodwill in the country", the yatra concluded at Mahakali on 7 March. The NSP has done quite well in the midst of disturbances when several *mad-heshis* were beaten up in December and January (resulting in one death) because of the concocted remarks of Hrithik Roshan.

It is time that Nepalese politicians realised that the rules of the game are no less important than power politics itself. Failure on this front will create more serious problems in the future.

(To be concluded)



Articles 8 and 9 of the Kingdom of Nepal. A single bench of Chief Justice Keshav Prasad Upadhyaya decided the same day that a special bench of the Supreme Court would initiate a discussion on the matter.

The King has taken the step under Article 88(5) of the Constitution, which says: "If His Majesty seeks opinion of the Supreme Court on any complicated question of interpretation of any provision of the Constitution or any other law, the Supreme Court shall, after the deliberation on the question referred to it, submit to His Majesty a report with its opinion thereon".

This move by the constitutional monarch is seen by many as a slap in the face of the Koirala government — and that too in this hour of crisis. No less curious was the statement of a royal nominee in the upper house, Ramesh Nath Pandey: "It is His Majesty's obligation to protect and implement the Constitution. We have to look at this action by His Majesty in true spirit of protecting and implementing the Constitution".

### MAOIST TERROR

In another significant development, the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) — the organisation which has been continuing what is called the "people's war" since February 1996 — has demanded the formation of an all-party interim government to draft a republican constitution for the kingdom. The Maoists had recently held a convention, the venue of which was kept a secret, but it was announced that it ended on 25 February. Comrade Prachand, hitherto general secretary of the outfit, will now be its chairman, and will have sole authority over the party.

Not many political parties may be enthused by the idea of

THE STATESMAN

13 APR 2001

# 60 victims in 3 days: Nepal Maoist rebels assert themselves

By SUMAN PRADHAN

**Kathmandu, April 5:** With nearly 60 men killed in rebel attacks over the past three days, this has been the most violent week in Nepal since the Maoist rebels burst into the national scene six years ago. It could soon get even worse, if the rebels have their way.

For on Friday, the underground Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) has called a nation-wide strike against what it calls "the corrupt and bourgeois government" of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala. And if past experience is any indication, a Maoist-called strike is often fatal. As such, the Koirala government is pulling itself by the bootstraps, sending armed police

patrols on the streets in Kathmandu and other towns, preparing for the worst.

It is ironic that Koirala should be facing such a challenge from a once-fringe movement just when he should be savouring success in smoothing the often rocky transition from autocracy to democracy. Nepal reverted to democratically elected governments after an intense people's movement in April 1990 turned the monarchy into a constitutional one and handed power to elected officials like Koirala, who after all, has governed Nepal for nearly seven of the 11 years of democracy.

Come Sunday, Nepal marks that important anniversary. But it appears that the Maoists, the Opposition Communists, and rebel elements within his own governing Nepali Congress Party are out to spoil the fun for the Prime Minister.

The violence these past days in Rukumkot, Maimpokhari and Palpa.

when a combined total of 55 lives were lost (45 police and 10 rebels) in Maoist raids is just an inclination of the carnage to come. Maoist rebels, who are fighting for a republican state in this Hindu monarchy, have further taunted Mr Koirala by brazenly calling all policemen to hand over their arms to them and join the "people's war."

## SPOTLIGHT

And to rub salt on the wound, two top Maoist leaders have also recently held secret meetings with an Upper House parliamentarian nominated by King Birendra. This has begun the rumour mills of Kathmandu churning, with some local newspapers also claiming that the rebels now want to talk directly with the Royal Palace. Analysts say that would not be a

surprise, since the rebels have lately called for a government in which all sides and parties, including the palace, are represented. "This has been their game plan since their convention some weeks ago," says Mr Gunaraj Luintel, a political observer who closely analyses the Left groups of Nepal.

Many here say, by now this Himalayan Kingdom should have been well on its way to being a stable democracy. And yet, political instability is still an endemic problem, as exemplified by the Maoist rebellion. Moreover, Nepal's Parliament has been in a logjam this entire Winter Session due to Opposition Communist demands for Mr Koirala's resignation for his alleged involvement in a shady aircraft leasing agreement.

The disruption of Parliament has harmed Mr Koirala more than anyone.

His efforts to pass two ordinances that set up armed police force and regional administrators have floundered. Both these measures were aimed at boosting security in rural areas. Now the government has no other alternative but to repromulgate the ordinances and hope that it wins parliamentary approval within six months. That can only happen if the Congress remains united. Mr Koirala on Wednesday began that long awaited move for reconciliation by seeking a meeting with his predecessor and bitter rival, former PM Krishna Prasad Bhattarai.

Deputy prime minister Ram Chandra Paudel, who does Mr Koirala's bidding most of the time, says, "when parliamentary democracy is under attack from the Maoists and other forces, the Congress has to remain united. We are confident that we will find a solution to this."



# Maoists kill 35 Nepal cops

REUTERS

KATHMANDU, April 2. — Suspected Maoist rebels killed 35 police officers in Nepal in two overnight attacks, one of which was the biggest on police since the group took up arms in 1996, officials said today.

Three attackers were killed in the clashes around police posts in western and central Nepal.

Home ministry spokesman, Mr Gopendra Bahadur Pandey, said 30 officers were killed at Rukumkot, Rukum district (west Nepal), when suspected rebels fighting the country's constitutional monarchy attacked a police post.

"Thirty bodies have been recovered from the site of the clash," Mr Pandey said. The 14



Mr GP Koirala: More trouble on hand

wounded policemen were admitted to hospitals in Kathmandu and neighbouring Nepalgunj.

Three suspected rebels and another five policemen died in a gunbattle at Dolakha district in central Nepal early today. The 13 wounded policemen have been flown to Kathmandu. There was no immediate word from the rebel group about the fresh wave of violence.

The Maoists started their low-intensity but sustained campaign from a couple of remote and poor foothill villages. The rebellion has now spread to more than 30 of the kingdom's 75 administrative districts. Both the government and the rebels have accused each other of lacking seriousness for peace dialogue.

Last November, efforts to start peace talks failed.

## US diplomats head for China

SANYA (China), April 2. — US diplomats arrived on the Chinese island of Hainan today to help win the release of 24 American air crew and ensure their Navy spy plane packed with top-secret electronics didn't fall into Chinese hands.

The US aircraft made an emergency landing on the tropical southern island yesterday after a mid-air collision during a game of cat-and-mouse with a Chinese fighter plane which crashed. Two defence attaches from the US embassy in Beijing arrived in Haikou, capital of Hainan, to join a third diplomat already sent in from the US consulate in southern Guangzhou. The two were met by a Chinese official, jumped into a van and sped off towards Lingshui military airport on the southern edge of the island province near the city of Sanya. Earlier, a spokesman for the US Pacific Command in Honolulu bluntly warned Beijing to stay away from the EP-3 Marine surveillance plane. — Reuters

## Pay hike demand caused stampede

ISLAMABAD, April 2. — An unmet demand for a pay raise caused the stampede at the shrine of Baba Farid Ganjshakar in Pakistan which killed about 40 pilgrims over the weekend, reports said today.

Islamabad's daily *Jang* quoted a senior police officer as saying that the caretaker of the Muslim shrine in Pakpattan town haggled with officials for four hours before he agreed to open a supposedly sacred door, *Behishti Darwaza* (the door to paradise) to pilgrims.

— DPA

THE STATESMAN

3 APR 2001

## Nepal Defence Minister <sup>HC-4</sup> resigns <sup>3/13</sup>

NEPAL'S DEFENCE Minister, Mahesh Acharya, resigned on Friday taking "moral responsibility" for the sacking of a former Central Bank governor now reinstated by the Supreme Court.

"I honour the decision taken by the Supreme Court and have decided to resign," Acharya said. He was the Finance Minister when the Government sacked Tilak Rawal as the bank governor in August following differences between the two men over "policy matters."

Rawal appealed to the Supreme Court, which on Wednesday ruled the sacking was illegal and ordered the Government to reinstate him to his old job.

The resignation of Acharya, who is considered a close aide of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, comes at a time when Koirala is facing a turbulent parliament where opposition parties are demanding his resignation and rebels in his party are refusing to support him.

"My decision would not make it difficult for the Prime Minister. Instead it would make things easier for him," Acharya said.

AP, Kathmandu

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

31 MAR 2001

# Resignations spell trouble for Koirala ✓

Keshav Pradhan  
Kathmandu, March 14

15/3  
Koirala  
Roshan riots  
H.P. 11

THE RESIGNATION of two loyal ministers yesterday has come as a blow to Nepalese Prime Minister G.P. Koirala who is desperately trying to resist a move from within and outside the ruling Nepali Congress (NC) to oust him from power.

Agriculture minister J. P. Gupta, a hardcore Koirala loyalist, quit the Government in protest against lack of consistency in its policies.

Till last month, he held the glamorous Information and Communications portfolio. Gupta was cut up with his colleagues after the Government recently reversed his decision not to give up-linking facilities to a cable network with whom he was fighting a running feud.

Moreover, the Government had raised questions about the network's role during anti-Hrithik

Roshan riots. What has embarrassed Koirala even more is the resignation of Minister of State for Labour S Hamal on grounds of the Prime Minister's failure to deliver. The Prime Minister has asked the two ministers to reconsider their decision.

Seeking Koirala's resignation over a controversial aircraft deal, Opposition parties have not allowed Parliament to run for a day since its winter session began on February 8.

Mr Koirala should step down immediately as his Government is both corrupt and inefficient," said Madhav Nepal leader of the Opposition.

Interestingly NC dissidents had also focused on alleged irregularities in the hiring of a jet by the Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation from Lauda, an Austrian firm, when they began a campaign for Koirala's removal on grounds of corruption, nepotism and non-performance two months ago.

THE

1973

# Nepal Opposition unites to oust PM

**Kathmandu, March 11:** The long-running campaign by Nepalese opposition parties to disrupt proceedings in Parliament threatens the future of the whole parliamentary system in the Himalayan nation, say analysts.

Opposition parties have disrupted proceedings in the House of Representatives since the latest session began on February 8, preventing the passing of the royal ordinance for the creation of a new Army unit.

A rainbow alliance of political groups has come together in a bid to force Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, leader of Nepali Congress, to resign and block the establishment of a 15,000-strong special armed force which will help combat a six-year-old insurgency by Maoist rebels.

They fear that the passage of the ordinance will clear the way for the government to set up a powerful special armed force which will be used to end the insurgency which has so far claimed nearly 1,600 lives. "In that eventuality, the future of the ruling NC will be ensured as a power to reckon with for several years," political observer Hari C. Shrestha said. (AFP)

## Discussion on peacekeeping tops Annan's Nepal agenda

**Kathmandu, March 11:** Discussions on peacekeeping operations are likely to dominate the 20-hour visit of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to Nepal next week, officials said.

Mr Annan arrives in the Himalayan kingdom on Monday from Pakistan as part of a regional tour which will also take him to Bangladesh and India. Officials said Mr Annan would meet Nepali Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, foreign minister Chakra Prasad Bastola and defence minister Mahesh Acharya.

"We have no agenda for the meetings but we will discuss peacekeeping operations in different parts of the world as well as the UN activities in Nepal," foreign secretary Narayan Shumshere Thapa said late on Friday.

Nepal wants UN support to upgrade an Army training centre near Kathmandu so it can become a UN Regional Peacekeeping Training Centre for troops from South Asian countries. (Reuters)

# Nepal announces fresh talks initiative with Maoist rebels

BY SUMAN PRADHAN

**Kathmandu, March 7:** Just a day after media reports speculated on a possible move towards talks between Nepal's beleaguered government and Maoist rebels, the government confirmed the fresh moves by announcing a list of captured rebels as demanded by the underground Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist).

On Tuesday, deputy prime minister Ram Chandra Paudel, who also holds the powerful home ministry dealing with internal security, abruptly released the names of 302 Maoist rebels in the police custody. Not only that, he also laid out the charges against each of the captured rebels.

The latest government move was in response to fresh Maoist demands to make public the list of captured rebels and the charges against them, a government source said. "We are hopeful that this time, the two sides can actually sit down for talks."

Deputy prime minister Paudel himself made it clear that the government was keen for talks with the rebels. "We have taken the first steps. Now it is up to them to respond," he said. However, Mr Paudel said that the government deems as non-negotiable the status of Nepal's constitutional monarchy as well as its multi-party parliamentary system.

Both these institutions have been repeatedly derided by the Maoist leadership who want to undo the monarchy as well as multi-party democracy and establish in its

place a Republican one-party state. While unveiling the names of the rebels, the government also laid out its own set of demands for the rebels to fulfill. "Many innocent citizens have been kidnapped by the Maoists. We now expect them to make public the whereabouts of such citizens," Mr Paudel said.

While it may appear that the rebels and the government are conducting a delicate dance of claims and counter-claims, the two sides are actually moving towards negotiations. Human rights activists, who are appalled by the carnage the six year old Maoist rebellion has wrought in this Himalayan Kingdom, are playing a central role in nudging both sides to the negotiating table. Former Leftist legislator and a

prominent human rights activist Padma Rama Tuladhhar said that this time, the two sides seem serious about talking. "We want both sides to approach the talks with good faith," he said.

Mr Tuladhhar knows the frustrations of failed talks. The last time the two sides inched towards negotiations was in October last when Mr Tuladhhar himself brokered the talks. But those hopes were dashed even before negotiations began in earnest after the government blundered into releasing two Maoist rebels with much fanfare, rather than discreetly as demanded by the rebels.

Since then, the rebels have escalated their attacks on isolated police posts in rural north-western Nepal and killed

dozens more police and civilians. The total death toll in the six year "People's War" now stands at close to 1600, according to the government's own estimates.

Senior government officials say that still, the rebels would not have inched towards fresh talks if not for two new political developments. The first was the formation of a specialised armed police force in January which envisages a 15,000 strong, well-armed, well-trained paramilitary police to replace the regular police in counterinsurgency operations. And the second is the recent Maoist general convention which indicated that its leaders were ready for talks when the convention passed a resolution for an "all-party government to draft a new Constitution."

THE ASIAN AGE

3 MAR 2001

# Nepal seeks China support for training base plan

Keshav Pradhan

Kathmandu, February 22

CHINA, WHICH trains the Royal Nepalese Army at various levels, is likely to support Nepal's proposal to have a regional training centre for UN peacekeeping forces at Panchkhal, 70 km east of here.

Chinese Defence Minister Gen Chi Haotian, who arrived here yesterday just five days before King Birendra's weeklong state visit to the Communist country, responded "positively" to the proposal during his meeting with his Nepalese counterpart Mahesh Acharya.

The Nepalese Defence Minister, however, categorically said that his country had no plans to purchase arms from Beijing. He added: "China will continue to train the Nepalese Army at senior and middle levels."

Earlier in 1988, serious differences had

cropped up between Delhi and Kathmandu after the latter imported anti-aircraft guns and armoured cars from China without India's consent.

The 1950 Indo-Nepal Treaty prohibits purchase of arms by Nepal from any third country without India's knowledge. Before China, Nepal had sought Britain's help in establishing the proposed training centre during British defence secretary G Hoon's visit here two months ago. Britain has been recruiting Nepalese as soldiers for over 185 years.

Deployment of Nepalese soldiers for UN duties has been a major source of revenue for the poor and backward kingdom. Most of the UN peacekeepers in Lebanon and East Timor are from Nepal that is now likely to send its soldiers to Sierra Leone.

The timing of the King's programme and

Gen Haotian's arrival has generated a lot of interest here. The monarch's state visit, third since his enthronement in the Seventies, will help him equalise the number of his tours to India. So far, he has made three state and six personal visits to India.

As Acharya himself put it, "Gen Haotian's visit will allow us to give us first-hand information about Nepal before the King's tour that begins on February 22."

Interestingly, the Chinese Defence Minister's arrival coincided with the Nepalese Army Day that falls on Mahashivratri. A fortnight ago, a delegation led by Chinese assistant foreign minister Wang Yi agreed to speed up work on the second trans-Himalayan road joining Nepal and Tibet. Construction of a similar road between Kathmandu and Tibet in the Sixties had created resentment in Delhi.

## N Korea may restart N-tests

NORTH KOREA on Thursday warned it might restart long-range missile tests in light of signs the new US administration could take a tougher line with the Communist nation.

North Korea also complained that the US had not upheld its end of a 1994 agreement under which Pyongyang froze its nuclear programme, and threatened to drop that accord too. The angry statement from the North's foreign ministry followed comments by senior US officials that they expected reciprocity from Pyongyang in dealings between the countries.

Seoul, AP

# Crisis deepens in Koirala Cabinet

**Kathmandu, Feb. 8:** The crisis Nepali Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala's government has been facing deepened just ahead of the winter session of Parliament as two ministers of his reshuffled Cabinet refused to take oath.

The ministers — Khum Bahadur Khadka, given the portfolio of physical planning and works, and Ram Saran Mahat of finance — said they would not accept the posts as they were not consulted before their names were added to the list.

A chill ran through Koirala camp when Mr Khadka said: "as the reshuffle came without consultation, we have decided to boycott the swearing in ceremony and refuse to take the posts."

The refusal puts an end to Mr Koirala's attempt to bring peace to the Nepali Congress party ahead of

the winter session of Parliament leaving his fate hanging in balance as party unity was crucial to face the Opposition demanding the Prime Minister's resignation.

Mr Khadka in a signed statement said. "The move (Cabinet reshuffle) made by Mr Koirala without proper consultation with senior leader Krishna Prasad Bhattarai (the only surviving founding member of the NC), would not help in keeping unity in the party."

The rival camp, under former Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, has challenged Mr Koirala's leadership for making the Cabinet one-sided. Mr Koirala 10 months ago had said he was there to fight corruption, maintain law and order, work for poverty alleviation and streamline bureaucracy, but is alleged to be involved in financial scandal. (IANS)

THE ASIAN AGE

- 9 FEB 2001

## KOIRALA ON TOP

Need to review accords with India

THE dissidents' cry for a change in leadership has silenced those who had been demanding a change — they have to reconcile to the fact that GP Koirala is firmly in the saddle. Not only did the Prime Minister survive a no-confidence motion six weeks ago, he was re-elected party president for another four years. That he will have a comfortable victory over rivals Sher Bahadur Deuba and Hari Ram Joshi was never in doubt. Deuba, who claims to have the "vision and age" to solve the country's problems, may have to wait. His political abilities were tested earlier when he headed a coalition for 19 months. Koirala has already hinted at handing over charge to a younger man since the country is heading towards "collective responsibility". The first thing he did after his re-election was nominate his arch rival KP Bhattarai to the powerful working committee. Deuba may also be included to appease the dissidents. Koirala had not been vindictive. In his previous ministry he gave berths to some of his critics who were members of the "gang of 36" which brought his government down in 1994. Differences have divided the party for several years, the saving grace is that it is still intact.

Koirala's pro-India tilt has alienated a large number of Nepalese, particularly leftist elements. The strong undercurrent of anti-Indian feelings surfaced last December over alleged remarks by Mumbai film star Hrithik Roshan. It has left a bad aftertaste. It would be in India's interest to take the initiative to review a few controversial agreements, particularly provisions of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship 1950, which have become meaningless. Any useful reappraisal of Indo-Nepalese relations will have to start with this.

THE STATESMAN

2 FEB 2001



## Nepali Congress sticks to Socialism despite threats from Communists

Keshav Pradhan <sup>HP</sup>  
Pokhara (Nepal) January 20

THE NEPALI Congress (NC) has reverted to its old slogans of socialism even as its government struggles to curb Maoist insurgency that has been spreading fast in the kingdom.

In yet another <sup>HP 14</sup> incident, Communist guerrillas belonging to the underground Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) abducted a chief district officer and a customs officer in Sindhu-palchok district bordering Tibet, yesterday, within hours after the NC's four-day 10th national conference kicked off in a tourist resort, near Kathmandu.

Representatives from Socialist Interanationale, of which NC is a member, the Chandra Sekhar-led Samajwadi Janata Party, the Chinese Communist Party, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party and the Bangladesh Awami League were present at the opening ceremony.

Prominent NC leaders, including Deputy Prime Minister R.C. Poudyal and former Prime Minister <sup>S.P.</sup> Deuba, in their inaugural <sup>speeches</sup>, claimed that the Maoists have targetted mostly NC workers for physical elimination.

In his report submitted to the party today, NC general secretary Sushil Koirala said all frontal wings would come forward to instill confidence among the people terrorised by Maoist "terrorists who have become a threat to both democracy and the nation."

Quoting B.P. Koirala, founder of the NC, Sushil Koirala said, "Socialism is the future of third world countries. If we fail to adopt it, we will have to suffer at the hands of military dictators or Communist autocrats or religious fundamentalists."

The NC, which was founded in Calcutta in 1946 as a social democratic organisation, is likely to propose implementation of socialist ideals in the kingdom where half of the 22 million people are below the poverty line and where economic liberalisation began simultaneously with India in the early Nineties.

Its policy and programme proposal calls for balancing of the principles of socialism with those of economic liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

21 JAN 2007

# Koirala trouble not yet over

FROM PROBIR PRAMANIK

Kathmandu, Jan. 5: A day after failing to win a no-trust motion against Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, rebels in the ruling Nepali Congress today claimed that the issue is still alive.

Addressing a news conference this afternoon, former premier and rebel leader Sher Bahadur Deuba said the no-trust motion moved by the dissenting group, which was not "tabled" at the Nepali Congress Parliamentary Party's meet yesterday, was "alive". The group of 41 rebel members of the Nepali Congress in the House of Representatives — the Lower House of Nepal's parliament — would be moved again.

"We do not intend to split the Nepali Congress. In fact we want to unify the party being split by the Nepali Congress parliamentary party leader and the Prime Minister. The Koirala camp had by threat managed to secure the support of 15 rebel MPs who had originally signed in the motion demanding that Koirala step down from the leadership," Deuba said.

Asked about the rebel camp's next course of action, the former prime minister said: "We intend to move the no-trust motion again.

But our main focus will be on the party's national convention at Pokhara later this month."

Dismissing the allegation that the rebel camp was trying to split the Nepali Congress, Deuba said: "I can't even think splitting the Nepali Congress to which I have been a major contributor. We intend to provide good leadership to the party. We are the real Nepali Congress. It was Koirala who ousted former Prime Minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and has failed to fulfil the promise of solving the Maoists insurgency and corruption. Koirala has let down not only the party but the entire country."

Asked about any "compromise formula" to end the feud within the Nepali Congress, Deuba said: "There could be many compromise formulas. We have to adopt one that arrests the party from splitting. But that would mean that the Koirala camp will have to face another free and fair no-trust motion."

Blaming the government for fuelling communal passion in Kathmandu following the alleged anti-Nepal remarks of Hrithik Roshan, the rebel leader said: "It was the foolhardiness of the government to have banned screening of films starring Hrithik."

*The Economic Times*

6 JAN 2007

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## Himalayas on fire

India had just about succeeded in convincing an agitated Nepal that cine idol Hrithik Roshan had not made any remarks about not liking Nepal or the Nepalese when Bharatiya Janata Party leader K.R. Malkani decided to strike while the iron was hot. He went several steps further by suggesting that the late Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru should have accepted the accession of Nepal which he claimed had been offered by King Tribhuvan. And what is more, Mr Malkani has not backed off from what he said, but stood by the rather aggressive assertion. Nepal has lodged a strong protest with India sending the Foreign Office into turmoil as the officials try to control the damage through soft words and polite language. The BJP has also had no hesitation in disassociating itself from Mr Malkani's controversial remarks terming these as unfortunate and insisting that this was a personal opinion and did not reflect the opinion of the party. In fact the BJP issued an official release stating that it was committed to strengthening ties with Nepal, and that it fully respected the neighbouring country's sovereignty and cultural identity. This is not likely to dilute the protest which has taken a violent turn. In fact the Nepalese communist parties have called for a nationwide strike and are demanding the resignation of the deputy Prime Minister Ram Chandra Poudel. Mr Malkani, apart from insisting that Nehru made a major mistake in not allowing Nepal to accede, has also gone on to speak of a strong Pakistani presence there saying that Pakistan has several agents in Nepal and is spending a lot of money. Ironically, relations between India and Nepal have taken a turn for the worse under a BJP-led coalition in Delhi. The BJP had always, before it came to power at the Centre, embraced Nepal as a Hindu state and sought to make common cause with the tiny country where obviously anti-Indian sentiments still run very high. The Nepalese government was not particularly happy with the allegations hurled across the border by Delhi following the hijacking of the Indian Airlines Kathmandu-Delhi flight to Kandahar. India had at the time adopted a rather belligerent attitude which had caused considerable resentment in Nepal. Matters had subsided with high level visits seeking to tone down the sentiments and bring relations back on an even keel. That this was only on the surface was indicated by the sudden and almost spontaneous protest against alleged remarks by an Indian actor, which has now been given genuine ammunition by the BJP stalwart. Mr Malkani alone can explain the timing of his remarks. And whether he has entered the controversy thoughtlessly or deliberately. If it is the last then the BJP should be worried because Mr Malkani is not a leader who can be ignored, having held important positions in the party. And he has decided not to be governed by the party whip, but to state purist positions according to his own individual perceptions. This, regardless of the fallout on the government and the party. Obviously he is of the old school which is not particularly happy about the tight-rope walking by the government and the BJP throughout its term in office. Needless to say, Mr Malkani's statement cannot be dismissed as easily as Hrithik's alleged remarks, and his views on Nepal will continue to stoke the fires for some time to come. Particularly as the Opposition in Nepal is looking for issues and will not allow its own government to rest until it has extracted a meaningful apology from Delhi.

THE ASIAN AGE

- 2 JAN 2001

# New year gloom engulfs Nepal

FROM PROBIR PRAMANIK

**Kathmandu, Dec. 31: Dying embers of the Hrithik Roshan controversy in Nepal were stoked by a fresh burst of violence in which two people of Indian origin died and by an untimely remark by a BJP leader.**

Unknown assailants fired on a rally organised by the Sadbhavna Party, dominated by people of Indian origin, to protest against the controversy over an alleged comment by Hrithik. In the firing in Rajbiraj bordering Bihar, two people — identified as Mahendra Chowdhury and Kushilal Yadav — died.

In the capital, bombs were hurled at the houses of three Nepali Congress leaders — D. Badu, education minister; Sushil Koirala, general secretary, and Govinda Joshi, a former minister.

The incidents occurred as Nepal was preparing to spend the first day of the new year in the life-halting embrace of a strike called by the Left parties, demanding dismissal of the Girija Prasad Koirala government.

Koirala's task of controlling the unrest at home and mending fences with India was made even more difficult by a comment by senior BJP leader K.R. Malkani.

He told a website yesterday that it was a mistake by Delhi not to have accepted Nepal's offer of accession to the Union when it was made to Jawaharlal Nehru by King Tribhuban, adds our Delhi bureau.

Late tonight, Malkani withdrew his remarks if "they have hurt my good friends in Nepal" and said he was "extremely sorry".

Before the apology came, Nepal's deputy prime minister Ram Chandra Poudyal said: "We will lodge a strong diplomatic protest with the Indian government. It is unfortunate that such remarks are being made by senior Indian leaders, that too in the wake of the Hrithik episode."

Aware that such a comment will give a handle to anti-India elements in Nepal to whip up public sentiment, New Delhi scrambled to distance itself from the statement. "The remarks do not reflect the views of the government of India," foreign ministry spokesman R.S. Jassal said. "It is important that at this juncture, we avoid any misunderstanding and misperception and work to strengthen the traditional ties of goodwill and friendship between the peoples of the two countries," he added.

The ruling BJP also distanced itself from the views of its nation-

al executive committee member.

Malkani had said: "I think, we made a serious, very foolish mistake when Tribhuban offered to accede to India and Nehru said: 'No, No, duniya kya kahegi (What will the world say?)'"

This is not the first time Malkani has embarrassed the government. His strong criticism of the ruling BJP in Parliament had earned him the title "Comrade Malkani" from the Left.

Despite India's damage control effort, there is apprehension in Delhi that Malkani's remark may give a fresh lease of life to Left-wing demonstrators who will bring Nepal to a standstill from tomorrow.

A nine-party Left combine has given the strike call, but at least one of them — a major constituent — was not willing to go along.

Poudyal appealed for revocation of the strike call, but ruled out acceptance of the Left demand for Koirala's resignation. "The timing of the bandh will not only harm Nepal's economy, but will have an adverse impact on the country's image in the international arena. Tourism will be one of the major losers in the bandh," he said. Hotels are already facing a deluge of last-minute cancellations. (See Page 6)

THE TELEGRAPH

1 JAN 2007