

Nepal Maoists lift blockade

Keshav Pradhan ^{#0300}
Kathmandu, December 29 ¹⁹⁹⁴

THE PEOPLE of Kathmandu heaved a sigh of relief today following the lifting of a Maoist-sponsored economic blockade that began on December 23.

The rebels had snapped supply lines to the Kathmandu valley primarily to protest against the alleged extra-judicial killing of their comrades by security forces. A statement issued by the Maoist-run Tamang autonomous region government (TARG) said the blockade had been lifted in response to appeals from human rights organisations, civil societies and the media.

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Buddhist by religion, Tamangs belong to mongoloid stock and live in Makwanpur, Dhading, Nuwakot, Kavre, Sindhupalchok, Rasua, Sindhuli, Dolakha and Ramechhap districts that surround the Kathmandu valley. In August, the TARG had blocked traffic to and from Kathmandu for over a week.

30 DEC 2004

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Maoists blockade Nepal

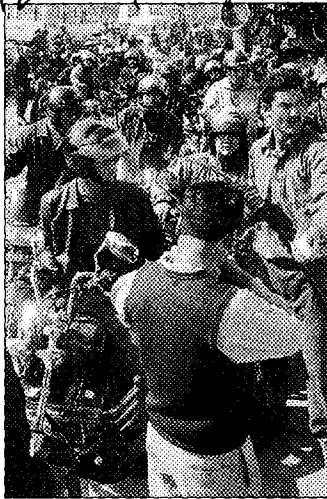
Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, December 24

INDIA IS closely watching the ongoing economic blockade by Maoists that threatens to create a shortage of essential commodities in Nepal.

Since Thursday, not a single cargo vehicle has moved into the kingdom from Raxaul (Bihar) through which Nepal gets its petroleum supplies. Indian consul-general Gururaj Rao, based in Birgunj (Nepal) across Raxaul, said, "About 300 cargo vehicles are stranded on the Indian side. We are closely monitoring the situation."

However, there were no reports of Indian vehicles getting stranded on Nepalese highways. Hundreds of Indian pilgrims were escorted back to India from the Garimai religious fair near Birgunj in private and government vehicles. King Gyanendra had opened the fair last week.

Since Wednesday, the rebels have been blocking movement of vehicles in new areas everyday. They have brought traffic to a halt on Mahendra Rajmarg, Tribhuvan Rajmarg and Prithvi Rajmarg (all connecting



Nepalese motorcyclists crowd to buy fuel at a petrol station in Kathmandu on Friday, during an indefinite Maoist rebel blockade of the capital.

Kathmandu with India and the Nepalese lowlands) and Araniko Rajmarg that joins the capital with Tibet. Mahendra Rajmarg runs across Nepal, parallel to Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

With all supply lines, espe-

cially to Kathmandu, getting snapped off, the Nepal government has decided to run vehicles with the help of Army escorts. "The situation is better than Thursday," said a senior home ministry official, admitting, "There has been some panic buying in the capital." Prices of vegetables have gone up by about 20 per cent.

Maoist-sponsored general strikes in Bara, Rautahat, Sunsari and Morang districts, all bordering India, have further disrupted supply lines. The rebels have imposed bandhs and blockades for a week in some areas and for an indefinite period in others in support of various demands ranging from a halt to foreign interference to the killing of their cadres in custody. In August, they had blockaded Kathmandu for a week.

40 killed in clashes

Clashes between Maoist rebels and security forces have claimed 40 lives, including 28 Maoists and five civilians, in the last two days, security sources said on Friday.

25 DEC 2004

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Maoists cripple Kathmandu



HARD TIMES: Motorcyclists crowd to buy fuel at a petrol pump in Kathmandu on Friday. — AFP

25/12
Press Trust of India 51-2

KATHMANDU, Dec. 24. — Life was paralysed in eastern and central Nepal today due to an indefinite blockade of highways by Maoists to protest the killing and detention of their cadre by government forces, leading to a sharp increase in commodity prices and stockpiling of essential goods.

Vehicles moving to and from the capital came to a complete halt following the blockade in Makawanpur, Dhading and Sindhupalchowk districts bordering Kathmandu starting from yesterday. Major sections of the Prithvi Highway, Tribhuvan Highway and East-West Highway were specially affected.

Two army personnel and two other soldiers were critically injured when a booby trap set up by Maoist rebels exploded at Jhalleri area of Kanchan-

pur district near the Indo-Nepal border. The incident occurred when security forces were defusing booby traps set by the rebels to obstruct traffic on the East-West Highway, army sources said.

No vehicles entered or exited from the Thankot checkpoint, the only land route that connects Kathmandu with Raxaul of India and other Terai districts, police said. There were only few dozens of vehicles on the road as compared to some 1,900 normally, police said.

Thousands of passengers were stranded at bus stations and no trucks with essential goods including foodgrain could move on the highway despite the government's assurance to provide security. But home ministry spokesman Mr Gopendra Bahadur Pandey said that government has provided necessary security arrangements on the highways.

25 DEC 2004

THE STATESMAN

Violence, capital siege hit Nepal

Kathmandu, Dec. 23 (Reuters): Nepali soldiers killed 22 Maoist rebels in a fierce gun battle in the west of the country today, the army said, as a partial blockade of Kathmandu by the rebels reduced traffic to a trickle on two key highways.

Rebel violence has spiralled in the Himalayan country ahead of a January 13 government deadline for the insurgents to join peace talks. More than 80 people, about half of them soldiers, had been killed in the week before today's attack.

"Hundreds of guerrillas attacked a regular army operations team in the forested hills," an army officer said. "We lost two people in the initial fighting but they fled after we overran their positions."

The new violence came as traffic on two of the three main highways leading to Kathmandu dropped to a trickle after the Maoists warned vehicles to stay off the road in the latest move in their campaign to overthrow Nepal's monarchy.

A handful of trucks loaded with food supplies and just a few buses wound their way down one of the highways, cutting through a small valley ringed by green hills at Badhangyang, 20 km southwest of Kathmandu.

The rebels, fighting to establish communist rule, successfully cut off the hill-ringed capital from the rest of the country for a week in August, choking it of food and fuel supplies.

Today's gun battle took place in Arghakhanchi district, a Maoist stronghold about 350 km west of Kathmandu. Twenty soldiers and



A truck driver washes his vehicle at Nubise checkpost, 26 km west of Kathmandu, after being stopped by a Maoist blockade. (AFP)

at least six rebels were killed in a rebel ambush in the same district last week, the army officer said.

"We have recovered 22 bodies of rebels. They have suffered heavy casualties today ... the fleeing Maoists have carried away many dead or wounded comrades," the officer said. Five soldiers were also wounded in the fighting, he added.

Elsewhere, at least five soldiers were killed overnight after the guerrillas, who specialise in hit-and-run attacks, ambushed a security patrol in Kailali district, 600 km west of the capital.

As in August, there were no visible signs of the Maoists enforcing the blockade today. The rebels have been able to frighten people off by threats

alone. The two highways carry 90 per cent of supplies to the Kathmandu valley, home to about 1.5 million people.

The rebels said they would continue the blockade until they received information about hundreds of missing comrades. The ban was also a protest against alleged custodial killings of Maoists.

The rebels have rejected the January 13 deadline and pledged to derail national elections that Prime Minister Deuba has vowed to hold. Information minister Mohammad Mohsin said the rebels were behaving "irresponsibly." "We are trying to deal with the situation and are taking measures to ensure that there is no scarcity of essential goods in the capital due to the blockade," Mohsin said.

24 DEC 2004

THE TELEGRAPH

Bhutan refugees launch Swadesh Yatra in Nepal

Debasis Sarkar

TIMAI REFUGEE CAMP (NEPAL) 17 DECEMBER

ARMED with the slogan "We want to die in our homeland", around 40,000 senior Bhutanese refugees launched the "Swadesh Yatra" on Thursday in the refugee camp in Nepal. This has slightly warmed the administrative environment in India. Sandwiched between Bhutan and Nepal with a neutral standpoint, India has decided not to give passage to refugees from Nepal to Bhutan unless the two countries come down to any settlement on the issue.

Of the nearly 1.2 lakh Bhutanese refugees currently residing in seven camps aided by the United Nations High Commission of Refugees (UNHCR) in Nepal, almost 40,000 beyond the age of 50 are taking part in the movement and will march towards Bhutan through India in the next couple of days.

"We expect India to support us," said R.C. Sikdal, former Bhutan District Development Board member and a refugee himself. Referring to the 1949 Indo-Bhutan treaty, he said: "It ensures free entry and right of movement for all Bhutanese citizens in

India. Thus by allowing us to cross Indian territory, the country would not be violating any protocol."

The refugees were strongly opposed by the Indian government and a large number was arrested while trying to cross Indian territory to enter Bhutan in early 1996. It is feared that this march may meet the same fate. "We are very clear in our standpoint and determined to follow the directive of the Union home ministry to stop anyone not accepted by the Bhutan government as their citizen," said a senior police official, who was otherwise tight-lipped on the sensitive issue.

However, the senior refugees are getting "moral support" from several political corners including some leading political parties of Nepal and Bhutan. Balam Paudyal, acting president of Bhutan People's Party, though not very sure whether

they would be able to cross the Indian territory or not, said: "This would insist the government of India to persuade the matter with the government of Bhutan. Indirectly this will help in early repatriation of the refugees." Narad Adhikary, general secretary of Druk National Congress, echoed Mr Paudyal's opinion.



18 DEC 2004

The Economic Times

Gyanendra meet sparks unrest

Statesman News Service

KATHMANDU, Dec. 9. — Nepal's King Gyanendra raised a storm today when he inaugurated a convention in the capital asking for more powers for the monarchy, leading to all Communist ministers boycotting the programme.

Though Prime Minister Mr Sher Bahadur Deuba and ministers from his own Nepali Congress (Democratic) party and two more parties in the coalition kept the king company, 11 ministers from the Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist, a major coalition partner and vocal critic of the government as well as the king, stayed away, calling the convention unconstitutional.

The Raj Parishad — the council of royal advisors — was originally a titular body with little political activity, but, ever since the Maoist insurgents began their guerrilla war in 1996 with the aim of replacing Nepal's constitutional monarchy, and since King Gyanendra ascended the throne, the council has run into a lot of controversy. It has organised meetings to discuss the political situation and extol the virtues of the monarchy as the symbol of unity. After five meetings of its zonal committees, the council on Thursday began a two-day convention in Kathmandu, triggering protests by political parties and student unions.

The inauguration by the king led students to demonstrate all over the country. They burnt effigies and tyres, blocked roads and clashed with security forces.

The protesters were calling the convention unconstitutional, because the constitution states that the council will meet if it is summoned



King Gyanendra lights a lamp at the inauguration of the state council meeting in Kathmandu on Thursday. — AFP

by the king. Otherwise, it can meet after the demise of the monarch, his abdication or upon the decision taken by one-fourth of its members that the king, due to physical or mental infirmity, is unable to perform his functions. Gyanendra has been accused of usurping executive authority since October 2002, when he sacked the Deuba government and since then appointed three of his nominees as Prime Minister, rejecting the consensus candidate named by a coalition of five major parties.

The Maoists refuse to hold peace talks with Mr Deuba, saying that they want direct talks with the monarch. The communist boycott shows the rift in the government and the tight-rope Deuba has to walk.

10 DEC 2004

THE STATESMAN

>> **INBOX**

Row over attack on Koirala daughter

CONTROVERSY HAS arisen over a bomb attack on the house of Nepali Congress chief G.P. Koirala's daughter, Sujata, here early on Thursday. Koirala had held an important political meeting with mainstream Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist) leaders there on Wednesday. They had reportedly discussed the possibility of having a democratic government through the reinstatement of Parliament dissolved over two years ago. Though Sujata escaped unhurt, two rooms of her residence were damaged. The bomb fell close to her bedroom. She has been in the forefront of the ongoing agitation against the



2002 royal takeover. Sujata said, "I suspect the hand of government agents in the attack... Maoists cannot be involved in this." She added, "I could escape because I had shifted to my daughter's bedroom." The home ministry said police had begun a probe into the explosion.

HTC, Kathmandu

03 DEC 2004

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Deuba in the dumps

Mr. Sr. Singh
S.B.
Mr.
Maoists and Koirala compound misery

That Maoist rebels would reject Nepalese Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's 13 January deadline to resume talks was expected. It seems secret talks the government was reportedly holding with the rebels has failed, or else an outcome would have been announced. Clearly Deuba is under pressure to hold general elections in April next year since this was King Gyanendra's main objective when he reinstated him last June. But a free and fair exercise will not be possible unless the government comes to terms with the rebels who control about 40 of Nepal's 75 districts. The results of the two previous talks were disappointing, with no headway resulting from both sides setting their own terms. While Deuba insists the Maoists renounce violence and surrender arms as a prior precondition, rebels demand elections to a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution for a republic. Deuba's adamancy makes light of the commitment he made soon after reinstatement to be "flexible" in dealing with rebels, even to the extent of accepting their demand for a constituent assembly.

There are now no hopeful signs of ending the political instability, with Maoist leaders saying Deuba's "weak" government lacks the legitimacy to negotiate — criticism that is justified to some extent. It is the fight between Nepali Congress chief GP Koirala and Deuba over control of the party apparatus that has caused multi-party democracy to suffer so serious a setback. The party is already split and Koirala refuses to be part of the Deuba government. In such an extraordinary situation, it is necessary that the two sink their differences for the sake of Nepal's future. //

02 DEC 2004

THE STATESMAN

13 Jan talks deadline for Nepal Maoists

26/11
Statesman News Service

KATHMANDU, Nov. 25. — After failing to evoke a positive response from the Maoists despite repeated calls to resume peace talks, the Nepal government today announced 13 January as the deadline for the rebels to start a dialogue and said it would go ahead with poll arrangements otherwise.

Prime Minister Mr Sher Bahadur Deuba announced the government's decision after a Cabinet meeting today.

Mr Deuba said the government was determined to end all violence through peaceful means and was ready to discuss any issue with the rebels and resolve it through a national consensus. He said that if the rebels agreed to hold talks,

the government would ensure "full security" for the rebel representatives.

After the Maoists broke off peace talks and resumed their attacks in August, the then Surya Bahadur Thapa government re-imposed the terrorist tag on them and sounded a global alert for the capture of their key leaders.

Mr Deuba said the government would continue to try and find a political solution till 13 January, which signifies the end of the Nepali month of Poush, and after that, would start preparations for holding elections.

However, both politicians and the diplomatic community in Nepal have expressed misgivings about holding elections until there is peace in the country torn by an eight-year-old insurgency.

Nepal sets peace talks deadline

Army claims killing 300 rebels

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, November 25

NEPAL'S PALACE-IN-STALLED government on Thursday set January 13, 2005, as a deadline for the resumption of a peace dialogue with Maoists, who have been fighting to turn the kingdom into a republic since 1996.

After a Cabinet meeting, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba said, "If the Maoists do not come to talks by January 13, we'll go in for parliamentary elections. We cannot keep on waiting for them indefinitely."

Significantly, Deuba's ultimatum comes amid reports about the Royal Nepalese Army's claims about killing about 300 insurgents and taking over a rebel arms training base in Maoist-infested western Nepal this week.

In the same breath, Deuba promised to "discuss whatever issues the Maoists may have for such negotiations". (All previous talks had collapsed over the rebels' demand for a constituent assembly.) He pledged security to Maoist negotiators during peace meetings.

The Communist rebels have so far refused to talk to the Deuba government, questioning its legitimacy. Opposition parties are of the view that elections cannot be held until the Maoist insurgency is over.

Besides, Deuba's coalition government comprising representatives from the Nepali Congress (Democratic), the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist), the Rashtriya Prajatantra Party and the Nepal Sadbhavana Party is also running out of time.

26 NOV 2004

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

66 Maoists, 10 troopers killed in Nepal clash

Agence France Presse

KATHMANDU, Nov. 21.

— At least 66 Maoist rebels and 10 government troopers were killed in an overnight clash in Pandon village in Kailali district, an army officer said today.

“The bodies of 16 rebels were found from the clash site and 50 others were found 50 metres away, 10 security personnel were killed while 16 others were injured”, he said.

The injured troopers were flown to Kathmandu for treatment. The number of casualties could not immediately be verified by the sources.

Meanwhile, an army officer said, three Maoists were shot dead overnight while they were laying landmines at Lekhnath village in Pokhara.

Maoists gunned down three people at Salleri village in Dailekh district for organising an anti-Maoist movement.

Maoist rebels today also declared an immediate two-day traffic blockade in the Gandaki and Lumbini zones of western Nepal, leaving some 10,000 tourists stranded, officials said.

The blockade was called to protest killings by the security forces “of our local leaders and activists,” said Dev Gurung, Maoist polit-buro member, in charge of the Gandaki area.

Hotel Association Nepal (HNA) president Mr Narendra Bajracharya appealed to the rebels and the government to hold peace talks to resolve the matter.

“After Kathmandu, Lumbini, Chitwan and Pokhara are the most important tourist destinations and currently it is the tourist season,” he said.

Maoists

storm

Nepal

town

Kathmandu, Nov. 1
(Reuters): Hundreds of Maoist rebels stormed a remote town in Nepal and set government buildings on fire, an army officer said today, in the first major attack after a short truce ended four days ago.

The rebels, fighting since 1996 to topple the Himalayan nation's constitutional monarchy, attacked Gamgadi, capital of the remote Mugu district, late yesterday and fought pitched battles with government troops.

"They set several empty government buildings on fire and fled to nearby jungles," said the army officer, who did not want to be identified.

The army sustained no casualties but soldiers recovered the body of a rebel killed in the fighting, an army statement said. Rebels have not commented so far. In a separate incident, soldiers shot dead five Maoist guerrillas.

Gamgadi, about 600 km northwest of the capital, Kathmandu, is surrounded by mountains with no proper road and with poor communication links. Mugu district is a stronghold of the Maoists, who are fighting to convert Nepal into a single-party communist republic.

The attack comes after a nine-day truce between the rebels and the government for the Hindu festival of Dasain that ended on Thursday.

Violence in Nepal, one of the world's 10 poorest nations, has surged since rebels walked out of peace talks last year.

The insurgency has claimed more than 10,000 lives since 1996, wrecked the impoverished economy and scared away tourists, who used to flock to the world's only Hindu kingdom known for its soaring mountains.

Aziz visit

Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, on a two-day official visit to Nepal, will hold talks with his Nepalese counterpart Sher Bahadur Deuba on bilateral issues and south Asian regional cooperation, officials said today.

Aziz arrived here today by a special flight as chairperson of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

Nepal truce ends, 12 dead

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KATHMANDU, Oct. 30. — Nepal's hope for a peaceful Tihar, the local equivalent of the Diwali festival, receded fast with 12 people being killed within less than 48 hours of the end of a temporary truce called by the Maoist insurgents.

Clashes between security forces and the Maoists spread from east to mid-west Nepal since yesterday resulted in the death of 12 rebels.

Hours after the nine-day ceasefire called by the Maoists to allow peo-

ple celebrate Dashain, Nepal's biggest festival, in peace ended on Thursday midnight, there were reports of clashes between the Maoists and security patrols in Dang district in midwest Nepal, considered a Maoist stronghold.

Yesterday, security forces killed two Maoists in Ramnagar in Siraha district in southeast Nepal. The toll went up to 12 Saturday as 10 more rebels were killed in three different districts. An early morning skirmish between the two sides early this morning result-

ed in the death of four Maoists in 33 Bigha in Siraha district while two more were killed in Dailekh in remote midwest Nepal and four in north-east Taplejung district.

On Thursday, after Nepal limped back to normalcy following nearly 15 days of festivities, the Cabinet decided not to extend the tacit ceasefire on the government's side, that was a reciprocal gesture during Dashain. Prime Minister Mr Deuba, whose Nepali Congress (Democratic) party held a Dashain get-together Thursday, boy-

cotted by Opposition leaders, including his former mentor ex-PM Mr Girija Prasad Koirala, reiterated the government would go ahead with poll arrangements by April if the Maoists did not agree to resume peace talks.

Mr Deuba's assertion has been greeted with disapproval by rights activists, politicians and members of his own coalition government, who say any poll held without bringing the Maoists back to the political mainstream would be marred and meaningless.

31 OCT 2004

Maoists call nine-day festival ceasefire

Kathmandu, Oct. 15 (Reuters): Maoist rebels, giving in to popular demands, today announced a nine-day truce for a Hindu festival period beginning next week.

"Our party announces the

suspension of all armed operations from October 20 to 28 on the occasion of the traditional festival of Dasain," Maoist leader Prachanda said in a statement.

But analysts said a short

ceasefire was unlikely to lead to peace talks in the nation where more than 10,000 people have died in the rebellion. The guerrillas would use the festival truce to regroup, one expert said.

"Although this is a positive move, it does not give any room for optimism for a permanent ceasefire," said Rajendra Dahal, editor of the widely circulated *Himal* magazine. "This is a small

break to give rest to guerrillas and prepare for more attacks." The rebels, who are fighting to topple Nepal's constitutional monarchy, have called for such ceasefires in the past.

No change in Nepal polls

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Kathmandu, Oct. 5
(Reuters): Nepal will continue with its plans for elections in April even if Maoist rebels do not come forward before then to join peace talks, the country's embattled Prime Minister said today.

Sher Bahadur Deuba, 57, re-appointed in June about two years after King Gyanendra fired him for failing to tackle an 8-year-old revolt, said his coalition was committed to peace and still awaited a rebel response to his latest offer for talks. "If they (Maoists) don't come for negotiations, we can't remain without a parliament. We will be compelled to go to the polls," Deuba said at his red-brick home in Kathmandu.

"The election is going to be held in April. The king is committed to elections in April. The government is committed to elections in April. Elections will only strengthen democracy. "We are ready to talk ... We can talk even after the elections are announced or even before or during the elections," said the bespectacled Deuba, seated beneath a large portrait of King Gyanendra and Queen Komal in his high-security home.

Peace with the Maoists, fighting since 1996 to replace



Sher Bahadur Deuba in
Kathmandu. (Reuters)

constitutional monarchy with a communist republic, is key to any election in Nepal, which has been without an elected parliament since 2002 because of rebel threats.

Violence has surged since peace talks failed last year and eight people are killed every day on average in a conflict that has wrecked the economy, slowed foreign-funded projects, and driven tourists away from the scenic Himalayan kingdom.

Last month, the government appealed to the Maoist rebels to resume dialogue, but Deuba refused a rebel demand to involve the UN or any international human rights body.

Nepal mulls talks rejoinder, kills 11 rebels

Kathmandu, Sept. 29 (Reuters): Nepali troops shot dead 11 Maoist rebels today, as the government prepared a response to the latest terms for fresh talks by the guerrillas who shut down nearly half of the kingdom on the second day of a strike.

A police spokesman said seven Maoist rebels were killed after a firefight with a police patrol at Khaskusma, 450 km west of Kathmandu.

"The firefight took place

after the police, acting on a tip from villagers, patrolled the area and encountered the rebels," police spokesman Rabi Thapa Chhetri said. The dead included two women guerrillas. Elsewhere, soldiers shot dead four Maoists in separate gunbattles.

There has been no major fighting in Nepal since March but eight people die each day on an average in unabated violence after talks between the government and Maoists, who

want to topple the constitutional monarchy, failed last year.

Maoist chief Prachanda, responding to Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's latest offer last week to resume the dialogue, was seeking assurances the Prime Minister had the backing of warring political parties and King Gyanendra to negotiate.

Information and communication minister Mohammed Mohsin said a peace panel of

top leaders of the four-party ruling coalition was meeting today to craft a response to the rebels. "We are trying to formulate a consensus approach for the dialogue to restore peace," Mohsin said.

The fresh bid for peace came as schools, colleges, businesses and most public transport in Kathmandu and east Nepal were shut for the second day in response to the strike called by the rebels to protest the killing of two guer-

rilla leaders this month.

Troops stood guard at key intersections in the capital, as a few taxi drivers and motorcyclists ventured out, some with licence plates covered to avoid being identified by rebels. Yesterday, a bomb exploded on the outskirts of Kathmandu, causing minor damage to a bank, but no one was injured.

Police said suspected Maoists hid the bomb in a package left in a taxi, but the government resist pressure

alert driver threw it into a deserted street where it exploded.

More than 10,000 people have died in the insurgency since it broke out in 1996 in the Himalayan nation. The rebellion has frightened away tourists and slowed foreign-funded projects in one of the world's poorest nations.

The Maoists, who want to set up a communist republic, are also demanding that the government resist pressure

from the army and accept the involvement of the UN or global human rights bodies in talks. They want the talks to consider their demand for an assembly to prepare a new constitution to decide the future of the monarchy.

Six Nepali soldiers who completed a patrol near a Maoist rebel stronghold died on their return when their boat became entangled in a fish-breeding net and sank, police said today.

U.N. intervention must for talks: Nepal Maoists

By Marcus Dam

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KOLKATA, SEPT. 29. Nepal Maoists have reportedly demanded the intervention of the United Nations or any human rights organisation recognised by it as a condition for talks with the Nepal Government. This was in response to a recent call by the Sher Bahadur Deuba Government for negotiations to pave the way for cessation of hostilities in that country.

The Maoists' demand was contained in a "message" to the Government sent "within the past week," senior officials of Nepal's diplomatic mission in India told *The Hindu* here today. The rebels have also asked whether the Government was

committed enough to resolve the crisis. "The Government can be flexible to any point within the bounds of multi-party democracy and constitutional monarchy," the diplomats pointed out.

The Nepal Government has, for long, been insisting that the Maoists lay down arms before a dialogue could begin. But with the situation in the country showing little signs of improvement, it was decided that a "high-level peace committee," comprising leaders of various "democratic" parties, be set up to suggest ways of handling the crisis.

Discord

There was already discord

*110 12
2009*

within the committee (whose chairperson is the Prime Minister) over the stand to be adopted in dealing with the Maoists' demand.

At a meeting of the committee in Kathmandu today, a senior member representing the Nepal Communist Party reportedly argued that the Government should unilaterally declare a cease-fire to ensure a conducive atmosphere for negotiations with the rebels. The Government has so far been questioning the need for the involvement of a third party in negotiations even as leaders of a few other political parties indicated that the Maoists ought to first justify their demand for such an intervention.

THE HINDU 30 SEP 2008

Red China sends Maoists to death

KATHMANDU, Sept. 23.— The Maoists who have been fighting relentlessly to establish a Communist regime in Nepal, came in for a major shock when two of their cadre were given death sentence by Communist China. This is the first time that the Maoists have been given capital punishment in China.

Beijing this month awarded death sentence to two Nepalese and sentenced two more to prison for reportedly trying to smuggle out Chinese pistols and explosives to Nepal through Tibet. The men were said to have been arrested in Khasa town along the Nepal-Tibet border. The matter came to light last week when Nepal's foreign ministry, after receiving news that a local court of Xigatse in Tibet, had convicted the four for arms smuggling, appealed to Beijing to stay the execution of the two men. While the Nepal consulate in Lhasa was asked to look into the matter, the identities of the men were revealed today. Correspondents of two private radio channels based in Sindhupal chowk in north-central Nepal, near the Tibetan border, broke the news that the men on death row, Hiralal Shrestha, alias Ananda, and Gyaltzen Sherpa, are both Maoists.

The Maoist leadership has not issued any statement. Amnesty International has launched a campaign for the stay of the death sentence.

— Sudeshna Sarkar

Nepal Maoist leader demands political prisoner status

Deepak Prahladka
Kolkata, September 22

A SINGLE-JUDGE Bench of Justice P.C. Ghose of the Calcutta High Court on Wednesday directed the Jalpaiguri Correctional Home to consider, within four weeks, the petition of a Nepalese Maoist leader, seeking the status of a 'political prisoner'.

Mohan Vaidya, who claims to be a leftist leader carrying on a democratic movement in Nepal, was arrested by the Jalpaiguri police on May 19 and was sent to jail custody by the court. The police have accused him of offences against the state punishable with death.

Saying that the charges were political in nature, Vaidya filed a writ petition in the Calcutta High Court for a direction on the jail authority to grant him the status of a political prisoner under the West Bengal Correctional Services Act.

Moving the petition, his advocate, Bikash Bhattacharya, said: "Under the Act, any person detained in jail for offences against the state shall be treated as a political prisoner and will be entitled to better facilities such as a separate cell with table, chair, books, barber service, insurance benefit for him and his family."

Opposing the petition, the state advocates, Abha Roy and Abhra Mukherjee, said that before coming to the court the prisoner should have made an appeal to the authorities.

Back in business

5-8-09 But Nepal must shelve egos 11/08/09

Thankfully 47 industrial establishments and hotels forced to close down last month by Maoist rebels have resumed operations. Any further delay would have been detrimental to the Himalayan country's sagging economy. Some of these were British and Indo-Nepalese joint ventures and 100,000 employees were reportedly rendered idle, the exchequer losing revenue in the crores of rupees. The Maoists lifted the ban after the government reportedly conceded their demands for the release of two senior leaders, to disclose the whereabouts of missing comrades and punish the army personnel responsible for excesses. They must have also, however, realised they would have harmed their own cause had they remained adamant since there were signs of unrest against the forced closure. That the breakthrough came about within three days of Nepalese Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's return from a Delhi visit would give the impression that this was influenced by his hosts but all that was sought was protection for Indian business interests under the 1950 Peace and Friendship Treaty. India's commitment to Nepal is confined to supplying arms and military hardware and the Maoist threat to resort to suicide bombings if Delhi's involvement is established is unfounded.

Return to industrial peace (workers will be paid for the closure period) will prosper if the government and Maoists set aside their antagonism and return to the negotiating table. Nepali Congress leader GP Koirala's refusal to join the Deuba government has queered the pitch but he, too, has a strong point in seeking revival of the dissolved parliament. There is no provision for this in the Nepalese constitution, nor is there for an all-party government Deuba is supposed to constitute. Maoist leaders say the government is unwilling to meet their demand for a constituent assembly for fear of losing out. What stands in the way of genuine rapprochement is Nepalese leaders' ego. They should sink their differences if they are at all serious about remedying the fallout of eight years' of Maoist revolt.

Nepal's neurosis

The crisis in the Himalayan kingdom is nothing but a rising conflict between a populace that has been starved of development, and a die-hard monarchy that insists on retaining its anachronistic ruling syndrome, writes JK DUTT

19/9

NEPAL'S Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's recent visit to India was the second one in the last two years, of course with a break in between from his prime ministership. This visit is being seen as expedient by the beleaguered PM for securing bail in view of his unenviable position back home.

The politico-security situation in the landlocked Himalayan kingdom has reached an alarming state. This was not unexpected considering the spate of events that have overshadowed Nepal for some time now. The Maoists control almost all the 75 districts of the country and willy-nilly have the backing of the impoverished villagers who live in these districts. The increasing feud between Katmandu and the Maoists that has taken nearly 9,000 lives, is approaching a point-of-no-return with Nepal's government being pushed more and more on its back-foot.

What precisely is Nepal's problem? Simply put, it is a rising conflict between the populace that has been starved of development, and a die-hard monarchy that insists on retaining its anachronistic ruling syndrome. As the unrest grew over the years, local Maoist leader Pushpa Bahadur Kamal aka Prachanda along with his lieutenant Baburam "Tiger" Bhattarai gave a fillip to a mass movement for development as well as for pressurising Katmandu to remove the monarchy if the latter was not agreeable to mend its ways. Expectedly, the king refused, the outcome of which was disastrous for the country.

However it must be said in all fairness that the late King Birendra was humane enough to appreciate his subjects' demand for a better quality of life and to this end he did make some earnest attempts for alleviating their hardship. Regrettably, palace intrigue precluded his well-meaning thoughts from being translated into action. He made the cardinal error of treating a socio-economic issue as a security related one and sent in the police and the army to combat a wholly erroneously conceived "enemy." It is indeed a mystery why King Birendra who was basically very liberal minded and a forward thinking person, did this folly. Arguably, he did indicate that the application of military force would be temporary but history has amply proved the fallacy of such misplaced sanguineness. In short, the king's tactics failed.

Recounting, Katmandu went all out on two counts - one, inducting as much economic inputs from India as possible so that overall development could take place in accordance with a time schedule and two, starting a dialogue with the Maoists overridden with a

cease-fire. This strategy did work initially and there was abundant hope that peace would find its rightful place in Nepal as the forerunner to development. Sadly, the modus vivendi did not last long. Insurgency restarted, first at a low level then gradually rising in intensity to a crescendo. Peace talks broke down time and again and trade inputs from India thinned due to absence of adequate infrastructure coupled with non-progress on the major points of the India-Nepal Friendship and Cooperation Treaty of 1950. The current state of affairs in Nepal is truly alarming as it has been compounded by a free-for-all between the prevailing political parties, the king, and the Maoists. The unfortunate fallout of this sordid three-sided war has been on the people of the country who have become disillusioned.

New Delhi has on earlier occasions - as also now - advised Katmandu to create an acceptable governance system by establishing multi-party democracy inclusive of the Maoists, taking a leaf from Colombo's methodology. Also, it has been suggested that the king transform



Nepalese soldiers stand guard at the entrance of a five-star hotel in Kathmandu after it reopened recently. Many shops and hotels were shut for nearly a month following Maoist violence. (Inset) Nepalese Prime Minister meets with Atal Behari Vajpayee in New Delhi. - AFP



his brief to just a constitutional monarch, to remain a titular head and at most a "consultant" to the government of the day. New Delhi has also steadfastly refused sending any Indian troops to physically help Nepal's security forces but has provided aid of the nature of training, equipment, and pragmatic political support. India has offered substantial contribution in industry, agriculture, and information technology but has rightly placed a term of reference to say that without political stability in Nepal, it would be futile to execute development plans. The eagerly awaited rail connection linking Raxaul in India with Birganj in Nepal has got held up.

One wonders whether the present incumbent on the throne, King Gyanendra, comprehends India's point of view. New Delhi had prolonged sessions with him when he visited India last year but apparently he appears to

adhere to his own version of realpolitik. He has been changing PMs like - as a cynic put it - one changes daily garments! This has not helped in any manner. On the other hand, it has been instrumental in encouraging factionalism in the already fragmented political scenario. In the process, the government continues to lose ground to the Maoists.

What should be done before Nepal spirals completely out of control and perhaps King Gyanendra is forced to flee the country? The United Nations realised the gravity of the situation in Nepal of late and offered to help out, an offer that was peremptorily refused by Katmandu. On reflection, UN intervention is the only way out. For a start, a Saarc Peacekeeping Force under UN aegis must be deployed to create the ambience for talks to begin.

India would make a worthy facilitator and these talks should be held outside Nepal, perhaps in a salubrious location like Goa or Ootacamund. The crux of the talks however, must focus on the reorientation of Nepal's monarchy as suggested by India previously. If King Gyanendra dithers on this

vital issue, international pressure should be brought to bear on him and this pressure maintained till he falls in line.

Another imperative for a speedy solution is, Nepal has become an ISI nest. This fact is worrisome for the whole region in view of the rapid spread of international terrorism. In this context, West Bengal faces a serious concern over its Siliguri Corridor since this geo-strategic connector has become a haven for transiting terrorists and their armoury. Unless firm steps are taken immediately, preferably by converting this connector into a Union Territory and sealing its borders effectively, instability will permeate not only into West Bengal as the Kamtapur and People's War have already demonstrated, but this undesirable political malfeasance will envelope the whole of North-east India.

Postscript. Katmandu should replace the same old tired faces that are seen in its political mainstream with fresh, young blood. The ongoing Prime Ministerial "game" over the past years for example has been more like a relay race where the PM's baton is passed from one withered hand to another! This has to stop. The Nepalese people surely deserve better. A new and rejuvenated leadership at all levels of governance will work wonders for the nation.

(The author is a retired Lieutenant Colonel of the Indian Army.)

THE HINDU

19 SEP 2004

Nepal frees trade union leaders tied to Maoists

1919
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the 8th of 1919
Kathmandu, Sept. 18

(Reuters): Nepal has freed two jailed trade union leaders linked to Maoist rebels after the union agreed to halt a campaign that had forced many trading businesses to shut down, a mediator said today.

Nepal's top firms, including transport companies, a Coca Cola bottler and a power station, resumed operations Thursday, some for the first time in more than a month, after the union withdrew demands that they close down.

Bombs exploded outside hotels that were asked to close and many businesses were shut despite government assurances that it would provide security.

The All Nepal Federation of Trade Unions, which supports the Maoist campaign to replace Nepal's constitutional monarchy with a communist republic, allowed the businesses to reopen after the government said it would free the leaders and provide information about 22 others the union says are missing.

"They (the government) have fulfilled their commitment," Malla K. Sundar, a human rights activist and mediator, said.

The government, struggling to put down the Maoist revolt that has claimed 10,000 lives since 1996, says the union has agreed not to force industries to shut down in future. "Now we have to see if the union also fulfils its commitment," Sundar said.

The union leaders were handed over late yesterday to mediators who brokered the deal. The union issued the threat to 12 firms in August and added another 35 to the list last week. Industry officials say the closure of the 47 businesses, which contribute more than \$100 million in revenue, had affected thousands of workers in Nepal.

Nepal firms reopen after a month

Kathmandu, Sept. 16 (Reuters). Nepal's top firms reopened for business today, some for the first time in more than a month, after a trade union linked to Maoist rebels withdrew threats against them.

The All Nepal Federation of Trade Unions had demanded that 12 of the country's leading firms close down last month, accusing them of unfair labour practices, a threat that was extended to another 35 firms last week.

"We are opening now. We

will be fully operational by tomorrow," said Rajiv Malla, general manager of Kathmandu's luxury hotel Soaltee Crowne Plaza, closed after a bombing last month.

The trade union withdrew the threat against the firms late yesterday after the government agreed to free two of its jailed leaders and provide information about 22 others it says are missing.

Nepal's embattled government, struggling to put down the Maoist revolt that had claimed 10,000 lives since 1996,

said the union had agreed not to force industries to shut down in future.

"Those who mediated the agreement have given us an assurance that there will be no more indefinite strikes or closures of industries by the other side in future," cabinet spokesman Mohammed Mohsin said.

Analysts said the Maoist union had faced pressure from other labour groups to withdraw the campaign, which hurt thousands of workers. Some unions had threatened to return to work tomorrow even if the strike was not called off.

"They probably did not want to face the wrath of workers in particular and peo-

ple in general," said Yubaraj Ghimire, editor of Nepali magazine, *Sarmay*.

The affected firms included a Coca Cola bottling plant, a leading tobacco firm, a hydro-electric power plant, a key producer of hospital and industrial oxygen, a sugar factory and leading transport companies.

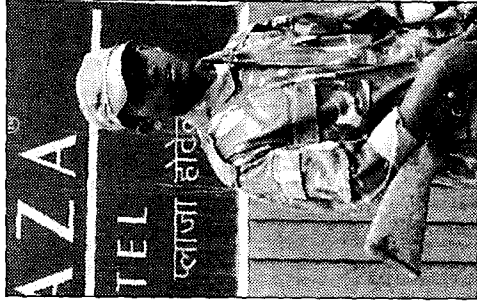
Industry officials say the closure of the 47 businesses, which contribute more than \$100 million in revenue to the cash-strapped government annually, had affected thousands of workers in the desperately poor Himalayan kingdom.

Tiger Tops Limited, which runs the country's oldest jungle lodge and is popular among western tourists, said the closure had threatened

thousands of jobs. "Tiger Tops maintains a strictly apolitical stance and regrets being drawn into a political matter that was no concern of the company," it said in a statement. It reopened its doors today.

Last month, the rebels called for a road blockade of Kathmandu, disrupting food and supplies to the hill-ringed capital of 1.5 million people for seven days.

The US Peace Corps has withdrawn 87 volunteers working in education, health, sanitation and community development, temporarily suspending its 40-year involvement in Nepal after two bomb blasts at the American information centre in Kathmandu.



A policeman stands guard outside a hotel in Kathmandu. (AFP)

Embassies issue appeal to rebels, India talks tough

Nepal firms shut down

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT
AND AGENCIES

New Delhi/Kathmandu: **Sept 10:** Maoists in Nepal today forced the closure of 35 major companies, including an Indian joint venture, even as Delhi advised Kathmandu to get out of its "siege mentality" and play a "pro-active role" in dealing with the rebel threat.

The embassies of India and eight other countries also urged the Maoists to allow business activities to continue in Nepal.

In a joint statement, foreign embassies of nine countries asked the Maoists to withdraw their threat to the companies. "The Maoists' use of terror against the industry and workers to achieve political goals violates international norms," said the statement issued by the British embassy on behalf of the industrial security group (ISG), comprising representatives from the embassies of India, the US, the UK, France and Germany.

The Maoists had asked 35 companies, including Sipradi Trading, a dealer of Tata Motors, Hotel Malla and the Jyoti group of industries, to close down their business indefinitely from today. Three bombs had gone off at Hotel Malla two days ago, causing slight damage.

"All the 35 industries closed down their operation indefinitely from today due to lack of security," Rajendra Khetan, the vice-president of



Soldiers guard the gate of the American Center in Kathmandu after a bomb attack by Maoists. The blast caused damage but no casualties, police said. (AFP)

Federation of Nepal Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said. The future of around 25,000 employees and 1 lakh dependants has been threatened due to the closure.

Assuring support to Kathmandu in "every way possible", Delhi emphasised that if the Maoists wanted a peaceful settlement through talks, they should first give up violence and accept Nepal's "constitutional monarchy and multi-party democracy".

The Indian leadership conveyed this message to visiting Nepal Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba during talks

yesterday. He met almost all key leaders, including Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, foreign minister K. Natwar Singh, defence minister Pranab Mukherjee and home minister Shivraj Patil.

Deuba also called on President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, and met United Progressive Alliance chairperson and Congress chief Sonia Gandhi this evening. Delhi feels the Maoists — with their links to the People's War Group and the Maoist Communist Centre in India — are a "common threat" to both countries. India was of the opinion that

the Royal Nepal Army was no longer a "ceremonial army" and could take the Maoists head on, given proper support — both military and political.

The toughening of India's stand vis-a-vis the armed rebels came in the wake of a Maoist statement criticising Delhi's attempt to "colonise" Nepal — as it allegedly did with Sikkim and Bhutan — through Deuba's "puppet" government. The statement, issued in Nepal some days ago, showed the rebel outfit had gone back to its earlier stand bracketing India and the US as major enemies.

Nepal union asks 35 firms to close

Kathmandu, Sept. 7 (Reuters): A Nepali labour union with links to Maoist rebels asked 35 firms across the embattled Himalayan kingdom today to shut shop in a move aimed at bolstering the guerrilla campaign to overthrow the monarchy.

The new threat comes as Nepal returns to normal after violent riots over the killing of 12 Nepalis by an Islamic militant group in Iraq and is likely to again hit an impoverished economy that has already been hit by years of insurgency.

The new list of businesses asked to close down includes Bhotekoshi Power Company, a US joint venture generating hydroelectric power, and Tiger Tops Jungle Lodge in Chitaun in southern Nepal, a tourist attraction for jungle safaris.

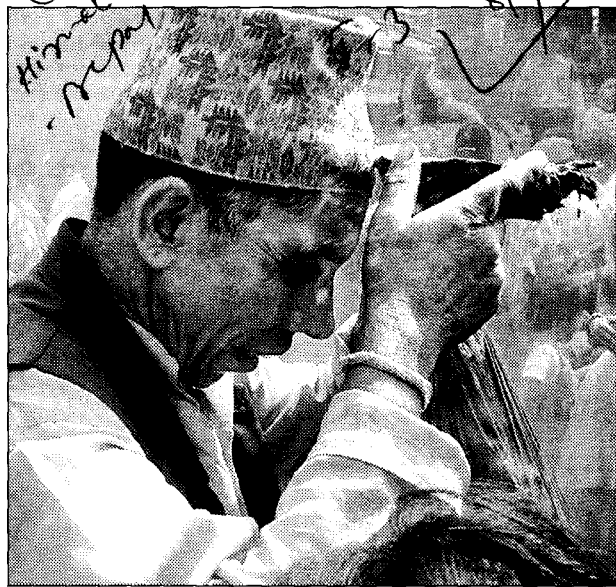
Others on the list are two local luxury hotels, a unit of Dabur Nepal, a joint venture with personal care and herbal products maker Dabur India Limited and other local firms in the tea, jute, textiles and sugar businesses.

In Mumbai, Colgate Palmolive India Ltd said its wholly owned subsidiary in Nepal has resumed operations, in what is seen as huge morale booster for the Nepalese government.

The call by the All Nepal Federation of Trade Unions comes three weeks after 12 businesses, including luxury hotel Soaltee Crowne Plaza and leading tobacco firm Surya Nepal, decided to close down after four bomb blasts rocked the hotel.

Soaltee Crowne Plaza is managed by a Hong Kong-based subsidiary of Britain's InterContinental Group of hotels and Surya Nepal (P) Limited is a joint venture among Nepali investors, Indian Tobacco Company and British American Tobacco Company.

"Since the government and industrial enterprises have not fulfilled demands



A man prays during Janmashtami at Patan on the outskirts of Kathmandu. (AFP)

presented by our organisation so far, we announce indefinite closure of additional 35 industries from September 10," the All Nepal Federation of Trade Unions said.

The group, which has close links with the rebels fighting to set up a communist state, did not spell out its demands but in the past it has insisted the government stop dubbing it a "terrorist" group.

The government urged firms to continue operations and said it was ready to provide them with security.

"We cannot threaten the businesses to open but we have told them we will give them adequate security so that they can run their business," cabinet spokesman Mohammed Mohsin said.

Industry officials say the closure of 12 businesses since the Soaltee blasts — which included a Coca Cola bottling plant — has hit 5,000 workers and resulted in a daily loss of \$4 million to the firms.

The latest crisis comes ahead of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's visit to India, a strong supporter of

Nepal's fight against the Maoists.

Deuba is due to leave tomorrow on his first visit to India after being re-appointed in June.

New Delhi has assured its neighbour of all possible help to tackle the Maoist revolt that has killed more than 10,000 people.

8 SEP 2004

THE TELEGRAPH

Maoists in Nepal 'ban' 34 ventures

Statesman News Service

KATHMANDU, Sept. 6. — As Kathmandu today recovered from a bout of curfew imposed after last Wednesday's nationwide violence and arson over the killing of 12 Nepalese by Islamic militants in Iraq, the Maoists struck again, announcing a fresh 'ban' on 34 business ventures.

These include Dabur

Nepal's medicinal plant nursery in Banepa near Kathmandu, ITC's joint venture, Surya Nepal's garment division in Morang in south-east Nepal, LG TV, the Korean joint venture, two power projects, several leading hotels, and a host of other businesses.

Also on the hit list was Basuling Sugar Mill, owned by a son of the former Nepalese Prime Minister, Mr Lokendra

Bahadur Chand.

The *fatwa* was issued by the trade union of the Maoists, All Nepal Federation of Trade Unions, that had last month closed down 12 businesses.

This is the second blow for Surya Nepal, the largest single taxpaying company whose tobacco division was 'banned' on 17 August along with Bottlers Nepal, the bottlers of Coca-Cola, and Soalt-

ee Crowne Plaza, the oldest five-star hotel in Nepal.

Dabur Nepal, a subsidiary of Dabur India, seemed to have anticipated the move.

Last month, it temporarily closed the nursery after a local Maoist leader was quoted by the local media as saying that the Banepa establishment should also be closed.

Fishtail Lodge, one of

the best-known hotels in the tourist town of Pokhara, Hotel Malla in Thamel, the tourist hub in Kathmandu, and Hotel Tiger Top in Chitwan are among the threatened companies on the fresh list.

The blow could be a mortal one for ailing Nepalese industries.

Earlier, the Maoists also said they would close down all companies with

US investment.

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Himalayan problem

Nepal's king must think of his kingdom

NEPAL is no longer just a "tourist destination". The mountain kingdom is posting notice in a most violent manner that it is more and worse than that. Indeed, time has come to wonder whether the nation-state faces implosion. Wednesday's communal mob fury may not be exceptional by South Asian standards. But coming as it does after months of Maoist violence, a longer period of ineffectual governance and a royal family whose authority hasn't recovered since King Birendra and several family members were gunned down by the crown prince, Deependra, the rioting is a strong indication of institutional rot. Worse, there seems to be no cure. King Gyanendra constituted an all-party government in June after dismissing the Surya Bahadur Thapa administration for failing to control Maoist violence. But Thapa's successor, Sher Bahadur Deuba, has manifestly failed as well. Maoists now operate brazenly in Kathmandu, bombing seemingly at will and threatening business, including multinationals. The King would seem to have few options. Plus, he is possibly part of the problem. His getting the throne via a horrendously bloody tragedy wasn't the best of beginnings. He has been clearly less successful than King Birendra in playing that difficult role - that of a monarch in a democracy. Birendra's contribution to Nepal is in the early 1990s constitution that guaranteed multi-party democracy and a constitutional monarchy. He achieved, given Nepal's general backwardness, impressive progress. The assassination and Maoists seem to have wiped away those gains. If communal tension is added to this, a tragedy of, so to speak, Himalayan proportions is more than likely.

India has very good reasons to want a Nepal that is not close to implosion. This is not only because their Maoists and our Maoists have wondered aloud about fraternal cooperation. Or because Nepal, no matter official denials, has been a host to Pakistan-sponsored jihadis targeting India. If Nepal becomes violently chaotic, India will be the most favoured destination for refugees. That those fleeing will reach Bihar and UP first, places that need no more lawlessness, makes the scenario worse. New Delhi, therefore, needs to use its influence intelligently to make Kathmandu understand the gravity of the situation. This has to go beyond training the Royal Nepal Army in counter-insurgency. King Gyanendra will have to be persuaded that genuine democracy is the first step in containing this crisis. Maoists, who want a republican Nepal, will not even consider talking unless they perceive the royal family is withdrawing somewhat from public life. The King is thought to be mistrustful of democracy. He should know that there's no point being a king if there's no kingdom.

3 SEP 2004

THE STATESMAN

Street riots to protest killing of Nepalis

9-1
29

हिंसा - नेपाल

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Kathmandu, Sept. 1: "Down with Islam" on their lips, protesters today attacked a Kathmandu mosque and Muslim properties in retaliation against the killing of 12 Nepalis by an Iraqi militant group.

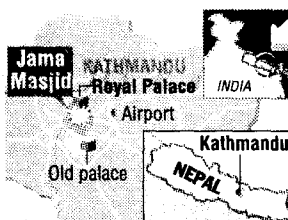
Hundreds of people poured into the streets last night after television pictures showed the murders of the Nepalis yesterday but violence erupted this morning as rampaging mobs launched a string of attacks, forcing the government to clamp curfew at 2 pm.

Two persons were killed in police firing.

Protesters stormed the city's main mosque, set furniture and carpets on fire and tore up a copy of the Quran, before the police drove them out.

"Demonstrators entered the mosque, threw stones and partially damaged it," said police official Binod Singh. "They tried to set the building on fire but police intervened and prevented them."

Hundreds gathered at city landmarks and burnt tyres to disrupt traffic. The offices of Moonlight Consultancy Pvt. Ltd, which had sent the slain Nepalis to Jordan, were ransacked even as the government cancelled its licence for illegal despatch of citizens to



THE FALLOUT

- Two killed for violating curfew
- Jama Masjid, Nepal's biggest mosque, stormed
- Clash near Egyptian embassy
- Offices of Saudi Arabian Airlines and Qatar Airways attacked
- Job agencies sending people to the Gulf targeted
- Economic summit called off

Iraq. Nepal does not allow its nationals to go and work in Iraq because of security risk.

The demonstrators targeted business establishments owned by Muslims. Among them was Spacetime Network, which runs Kathmandu's biggest cable network, apart from a Nepali newspaper and satellite channel. After the attack, the cable network, which beams almost 60 channels including several that are Indian, went off the air. A mob ransacked the office of Nepal's biggest media house, Kantipur Publications.

King Gyanendra urged people of different faiths to stay

calm in a nation already torn by a Maoist revolt. "We must ensure this tragic incident does not weaken the age-old fraternal ties, unity and mutual tolerance that exist among the Nepalese people," the palace said.

About 3.5 per cent of Nepal's 27 million people are Muslim, but the country has no significant history of anti-Muslim protests or riots.

Protesters shouted "Down with Islam", "Long live the memories of the 12 Nepalis", and called for the government to resign. The Nepalis had gone to work in Iraq as cooks and cleaners for a Jordanian firm.

Crowds burst into the offices of Pakistan International Airlines, Saudi Arabian Airlines and Qatar Airways, smashing windows and taking papers and furniture on to the street to burn.

Clashes with the police also erupted outside the Egyptian embassy as a group ransacked the adjoining offices of a recruitment company.

For much of the day, the capital lay under a pall of smoke from burning tyres. The fires were kept going by crowds that brought out logs and firewood.

The government announced national mourning tomorrow in memory of the dead.

■ Picture on Page 4

12 Nepalese hostages killed in Iraq

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA, AUG. 31. An Iraqi militant group today claimed responsibility for killing 12 kidnapped Nepalese, shifting the focus back to a spate of abductions in Iraq that include three Indians working for a Kuwaiti transport company as well as two prominent French journalists.

In a videotape posted on an Islamic website, a masked man was shown slitting the throat of a blindfolded man lying on the ground, the Associated Press reported. The tape also showed an armed man firing single shots from an assault rifle at the back of the heads of 11 others. Other pictures showed all 12 beheaded. The authenticity of the tape has so far not been verified. The Nepalese Cabinet held an emergency session to discuss the reported executions.

Shortly afterwards, Nepal's ambassador to Qatar, Shyamamand Suman, was reported to

have told the Nepalese media over telephone that, "it is a matter of great sorrow that they have killed the innocent Nepalese in an inhuman manner." "I am going to the Al-Jazeera television station to find out more details," he said.

The ambassador said the militants had "murdered" the 12 Nepalese without setting any deadline or offering to talk, and that he himself came to know about the murder from television.

Vows to fight U.S.

The militant group, Jaish Ansar al-Sunna, which had carried out the abductions 10 days ago, said in a statement that, "We have carried out the sentence of God against 12 Nepalese who came from their country to fight the Muslims and to serve the Jews and the Christians... believing in Buddha as their God." The statement vowed to continue fighting the Americans. "America today has used all its force, as well as the

help of others, to fight Islam under the so-called war on terror, which is nothing but a vicious crusade against Muslims."

At the end of the four-minute video, a man read another statement off camera, declaring that there would be no let-up in the fight against the interim Iraqi Government. "We will work on exterminating them until the last fighter," he said.

Shock in Nepal

Diplomatic sources told *The Hindu* that the Nepalese authorities have been shocked by the news of the killing. "There was an anticipation in Nepal that the hostages would be released, especially as negotiations for freeing the three Indian truck drivers kidnapped in Iraq appeared to be making progress," they said.

Seeking the release of the hostages, the Nepalese authorities had contacted Sheikh Ahmed Abdul Ghafoor al-Samree, president of Sunni Awqaf

in Baghdad. On August 27, he had reportedly appealed to the militant group to free the captives. However, the hostage-takers neither established contact with the Nepali authorities nor did they forward any demands through any other channel. Nepal's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Prakash Sharan Mahat, had reportedly said then that his Government had sought help from the Qatar-based Al-Jazeera television, which had earlier aired a video of the kidnapped, in order to establish contact with the militant group.

Hardline group

Sources pointed out that unlike some other outfits in Iraq, the Jaish Ansar al-Sunna has been known for its hardline orientation. The group, which has a strong presence in central and northern Iraq, is believed to be an offshoot of the Ansar al-Islam, which has demonstrated its leanings towards the Al-Qaeda in the past.

১২ নেপালি পণবন্দিকে হত্যা করল ইরাকি জঙ্গিরা

বাগদাদ ও প্যারিস, ৩১ অগস্ট: পণবন্দি ১২ জন নেপালিকে হত্যা করা হয়েছে বলে জানিয়েছে ইরাকি জঙ্গিরা। 'আর্মি অব আনসার আল-সুন্না' নামে ইরাকি জঙ্গিদের ওই সংগঠনটি পণবন্দিদের এক জনের মাথা কেটে ফেলার এবং বাকিদের গুলি করে মারার ছবিও একটি ইসলামি ওয়েবসাইটে পাঠিয়ে দিয়েছে। ইরাকি জঙ্গিদের হাতেই অপহৃত দুই ফরাসি সাংবাদিকের মুক্তির জন্য যখন নানা স্তরে তৎপরতা চলছে, তখনই এক সঙ্গে এত জন পণবন্দির হত্যার খবরে আতঙ্ক সৃষ্টি হয়েছে। তিন ভারতীয় ট্রাক চালক-সহ কে জি এন্সের অপহৃত সাত কর্মীর ভাগ্য নিয়েও ফের সংশয় তৈরি হয়েছে।

১২ জনের হত্যার খবরের সত্যতা স্বীকার করে নেপালের বিদেশ প্রতিনিধী প্রকাশশরণ

মাহাত বলেছেন, ইরাকে নেপাল বা তাদের কোনও সংস্থা কাজ করছে না। তবু নেপালি নাগরিকদের এই পরিণতিতে তাঁরা মর্মহত। জঙ্গিরা বলেছে, মুসলিমদের বিরুদ্ধে লড়ার জন্য 'ঈশ্বরের শাস্তি' দেওয়া হয়েছে ১২ নেপালিকে। জর্ডনের একটি সংস্থার হয়ে রাঁধুনি ও সাফাইকর্মী হিসাবে কাজ করত ১২ জন নেপালি ইরাকে গিয়ে চলতি মাসের গোড়ায় অপহৃত হন। নেপালের মতো ছোট্ট দেশ ইরাকে যুদ্ধ বা তার পরবর্তী পরিস্থিতির সঙ্গে কোনও ভাবেই জড়িত ছিল না। সেই দেশের ১২ জন নিরীহ নাগরিককে এই ভাবে জঙ্গিদের হাতে প্রাণ দিতে হওয়ায় এই অঞ্চলের সব সংস্থাই আতঙ্কিত হয়ে পড়েছে। একসঙ্গে এত জন পণবন্দিকে হত্যা করার ঘটনা ইরাকে আগে ঘটেনি।

আজকের ঘটনার পরে স্বাভাবিক ভাবেই উদ্বেগ বেড়েছে তিন ভারতীয় পণবন্দির পরিবারের। অজুযামীর বাবা রামমুর্তি বলেছেন, "নেপালিদের হত্যা দুর্ভাগ্যজনক। তবে আশা করি এ জন্য আমার ছেলের মুক্তি আটকে যাবে না।" কেন্দ্রের তরফেও তাঁদের তেমনই আশ্বাস দেওয়া হয়েছে। বিশেষমন্ত্রকের মুখপাত্র নভতেজ সরনা জানান, ভারতীয় পণবন্দিরা নিরাপদে আছেন বলে তাঁরা খবর পেয়েছেন।

এ দিন ইসলামি ওয়েবসাইটটিতে 'আর্মি অব আনসার আল-সুন্না'র বিবৃতিতে বলা হয়েছে, "১২ জন নেপালিকে ঈশ্বরের শাস্তি দেওয়া হয়েছে। বুজ্জাকে ভগবান মেনে ওরা মুসলিমদের বিরুদ্ধে লড়তে এসেছিলেন। এসেছিলেন ইহুদি আর খ্রিস্টানদের উপকারে লাগতে।"

এ দিকে, ফ্রান্সের স্থূলে মুসলিমদের মস্তকাবরণী নিষিদ্ধ করার সিদ্ধান্ত প্রত্যাহার করে নেওয়ার জন্য প্রেসিডেন্ট জাক শিরাকের কাছে আবেদন জানিয়েছেন অপহৃত দুই ফরাসি সাংবাদিক জর্জ মালব্রুলো ও ক্রিস্টিয়ান শেনো। তাঁদের আবেদন প্রচার করে আল জিরা জানিয়েছে, অপহরণকারী ইরাকি জঙ্গিরা দাবি মানার জন্য ফরাসি সরকারকে আরও ২৪ ঘণ্টা সময় দিয়েছে। অপহরণের পরে জঙ্গিদের দেওয়া ৪৮ ঘণ্টার সময়সীমা শেষ হয়েছে নোমবার রাত। তবে ফ্রান্স এখনও আইন তুলে নেওয়ার কথা ভাবছে না। ফরাসি সরকারের পাশে দাঁড়িয়েছে বিভিন্ন মুসলিম সংগঠনও। অপহরণের প্রতিবাদে প্যারিসে রাস্তায় নেশেছেন কয়েক হাজার মানুষ।

— রয়টার্স, এ এফ পি

নয়।
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Nepali Cong row with Army ¹⁷ sparks unrest

Keshav Pradhan ^{Keshav Pradhan}
Kathmandu, August 29 ^{29/8}

A ROW between the Army and the Nepali Congress has sparked a fresh bout of unrest in trouble-torn Nepal.

On Sunday, the NC's youth and student wings threw life out of gear in many districts with bandhs, chakka jams and rallies. They were protesting against the Army's alleged refusal to allow NC chief G.P. Koirala to enter the Kathmandu airport on Saturday.

The NC activists enforced a strike in Kathmandu and neighbouring Patan and Bhaktapur. Police said the protesters damaged at least 12 vehicles in Kathmandu. There were reports of roadblocks, strikes and demonstrations in Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari, Siraha, Saptari, Dhanusa, Udaipur, Dhad-ing, Kaski, Rupendehi and Kapil-vastu districts.

The NC claimed that the Army forced Koirala, currently spear-heading a stir against the 2002 royal takeover, to cancel his trip to west Nepal's Bhairhawa where he was scheduled to attend a few meetings.

The government set up a committee to probe the incident. A report is expected by Monday. The Army described the incident as "unintentional".

Many leaders, including Rashtriya Prajatantra Party leader and ex-Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa, decried the Army's action.

Nepal: Is it time for India to intervene?

Nepalis can and must solve their own problem, however dire. (11/23)



Kanak Dixit
Editor, Himal
Kathmandu

India should be interested in the restoration of peace in Nepal, because ordinary Nepalis are suffering, and also because of possible insurgency spillover. But should India 'intervene' directly to solve the problem for Nepal? No.

The Maoists challenge is Nepal's homegrown problem born of a decade of new-found democracy. Because it is not an insurgency abetted by any significant external force, the problem can be resolved internally. The crisis will only become more complicated if an outside power takes untoward interest.

Nepal's political landscape has been transformed in the recent past, and for better or worse, the fierce nationalism of Kathmandu Valley today finds resonance across mountain, hill and Tarai plain. Any adventure by New Delhi would reap a mass reaction that would surprise not a few. Simultaneously, it would drive legitimate political forces into the insurgent's antiquated Naxalite philosophy and often brutal ways.

While today New Delhi

provides large amounts of military aid to Kathmandu, it could take significant action on the political front without being 'interventionist'. Firstly, India could try to get the Maoists to vacate Indian territory, which they use as refuge via the open border. As insurgents who loudly proclaim their brand of ultra-nationalism (largely defined by anti-Indianism), one could demand that the Maoists fight from within their own country. Such action would give political pause to the rebels and provide a proper reading of their power on the ground.

Secondly, India should use a suitable opportunity and verbiage to inform the Nepali public of its anti-Maoist posture. Though it's obvious to many, it's not so to the larger Nepali public which has been fed a web of conspiracies. So, the Maoists gain incongruous political standing from the belief among large sections that India provides them tacit support.

Thirdly, because its direct involvement in a peace process would be impractical, New Delhi should back international efforts. The issue of an appropriate UN facilitation is today not even brought up by the timid Nepali side for fear of Indian displeasure. Given the changed geopolitical context glo-

bally and regionally, and the place of Nepal internationally, New Delhi should have no problem in signalling its acceptance of UN good offices. Fourthly, any political solution for long-term stability can only be found via democracy and pluralism. Presently, India's plans for braking insurgency seem to rest on military support and a reliance on the King's ability to rope in parties. But it's only the activism of political parties that can undermine Maoists. Nepalis can and must solve their own problem.



Ranjan Roy
Editor
Times News Network

It's abundantly clear that a blaze of republicanism is sweeping the Himalayan slopes and the region in action in South Block has been global. Can New Delhi sit quietly and watch as Nepal plunges into chaos and anger sweeps across porous borders? No need to play big brother a la Dubya and get

SUNDAY DEBATE



into a military adventure, but India can't ignore its regional responsibilities and must back democracy. Civil society in Nepal is seething with anger over the monarchy willy-nilly taking over an absolute role, reversing the gains of an earlier democratic movement. King Gyanendra has no ear for democratic music and has preferred to dismiss a government that was not pliant. And it's not just his disdain for elected governments, but the ghost of the June 2001 royal massacre still hovers.

The history of international relations is pockmarked with the failures of armed intervention and India has its own recent memories of Sri Lanka. But why aren't we actively engaged politically? Under the circumstances, New Delhi's logical first call should be for restoration of democracy and parliament. Isn't that what the Nepalese are also asking for? Instead, we're cosily smuggling into the continent post-9/11 consensus against global terrorism. Never before have the interests of the US, China and India coalesced into such unanimous backing for Kadhafi's anachronistic king. Liberal aid and weaponry is flowing into the palace and even the Nepalese Royal Army, once little more

than palace guards is becoming delusional about a possible political role for the generals. Washington's \$17 million and Indian ammunition may turn the Royal Nepalese Army into a mean anti-insurgent force but it will also bolster the royalists. There are arguments against backing Nepal's elected leaders who are discredited and corrupt, but so are many of ours. Giving legitimacy to a king with doubtful credentials and palace satraps who have jumped at the first opportunity to blame India for Nepal's ills isn't the way out. New Delhi must instead pressure the palace to restore parliament and bring in political parties as force-multipliers for the dialogue with Maoists. New Delhi must then extract a promise from the palace not to throttle Nepal's nascent democracy and keep the military out of politics. Worrying about cross-border linkages between Maoists in Nepal and outlawed left-wing extremist groups like the People's War and the Maoist Coordination Committee in India, to use South Blocks words, is important. But the mandarins must get involved now and later sleep tighter knowing the Himalayas are in the hands of the gentle people who live there.

218 Nepal

THE TIMES OF INDIA 19 April 2001

Maoists bomb Nepal Lever factory

51-11-298

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KATHMANDU, Aug. 28. — Yet another Indian investment came under attack in Nepal, with Maoists today setting off three blasts at the factory of Nepal Lever Ltd and reportedly causing damage worth millions.

Around 12.45 a.m., a group of men entered the premises of the FMC (fast moving consumer goods) company at Basamadi in Makwanpur district in

southwest Nepal and ordered the staffers and security guards out. Thereafter, three bombs went off at the administrative building, boiler plant and toothpaste factory. Police cordoned off the factory, that now has been attacked the fourth time by the insurgents. With all offices remaining closed in Nepal today, there was no official statement from Nepal Lever authorities. However, the Federation of

Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry issued a press statement in the afternoon, condemning the attack.

Hindustan Lever Ltd of India incorporated Nepal Lever in 1992, holding 80 percent of the shares. The rest is owned by nearly 2,000 Nepalese shareholders. The Basamadi factory was established in 1993 with an investment of nearly NRS 320 million. Despite being a household

name with its products like Fair & Lovely, the fairness cream, Close Up and Pepsodent toothpastes, Lux, Liril and Super OK soaps, and Wheel detergent powder, Nepal Lever has been swinging between profit and loss.

Its activities were affected earlier this year when the Maoists called a blockade in the districts, disrupting supplies.

The multinational company had established itself in

the entertainment industry of Nepal by instituting the annual Lux Film Awards for the Nepalese film industry, a fashion show which gave winning Nepalese models a chance to enter the Lakme Fashion Show in India, and sponsoring concerts as well as recently, along with other corporate houses, funding Nepalese taekwon-do star Sangina Vaidyas passage to Athens to take part in the Olympics.

Along with Dabur Nepal, Surya Nepal, ITCs joint venture, Colgate-Palmolive and other Indian investments, Nepal Lever too had faced extortion demands from the Maoists.

Today's blasts come a day after the Maoists announced they would close down all ventures with American investment in them to retaliate to the Bush government's training and arming the Royal Nepalese Army.

মিছিল কাঠমাড়তে

কাঠমাড়, ২২ অগস্ট:

মাওবাদীদের হুমকিতে দেশের ১২টি বহুজাতিক সংস্থার ঝাঁপ বন্ধ হওয়ার প্রতিবাদে আজ প্রায় ২৫ হাজার শিল্পপতি ও শ্রমিক একজোট হয়ে এখানে বিশাল মিছিল বার করেছেন। 'ফেডারেশন অফ নেপালিজ চেম্বার অফ ইন্ডাস্ট্রিজ অ্যান্ড কমার্স' আয়োজিত এই প্রতিবাদ মিছিলে শিল্পসংস্থা, হোটেল, পরিবহণ সংস্থা, স্কুল, জামাকাপড়ের কারখানা-সহ প্রায় ২০০টি সংস্থা অংশ নিয়েছিল।

অবরোধের জেরে বিপর্যস্ত কাঠমাড়তে ১৭ অগস্ট থেকে ১২টি বহুজাতিক সংস্থা বন্ধ হয়ে গিয়েছে। অর্থনৈতিক অবরোধ আজ পঞ্চম দিনে পড়ল। পাশাপাশি, মাওবাদীদের হামলায় ক্ষতিগ্রস্তদের সংগঠনের তরফ থেকে এ দিন পরিবহণ বন্ধ-এর ডাক দেওয়া হয়েছিল। রাস্তায় বন্ধের দরুন যানবাহন খুব কমই চলাচল করেছে।

এ দিকে, রাজধানী থেকে প্রায় ৫০০ কিলোমিটার দূরে, জুমলা জেলার খালাঙ্গায় মাওবাদীদের জেলা

সদর দখল করার চেষ্টা ব্যর্থ হয়ে গিয়েছে। নিরাপত্তারক্ষীদের সঙ্গে গুলির লড়াইয়ে ৪ জঙ্গি ও ১ নিরাপত্তারক্ষীর মৃত্যু হয়েছে। মাওবাদীরা ৬ পুলিশকে অপহরণ করেছে। জুমলা জেল ভেঙে ৬ বন্দিকেও নিয়ে যায়। পরে এদের মধ্যে ৩ জনকে ছেড়ে দেওয়া হয়েছে।

জুমলার জেলা সদর দখল করতে কয়েক শো মাওবাদী জঙ্গি কাল রাত ১১টার পর একাধিক জায়গায় হামলা চালায়। তারা বেশ কয়েকটি সরকারি ভবনে বোমা ছোড়ে, অনেকগুলি বাড়ি ও দোকান লুণ্ঠ করে। জেলা প্রশাসন ভবন, জেলা ভূমি-রাজস্ব দফতরের ভবন, কৃষি উন্নয়ন ব্যাঙ্কের অফিস হামলায় ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হয়। গোটা শহরে আতঙ্ক ছড়িয়ে পড়ে। একইসঙ্গে তারা সেনা ছাউনি, থানা আক্রমণ করে। আদালত, অ্যাটর্নি জেনারেলের দফতর ও ডাকঘরে আগুন লাগিয়ে দেয়। জঙ্গিদের খোঁজে হেলিকপ্টার ও স্থলবাহিনীকে দিয়ে ব্যাপক তল্লাশি শুরু হয়েছে। — রয়টার্স, পি টি আই

/// for of Nepal ✓

SPIRALLING CRISIS

HD-8 25/8

THE BLOCKADE OF Kathmandu Valley by Maoist guerrillas is an unprecedented show of strength by the eight-year-old insurgency. It constitutes a direct challenge to the authority of the Nepal Government. The capital city, which depends on land routes for most of its supplies, has been cut off since the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist called the blockade earlier this week demanding the release of its arrested cadres. The ease with which the Maoists have managed to ensure compliance with their order is not surprising, considering that the armed insurgency has grown rapidly since its launch in 1996 and now affects most of the land-locked country. The insurgents may not have absolute control of any part of Nepal in the manner of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka, but they have pretty much succeeded in paralysing the work of government everywhere by relying on a combination of fear and sympathy to enforce their writ. Until recently, Kathmandu was one place that was relatively immune from the insurgency. True, the Maoists had carried out a couple of bomb attacks and killed a politician in the city. Earlier this month, they forced the closure of several businesses located in the Valley. But now, by effectively sealing the capital off, they have shown they can move the insurgency where it will hit the country hardest.

The manner in which the Sher Bahadur Deuba Government responds to the crisis could well determine the future of Nepal's 14-year-old democracy. The threat from the Maoists, who aim to establish a republic by doing away with the country's constitutional monarchy but whose commitment to a multi-party democracy is far from clear, is only one aspect of the problem. Another threat emanates from within Kathmandu. King Gyanendra has made no secret of his desire to play a bigger and more direct role in governance than is laid down for him in the country's 1990 Constitution. His record speaks for itself. In 2002,

he dismissed an elected government and assumed executive powers. He appointed Mr. Deuba Prime Minister in June this year only after months of agitation and street protests by five political parties. The new Government is a coalition of four parties including the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist-Leninist (UML), the country's second largest party. Although not elected by the people, it closely reflects the composition of the Parliament that the King dissolved two years ago and represents Nepal's best chance yet to craft a national consensus on meeting the Maoist challenge in an imaginative way. But thus far the Government has not provided any evidence of clear thinking on the issues at stake. A leadership vacuum at this crucial stage can only create opportunities for interference by the monarch. Mr. Deuba would do well to win the cooperation of Girija Prasad Koirala, who heads the Nepali Congress, the country's biggest political party; he petulantly refused to join the multi-party government and has been working at cross-purposes with it ever since.

The situation should cause concern in India, which shares a 1,500-km-long open border with Nepal. The Maoists are known to have links with like-minded groups on this side of the border. They have openly expressed their animosity towards India, not least because the Indian Government has provided weapons and training to the Royal Nepal Army to fight the insurgency and arrested some of their leaders who were in hiding in India. Indians run many of the businesses the Maoists have threatened in Nepal. India's position that the insurgency, which has real economic and social roots, cannot be countered militarily and that all the constitutional and democratic forces in Nepal must come together to find a political solution to it, is sound. New Delhi must continue to encourage such a resolution to Nepal's complicated crisis to which many actors have contributed.

Maoists call off blockade

Statesman News Service

KATHMANDU, Aug. 24. — Maoists today called off the indefinite Kathmandu blockade after seven days of relentless negative publicity for Nepal's government in the eyes of the international community and untold hardship to people.

A statement by the leaders of the joint district committee of the CPN-Maoist issued in the evening said the blockade was being lifted due to requests by human rights organisations, trade unions, intellectuals and the general public. The statement was signed by local level Maoist leaders Subash Tamang, Kshitij, Rajman Tamang and Kajiman Tamang.

However, it warned that the lifting of the blockade



A government office building, on the outskirts of Kathmandu, destroyed in an explosion triggered by the Maoists on Tuesday. — AFP

was for a trial period of one month. After that, it would launch even stronger programmes if the government ignored their demands.

The Sher Bahadur Deuba

government had undoubtedly contributed to persuading the rebels to lift the siege by an announcement that it would disclose within a month the whereabouts of missing Mao-

ist cadre and leaders. Despite a sudden power cut in Kathmandu, the city rejoiced at the news. Along with the valley, the rebels have also lifted the prevailing blockades in remote districts like Makwanpur, Dhading, Nuwakot, Rasuwa and Sindhupalchowk.

The lifting of the blockade could be an indication that the rebels are ready to hold fresh peace talks with the government.

Though there was no immediate mention about the fate of 12 companies that shut down a day before the blockade due to a ban imposed on them by the Maoists, it is likely that they too would reopen soon. This was not unexpected with Surya Nepal, a joint venture of ITC, having recently expressed hope that the impasse would be resolved soon.

THE STATESMAN

25 AUG 2008

Nepal Under Siege

Maoist rebels bring Himalayan

kingdom to a standstill 29/8

We have long warned that the situation in Nepal is fast spinning out of control. Recent events suggest that in fact things might get worse than we thought. For almost the past week Maoist rebels who operated only in far-flung areas of the country have now sealed off Kathmandu from vital supplies by blocking routes from India. At the same time, police outposts in the further realms of the country are still under attack. On Sunday evening, at least one government soldier was killed and six policemen taken hostage when rebels launched a major offensive in Khangala town in western Nepal. New Delhi repeats that it is 'watching the situation carefully'. But it is becoming increasingly obvious that a more energetic engagement needs to be made by India in this strategic and sensitive backyard. The grapevine has it that India has stepped up supplies of arms and materiel to help the Nepalese forces combat the Maoists. There must have been back-door diplomacy to try to bring the contending parties to the negotiating table. However, so far a solution has remained elusive, with the rebels insisting that a total ceasefire and the calling of a constituent assembly should be the precondition for talks.

The palace would be reluctant — to put it mildly — to liquidate itself. However, some concessions have to be made by both sides. The point is — which party or parties are best suited to play the honest broker? Considering India's close economic, social and cultural ties with the Himalayan kingdom, New Delhi would seem to be ideally suited for the role. But India has, for far too long, been seen as a big bully, not only by Nepal but by other smaller neighbours as well. Any talks held under the obvious auspices of India would be doomed to failure. So, what are the alternatives? The present situation obviously cannot be permitted to continue. On their part, the Maoists, splintered as they are, have said they would be willing for a UN-monitored process. New Delhi and other friends of Nepal should try and persuade the palace to accede to this request. The donor agencies and NGOs, whose presence in Nepal cannot be wished away, could also play a positive role by endorsing such a move. Insurgency has brought Nepal's tourism-driven economy to a grinding halt. The prospect of India being saddled with another refugee problem is not exactly remote.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

24 AUG 2001

Army escorts Indian food supplies to Kathmandu

Keshav Pradhan & Agencies
Kathmandu, August 23

WITH MAOISTS reluctant to resume peace talks, Nepal on Monday began an all-out attempt to break their Kathmandu blockade that began on August 18. It focused more on Tribhuvan Rajmarg, which leads to India, than Arniko Rajmarg, which connects the capital with Tibet. India, meanwhile, has reportedly sent 70 trucks containing essential commodities to help break the blockade.

Right from morning, Army helicopters were sent on recces to keep the rebels away from hilltops overlooking the two highways. Army personnel in India-made mine protection vehicles (MPV) were seen leading convoys of vehicles along Tribhuvan Rajmarg.

Movement of people and vehicles on Tribhuvan Rajmarg was much higher than before. An Army officer at Naubishe in Maoist-infested Dhading district said, "The rebels no longer have the advantage of heights." The Maoists have not so far put up resistance anywhere. By one pm, 125 vehicles, including seven Indian trucks laden with foodstuff, entered Kathmandu through Tribhuvan Rajmarg. Altogether 138 vehicles entered Kathmandu from Nagdhunga pass in the Tribhuvan Highway and 336 left the capital till 4 pm today, on the sixth day of the Maoist economic blockade, the army said. On Sunday, their number was just 77. In normal times, about 1,200 trucks reach Kathmandu from the Nepalese plains and India.

There was hardly any movement of vehicles between Tibet and Kathmandu. Traders use this 110-km route to bring Chinese goods to Kathmandu, most of which clandestinely find their way into India. Compared to Tribhuvan Rajmarg, the number of security posts here were much less.

At Sangha on Arniko Rajmarg, a police official said, "Whatever vehicles we see here are from neighbouring districts." The rebels are well entrenched here and run a parallel government in many villages.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, while rejecting the UN offer to mediate in talks with the rebels, has not ruled out an expanded role for India in resolving the conflict in the Himalayan kingdom.

He again urged the rebels to end their blockade as also their agitation against the Indian business houses and other multinationals. "If the Maoists are really concerned about



Nepalese police officers frisk motorcyclists at a checkpoint in Kathmandu on Monday. AFP

the peace process, they must end the blockade and strikes against the industries," he said.

Deputy Prime Minister Bharat Mohan Adhikari said the government was ready to declare a ceasefire if the Maoists were ready to come to the negotiating table. "We need to start the talks without setting any pre-condition," he said. A key rebel demand for ending the blockade is that the government stop calling them terrorists. The tag keeps guerrilla leaders hiding in the mountains to avoid arrest.

Asked about the terrorist label, Adhikari said: "Let them come to the negotiation table. We will discuss what-

ever they want." The government on Friday agreed to another demand by saying it would release within a month information on an unspecified number of leftist activists who have gone missing in the civil war, which has claimed 10,000 lives since 1996.

But in a sign the moves were not enough, the Maoists stormed a town in northwestern Nepal late Saturday and launched small-scale attacks in the blockaded capital. Prem Bahadur Thokare, a small-time contractor, was hit by two bullets as he walked Monday past the tightly guarded home of an army officer in Kathmandu.

Dhaka disruptions

29/8/04

BANGLADESH OPPOSITION leader and former PM Sheikh Hasina Wajed was the prime target of Saturday's attack when — after a failed grenade assault on her — assailants tried to gun her down. That she survived had more to do with the presence of mind of her party workers rather than any security detail. The latest attacks could be an attempt to exploit the longstanding acrimony between the Awami League and the Bangladesh National Party. But Prime Minister Khalida Zia needs to act strongly to reassure Ms Hasina and the world that the ruling BNP will not succumb to terrorism.

If there's something more disturbing than the weekend's bomb blasts, it's probably the way these explosions tie in with a deadly pattern of violence. This year alone bombings have ranged from Sylhet in the northeast to the capital, Dhaka, to Khulna in the southwest. Over the last five years, at least 140 people were killed in bomb blasts, as unknown

assailants targeted cinemas, opposition rallies, newspaper editors and the shrine of an Islamic saint. Begum Khalida's government denies that it has encouraged this climate of violence. But the identity of those responsible is no secret. Neither is their goal of destroying the secular institutions of the country.

Unfortunately, in its contest with the Awami League, the ruling BNP has not hesitated to ally itself with some of these radical Islamic groups like the Jamaat-e-Islami and encourage a climate of licence that enables several insurgent groups active in India to shelter in Bangladesh. Both the parties could do well to learn from Nepal where fighting between political parties made the parliamentary system non-functional and has allowed Maoist extremists to take control. Indian options may be limited, but it can't be complacent to the developments that could lead to yet another neighbour going down the route of chaos and anarchy.

SIX OFFICES TORCHED, THREE ABDUCTED

Maoists devastate Jumla district HQ

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Statesman News Service

KATHMANDU, Aug. 22. — The Maoists last night launched a daring attack in Jumla district, destroying over six government offices and abducting three people, including a senior government official.

Armed with long-range weapons, the rebels attacked Khalanga in the midwestern district from at 11 p.m. and continued the raid till this morning despite the army flying in reinforcements from western headquarters in Nepalgunj and Surkhet. At least one security personnel was killed while 10 rebels were reportedly wounded. After the raid, the body of a Maoist was left behind, reports said.

Infrastructure worth millions was destroyed as the Maoists torched the offices of the district development authorities, land revenue, agriculture development, water and power supply and the district prison. While earlier reports said five prisoners had fled after the jail was destroyed, three were said to have returned.

Khalanga had been subjected to another devastating attack by the rebels last year.

Other reports of individual killings, strikes and

Nepal yet to confirm abductions

KATHMANDU, Aug. 22. — Nepal has said that it is yet to confirm the reports of abduction of its 12 nationals by militants in Iraq, the state media reported today.

"We have not received any information about the incident, and the government has also asked the Nepalese embassy in Pakistan to confirm it," the government daily The Rising Nepal quoted labour minister Mr Raghuj Pant as saying. The Nepalese embassy in Islamabad looks after Nepal's diplomatic affairs with Iraq as there is no Nepalese diplomatic representative in Iraq. A three-member enquiry committee headed by secretary in the ministry of labour and transport, Mr Narayan Prasad Silwal, is looking into the abduction issue, it said.

Communication minister Md Mohsin said efforts will be made for their release through UN agencies and human rights organizations working in Iraq once all information surrounding the abduction are received.

Media reports quoting a statement posted on an Islamic website on Friday, said an Iraqi outfit has announced the purported abduction of 12 Nepalese men on the night of 19-20 August for cooperating with US forces in Iraq. — PTI

blockades kept pouring in.

The student wing of the rebels called a strike in Dhading, Nuwakot and Rasuwa, three areas that have been targeted for repeated such measures since two of their leaders were killed by security forces recently. The highway to Makwanpur was also blockaded and the rebels, in a surprise move, were reported to have shut down the hotel in Nepalgunj where they had held their last round of peace talks with the government last year. Ten tourists staying in the hotel were said to have

been ordered out.

Anti-Maoist rally

More than 25,000 protestors comprising industrialists and labourers held a rally in Kathmandu today to denounce the closure of 12 multinational companies, including Indian firms, due to the Maoist threat.

Around 200 organisations, including various industries, schools, hotels, transport companies, garment factories, travel entrepreneurs participated in the peaceful rally called by Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Industries and Commerce.

23 AUG 2004

The fear within

Keig
Mepa
23/4/04

Nepal's Maoists going too far

The Maoist threat to close 18 industries — among these Indo-Nepalese joint ventures like Surya Nepal, the largest tobacco manufacturer, and Hotel Soaltee Crown Plaza — for what they call “anti-people” and “exploitative activities” confirms suspicions that the recent torching of more than a dozen Indian oil tankers was no isolated incident. Intended to create tension by whipping up anti-Indian sentiments, the diktat has ostensibly caused cold feet in industrial circles. This comes when the Himalayan kingdom’s political stability and security are in grave danger; the concern is not unfounded. Delhi must do more than seek Nepal’s protection for Indian enterprise. A way out must be found for permanent industrial peace since a large number of Indians work in that country. If the Maoists do not relent, thousands of workers will be jobless and Nepal’s economy, already in the doldrums, will flounder. A conducive atmosphere is what people expect to revive the sagging tourism industry, the country’s mainstay which directly and indirectly employs about 200,000 people. Hopefully, the reported efforts by the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce to hold talks with Maoists will bear fruit.

The Maoists must also realise they are hurting those they have sworn to serve. Since their rebellion began in 1996, thousands of able-bodied Nepalese have fled their homes and sought employment in India and other countries. Of some consolation is their softening attitude towards private schools which are limping back to normalcy. On the political front, the Deuba government is said to be in secret contact with the Maoists, reason being that the public will be told only in the event of a positive breakthrough. Peace hinges on such slippery footholds but hope springs eternal.

Nepal Maoists wreak havoc

Govt offices burnt ■ Prisoners freed ■ Cops abducted



Nepali Congress activists protest against Maoists in Kathmandu on Sunday.

AFF

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, August 22

IGNORING THE government's repeated calls for dialogue, Maoists late on Saturday raided a western Nepalese district town, set ablaze several offices and destroyed an airstrip, as angry traders rallied on the streets of Kathmandu to protest a crippling rebel blockade of the capital.

Officials said the insurgents mounted their attack on Khalanga, headquarters of Jumla district, around midnight. During the six-hour fighting, they burnt down revenue, development, administration and court offices.

Several hundred Maoists broke into the district jail and freed six people. They killed a soldier and abducted nine people, including six policemen. They retreated when security reinforcements reached Khalanga in helicopters. Casualties on the rebels' side are not known.

There was panic in the eastern Nepalese districts

Women soldiers to tame ultras

THE ROYAL Nepalese Army (RNA) on Sunday deployed the first batch of its women soldiers against Maoists. Till now, it was only the Maoist-run People's Liberation Army (PLA) that had woman fighters. These soldiers comprise about 30 per cent of the PLA's total strength and have participated in numerous attacks on government and RNA establishments. Prior to the

Maoist rebellion, Nepalese women had not taken part in war since the 1814-16 Anglo-Gurkha War. At the time, they had fought with kukris, swords and rocks. The women soldiers, who completed their training on August 2, were put on duty at Nagdhunga — Kathmandu's only exit point to India. They were more in number than their male colleagues.

HTC, Nagdhunga

of Panchthar and Ilam, bordering Sikkim and Darjeeling, after the rebels threatened to attack their district headquarters, Phidim and Ilam.

Police at Khalanga said the bodies of five dead rebels had been found. Locals said the rebels had physically carried some 20 to 25 wounded colleagues.

While there has been limited violence in the cap-

ital, security was tightened Sunday as industrialists and other opponents of the Maoists marched through the city, burning tyres and chanting slogans.

The industrialists carried placards reading "Stop blockade", "Allow businesses and industries to run smoothly!" and "Let us live peacefully!"

Trucks of police and soldiers were stationed at in-

tersections throughout the capital, with armed guards setting up checkpoints on key roads, witnesses said.

Very few vehicles were seen moving on the streets of Kathmandu due to a general strike called by victims of Maoist rebel activities. They have been joined in their strike by students protesting an increase in the price of petroleum products.

The Nepal Consumers Forum said the combined effect of the blockade and the strike had seen inter-city traffic coming to a near-halt on Sunday, despite increased security along the highways.

The Maoists further intensified the Kathmandu blockade that began on Wednesday. Movement of people and vehicles on Tribhuvan Rajmarg, which connects Kathmandu with India, was abysmally low because of a rebel-sponsored strike in Makwanpur district.

The Army kept close watch on the highways from helicopters.

New worry for Nepal: Kidnap report

SUDESHNA SARKAR
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KATHMANDU, Aug. 21. — After being slapped an indefinite blockade of Kathmandu valley by Maoists and a ban on 12 business houses, the beleaguered Nepal government was delivered a further blow today when the local dairies splashed reports from Dubai that a militant Islamic group had abducted 12 Nepalese workers.

The papers went to town with reports that the Islamic militant group Ansar al-Sunna, that claims to have killed over 1,000 people in Iraq, had taken "12 people affiliated with a Nepalese company" captive for helping the USA to "fight Islam".

A statement signed by the military command of the army of Ansar al-Sunna and posted on Islamic websites gave the news but not the names of the 12 men or the place where they were being

held. Instead, it said the men, who had been operating "via a Jordanian company called Besharat and Partners" would soon have their photographs posted on the outfit's website to "serve as a lesson to others".

The Sher Bahadur Deuba government, which took 72 hours to deal with the Maoists' trade ban and 48 hours to announce measures to foil the blockade reacted to the new crisis faster, setting up a three-member team of bureaucrats to look into the reports.

The state media reported this afternoon that a three-member team headed by the secretary of the ministry of labour and transport management and including a senior official each from the home and foreign ministries was looking into the matter. It also said the ministry of foreign affairs has asked the Nepalese embassy in Pakistan to confirm the incident. Since there is no Nepalese embassy



A boy shops in Kathmandu on Saturday. The Maoist blockade has stalled transport links and sent prices of fruit and vegetables soaring. — AFP

in Iraq, all official queries would have to be directed either to the embassy in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan or Egypt.

Though the Nepalese government has banned its citi-

zens from working in Iraq, the department for labour and transport management said that in the last two to three months alone, 10,000 to 15,000 Nepalese had been re-

'Secret talks' with rebels

KATHMANDU, Aug. 21. — Nepalese Prime Minister Mr Sher Bahadur Deuba today offered to hold "secret talks" with Maoist rebels, who are spearheading a violent movement against the monarchy, and said that efforts would be made to hold the dialogue before general elections in April.

The government wanted "secret talks with Maoists" as "whenever they have been held publicly, they have failed," said Mr Deuba, who is scheduled to pay a five-day visit to India from 8 September.

Asserting that his government stood by multi-party democracy and constitutional monarchy, he said: "We are not going to compromise on this, come what may", a reference to Maoists' agitation against the monarchy.

He said the government was trying to initiate talks with the Maoists before the general elections in April, according to a BBC release. During his visit to New Delhi, he is expected to discuss Maoist insurgency and various bilateral and international issues. — PTI

Since the US-led war in Iraq, security companies have been mushrooming in the Gulf country and they are glad to hire Gurkhas because of the latter's valour as well as willingness to accept lower salaries. For instance, last year, when Scott Custer and Michael Battles, two former Army Rangers in their mid-30s, won a \$16 million contract to guard Baghdad's airport, their company running on borrowed funds hired Nepalese Gurkhas to staff the project. The fledgling firm is said to have lost four employees consequently.

The first reported death of a Nepalese worker in Iraq came last year.

The unnamed retired Gurkha soldier, said to be employed by the Coalition Provisional Authority, was bringing mail from Kuwait to the United Nations staff in Basra as part of a two-car convoy when he was shot near an intersection.

ports that over 5,000 Nepalese workers were camping on the streets of Mumbai after being stranded by six unscrupulous recruitment agencies who had lured them with offers of plum jobs in Iraq.

Nepal blockade enters third day

GOPAL SHARMA
KATHMANDU, AUGUST 20

SUSPECTED Maoist guerrillas set off two bombs in and around Nepal's capital on Friday, wounding two people as the commercial centre remained cut off for a third day by a rebel-imposed blockade.

Two men shot and wounded a policeman guarding a government building in central Kathmandu before they entered the building and planted a crude bomb under a staircase, police said. The blast, which also wounded a passing motorcyclist, left twisted metal frames and glass littering the area around the city's busy Dilli Bazar area.

"The rebels are targeting public places where there are crowds, a police officer said. "Luckily, not many people were around here as it was still early in the day."

Hours earlier, suspected rebels set off a bomb at an empty police post on the outskirts of Kathmandu. The blasts are seen as an attempt to scare people and ensure the blockade of major roads into the city is not violated.

The unprecedented siege of Kathmandu began on Wednes-



Troops inspect a blast site at a police post in the outskirts of Kathmandu on Friday. Reuters

day and is being enforced through fear of attack by the Maoists. They have not blocked highways or prevented vehicles from moving in and out of the capital but drivers are too scared to take the risk.

The blockade has begun to bite, triggering fuel rationing and driving up food prices. The rebels called for the blockade to press demands for investigations into the alleged killing of comrades, release of some jailed members and information about missing guerrillas. Four bomb blasts, also blamed on the guer-

rillas, rocked Nepal's Soaltee Crowne Plaza hotel on Monday but caused no injuries. Those blasts forced the hotel and nine other companies, including a Coca-Cola bottler and a tobacco company joint venture with India's ITC Ltd and British American Tobacco, to shut down following rebel threats.

But the blockade did not mean the rebels could overrun the heavily guarded capital anytime soon, Deputy PM Bharat Mohan Adhikary said on Thursday, adding that he wanted to call for peace talks. —Reuters

Nepal sop to Maoists

Statesman News Service

KATHMANDU, Aug. 20. — Nepal's government today sought to lift the Maoists' ban on some major business houses and the blockade of Kathmandu by partially conceding to the rebels' demands.

After a special Cabinet meeting held at Prime Minister Mr Sher Bahadur Deuba's residence today, the government announced it would disclose the whereabouts of the missing leaders and cadre of the trade union and student union affiliated to the Maoists.

While the student union had called the Kathmandu blockade from 18 August, the trade union had announced a ban on 12 companies from 17 August.

The two organisations

have been demanding the disclosure of the whereabouts of their missing leaders, compensation for the families of those killed by security forces and release of two trade union leaders Kumar Dahal and Minprasad Chapagain, who are held in Patna jail in Bihar.

Information and communications minister Dr Mohammad Mohsin, who is also the spokesman of the Deuba government, today said the whereabouts of the missing people would be made public within a month.

Asked why the government conceded the demand so belatedly and lost the nation millions due to the closure of the businesses and the blockade, Dr Mohsin said the government was not ready to give in to pressure tactics.

"We have been asking the Maoists to come to the talks table but they have not shown the necessary preparations," he said. First they employ their students, then trade unions and women to pressure us we do not accept this strategy."

While the government hopes to mollify the rebels with the announcement, it is also trying to persuade the public and especially transport operators, to disobey the blockade call.

Dr Mohsin said the government has set aside Rs 59,000 to pay compensation to those whose vehicles were damaged during earlier demonstrations and shutdowns. The government would also provide security for industries, he said, urging the closed business houses to reopen.

Deputy PM ready for talks as blockade hurts Kathmandu

GOPAL SHARMA

KATHMANDU, AUGUST 19

THE fear of attack kept most vehicles off roads leading to Nepal's capital for a second day on Thursday as authorities sought talks to end a siege called by Maoist insurgents.

The call for an indefinite blockade by the guerrillas, who have threatened to attack vehicles that violate it, has disrupted the supply of food and goods to Kathmandu.

But life was largely unaffected, Kathmandu residents said, and there was no sign of panic buying.

The guerrillas have not physically stopped the movement of vehicles since the blockade began on Wednesday and there has been no violence. But the fear of the Maoists' hit-and-run tactics have forced people to fall in line, analysts said, barring some vehicles with Army escorts.



A security personnel keeps a watch on Prithvi highway outside Kathmandu on Thursday. AP/PTI

Deputy PM Bharat Mohan Adhikary urged the rebels to begin peace talks to help end the revolt.

"We have urged businesses and the public not to bow to rebel threats and assured them security," Adhikary said. "What else can we do?"

"Neither can we finish the Maoists, nor can they capture Singha Durbar. Both must accept co-existence," he said. "We are ready to solve the problem peacefully. We are ready to talk to them without any condition," he said.

The rebels called the blockade to demand the release of detained guerrillas, a probe into the alleged killings of activists and information about thousands of missing comrades. Authorities say Kathmandu is estimated to have about two weeks' stocks of food, cooking oil and petroleum products.

The US condemned the fresh trouble in Nepal, saying the threats and violence by the rebels showed their disregard for the well-being of the Nepalese people. —Reuters

Nepal Maoists turn down govt olive branch

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, August 19

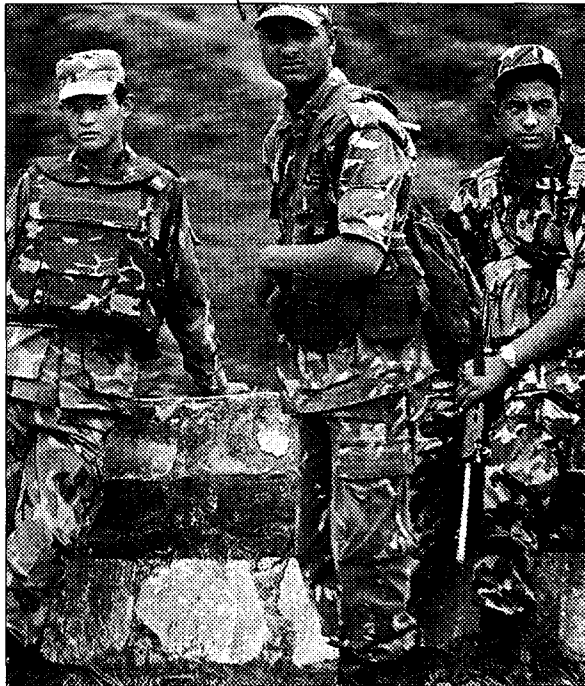
WITH THE Maoists continuing to blockade Kathmandu, the Nepal government on Thursday asked them to return to peace talks. But the rebels have so far ruled out any dialogue with the palace-installed government, describing it as "hired agents of feudal rulers."

On the occasion of the 77th birthday of Queen Mother Ratna, which is celebrated as Children's Day here, Deputy Prime Minister Bharat Mohan Adhikary said, "We ask the Maoists to respect the good intentions of the government and return to the negotiating table."

Meanwhile, Nepal has begun getting international backing in the wake of the blockade. The US became the first country to condemn the Maoists for "undermining Nepal's economic, political and social development with threats and violence." It described as "reprehensible" Monday's bomb attacks on Hotel Soaltee and closure of businesses by the rebels. Washington ordered blocking of Maoist assets in the US and banned Americans from transactions and dealings with the rebels.

Amnesty International expressed concern at the siege as well as the Maoist threat to press freedom. Britain's special envoy, Sir Jeffrey James, also met Nepalese leaders.

Various media organisations held countrywide demonstrations against the recent killing of a Radio Nepal correspondent by the rebels. Though far from the truth, some of the dailies carried only the government version of the blockade that claimed it as a flop show.



Soldiers stand guard at Prithvi highway on the outskirts of Kathmandu on Thursday. AP

Media trains guns on Maoists

THE NEPALESE media has trained its guns on Maoists as they move closer to Kathmandu. On Wednesday, over 200 media personnel marched through the streets of Kathmandu to protest against the recent killing of Radio Nepal correspondent Dekendraraj Thapa in western Nepal.

The local media, which was earlier accused of supporting the Communist rebellion, threatened to black out news concerning the Maoists. A majority of broadsheets published here did not carry any story on the Kathmandu blockade.

Instead, *Kantipur*, the

kingdom's largest Nepali language daily, carried a file photograph of Thapa being welcomed by the rebels at a programme in Kalikot. The caption said, "The Maoists are killing the very people whom it used to welcome in the past."

The paper, for which Maoist leaders often write, carried as its lead story the rebels' alleged threat to eliminate 10 more journalists. A front-page headline in *Nepal Samacharpatra* screamed, "If the Maoist leadership does not apologise, the media will boycott them".

HTC, Kathmandu

PEACE TOGETHER

Some communists never recover from what Lenin called the "infantile disorder". Others have argued that the streak is there anyway in the ideology of communism. Nepal's Maoists make no secret that they want to thrive on spreading disorder. Their latest offensive — an indefinite economic blockade around Kathmandu — is, however, more cynical than infantile. It comes close on the heels of the shutdown that they forced on a dozen business ventures on the plea that these filled the coffers of the country's royal family at the expense of the workers. They have forced other shutdowns — on tourism and transport sectors and educational institutions, while turning the country into a killing field. The Maoists' gameplan is to shut the country down and hold its government to ransom. It would be simplistic to assume that they do these only to force the government into fresh peace negotiations. For they do not accept the legitimacy of the present or any other government or even the constitution. This is apparent from their demands that include the abolition of the country's constitutional monarchy and the setting up of a constituent assembly to draft a new republican constitution. Although they have joined — and walked out of — several rounds of peace talks in the past, they use these only as a ploy. All their demands and offensives are thus a call to disorder and anarchy.

Successive governments in Nepal have tried — and failed — to buy peace with the Maoists. But there is one lesson from the failed attempts that the government of Mr Sher Bahadur Deuba must take. It is that no peace comes through the barrel of a gun. A government that succumbs to peace talks at gunpoint is bound to be disappointed with the outcome. Mr Deuba's is an interim government that was appointed by the palace, and whose legitimacy has been questioned by the kingdom's largest political party, the Nepali Congress. Obviously, the Maoists want to exploit this vacuum in the political process. Their differences notwithstanding, the government and the parties must come together to call the Maoists' bluff. Also, there is a larger dimension to the rebels' threat. It is a challenge to the region's security and to bilateral relations between Nepal and India. The Maoists receive arms and logistical support from their Indian comrades, thereby threatening India's own security. New Delhi has to stand by Nepal in the interest of its own and the region's security.

Kathmandu cut off

SNS & PTI

KATHMANDU, Aug. 18. — The Maoists today enforced an indefinite blockade of Kathmandu intended to cut off food and other essential commodity supplies to Nepal's capital.

The rebels have also issued death threats to 10 journalists in Nepal. The threats follow the killing of Dekendra Raj Thapa, a journalist associated with Radio Nepal.

Even though the government deployed additional security forces, trucks and buses carrying essential goods did not ply on the highways connecting Kathmandu with other districts, fearing Maoist attacks. Only a few passenger buses operated around the Kathmandu valley.

A high-level meeting of the Nepalese security agencies yesterday decided to accelerate security arrangements across the country. Deputy Prime Minister Mr Bharat Mohan Adhikary said after the meeting that the government was determined

to foil the rebels' attempt to cut off Kathmandu.

The blockade of Kathmandu comes a day after the Maoists forced multinational companies, including some Indian firms, to suspend their operations in Nepal. The Maoists had said the companies were being forced to close down due to their "exploitation" of workers and "spying activities".

Concerned over the development, the ambassadors and charge d'affaires of five countries — India, France, Germany, the USA and Britain — met Prime Minister Mr Sher Bahadur Deuba today, urging him to resolve the impasse through talks.

Mr Deuba said his government was committed to providing security for foreign investors and had beefed up safety measures to foil the blockade.

Meanwhile, the rebels issued threats to two journalists associated with the leading *Kantipur Daily* and eight others working in remote areas where the Maoists have stronghold.

THE STATESMAN

18 AUG 2004

Blockade tremors in Nepal

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, August 17

FEAR LOOMS large over Kathmandu following a Maoist threat to impose an indefinite economic blockade on the city from Wednesday. Finding the rebels so close, the Nepal government has put its forces on high alert. "It's quite a challenging task to deal with invisible enemies," information minister Mohammed Mohsin said.

Government preparations began in response to a statement issued by the rebels from their hideout asking people to not to violate the blockade. On Tuesday also, a mere statement from the Maoists led to the closure of 10 Kathmandu-based major business houses, who the rebels suspect have royal links, for an indefinite period.

Home ministry spokesperson G.B.

nouncing withdrawal of the blockade last week. According to the supplies ministry, the capital has stocks of petrol for 10 to 12 days, diesel and kerosene for 25 to 26 days, food grains for 30 days.

By evening panic purchasing started in many areas. This, officials feared could exhaust the supplies "in no time and create an artificial scarcity." Prices of vegetables went up by 25 per cent. Appeals were made in the state-controlled media seeking people's cooperation. The government fears that the rebels, who are holed up in the hills surrounding Kathmandu, may try to cut off the highway leading to the plains and India.

But residents were in no mood to challenge the Maoists. A Federation of the Nepal Chambers of Commerce and Industries official said, "We cannot feel safe as long as the government begins dialogue with the Maoists."



AP
Soldiers patrol a Kathmandu street on Monday night.

Pandey said, "We have geared up all agencies to face any eventuality. Security forces will keep supply lines intact." He declined to comment on a statement purportedly issued by the rebels an-

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Bombs thrown at Soaltee

Business in Nepal panics

17/8
Kis 8/ Nepal

Kathmandu, Aug. 16 (Agencies): A man on a bicycle threw at least four bombs into the compound of the Soaltee Crowne Plaza hotel in Nepal's capital today but no one was injured.

Six multinational firms, including Indo-Nepal joint venture Surya Nepal, announced closure of their operations in view of Maoist rebels' threats.

The attack in Kathmandu came on the eve of a deadline by the Maoists to shut down 10 companies, including the luxury hotel, accusing them of unfair labour practices in the Himalayan state.

Hours after the blasts, the hotel, which had earlier refused to bow to the rebel threat, said it would be closed tomorrow and its guests would be moved to other hotels in Kathmandu.

"The explosions took place within a gap of a few minutes," an interior ministry official said. "The bombs fell

near the empty tennis court at the back of the hotel. So no one was injured." Police said the bombs had caused two big craters in the ground near the tennis court.

There were no claims of responsibility for the blasts. The official blamed Maoist insurgents who have been fighting since 1996 to replace the constitutional monarchy with communist rule. The Maoist revolt has killed more than 10,000 people in Nepal. Today's attack was the first targeting a luxury hotel in the Nepali capital.

"The security of our guests is of prime concern," a Soaltee manager, who did not want to be identified, said. "Due to security concerns, we are closing down the hotel from tomorrow."

The hotel, which is managed by a Hong Kong-based subsidiary of Britain's InterContinental Hotels Group, is particularly popular with Indian tourists.

Deuba for consensus on dialogue with Maoists

By Nirupama Subramanian

KATHMANDU, JULY 27. The new Government in Nepal wants to open a dialogue with the Maoists "straightaway" but will first work at formulating a broad national consensus on its position for negotiations, the Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba, told *The Hindu* in a recent interview.

"My priority is to ensure that mainstream political parties and the King should have a common approach to deal with the Maoists. I want to enter into a dialogue with the Maoists but we must first have a common position," Mr. Deuba said.

Mr. Deuba, leader of the Nepali Congress-Democratic (NCD), was appointed Prime Minister on June 2 by King Gyanendra. The King had dismissed his elected Government in October 2002 and assumed executive powers. Parliament had already been dissolved. Two Governments followed in quick succession, both led by Prime Ministers handpicked by the King.

After protests by five political parties against the monarch that disrupted Kathmandu for two months earlier this year, the King asked the politicians to choose a candidate who could head an all-party government.

'Reinstatement'

When they failed to do so, he reappointed Mr. Deuba who now heads a four-party coalition, of which the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist-Leninist (UML) is the largest partner. Mr. Deuba called it his "reinstatement."

But the Nepali Congress (NC), Nepal's biggest party, headed by G.P. Koirala, has

stayed out, on the ground that as a Government appointed by the King, it has no legitimacy.

Mr. Deuba said that unlike the two previous Governments, his was the most representative of the last Parliament, and enjoyed the support of "70 per cent" of its members. The Prime Minister said this gave his Government the legitimacy to negotiate with the Maoists.



He said he would hold elections as soon as possible so that Parliament could be restored. Politicians fear elections in the current security atmosphere could prove violent.

"That is why I am saying I would like a final solution (with the Maoists) before holding elections," Mr. Deuba said.

'Discreet negotiations'

The Prime Minister said he had not established contact with the Maoists. He favoured discreet negotiations. "I feel an open dialogue may create problems. They come with their position on the table, we go with ours on the table. It is very difficult to retreat."

But Mr. Deuba reiterated his

Government's well-known position on negotiations. "We believe in constitutional monarchy. And we believe in multi-party democracy. We are not prepared to compromise against either of these. Other things, we can discuss."

Mr. Deuba, whose Government called a ceasefire and began a peace process with the Maoists in 2001, ruled out a ceasefire before talks this time. The 2001 process, and another peace process in 2003, also accompanied by a ceasefire, failed.

"I don't think a ceasefire will help this time. Maybe, after the bottom-line is agreed upon by both sides. But not now. Because of the failure of peace talks twice, we have to change the modalities this time."

He said only a dialogue could evolve a common ground for negotiations with the Maoists, who were demanding the abolition of the constitutional monarchy and the establishment of a republic.

'U.N. role not needed'

The Maoists recently floated the idea of the United Nations as a mediator, but Mr. Deuba said that was not necessary yet.

"We would first like to solve this problem ourselves. Let us try. If we fail, we can go for outside help from anybody, any country, any institution."

Mr. Deuba, who was among the politicians agitating against King Gyanendra two months ago, said the monarch had now accepted his role as a constitutional monarch.

"The King has announced that sovereignty has been given to the people and executive power to the Prime Minister. I think he is now cooperating with us," he said.

CONFLICT IN NEPAL

GP Koirala Emphasises Restoration Of Pratinidhi Sabha

By PARMANAND

Girija Prasad Koirala, the Nepali Congress president, celebrated his 80th birthday on 4 July in New Delhi's general and political heat. Of course, he was oblivious of it, for, in Nepal the dates are overwhelmingly counted in accordance with the Vikram Samvat calendar. However, Girija Prasad, who had come to New Delhi for a general medical check-up, did not leave anyone in doubt that the movement he had launched against the "regression" in Nepal would continue unabated. In fact, he stressed that no government in Nepal would be worth its name without the inclusion of the Nepali Congress — and he emphatically asserted that the NC would not join the Sher Bahadur Deuba government. For there was no difference in the modus operandi and modus vivendi of the incumbent government and the governments of Surya Bahadur Thapa and Lodendra Bahadur Chand.

Formidable front

Koirala, who has achieved the distinction of having the longest tenure in the post-1900 multi-party democracy phase, appears determined to give primacy to principle over power. At the ripe age of 80, he leaves none in doubt about his mental and physical agility. Without doubt, those interested in a functional and participatory democracy in the kingdom are looking at Koirala.

The movement launched by five important political parties in the Himalayan kingdom aims at fighting against regression ("Pratigaman" in Nepali). This came into being after the Nepal's popularly elected Pratinidhi Sabha was dissolved in May 2002 — and more particularly after King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev assumed executive powers on 4 October 2002, when he also dismissed the Sher Bahadur Deuba government for its "incompetence" and failure to hold parliamentary polls.

The combination of the NC, the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) or UML, the Nepal Sadbhavana Party, the Nepal Mazdoor Kisan Party and the Jan Morcha Nepal became a formidable front, calling for the restoration of the dissolved Parliament and formation of an all-party government through a general consensus.

After the UML and the NSP moved in the direction of joining the Deuba government, the mass

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movement appeared to have received a setback. But the movement, under the leadership of Koirala soon showed its in-built strength.

Koirala stressed that the movement has grown from the native soil — *Mato batto janmeke andolan*. He emphasises that this movement is not like the earlier ones and insists that all organisations, trade unions and even civil servants,



doctors and engineers are supporting the movement. He feels that even India would have to take cognisance of this reality. While, on the one hand, Koirala points out that there is no unanimity in the UML on joining the government, he stresses that even its alienation has not weakened the movement.

Koirala also insists that the movement cannot become anybody's pawn. He feels that it is based on fundamental principles. But at the same time, he is realistic enough to realise that the struggle is not easy. He has advised Nepali supporters of democracy and the NC living in India to demonstrate their strength in India, too. He describes the Nepalis living in India as Nepal's permanent ambassadors in the country — where he himself was born. He feels official ambassadors are technical and fixed-term representatives of the government, whereas ordinary Nepalis living here are permanent and real representatives — establishing enduring people-to-people relations.

Focus on monarchy

In any case, to Koirala, the entire movement is focused on the restoration of the Pratinidhi Sabha. Under ordinary circumstances, the Pratinidhi Sabha elected in May 1999, would have completed its full five-year life in May this year, but Koirala and the NC feel that the future scenario hinges on restoration of the dissolved parliament.

Willy-nilly, the 235-year-old Shah monarchy in Nepal has become a prominent focus of the ongoing movement. As the supposedly constitutional monarch is trying to become active and assertive, the reactions are becoming more audible and visible. Probably at no point of time in Nepal's history, such strong language had been used. The circumstances under which King Gyanendra assumed the throne

in June 2001 only contributes to the worsening of the political scene.

Koirala says openly that his fight is against the king and against no political party. He states further that everyone is asking what this conflict is about, and then explains that this conflict is between conservatism and modernism. He clarifies: "This is not a conflict between me and the King; principles are involved". He goes to the extent of saying that even if he were to give up the struggle, it wouldn't stop, for the modern age is looking for changes.

Koirala feels the king wants to take the kingdom to the 18th century in the new millennium. This is the *dwandwa* (conflict) in Koirala's view. He also distinguishes between the monarchy as an institution and the monarch as an individual. Narrating his experience with four kings — Tribhuvan (1911-55), Mahendra (1955-72), Birendra (1972-2001) and Gyanendra (2001-) — he says all of them had different natures. But he feels they all should have behaved in the same manner on constitutional and political issues.

He envisages an avoidable but ironic situation in which the king, too, helps in the ongoing movement: by running away! How and when, or whether at all, this would happen is difficult to imagine — at this moment, at least. History, though, is replete with all kinds of examples. In his talks with the King, Koirala has

been stressing that the latter needs to establish greater credibility than his predecessors.

He minces no words in stressing that no army, against the wishes of the masses, can look after the security and safety of the king. He underlines the army's weakness by relating how the 80,000-strong army could not protect King Birendra. Koirala, therefore, feels that the king should have the safety and security provided by the people.

He could not avoid the question of dealing with Maoists — who are fighting for a republican form of government by replacing the present monarchical system and whose war with the state and others have resulted in the killing of some 10,000 people since 1996. In fact, Koirala had to scotch rumours that he had held telephonic talks with the Maoist leadership during his recent visit to India. He emphasised there was no need for him to visit New Delhi for this purpose.

Ready for dialogue

GP stresses that he is ready to enter into dialogue with the leadership of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) with an open mind and without any preconditions. "I have kept all issues with the Maoists open", he says. At the same time, he insists that in the present constitutional scheme of Nepal there is no provision for a constituent assembly or a referendum. He, therefore, stresses that the existing constitution has to be activated and Parliament has to be restored. "And let Parliament decide". After all, it is the only representative body of the kingdom.

He also talks about a proper environment for talks with the Maoists. They must surrender their arms before any fruitful talks. Significantly, the Maoists have already held six rounds of talks with the Nepal government during the tenures of Sher Bahadur Deuba, LB Chand and Surya Bahadur Thapa — without any concrete result. No less significantly, the Maoist insurgency at its height had seen the kingdom impose first-ever emergency in the post-1900 phase on 26 November 2001.

If the Maoists go to the people with arms and others including political parties remain unarmed, how can the situation be called tenable? He sees the concept of a constituent assembly, as demanded by the Maoists and several others, as vague. The people are the central focus and their aspirations, he feels, are represented by Parliament.

Signals must go to the world that India is open to investment... China is one example... if we don't follow China on foreign direct investment, we will be left behind in economic growth... I will say it sweetly and listen to my friends (in the Left) but eventually I will take the decision in the best interest of the country. — Mr P Chidambaram, Union finance minister.

Mr Chidambaram has time to entertain the grievances of the stock markets but no time to meet and talk to us. — Mr Gurudas Das Gupta, CPI member of the Lok Sabha and leader of the Aituc.

There is no baby universe branching off, as I once thought. The information remains firmly in

our universe. I'm sorry to disappoint science fiction fans, but if information is preserved, there is no possibility of using black holes to travel to other universes. — Mr Stephen Hawking, astro-physicist.

I still think we made the right decision. The intelligence really left little doubt about Saddam Hussein and WMD. — Mr Tony Blair.

Why is it for this Prime Minister that sorry seems to be the hardest word? — Mr Michael Howard, Conservative leader.

Nobody wants to be the war President. I want to be the peace President. For a while we were marching to war. Now we're

marching to peace. — President George W Bush.

The office of the Prime Minister has been devalued. There are many power centres. We don't know who is pressing the button. There is PM, SPM (super Prime Minister) and CPM. — Mr LK Advani.

No one is willing to pay any price to have Indian tea. We have lost the space. — Mr Kamal Nath, Union commerce minister.

Things have reached such a pass that the CPI-M wouldn't allow people to reach courts and seek justice. I appeal to all of you to fight tooth and nail and prevent the (West Bengal Block Level Pre-Litigation Conciliation Bo-

ard) Bill from being implemented. I have asked Trinamul MLAs to oppose the Bill and they will do that vehemently. — Miss Mamata Banerjee, at a rally in Kolkata.

If any governor does not follow the ideology mentioned in the Preamble of the Constitution, I will find it very difficult to function with him. — Mr Shivraj Patil, Union home minister.

On Bengal's football grounds, East Bengal and Mohun Bagan players can never be allies. But when the national football team is formed, players from both sides are selected. It's OK if the CPI-M doesn't want to play in the national team. There are other players. — Mr Priya Ranjan Das Munshi, at a rally in Kolkata.

on
RECORD

4/7 Tightrope walk for Nepal PM

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, July 21

THE QUESTION uppermost in the minds of the Nepalese is whether Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba will be able to fulfil the tasks assigned by King Gyanendra or face an undignified sacking like in the past.

The monarch has asked Deuba to constitute a government representing all sides, restore peace by re-viving dialogue with Maoists and hold free and fair elections possibly by April 2005. Two years ago, he had sacked him for failing to

hold elections. And, considering the present situation in trouble-torn Nepal, the PM may find his present tenure more daunting than the previous one.

In the past, Deuba, as an elected PM, had himself taken the initiative to resolve the Maoist crisis with social, economic and political reforms, some of which were in tune with Communist rebels' demands. He faced stiff opposition from the landed gentry.

Later, a rift within the then ruling Nepali Congress over extending Emergency rule forced him to abandon

statement, the possibility of restarting formal peace dialogue still looks distant.

The rebels have also condemned his coalition partner-the mainline Communist party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist) as "an agent of feudal autocrats."

As far as the issue of all party is concerned, Deuba is most unlikely to get the support of G.P. Koirala's Nepali Congress, the Jan Morcha, the Nepal Mazdoor Kisan Party and Nepal Sadbhavana Party who will intensify their anti-king campaign after the monsoon.



Sher Bahadur Deuba

his programme.

A minister in the Deuba government claims they have begun informal talks with the Maoists. But, giving the Maoists continuing opposition to Deuba's rein-

Communists join Nepal govt

Agence France Presse

KATHMANDU, July 4. — Nepal's communists today formally joined the government of Mr Sher Bahadur Deuba after last week agreeing to a common agenda to seek peace with Maoist rebels and fully restore democracy.

The Communist Party-United Marxist and Leninist (NCP-UML) said in a statement it had submitted a list to of 10 members, headed by politburo

member Bharat Mohan Adhikari, to the Prime Minister for nomination to his government.

The Prime Minister, who was reappointed on 2 June by King Gyanendra, is to announce his expanded cabinet tomorrow, which will also comprise members from two smaller parties, the rightist National Democratic Party and the pro-India Nepal Sadbhawana Party (NSP).

"I confirm the nomination of 10 members of our party for the ministerial

assignment under my leadership," Mr Adhikari said.

Mr Deuba had been unable to bring parties into his new cabinet until he was invested with full powers which were taken away after the elected leadership in 2002 was sacked. The three parties agreed to join after reaching agreement with Mr Deuba on a common program which calls for new talks with Maoist rebels to end the eight-year civil war, which has claimed more than 9,500 lives.

THE STATESMAN

5 JUL 2004

The Koirala factor

5/8
7/6
Deuba deserves cooperation
Koirala

Sher Bahadur Deuba's reinstatement as Prime Minister early this month seems to have had little effect on Nepal's political crisis. In fact, the existence of his uncertainty riddled set-up is under threat unless four other parties chip in. There is, of course, no love lost between Nepali Congress chief GP Koirala and Deuba following the 2002 split in the party, but being partners in the five-party alliance forged to fight the previous government's "regressive measures" to silence protests, many expected a reconciliation. Curiously, street protests continue and plans are on to intensify them. Deuba, however, is committed to setting up a consensus all-party rule, resume a dialogue with Maoists and create an atmosphere conducive for elections by April next year. How he fares depends on support from Koirala who must realise Deuba was re-appointed after the five-party alliance failed to recommend a consensus candidate.

Of late, Deuba seems to have softened towards Maoists as evident from his recent comment about being "prepared to exhibit maximum flexibility" and even open to the rebels' demand for a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution. The Maoists should grab this opportunity, end years of mindless mayhem and join the uplift of Nepal's predominant have-nots. The government must reconsider its decision not to accept UN mediation offer since Maoists have welcomed it. The only upbeat sign so far is the lifting of an indefinite ban on education by Maoist students imposed on 6 June. This came after the government withdrew the "terrorist" tag on their organisation. Last year alone, 73 school days were reportedly lost due to the strike. That a day's closure caused a loss of Rs 5.2 crore is appalling for a country in the economic doldrums.

Maoists gun down 14 cops in Nepal

STATEMAN NEWS SERVICE

KATHMANDU, June 19. — Maoists struck a fresh blow Saturday morning, killing 18 people, including four civilians.

A convoy of Armed Police Force found itself caught in a pitched battle when it entered Dhankhola village in Dang, a Maoist stronghold. The rebels opened fire and the skirmish, said to have started around 9 a.m., continued till afternoon. Fourteen security personnel died in the surprise attack but it could not be ascertained till this afternoon whether there were any casualties on the Maoist side.

The hail of bullets sprayed a private bus on the nearby Tulsipur Highway, killing for passengers and wounding over 20, radio reports quoted the district authorities as saying. The attack comes just four days after the Maoists ambushed two security vehicles patrolling the Mahendra Highway, killing 22 policemen, including an inspector.

The killings would cast a shadow on the optimism after King Gyanendra on Friday agreed to scrap a regulation that made it mandatory for the government to take the king's consent for the promotion and transfer of civil servants, signing major treaties with any foreign country and setting up new army offices. The attack comes as the month-old Deuba government tries to settle down.

TRE

20 JUN 2004

Political poker

Nepal back in the dumps

Newly-appointed Nepal Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba is already out on a limb. With Nepali Congress chief GP Koirala refusing to cooperate and rebels on a fresh rampage — on Monday alone 21 policemen were killed and 200 students from eight districts kidnapped — hopes of a multi-party ministry to prepare the ground for talks with the Maoists and holding elections by April next year are fast receding. Though not unexpected — Koirala is yet to forgive Deuba for splitting the party in 2002 — this discouraging picture portends Deuba meeting the same fate as predecessors Lokendra Bahadur Chand and Surya Bahadur Thapa in not meeting King Gyanendra's expectations. Five main political parties that forged an alliance to restore multi-party democracy must set aside personal prejudices and work as one to break the political deadlock. Because division is what the King expects and wants. He played his cards pretty well by reinstating Deuba, whom he dismissed in 2002 for failing to hold elections in time, and can be expected to take advantage of the political stalemate to legalise his rule. After all, when democracy fails, monarchy is the only binding force and he may continue to play political poker.

But failure to curb the revolt with brute force leaves no option but to broker a ceasefire. The signs, though, are not propitious, with Royal Nepal Army reportedly against any fresh arrangement that would only help rebels consolidate their position. But there is no alternative to a political solution. The outcome of Indian foreign minister Natwar Singh's recent Nepal visit was the gift of two helicopters. At best, India can give moral and material support. Anything more would only heighten anti-Indian sentiments.

THE TIMES

17 JUN 2004

'Need for consensus in Nepal'

By Amit Baruah

KATHMANDU, JUNE 5. King Gyanendra of Nepal and the External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, have agreed that it is "essential to have a national consensus" on the political question in the Himalayan kingdom so that a timeframe could be worked out to hold elections.

Addressing the Indian press today at the end of a two-day visit to Nepal, Mr. Singh, when asked about his assessment of the role played by the King over the last two years, said he did not spend too much time on the past.

"Our interest is in the future and he [the King] is very, very keen to resolve the political situation," Mr. Singh stated at the sprawling residence of the Indian Ambassador here.

On the holding of elections, Mr. Singh said the King had given no specific time frame, but the appointment of Sher Bahadur Deuba as Prime Minister was the first step in this direction.

He specifically mentioned the role of the senior Nepali Congress leader, G.P. Koirala, whom he met at his residence this morning. "I respectfully said to him that as the senior-most political leader in Nepal everybody looked to him to take a

lead in resolving this crisis." His Nepalese interlocutors had informed him that they wanted to invite international observers, including Indians, to be present during the polls. "I made no commitment [on the issue of Indian observers]. I said I will place it before the Prime Minister [Manmohan Singh] and the Cabinet," he said.

Asked whether the two Governments proposed to expand the ongoing defence cooperation to include more training and equipment, including weapons, Mr. Singh replied, "Yes, we will. This came up with His Majesty, the Prime Minister and the Chief of the Army Staff."

In his discussions with King Gyanendra on Friday, Mr. Singh said they had shared "common concern" in regard to security matters, a reference to Maoist activities, which had been causing trouble not just in Nepal, but also in Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh.

Mr. Singh said King Gyanendra appreciated the gesture of the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, in not accepting the post of Prime Minister. "This was a gesture which was unprecedented and brought great credit to Indian democracy," Mr. Singh quoted the King as saying.

See also Page 8

Deuba rides again

SF 8
9/5/06
Hope returns to Nepal
high
copy

With King Gyanendra conceding to breakaway Nepali Congress (Democratic) leader Sher Bahadur Deuba's demand for reinstatement as Prime Minister, it is to be hoped that this is the first step towards restoring power to the people. Multi-party democracy has been in retreat since the monarch dismissed Deuba's caretaker ministry in October 2002 for failing to hold a snap-poll within six months of parliament's dissolution. Deuba's mistake was to seek a poll deferment, citing lawlessness caused by Maoists, but the Constitution does not allow extension. Nor is there provision for an interim all-party government, but this is perhaps the only way out of the political impasse. Deuba has been asked to get on with holding elections by April next. The King had no option but to take Deuba back after the five main parties failed to respond to his call for a consensus prime minister with a "clean image", the deadline for which expired on Monday evening. While the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist) and the pro-monarch Rashtriya Prajatantra Party are receptive, Nepali Congress leader GP Koirala is unlikely to frustrate Deuba's attempt.

Restoring some semblance of peace is obviously Deuba's priority, but much depends on his ability to handle the Maoists, who reportedly control a large part of the country. There is no alternative to reviving a dialogue and if Deuba continues to take a tough stand as he did earlier and harps on the precondition that the rebels first surrender arms, it would merely alienate them. Since a military offensive has failed to curb rebel activities, it is time democratic forces got their act together and met the grassroots revolt politically.

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Deuba sworn in sans Cabinet

Statesman News Service

KATHMANDU, June 3. — Mr Sher Bahadur Deuba was sworn in as Nepal's new Prime Minister today with the major Opposition parties beginning talks on whether to support him and join the government. However, the Cabinet was not announced.

Mr Deuba, who was reappointed by King Gyanendra who had sacked him two years ago for his failure to hold elections, met his former mentor turned foe Mr Girija Prasad Koirala last night as a conciliatory gesture trying to woo Mr Koirala's Nepali Congress party.

Mr Koirala, however, has warned that his party

would continue its movement against "regression", a reference to King Gyanendra overstepping the role of a constitutional monarch and sacking an elected government.

Both the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist-Leninist, the two leading parties in the Opposition coalition, have started holding meetings to discuss the issue of supporting Mr Deuba and joining the government. The new Prime Minister's own party, the Nepali Congress (Democratic), formed in 2002 after Mr Koirala expelled him from Nepali Congress, also held a meeting this morning to discuss the new Cabinet. Consequently, Mr Deuba

alone was sworn in this morning in the Narayanhity palace by King Gyanendra in the presence of Crown Prince Paras and Chief Justice of Nepal Mr Govinda Bahadur Shrestha.

Though Mr Deuba's appointment has been the most acceptable solution so

far, constitutional experts however said it was still illegal and as arbitrary as the two earlier appointments made by the king. The constitutional solution would have been, they said, for Mr Deuba to have moved Supreme Court and been reinstated by it.



Nepal's Opposition leaders and workers at an anti-King rally in Kathmandu on Thursday. — AFP

Sacked Deuba returns as PM

8/6 51.3 Hi 81. - Nepal

Statesman News Service

KATHMANDU, June 2. — King Gyanendra, who has not been coronated yet due to the lack of an auspicious date, chose today, when the Maoists have called an all-Nepal bandh, to name as Nepal's new Prime Minister Mr Sher Bahadur Deuba, the same man he had sacked two years ago from the same post for failing to hold elections.

Though 35 people, including a boxer, journalist, college students and a man claiming to possess divine powers, had applied for the top job in the Himalayan kingdom, the king dismissed all of them, the way he had dismissed all nominations in June 2003 and put Mr Surya Bahadur Thapa in the hot seat.

Mr Deuba, who had been summoned to the palace for a late night conference on 31 May and today again around 10 a.m., pipped the other contestants since his reinstatement would be legally correct and since he is likely to get the support of a major opposition party,



Faced with the street protests, Maoist insurgency and political paralysis, King Gyanendra named Mr Sher Bahadur Deuba (above) to the Prime Minister's post 'with a task of holding general elections'. — AFP

the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist-Leninist, as well as the Rastriya Prajatantra Party of caretaker Prime Minister Mr Thapa which has been clamouring for its own leader's ouster.

Deuba's primary responsibilities include forming an all-party government, a task his two predecessors failed to accomplish, and holding polls.

The jubilant 58-year-old told the press soon after his appointment that restoring peace and reopening peace parleys with the Maoists would be his first priority.

Mr Deuba was appointed in time to be congratulated by Indian foreign minister Mr K Natwar Singh, who will make Kathmandu his first port of call since his appointment last week. On his two-day trip starting from Friday, Mr Singh will be accompanied by foreign secretary Mr Shashank. Mr Singh will also meet King Gyanendra and Opposition leaders.

Making peace overtures to the Maoists would be no bed of roses for Mr Deuba whose tenure in 2000-2001 saw the imposition of the draconian emergency period to curb the insurgency with an iron hand. The media was virtually gagged, Maoist mouthpieces closed and the editor of a pro-Maoist publication killed in custody. When the peace talks broke down, the Maoists accused Mr Deuba of using them as a ploy to surround them.

Unfit in 2002, Deuba is perfect for king now

(N)
kei se report
3/6

Kathmandu, June 2 (Reuters): Nepal's King Gyanendra reappointed Sher Bahadur Deuba Prime Minister today, the same man he sacked in 2002 provoking a political crisis in a country already reeling from a bloody Maoist revolt.

Deuba's appointment is expected to ease political tension after months of street protests, but is unlikely to stop rebel violence that has wrecked the impoverished kingdom since 1996, analysts said.

Deuba, who will be sworn in tomorrow, said he was trying to put together an all-party cabinet to end a political stalemate and give him a strong hand in possible negotiations with the Maoist guerrillas who control vast swathes of the countryside.

The appointment came more than three weeks after a royalist Prime Minister resigned in the face of daily protests in Kathmandu organised by political parties calling for a return to multi-party democracy.

"The king had sacked me. I am reappointed," Deuba said after meeting the king at the sprawling Narayanhity royal palace.

Deuba said he would seek the cooperation of all parties to form a government, would work for peace and would aim to hold a general election by April next year, as requested by the king.

Analysts say Deuba's appointment could end the street campaign by the political parties because he is seen as less of an ardent royalist than his two



Sher Bahadur Deuba. (AFP)

predecessors.

Nevertheless, he would have to convince the main parties, which have been insisting they be allowed to name the new Prime Minister, that he is his own man, independent of the king. But analysts saw little hope of an end to the Maoist insurgency under Deuba.

Few expect him to be able to bring the rebels back to negotiations because he has in the past rejected their demand for a new constitution. "He has already

been tested and failed in peace efforts with the Maoists," said Rajendra Dahal, editor of the widely read Nepali weekly *Himal*.

Deuba, who has been Prime Minister twice before, said it was a big responsibility to lead the country to peace and elections.

"I will seek the support of all parties to form a cabinet as far as possible, make efforts to maintain peace and hold elections," said the new Prime Minister, dressed in a traditional knee-length white shirt, tight trousers

and black cap. The king sacked Deuba in October 2002 when he sought to postpone elections for a year, sparking a constitutional crisis in the impoverished Himalayan kingdom. Two royalist Prime Ministers have since come and gone, neither proving able to build bridges with main political parties or make peace with the Maoists.

The guerrillas have in the meantime stepped up attacks across the rugged nation and in Kathmandu raising fears that Nepal, sandwiched between India and China, could descend into chaos.

The alliance of five political parties organising the protests was guarded in its response to Deuba's appointment.

The biggest party, the Nepali Congress, said it would read the fine print of his appointment before announcing its stand or deciding whether to call off the daily protests — which continued today with about 5,000 people on the streets. The royal palace said Deuba would exercise all executive powers vested by the constitution.

"The king has asked him to recommend a cabinet by including all political parties to the extent possible and maintain law and order to begin elections to parliament by mid-April 2005," the palace said in a statement.

The appointment came in the midst of a three-day transport strike called by the rebels, and a day after the third anniversary of a palace massacre that accelerated Nepal's slide into chaos.

3 JUN 2004

7/11/04

KING SEES RED

W

A political vacuum is a sure recipe for anarchy. This has been particularly true of Nepal, where the collapse of the political process has added grist to the Maoist mill. Now that King Gyanendra has asked the political parties to suggest an acceptable name for the prime minister's post, there is some hope of an end to Nepal's dangerous drift. But the monarch's move may have only broken the ice. Ever since the king dismissed an elected prime minister nearly two years ago, the country has witnessed a deepening distrust between the crown and the political parties. This largely explains why two subsequent prime ministers, appointed by the palace, failed to win the confidence of either the parties or the Maoists. It is crucial, therefore, that the king and the parties work in an atmosphere of mutual trust in choosing the next prime minister. It would spell greater disasters for the country if the parties suspect the king's move to be a ploy to split them. At the same time, the parties now face a challenge of playing their part for the restoration of democracy. Even if the king's actions in the last two years have left much to be desired, the parties too have been disappointing in their responses to the political crisis.

Much more than the choice of another prime minister is actually at stake. Whoever takes charge of the government at this stage has two urgent tasks — to resume the political process that will culminate in fresh parliamentary elections, and to persuade the Maoists to return to the negotiating table. And the two tasks are inter-linked. For it could be almost impossible to hold free and fair elections without the Maoists agreeing not to disrupt them. But talking to the Maoists cannot be the same thing as submitting to their politics of blood. The new government has to defeat the Maoists' strategy of holding the country to ransom, and thereby forcing the government to accept their radical demands. The two major national parties — the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) — cannot afford to ignore the Maoist threat to establish a red republic in the country. No matter who the next prime minister is, Nepal's fledgling democracy will continue to be in peril if Maoism is not defeated.

Gyanendra

seeks new PM

Kathmandu, May 31 (Reuters): Nepal's King Gyanendra, facing a bloody Maoist revolt and a political crisis, asked national parties to suggest a replacement for the royalist Prime Minister who resigned early this month amid street protests.

Nepal has been effectively without a government since Surya Bahadur Thapa stepped down three weeks ago.

"The individual must have a clean image, be able to garner the support of all quarters ...and initiate elections to the House of Representatives (within mid-April 2005) by maintaining peace and security," Gyanendra's palace said in a statement late yesterday.

The call from the king came hours after Maoist rebels, who want to topple the Hindu monarchy and set up a communist state, set off a powerful bomb in a bus in Kathmandu killing one person and wounding 21 others.

Gyanendra plunged the impoverished nation into turmoil in 2002 when he fired an elected prime minister and indefinitely postponed elections to parliament dissolved early that year.

He has changed two royalist prime ministers since then but has failed to make peace with the rebels, which is key to fresh parliamentary elections. "The king's move could only be a ploy to split the Opposition," said an Opposition alliance member.

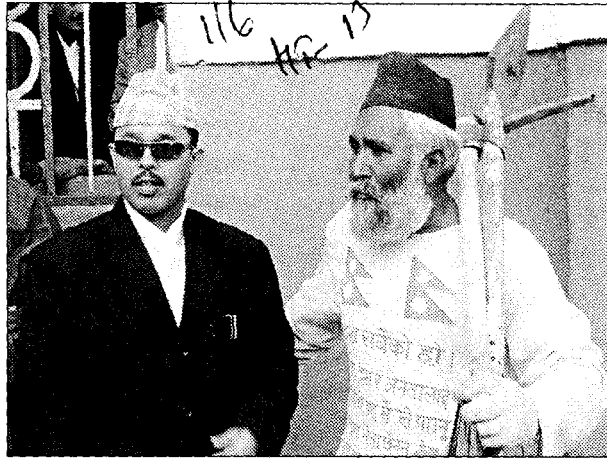
34 wannabes file papers for post of Nepalese PM

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, May 31

KING GYANENDRA'S one-day deadline for submission of names for the post of Prime Minister has evoked a mixed response. Nepal has had a caretaker government since royalist PM Surya Bahadur Thapa quit office on May 7.

Amid threats of fresh resistance, the palace received applications from 34 wannabe PMs, who included politicians, journalists, a singer, a boxer and a man who had passed his school leaving examination after 37 attempts.

The kingdom's five agitating mainstream parties — the Nepali Congress, the Communist Party of Nepal—Unified Marxist Leninist, the Nepal Mazdoor Kisan Party, the Jan Morcha and Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Anandi Devi) — rejected the ultimatum. After a meeting of the five parties, NC president G.P. Koirala said, "The ki-



AFP

Nepalese prime ministerial candidates Laxman Singh Khadka (right) and Ramesh Shrestha in Kathmandu on Monday.

ng's notice is not in conformity with democratic principles'. NSP(A) general secretary Rajendra Mahato added, "Now, we're planning to intensify our stir".

The royal notice asked for names of leaders who had a clean image and who could

garner support of all parties, restore the peace and hold elections by April 2005.

It came after the monarch held several rounds of meetings with politicians, including those from the five parties, intellectual and social workers.

JUN 1 2002

Bhutan 'no' to jobs for aliens

PROBIR PRAMANIK

Siliguri, May 30: A decade after the landlocked Himalayan kingdom opened its doors to the world, it has issued a royal notification barring "foreign" workers in 16 different occupations.

Come June 1, the royal decree, passed by a Bhutan National Assembly resolution in January, will bar foreigners from working in service-related sectors. Bhutan, for years, has been employing more than 50,000 foreigners, particularly Indians, as accountants, clerks, office assistants, typists, receptionists, computer and telephone operators, drivers, daily wagers, contract labourers and regular job employees.

Although senior Bhutan bureaucrats are in favour of the "son-of-the-soil" policy, in private, they admit that restriction of foreign workers in some of the service-related sectors might hinder the country's march towards modernity.

A senior Bhutan foreign ministry official, however, said the ban was essential for the internal security and to solve the growing unemployment problems.

Speaking over phone from

Thimphu, labour and human resource ministry secretary Pem L. Dorji said: "Foreigners were given the jobs because they were better qualification academically and more skilled than Bhutan nationals. The kingdom, with a population of less than 6 lakh, has a working population of 227,698. Of them, over 50,000 are foreign nationals. There are 4,522 unemployed educated youths in the age group of 15-24 years at present.

"His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuk's vision is that every man and women graduating from the various technical and non-technical institutions should be given appropriate jobs."

Private entrepreneurs and multi-national companies are not too happy about the ban.

A senior executive of the Tashi Group of Companies, one of the largest private corporate houses, said from Phuentsholing: "The policy is good for the kingdom. But the people of Bhutan look down upon manual labour. With no economic pressure and a large section of affluent Drukpas, being well placed in administrative posts, who will do the clerical job?"

THE TELEGRAPH 31 MAY 2001

The King & them

And no one the wiser in Nepal

King Gyanendra's reluctance to hand over power to elected representatives is taking his poor mountain country to the economic brink. Granted, he has, over the past few days, met the five major parties' demand to withdraw the ban on protest rallies and also allowed Surya Bahadur Thapa to resign as Prime Minister. He also met leaders of the five-party alliance collectively instead of individually as he earlier insisted. But Nepali Congress leader GP Koirala sounded vague after the meeting, saying he was "neither optimistic nor pessimistic" about early settlement. All the alliance suggested was a restoration of parliament and formation of an all-party government that would talk to the Maoists. Strangely, the alliance is yet to decide on a consensus Prime Minister — whom the King insists must have a "clean image" — nor does it seem to agree with the argument that the Supreme Court can revive parliament. If Koirala feels it is more a "political issue", the King has not made a decisive move in the 18 months he has been running affairs.

While the situation defies solution, confusion is running amok with the Maoists demanding the end of parliamentary democracy and formation of a one-party Communist republic. There is growing fear about the future of multi-party democracy in the absence of any understanding with them. The palace can ill afford to ignore reports of Maoists "abducting" thousands of villagers, sparing neither children nor pregnant women, to have them march in "people's campaigns" and preventing thousands of teachers from taking up their posts before "familiarising" themselves with "people's education". One wonders how many general strikes (this month alone there were five in 10 days) Nepal must suffer before King and party leaders regain the people's confidence.

THE STATESMAN

27 MAY 2004

Koirala's hard choices in battle of nerves

PRANAY SHARMA

Kathmandu, May 11: Five days since the resignation of the Surya Bahadur Thapa government, the Opposition alliance parties and King Gyanendra have been unable to break the political impasse in Nepal.

Having spurned Gyanendra's invitation for talks, the five-party alliance has stayed firm in not meeting the monarch till he gives an assurance of returning power to the democratic forces.

Gyanendra, on the other hand, has indicated that while he wanted a political settlement through negotiations he was in no mood to wilt under pressure from the Opposition forces.

There are even strong signals that if the five-party alliance does not take the initiative of breaking the status quo, Gyanendra may go ahead and nominate his choice of candidate as the next Prime Minister of Nepal.

As the battle of nerves continues between the two sides, pressure is mounting on the Nepali Congress to urgently initiate dialogue with Gyanendra.

But the Nepal Congress chief Girija Prasad Koirala cannot be seen breaking ranks with other partners of the alliance. This



King Gyanendra

was evident after Koirala, despite his earlier arguments in favour of talks with the king, refused to meet Gyanendra individually.

Koirala cannot meet the king unless Gyanendra gives a public assurance that he would return "sovereignty to the people". Anything short of this, will not only make the Nepali Congress leader look like a "power hungry

politician" but also diminish his stature among his supporters and the partners of the five-party alliance.

The other problem that Koirala faces is in getting the support of Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist) Madhav Nepal on his candidature for Prime Ministership. Koirala has the support of the other three partners—the Jan Morcha, the Nepal Mazdoor Kisan Party and Sadbhawna (Anand Devi faction) for his candidature.

But Madhav Nepal, who was earlier the consensus candidate of the alliance for the Prime Minister's post, has neither given up his claim nor allow Koirala to put forward his name for the coveted post.

However, if Koirala continues to dither, the king may select one of his supporters for the post. The names of the speaker of the last parliament Tarachand Bhat and at least three former chief justices of the Supreme Court are doing the rounds. Palace sources argued that if the impasse continues then Gyanendra may not only select a person of his choice but also announce the dates for the parliament elections.

Koirala rejects king's offer

PRANAY SHARMA

Kathmandu, May 10: The Nepali Congress chief Girija Prasad Koirala and the Communist Party of Nepal (United, Marxist-Leninist) general secretary Madhav Nepal, have turned down King Gyanendra's offer to meet them individually.

Instead, both have insisted that all leaders of the five-party alliance should be invited for the meeting called by King Gyanendra to break the current political impasse.

However, the alliance has not withdrawn the two-day country-wide bandh which begins tomorrow. Till this evening, there was no fresh invitation from King Gyanendra. But the meeting, with or without all the alliance leaders, may take place in the next few days.

However, much depends on how Gyanendra assesses the situation in Nepal and how seriously he takes the challenge thrown before him by the Opposition parties.

The king had wanted to meet Koirala at 5 pm this evening and an hour later had planned a separate meeting with Madhav Nepal. But at this morning's meeting of the five-party alliance at Koirala's house, it was agreed that none of the alliance leaders would meet the king individually. They stressed that Gyanendra should meet them together as an alliance.

On the face of it, the alliance's resolve not to meet the king separately gives out a strong and clear message to Gyanendra that the democratic forces will not allow any attempt to cause a split in their ranks.

The alliance of the five parties has worked well so far. It has

not only held together for more than a year, but also managed to bring enough pressure to force the king's nominee Surya Bahadur Thapa to step down from the Prime Minister's post last Friday.

But the refusal to meet the king separately may also have stemmed from the lack of trust that exists among the leaders of the alliance. Nepal and Koirala are both Prime Ministerial aspirants and, therefore, if either was to meet the king exclusively it may have led to the end of the alliance and brought out the cracks in the pro-democracy movement.

Instead, the alliance is now waiting for an invitation from Gyanendra to meet them together. Once that happens, the alliance feels the chances of Gyanendra accepting a nominee put forward by them for the Prime Ministership is higher.



Girija Prasad Koirala

THE TELEGRAPH 11 MAY 2001

Search on for next Nepal PM

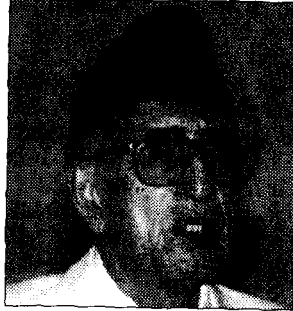
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KATHMANDU, May
— Hectic parleys are on in Nepal for the appointment of a new Prime Minister following Mr Surya Bahadur Thapa's resignation yesterday.

Mr Thapa's resignation came after an 11-month tenure that saw increased violence by the Maoists and an indefinite agitation by the Opposition from 1 April.

King Gyanendra has accepted the resignation of his hand-picked Prime Minister, who will continue to head a caretaker government till his successor is appointed.

All eyes are once again on the king, who has been meeting the leaders of the political parties as



WHO'S NEXT: Mr Girija Prasad Koirala (left) and Mr Madhav Kumar Nepal.

well as former Premiers.

When Mr Thapa's predecessor Mr Lokendra Bahadur Chand quit in May 2003, King Gyanendra rejected the consensus candidate proposed by an alliance of five parties and nominated Mr Thapa. The consensus candidate, Mr Madhav Kumar Nepal,

who heads the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist and is a former Deputy Prime Minister, is likely to be a contender this time as well though his party has said it would support Mr Sher Bahadur Deuba, who was sacked by King Gyanendra to put Mr

Chand in power.

However, one of the biggest parties — Nepali Congress headed by former Premier Mr Girija Prasad Koirala — is no longer ready to accept Mr Nepal as the consensus candidate and would prefer to see one of its own leaders. The names being floated are that of Mr Koirala himself, who has been PM four times, his niece Ms Shailaja Acharya, senior leader Mr Ram Chandra Poudel, both of whom have been former Deputy PMs, and Mr Sushil Koirala, a senior leader.

A dark horse is Mr Pashupati Shumsher Rana, who heads the dissident faction in Mr Thapa's Rastriya Prajatantra Party, that had been clamouring for his ouster.

Nepal palace nominee quits as PM

PRANAY SHARMA

Kathmandu, May 7: Royalist nominee Surya Bahadur Thapa today resigned as Nepal's Prime Minister, a move that could pave the way to resolving the country's political crisis.

Though backed by the palace in his 11-month tenure, Thapa failed to tackle either the Maoist problem or the challenge thrown by the parliamentary parties demanding the restoration of democracy.

His resignation comes in the wake of mounting pressure from the five-party alliance and other countries, particularly foreign donors who yesterday demanded that urgent steps be taken to restore democracy in Nepal.

But it is not clear yet whether Thapa's resignation will provide King Gyanendra a little more space to manoeuvre or force him to give up some of the executive powers that he had taken away from the elected representatives. A sure sign of his willingness to

opt for the latter option will be his announcement of a time-frame for holding elections in the country.

"As a Prime Minister I tried honestly to end the current stalemate and conflict. My faith in constitutional monarchy, multi-party democracy and sovereignty of people remains unaffected," Thapa said in a televised address to the nation this afternoon.

"I have presented my resignation as the Prime Minister to His Majesty to pave the way for national consensus and to protect constitutional monarchy, multi-party democracy and the nation's overall interest."

"The solution to the Maoist problem must be sought through peaceful talks. Elections must be held as soon as possible to protect the constitution and democracy," he added.

The king has asked Thapa to continue till an alternative arrangement is found.

But the development has sparked hectic parleys among

the major players that include the Nepali Congress, the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist) and Sher Bahadur Deuba's Nepali Congress (Democratic).

Political analysts say the moves made by the king in the next few days will reflect his sincerity in restoring democracy. He has two options — meet the parties individually or ask the five-party alliance plus Deuba, whom he had sacked two years ago as Prime Minister, to come for negotiations together.

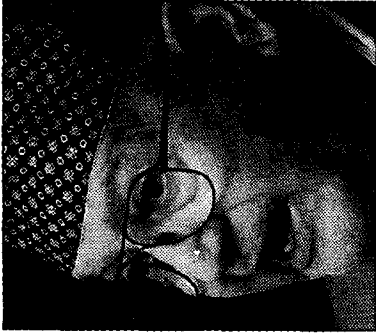
To show their solidarity the five party alliance may not meet the king separately — though G.P. Koirala is keen on doing so — but go to the Palace together and put forward the name of a consensus candidate for the Prime Ministership.

Deuba may be asked to be the next Prime Minister, though he does not enjoy as much support as his rival Koirala, who controls

most of the Nepali Congress members and supporters.

Early indications are that Koirala wants to be the Prime Minister, but for this he will need Madhav Nepal's support. But since the latter is also an aspirant, he may break ranks and go along with Deuba either to get his support or jeopardise Koirala's chances.

In the absence of a consensus, there is also speculation that Tarunath Ranadhat, the speaker of the last parliament, may be asked to be the Prime Minister while the leaders of the alliance will be part of an advisory group to help him run the government.



Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa announces his resignation on Friday.

(Reuters)

(1)

Nepal PM resigns

Press Trust of India

KATHMANDU, May 7. — Amidst growing pro-democracy protests by Opposition parties in Nepal, the Royal-appointed Prime Minister, Mr Surya Bahadur Thapa, today resigned saying an early general election could help rescue the country from the present political crisis.

Mr Thapa (76), who was hand-picked by King Gyanendra in June last year, went on state-run television to announce his resignation. "I have submitted my resignation to the King. I hope my resignation will pave the way for building a national consensus to protect multi-party democracy ..."

Apparently referring to the widespread protests by Opposition parties demanding restoration of democ-

racy, he said "clashes and controversy intensified and all this have threatened to jeopardise the constitution, democracy and the very interest of the nation".

Mr Thapa, the second Prime Minister to be appointed since the King



Mr Surya Bahadur Thapa

assumed executive powers in October 2002, said he hoped that his resignation would help establish lasting peace in the country. "I believe that peaceful resolution to the Maoist problem and holding election at

the earliest can only rescue the country from the present political crisis."

His resignation followed massive and occasionally violent street protests organised by five main political parties for restoration of multi-party

I hope my resignation will pave the way for building a consensus to protect multi-party democracy in the country

system and holding of a general election.

Reacting to Mr Thapa's resignation, Nepali Congress central member Mr Ramchandra Poudyal said: "Our agitation is not aimed at changing the

Prime Minister, we want the King to return the people's sovereign rights.

"The stalled constitutional process should restart and a responsible government should be formed. There should be political solution to the present stalemate. I hope dialogue will proceed between the King and the major parties."

The five agitating parties had earlier rejected the offer for talks by the King setting some pre-conditions which includes lifting of the prohibitory orders, release of all the detainees and dismissal of the present government.

With the Prime Minister's resignation and the release of the five student leaders, who were in police custody for their involvement in anti-monarchy activities, all the demands of the Opposition parties have been met.

THE STATESMAN

8 MAY 2001

প্রধানমন্ত্রীর ইস্তফা নেপালে, খুশি বিরোধীরা

কাঠমাণ্ডু, ৭ মে— ইস্তফা দিলেন নেপালের প্রধানমন্ত্রী সূর্য বাহাদুর থাপা, পাঁচ সপ্তাহের চূড়ান্ত রাজনৈতিক ডামাডোলের পর। রাষ্ট্রীয় টিভি চ্যানেলে তাঁর ইস্তফার কথা ঘোষণা করে থাপা বলেন, “দেশে যে রাজনৈতিক অস্থিরতার সৃষ্টি হয়েছে তা অবসানের জন্য প্রধানমন্ত্রী পদে আমি ইস্তফা দিলাম। এর ফলে নতুন সরকার গঠনের রাস্তা পরিষ্কার হল। আমার আশা সব দলই মতৈক্যে পৌঁছবে আর দেশে স্থায়ী শান্তি আসবে।”

২০০২ সালে নির্বাচিত সরকারকে বরখাস্ত করে নিজের অনুগামী দলকে রাজ্যপাটের দায়িত্ব দেন রাজা জ্ঞানেন্দ্র। আর তাঁর বিশ্বস্ত নেতা সূর্য বাহাদুর থাপা প্রধানমন্ত্রী নিযুক্ত হন গত বছর জুনে। এপ্রিল থেকেই দেশে পূর্ণ গণতন্ত্র প্রতিষ্ঠা ও সর্বদলীয় সরকার গড়ার লক্ষ্যে বিরোধী দলগুলি সংগঠিত ভাবে থাপার ইস্তফা দাবি করছিল।

গত কয়েক সপ্তাহে এই দাবি কখনও হিংসাত্মক কখনও বা শান্ত আন্দোলনের চেহারা নিয়েছে। বিরোধীদের মধ্যে দ্বিতীয় বৃহত্তম দল ইউএমএল প্রধান মাধব কুমার নেপাল জানিয়েছেন, থাপার এই সিদ্ধান্তের ফলে জ্ঞানেন্দ্রের সঙ্গে আলোচনার পথ প্রশস্ত হল। তবে নেপালের একটি নামজাদা ইংরেজি দৈনিকের সম্পাদক জানালেন, শান্তি ফিরবে কিনা, সে বিষয়ে এখনই কিছু বলা যাচ্ছে না। এটা নির্ভর করছে কী ভাবে এবং কে থাপার জায়গায় এলেন, তার উপর।

অন্য দিকে এক আমলার মত, নেপালের বর্তমান রাজনৈতিক প্রেক্ষাপটে মাওবাদীদের বিরুদ্ধে রাজা ও রাজনৈতিক দলগুলির এক হয়ে লড়াই করা উচিত। অবশ্য বিশেষজ্ঞদের মতে, নেপালে অবাধ ও শান্তিপূর্ণ নির্বাচন হতে পারে শুধুমাত্র মাওবাদীদের সঙ্গে শান্তি স্থাপনের পরই। কিন্তু সেই সম্ভাবনা এখন কম।— রয়টার্স

8 MAY 2002

Koirala postpones talks with king

PRANAY SHARMA

Kathmandu, May 5: Talks between Nepali Congress leader G.P. Koirala and King Gyanendra scheduled to begin today have been postponed in view of the possible negative impact the dialogue may have on the five-party Opposition alliance, where the Congress is a major partner.

The talks may now be held on Friday or over the weekend. Madhav Nepal, the leader of the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist), the other significant member of the five-party alliance that has launched a countrywide protest for the past one year demanding the restoration of parliament, has publicly opposed any dialogue with the king at this juncture.

Indications are the Nepali Congress may have postponed the talks to assuage other members of the alliance. Party leaders tried to put up a brave front on the negative impact a dialogue with the king may have on the alliance.

They emphasised the need to engage with the palace to resolve the political crisis and made it clear that Koirala and Gyanendra would meet in the next few days.

But they added that the Congress would not like to break the



MUM'S THE WORD:
G.P. Koirala

five-party alliance at this juncture as it appeared to have put the king on the defensive.

Hectic closed-door parleys among the Nepali Congress leadership to prepare the ground for talks between Koirala and the king are underway. The leaders today said the party would like to know whether the king was willing to look for a resolution of the crisis within the constitution of the country.

"If the king is willing to look for a solution within the constitution then we will demand that he restore parliament," party leader and former minister Chakra Bastola said.

But while this is the public

position, sources said Koirala may even bring up the issue of holding fresh elections in the country, provided the Maoist rebels who hold sway over almost all rural areas of Nepal are not opposed to it.

The palace is said to have started informal negotiations with the Maoists and a deal may be struck sooner rather than later.

Political analysts believe that one reason the king was keen on a dialogue with Koirala is that he wanted the Nepali Congress and other democratic forces to endorse his deal with the Maoists.

There is also a possibility that Koirala may bargain for the Prime Minister's chair till peace talks between the king and the democratic forces and the Maoists are completed and the situation is right for fresh elections.

If the proposal is accepted, Koirala may choose not to contest the next elections.

A lot will, however, depend on how Madhav Nepal reacts. There is a popular view in the Nepali Congress that Koirala should meet the king, but that is not shared by the Communist Party that Nepal heads. Rather, he may find it difficult to convince his cadre of the need for a dialogue with the palace now.

Government lifts ban on rallies, frees Opposition leaders

King blinks in Nepal stand-off

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Kathmandu, May 3 (Reuters): Nepal's king, facing protests over his suspension of democracy, today lifted a ban on rallies that had sparked thousands of arrests, but the move failed to quell massive demonstrations.

Police released two top Opposition leaders who were detained to stop them leading the latest in a series of rallies against King Gyanendra to demand he replace an appointed royalist government with a multi-party team and hold elections.

"His Majesty's Government has lifted the ban on public gatherings with effect from midnight," home minister Kamal Thapa said. Ending the ban was a key condition the five Opposition parties had set before any talks with Gyanendra to end the political crisis. Last month, they rejected an offer of talks.

"If the move facilitates a meeting between His Majesty the King and the political parties, the government will be happy," Thapa said. The government also revoked an order allowing police in Kathmandu to hold people for 90 days without a warrant.

Police picked up Nepali Congress party chief Girija Prasad Koirala and Communist Unified

Marxist-Leninist (UML) head Madhav Kumar Nepal as they left their homes in the city ahead of a protest today, but the two were later released.

More than 5,000 people have been arrested and 300 injured since the protests against the king were stepped up on April 1, the move that originally prompted the ban on public gatherings.

Gyanendra faces increasing criticism over his decision to fire an elected Prime Minister in 2002 and replace the government with a hand-picked royalist cabinet.

The king, who came to power after his brother and several members of the royal family died in a massacre at the palace by the crown prince in 2001, dissolved Parliament and postponed elections indefinitely.

The protests come before a key meeting between the government and foreign donors, who provide more than 60 per cent of the cost of economic development in one of the world's poorest countries. Many have urged reconciliation between the parties and the king.

Nepal is also fighting to quell a Maoist revolt aimed at overthrowing the monarchy.



A man being escorted by police in Kathmandu on Monday. (Reuters)

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nepal

THE CRISIS IN NEPAL

10-10

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KING GYANENDRA OF Nepal has only himself to blame for the suspicion with which the country's democratic parties have treated his offer of negotiations to end the present political standoff in Kathmandu. Since the beginning of April, an alliance of five parties has spearheaded protests against the King's apparent moves towards an executive monarchy, paralysing the capital every day with marches and sit-ins. Already under pressure from a violent Maoist insurgency, King Gyanendra appears to have backed off from an escalating political confrontation by inviting the five-party alliance, which includes the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party (United Marxist-Leninist) — Nepal's two largest political parties — for negotiations. But the alliance understandably smells a ploy to defuse its agitation rather than any real desire by the monarch to address the demand for a return to the hard-won 1990 Constitution and its system of multi-party democracy that he disrupted in 2002. Since sacking the elected government that year and usurping executive powers that are not his under the Constitution, Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Deva, who came into the kingship unexpectedly after the regicide at Narayanhiti Palace in June 2001, has made no secret of his discontent with being a mere constitutional monarch. Despite paying periodic lip service to a return to democracy during his two-year reign, King Gyanendra has worked to undermine political parties, criticising and questioning their role. The current round of protests, the most intense since his unconstitutional acts of two years ago, erupted soon after he declared the "strong bond" between himself and the people as the "cornerstone" of Nepali nationalism.

While the onus is on the King to convince the political parties that he sincerely wants to return to the suspended 1990 Constitution, the five-party alliance cannot turn its back on engaging the monarch because that is the only realistic way it can seek to negotiate a restoration of the

democratic process. But first, the political parties must demonstrate a unity of purpose. Over the last two years, King Gyanendra was able shrewdly to manipulate the divisions among the pro-democracy parties to perpetuate his rule. The alliance is agreed that the way forward is to establish an all-party transitional government. Undoubtedly, this is the course of action it must pursue in any eventual talks with the King as it would be the least rancorous. Alternatives such as the reinstatement of the sacked Deuba Government or of the dissolved Parliament would be fraught with more political conflict. But the alliance's inability to project a consensus candidate to head the all-party government could once again provide the King space to play his divide-and-rule games. Moreover, fighting over an office that is to be filled by royal appointment undercuts the very basis of the pro-democracy agitation. The five-party alliance must act on the clear understanding that the sole mandate of a consensus Prime Minister would be to head a transitional government that would pave the way to democratic elections — which the King has promised to hold before April 2005.

A resolution of the political crisis is essential if Nepal is to come to grips with the issues underlying the eight-year-old Maoist "people's war" that has taken more than 9,000 lives. The King, who cited the escalating insurgency as one of the reasons for taking over the reins of government in 2002, mistakenly believed he could cut the ground under the political parties by negotiating peace with the Maoists. He failed. The talks broke down last year and with that the ceasefire. Since then, despite Indian and United States assistance to the Royal Nepal Army to control the insurgency, the Maoists have rapidly added to the territory under their control. Their growing influence has underlined the urgency with which the political parties must work towards the restoration of the democratic process in Nepal, defeating an autocratic monarch's designs.

Heavy the head...

हिस्टोरी
From bad to worse in Nepal 4.8

How King Gyanendra, who assumed executive powers 18 months ago, hopes to solve the turbulent political crisis is unclear but evidence suggests further prevarication will be disastrous for his mountain country. Daily demonstrations by five mainstream political parties, joined by thousands of others demanding restoration of multi-party democracy in defiance of the government ban on protests, characterised the whole of April. That the King can do no wrong may be unexceptionable, but the principle is becoming passé and it would be disastrous should he choose to go the Sikkim Chogyal's way. Bhutan has been wiser and its monarchy is respected. The cry for a republican democracy in Nepal is becoming strident, something the King cannot wish away. His decision to hold general elections by April next year is a mere ploy to delay handing over power to the people. No political parties have responded and in any case, elections cannot be held amidst fear and mistrust. The King's strongest point is that the Royal Nepalese Army is solidly behind him but events in the past few years have shown that the military offensive against Maoist rebels has only made them more intransigent.

No less disturbing has been the repressive actions against peaceful demonstrators. Even journalists demanding press freedom were not spared. Reports say seven scribes were killed by Maoists and security personnel over past seven months, six missing and 31 allegedly "tortured" and "abused" by authorities. All this is surprising because Nepal recognises the people's right to information on any matter of public interest and also guarantees that only a minimum of people's rights will be curtailed in an emergency. Any undemocratic action by the King will only sound the death-knell of a centuries-old monarchy.

THE STATESMAN

30 APR 2004

Nepal leaves road open for Maoists

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu/
Pashupatinagar, April 9

WEDNESDAY'S MAOIST attack on Pashupatinagar near Darjeeling has exposed how unsafe the over 1,650-km India-Nepal border has become, particularly due to Kathmandu's poor security system. In recent months, the impoverished kingdom has withdrawn a sizeable number of security posts to avoid big casualties at the hands of Communist rebels.

At Pashupatinagar security forces posted in nearby areas were shifted to the police station that bore the brunt of the attack. A Nepalese official said, "This kind of shrinking of security zones seems to have given the rebels sufficient time and space for organising big attacks." In every big raid, the rebels use 2,000 to 3,000 men and women fighters along with medical teams and porters.

Indian officials are worried over the withdrawals, more because they fear infiltration by the North-east militants and ISI-backed Islam-



HT
A Nepal policeman, injured in the attack, at the Darjeeling Sadar Hospital.

ic groups. Since the Kargil conflict, New Delhi has deployed the Sasashtra Suraksha Bal (till recently called Special Security Bureau) along the Indo-Nepal border.

A West Bengal police official on the Indian side of Pashupatinagar said, "We cannot rule out Pashupatinagar-type attacks in other areas if Nepal doesn't strengthen its security and intelligence network." He added, "We had informed Nepal about the growing presence of Maoists in adjoining Gork-

hay, Ingha, Kholagaon and Jhabari villages."

The region used to host a number of arms-training camps run by the GNLF during the 1986-88 Gorkhaland stir in Darjeeling.

An Indian official in Kathmandu said, "Nepal has left an equally big vacuum in the Terai, bordering Bihar and UP." The Terai is strategically important because both Nepal and the rebels receive their supplies through it.

To gain control over Terai, the Maoists recently set up autonomous governments for Madhesias (Hindi-, Maithili-, Bhojpuri-speaking Nepalese) and Tharus in eastern and western plains. Not only this, this Friday they pledged security for Indians who share a common ethnicity with the Madhesias.

Nepalese authorities say they didn't have enough personnel to guard all posts effectively. The Royal Nepal Army and civil and armed police wings together have a little over 1,00,000 personnel. The Maoists have an estimated 7,000 hardcore fighters and thousands of militias.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

10 APR 2004

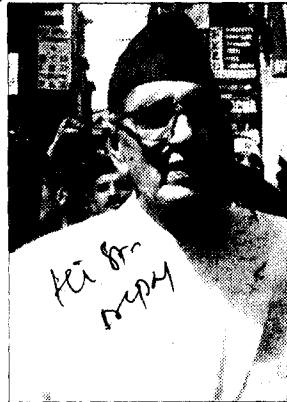
Thousands arrested during Nepal stir

Press Trust of India

KATHMANDU, April 9. — Nepalese riot police today arrested tens of thousands of demonstrators including top leaders of the five political parties as they continued their agitation demanding restoration of democracy for the ninth day, defying a government ban on protests.

Around 10,000 pro-democracy agitators including human rights activists were arrested during their sit-in and protest rallies defying the government's ban yesterday on all types of gatherings and rallies.

Amidst intelligence reports that the Maoist rebels may infiltrate the rallies and cause violence, the government had declared all three cities of Kathmandu valley as riot zones in view of the ongoing agitations.



Nepali Congress Party president Mr Girija Prasad Koirala was manhandled and sustained head injuries when riot police arrested thousands of agitators in Kathmandu on Friday. — PTI

The agitators courted arrest peacefully, and were driven away in trucks to the capital's outskirts.

As they were taken away by the police on more than 100 trucks, the protestors chanted anti-King slogans and waved their party flags.

THE STATESMAN

10 APR 2004

Militants destroy Nepal govt offices, open covering fire from India

Maoists mount border offensive

VIVEK CHHETRI

Pashupati Nagar (India-Nepal border), April 8: Around 3,000 heavily armed Maoist guerrillas stormed the border town 36 km from Darjeeling last night and set ablaze all administrative offices in the area.

Two policemen were killed in the offensive on Pashupati Nagar, which besides having key Nepal government offices, is also a trading hub with several businessmen of Indian origin having set up shop there.

About 45 policemen were on duty at the post in the Ilam district town when the rebels, who divided themselves into several groups, swooped on the town around 10.40 last night.

A couple of groups took on the policemen at the outpost, the others torched the offices, which included those of the Border Administrative Branch, Nepal Rastriya Baniya Bank and the customs. All the buildings are within a kilometre

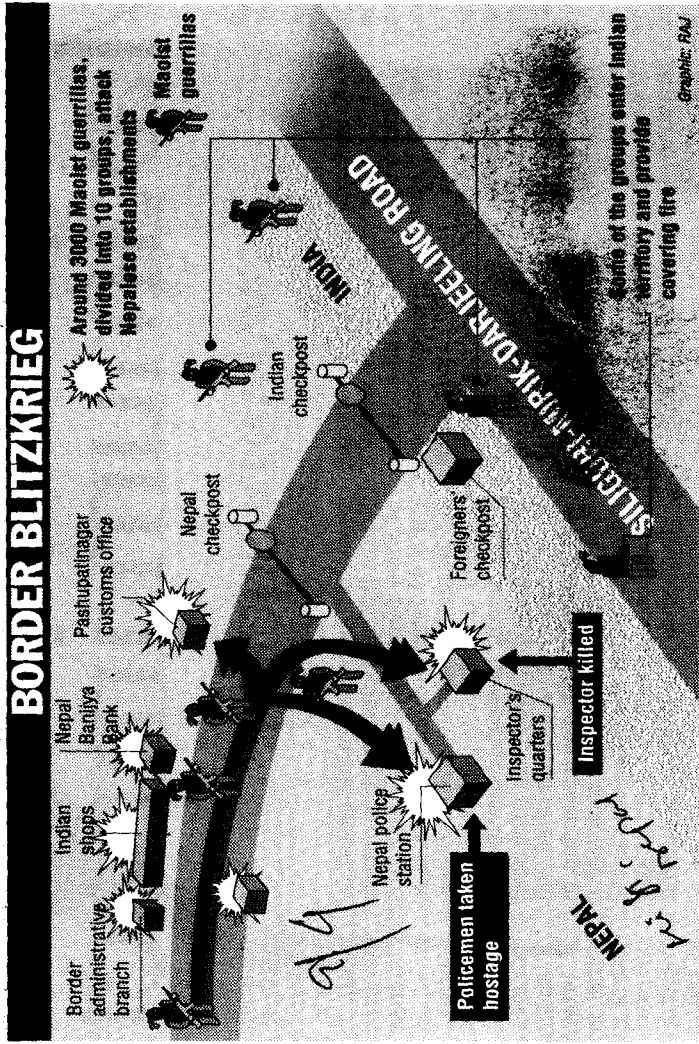
of the border, with the Nepal police station a mere 15 metres from the Indian checkpoint.

Some of the Maoists entered Indian territory to provide covering fire to their comrades who were engaged in a shootout with the Nepalese security-men. The five unarmed policemen at the Indian foreigners' checkpoint were held hostage by the armed rebels. Only one of the five was carrying arms and could therefore do little.

Inspector-in-charge of Pashupati Nagar police station Praju Kumar Rai and havildar Surjesh Shrestha were killed in the attack. Rai was first shot and then hacked by the Maoists.

The rebels are said to have abducted 42 policemen. "About a dozen policemen are safe while the rest are still missing," said a spokesman for the Nepalese police. "We have sent reinforcements and a search is on."

The attack bore the stamp of a typical Maoist offensive executed with precision. Rawati



Ghimire, who is in charge of the post office here, said: "I was near the office when they began firing. I overheard some people shouting that they should also torch the post office but one of them said it was not part of their plan." The post office near the bank was spared.

Nearby shops belonging to

Nepalese citizens of Indian origin were not so lucky. The guerrillas, who have targeted properties owned by Indians over the past few days, broke into the shops and ransacked them.

Residents reported that at least 15 Maoists were injured in the attack but none was left behind. The rebels were

equipped with stretchers and first-aid.

"They did use vantage points in Indian territory during the attack. We will talk with higher authorities to increase police and Special Service Bureau personnel," said north Bengal inspector-general of

Nepal Maoists raid town near Darjeeling

Hi B Nepal
Niraj Lama in Pashupatinagar (Nepal)

April 8. — Maoist rebels launched a massive raid in this border town, only 36 km away from Darjeeling, last night, killing two policemen and taking possibly 41 of them hostage.

Typical of the rebels, nearly 3,000 of them overran the town, setting ablaze its police station, bank, Customs office and several other government buildings. They also looted around Nepali Rs 24 lakh of the bank's money and arms from the police station. This is the first Nepalese border town in this region to experience a major raid of the kind, worrying the Indi-

an authorities here. Senior police officials, including IG, North Bengal, Mr B Mishra, rushed to the spot to assess the situation.

According to some unidentified eyewitnesses in the town "where both residents and officials are too terrified to talk" the guerrillas arrived in the town around 10.40 p. m. Taking advantage of the dark and the fog, they dispersed around the town and launched almost simultaneous attack on their targets mainly in the Area Police Office, offices of the Rashtriya Baniya Bank and the border administration.

The siege of the police station, where most of the total 65 personnel were present at the time, lasted for nearly one hour,

marked by a heavy firefight between both sides. Notably, the police station is only 15 m from the border, and locals alleged that the rebels had even fired from the Indian territory. Mr Mishra later noted that the rebels "may have used" the Indian territory to provide "cover fire" in the assault on the Nepalese police station. The women members of the rebel force are reported to have "appealed" through loudspeakers to the Indian security forces present at the border to desist from interfering.

The heavily outnumbered Nepalese police force finally surrendered after an hour. By then two of them were killed. The rebels set fire to the police station before taking away at least Nepali Rs 24 lakh of the Rash-

triya Baniya Bank placed there for safe-keeping. The rebels also looted some guns. Incidentally, one of the three injured policemen, Mr Chandra Periyar (24), has been admitted to the Darjeeling Sadar Hospital. According to him, the rebels lined up all the surrendered policemen and ordered them to march ahead. However, he was let go when they found his legs had sustained bullet injuries. The whereabouts of the missing policemen are not yet known. The Special Security Bureau, agency responsible for security along India-Nepal border, has a camp of 140 men around 500 m from the border here. A senior officer of the force noted that they were aware of the attack but it was too dark to know what was going on.

THE HINDU

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Maoists kill 2 policemen, US issues travel warning

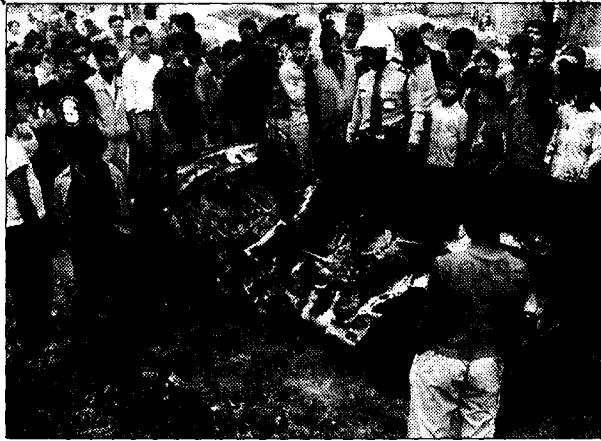
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KATHMANDU, APRIL 8

HUNDREDS of Maoists attacked a police post in Nepal's border district of Ilam, killing two policemen and abducting 42 others, officials said today. In a late night attack on the police post manned by 62 policemen at Pashupatinagar, Maoists killed two policemen, Home Ministry spokesman Gopendra Bahadur Pandey said. While the rebels abducted 42 policemen, 18 others managed to make contact with the administration, it was reported.

The government has sent additional troops through helicopter to counter the rebels.

The attack came at a time when the rebels have called a three-day general strike starting Tuesday last.

Meanwhile, the US State Department warned US citizens to defer non-essential travel to Nepal amid reports of US trekkers being detained by Maoist rebels in the Himalayan kingdom. The travel warning updated a similar notice issued in December last year and highlighted anti-American threats, growing Maoist extortion and attacks



People look at a blown-up taxi during the general strike called by Maoist rebels in Kathmandu on Thursday. Reuters

on government forces, and disruption of civilian road transportation.

"The US Embassy (in Nepal) has received two reports of US trekkers being detained by Maoists, in one case for several days," the notice said yesterday. No details of the Americans were given.

The Maoist rebels have been waging their "people's war" since 1996 to overthrow the constitutional monarchy and install a Communist republic. Rights groups say both government troops and rebels have abducted their opponents during the insurgency, which has claimed an esti-

mated 9,500 lives so far.

The State Department said yesterday that businesses identified with the United States had been attacked and that some private vehicles transporting foreigners, including two Americans, were stopped by Maoists and burned after passengers were forced to disembark.

Interrupted telephone services to many trekking areas caused by rebel destruction of communications infrastructure make it difficult and sometimes impossible to locate travellers or to arrange medical evacuations should emergencies occur, the statement said.

Maoists kidnap 1,500 youths

Agence France Press
Kathmandu, April 7

MAOIST REBELS abducted around 1,500 youths from three villages in a remote corner of southwestern Nepal, a local village official said on Wednesday. The kidnappings late on Tuesday were the latest in a wave of abductions by the rebels who security officials say take students, teachers and others to draft them into their ranks and "re-educate" them at Maoist camps.

"The Maoists kidnapped 1,500 youths and students, including teenage girls, from Tribhuvan Basti, Kalipa and Parasa villages in Kanchanpur district", Rajendra Singh Rawal, an elected council official, said.

"The rebels took these 1,500 people in 27 tractor-trailers to an unknown destination", said Rawal. Before departing, the Maoists said they would return to round up more young men from the villages, he said.

Locals were fleeing across the Nepal border to the Indian town of Pilibith, in Sonpura Nagar district, because they fe-

ared more abductions, Rawal said.

Army officials say the Maoists are kidnapping youths and forcing them to join their ranks in the face of mounting guerrilla losses at the hands of the security forces.

Human rights groups say both troops and rebels have abducted their opponents during the insurgency that has claimed over 9,500 lives.

The rebels have been waging their 'People's War' since 1996 to overthrow the constitutional monarchy and install a communist republic in the country

Last month, security forces said more than 500 guerrillas were killed in a bloody clash in west Nepal. The rebels said just 40 of their fighters died.

Meanwhile, around 250 of 1,000 teachers and students kidnapped last week from Bajhang district in Nepal's far west have been released but the fate of the other 750 was unknown, a district official said.

The Maoists also abducted 150 teachers earlier this week from the Dadheldhura district in western Nepal, the police said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

8 APR 2004

Maoists target state aircraft in Nepal

Agence France-Presse
Kathmandu, April 6

MAOIST REBELS on Tuesday attacked a small plane with bombs and gunfire at an airport in remote northwest Nepal, but it was not immediately known if there were any casualties, police said.

The pilot took off safely from Chainpur airport, Bajhajang district, 450 km northwest of Kathmandu as soon as he heard the sound of exploding bombs and gunfire that missed the aircraft, police said.

But the fate and number of passengers and crew, who had just left the Canadian-built Twin Otter, capable of carrying up to 20 commuters, was not immediately known, police said. The rebels attacked the twin-engine turboprop plane belonging to state-owned Royal Nepal Airlines from surrounding hilltops after the passengers disembarked.

"The Maoist rebels had started attacking the aircraft, which had just offloaded the passen-



REUTERS

Police and army personnel released by Maoist rebels arrive at Kathmandu airport on Tuesday.

gers, with bombs and guns but missed the aircraft," which other passengers were about to board, senior police officer Keshav Baral said.

Police said there was no report about the fate of the people

at the airport because communication links were down between Bajhajang and Nepalgunj, where the pilot landed.

Meanwhile, life was paralysed in Nepal on Tuesday, the first day of the three-day country-

wide general strike called by the Maoists, even as the rebels freed 37 security personnel captured by them after a battle with government forces in western parts of the country two weeks ago.

In capital Kathmandu and other parts of Nepal, major markets were closed, most of the vehicles were off the roads and schools and colleges were shut down as Maoists enforced the strike called to mark the 'People's Movement Day'. In another development, the Maoist rebels on Tuesday released 37 security officials captured by them from Beni Bazaar in Myagdi district after a battle with government forces on March 20, Home Ministry spokesman Gopendra Bahadur Pandey said here. The captives, including Myagdi chief district officer Sagarmani Parajuli, district police chief Rana Bahadur Gautam and 35 security personnel, were handed over to Red Cross officials at Thawang in west of the capital and were flown to Kathmandu on two helicopters.

Maoist games

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Nepal must blow the whistle

King Gyanendra's promise of an early return to democratic governance will not amount to much unless Nepal's political brigade cooperates. Having ignored the monarch's earlier seven-point proposal towards this purpose, they must now realise that the chaos does cry out for solution, more so because the Maoists are clearly bent on a protracted struggle to achieve a republican state. A series of strikes, bandhs and demonstrations have characterised the past few months and have hurt daily wage earners the most. And with the Maoists now reportedly torching some Indian trucks and seriously injuring three occupants — ostensibly in retaliation for the recent extradition of two top Maoist leaders from India — it seems their game is to mar Indo-Nepalese friendship. The incident came within hours of 18 Indian oil and diesel tankers being set ablaze for allegedly defying a blockade. Thankfully, the vehicles were reportedly returning to India after delivering supplies. In the absence of assured security, tanker owners may have to think twice before sending vehicles to Nepal and this could create a serious shortage in a country that relies entirely on supplies from India.

As the more powerful neighbour, India has a greater responsibility to understand Nepal's sentiments and Delhi has tried to set at rest ultra-leftist's fears of Indian hegemony. Nepal stands to gain from several joint hydel power and irrigation ventures and Delhi has acknowledged that country's sensitivity and rights while signing accords on the projects. It is to be hoped that one or two isolated incidents, reckless though they are, will not harm ties between the two countries. But Nepal must guard against any return of anti-Indian feelings witnessed during the panchayat era.

Pride & prejudice

Handwritten: 16/04/04
Nepal needs constitution revival *SR 6*

One word aptly describes Nepal: contrast. While five main political parties staged massive demonstrations for the restoration of multi-party governance and life in Kathmandu Valley, King Gyanendra was touring the countryside. While Maoists take on the Royal army to abolish the monarchy and establish a republican state, 16 districts accorded the King and Queen a civic reception, an indication of the cult status the monarchy enjoys. Nepali Congress chief GP Koirala and his family are against the King's usurping power, but his late brother BP Koirala's granddaughter, Bollywood actress Manisha Koirala, took part in a walkathon to raise funds for the Rotary Club and openly supported the King. While the majority of Nepal's population live from hand to mouth, development funds from donor countries suppress the Maoist rebellion. Koirala says he is willing to contact the Maoists, but only through correspondence. What is disturbing is the maddeningly slow process towards the King's promise to hold elections by April next year. If he means well, he has no choice but to reactivate the constitution.

Strange as it might sound, some believe the King is so worried about the growing population and wants the Maoist reprisals to continue. A political analyst suspects the existence of a "tactical alignment" that will allow the King to retain all power for himself since political parties failed to lift the country from its economic morass. The force the administration used to quell recent demonstrations was reminiscent of the repression during panchayat rule under which parties were banned. The only difference being that those who have now taken to the streets are the parties duly elected by the people. If further bloodletting is to be averted, the King must make an objective reappraisal of the dangerous drift and start talks with political parties.

Maoists kill 9 policemen

*Hi Br
Nepal*

Kathmandu, April 5 (Reuters): Hundreds of Maoist rebels stormed a police post in eastern Nepal and killed at least nine police officers, officials said today.

Police said six policemen were injured and about 14 were still missing after the overnight attack in the village of Yadukuwa, about 300 km east of the capital Kathmandu.

Government officials said three soldiers were killed and seven others wounded today when the rebels ambushed an army patrol in Kavre, 40 km east of Kathmandu.

The latest attacks came ahead of a three-day general strike called by the Maoists who are fighting to set up a communist republic in place of a constitutional monarchy in the world's only Hindu kingdom.

The Maoists have stepped up attacks on government installations and security posts after walking out of peace talks last August.

The number of rebel casualties was not known in the latest attacks — the Maoists usually carry away the bodies of their comrades after clashes.

Witnesses said more than 500 rebels bombed the police post and began firing automatic weapons at around 1515 GMT last night.

The fighting lasted two to three hours.

Details were still sketchy as the rebels have cut telephone and electricity lines to the village and also set up road blocks to stop reinforcements from coming.

"People are terrorised. All shops are closed," said Brij Kumar Yadav, a reporter for a local Nepali daily, by telephone from the site.

He said unexploded crude bombs had been strewn on the streets of the village.

The latest raid came as protesters burned tyres and blocked traffic in Kathmandu, the fifth day of their protest to press King

Gyanendra to fire the royalist cabinet and name an all-party government.

Yesterday, at least 200 people, including over a dozen political leaders were injured as police lathicharged, tear-gassed and fired rubber bullets at thousands of pro-democracy protesters who tried to break the security barricade while marching towards the royal palace.

The king has ignored the demand which political parties say is crucial to ending turmoil in a country battling a bloody Maoist revolt since 1996.

Two weeks ago, thousands of Maoist rebels overran a district capital in west Nepal in an attack in which at least 250 people, most of them rebels, were killed.

In a separate attack in the west of the country yesterday, rebels shot and injured three Indian traders bringing goods from Nepal's southern neighbour and set their vehicles on fire.

On Saturday night, they also set fire to more than a dozen trucks waiting at a border post in western Nepal to pick up gasoline supplies from India.

India, which has supported the government drive against the guerrillas, condemned the attacks.

"Such incidents, far from deterring such cooperation, will only lead to redoubled efforts on the part of both countries to overcome the danger which such terrorism poses to the security of both our neighbouring countries," said an Indian government statement.

Maoists

59 target 8

Indians

Kathmandu, April 4 (PTI): Maoists set ablaze nine Indian vehicles, including eight tankers, and opened fire on three Indians early this morning, hours after the rebels bombed the house of home minister Kamal Thapa in Nepal.

Eight empty tankers with Indian number plates were set ablaze by the Maoists in Kailali district, 600 km west of Kathmandu, the police said. The trucks were heading towards the Indian border after unloading petroleum products in Kailali.

In Rupandehi district, 300 km west of the capital, the rebels fired on three occupants of an Indian truck before setting the vehicle on fire. The truck owner, driver and cleaner suffered bullet injuries in the attack while unloading goods from Rajasthan on a highway in Parsari village at 5.30 am, an officer of the Rupandehi district police said.

The Indians were admitted to Bhairahawa Medical College and are said to be out of danger. One of the injured was identified as Hukum Ram Chaudhari from Rajasthan. A hunt has been launched to nab the culprits.

Last evening, Maoists exploded a powerful bomb at a house belonging to the home minister in Hetauda in Makawanpur district, injuring two security guards. Police said the house, rented by a government office, was partially damaged by the explosion at 7.30 pm.

An accountant was shot dead by the Maoists at Baglung district development committee office last evening, according to state-run *The Rising Nepal*.

APR 5 2004

5 APR 2004

Royal reckoning

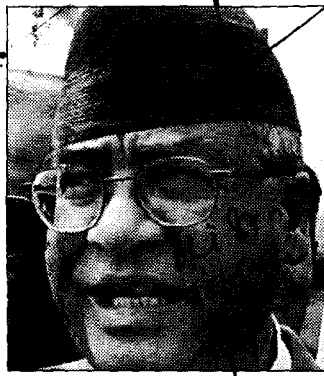
Si. B. A. Nepal continues to bleed. K. S. P. 2

With the death-toll in Nepal continuing to mount and the government now ruling out further talks with the Maoists, one cannot help wondering what lies in store for this poor, tradition-bound mountain country. King Gyanendra's decision to hold elections by April next year is all very sound but he has been saying as much since he took over in October 2002 after dismissing the caretaker Sher Bahadur Deuba government for failing to hold the mid-term poll scheduled for November that year. The prevarication only lends credence to rumours of the King not being too keen on handing over power to the people. Ironically, just when life was looking up for the predominantly rural population, development funds are being used to crush the Maoist rebellion, the result of poverty and intolerance. King Gyanendra's emphasis on creating a conducive atmosphere for free and fair elections seems unrealistic for the situation the country finds itself in. How the King plans to tackle the problem is difficult to understand but the army's deployment has not helped. The manner in which the rebels are defying authority suggests they are not prepared to compromise on their demand for a republican set-up.

Whatever the King's reason for not responding to UN chief Kofi Annan's offer of mediation, the world body's involvement could at least help facilitate a temporary cessation of hostilities and prepare the ground for elections. The King obviously does not want to be remembered as one incapable of governing. The government's priority on providing relief to the victims of violence deserves applause but Nepal's poor far outnumber its rich and it is this huge silent majority that has been at the receiving end of Maoist insurgency. Political parties have a greater responsibility and must ensure that the palace does not become a permanent centre of power.

THE STATESMAN

2 APR 2003



Former Prime Minister
Sher Bahadur Deuba at the
rally in Kathmandu. (AFP)

Gyanendra urged to fire royalist PM in huge rally

Kathmandu, April 1 (Reuters): About 30,000 people rallied in the Nepali capital today to press King Gyanendra to fire a royalist Prime Minister and form an all-party government in the biggest anti-king rally in the Himalayan kingdom since 1990.

King Gyanendra, who took over after his brother was killed along with several other royals in a palace massacre in 2001, has been under attack since he dissolved parliament nearly two years ago and sacked an elected Prime Minister in a row over elections.

"This is an important beginning to end the present autocratic system and restore democracy," Girija Prasad Koirala, chief of the centrist Nepali Congress party, said as he squatted on a road with thousands of his supporters.

The Nepali Congress is one of five political parties that have vowed to continue protesting until the monarch appoints their nominee as Prime Minister or revives parliament.

Police set up barbed wire roadblocks to stop protesters from marching on the king's palace, as demonstrators marched through the streets with placards saying: "No to active monarchy".

Officials said there was no violence. Protesters said they would defy government orders banning protests near the monarch's official residence and other key government buildings.

King Gyanendra, whose popularity has been sliding since he suspended democracy and assumed executive powers, is currently touring district capitals in west Nepal, meeting people in his latest public relations drive.

Gyanendra says he hopes to hold polls delayed since late 2002, by mid-April next year — but only if it is safe to do so.

Many doubt elections can ever be held until the Maoists fighting to topple the monarchy are brought back to the negotiating table, something most say rests in the king's hands.

A constitutional monarch by title, Gyanendra now effectively has full control of the government and the country until an election can be held and a new government formed.

The turmoil is the latest in Nepal beset by a bloody Maoist revolt that has killed more than 9,250 people since 1996 and hit the impoverished economy.

1 2 APR 2004

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Germans stand by Nepal Maoist

himalayan & nepal 59-3 29/3

Statesman News Service

CHENNAI, March 28. — A group of German lawyers have appealed to the Centre to free unconditionally the Maoist leader from Nepal, Chandra Prakash Gajurel, and grant him asylum here or in any European country. Gajurel is a politbureau member of the Communist Party of Nepal, involved in a struggle for democracy there.

Gajurel was arrested at Chennai airport on 19 August 2003, while trying to leave for London on a forged passport and detained in the Central jail here. The German lawyers contended that while a case had been registered against him, no charge-sheet had been filed even seven months after his arrest and detention. Gajurel had moved Madras High Court to restrain the Indian authorities from



deporting him to Nepal.

In his petition, Gajurel said if he was deported, as requested by the Nepalese government, he would be tortured and executed there. Gajurel has been charged for offences under various provisions of the IPC, besides the Indian Passport Act. Gajurel's pleas for bail were dismissed by the Alandur judicial magistrate.

Describing him as the

"world's most famous prisoner in Chennai prison," the team of German activist lawyers who visited Gajurel in the Central jail here, said they would seek the help of the German ambassador in Delhi, apprise him of the events following his arrest and stress on the aspect of "violation of human rights". The Centre should protect his life and allow him to seek asylum in a European

country, they told journalists here yesterday.

The German lawyers, accompanied by senior advocate Mr K Chandru, pointed out that for a "minor offence like using a fake passport" Gajurel had been detained in prison for over seven months. "This insecure situation does not go along with the democratic principles we are used to in Germany," they said, adding the Maoist leader's "first choice" was to stay in India as a "free man". He would like to return to Nepal as soon as the political situation there allowed it.

"If this is impossible, he is longing for a guaranteed asylum out of India, in a European country. He wishes to leave India with a visa and under protection of the country, which is willing to give him asylum or with the help of an international organisation," the lawyers said.

THE STATESMAN 29 MAR 2004

Gyanendra ready to hold elections

Keshav Pradhan

Kathmandu, March 28

KING GYANENDRA on Sunday expressed his readiness to hold elections and transfer power to an elected government by April 2005. This comes five days before the resumption of the Opposition's agitation against the 2002 royal takeover.

Addressing a public reception in Pokhara, about 200 km west of here, the monarch exhorted, "Let us not waste any more time on empty rhetoric. Let's take concrete measures to fulfil the people's desire for good governance. Let's ascertain the future course of our nation."

The monarch appealed, "I call upon all concerned to create an environment wherein free and fair elections can be held by 2061 (Nepali year spanning April 2004-April 2005)." He said the Nepalese monarchy has always worked in accordance with people's aspirations. He remarked, "The intimate monarchy-people relationship is the cornerstone of Nepalese nationalism." He asked politicians to rise above selfish interests to make multi-party democracy "strong and meaningful."

A palace-installed government has been running Nepal since the October 2002 sacking of the last elected government over its failure to hold polls in the stipulated six months. Parliament was dissolved in May 2002 following infighting in the ruling Nepali Congress (NC).

The NC and its agitating partners — the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Lenin-



King Gyanendra

Poll mode

ist), the Nepal Mazdoor Kisan Party, the Jan Morcha and the Nepal Sadbhavana Party — now want the king to set up an all-party government as a precondition for reconciliation.

Meanwhile, an army lieutenant was shot dead by Maoist rebels in Kathmandu, the police said. The rebels fired at Lt Dhana Bahadur Thapa near his house in the Khusibu-Nayabazaar area when he was on his motorbike, a police officer said. Thapa was taken to Birendra Military Hospital in Chhauni, where he died of the bullet wounds.

Elsewhere in the Himalayan kingdom, two children were killed and two others seriously injured in a bomb explosion in Terhathum, state-run The Rising Nepal reported.

Later, district secretary of the Maoist organisation nicknamed Sajjan claimed the responsibility for the incident.

Nepal forces search for bodies after bloody battle

Kathmandu, March 22
(Reuters): Nepali forces dug up bodies of Maoist rebels and searched for scores of missing police and soldiers today after what could be one of the bloodiest battles in the kingdom's brutal eight-year rebellion.

The rebels' elusive leader vowed to continue raids on government targets despite yesterday's 12-hour gunbattle in western Nepal in which the army says 500 guerrillas died and 17 police and soldiers were killed.

"The armed attacks will continue until a progressive political solution has been reached," Maoist chief Prachanda, who goes by the one name, said in a statement to local media.

As buildings still smouldered a day after the attack, police and troops said they had found the bodies of 40 guerrillas.

"Some bodies were found buried in the banks of the Kali river," interior ministry spokesperson Gopendra Bahadur Pandey said. "The search is continuing."

The Maoists, fighting to replace the Himalayan kingdom's constitutional monarchy with a one-party communist state, routinely carry their dead away from encounters, often burying them in the soft sand near rivers and dry river beds.

Fifty-eight police and district officials are missing. It is not known if any soldiers are also missing. There was no independent confirmation of the official tally. Both sides routinely exaggerate enemy casualties and understate their own.

Nepali newspapers quoted rebel sources saying they had killed 150 soldiers and police and lost less than 40 of their own.

If the official toll is true, it would be the bloodiest single battle since the revolt began in the world's only Hindu kingdom in 1996, devastating the tourism and farm dependent economy.

More than 9,000 people, most of them rebels, have died so far.

The battle began just before midnight on Saturday when rebels swooped down from surrounding hills and stormed a bank, a jail and government buildings in the town of Beni, about 280 km west of Kathmandu.

ফৌজি কপ্টার থেকে বোমাবর্ষণ

গুলিগোলায় পাহাড়ে দাবানল

তুমুল লড়াইয়ে নেপালে নিহত ৫০০ মাওবাদী

কাঠমান্ডু, ২১ মার্চ (পি টি আই)— পশ্চিম নেপালের মায়াগড়ি জেলায় পাহাড়ি জঙ্গলে সেনাবাহিনীর সঙ্গে যোরতর যুদ্ধে অন্তত ৫০০ মাওবাদী গেরিলা নিহত হয়েছে। আজ ভোর থেকে এই লড়াই শুরু হওয়ার ১২ ঘণ্টা পর কাঠমান্ডুতে সাংবাদিক বৈঠক ডেকে এই খবর দিয়েছেন নেপালের রাজকীয় সেনাবাহিনীর মুখপাত্র কর্নেল দীপক গুরুং। তিনি জানিয়েছেন, আহত হয়েছে অন্তত ২০০ মাওবাদী। লড়াইয়ে ১৮ জন সেনা, পুলিশও মারা গেছে। কর্নেল গুরুং জানিয়েছেন, ১৯৯১ সালের নভেম্বরে নেপালে নিষিদ্ধ মাওবাদী কমিউনিস্ট দলের বিরুদ্ধে সেনা অভিযান শুরু হওয়ার পর একদিনের লড়াইয়ে এত হতাহত কখনও হয়নি। গোলাগুলির লড়াইয়ের তীব্রতায় বেনিয়াবাজার শহরের অদূরে পাহাড়ি জঙ্গলে আগুন ধরে যায়। মাওবাদী গেরিলাদের খতম করতে নেপাল ফৌজি কপ্টার থেকে পাহাড়ি জঙ্গলে বোমাবর্ষণ করে। কর্নেল গুরুং বলেছেন, মায়াগড়ি জেলার সদর শহর বেনিয়াবাজার দখলের চেষ্টা চালিয়েছিল মাওবাদীরা। ওই উদ্দেশ্যে রাতে এক হাজারের বেশি মাওবাদী গেরিলা একসঙ্গে সেনাবাহিনীর কালিদাস ব্যাটেলিয়ান চৌকি, জেলা প্রশাসন অফিস, জেলার পুলিশ দপ্তর, জেলা উন্নয়ন কমিটির অফিস আক্রমণ করে। শুরু হয়ে যায় যুদ্ধ। যুদ্ধ ছড়িয়ে পড়ে পাহাড়, জঙ্গলে। কর্নেল গুরুং বলেছেন, হতাহত গেরিলাদের বহু

দেহ তাদের সঙ্গীরা জঙ্গলে নিয়ে গেছে। তাঁর দাবি নিহত মাওবাদীদের মধ্যে আছে কয়েকজন কমান্ডার। কর্নেল গুরুং জানিয়েছেন, নিহত এক মাওবাদীর কাছ থেকে একটি এ কে-৪৭ রাইফেল পাওয়া গেছে। ঘটনাস্থল নেপালের রাজধানী কাঠমান্ডু থেকে ৪৫০ কিমি দূরে। এই লড়াইয়ে দুপক্ষই অত্যাধুনিক অস্ত্রশস্ত্র, ৮১ মিমির কামানসহ দূরপাল্লার অস্ত্র ব্যবহার করেছে। পাহাড়ি জঙ্গল থেকে মুহুমুহু কামানের গোলা, বোমা ছুঁড়েছে মাওবাদীরা। ভোররাত থেকে লড়াই শুরু হওয়ার পর ফৌজি হেলিকপ্টারে মায়াগড়ি জেলায় প্রচুর সেনা পাঠানো হয়। এ ছাড়া ৪/৫টি কপ্টার পাহাড়ি জঙ্গলে বোমাবর্ষণ করায় এত মাওবাদীর মৃত্যু। এই লড়াইয়ে বেনিয়াবাজারে জেলার সদর প্রশাসন অফিসটির ক্ষয়ক্ষতি জানা যায়নি। খোঁজ নেই বেশ কয়েকজন পুলিশ কর্মীর। কর্নেল গুরুং জানিয়েছেন বেনিয়াবাজারের কারাগার ভেঙে মাওবাদীরা কয়েকজন বন্দীকে মুক্ত করে বলে তাঁরা খবর পেয়েছেন। লুট করেছে একটি ব্যাঙ্কও। যুদ্ধ শুরু হওয়ার পর মায়াগড়ি জেলার সঙ্গে কাঠমান্ডুর টেলিফোন যোগাযোগও ২ ঘণ্টা বন্ধ ছিল। মাওবাদীরা একটি সেতু ধ্বংসেরও চেষ্টা চালিয়েছিল, সেনাবাহিনী তা ভেঙে দেয়। কর্নেল গুরুং জানিয়েছেন, বিস্তৃত খবরের জন্য অপেক্ষা করছেন তাঁরা।

AAJKAL

22 MAR 2004

500 Maoists killed

SNS & PTI

KATHMANDU, March 21. — At least 500 Maoist rebels were killed and 200 injured in one of the bloodiest gunfights with security forces in western Nepal, where the rebels attacked a district headquarters, freed some prisoners from a jail and looted a bank, the army said today.

Eleven soldiers and seven policemen also lost their lives in the gun-fight that took place in Myagdi district, 450 km west of Kathmandu, Royal Nepal Army spokesman Col. Deepak Gurung told reporters, "On the basis of

what our people and witnesses saw, we believe 500 Maoists were killed and 200 others injured," he said, adding the encounter lasted for 12 hours.

This was the highest causality suffered by the Maoists in a single incident since the army was mobilised in November 2001, Col. Gurung claimed.

Launching aerial attacks, the joint teams of security forces foiled an attempt by the Maoists to capture Benibazaar, the district headquarters of Myagdi district. Most of those killed include militants and some were their commanders, the spokesman said, adding the army

also seized an AK-47 rifle from a slain rebel.

The Maoists also carried away the bodies of their dead comrades while the fighting continued, Col. Gurung said.

The fighting started when the Maoists simultaneously attacked Kalidas battalion post of the army responsible for constructing roads in the district, Myagdi district administration office, district development committee and district police offices last night, he said.

The attack on Myagdi was the second major strike by rebels on a district headquarter this month.

It came 17 days after the

Maoists launched a three-pronged attack in Bhojpur district, killing at least 32 security personnel.

There were also reports of gunfights Sunday between rebels and security forces in Parbat and Baglung districts.

In Chitwan district, rebels blasted the control tower at Mahauli airport Saturday night, destroying it and equipment worth Rs.25 million. The airport is a gateway to the Royal Chitwan National Park, a major tourist attraction in the Himalayan kingdom. In Nawalparasi district, security forces killed a Maoist and arrested a second, Radio Nepal reported.



Colonel Deepak Gurung
in Kathmandu. (AFP)

Nepal rebels kill 29 in telecom tower strike

Kathmandu, March 3
(Reuters): Hundreds of Maoist rebels stormed a telecommunications tower in eastern Nepal, killing 29 soldiers in their biggest offensive since peace talks with the government collapsed in August, the military said.

Army spokesman Colonel Deepak Gurung said troops killed 10 guerrillas after yesterday's attack in Bhojpur district, a stronghold of the rebels who are fighting to replace Nepal's monarchy with a communist state.

"They bombed the telephone tower and destroyed it," Gurung said today, adding that communications in the area had been snapped after the attack in Himalayan foothills 500 km east of Kathmandu.

Another army official said more than 1,000 rebels, armed with automatic weapons and bombs, wanted to capture the district capital but were repelled by soldiers. At least 10 troops were missing after the clash that also left 23 people wounded. Violence has surged in Nepal since the guerrillas walked out of peace talks after the government refused to compromise on the future of the monarchy.

Officials say about 1,700 people, most of them rebels, have been killed since August, taking to more than 8,900 the total deaths since the revolt began in 1996. Gurung said the rebels also bombed the office of the district administrator and the local branch of a state-owned bank causing minor damage to the buildings.

"But they could not take away valuables or cash from the bank," Gurung said.

There was no comment from the rebels, whose revolt has crippled Nepal's tourism-dependent economy, scared away investors and threatened the stability of the kingdom, wedged between Asian giants, China and India. "The rebels ran away after an army helicopter with night vision facilities began aerial patrol," one official said.

The rebels have been blamed for a string of small bomb attacks in Kathmandu in recent days. Nepal has been in turmoil since King Gyanendra, who ascended to the throne in 2001, fired an elected Prime Minister the following year.

THE TELEGRAPH

4 MAR 2001

WITHERED DEMOCRACY-II

Nepal Is Drifting Towards A Failed State

By PARMANAND

With a view to containing the Maoists, who have been struggling for a republican form of government for eight long years now, and whose violent methods forced the government to impose emergency for the first time after 1960, the Thapa government has announced a policy of "surrender and amnesty". Besides the provision of employment and security, the government has assumed financial assistance ranging from Rs 1,000 to Rs 20,000 to the Maoists who surrender their weapons.

Unveiling the policy, minister for information and communications and government spokesperson Kamal Thapa said in December: "The government appeals to the Maoists to make use of the opportunity," adding, "We assure them of providing security and employment."

Amnesty

According to the policy, the government has set up an Investigation and Probe Centre at Sundarijal in the capital and a rehabilitation centre in Dhakal Tar of Tanahu district. Kamal Thapa informed that the Investigation Centre would probe into the applications filed by the Maoists in order to find out the genuine ones. The 4-page policy paper states that the government would grant amnesty to the Maoists who surrender before 12 February 2004.

Quite expectedly, the Maoist rebels have reacted strongly to the government's offer for "surrender and amnesty". Maoist supremo Pushpa Kamal Dahal, popularly known as Prachanda, said the offer is "suspicious" and is a "new tactic" of the government. Prachanda stressed: "The newly announced so-called price-list for surrender is nothing but the government's tactics to build up the morale of the already waning royal army, which is on the verge of collapse." Prachanda claimed that the price-list had proved that many soldiers of royal army had quit the government side and had been joining the "people's army".

Prachanda also claimed that after the cease fire break, the people's army had seized hundreds of modern weapons such as LMG, M-16 and SLR from

the royal army. Calling the government's statement "pathetic and paradoxical", Prachanda appealed to all people to "unite with them to bring a 'republican state'". Significantly, Prachanda also emphasised that it was high time for all leftist, progressive,

50-minute meeting with King Gyanendra in January. The two discussed the present situation in the kingdom and the future course of action. However, after the meeting, Koirala stated that he was "not so optimistic" about the outcome of the meeting. In



democratic and patriotic forces to unite to root out "feudal dictatorship" from the country and move ahead for the construction of a republican state through a "constituent assembly". He underlined his willingness and readiness to hold talks with all on this objective.

Resentment

All parliamentary and mainstream Nepali political parties and interest groups want the existing ad hoc arrangements resulting in concentration of powers and increase in authoritarian tendencies to end at the earliest. They all, though, do not seem to be in agreement with each other on the immediate step or objective. Therein lies the rub; that has been helping the powers that be. But, beyond doubt the resentment against the status quo is not only on the increase but it is also becoming more vocal and, at times, violent. Happily, His Majesty's government and His Majesty himself are not unaware thereof.

The Nepali Congress supremo, Girija Prasad Koirala, had a

his Nepali Congress Office at Teku, Koirala told press persons that there had been evidence that time and again the King had turned away from his words. He also revealed that he had urged upon His Majesty the King that the restoration of the dissolved House of Representatives was the only "suitable option" for an outlet. On the other hand, he added that the five parties — of which the Nepali Congress is the leading light and which include the UML, the Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Anandi Devi Group), the NMKP and the Jan Morcha Nepal — would continue its "anti-regressive" movement, despite the series of audiences granted by the king to political leaders.

Incidentally, the House of Representatives would have completed its full term in May this year. But Koirala has been consistently insisting upon the restoration of the House. Relevantly, the Supreme Court of Nepal has only recently rejected a public writ petition stating there was no provision in the constitution for calling a session

of the dissolved House of Representatives.

Commenting on the royal audiences, Prachanda said recently that the King wanted to bring about a "split" among parties through the "audience tactic". In a statement, Prachanda said that the audiences "are nothing but the King's tactic to bring division among the parties who have been protesting against regression". On the other hand, the UML, the largest leftist party in the mainstream, has agreed in principle to hold a Round Table Conference, a major demand put forth by the Maoist rebels during the failed peace process, the party sources said recently.

Economy

Amidst this political uncertainty, the kingdom's economy is moving from bad to worse. The manufacturing sector shrank by 10 per cent. Trade and tourism dropped by 10.8 per cent. On the individual plane, tourism dropped by 28 per cent. According to an estimate, the damage caused by the Maoists stands at \$500 million. Happily, the economy has been largely saved by remittances which stand at \$90 million each year.

However, the World Bank has warned Nepal that it would drift into a "failed state" if the 8-year-old Maoist conflict is not resolved in time. The multilateral donor agency has shown serious concern over the deteriorating security situation. Its Country Assistance Strategy 2004-07, which is yet to be launched, warns that the country is getting into a widespread armed conflict and breakdown of state institutions are the major risk factors at present.

Things are serious. Casual and ad hoc approaches are bound to be worse than useless. Rising above pettiness and avoiding immediate gains, in the interest of the people and the country, are the needs of the hour. Time, indeed, is running out. Statesmanship and enlightenment could be the only meaningful and purposeful strategy in the existing state of affairs. Obviously initiatives under the given circumstances, have to come from the top.

(Concluded)

WITHERED DEMOCRACY-I

Himalayas
S. Nepal
5/6

Dissent Against Nepal's Monarchy Is Rising

By PARMANAND

In the chilling and biting cold of winter, the politics of the mountain kingdom of Nepal seems to be warming up. Various political actors, including the powers that be, have become active simultaneously — even though in varying degrees and for varying objectives. Though it does not appear, for sure, that a new phase of more democratic, participatory and meaningful politics is in the offing, it appears crystal clear that every segment of the political class wants to play to the gallery to the best of its ability and capacity.

Parliament

The South Asian landlocked state in the eastern Himalayas today is the only state in the region without a popularly elected legislature. The 205-member directly elected Pratinidhi Sabha has been out of existence since 22 May 2002, when it was dissolved by King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev on the recommendation of the then Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba. The upper and permanent house of the bicameral parliament, the Rashtriya Sabha — containing both indirectly elected and nominated elements — could have met under the constitution and indulged in the exercise of interest-articulation and interest-aggregation. The powers that be nixed any such exercise. Its numerical strength was also allowed to dwindle as falling vacancies were not filled up. Worse, the local bodies have also lost their existence. Of course, the government has chosen to nominate several people to look after these bodies.

After the dismissal of the Sher Bahadur Deuba ministry in October 2002, two Prime Ministers — Lokendra Bahadur Chand and Surya Bahadur Thapa, the present incumbent — assumed office. But they did so more because of their proximity to the palace than to the people, more because of royal bounty than popular mandate. In any case, democracy has been visibly withering away since October

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2002 in Nepal.

The constitution that came into operation in November 1990 had envisaged a system of constitutional monarchy based on multiparty system. In fact, this had become a reality much

1769. Since October 2002, though, there has been little doubt about the real power-centre and power-wielder in Nepal. As such, any political initiative appears serious and meaningful only when it



before the enforcement of the constitution, per se. As early as April 1990, the then reigning and ruling King, Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev (1972-2001), had dissolved the authoritarian panchayat system (1962-1990), lifted ban from political parties imposed in 1961, and invited the President of the Nepali Congress, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, to head an interim government tasked with holding the first-ever multiparty polls after 1959 and framing a constitution.

7-point agenda

Significantly, the Nepali Congress had been consistently struggling for the revival of multiparty system ever since it was undone by King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev (1955-1972), the father of Kings Birendra and Gyanendra. Incidentally, King Mahendra has been the only monarch in Nepal's history whose two sons ascended the throne of the Shah dynasty established by King Prithvi Narayan Shah of Gorkha in the unified Nepal in

emanates from the throne. King Gyanendra has taken two palpable and apparently meaningful initiatives recently. The King has come out with a 7-point agenda comprising national consensus, peace and security, corruption control, people-oriented administration, national unity, free and fair elections and an all-party government.

On the other hand, and quite significantly, the King has been meeting leaders of various political parties, which had shown their convincing presence in the three Pratinidhi Sabhas elected in 1991, 1994 and 1999. He has granted long audiences to the Nepali Congress supremo, Girija Prasad Koirala, who has also relevantly, the record of holding the premiership for the longest period in the post-1990 phase, former Prime Minister and Nepali Congress (Democratic) leader, Sher Bahadur Deuba, former deputy prime minister and Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) general secretary, Madhav Kumar Nepal, former minister and Rashtriya Prajatantra Party

chairman, Pashupati Shamsheer Jung Bahadur Rana.

King Gyanendra has also given audience to the Nepal Mazdoor Kisan Party leader, Narayan Man Bijukchhe, Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Badri Mandal) President and former deputy prime minister Badri Prasad Mandal and two ministers in the Surya Bahadur Thapa ministry, Prakash Chandra Lohani and Kamal Thapa.

Political culture

In his characteristic style, the monarch, officially known as Shree Panch, has met all these leaders only individually — oblivious of the importance and relevance of what is known as collective wisdom. But then the style adopted by the king has always come handy and is not exceptional in the Nepali political culture. More often than not, the leader who gets an exclusive audience feels quite elated at the cost of democratisation and liberalisation of the polity and society. It does not, though, mean that political leaders do not suggest that the King should meet various leaders collectively to discuss the nitty-gritty of the kingdom's politics.

Why has the king embarked on meeting leaders of various political hues in the kingdom? Reasons are obvious. The international community no longer feels the importance of doubtful divinity in the politics of the new millennium. It has got used to see multiparty system based on cooperative competition alive and kicking; it has become fond of seeing elected legislatures reflecting the urges and aspirations of the hoi polloi. On the domestic front, too, resentment against the existing arrangement is growing fast and becoming more vocal.

Demand for a republican form of government, which has been the main plank of the violence-friendly Maoists, is seeing more and more takers among the peace-loving common Nepalis, too. Going to the streets and indulging in agitprop for this purpose is becoming more intensified.

(To be concluded)

19 FEB 2002

Ex-Nepal MP shot on bandh day

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Statesman News Service

KATHMANDU, Feb. 17. — Maoists shot dead a former MP in Nepal today, the day life in the country came to a standstill after a bandh called by the rebels.

Police said three to four people entered the ancestral home of Khem Narayan Fauzdar (52), former member of the upper House of parliament, and leader of the Nepali Congress (Democratic) party, and pumped at least three bullets into him before escaping.

Fauzdar, who had been an MP for six years from the mid-90s to 2002, was killed in Nawalparasi district in western Nepal, a day after the government media said security forces had shot dead at least 35 rebels in another district in western Nepal.

The state-run Radio Nepal had said last night that security forces had encircled at least 1000 insurgents in western Kalikot district and killed at least 35, which was likely to include senior rebel leaders.

Fauzdar's death comes 48 hours after an activist was killed by the Maoists in the heart of Kathmandu city for starting an organisation that was demanding rehabilitation and justice for the people victimised by the insurgents.

Even as Mr Deuba, who had survived an attempt on his motorcade by the Maoists late last year, condemned Fauzdar's killing, the city remained paralysed in response to the second bandh call



Nepalese policemen patrol a street in Kathmandu on Tuesday.— AFP

in six days given by the rebels.

The fresh killings are likely to deepen the fear and contribute towards ensuring another massive shutdown from 25 February, when the Maoists have called a five-day bandh.

THE STATESMAN

18 FEB 2004

Maoists kidnap 400 women in Nepal

Statesman News Service

KATHMANDU, Feb. 16. — Maoist rebels killed three persons, including a child, and abducted 400 women for refusing to cooperate with them in Nepal, reports said today, on the eve of another Maoist-called bandh in Nepal, the second in less than a week.

In a separate incident, a civilian was killed when a bomb planted by Maoists exploded in Jhapachowk in Jhapa district, the government-run *Gorkhapatra* daily reported.

Yesterday, a 36-year-old man was gunned down in Bagbazar in the evening, in one of the busy commercial areas of the capital, with police unable to arrest the assailants despite descriptions by eyewitnesses.

The victim, Ganesh Chiluwal, headed an organisation comprising people victimised by the rebels and had reportedly received death threats from them to close his office or face the consequences.

The Maoist Victims' Association had been meeting the international community, officials and human right activists to press for the rehabilitation of people displaced due to the Maoists, tortured by them or orphaned.

During the year-end, when Nepal celebrated Dashain, one of its biggest festivals, the association members had camped in one of the prominent public places in the capital to highlight the fact that they had no means or relatives to share the festival with due to the Maoists.

Though the outlawed organisation did not immediately claim responsibility for

a letter signed by the so-called head of the "Maoist Valley Coordination", asking him to close the office at the place where he was later gunned down, or face death.

Last week, the association had burnt effigies of Prachanda, aka Pushpa Kamal Dahal, the supreme chairman of the rebels, and his deputy Dr Baburam Bhattarai, in the capital, calling the former a "murderer".

As members of the organisation gathered in the city to take out his cortege, news reached the city about the insurgents on Sunday firing on a passenger bus in Thapa chowk of eastern Jhapa district, resulting in the death of a nine-year-old girl and another passenger.

Last Thursday, during another bandh, at least two passengers died when the insurgents hurled bombs at one of the few public buses defying the call and continuing to ply with the help of armed security personnel.

The local media reported the abduction of 300 students from Jungar Higher Secondary School in Rolpa district, considered a Maoist stronghold. There were also reports of at least 400 women from Bhaikhale area in Accham district being taken as prisoners.

Meanwhile, 26 Maoist workers surrendered before security forces in Rautahat district, the report added.

The news of the abductions comes on the eve of the Nepal king and queen's tour of the remote districts, including Maoist strongholds where the political parties have been afraid to venture since the breaking off of the ceasefire.

From tomorrow, a spate of festivities will be held to mark the 54th anniversary of the revolution. The events are scheduled to be held.

...ova has been in custody ...

King Gyanendra to visit Maoist stronghold

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TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kathmandu: Amid tight security, King Gyanendra is scheduled to attend a function in the Maoist stronghold of Nepalgunj town in mid-western Nepal on Sunday, where the rebels exploded bombs and called three-day general strike.

Authorities said that security has been beefed up and preparations are complete for the civic reception of the King, whose visit since Thursday, is being seen as a

popularity test. *High Nepal*
Targetting the function, the Maoists have called a three-day general strike in Bheri and Karnali zones from Friday, while the rebels have also exploded four bombs in Nepalgunj on the same day. No one was injured.

The civic reception function of the King is being organised at a time when the five political parties are intensifying their pro-democracy agitation in different parts of the country.

THE TIMES OF

8 FEB 2004

Nepal royal couple visit Kalighat temple

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA. Jan. 31. — The Crown Prince of Nepal, Paras Bir Vikram Bahadur Shah Dev, and Her Highness Himani Bhagyalakshmi Shah Dev, visited the Kali temple at Kalighat amid tight security this morning.

A huge crowd gathered outside the police cordon near the temple to have a glimpse of the royal couple who arrived at 11.45 a.m..

Dressed in traditional *Punjabi* and *kurta*, the prince waved at the crowd as he got down from the car. The smiling Prince and Princess tried to come forward, but were prevented from doing so by Special Branch officers on duty. But they did pose for a photograph.

Police and the temple priests then took the couple into the temple to offer prayers. They stayed inside the temple for about 15 minutes and left at noon.

The royal couple had landed at the Kolkata airport at 9.25 a.m. from where they went to ITC Sonarban-gla Hotel. They are invited for dinner at the Raj Bha-van tonight. They will leave the city tomorrow morning by a Royal Nepal Airlines flight.

Meanwhile, the entire Kalighat temple complex, including shops, were closed since this morning. Police virtually took control of the whole area since 8.00 a.m. and not a single shopowner was allowed to open his shop.

Today being an auspicious day for Kali Puja, thou-sands of pilgrims who came from several parts of the country were stranded. Mr Tamal Banerjee, a resident of Burdwan who came to the temple early in the morn-ing said, "I did not know that the common people will not be allowed inside for security reasons. Even the shops for *prasadam* are closed." A section of the shop-owners too expressed their anger against the police for not allowing them to open their shops. As a result, the brisk business which they do on Saturdays was hit, some traders alleged.

Indian firms unscathed by Maoist attacks

Sudeshna Sarkar in Kathmandu

Jan. 28. — Two separate bomb attacks by Maoists on two prominent Indian joint ventures that had been made the targets of the rebels' extortion bid earlier, Dabur Nepal and Surya Nepal, a joint venture of ITC, left both unscathed and unfazed.

"We are running smoothly," Mr T K Gupta, director of Dabur Nepal, said. According to him, on Monday, two men riding on a motorbike had hurled a bomb at the wall of the compound that houses the Dabur Nepal corporate office and green-house in Birgunj district and fled. "About six inches of grass near the wall was flattened. There was no other effect contrary to reports in a

section of the media that the insurgents had taken control of the staff for some time," Mr Gupta said.

Dabur Nepal, which has an annual turnover of NRS 280 million and employs 800 people directly while generating means of livelihood for nearly 3000-3500 families, was asked by the Maoists to pay "tax" to their "people's government" late last year. The company was asked to pay NRS 10 million. Surya Nepal, which manufactures tobacco products and garments, was asked about the same time to pay NRS 5 million.

Both the organisations' cases were taken up by the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu which made a formal request to the Nepalese government for

protection for both the ventures. Both the companies said they had refused to pay. "We are a professionally managed company with all our expenses coming under audit," Mr Sanjiv Puri, managing director of Surya Nepal, said. "There is no way we can pay."

On Monday night, the Maoists also hurled a bomb at the Surya Nepal factory in Simara. However, the bomb fell on the fence between two walls and caused no damage.

Surya Nepal, which is interested in diversifying into food products in Nepal, has for now decided to lie low till the publicity and furore die down. Dabur Nepal, on the other hand, has been going on unfazed with new product launches. This month it launched a new brand of hair-care

Koirala's daughter hurt in clash

KATHMANDU, Jan. 28. — Dozens of students, including Ms Sujata Koirala, Nepali Congress chief Mr GP Koirala's daughter, were injured today when police lathicharged pro-democracy protesters who took out rallies across Nepal. Meanwhile, rejecting King Gyanendra's reported remarks that Nepalese political parties did not fulfill their responsibilities towards the people, Mr Koirala has said his views did not represent those of a "21st century monarch". — PTI

products in the Himalayan kingdom with the institution of a film awards ceremony.

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16/1/04

Save Nepal

✓

Give Maoists yet another chance ✓

Political parties in Nepal must put aside their differences if they are serious about restoring order. None has displayed any good sense yet to end the 15-month-old political imbroglio that followed King Gyanendra's dismissal of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba in October 2002 for failure to hold the mid-term poll scheduled in the second week of November that year. Since then there had been proposals galore but few takers. While the King has sought a national consensus on his seven-point agenda — including curbs on corruption, the need for good governance, solution to the Maoist problem and an all-party government — the Nepali Congress wants the Constitution activated. The Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist) has put forward a nine-point "road map", including a fresh election and claims it was prepared "to address the Maoist mood". Surya Bahadur Thapa believes the only way out is to hold elections. The students are forthright: if the King fails to restore multi-party democracy there has to be a republican set-up. In normal course the general elections are due in May and the interim government's main objective is to create a conducive climate. But there is little Thapa can do unless the political parties cooperate. The country is back to square one with the government again putting the "terrorist tag" on Maoists after they walked out of the peace talks last July.

Maoist uprising since February 1996 has so far claimed more than 8,400 lives, most of them over the past two years, and affected the development process. Since Emergency and the use of force have failed to tackle the menace the threat has to be met politically. Individually political parties are in no position to decide the country's future so the best they can do is to agree to the government's proposal for a round table conference and hammer out a solution.

THE STATESMAN

16 JAN 2004

Blunt Bhutan message to Pak

Handwritten: 5/11/04
BHARAT BHUSHAN

Islamabad, Jan. 4: Bhutan's Prime Minister Lyonpo Jigmi Y Thinley did not mince words when he said: "While we take comfort in the failure of the attempts on the life of H.E. President Musharraf, we cannot but see it as yet another rude reminder of our lack of will to root out the menace of terrorism."

In saying so boldly, he proved that geographical size need not come in the way of speaking the truth.

Thinley said South Asia had been living with the nightmare of terrorism and there was a need to immediately and forcefully implement the Saarc multilateral obligations to suppress the menace.

The Additional Protocol to the Saarc Convention on Terrorism, which lists those

doing what it urged other Saarc nations to emulate — to act against terrorism and make South Asia safe and secure.

The Bhutanese Prime Minister recalled how three armed extremist groups from India had sneaked into Bhutan and established 30 camps in the dense jungles of the kingdom.

"The strategically located camps were used to train insurgents, store arms and ammunition, and to launch terrorist attacks inside India," he said.

He described how their presence impeded trade, led to the closure of several large industries and educational institutions and inhibited socio-economic development. Innocent people in Bhutan, Assam and Bengal became "victims of threat, coercion, and extortion", and misunderstanding

THE TELEGRAPH

5 JAN 2004