

# Permanent seat: Maldives fully backs India

By Amit Baruah

**NEW DELHI, MARCH 30.** The Maldives today announced that it would extend "full support" to India's entry into the United Nations' Security Council as a permanent member. "I have accordingly assured the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, of our full support to India in this matter," the Maldivian President, Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, said at a press conference.

With this public announcement, four South Asian nations — Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and now the Maldives — have come out in support of India's entry into the Security Council as a permanent member.

Mr. Gayoom said the Maldives joined India in welcoming the reform proposals put forward by the U.N. Secretary-General, Kofi Annan. "We believe the Security Council must reflect the realities of our times to strengthen its effectiveness and relevance."

## Strategic partner

India was a crucial "development and strategic" partner for the Maldives. "In addition to

being a major player in the region, India is also an influential nation on the world stage. We share common views on a range of international issues of mutual interest such as international peace, the protection of the environment ... the fight against terrorism and the reform of the United Nations."

Mr. Gayoom said that India had played a crucial role in the post-tsunami relief efforts of his country. "Although the number of deaths in the Maldives was comparatively low, the tsunami created a nationwide disaster, wiping out about 62 per cent of GDP."

## "Response substantial"

"The Indian Government's response to the emergency was timely and substantial, and we thank the Government and the people of India for that help. We also thank other donors who have joined us in the relief and recovery efforts."

Asked about the status of the still-to-be-held South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, Mr. Gayoom said both the Maldives and India were ready to attend the twice-postponed summit.

The President, who imposed a state of emergency last year and cracked down on Opposition activists, denied there were any "political prisoners" in his country. He maintained that last year's events were a result of "mob violence."

Asked about the "vague nature" of some of his reform proposals which left open the possibility of executive abuse, Mr. Gayoom said these were just proposals, and would have to be discussed by the special Majlis (Assembly).

On whether he would allow the Opposition Maldivian Democratic Party to set up an office in Male, Mr. Gayoom said the present Constitution did not allow this, though he was in favour of multi-party democracy.

"There should be space for a multi-party Constitution," Mr. Gayoom said but refused to give any timeframe by when these democratic reforms could be put in place by the special assembly.

According to him, the Maldives had prospered due to "political stability." He felt "violence" would prevent visitors from coming to his country.

THE HINDU

31 MAR 2005



Manmohan Singh being greeted by Mauritius Prime Minister Louis Berenger on his arrival in Port Louis on Wednesday. (AFP)

## Small neighbours in focus

**RADHIKA RAMASESHAN**

**Port Louis (Mauritius), March 30:** Atal Bihari Vajpayee and his party flaunted the "maturing" of Indo-US relations as a high-point in the six-year life of the National Democratic Alliance government.

Vajpayee's successor, Manmohan Singh, has chosen Mauritius as the destination for his first bilateral visit and it did not happen by chance, claimed sources close to the Prime Minister.

Foreign policy is not Singh's first area of interest or concern but his choice is influenced by his view that India needs to focus on countries that are specks on the world map but count in their own ways.

In the process, the sources said, the Prime Minister is

"redefining" the concept of India's neighbours. "Who is a neighbour? In a village, the nearest house can be 10 miles away but the occupant is a neighbour nonetheless. As the crow flies over the Indian Ocean, Mauritius is India's nearest neighbour," quipped a source.

In his departure statement, Singh said he saw Mauritius as a "friendly gateway to the African continent and an invaluable partner at multilateral fora".

Singh's original bilateral trip would have included Sri Lanka as well, reinforcing his notion of global diplomacy.

But after the Pakistan President expressed a desire to watch an India-Pakistan one-day in Delhi, Singh had to drop Lanka from his itinerary from where he was to reach

Kochi in Kerala to meet Pervez Musharraf, according to the original schedule. By then, reworking his travel plans was "not possible", a source said.

Singh's second bilateral visit would probably be to Singapore next month. He will go to Afghanistan in October to inaugurate the Parliament complex built with Indian help.

The Prime Minister, sources said, is still undecided about a US visit despite an invitation. It is believed he would rather wait for Washington to first clarify its offer of civil and nuclear technology cooperation.

In Mauritius, Singh will call on President Anerood Jugnauth and leader of the Opposition Navinchandra Ramgoolam. He will also address the national Assembly.

India's security fears hold sway when dealing with neighbours

# Losing Kathmandu

PRATAP BHANU MEHTA

The political crisis in Nepal continues unabated and it seems that there is little India can do to influence the course of events. This crisis is a product of deep-seated structural issues in Nepalese society. To be fair to India, it is never easy to influence the actions of rulers like King Gyanendra, whose paranoia makes them immune to both the interests of their own people and international pressure. But while many political observers had seen Gyanendra's actions as coming, the government of India woke up too late. Our Nepal policy has also revealed some fundamental mistakes in our approach towards our neighbours.

Our fundamental mistake in dealing with many of our neighbours is this. We have fallen prey to our own security fears. To put it provocatively, if we had aimed at genuine friendship with our neighbours we would have gained our security. But when we aim at our security, we invite their enmity. It is astonishing that despite the weight of economic interdependence, social relations and geographical destiny, India came to carry so little credibility in Nepal. We should acknowledge that this was a result of our encasing Nepal in a relationship of subordination. In the Fifties we decided who would rule them. Nepal's sovereignty over its foreign affairs was always attenuated by India's concerns: matters from building hydro projects to roads required India's tacit approval. Even though we were in many ways a benign power, we were ultimately paternalist. The overall structure of the relationship lent itself to creating a politics of resentment in Nepal. And this relationship was driven by our conception of security, not by the imperatives of development in Nepal.

A security syndrome also affected our judgments about the Maoists. We vacillated too long before realizing that the king's policies had little to do with effectively dealing with the Maoists. As reprehensible as their methods are, they draw upon legitimate grievances and are a viable political movement. Indeed, the present conjuncture is a unique opportunity to bring many of them into the political mainstream. Some of the Maoists realize that their long-term goals require them to gain broader political legitimacy. Democracy itself can be a path to power. The

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Maoists have, for the first time, allowed regular political parties to operate in areas under their control. Ironically, it may turn out that the left parties inside Nepal may find it more difficult to do business with the Maoists than the Nepal Congress. But there is a real danger that the Indian government is not doing enough to establish political links with the Maoists. A great failing of our policy is that we often let the intelligence establishment define our political objectives. Rather, we should be clear on our political ob-

jectives and use whatever means are necessary to achieve them. Our attitude to the Maoists has been inexplicable. India was the first state to declare them terrorists (even before Nepal did). But when we actually declared them terrorists, we then did nothing to crack down on them and curb their activities. Now that there is an opportunity for them to be part of the political dialogue, we want someone to destroy them. So we end up neither with a capacity to instil fear, nor with any political capital to deploy. The singular lesson in our dealing with the Maoists is this: there has to be clarity of objectives and a determination to stick to a strategy.



We were under the illusion that the king's actions were about fighting Maoists. India read out the riot act almost two weeks too late, and there is some evidence that India's message was not as categorically received as India had hoped. The king is still reading too many caveats into our messages and apparently believes that India and the United States of America will not put maxi-

mum pressure for fear of sending him closer to China. India, at this juncture, has very little *locus standi*: even our ambassador can be sent away without an audience. But we must relentlessly use the office of every international mediator to impress upon the king that now is his last opportunity. There appears now to be a groundswell of republicanism inside Nepal, and the last defendants of a constitutional monarchy are fast disappearing. Indeed, there is a danger that we will fall between two stools: the

**The international community will have to think of a decent exit strategy for the king, or he will have no reason to relent**

new forces in Nepal, who have the momentum of history on their side, will not remember India as a real friend of democracy. India blockaded a whole country when it thought fit, but continued to vacillate over arms supplies to an errant monarch. The international community will have to think of a decent exit strategy for the king, or he will have no reason to relent. But it is astonishing that we have not been able to even negotiate a major public visit by non-government figures to political prisoners, and are consoling ourselves that select releases are a sign of progress.

But the most important lesson for India is this. Foreign ministries around the world have lots of failings in common: they confuse diplomatic exchange with long-term strategy. What India needs in the Nepal crisis is deep links with the important actors, the Royal Nepal Army, the Maoists and others. Foreign offices are not good at cultivating these links. They are slow to respond to the ramifications of domestic politics in any country. They have a professional bias towards risk averseness, which inevitably leads them towards the *status quo*. And they often confuse form with substance. I recently had the awkward experience of a very distinguished foreign service officer, in a seminar on Nepal, requesting the speakers to be "polite" when referring to King Gyanendra, since he was the head of a neighbouring state. I can only imagine how effective such officers, caught in the virtual world of diplomacy, are at conveying messages.

Our ministry of external affairs is also peculiarly reluctant to send out clear messages. In retrospect, the first press conference after the prime minister cancelled his visit to Dhaka probably sent the wrong signal to Nepal. It not only managed to confuse messages to Bangladesh with a message to Nepal but it was also that our message to the king was not pointed.

Of course, any progress will not be easy. But India has to work on the following assumption. First, neutrality is not an option in two senses. We are not perceived as neutral and in the present circumstances even acts of omission have ramifications. Second, in the past we have attenuated Nepal's sovereignty based on our security concerns. Now we should perform a constructive role in maintaining democracy in Nepal. We should trust that whichever regime comes to power in Nepal, in the long run, it will have to work out a propitious relationship with India. Therefore we ought not to be distracted by short-term anti-India rhetoric.

It is about time that Nepalese society writes a constitution for itself, rather than being handed one by the king. Even restoring the suspended parliament may, after all that has happened, not be enough. The convening of a constitutional assembly can be made compatible with a place for a constitutional monarchy. But time is running out. There is still possibility of negotiation, but the message has to get through to the king that he has no option but to take assured steps towards democracy.

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# Gayoom arrives, to say thanks

## Acknowledges India's Efforts In Providing Relief Following Tsunami

**New Delhi:** Maldives President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom on Monday met Prime Minister Manmohan Singh here and discussed bilateral and international issues. Officials said Gayoom thanked Singh for India's prompt assistance following the December 26 tsunami that battered many of Maldives' nearly 1,200 islands.

The Maldivian economy, which is centred on 87 resorts catering to high-spending global tourists, was badly hit by the disaster. India took the lead in providing relief with more countries, such as the US, joining the reconstruction effort later.

Accompanied by his wife Nasreena, Gayoom arrived here on Sunday on a six-day visit, his first since 2000. He is scheduled to meet President A P J Abdul Kalam and hold talks with external affairs minister Natwar Singh and defence minister Pranab Mukherjee on Tuesday.

India and Maldives enjoy cordial relations and are members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc). New Delhi not only helped Gayoom stave off a coup against him in 1987 but also built its public health infrastructure. Gayoom has been in power since 1978 and has lately promised multi-party democracy in Maldives by the year-end. India wants Maldives to release political activists arrested following riots in capital Male in August 2004. IANS



Maldives President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom shakes hands with PM Manmohan Singh in New Delhi on Monday

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## Nepal scholars barred from India meet

**Kathmandu:** Three Nepalese academics, including a former ambassador to India, were on Friday prevented by security forces from travelling to India to attend a seminar.

Lokraj Baral, a former Nepalese envoy to India and a respected author, as well as Tribhuvan University professors Krishna Khanal and Krishna Hachchethu were to take part in the seminar to be held in Goa from Saturday.

The Centre for the Study of Developing Society in New Delhi had organised the meet. But security personnel stopped all three at the Tribhuvan International Airport, saying they had instructions from higher authorities.



**Gyanendra**

The outspoken Baral, also a political scientist, had faced a similar situation last month. He was arrested at the airport Feb 7 when he was returning from New Delhi. He was kept under arrest for 18 days, triggering protests both at home and abroad.

An indignant Baral told the Kathmandu Post newspaper: "If we are a threat to the state, we ask to be imprisoned. If not, why are we being treated like this?" He also told the daily that professionals should not be treated as politicians. "We are not advocating any political doctrine," he said.

Since King Gyanendra sacked the government of Sher Bahadur Deuba Feb 1 and assumed absolute powers with the help of the army, Nepal has been under a state of emergency with the suspension of civil rights.

The new regime has also said it could impose curbs on movements of its citizens as well as others living in the kingdom. Early this month, the arrest of noted Nepalese journalist Kanak Mani Dixit created another furore. Dixit was taken into custody after returning from India where he had delivered lectures at seminars organised by Kolkata's Jadavpur University and New Delhi's India International Centre.

He was arrested 48 hours after his return to Kathmandu but was released in five hours following protests. IANS

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# Flawed parameters

5/10/05  
Delhi must review policy towards Nepal

New Delhi is partly to blame for King Gyanendra keeping the Indian ambassador waiting for an audience for over a month — he met Pakistan's former envoy within days of the royal takeover — and must review its rather inconsistent foreign policy vis-à-vis its immediate neighbours.

Myanmar is ruled by a military junta that must hold some record for suppressing democracy for as long as it has but India maintains diplomatic and trade ties. At Delhi's instance recently, the Myanmar army conducted cleansing operations against North-east militants along its border. India and Bhutan have excellent relations but the drive against illegal migrants 15 years ago forced thousands of Bhutanese of Nepali origin to flee and they languish in improvised Nepal camps. India does nothing because these are "internal affairs" of Bhutan, and yet it takes a different view where Nepal is concerned. It refuses to accept the King's contention that the Sher Bahadur Deuba government's dismissal was to contain Maoist activities, clean up the political machinery and hand power back to the people in three years.

At the UN Human Rights Council meeting underway in Geneva, Nepal foreign minister Ramesh Nath Pandey defended the army action against the Maoists. Last year Switzerland, in a resolution, sought to put Nepal on Agenda 9, implying a dire human rights crisis and a need for international monitoring. Though no longer a member, Switzerland can move the resolution and lobby for an anti-Nepal vote. India is unlikely to vote and, possibly realising this, Nepal has not even approached New Delhi. Pakistan, China and perhaps Russia will vote for Nepal.

Suddenly, as if to pique India, General Musharraf has raised the Kashmir issue again as being the irritant which, if not resolved, would affect the credibility of the confidence-building measures. Dhaka, too, fired a salvo about India's upstream dam constructions drying up several of its water bodies. Vishwa Hindu Parishad leader Ashok Singhal's meeting with King Gyanendra last month informing him about the support of Hindus worldwide for the royal coup suggests that the only Hindu monarch in the world is not without admirers in India, mostly from the Hindutva camp.

Then there are reports of Nepal Maoists, branded terrorists by India, meeting at west Delhi's Narela locality last Sunday, which could prompt Nepal to turn around and wonder why India does not tackle "terrorists". Even more embarrassing for India was last Thursday's incident where former Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa took ill shortly after dinner at the Indian ambassador's residence. Coming within a week of vice-chairman Tulsi Giri criticising dinner diplomacy, Nepal may use this to accuse India of hobnobbing with opposition leaders. Why, one is tempted to ask, do tensions with Nepal invariably heighten only when the Congress is in power?

# Centre decides to increase SSB forces along Indo-Nepal border

Debasis Sarkar

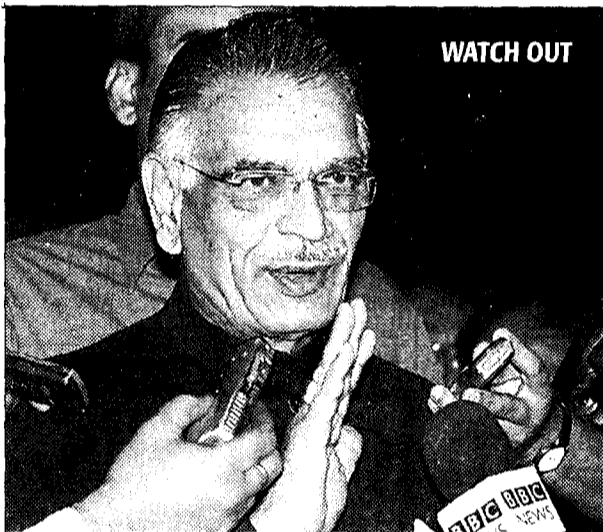
PANITANKI-KAKARVITA

(Indo-Nepal Border) 27 MARCH

**F**OLLOWING the recent political turmoil in Nepal and possible heavy inflow of Maoist activists from Nepal to India, the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) has decided to increase its forces along the international border.

Quoting Union home minister Shivraj Patil at a function in New Delhi on Sunday, a senior SSB official told ET that the central government has given deep thought to the matter. "The government is going to deploy 20 more battalions along the border in order to plug the gap. The Cabinet has already approved the raising of these battalions," he said.

Under the special friendship treaty between the two neighbouring countries, the 1751-km long Indo-Nepal border is open and cannot be guarded by military forces.



Government plans to deploy 20 more battalions to check inflow of Maoist activists

Since the citizens of both countries have scope of free movement across the border without any passport or visa, keeping proper vigil in the border requires special skill. The SSB's

experience of more than four decades in handling civil operations in border areas was utilised to achieve the goal.

In accordance with the strategy of "One Border One Force" suggested by the Subrahmaniam committee to the government after the Kargil war, SSB had been given the responsibility of looking after the porous Indo-Nepal border in September 2001.

Of the total length of the border, around 900 km run along West Bengal and Sikkim, where 16 SSB battalions have already been deployed at 135 border outposts. Recently, the force has also been entrusted with the responsibility of the Indo-Bhutan border as well.

Since deployment, SSB has arrested 439 smugglers and 55 Maoists while seizure of goods worth more than Rs 8 crore has taken place. In addition to this, more than 80 million hi-tech and expensive firearms have also been seized by SSB.

# Maoists held secret meet in Delhi: Nepal

Sudeshna Sarkar  
in Kathmandu

March 24. — Defying India's ban on them, Nepal's Maoist guerrillas held a secret meeting in Delhi on Sunday to discuss the expulsion of three top leaders, Nepal's army said today.

Royal Nepalese Army spokesman Brigadier-General Dipak Gurung told the media here that the Nepalese government has conveyed the matter to India. According to army reports, Maoists belonging to the north-west regional bureau of the outlawed Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) met in the west Delhi locality of Narela, in Sector V Central Park, to discuss a circular on the latest activities in the underground party. The circular confirmed the demotion of the deputy leader of the rebels, Mr Baburam Bhattarai, who was in charge of the central division, ranking next to the CPN (Maoist) supreme commander, Pushpa Kamal Dahak aka Prachanda.

Since last week, Nepal's state media has been reporting a rift among Maoists.

## Gyanendra aide in Capital

NEW DELHI, March 24. — A close friend of Nepal monarch, 95-year-old Field Marshal Neer Shamsher Rana, a WW-II veteran, arrived here yesterday along with the chairman of Nepal's Raj Parishad Standing Committee, Mr Parashu Narayan Chaudhary. Both are on separate "private" visits. Nepal watchers said Mr Chaudhary's visit is more significant as the Raj Parishad is equivalent to a Privy Council. Mr Chaudhary left for an ashram in Mathura yesterday. He may meet VHP leaders too. — SNS

Differences in opinion led to Bhattarai being expelled with his wife, Hisila Yami aka Rahul-Parbati, the state media said. Bhattarai denied army reports.

**Military aid**  
Nepal's army said today: "We're not worried by the blockade of military aid as we have sufficient weapons in stock and the infrastructure to produce small arms and bullets by ourselves."



# India in neighbours'

## MONARCH DELIVERS A ROYAL SNUB

**Sudeshna Sarkar**  
in Kathmandu

March 23. — After its overtures were spurned by India, a simmering Nepal has struck back, putting New Delhi's envoy way down its list of priorities, giving precedence to Pakistani diplomats, the kingdom's own festivals and even militant Vishwa Hindu Parishad leader Mr Ashok Singhal.

As a sign of the entente far from cordiale, India's ambassador to Nepal Mr Shiv Shankar Mukherjee has been kept waiting for over a month for an audience with King Gyanendra while the monarch has readily granted audience to Pakistan's outgoing ambassador Mr Zamir Akram, attended *Shiva Ratri* celebrations at Pashupatinath Temple and met Mr Singhal who came last month with the assurance that millions of Hindus worldwide supported the royal coup.

Also in the dog house, along with the Indian envoy, is the British ambassador, Mr Keith George Bloomfield, whose request for a royal audience has also been put on hold since last

month. But though the USA had joined forces with India and the UK to express concern at the royal takeover and urge for the restoration of multi-party democracy, the US ambassador, Mr James Francis Moriarty, has been shown preferential treatment

### 'Delhi to blame'

DHAKA, March 23. — Bangladesh has alleged that construction of numerous dams upstream by India on common rivers has led to the drying up of more than 80 waterbodies in the country. Bangladesh is facing different problems for lack of adequate water as its major rivers are losing navigability due to withdrawal of water through construction of barrages and diversion of their normal courses at the "upstream" by India, local government minister Mr Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said here today. — PTI

with the king granting him a meeting within less than 10 days of a request. This despite the fact that Mr Moriarty also sought to meet Nepal's top political leaders under arrest since the royal coup.

Both the US and Indian ambassadors were prevented from meeting the former Prime Minister and Opposition leader, Mr Girija Prasad Koirala, a prevention that hit the headlines and triggered a formal letter from the foreign ministry to diplomatic missions, UN offices and NGOs, asking them not to seek meetings with political detainees held "in accordance with Nepal's laws".

The royal pique is thought to have been caused by both India and the UK suspending military assistance to Nepal's army while the USA is still contemplating doing so, apparently held back by the fear that if it really does so, it would boost Maoist activities and enable them to turn Nepal into another Cambodia.

Though Nepal sent its foreign minister, Mr Ramesh Nath Pandey, to Delhi early this month for a patch-up, India refused — another factor for the king's being cold towards his southern neighbour while being warm towards its northern neighbour, China, which has been steadily, if though quietly, supportive of the Nepal monarch.

THE STATESMAN

24 MAR 2005

# King's envoy on Delhi mission

**PRANAY SHARMA**

**New Delhi, March 22:** King Gyanendra is despatching Field Marshal Meer Bahadur Rana to Delhi tomorrow for talks to break the diplomatic status quo that has set in since his coup last month.

Rana's visit comes at a time when India has made it clear that it will not bail out Nepal at the ongoing UN Human Rights Commission meet in Geneva or resume arms supply till democracy is restored in the country.

The chairman of Nepal's state council, Parashu Narayan Chaudhary, is also arriving tomorrow. Although his visit is being called a private one, South Block has not

ruled out the possibility of Chaudhary seeking a meeting with Indian leaders in the next few days.

Chinese foreign minister Li Zhaoxing is due to visit Nepal at the month end amid speculation that Beijing will help Kathmandu with military supplies if required.

Chinese sources said Li was visiting Nepal and Maldives as Prime Minister Wen Jiabao will skip these countries during his South Asia visit next month.

However, Li's March 31 visit appears an attempt by Beijing to respect Indian sensitivities while keeping its line of communication with Nepal open.

On February 1, Gyanendra

concentrate executive power in his hands. India and most key global players have criticised the coup and put financial and military aid on hold since then.

Mounting pressure has so far not pushed Gyanendra into making any major moves to restore democracy. He has only taken small steps, including freeing Deuba and some political leaders from house arrest. But he continues to take a tough line against other major political parties by keeping many of their top leaders in custody.

The king has also refused to meet Shiv Shankar Mukherjee, the Indian ambassador in Nepal, though his request for an audience has been

pending for several weeks. India has not taken too kindly to this and it remains to be seen how Rana is received in Delhi.

Over the past few days, India has made it clear it that will not bail out Nepal at the Geneva meet where the king could come under attack for his "undemocratic" style of dismissing the Deuba government and the gross human rights violations in his country.

Rana's visit could be an attempt by the king to convince India to support the steps he has taken to "clean up" the situation in Nepal. Or he could be trying to find a way out of the current diplomatic imbroglio.



**Gyanendra:** Peace move?

dismissed the Sher Bahadur Deuba regime and imposed emergency in Nepal to marginalise democratic forces and

# Nepal raps India for skipping Saarc meet

Keshav Pradhan  
Kathmandu, March 17

NEPAL ON Thursday launched a broadside against India for skipping the Saarc summit and talking about the Kingdom's political system while remaining oblivious of Maoist activities on its soil. It also criticised major donor countries for imposing their "ideas" on the Nepalese people.

Tulsi Giri, King Gyanendra's senior most deputy in the government, said, "India's aware of the presence of Maoists (Nepalese) on its territory. We needn't talk to it about them. The Maoists have links with the LTTE, the People's War and Naxalites. How can India be oblivious to all this and talk about the political system here?"



Tulsi Giri

India's aware of Maoists' presence on its territory. How can India talk about political system here?

something that you don't like, but you can't impose your ideas on anyone... it's up to the Nepalese to decide what they want... the King has repeatedly pledged his commitment to multi-party democracy... he has taken this step (February 1 takeover) only to re-energise this system".

Giri criticised multi-party leaders for allowing themselves to be "remotely controlled" by others. He said, "Diplomats host them dinners, but they don't call us". When asked to name the countries that are backing the politicians, he replied, "It's up to you to guess".

## Nepal's roadmap

- Giri invited politicians to talk to ministers, not the King, on areas of agreement—such as terrorism, corruption, disciplining of the bureaucracy and a transparent fiscal policy
- He offered to free political prisoners and shorten the emergency rule
- He ruled out talks with Maoists till they returned to the mainstream

## Sop to India

- Will allow UTL to resume its telephone services (suspended since February 1) in less than a week

only to avoid a direct meeting with the Nepalese monarch.

Giri took a dig at friendly nations that called for a "representative government" in Nepal. He said, "It's natural to react to

where Maoists are located.

Throwing diplomatic norms to the winds, Giri mockingly described the Bhutanese King as "the greatest democrat". He said, "Indian leaders didn't mind shaking his dirty hand and making him their chief guest on Republic Day, but they refused to go to the Saarc". There is a general impression here that India got the summit cancelled

To support his argument, Giri quoted Indian newspapers and a speech reportedly made by Karan Singh in Parliament. Dragging Bhutanese King Jigme Singhe Wangchuk into the controversy, he remarked, "He, too, asked for measures to stop the Maoists, who have posed a threat to neighbouring countries from Indian soil". He named Bangkok as another place

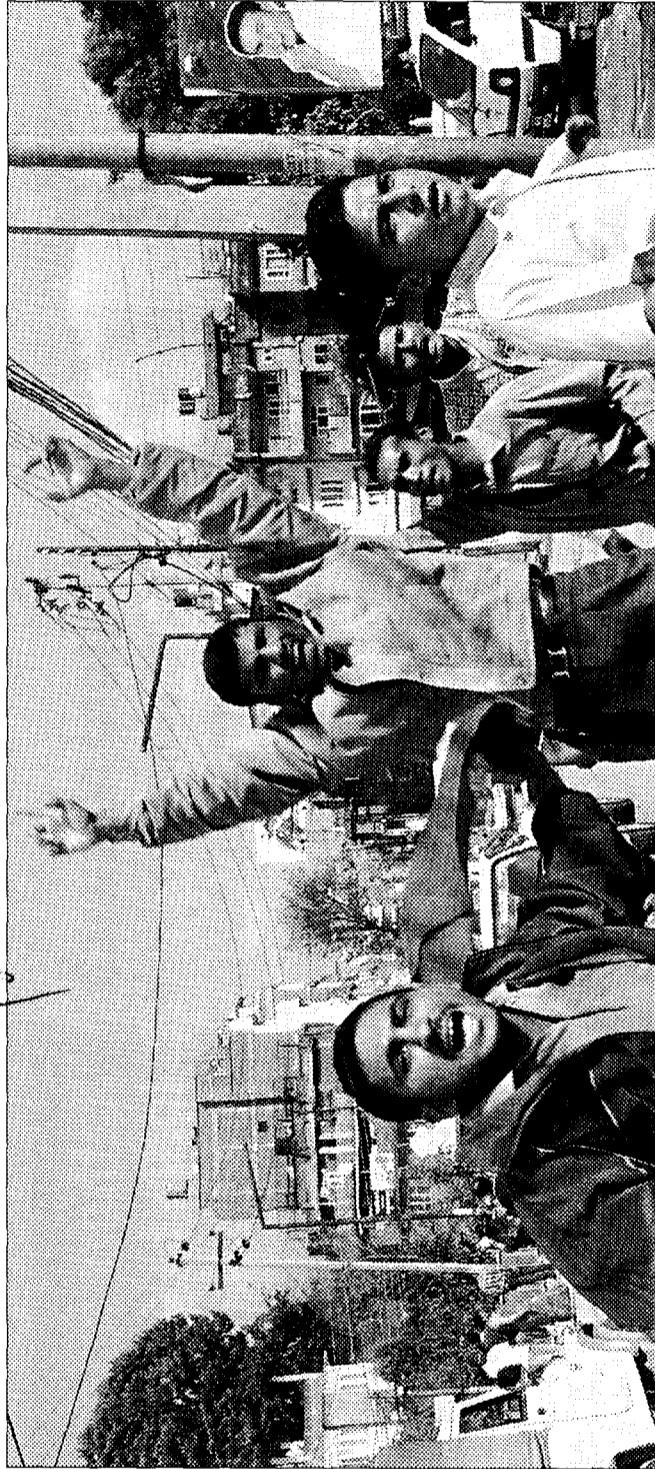
# India not to back Nepal at UN

**Keshav Pradhan**  
Kathmandu, March 13

INDIA IS most unlikely to support Nepal, which is under the king's direct rule, at the 61st session of the UN Human Rights Commission beginning in Geneva on Monday. Last year, New Delhi and Washington had bailed out Kathmandu when it was on the verge of facing the UN body's disapproval under Article 19 for its unsatisfactory rights records.

An Indian diplomat said, "We do not see any possibility of Nepal getting our help this time." In the last session, the UN body had diluted its criticism of Kathmandu at the initiative of India and the US, both of which now strongly disapprove King Gyanendra's rule and suspension of fundamental rights.

Rights activists feared that given the adverse reports by various visiting UN teams, Nepal could this time face censure under Article 19 that calls for the establishment of a Special Rapporteur for monitoring the rights situation in the kingdom. In recent months, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour, UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance



AFP

Nepalese students shout slogans during an anti-monarchy demonstration in downtown Kathmandu on Sunday.

chairman Stephen J. Toope and Amnesty International secretary-general Irene Khan have expressed serious concern over rights conditions in the kingdom. In an apparent bid to impress

the international community, Kathmandu freed a number of politicians, including the deposed Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba ahead of the Geneva meet.

Besides, the Royal Nepalese

Army also agreed to allow national and international rights observers to visit its detention centres where a large number of people are detained in connection with the Maoist insurgency with-

out trial for months. Foreign minister Ramesh Nath Pandey, who will present Nepal's case in Geneva, pledged Kathmandu's commitment to human rights and multi-party democracy.

# Lift all restrictions, Natwar tells Pandey

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**New Delhi:** India on Monday demanded lifting of all restrictions on its entities in Nepal, including several television news channels, but remained non-committal on an early resumption of military aid to the Himalayan kingdom, suspended after the royal takeover by King Gyanendra.

External affairs minister K Natwar Singh during talks with visiting Nepalese counterpart Ramesh Nath Pandey conveyed India's disappointment over the recent measures taken by the king, saying it had served to "only deepen the crisis" facing Nepal. This was the first high-level political contact between the two countries since the February 1 takeover. New Delhi had voiced grave concern over the king's decision on February 1 to sack the Dubea government, impose emergency, arrest political leaders and clamp restriction on the media.

Singh expressed India's concern over the "blacking out of several Indian TV news channels by Nepal and also difficulties being faced by Indian joint ventures in the country," external affairs ministry spokesman N Sarna said here. He underlined the importance of lifting restrictions on Indian entities in Nepal at the earliest in the interest of India-Nepal relations, the spokesman said.

Singh said it would be in the interest of Nepal and its people, for the king and the po-

litical parties to join together on a national platform to unitedly deal with the multiple challenges facing the country, including the threat from Maoist insurgency. Asked about resumption of military aid by India, Sarna said Singh conveyed that the matter remained under "constant review". To a spate of questions, he said, "The logic of reviewing military aid etc. is to see what the purpose of the military aid is, whom is it helping, where is it going and what purpose is it performing".

"So when the government is not sure on these grounds, then we have to keep it under constant review," Sarna said. On Nepal's contention that stopping of military supplies would strengthen Maoists, he said this was "up for speculation". He said certain amount of aid, assistance and training was being given by India to the Royal Nepalese Army for several years. "But keeping in view the developments that took place, it was decided to review the situation. While doing so, it was decided that no supplies should be sent after February 1," he said, adding since then, no supplies have gone to that country.

Natwar Singh pointed out that it was not only India but several other friends of Nepal, which had expressed grave concern over the king's measures that could endanger the institution of monarchy itself. PTI



**K Natwar Singh**



**R N Pandey**

# Back King to support stability: Nepal minister's pitch

Devirupa Mitra in New Delhi

March 8. — Sitting in his suite at Oberoi Hotel overlooking the greens of Golf club, the Nepalese foreign minister, Mr Ramesh Nath Pandey, is half-way through his visit to India, trying to convince a reluctant Indian leadership that it needs to continue supporting the regime in Delhi. His pitch — to promote stability, support the king.

"Not only is the future of Nepalese democracy at stake, but so is the stability of India and future of old democracy," said the foreign minister, Mr Ramesh Nath Pandey while speaking to The Statesman.

Arriving yesterday on a 'working' visit, Mr Pandey met the external affairs minister, Mr Natwar Singh, over a luncheon meeting, where a disappointed India delivered a blunt message that the King needs to take an "early initiative" on forging a platform with the po-



Mr Ramesh Nath Pandey

litical parties and restoring multi-party democracy.

After his luncheon meeting with Mr Natwar Singh yesterday, the Nepalese foreign minister spent his sixty-second birthday in the Capital today, meeting 'old friends', former Prime Minister, Mr IK Gujral and former Cabinet minister and BJP member, Mr Arun Shourie. "This is my third birthday in the Indian Capital," he men-

## Maoist recaptured

DARJEELING, March. 8. — One of the two Nepalese Maoists who had escaped from the court premises here yesterday was recaptured today. Badal Rai (21) was picked up from Choongtung tea estate in Pulbazar police station area this afternoon. Rai, although from Ilam district of Nepal, has his in-laws' house in the tea garden. The other escapee Yam Bahadur Mukia is still untraced.

In the meantime, the constable who was in-charge of the duo has been suspended, while another Home Guard has been demobilised. The two had fled when they were being taken back to the prison van after being produced in the court. While Mukhia was arrested in August 2004, Rai, described as an "area commander" of the Maoists, was nabbed in October in the Sukhiapokhri police station area. — SNS

tioned in an aside.

Mr Pandey asserted that the "fate of future peace and democracy rests on the stability of the smaller states in the world". Nepal has been hoping that the Maoist insurgency raging in most part of the mountainous nation will frichten a critical international community in "helping us in all spheres".

A former journalist, Mr Pandey said it was "wrong" to say that the

of turning into a failed state," he said. He described the Nepalese politicians who are active in India as "small fry" who are running from the law. "These people had been booked on corruption charges in the courts. These charges had not been levelled by this regime, but by the previous government of political parties," said Mr Pandey, who proudly remembers that he interviewed Pandit Nehru as a sixteen-year-old. The restrictions clamped on political activity and media, said the Nepalese foreign minister, was only the fulfillment of constitutional clauses on clamping emergency. "This constitution had been drafted by the political parties," said Mr Pandey, gestulating with his hand.

The restoration of democracy could be done long before the three years of royal rule — "it all depends on how the international community will support us".



# Turkmenistan gas pipeline: Delhi is not so sure

The projection is that Turkmenistan will increase its production to around 120 BCM by 2007. However, sources said, Turkmenistan has committed large amounts of this gas to Russia through a 20-year contract signed by Gazprom in April 2003. In fact, nearly 70 BCM of the projected 120 BCM is believed to be contractually committed to Gazprom.

The MEA has conveyed this to the Petroleum Ministry and has indicated that taking into account Turkmenistan's commitments

to Ukraine and Iran as well as its own domestic needs, there will be little available for further export. Though different figures are being projected about Turkmenistan's production potential, the MEA still has doubts about the feasibility of the project on a commercial basis.

The ADB study talks of the pipeline terminating at Fuzilka in India, which clearly indicates that the Indian market is crucial to the commercial viability of this project. This too has

been conveyed to the Petroleum Ministry through a communique at the highest level in February first week by the MEA.

A firm view on the project will, however, be taken after a proper assessment and a detailed study of the ADB report. Till then, New Delhi would be cautious in its response on the project.

While it is clear that Karzai may have to wait longer for an Indian response on the subject, he utilised his discussions with Prime Minister Man-

mohan Singh today to convey that Kabul had taken up with Islamabad the possibility of a trade corridor between India and Afghanistan through Pakistan. He promised to pursue this further.

Besides, India and Afghanistan also signed two MoUs on cooperation in civil aviation and information and broadcasting today.

New Delhi also announced that Indian Airlines will resume services to Kabul after a gap of nearly a decade in the

forthcoming summer schedule. The airline has already put in its request with the Directorate General of Civil Aviation to operate the first flight on March 31.

The Delhi-Kabul flight will have a stopover at Amritsar. The airline plans to operate two services a week and deploy an Airbus 320 on the sector. This apart, New Delhi has also agreed to fund and execute the Pul-e-Khumri power transmission line to Kabul which is facing acute power shortage.

# Turkmen gas: Delhi is not so sure

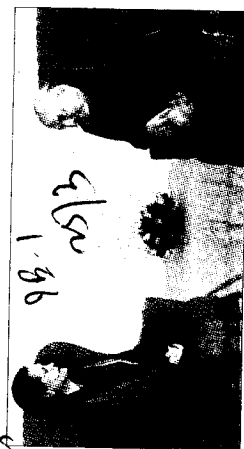
■ Afghans want India in project, MEA wants to take a harder look

PRANAB DHAL SAMANTA

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 24

For all the enthusiasm on the part of the visiting Afghan President Hamid Karzai to get India involved in the proposed Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan gas pipeline, New Delhi is still not convinced on the feasibility of this project.

In particular, the Ministry of External Affairs has serious doubts over whether Turkmenistan has sufficient gas re-



Karzai meets Sonia Gandhi in New Delhi

serves to dedicate to this pipeline. It is learnt that the ministry has suggested a more in-depth assessment of the project, which in-

cludes examining in detail the recent report of the Asian Development Bank on the pipeline.

South Block officials point out that Turkmenistan's gas production last year was 58 billion cubic metres (BCM), of which 35 BCM was exported to Ukraine and smaller volumes to Iran and Russia. About 11 BCM was used for domestic consumption.

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*Photo: V. Sudershan*  
WITH the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, at a  
delegation-level meeting in New Delhi on Thursday.  
— Photo: V. Sudershan

## Indian goods: Karzai to raise issue with Pakistan

By Our Diplomatic Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, FEB. 24.** The Afghan President, Hamid Karzai, today said that he would raise with Pakistan the issue of Indian goods being able to enter Afghanistan through Pakistan. Mr. Karzai told the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, that he would take up the matter with his Pakistani counterpart, Pervez Musharraf, next month.

Two agreements were signed between India and Afghanistan — one in the field of civil aviation and the other in media and information.

An External Affairs Ministry spokesman announced that Indian Airlines would begin flying the Delhi-Kabul sector from March 27.

He said India had completed work on television satellite uplink at Kabul and downlink at 10 provincial capitals in Afghanistan. Work had also begun on the restoration/ augmentation of television hardware in Jalalabad and Nangarhar provinces. India will be taking up the next phase of augmentation of TV cov-

erage though additional satellite links.

Dr. Singh congratulated the people and the Government of Afghanistan on their achievements in the last three years. "The elections held in October 2004, which also resulted in President Karzai becoming President, were pointed out as a landmark in the history of Afghanistan," he said.

Dr. Singh told Mr. Karzai that India remained committed to providing economic and technical assistance to Afghanistan. New Delhi had already committed up to \$400 million and was executing projects in all parts of Afghanistan in areas such as hydropower, road construction, agriculture, industry, telecom, education and health.

India also committed itself to fund and execute the construction of a power transmission line from Pul-e-Khumri to Kabul as well as a sub-station at Kabul. This project would address the acute power shortage that prevails in the Afghan capital, the spokesman added.

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# Flight to Kabul, 16 yrs on



Dr Manmohan Singh with the Afghanistan President Mr Hamid Karzai in New Delhi on Thursday. — PTI

## Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Feb. 24. — Indian Airlines will start a regular flight on the Delhi-Kabul sector from 27 March after a gap of sixteen years.

This was decided as part of the MoU in the field of civil aviation agreed between Afghanistan and India during a three-day working visit of President Mr Hamid Karzai today after extensive discussions with Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh. The second MoU was on media and information, whereby India will augment the television coverage in Afghanistan with further satellite uplinks and downlinks.

The subject of trade corridor through Pakistan also came up during discussions between the two delega-

tions, with Mr Karzai promising to pursue the matter with the Pakistani authorities.

Presently, Afghan goods are allowed to transit through Pakistan to India, but a similar right is not given vice versa. The Afghan and Indian delegations, led by President Mr Karzai and Prime Minister Dr Singh held discussion for nearly an hour, followed by a signing ceremony for the two countries. Dr Singh also hosted a working lunch for the Afghan delegation members.

According to the MoU on civil aviation, the Indian government will be providing experts and manpower to set up the civil aviation system in Afghanistan for everything from airport management and maintenance of aircraft. This would include training in

areas of airport management, air traffic control and navigational aids.

Further, it was announced from 27 March, Indian Airlines will operate from Delhi to Kabul, via Amritsar. The last Indian Airlines flight to Kabul was in 1989 when it was operating twice a week.

The bilateral accord on media and information allows for greater interaction between mediapersons of India and Afghanistan.

An MEA spokesperson said that the work on television satellite uplink at Kabul and downlink at ten provincial capitals in Afghanistan have been completed under the Indian government's assistance programme.

"Work has commenced on augmentation of TV hardware in Jalalabad and Nangarhar province. India will be taking up the next phase of augmentation of TV coverage though additional satellite uplinks and downlinks," he said. India has already committed \$400 million for economic and technical assistance of Afghanistan. The Prime Minister pointed out to the Afghan president that out of the \$100 million for financial assistance announced in Tokyo in January 2002, \$96 million has already "been tied up".

The new projects announced by India today were the construction of a power transmission line from Pul-e-Khumri to Kabul. An expansion of cold storage capacity at Kandahar is also in the pipeline.

# এই চাপ সৃষ্টি জরুরি

তিন সপ্তাহ হইয়া গেল নেপালের রাজা জ্ঞানেন্দ্র রঞ্জপাতহীন অভ্যুত্থানের মাধ্যমে ক্ষমতা দখল করিয়াছেন। নেপালে সরকার বরখাস্ত হইয়াছে, রাজনৈতিক দলের নেতারা বন্দি হইয়াছেন, দেশে জরুরি অবস্থা জারি করিয়া নাগরিকদের গণতান্ত্রিক অধিকার কাড়িয়া লওয়া হইয়াছে এবং প্রতিনিধিত্বমূলক শাসনব্যবস্থার প্রত্যাবর্তন অনন্ত কাল স্থগিত হইয়া গিয়াছে। ভারত তাহার প্রতিবেশী রাষ্ট্রে গণতন্ত্রের উপর এই আক্রমণে এতটাই বিচলিত ও রুষ্ট হয় যে ঢাকায় সার্ক দেশগুলির শীর্ষ সম্মেলন উপলক্ষে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের সফরই বাতিল করিয়া দেয়, যাহার ফলে সম্মেলনও বানচাল হইয়া যায়। অতঃপর নেপালে গণতান্ত্রিক ব্যবস্থা ফিরাইবার জন্য ভারত কূটনৈতিক ও অন্যান্য পন্থায় নেপালরাজের উপর চাপ সৃষ্টি করিয়া চলিয়াছে। এই চাপ সৃষ্টিরই একটি দৃষ্টান্ত নেপালকে সামরিক সাহায্য দান বন্ধ রাখা। ব্রিটেনও যে একই কারণে নেপালকে সমরাস্ত্র সরবরাহ স্থগিত রাখিয়াছে, বিদেশ মন্ত্রী জ্যাক স্ট্র কেনও রাখঢাক না করিয়াই তাহা জানাইয়া দিয়াছেন। ডেনমার্ক সহ অনেক পশ্চিমী রাষ্ট্র গণতন্ত্রের পুনরভিষেক না হওয়া পর্যন্ত নেপালকে আর্থিক সহায়তাও মূলতুবি রাখিয়াছে।

ভারত এখনও আর্থিক সহায়তার উপর কোনও অবরোধ জারি করে নাই, কেবল সামরিক সাহায্য বন্ধ রাখিয়াছে। ভারত নেপালের বৃহত্তম অস্ত্র সরবরাহকারী। মাওবাদীদের সহিত নেপালে কর্তৃপক্ষের যে গৃহযুদ্ধ চলিয়াছে, তাহাতে উন্নত সমরাস্ত্রের সরবরাহ অতিশয় জরুরি। মাওবাদী গেরিলাদের দমন করার জন্য এই সব যুদ্ধাস্ত্রের ব্যবহার কেবল নেপালের পক্ষেই অপরিহার্য নয়, রাজ্যে রাজ্যে মাওবাদী সন্ত্রাসে উদ্যস্ত ভারতের পক্ষেও তাহার সীমান্তবর্তী রাষ্ট্রের ওই রাজনৈতিক সন্ত্রাসকে উপচাইয়া ভারতে পৌঁছাইতে না দেওয়া জরুরি। নেপালের মাওবাদীরা যে ভারতীয় মাওবাদীদের সহিত নিবিড় সংযোগ রক্ষা করিয়া চলে, অরক্ষিত সীমান্ত অতিক্রম করিয়া উত্তরাঞ্চল, উত্তরপ্রদেশ, বিহার ও পশ্চিমবঙ্গে নেপালের মাওবাদীদের ভারতে যাতায়াত, আশ্রয়লাভ এবং রসদ ও অস্ত্র সংগ্রহ করিয়া নিজেদের পুষ্ট করিয়া থাকে, তাহা ভারতীয় গোয়েন্দাদের অজানা নয়। নেপালে মাওবাদী বিদ্রোহ দমনে ভারতের সুস্পষ্ট স্বার্থ আছে এবং সেই স্বার্থ সিদ্ধ করিতেও নেপালকে সমরাস্ত্র সরবরাহ করার প্রাসঙ্গিকতা যথেষ্ট। তবু যে ভারত নেপালের রাজতন্ত্রকে সামরিক সাহায্য দান স্থগিত রাখিয়াছে, তাহাতে বুঝা যায়, সে দেশ হইতে গণতন্ত্রের বহিষ্কার ভারতীয় শাসক গোষ্ঠীকে কতখানি বিচলিত করিয়াছে। কেহ কেহ বলিতেছেন, গণতন্ত্র তো পাকিস্তানেও নাই, সেখানেও জঙ্গি শাহি গণতান্ত্রিক ও নির্বাচিত সরকারকে বরখাস্ত করিয়া ক্ষমতা দখল করিয়াছিল। কিন্তু পাকিস্তানের ক্ষেত্রেও ভারত তীব্র প্রতিক্রিয়া ব্যক্ত করিয়াছিল। কমনওয়েলথ রাষ্ট্রজোট হইতে তাহার সদস্যপদ খারিজের জন্য সচেষ্ট হইয়াছিল এবং ইসলামাবাদকে আন্তর্জাতিকভাবে একঘরে করিতেও উদ্যোগী হইয়াছিল। সর্বোপরি নেপাল আর পাকিস্তান এক নয়।

নেপাল সর্ব বিষয়েই ভারতের উপর একান্ত ভাবে নির্ভরশীল প্রতিবেশী। ভারত হইতে খাদ্যশস্য, লবণ, নিত্যপ্রয়োজনীয় আহাৰ্য ও অন্যান্য পণ্য নিয়মিত সরবরাহ না হইলে নেপালের নাভিশ্বাস উঠিবে। ইতিমধ্যেই মাওবাদীদের অর্থনৈতিক অবরোধ এবং রাজকীয় সেনাবাহিনী সুরক্ষা দিতে না পারার ফলে ভারতীয় পণ্যবোঝাই শত-শত ট্রাক সীমান্তে দাঁড়াইয়া আছে। ইহা নেপালের জনজীবনকে বিপর্যস্ত করিয়া দিয়াছে। ব্যবসাপত্র শিকেষ্ট উঠিয়াছে, টেক্সটাইল সহ বিভিন্ন শিল্প, পরিবহণ, পর্যটন বিধ্বস্ত, বহুজাতিক সংস্থাগুলির দরজায় তালা ঝুলিতেছে। নেপালের জনসাধারণের সহিত তো ভারতের কোনও বিরোধ নাই, বিরোধ রাজতন্ত্রের সহিত। রাজা ও তাহার পারিষদরা বলিতে চাহেন, মাওবাদী বিদ্রোহ সুষ্ঠুভাবে মোকাবিলা করিতে হইবে দুবল গণতান্ত্রিক সরকারকে বিদায় করিয়া শক্ত হাতে প্রশাসনের হাল ধরা জরুরি ছিল। কিন্তু তিন সপ্তাহ হইতে চলিল, মাওবাদীদের শায়েস্তা করার কোনও লক্ষণ নাই। বরং তাহারা আরও দুঃসাহসী হইয়াছে। সত্য, গণতান্ত্রিক ব্যবস্থা এখনও দক্ষ হইয়া ওঠে নাই, বহুদলীয় গণতন্ত্রের শরিক দলগুলি নিজেদের দ্বন্দ্ব এতই জর্জরিত যে দেশকে একটি সুষ্ঠু শাসনব্যবস্থা তাহারা দিতে পারে নাই। কিন্তু নবীন গণতন্ত্রের পরীক্ষামূলক স্তরে এ সব অনিবার্য। তা ছাড়া, রাজতন্ত্র কখনওই গণতন্ত্রের বিকল্প নয়। ভারত তাই গণতন্ত্র ফিরাইবার চাপ বজায় রাখিয়া ঠিকই করিয়াছে। এই চাপ প্রয়োজনে বাড়ানো হইতে পারে।

# নেপালকে সামরিক সাহায্য বন্ধ করল ভারত, ব্রিটেন

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, নিজস্ব প্রতিনিধি, লন্ডন ও ওয়াশিংটন, ২২ ফেব্রুয়ারি: নেপালে গণতন্ত্র ফিরিয়ে আনার জন্য চাপ সৃষ্টি করতে ভারত ও ব্রিটেন প্রায় একই যোগ্যতা রাখবে। আমেরিকা এখনও সামরিক সাহায্য বন্ধ করার কথা না বললেও শীঘ্রই তারাও যে একই পথে হটিতে চলেছে, বিদেশমন্ত্রক সূত্রে তার স্পষ্ট ইঙ্গিত মিলেছে। এই মুহূর্তে মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট জর্জ বৃশ ও বিদেশ সচিব কন্ডলিজা রাইস দু'জনেই দেশের বাইরে থাকায় এই ঘোষণা হচ্ছে না।

তিনটি দেশই গত কয়েক দিন ধরে অবিলম্বে গণতন্ত্র ফেরানো, রাজনৈতিক নেতাদের মুক্তি, সমস্ত রাজনৈতিক দলকে প্রকাশ্যে কাজ করতে দেওয়া ও সংবাদমাধ্যমকে স্বাধীনতা দেওয়ার জন্য প্রকাশ্যেই নেপালকে চাপ দিয়ে চলেছে। ওয়াশিংটনে মার্কিন বিদেশ দফতরের এক বৈঠকে অংশ নেওয়ার পর

নেপালে মার্কিন রাষ্ট্রদূত জেমস মরিয়র্ডি ইঙ্গিত দেন, নেপালের রাজা প্রতিশ্রুতি মতো কাজ না করলে আমেরিকা সামরিক সাহায্য বন্ধ করতে পারে। মাওবাদীদের সশস্ত্র অভ্যুত্থানে জেরবার নেপাল সরকার এই সব সামরিক সাহায্যের উপর একাঙাই নির্ভরশীল। গত ১ ফেব্রুয়ারি নেপালের দেউবা সরকারকে বরখাস্ত ও দেশে জরুরি অবস্থা জারি করে রাজা জ্ঞানেন্দ্র সব ক্ষমতা নিজের হাতে নেওয়ার পর থেকেই ভারত, ব্রিটেন ও আমেরিকা তাদের অসজোষ জানিয়ে আসছে। মার্কিন রাষ্ট্রদূত জানিয়েছেন, ১০০ দিনের মধ্যে দেশে গণতন্ত্র ফিরিয়ে দেবেন বলে জ্ঞানেন্দ্র গত সপ্তাহে এক বৈঠকে আশ্বাস দিয়েছেন। আমেরিকার আশঙ্কা, প্রায় ১০ বছর ধরে চলা মাওবাদী অভ্যুত্থান এখন এতটাই শক্তিশালী যে, এই অবস্থা চলতে থাকলে তারা ক্ষমতা দখল করে বসবে। তখন নেপালের রাজা ও রাজনীতিকরা হয় ভারতে আশ্রয় নিতে বাধ্য হবেন, না

হলে মাওবাদীদের হাতে কোতল হবেন। এই অবস্থায় সেখানে আমেরিকা চায়, রাজা সেখানে দ্রুত গণতন্ত্র ফিরিয়ে পরিস্থিতি নিয়ন্ত্রণে আনতে সাহায্য করুন।

নেপালে জরুরি অবস্থা জারির পর থেকে বহু মানুষ গ্রেফতার ও নানা বিধিনিষেধে জেরবার হচ্ছে। অ্যামনেস্টি ইন্টারন্যাশনাল-সহ বিভিন্ন মানবাধিকার সংগঠন এ জন্য নেপালের বিরুদ্ধে ব্যবস্থা নিতে ভারত-সহ অন্যান্য দেশের উপর চাপ দিচ্ছে। ঘরে-বাইরে চাপ ক্রমশ বাড়তে থাকায় একুশ দিন পর নয়াদিল্লি আজ ঘোষণা করল, নেপালকে কোনও সামরিক সাহায্য নয়। কাঠমাণ্ডুতে ভারতীয় দূতবাস সূত্রে অবশ্য কালই এমন ঘোষণার ইঙ্গিত মিলেছিল। আজ বিদেশমন্ত্রকের মুখপাত্র নভতেজ সারনা বলেছেন, "নেপালকে সামরিক সাহায্য দেওয়ার বিষয়টি পরিস্থিতি বদলের সঙ্গে জমাগত পর্যালোচনা করা হয়। বর্তমান অস্থির পরিস্থিতির দিকে নজর রেখে ১ ফেব্রুয়ারি থেকেই ভারত নেপালকে

কোনও সামরিক সাহায্য দিচ্ছে না।" তবে সামরিক সাহায্য, অর্থাৎ অস্ত্র জোগান দেওয়ার বিষয়টি আপাতত বন্ধ রাখা হলেও নেপালি সেনাদের প্রশিক্ষণ বন্ধ রাখা হবে কিনা, তা আজ স্পষ্ট করেনি নয়াদিল্লি।

অন্য দিকে, ব্রিটেনও জানিয়ে দিয়েছে, নেপালকে ২৫ লক্ষ ডলার মূল্যের সামরিক যন্ত্রপাতি সরবরাহ করার জন্য জানুয়ারিতে যে ঘোষণা তারা করেছিল, তা আপাতত বাতিল করা হল। ওই সব যন্ত্রপাতির মধ্যে ছিল রাতে বিমান ও হেলিকপ্টার ওড়ার সহায়ক যন্ত্রপাতি, টেলিযোগাযোগ ও সোমা ধ্বংস করার সরঞ্জাম, যা মাওবাদীদের বিরুদ্ধে সামরিক অভিযানের ক্ষেত্রে অতীব জরুরি। ব্রিটেনের বিদেশসচিব জ্যাক স্ট্র জানিয়েছেন, নেপালের উদ্বেগজনক অভ্যুত্থান পরিস্থিতির কথা ভেবেই আপাতত সামরিক সরবরাহ বন্ধ রাখা হল।

সরকারি সূত্রের খবর, সামরিক সাহায্য বন্ধ

ভারতের সিদ্ধান্ত ঘোষণায় এত সময় লাগানোর কারণ, দিল্লির অতি সতর্ক মনোভাব। ভারত এমন কিছু করতে চায় না যাতে নেপালরাজের সঙ্গে তার যোগসূত্র ও কথাবার্তার মাধ্যমগুলি নষ্ট হয়ে যায়। ভারতের পক্ষে নেপাল যে অত্যন্ত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ দেশ তা হাড়ে হাড়ে জানে এবং বর্তমান প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায় দু'জনেই একাধিক কারণে নেপালের সঙ্গে সম্পর্কে আঁচ পড়তে দিতে গররাজি থেকেছেন। তার একটা কারণ মাওবাদীদের সন্ত্রাসে নিজের ধরে আঁচ লাগার সম্ভাবনা।

নেপালে মাওবাদীরা ক্ষমতা দখল করছে এটা নয়াদিল্লির দুঃস্বপ্ন। অন্য একটা কারণ, নেপালকে চট্টালে লাভবান হবে চিন। আর শুধু চিনই নয়, নেপালের রাজা মরিয় হায়ে অন্যান্য দেশের শরণাগত হতে পারেন। তার প্রভাব দক্ষিণ এশিয়ার অন্যান্য দেশগুলিরও উপর পড়তে পারে, যা ভারত মোটেই চায় না।

9/2/05  
re: Nepal  
ND-1

# Military supplies to Nepal halted

By Our Diplomatic Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, FEB. 22.** For the first time since the February 1 royal coup in Nepal, India today formally stated that military supplies to the Gyanendra regime had been halted.

"In view of the current disturbed conditions in Nepal, it is

a fact that no military supplies have been delivered since February 1," the External Affairs Ministry spokesman said today.

Ever since the coup, India has been mulling over the question of whether or not to suspend military supplies to Nepal.

India, the United States, European Union and Britain have been acting in concert on Nepal — all four made a synchronised withdrawal of ambassadors from Kathmandu recently.

## 'Continuous review'

"The issue of military supplies to Nepal has been under

continuous review taking into account the evolving situation in that country," the spokesman said today in response to a specific question on whether or not military aid had been suspended.

By referring to the "continuous review" phrase, India also seemed to leave open the possibility of resuming military assistance to Nepal in case there was an improvement in the "disturbed conditions" that currently prevailed there.

India had been an enthusiastic supporter of extending military support to the Nepa-

lese Government prior to the royal coup of February 1.

The Indian view at the time was that the Royal Nepalese Army had to be armed and equipped in order to combat the Maoists.

Though there have been a number of speculative reports in the press that Indian military assistance to Nepal had been suspended, the External Affairs Ministry spokesman's comment today is the first confirmation that no military supplies had been sent to Nepal after King Gyanendra's takeover.

THE HINDU

23 FEB 2005

# India freezes arms sales to Nepal

*Handwritten notes:* Nepal, New Delhi, 5/11, 5/11, 5/11

Statesman News Service

KATHMANDU, Feb. 21. — The Indian Embassy in Kathmandu today put an end to mounting speculation about New Delhi's policy towards the new regime in Nepal. It announced that India strongly supports the ousted political parties and put its military assistance for the Royal Nepalese Army on hold till further assessment. However, India will continue its civil aid.

The heavily-subsidised sale of arms, ammunition, helicopters and military hardware stands suspended. This is a setback for Nepal's army that has been urging for continuation of

## Maoist leader arrested

JALPAIGURI, Feb. 21. — Suresh Das, head of the Maoist operations in North Bengal, was arrested at Madarihat in Jalpaiguri district today, the SP, Mr Rahul Srivastava, said. For the past two years, the police had been on the lookout for him. He was also connected with the KLO and PWG. — SNS

Indian military assistance on the ground that the country is fighting Maoist terrorism, also a threat to India. India's decision will be conveyed to the Nepalese authorities by the ambassador, Mr Shiv Shankar Mukherjee, who was called to Delhi last week for consultations. However, despite returning on

Sunday, the envoy is yet to put in a request for audience with King Gyanendra. This is being regarded as intended to show India's strong disapproval of the royal takeover.

According to the message conveyed to the envoy by the Indian authorities, New Delhi continues to "strongly support" Nepal's parties, stands opposed to the 1 February move and would like the democratic process to be restored as soon as possible.

As India sees it, the royal takeover will only strengthen the Maoist insurgency and weaken the monarchy. India has once again called for the immediate release of political leaders placed under detention or arrest.

**Maoists shoot Indian truck driver: page 2**

THE STATESMAN

22 FEB 2005

# 'India watching Nepal situation'

49-17  
19/2  
By Amit Baruah

**NEW DELHI, FEB. 18.** "We will see what we can do if things do not change. We do not want in anyway to hurt the people of Nepal ... we continue to hope that His Majesty [King Gyanendra] will sooner rather than later restart the political processes which will encourage the political parties to get together, eventually leading to elections in Nepal and the constitutional monarchy functioning as such," the External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, said today.

Responding to a question on "what more" India could do about Nepal, Mr. Singh said that New Delhi was watching the situation "very, very carefully." Speaking at a joint press appearance with his British counterpart, Jack Straw, Mr. Singh said the Indian Ambassador to Nepal, who was in

Delhi for consultations, would be returning to Kathmandu on Sunday with a "verbal message" for King Gyanendra.

Referring to his talks with Mr. Straw on Nepal, he said India and Britain noted that the international community had strongly deplored the recent developments in that country constituting a serious setback to the cause of democracy.

"We agreed on the urgent need for [the] restoration of normal democratic processes, release of political prisoners and the lifting of censorship on the media. The U.K. and India would continue to be in close touch with each other concerning further developments in Nepal," he said.

India and Britain, along with the U.S. and the European Union, in a coordinated move, recently pulled back their ambassadors for a week "for consultations" to express their

displeasure at the King's action of seizing power on February 1.

Speaking at the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Mr. Straw said that when these ambassadors returned they would make it clear that "we are united" in the desire to see the restoration of representative government, the start of a meaningful peace process, with respect for human rights, and the goal of a stable, multi-party democracy.

"Both the Indian and the British Governments believe that recent developments have been a setback to those objectives. And we have made clear to all parties in Nepal that it is unacceptable to seek political change by violence. Peace will come only through all the Constitutional forces working together," Mr. Straw said.

"The situation in Nepal is for

you a problem in your backyard, but it is a matter of concern for the United Kingdom too. Because of the nature of today's world, we know well that conflict in one region has the potential to affect us all: to fuel extremism and terrorism, block economic progress and spread instability far beyond its immediate area. So the need to work together to build and maintain stability is at the heart of our foreign policy around the world," Mr. Straw added.

## Significant step in India-Pakistan ties

Welcoming the decision to begin a Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service, Mr. Straw said: "I know from my talks both in Pakistan and in India how significant this step is, and how positive is the signal it sends of commitment to the peace process and meeting the human concerns of the people of Kashmir."

"I know indeed that many of my own constituents [in Britain] will be delighted by this development. There is, of course, still a long way to go, but I salute the courage of both governments. And I warmly encourage them to take further steps to resolve all the issues between them, including Kashmir, and in so doing enhance regional security," he said.

At the joint press appearance, Mr. Straw said that progress had been good on the India-Pakistan peace process. "So, it is worth hanging in there ... I know from my Pakistani constituents and from my Indian constituents that what they look forward to is a normalisation of relations, and increase in trade and cooperation and visits, so on each side the big existential issue of Kashmir gradually reduces in scale."

Instability along its northern borders is unhealthy for India

# After the sock in the eye

## CUTTING CORNERS

ASHOK MITRA

India's garrulous foreign minister has received a sock in the eye. This gentleman, on induction in office last May, had chosen Kathmandu as his first official port of call. He lost no time to declare India's total support to King Gyanendra in his fight against the forces of terror, meaning the Maoists entrenched in roughly three-fourths of Nepal's total territory of 150,000 square kilometres. Free flow of arms and other *matériel* to subdue the communist insurgents was promised. Of course, one important condition attached to the support at least by implication: the king must maintain a kind of sweet understanding with the land-locked nation's traditional parties; the fig leaf of democracy should remain undisturbed.

The king has breached with contempt his part of the mutual commitment. He has presented New Delhi with a stark choice: democratic pretensions are expendable, if the Indian authorities want Nepal to be a bastion of the war against the Maoists, they must put up with the monarch's bidding; multi-party democracy is a luxury King Gyanendra would not permit.

It is for New Delhi to make up its mind whether to go along with the king. The situation presents New Delhi with some grim alternatives. What he has done by packing off his democratically elected ministers and clamping unabashed autocratic rule is bound to strengthen further the already powerful Maoist network in the country; patriotic Nepal citizens, who want to oppose the authoritarianism of the Shah dynasty, are henceforth bound to flock in vastly increased numbers towards support of the rebels. It is unthinkable, for domestic reasons, for the government of India to support the Nepal Maoists. But to endorse King Gyanendra's actions would cause a first-class international scandal, with again grave domestic consequences.

There is hardly an easy escape route from the dilemma. The prospects of nurturing an indigenous political party in Nepal, which would swear by democracy and yet oppose the Maoists, is likely to grow dimmer in the aftermath of the recent developments. It will in any case be difficult to blame the patriotic Nepalese for their expected shift to the Maoist camp. The Maoists, after all, have been most consistent in their opposition to hereditary monarchy. That negotiations with them have collapsed occasion after occasion is directly attributable to their insistence that the starting point of any arrangement to establish viable peace in the country must be abolition of the monarchy. Following the Gyanendra coup, it is the point of no return in Nepal: one is either for monarchy or for the Maoists; an intermediate

position — as the traditional parties had sought to stick to — is no longer possible. And since the views of these parties have ceased to be relevant, their very existence is now in peril.

There is also the other issue, which polite society pretends to be not worthy of mention. One of the principal functionaries of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), the architect-cum-economist, Baburam Bhattarai, had his education in north Indian universities. He wrote in the late Seventies a doctoral dissertation for the Jawaharlal Nehru

similar coyness in the matter of land reforms. The reason is obvious. In addition to the Ranas, their leaders too could be major victims of reforms.

But perhaps New Delhi's allergy towards the Nepal Maoists has a deeper significance. It has been actually a tale of three landlocked countries with three hereditary rulers. Indira Gandhi took care of Sikkim's Numgyal three decades ago. After some initial grumbling, China accepted the *fait accompli*. That however still left two other monarchies: one in Nepal and the

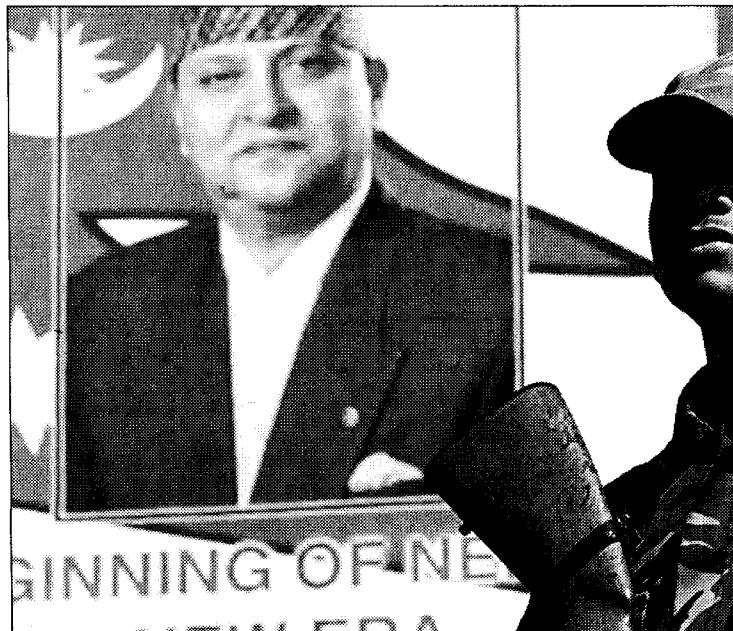
gress further renders it further awkward for New Delhi to eschew the beaten track in Nepal. The South Block strategists would seem to have made up their mind. The coup notwithstanding, they have reportedly agreed not to suspend arms aid to the king. In the changed circumstances, that however might not be enough. It should therefore be no surprise if, in the course of the next fortnight or thereabouts, in spite of initial American reservations, Condoleeza Rice descends on Kathmandu and chooses to shore up the monarchy, with India's mandarins turning the other way.

Those who preside over the affairs of the People's Republic of China may however have things to say in the event of such a development. Till now the Chinese authorities have been exceptionally correct on issues concerning Nepal. They have given no chance to anyone to suspect them of offering direct or indirect assistance to the Maoists there. But the situation can change dramatically if the confusion in Nepal is sought to be used as an excuse by the US administration to extend the toehold it has already established elsewhere in central Asia. Every action has its reaction, even if it is debatable whether the reaction is always equal and opposite. Once the United States of America shows its hand, the Chinese authorities too might find it relatively easy to despatch material assistance, including military equipment, to Nepali insurgents; the contiguous nature of the borders of the two countries would help such infiltration of weapons.

It is for New Delhi to decide whether instability of this nature along its northern borders is healthy, and welcome. The American intrusion can perhaps be avoided if the government of India stands aside and encourages Nepal's traditional parties to come to an understanding with the Maoists on the basis of an agreed programme which underwrites the multi-party democratic process. Such an understanding will immediately sound the death knell for monarchy, and even the Americans will not dare to intervene.

Admittedly, the Indian authorities have to take into account other considerations. Nepal as a landlocked country is heavily dependant on India for ingress and exit of both men and goods. Given the significant presence there of Indian business and industry groups, the urge to butt in in that country's affairs is not easily controllable. There is, besides, an aching in the heart as well, caused by the threat represented by any talk of democratic reforms in Bhutan which a settlement in Nepal might set off.

Can New Delhi though build non-destructible dikes against the tide of history for ever?



Without the fig leaf

University, *The Nature of Underdevelopment and Regional Structure of Nepal: A Marxist Analysis*. It should have been, but unfortunately has not been, compulsory reading for the ministry of external affairs and the ministry of home affairs in New Delhi. Bhattarai's book describes in frightening detail the grim nature of inequality in land distribution in Nepal. The medieval age, it would seem, has decided to park itself in that country forever irrespective of developments elsewhere in the world. Despite the so-called democratization of the political system initiated by King Mahendra, little has been done over the last fifty years to carry out meaningful land reforms; communist influence has as a result spread with extraordinary rapidity in the Nepal countryside and amongst the young intelligentsia. The traditional parties — who generally maintain fraternal links with the Indian establishment — have not only an ambivalent attitude on the issue of removing the monarchy; many of them betray a

other in Drukyl, otherwise known as Bhutan. While Nepal proved troublesome, Bhutan has been India's pocket borough. It is only one-third Nepal's size and has barely one-sixth of the latter's population. Even so, its king, Jigme Singye Wangchuk, is India's most obedient servant. By an agreement signed with the British crown in early 20th century, Bhutan surrendered its external affairs to the paramountcy of India's viceroy and governor-general. With New Delhi inheriting that arrangement in 1947, Bhutan's vote in the United Nations became India's proprietorial prerogative. Should Nepal be overrun by the Maoists, the pressure to democratize Bhutan and dissolve its absolute monarchy would be unbearable. In that event, India would lose its second vote in the United Nations.

All this makes for a muddled picture. The legacy of close relationship between the leadership of the present ruling party in New Delhi and that of the Nepal National Con-



# India offers hand of cooperation to Afghanistan

By Amit Baruah

**KABUL, FEB. 15.** India's growing clout as a donor nation was in full view as the External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, held discussions with the Afghan President, Hamid Karzai, the Afghan Foreign Minister, Abdullah Abdullah, and other senior Ministers here today.

India also handed over 49 Tata trucks valued at Rs. 6 crores, to be used as troop carriers by the Afghan National Army, to the Defence Minister, Abdul Rahim Wardak, at a function organised by the American military, as the U.S. is the coordinating nation to train and equip the ANA.

This donation to the ANA is part of a \$400 million package of assistance that has been extended to Afghanistan in the wake of the changes in the country's political landscape post-2001.

## Regional cooperation

According to Mr. Wardak, India's assistance to the ANA was an excellent example of regional cooperation. "We look forward to greater cooperation with India," he told presspersons as Mr. Singh handed over the keys of the 49 trucks to him. (Another 235 Tata trucks had been provided earlier).

Mr. Singh said India had taken up projects in several sectors — including education, health, public transport and civil aviation. "We would be happy to cooperate further on the rebuilding of Afghanistan's institutions, including the Afghan National Army."

Officials in the External Affairs Minister's delegation told correspondent that India



**The External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, with the Afghan President, Hamid Karzai, at the Presidential Palace in Kabul on Tuesday. — AFP**

was keen to provide training to military officers and provide more equipment, but the U.S. was reluctant to let India do this on account of sensitivities related to Pakistan.

Mr. Singh's visit to Kabul almost didn't happen due to heavy snow in Kabul, which led to the closure of the city's airport this morning.

However, after the airport reopened, the External Affairs Minister's special aircraft was able to land in the Afghan capital.

## Economic opportunity

The Foreign Secretary, Shyam Saran, told presspersons that Mr. Karzai informed Mr. Natwar Singh that India should

look at Afghanistan as its friend. Mr. Karzai, who will be in New Delhi next week, said that bilateral relations were now back on their "old footing."

Mr. Saran quoted Mr. Karzai as saying that India must look at Afghanistan as an economic opportunity and as a transit point to Central Asia. He also said that India could help Af-

ghanistan with capacity building in various fields.

On his part, Mr. Singh told the Afghan President that India reciprocated his friendly sentiments and was willing to do more to help Afghanistan. Pointing out that Indian goods had to take a long route through Iran to come to Afghanistan, he said that India's support to Kabul would continue.

Mr. Singh, who also dedicated a 100-bed surgical block in Indira Gandhi Child Hospital to the Afghan Government, met the former King Zahir Shah, who has been given the title of Baba-e-Millat or "father of the nation."

During his meeting with Dr. Abdullah, Mr. Singh said construction on the Dilaram-Zarandj road had begun. This link would give direct access to the Iranian port of Chabahar and provide a shorter route for Indian goods to reach Afghanistan. India, he said, was also willing to construct the Pul-e-Kumri-Kabul section of a power transmission line, which would be of great help to Kabul city that currently goes without power through the day and barely gets supply at night.

The Foreign Secretary described Mr. Natwar Singh's visit to Kabul as "brief, but substantive." In his view, this visit would set the stage for Mr. Karzai's trip next week to New Delhi.

On the issue of defence cooperation, Mr. Saran said a beginning had been made with the hand-over of the trucks. The Foreign Secretary was hopeful that new areas of cooperation would develop between India and Afghanistan.

# Delhi thorn for king crown

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**BHARAT BHUSHAN**

**Islamabad, Feb. 15:** India has decided to continue turning the screws on King Gyanendra to release political leaders, student leaders and human rights activists and restore democracy.

New Delhi believes that the Nepal king has isolated himself with his retrograde action. The so-called "China card" that Nepal kings are prone to play on Indian sensitivities has also been rendered somewhat meaningless. The US is understood to have conveyed to India that it would persuade China not to fish in troubled waters in Nepal.

Yet another indication of India's desire not to endorse the actions of the Nepal monarch is that Amnesty International is now going to hold its media briefing on Nepal in the Indian capital on Thursday.

The very mention of Amnesty International used to be anathema to New Delhi earlier. However, now, Irene Khan, the secretary-general of Amnesty International, who was in Kathmandu assessing the human rights situation, is returning to Delhi tomorrow in preparation for a major media briefing on Nepal.

"Who are we to tell anyone whether to hold or not hold a press conference in India?" an official accompanying the external affairs minister to Afghanistan and Pakistan said.

Such feigned ignorance notwithstanding, what is true, however, is that Amnesty International did not want to embarrass India in any way and had been indirectly told last week to take the press conference elsewhere. Amnesty was thinking of Bangkok as an alternative to New Delhi.

But the obduracy of the king and his inability to hear what India and the international community have been advising him of late have brought about a qualitative change in thinking in Delhi.

Indeed, according to sources, external affairs minister Natwar Singh apparently almost gave the Nepalese ambassador Karna Dhoj Adhikari a list of issues that India would like the king to consider to retrace his steps. The ministry of external affairs later released this as a summary of the conversation between Singh and Adhikari.

"The king should realise that no one in the international community is with him," said a senior government source. He added: "As for military aid from India, all of it has stopped, including what was in the pipeline."



**Policemen rest in Kathmandu.** (Reuters)

However, India is not going to take extreme steps in the hope that the king can still be persuaded to see sense and restore what he has undone.

The Indian official position seems to be that the king should initiate action to work out a common strategy with the political parties to tackle the Maoists.

While the revival of Parliament remains a way out, Indian officials believe that it may not be an immediate prospect and are willing to support a progressive movement towards that goal. (See Page 8)

# Kathmandu, with clarity

India must continue to engage actively with the world and its own neighbours on Nepal

GIVEN its geographical and political proximity to Nepal, it is inevitable that India's stance on the royal coup in the Himalayan kingdom would have a resonance that goes far beyond South Asia. New Delhi's refusal to play along with King Gyanendra's grand ambition to concentrate all power in the palace is in sync with Washington, Brussels and London — a consensus underlined by the calibrated recall of their ambassadors in Kathmandu. In almost identically worded statements, all these entities have demanded that the king reinstate multi-party rule in Nepal, restore civil freedoms and release political prisoners. It is not just the West. Nepal's citizens — including those based in India — have made fervent appeals to India to support the restoration of democracy in Nepal.

The king today is therefore sandwiched between an intransigent international community, on the one hand, and an increasingly restive nation, on the other. His coup has achieved the impossible task of uniting Nepal's fractious polity. The six Nepali political parties that have formed a united front for the restoration of democracy in their country have also appealed to India to stop military assistance to Gyanendra. Meanwhile the Maoists are bearing down on Kathmandu by imposing a punishing blockade. Gyanendra, in other words, is in an ex-

tremely vulnerable position and should be more sensitive to suggestion than ever before, if only for his own interests — and this is the moment that New Delhi would like to employ. Basically, India would not wish to see the kingdom destabilised because it believes that the only gainers from political chaos would be the Maoists. India would therefore want continuity with change in the region with the king rolling back his draconian intervention and allowing multi-party democracy to fill the power vacuum. Any peace talks with the Maoists can only take place after this happens.

The big question is, will King Gyanendra oblige with the urgency that the situation demands? That depends on two factors: the king's threat perception and India's success in conveying its concerns on Nepal even while working to achieve its central purpose — the reinstatement of multi-party democracy in the kingdom. In many ways, the two factors are interlinked. King Gyanendra must continue to feel the wrath of the world for the draconian measures he has imposed on his own people and India must do its bit to ensure that he does. At the same time, New Delhi must continue to engage actively with the world and its own neighbours on this vexed issue, both through formal diplomatic channels, as well as through the clear media articulation of its position. For India's foreign policy makers, this is as challenging as it comes.

INDIAN EXPRESS

15 FEB 2005

# On military hardware, India makes it harder for Nepal

■ King risks losing assistance from major donors

SHISHIR GUPTA  
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 14

NEPAL's biggest donors, including India, today turned up the heat on King Gyanendra's government as his envoy was told to lift all restrictions on political parties.

If he fails to comply, the King risks losing military assistance and the very arsenal with which he had hoped to combat the Maoist threat.

As reported by *The Indian Express*, New Delhi had already frozen military aid to the new government. It now turns out that this decision was taken even though the Indian defence establishment had wanted the assistance to continue.

The United States and Britain, the other two leading donors to Nepal, have



Political leaders from Nepal in New Delhi on Monday. PTI

also threatened to follow India's lead as they review their aid to the new dispensation.

This morning, India's External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh spelt out the government's stand to the Nepalese ambassador Karna Dhoj Adhikari in no uncertain terms.

Singh made it clear that India favoured bringing political parties on board as only then would the

monarch be able to make some headway on the Maoist problem.

There are indications that Kathmandu has asked for 100 days from the international community to roll back the freeze on political activity. Officially, however, South Block insisted that King Gyanendra's government had not spelt out any time frame. Meanwhile, New Delhi has recalled its

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

# On hardware, India makes it harder for Nepal

ambassador S S Mukherjee for consultations.

Washington, on its part, is reviewing its \$12 million military assistance to Kathmandu. Under Section 508 of the Foreign Operations Act, the US can stop weapons and military assistance to countries where a duly-elected head of government is deposed.

The Bush administration can also invoke the so-called democracy sanctions against Kathmandu. Washington is currently consulting its ambassador James Moriarty and trying to work out whether democracy sanctions kick in if a head of government is deposed by a head of state.

## MILITARY ASSISTANCE

### INDIA (RS 374 CR)

- Ranjit/Lancer Helicopters: 2
- Advanced Light Helicopters: 2
- 105 mm light field gun: 7
- INSAS rifles: 28,000
- Medium Machine Guns: 180
- Ammunition (rifle): 1.23 cr rounds

### US (\$12 MN)

- M-16 rifles: 20,140
- Communication equipment, night vision devices and bullet-proof clothing

### UK: (6.6 MN POUNDS)

- Mi-17 helicopters: 2
- Explosive ordnance disposal gear
- Communication equipment for six battalions

London, which had promised defence assistance to the tune of 6.5 million pounds, will also review the military aid. Its developmental aid will continue as this goes to the people of Nepal.

New Delhi, meanwhile, overruled its own defence establishment when it decided to play hardball with Nepal.

The Army in particular, wanted the military aid to continue as it feared that China or Pakistan would step in. Pakistan had already made a token gesture in that direction in January

when it offered Rs 50 lakh in military assistance to landlocked Nepal.

The UPA government, however, assessed that with the US mounting pressure on the King, there was no question of either China or Pakistan turning Nepal's military saviour.

It figured that Beijing would not want another North Korea on its hands if the Maoists came to power in Nepal.

And with Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf already under pressure to demit his job as Army Chief, New Delhi figured that he would want to stay out of the complications in Kathmandu.

INDIAN EXPRESS

15 FEB 2005

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# India for restoration of democracy in Nepal

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revised

By Amit Baruah

**NEW DELHI, FEB. 14.** The External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, today called for the immediate restoration of democracy in Nepal and the Foreign Secretary, Shyam Saran, said that India's military assistance to Kathmandu was under "constant review."

In other developments, six Nepalese political parties called for the "overthrow" of the monarchy. In a tough message, Mr. Singh told the Nepalese Ambassador to India, Karna Dhoj Adhikari, that it would be "desirable" if immediate steps were taken by his Government to release political leaders, journalists and human rights activists, restore media freedom, reinstate multi-party democracy and evolve a national consensus to address the Nepal's problems.

An official statement said that the meeting took place at the request of Mr. Adhikari. During the meeting, Mr. Singh conveyed India's position as spelt out in its February 1 statement following the assumption of executive powers by King Gyanendra. "The External Affairs Minister emphasised that India wishes to see a stable, peaceful and prosperous Nepal in its neighbourhood," the statement added. Six Nepali parties, including the Nepali Congress and the Nepal Communist Party, said they would launch a struggle to restore democracy in their country. "We also appeal to [the] international community in general to rise to the occasion ... None of them, India in particular, should be seen as strengthening the military hand of Nepal," a joint statement by the parties said and added that only then could India win "the love, goodwill and friendship of millions of Nepalese."

"King Gyanendra has murdered democracy along with the Constitution of Nepal, obtained in the wake of the glorious peo-

## Britain recalls Ambassador

**LONDON, FEB. 14.** Britain today recalled its Ambassador in Kathmandu, Keith Bloomfield. Announcing this, the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, said: "We strongly support constitutional monarchy and multi-party democracy in Nepal and want to see a sustainable peace process. We continue to call upon Maoists to end violence and for both sides to return to the negotiating table..." — PTI

**U.S. reaction: Page 11**

ple's movement of 1990. Today, in Nepal political leaders have been arrested and persecuted ... civil rights are abrogated," the statement said. The parties called on all "peace-loving, democratic and patriotic" Nepalese people to close ranks and defeat the "personal, autocratic ambitions of King Gyanendra."

About India's stand in the wake of the position taken by the Nepalese political parties that the monarchy should go, Mr. Saran said at the India International Centre that this was a decision for the people of Nepal to take, not for India.

India would deal with whatever government was there in Nepal, Mr. Saran maintained. New Delhi's sympathies lay with the democratic and secular forces in that country. According to him, abandoning democracy is not the answer to Nepal's problems. India was trying to get this across to the monarchy in Kathmandu. If sending an Indian representative to Kathmandu served a purpose, then New Delhi would not shy away from the task.

Later in the evening, India's Ambassador to Nepal, S.S. Mukherjee, met Mr. Singh at his South Block office here.

# চাপে পড়ে আডবাবীর্ষ কাছে দূত পাঠালেন নেপালরাজ

জয়ন্ত শোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি

১৩ ফেব্রুয়ারি: বিপাকে পড়ে ভারতের সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ স্থাপন করতে বিরোধী দলনেতা লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাবীর্ষ কাছে দূত পাঠালেন নেপালের রাজা জ্ঞানেন্দ্র।

এ দেশের বামপন্থীর প্রথম থেকেই চাইছেন, নেপাল-রাজের প্রতি কড়া মনোভাব দেখাক দিল্লি। কেন্দ্রের কাছে অবিলম্বে নেপালে সব রকমের সামরিক সাহায্য পাঠানো বন্ধ করারও দাবি জানিয়েছেন তাঁরা। কিন্তু বিরোধী দলনেতা এবং বিজেপি সভাপতি লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাবীর্ষ প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের সঙ্গে দেখা করে বলেছেন, যুক্তিসঙ্গত হবে না। আডবাবীর্ষ যুক্তি, সামরিক সাহায্য তুলে নিলে নেপালের ভৌগোলিক অবস্থানকে কাজে লাগিয়ে ভারতের বিরুদ্ধে ফায়দা লোটার চেষ্টা

করবে চিন এবং পাকিস্তান। তা ছাড়া, নেপাল-লাত্বিয়া রাজ্যগুলিতে যে ভাবে মার্ক্সবাদীদের প্রভাব বেড়ে চলেছে, তাতে সামরিক সাহায্য বন্ধ করলে আখেরে ভারতেরই ক্ষতি হবে। এ ব্যাপারে নেপাল রাজের সঙ্গে অবিলম্বে আলোচনা শুরু করা প্রস্তাবও দেন প্রাক্তন উপ-প্রধানমন্ত্রী।

এই অবস্থায় সাবধানে পা ফেলতে চাইছে মনমোহন সিংহের সরকার। ইতিমধ্যেই নেপালে ভারতের রাষ্ট্রদূত শিবশঙ্কর মুখোপাধ্যায়কে দিল্লিকে ডেকে পাঠানো হয়েছে। আমেরিকা এবং ব্রিটেনও তাদের রাষ্ট্রদূতকে ডেকে পাঠিয়েছে। সরকারি ভাবে তিন দেশই জানিয়েছে, নেপালের সাম্প্রতিক পরিস্থিতি খতিতে দেখতেই রাষ্ট্রদূতদের ডেকে পাঠানো হয়েছে। কিন্তু রাজনৈতিক মহলের ধারণা, গণতন্ত্র ফেরানো নিয়ে চাপ বাড়িয়ে প্রয়োজনে রাষ্ট্রদূত প্রত্যাহার করার পথ



শান্তি আলোচনার প্রস্তাব ফিরিয়ে দিয়ে মাওবাদী নেতা প্রচণ্ড এবং মুখপাত্র কৃষ্ণবাহাদুর মুহারা দেশবাসীর কাছে রাজতন্ত্র হটিয়ে সংসদীয় গণতন্ত্র প্রতিষ্ঠার আহ্বান জানিয়েছেন। আজ মাওবাদীদের ডাকা অবরোধের ফলে কাঠমান্ডু বাদ দিয়ে নেপালের বাকি অঞ্চলে যানবাহন অচল হয়ে গিয়েছে। সেনারা হেলিকপ্টার ও কনভয়ের সাহায্যে কিছু পণ্যবাহী গাড়ি পার করে দিতে সক্ষম হয়েছে। রাজপ্রাসাদ সূত্রে জানানো হয়েছে, নেপালের জনজীবনে অবরোধের কোনও প্রভাব পড়েনি।

মাওবাদীদের প্রভাব বাতা এবং নেপালের গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভৌগোলিক অবস্থানের কারণেই আমেরিকার মতো চরমপন্থী পথ নিচ্ছে না ভারত। তবে জ্ঞানেন্দ্রকে চাপে রাখার চেষ্টা চলছে। সাম্প্রতিক অতীতে কাঠমান্ডুর সঙ্গে রাজনৈতিক যোগাযোগপন্থার কাজটি করতেন স্য। প্রয়াস জাতীয় নিরাপত্তা

উপদেষ্টা জে এন দীক্ষিত। বর্তমান পরিস্থিতিতে নেপালরাজের জন্য নতুন করে কোনও রাজনৈতিক দূত পাঠায়নি দিল্লি। রাজা গণতন্ত্র ফেরানোয় উদ্যোগী না-হলে মন্ত্রিসভার নিরাপত্তা বিষয়ক কমিটির বৈঠক তেঁকে সামরিক সাহায্য বন্ধের বিষয়ে কথা শুরু করতে বাধ্য হবে বলে হুমকি দেওয়া হয়েছে।

ভারতের সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ রাখতে অনেক সময়ই কাঠমান্ডুর এক হোটেল ব্যবসায়ী প্রভাকর রানার সাহায্য নিত নেপাল। কিন্তু তিনিও বর্তমানে নেপালে নেই। ফলে বিপাকে পড়ে আডবাবীর্ষ কাছে দূত পাঠিয়ে নতুন করে ট্রাক টু' কূটনীতির রাস্তা খোলার চেষ্টা করছেন রাজা। আডবাবীর্ষ প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে এ কথা জানিয়ে রাজার সঙ্গে কথা শুরুর প্রস্তাব দিয়েছেন। এ দিকে, সংবাদসংস্থা জানাচ্ছে, ক্ষমতা দখলের প্রায় ১২ দিন পরে আজ প্রথম প্রাসাদের বাইরে দেখা

গিয়েছে রাজা জ্ঞানেন্দ্রকে। বসন্ত পঞ্চমী উপলক্ষে প্রাসাদের বাইরে আসেন রাজা। যদিও সংবাদমাধ্যমের সঙ্গে তিনি কোনও কথা বলেননি।

নেপাল থেকে এ পারে এসে শেখর কৈরাল জা নিয়েছেন, "নেপালিরা নিরাপত্তার অভাব বোধ করছেন।" গিরিজাপ্রসাদ কৈরালার ভাইসো বলেছেন, জ্ঞানেন্দ্রের বিরুদ্ধে শক্তি সংহত করার পরেই তিনি নেপালে ফিরবেন। তিন জন নেপাল কংগ্রেসের নেতাও পালানোর পরিকল্পনা করেছেন বলে জানান শেখর।

আজি মনমোহনকে: নেপালের রাজার উপর থেকে রাজনৈতিক ও সামরিক সমর্থন প্রত্যাহারের জন্য প্রধানমন্ত্রীর কাছে আজি জানায় নেপালি জনাধিকার কাছে আজি জানায় নেপালের সংগ্রামে আমজনতার শরিক হতে রবিবার কলকাতায় পদযাত্রা ও সমাবেশ করেন স্থানীয় নেপালিরা।

# নেপালে 'ট্র্যাক-টু'র কথা ভাবছে না ভারত

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ১০ ফেব্রুয়ারি: রাজকীয় অভ্যুত্থানের পরে নেপালের রাজনৈতিক পরিস্থিতির উপরে সতর্ক নজর রেখে সাবধানে এগোতে চাইছে ভারত। বিদেশ মন্ত্রক সূত্রের খবর, জ্ঞানেন্দ্রের সঙ্গে এখনই 'ট্র্যাক-টু' কূটনীতি শুরু করতে কোনও তাড়াছড়ো করা হচ্ছে না। বিশেষ কোনও দূতকেও নিয়োগ করা হচ্ছে না।

প্রাক্তন জাতীয় নিরাপত্তা উপদেষ্টা জে এন দীক্ষিতের পরে পাকিস্তান ও চিনের সঙ্গে কূটনৈতিক দৌত্য কে চালাবে, সে ব্যাপারে সঙ্গে সঙ্গেই সক্রিয় হয়েছিল সাউথ ব্লক। প্রথমে চিনে ভারতীয় রাষ্ট্রদূত শিবশঙ্কর মেননকে দিয়ে পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে কথাবার্তা শুরু করার কথা ভাবা হয়েছিল। কিন্তু বিদেশে নিযুক্ত রাষ্ট্রদূত হিসাবে মেনন রিপোর্ট করেন বিদেশমন্ত্রীকে আর এই 'ট্র্যাক-টু'

কূটনীতির দৌত্য সরাসরি প্রধানমন্ত্রীর পক্ষ থেকেই করা হয়। এই সমস্যা এড়াতে পরে স্থির হয়, পাকিস্তানের রাষ্ট্রদূত সতীশ লাম্বা ইসলামাবাদের সঙ্গে 'ট্র্যাক-টু' চালাবেন। তবে পাকিস্তান বা চিন নিয়ে চিন্তাভাবনা চললেও এখনই নেপাল নিয়ে এমন কোনও সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হচ্ছে না। এর আগে বাজপেয়ী জমানায় প্রভাকর রাণা নামে এক পাঁচতারা হোটেলের মালিক নেপালের সঙ্গে ভারতের কূটনৈতিক দৌত্য চালিয়েছিলেন।

ইতিমধ্যে নেপাল কংগ্রেস, নেপালি কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি-সহ বিভিন্ন রাজনৈতিক দলগুলি ভারতের সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ করে নেপালে গণতন্ত্র ফেরানোর জন্য নয়াদিল্লির উপরে চাপ তৈরি করছে। ভারতও অভ্যুত্থানের পরে যথেষ্ট কড়া বিবৃতি দিয়েছে। সার্কে যোগ না-দেওয়ার কারণ হিসাবে

নেপালের সাম্প্রতিক পরিস্থিতির উল্লেখ করা হয়েছে। বিদেশ মন্ত্রকের বক্তব্য, "পরিস্থিতির উপরে সতর্ক নজর রাখা হচ্ছে।" পরিস্থিতি কোন দিকে এগোয়, তা না-দেখে এখনই জ্ঞানেন্দ্রের জন্য কোনও 'খোলা বার্তা' পাঠাতে চায় না দিল্লি। আজ বিদেশ মন্ত্রকের মুখপাত্র নভতেজ সারনা বলেছেন, "নেপালে একে একে রাজনৈতিক বন্দিদের মুক্তি দেওয়া হচ্ছে। আমরা একে স্বাগত জানাচ্ছি। অবশ্য এখনও অনেকেই বন্দি রয়েছেন। আমরা চাই তাঁদেরও ছাড়া হোক।" প্রসঙ্গত, দুই প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী কৃষ্ণপ্রসাদ ভট্টরাই ও লোকেন্দ্র বাহাদুর চাঁদ-সহ সাত নেতাকে আজ মুক্তি দিয়েছে নেপাল সরকার।

আমেরিকা ও ব্রিটেনকে পাশে নিয়ে নেপালের উপরে কূটনৈতিক চাপ তৈরির চেষ্টাও অব্যাহত রয়েছে। রাজা

ক্ষমতা অধিগ্রহণ করার পরেই আমেরিকা ও ইংল্যান্ড তার সমালোচনা করেছিল। আই এম এফ-এর ঋণ নেপালকে দেওয়া হবে কি না, তা পুনর্বিবেচনা করার কথাও বলা হয়েছিল। নেপালে ভারতীয় দূতবাসের পক্ষ থেকে তখনই জানানো হয়, নেপালের উপরে ক্রমশ চাপ বাড়িয়ে তোলা হবে। অন্য দিকে চিন ও পাকিস্তান ভারতের সুরে সুর না-মিলিয়ে বলেছিল, 'এটা নেপালের অভ্যন্তরীণ ব্যাপার।' রাজা জ্ঞানেন্দ্র যাতে পরিস্থিতির সুযোগ নিয়ে চিনের সঙ্গে সখ্য বাড়িয়ে তুলতে না-পারেন, সেই চেষ্টাও করছে দিল্লি।

এ দিকে, নেপালের কৈলাশি জেলা কারাগারে হামলা চালিয়ে ১৬৬ জন বন্দি নিয়ে পালিয়েছে মাওবাদীরা। হামলায় ৫ জন নিরাপত্তারক্ষী মারা গিয়েছেন বলে পি টি আই জানিয়েছে।

**LOOKING AHEAD:** *Multilateral gestures from India may change King Gyanendra's mind*

# Royal plural

BY PREM SHANKAR JHA

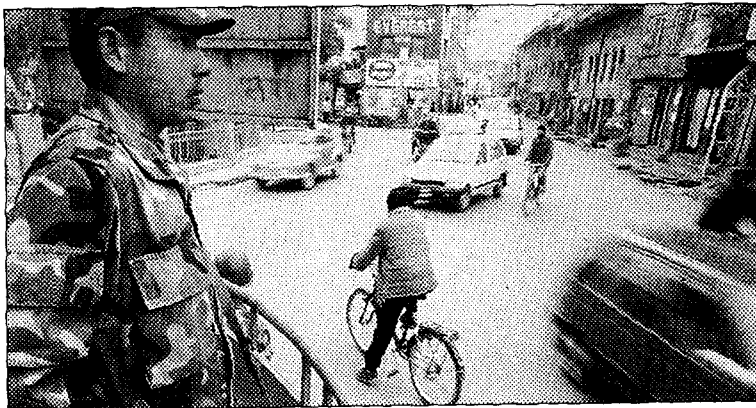
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**K**ING GYANENDRA'S decision to declare an emergency in Nepal, sack his government and assume direct control has confronted India with the most acute foreign policy dilemma that it has ever faced: to back the king in what is bound to become an all-out conflict with the Maoists; or to back away from him and let Nepal slip out of India's sphere of influence as he goes looking for new patrons.

New Delhi's immediate condemnation looked like a knee-jerk defence of the principle of democracy. But it was anything but that. The Indian government had been aware of King Gyanendra's increasing restiveness, and had been counselling patience for some time. It had, therefore, plenty of time to decide what it would do if he took the bit between his teeth. The king's growing frustration was easy to understand. The Maoist insurgency had been going on for nine years. A succession of elected governments had failed both to crush the movement and to bring the Maoists into the political mainstream. A ceasefire had been painstakingly negotiated in January 2003. But endless rounds of talks had brought the Maoists no closer to accepting the 1991 Constitution.

In the meantime, the strife had disrupted Nepal's economy, and choked off the revenue from tourism upon which it depended for most of its foreign exchange. The Maoists were using the lull to consolidate their hold on the rural areas of the kingdom. By some estimates, they now controlled 75 per cent of the country. The political parties had proved incapable of resolving the problem. The king had, therefore, acted out of desperation. This was a very different action from that of his father, King Mahendra, who had declared an emergency in 1960 mainly because of his personal dislike of Prime Minister B.P. Koirala.

If, despite this, New Delhi has felt it necessary to express deep concern over the king's action, to cancel Manmohan Singh's visit to Bangladesh at the last minute to avoid meeting the king, and prevent the new Army Chief, Gen. J.J. Singh, from receiving the honorary generalship of the Royal Nepal Army (RNA), it is because it is utterly convinced that the king has made a terrible mistake. By elimi-



**STREET THEATRE:** A Nepalese soldier, Kathmandu

nating the elected government from the political arena, he has entered into a direct confrontation with the Maoists. Since the prime purpose of the Maoists, ever since they first sought power through elections in 1991, has been to abolish the monarchy, there is now no room for compromise. Renewed conflict is, therefore, round the corner and, given the forbidding terrain of Nepal outside Kathmandu valley, and its relatively small army, it is a conflict that the government cannot win.

King Gyanendra may not be aware of this. Like all his predecessors, he is surrounded by a coterie of sycophants who tell him what he wants to hear. The RNA, too, is fanatically loyal to the monarchy, and may have given him an exaggerated impression of what it could do if the shackles of civilian control were removed. (This is indeed what the RNA's spokesman, Brigadier-General Gurung, told the *Indian Express* on February 4.) Finally, he is aware of the deep reverence that ordinary Nepalis feel for the monarch, whom they regard as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. These considerations seem to have persuaded him that support for the Maoists will melt away if he assumes direct control of the anti-insurgency operations.

Delhi, however, knows from its own bitter experience that most of his optimism is based upon wishful thinking. There were never more than 500 active 'A' grade terrorists in Punjab, backed by about 2,000 helpers and 5,000 sympathisers. Yet, they tied up over 350,000 police, military and paramilitary forces, and unleashed a reign of terror

that claimed more than 50,000 lives over the course of a decade. In the same manner, there have never been more than 3,000 active insurgents or terrorists in Kashmir. But the resulting violence has claimed around 60,000 lives and despite the deployment of 375,000 military and paramilitary personnel, J&K is not yet fully under control.

In Nepal, the active Maoist cadres are estimated to exceed 5,000. Even in relatively friendly terrain, the government would need half a million soldiers to wrest control of the countryside from them. But in the mountainous terrain of Nepal, where communications are primitive and large stretches have no motorable roads, even such large counter-insurgency forces would not suffice. Against this, the entire RNA numbers less than 80,000.

The king's precipitate action has left India with Hobson's choice. If it backs the king in a direct conflict with the Maoists, it will find itself embroiled in a low intensity conflict that cannot be won. As the conflict intensifies, the stakes for India in the king's victory will rise and it will find itself sucked ever deeper into the war. What starts as a supply of sophisticated arms to the RNA could end by sucking Indian troops into the conflict. After the IPKF's bitter experience in Sri Lanka, that is the last thing India wants.

What is worse, the main victims of the violence will not be the cadres of the Maoists or the soldiers of the RNA but defenceless villagers. While the Maoists will terrorise them to create safe havens for themselves, the RNA will terrorise the same villagers to dissuade them from giving

sanctuary to the Maoists or to punish them when they do. If the violence is prolonged, this will provoke a large exodus into India. In the end, the failure to crush the Maoists will embolden India's home-grown Naxals. They have already spread their tentacles to 157 districts (about a quarter of the country), but has so far lacked the popular support to pose a serious threat to the State.

The alternative, to deny support to the king, and refuse his request for arms, is fraught with risks of another kind. Under a 1965 agreement, Nepal has the right to procure weapons from other countries if New Delhi cannot, or will not, provide them. The king has sent signals that if his request for arms is turned down, he will turn to Britain, the US, Pakistan and China. The US and Britain are as reluctant to get sucked into the Nepali quagmire as India, but New Delhi fears that Pakistan and China may not be able to resist the bait. If either country establishes a permanent military presence in Nepal, India's northern ramparts will be decisively breached.

New Delhi has temporised by agreeing to send the arms that are already in the pipeline, but deferring a decision on agreements that have not as yet been signed. However, this can at most buy time. The more difficult task is to persuade the king to back away from his impulsive folly and hand back power to an all-party, national government. This will recreate the buffer that existed between the monarchy and the Maoists, and reopen the possibility of finding a compromise solution that brings the latter back into democratic politics, while preserving the monarchy in some form.

New Delhi will find it much easier to persuade the king if it abandons its insistence on bilateralism, and involves the US, Britain and the EU (and just possibly China and Pakistan) in the search for a solution. Such a multilateral initiative stands a far better chance of persuading the king to restore democracy and concede the Maoist demand for a Constituent Assembly, while simultaneously reassuring him that it will fully support the preservation of the monarchy. It will also put far greater pressure on the Maoists than Delhi alone can, to accept a compromise in the recasting of the Constitution that the king can live with.



# Opposition wants India to play pro-active role

*Handwritten:* India's neighbour

*Handwritten:* 11-12-11

**Kathmandu:** Ten days into emergency and suspension of democracy, the opposition in Nepal wants India to play a pro-active role for restoration of democracy in the Himalayan Kingdom leveraging its unique position in the common fight against Maoists.

India can apply moral pressure and link its stand on normalising its relations with Nepal, including collaboration on the military front and economic assistance to restore status quo ante before February 1 when King Gyanendra seized power, imposed emergency and clamped press censorship, former foreign minister Ram Sharan Mahat said in an interview.

The 54-year-old Nepali Congress central committee member said simultaneously political parties within the country are planning to regroup against the royal moves for re-establishment of democracy.

"India should leverage its position on restoration of democracy and human rights. One is the moral pressure linking it with normalising relations with Nepal with which it is cooperating on fighting the Maoists.

"India does not have to fear that Nepal will get close to China because Beijing has its own reservations in helping in the fight against the Maoists. India has a clear edge. Its military cooperation with Nepal is important in the fight against the Maoist insurgency and New Delhi can use its advantage."

New foreign minister Ramesh Nath Pandey blamed political parties for imposition of emergency in Nepal. He said peace would be restored in the kingdom within

three years and King Gyanendra would hold elections and hand over power to people's representatives.

Meanwhile, the United States has said that Nepalese security forces have prevented its ambassador from visiting senior political leaders under detention and asked the Himalayan kingdom to return to democracy and restore civil liberties immediately.

Concerned over the actions of King Gyanendra, who sacked the Sher Bahadur Deuba government and clamped national emergency on February 1, the US said it will "continue to

press for the restoration of civil liberties in Nepal." "The actions of the king, in summarily dismissing the government and declaring a state of emergency and taking repressive measures such as banning media and jailing political opponents, is something that we view with the greatest concern," state department spokesman Adam Ereli told reporters in Washington.

Asked about the fate of detained political activists, he said "the United States has called for the king to release detainees, lift house arrest and restore civil liberties and freedom of the press. US ambassador to Nepal James Moriarty made these points directly to the king when he met him on February 7, and has also been meeting with members of Nepal's civil society."

Nepalese security forces, however, "prevented the US ambassador from meeting senior political leaders under house arrest in Kathmandu," he claimed. Agencies



Policemen detain a human rights activist in Kathmandu

# জ্ঞানেন্দ্র-শিবশঙ্কর কথা, গণতন্ত্র ফেরাতে চাপ

কাঠমাণ্ডু ও বাঙ্গালোর, ৯ ফেব্রুয়ারি: অবশেষে দিল্লির সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ হল কাঠমাণ্ডুর নারায়ণহিতি রাজপ্রাসাদের। নেপালে ভারতীয় রাষ্ট্রদূত শিবশঙ্কর মুখোপাধ্যায়ের সঙ্গে আজ দেশের রাজনৈতিক পরিস্থিতি আলোচনা করেছেন রাজা জ্ঞানেন্দ্র। অপর দিকে ভারতের পক্ষ থেকে দাবি করা হয়েছে, রাজা দ্রুত গণতন্ত্র ফেরান আর রাজনৈতিক নেতাদের উপর থেকে নিষেধাজ্ঞা তুলে নিন।

ভারতীয় বিদেশ মন্ত্রক সূত্রে খবর, শিবশঙ্কর জ্ঞানেন্দ্রকে বলেছেন যে, তাঁর সিদ্ধান্তের ফলে নেপালের রাজনৈতিক দলগুলি একে অপরের প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বী হয়ে গিয়েছে। গণতন্ত্রকে যারা ধ্বংস করতে চায়, তাদেরই এতে সুবিধা হবে।

রাজা জ্ঞানেন্দ্র কথা বলছেন না বলে কয়েক দিন ধরেই ঘোর অস্বস্তিতে ছিল দিল্লি। মাওবাদী উপদ্রব রুখতে নেপালকে সামরিক সাহায্য দেওয়ার নীতি থেকে ভারত সরে আসবে কি না, সেই সংশয়ও তৈরি হচ্ছিল। আজকের সাক্ষাৎকারকে সেই জন্যই তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ বলে মনে করছে কূটনৈতিক মহল। সরকারকে বরখাস্ত করার পরে শুধু মার্কিন ও ব্রিটিশ রাষ্ট্রদূতের সঙ্গে কথা হয়েছিল জ্ঞানেন্দ্রের।

নেপালরাজের সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ হলেও ভারতের সমস্ত অস্বস্তি অবশ্য

কটকে না। নেপালে মাওবাদীদের উপদ্রব বাড়লে সীমান্তবর্তী ভারতীয় রাজ্যগুলিতে তার প্রভাব পড়বে বলে আশঙ্কা করছেন প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়। নেপালের সঙ্গে প্রতিরক্ষা সহযোগিতার বিষয়ে স্পষ্ট কোনও সিদ্ধান্তের কথা না-বললেও প্রণব জানিয়েছেন, নেপালের পরিস্থিতির উপরেই সব নির্ভর করবে।

‘এরো হুঁড়িয়া হুঁতটে’-এর অনুষ্ঠানে প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী আজ বলেছেন, “নেপালে মাওবাদী কার্যকলাপ নিয়ন্ত্রণে থাকা দরকার। বাড়াবাড়ি হলে পাশাপাশি ভারতীয় রাজ্যগুলিকে ফল ভুগতে হবে।” জ্ঞানেন্দ্র ক্ষমতা অধিগ্রহণ করার পরে শাহি সেনার কাছ থেকে লিখিত বার্তা পাওয়ার কথা স্বীকার করেন প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী। কিন্তু সেখানে ভারতীয় সামরিক সাহায্য বজায় রাখার জন্য নির্দিষ্ট অনুরোধ করা হয়নি বলে তিনি জানিয়েছেন।

যোগাযোগ ব্যবস্থা ফের খুলে দেওয়ার মতো কিছু কিছু শিথিলতা দেখানোর পরে আবার কড়াকড়ি শুরু করেছে নেপালি রাজ-কর্তৃপক্ষ। রাজনৈতিক বিক্ষোভ চলবে না বলে আজ কড়া হুঁশিয়ারি দেওয়া হয়েছে। নামকরা কলেজ ও গুরুত্বপূর্ণ সরকারি ভবনগুলির বাইরে সতর্ক প্রহরায় আছে সেনাবাহিনী। —পি টি আই, রয়টার্স

# Delhi envoy nudges king

OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Feb. 9: In the first official-level contact with the palace after the imposition of emergency last week, India has urged King Gyanendra to take all steps to restore democracy in Nepal.

Indian ambassador Shiv Shankar Mukherjee met the king in Kathmandu this evening and emphasised the importance of bringing leaders of political parties into a broad national consensus.

Mukherjee is the third envoy to have been given an audience with the palace after the king dismissed the Sher Bahadur Deuba government and assumed all powers on February 1. Ambassadors of the US and Britain have already met Gyanendra.

The Indian envoy asked the king to lift restrictions imposed on political leaders.

Many politicians have been arrested or placed under house arrest since Gyanendra seized power. While the authorities say they number 43, political parties claim it could exceed 100.

A former ambassador to India, Lok Raj Baral, has also been taken into custody. A senior academic, Baral was arrested as soon as he reached Kathmandu by a late evening Royal Nepal Airlines flight from Delhi on Monday.

Baral was in India to attend a workshop organised by the Observer Research Foundation, a Delhi-based think tank. He had made brief observations on the situation in Nepal at the workshop but had not spoken out against the king.

An old friend who met him here said Baral did not think he would be detained.

Human rights groups have spoken out against the detentions, in comments that appear to have provoked the security forces to increase surveillance on them or detain them too.

Kapil Shreshtha, a member of Nepal's human rights commission, was arrested while trying to leave the country for India.

Another prominent member of the kingdom's human rights commission, Sukaran Maharjan, is also reported to have been detained.

Democratic forces in Nepal have been mounting pressure on Delhi not to support the king and to allow the Nepalese people to decide the role he should play.

India, for now, appears to be keeping its options open.

At the meeting this evening, the king explained the reasons for dismissing the Deuba government and imposing emergency.

Mukherjee urged a return to the democratic process at the earliest. Delhi also emphasised the importance of bringing leaders of political parties into a broad national consensus to enable Nepal to face its political and economic challenges. For this, it was necessary to lift all restrictions on them, he said.

THE TELEGRAPH

10 FEB 1992

# India set to play realpolitik in Nepal

By Indrani Bagchi/TNN

**New Delhi:** Engagement, not estrangement is the new Indian buzzword on Nepal. Having displayed its displeasure about the royal power grab in no uncertain terms, India now looks prepared to play the game of realpolitik.

The first signs that India is ready to nuance its anger came from defence minister Pranab Mukherjee, who was quoted as saying that Nepal's affairs were an 'internal matter'. The choice of words is crucial precisely because it puts an unseen barrier to how much India will involve itself in pushing democracy in Nepal as against ad-

ressing its considerable security interests. Interestingly, it also echoes China's reaction to the Nepal crisis.

According to sources, word has come from the highest levels of government that India would not leave King Gyanendra high and dry. There is an intensified effort for India to get face-time with the King, who has not yet met Indian ambassador Shiv Shankar Mukherjee.

One of the conduits habitually used to gain access to the King by the previous government was his best friend and former business associate Prabhakar Rana. According to sources in the government, this channel has not yet been used in the

aftermath of the present crisis.

Said Gen Ashok Mehta, who heads the track II process with Nepal: "The King has bitten off more than he can chew. There are no spectacular military results: Captains and majors are patrolling editorial offices, practicing censorship and managing the emergency."

India's response will be measured against Gyanendra's real intention, which has prompted the renewed engagement call.

The terms of engagement will be more carefully worked out this time, but India will not leave the field open for either China or any other power to come fishing in troubled waters.

# PM neighbour gesture

OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

**New Delhi, Feb. 9:** After refusing to legitimise the royal coup in Nepal, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh indicated that India had not shut the door on its neighbour.

A PMO blueprint, which set out the policy thrust areas for the various ministries and departments, spoke of a "proactive engagement" with the neighbours to "improve border management" with a focus on "related infrastructure development".

According to the charter, the foreign ministry has been advised to explore "lines of credit with a view to creating opportunities for Indian business and improving access to needed raw material, including energy sources".

The defence ministry was asked to streamline the pro-

cedure in order to expedite acquisitions while improving transparency and accountability.

The home ministry was set a six-month deadline by the PMO to tackle "Naxalism/Left-wing extremism".

The ministry was also tasked to "tackle terrorism, militancy and insurgency in the Northeast and Jammu and Kashmir as an urgent national priority". However, it was advised to implement a Jammu and Kashmir reconstruction plan.

Proposals were mooted to revive the defunct National Integration Council — which was constituted in the Ayodhya era — and enact a model comprehensive law to fight communal violence.

In the social sector, Singh outlined plans to table a bill on education as a fundamental right, ensure nationwide cov-

erage of the mid-day meal programme, establish a national commission on education and ensure legal equality for women in all legislation.

The PMO charter pledged to "address the problems of minorities in a comprehensive manner".

For starters, it will commission a study by an institute set up by former Chief Justice A.M. Ahmadi to come up with "tangible" suggestions within the next six months.

His charter also promised to promote technical and "modern" education among minorities.

Realising that a pre-poll commitment on quotas in the private sector was not received too well by industry and opinion-makers, the PMO's "manifesto" merely spoke of "promoting employment opportunities for scheduled castes".

THE BIGGER PICTURE: India needs an effective policy to tackle the Nepal, Bangladesh crises

# A tale of two countries

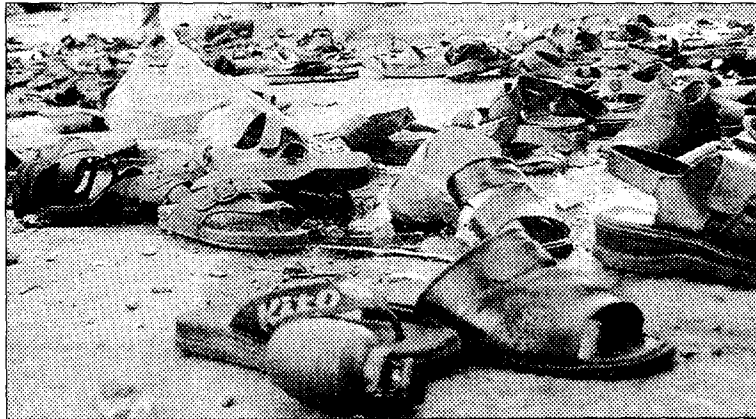
BY MANOJ JOSHI

ONE OF the problems of being unifocal is that when something happens outside the range of your vision, you cannot quite get a fix on it. This is what seems to have happened to India over Nepal and Bangladesh. In the last five years, while we have remained fixated on Pakistan — tensing for near-war in 2002, jockeying for peace in 2003 and reveling in the easing of tensions the year after — two major crises have been unfolding in our neighbourhood. Hidden to Indian eyes at least, Nepal and Bangladesh have gone into crisis mode, something that became evident only when the prime minister cancelled his visit to Dhaka for the Saarc summit.

In Nepal, the rise of the Maoists has been a direct consequence of the failure of parliamentary democracy. India's economic blockade of 1989 was the catalyst that compelled the king to give up absolute monarchy in the early Nineties. But its elements were the young activists who were at the forefront of the anti-monarchy struggle. Some of the more radical participated in the general election as the Samyukta Jana Morcha, led by Baburam Bhattarai, and won some seats. But widespread corruption, quarreling politicians and the continuing back-breaking poverty in the country left them disillusioned. Even a government formed by the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninists) in 1994 did not change things.

The following year, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) emerged, led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal *aka* Prachanda and Bhattarai, that decided to launch an armed struggle. By the end of 1996, despite an ineffectual government campaign, the Maoists had established themselves in three remote mountain districts in the west of the Himalayan kingdom. Observers have pointed to the inspiration that Peru's brutal Shining Path has been for the Nepalese Maoists and their tactics have not been very different, establishing themselves in remote mountain areas, killing alleged informers and 'class enemies'. Today, they control 69 of the 75 districts of Nepal. The primary target of the Maoists is the monarchy, but to tap nationalist sentiment, they also inveigh against Indian 'hegemonists' who allegedly prop up the oppressive system.

The royalist coup provides only



CLEARING THE MESS: Aftermath of a bomb blast at Sheikh Hasina's rally, Dhaka

an illusion of stability. Nepal, even with the wholehearted help of India, cannot impose a military solution on the insurgency. The better option is to press the Maoists hard enough to bring them to the negotiating table. But the ineptness with which the situation has been handled has tilted the decks in favour of the Maoists. King Gyanendra lacks the political skills to handle the situation and has, through his action, undermined the institution of monarchy itself.

The developments in Bangladesh have not quite precipitated as yet. But make no mistake, our eastern neighbour is in the throes of a deep crisis where the political blood feud between the two mainstream parties has enabled forces of extremism to grow exponentially. In the last year, the opposition and pro-India Awami League has faced bomb attacks authored by radical Islamists, leading to the death of several of their prominent leaders. The ruling Bangladesh National Party, which is in an alliance with the Jamaat-e-Islami, is unable to do much and it appears that the smaller Jamaat is driving the larger party, which appears to be in a state of drift.

As in Pakistan, Islamisation came to Bangladesh with the armed forces. In 1977, the military dictator Ziaur Rehman officially ended the policy of secularism and made recitation from the *Koran* a regular practice at the meetings of his own BNP. His successor, H.M. Ershad (1982-90), went a step further and made Islam the State religion. He also revived the Jammah-e-Islami, in the doghouse for its anti-national role during the liberation struggle, to counter the secular opposition.

When Begum Khalida Zia, widow of Ziaur Rehman, became prime minister in 1991, the Islamic forces consolidated their influence. They faced some check in the 1996-2000 period when Begum Hasina Wajed ruled, but in the 2000 elections, the BNP capitalised on the failures of Begun Hasina and won a massive victory, gaining 191 seats, with its ally getting another 17 in the 300-strong Parliament. No one has charged the Jamaat with being responsible for the attacks, but its presence in the government has encouraged a climate of impunity in which more radical groups like the Harkatul-jihad Islami, Bangladesh and the Jihad Movement have flourished.

Of particular concern are the country's Sylhet and Chittagong regions. The former, where a number of Indian insurgent groups are sheltered, has witnessed the highest number of bomb attacks, including one on the British deputy high commissioner last year. In the latter region, gun-running and lawlessness became manifest when a huge shipment of arms was seized as it was being unloaded at a government jetty last year. Till now, no explanation has been forthcoming about the origin and destination of the arms, allowing the impression to grow that the government is not really in control of things.

No matter from which angle approached, India has a tough call in both countries. The intensely nationalist Nepalese intellectuals, who form the core of the Maoists, have always resented India, as indeed has the monarchy. India's only friends, the Nepalese Congress and the professional classes, have not been particularly effective in putting across

their political message. In Bangladesh, India has had to stand by helplessly while friendly forces like the Awami League are being ruthlessly attacked. This is not surprising, considering New Delhi has been able to do little about the numerous camps that shelter insurgents active in the North-east for the past decade and more.

But policy can neither be made out of pique — it must carefully think through the consequences — nor can it afford to be squeamish. In 1989, the Indian blockade, criticised across the world, played a crucial role in bringing democracy to Nepal. Countries like the US and Britain have lined up with New Delhi in criticising the king's coup in Nepal. Particularly after the attack on the British official, alarm bells on Bangladesh have been ringing in Washington and London.

Contrary to some speculation, China is unlikely to make much of India's dilemmas. Both countries are so 'India-locked' that there is little China can do, except to make some token gestures, and there are no reasons to believe that they are interested in doing that either. In 1989, the decisive year for the Nepalese monarchy, the Chinese could have sent one convoy of fuel supplies to blockaded Kathmandu, but they did not, and compelled the monarchy to deal with New Delhi. Considering their own problems with Islamic extremism, Beijing is unlikely to encourage a situation that would make Bangladesh a new base for Islamic radicals. The more likely option it has is to allow India to stew in its own South Asian juice.

Clearly, the primary international responsibility for pulling the Nepalese and Bangladeshi chestnuts out of the fire rests with New Delhi. The issue is not leverage; both countries are 'India-locked' not only in geographical terms, but also culturally. No country in the world can have more leverage than India has on Nepal — communications, petroleum products, military supplies, everything must pass through our territory. India may not have similar leverage over Bangladesh, but it can make more than enough trouble for any regime inimical to India, if it so chooses.

The problem, however, and this is not unique to India, is the ability to translate our enormous power vis-a-vis these countries into a workable policy.

...the tough task...  
...Military-Military Relations Suffer

# RNA to India: Please continue aid flow



Policemen stand guard outside an Internet cafe in Kathmandu on Tuesday

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Kathmandu:** Nepal's Chief of Army Staff Gen. Pyar Jung Thapa has requested continued military assistance from India. In a meeting with Indian ambassador Shiv Mukherjee Monday, Gen. Thapa hoped that Indian military assistance to the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) would continue in the changed political setup in the Himalayan Kingdom.

Indian diplomatic sources confirmed the meeting and said the meeting took place at the request of Gen. Thapa. "It's an evolving situation. India is reviewing some aspects of its relationship with Nepal," said Sanjay Verma, first secretary and spokesman of the Indian embassy in Kathmandu.

India has been alarmed by the royal coup launched by King Gyanendra on February 1, and has reacted angrily to the takeover and imposition of emergency rule in Nepal.

The military assistance that India provides to the RNA is significant and is worth Rs 300 crore. It includes training of officers and weapons such as the INSAS rifle, ammunition,

mine-protected vehicles and helicopters. Under the assistance, Nepal has to put only 30% of the cost of the equipment and the rest is borne by the Indian government.

Indian sources say the military assistance was provided to enable the RNA to counter the increasingly violent Maoist insurgency, a concern for both the neighbours.

But King Gyanendra's coup has compelled the government of India to review the assistance. While many analysts in Kathmandu believe that direct military assistance will probably not suffer — ties between the Indian and Nepali militaries are strong and goes back decades — India also does not want the assistance to be used against the democratic political parties, who are now facing the brunt of the king's direct rule and emergency.

Many of their top leaders, including former prime ministers Girija Prasad Koirala and Sher Bahadur Deuba, have been put under house arrest, and hundreds of political activists and leaders have been rounded up since the coup.

# Delhi seeks date with monarch

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Feb. 8: India has sought a meeting with King Gyanendra to discuss the "political turmoil" in Nepal following his decision to dismiss the Sher Bahadur Deuba government and assume all powers to run the violence-prone country.

Sources said the meeting was sought by the Indian ambassador in Kathmandu, Shiv Shankar Mukherjee, yesterday. A formal response from the palace is yet to come but indications are that the meeting — the first official-level contact with the king after the "political coup" on February 1 — will take place in the next few days.

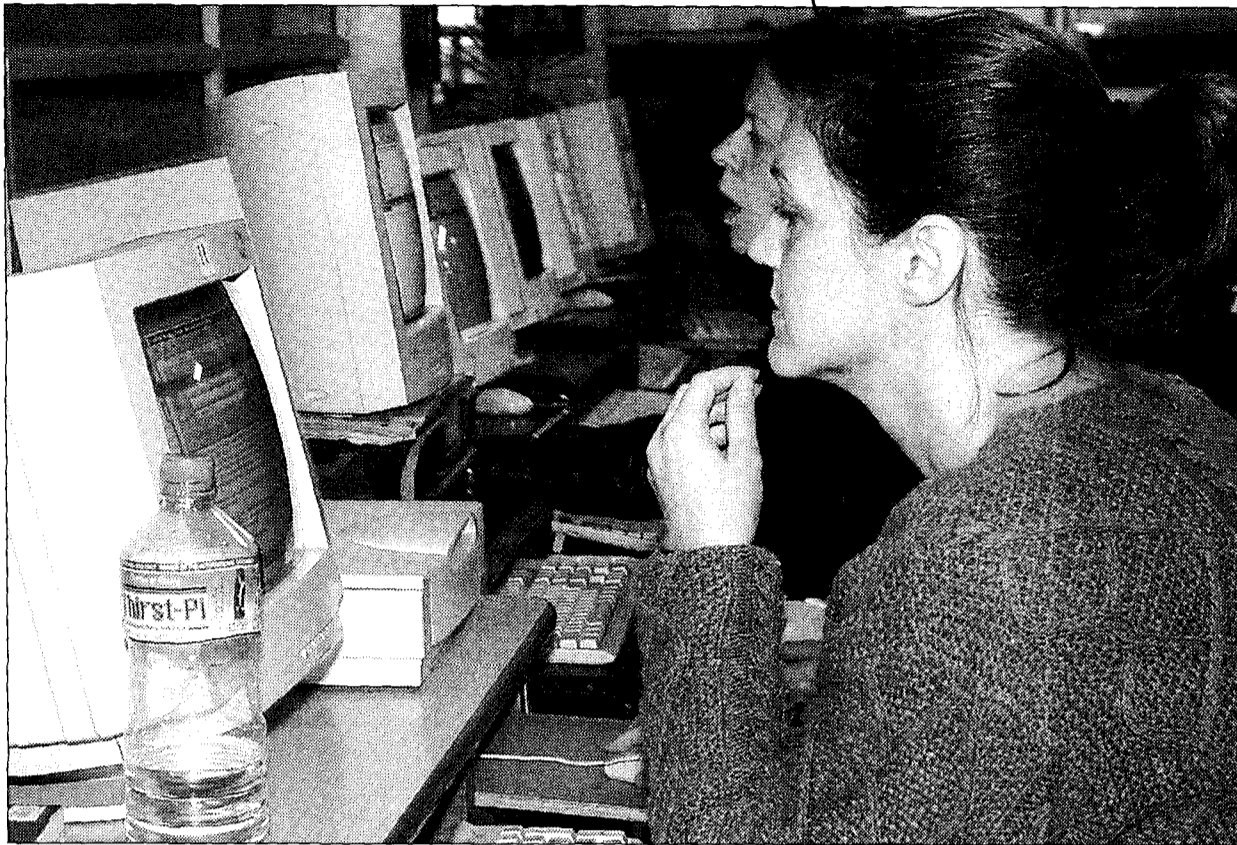
But democratic forces in Nepal are mounting pressure on New Delhi not to support the king and to allow the Nepalese people to decide what role he should play.

"India has to make it clear whether it will continue to support the king or whether it will leave it to the people of Nepal to decide whether or not the monarch should continue to play a role in the country's affairs," said Pradip Giri, a senior ideologue and a close adviser of the dismissed Prime Minister.

Giri added that India, as the largest democracy and the biggest arms supplier to Nepal, will have to take a clear stand on the crisis in the country.

"India has the right to know where the arms it is supplying to Nepal are going. It should make it clear to the king that the arms are not meant to be used by the RNA

## CONNECTING WITH THE WORLD



Foreign tourists check their email at a cybercafe at Thamel, a tourist centre, after the government restored telecommunication services in Kathmandu. (AFP)

against innocent and defenceless people of Nepal," Giri said.

He is among the many democratic leaders from Nepal who are now in India to try and create a strong pressure group to force King Gyanendra to take steps to restore democracy.

A similar appeal was also

made by the Nepal Sadbhavna Party (Anand Devi faction). Its leader, Rajendra Mahato, today appealed to the international community and India in particular for cooperation in the efforts to save democracy.

The proposed meeting between Mukherjee and the king in Kathmandu gathers special significance in the backdrop

of these developments.

The Nepalese ambassador in Delhi, Karna Dhok Adhikary, said the neighbours should both remain "compatible" to safeguard their vital interests.

Although Delhi appears to be unhappy with the king's action, senior officials in South Block have made it clear that

India will continue to keep its options open and stay in touch with Gyanendra.

The political turmoil in Nepal has India worried about the growing influence of Maoists in the country.

But Giri said it is time that India started looking beyond the king at the "emerging forces" in Nepal.

## Left keeps distance on protest

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Feb. 8: The CPM and the CPI will not join the protest demonstration planned by Maoists here on February 13 — the same day that their counterparts in Nepal propose to launch a massive nationwide campaign and bandhs in that country.

A CPI leader said the Left parties are not willing to plunge into unbridled protests on Nepal. However, "on February 24, we will have our own convention in Delhi on Nepal", he said.

"India's position on Nepal is delicate. There is strong anti-India sentiment among the population," the leader remarked. So, the strategy planned by the mainstream Left parties is an indirect one. The parties want to keep up the pressure on the United Progressive Alliance government, which in turn would pressure King Gyanendra to lift Emergency in the Himalayan kingdom.

Nepal-linked political and civil rights organisations here have also written to the Left parties, asking them to intervene to restore normality. "You should facilitate political introspection and dialogue between the democratic and progressive forces in Nepal. If the Indian government is not interested in helping democratic forces in Nepal then the democratic parties here can play a supportive role," some rights groups said in a "note to Indian democrats".

"India, along with others, supported the monarchy even as parliamentary democratic forces were being scattered. The Maoists already had an ideological and tactical advantage. They began acquiring technical parity by capturing arms that were meant to finish them off," the note said.

The Left also believes that the crackdown is not just on Maoists but on human rights organisations, media and the political parties. Yesterday, one of the human rights commissioners in Nepal, Kapil Shrestha, was barred from flying to Biratnagar in eastern Nepal. He was going there to open a branch of the country's human rights commission.

The CPM and CPI have always had antagonistic relations with Maoists since the Naxalite movement erupted in Bengal in 1967. Over the decades, the hostility has lessened but not to any great extent. The CPM's latest draft political resolution makes this quite clear.

"The Naxalite groups which rely on armed squads are active in certain pockets in Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Bihar. They have a disruptive stance which targets all bourgeois and Left parties without distinction," says the CPM.

## Delhi steals march over Beverly Hills

FROM PAGE 1

A total of 115 nominees posed for a group photo that featured Leonardo DiCaprio standing in the last row near Clint Eastwood, also up for best actor, and Morgan Freeman, up for best supporting actor.

In front of them, stood Jamie Foxx nominated for best actor in Ray and that film's director, Taylor Hackford.

In the front row in front of Australian actress Cate Blanchett was diminutive British actress Imelda Staunton, up for a best actress nomination in *Vera Drake*, a role that is giving her international recognition for the first time.

Asked how the nomination had changed her life, the British actress deadpanned: "I am totally changed. I won't do any domestic duties at all."

And then when asked if the nomination had led to her being offered more roles, the 49-year-old Staunton said: "I bloody well hope it does. I'd like to think I am an actress in mid-career, not at the end of one."

WRITTEN WITH AGENCY REPORTS

## Army fears arms leak

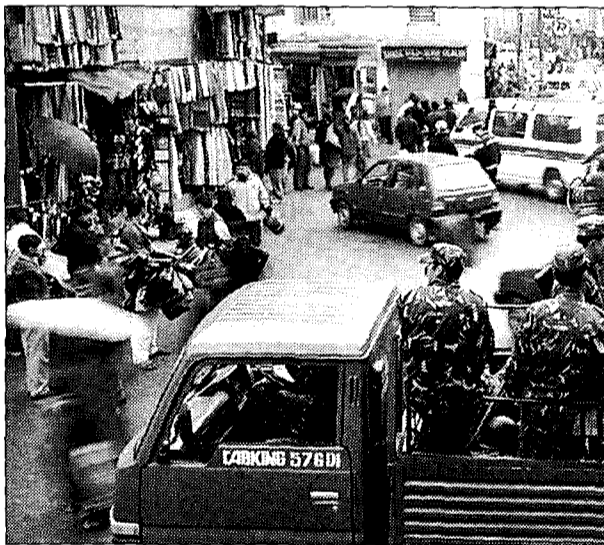
SUJAN DUTTA

New Delhi, Feb. 8: The Indian Army and security establishment is concerned that arms meant for the Royal Nepal Army may end up reaching militant rebels because the ability of Kathmandu's military to secure supply lines is doubtful.

With the Maoists calling for a blockade from February 13, protesting the king's move, the RNA will be severely challenged to secure supply lines. In New Delhi, sources in the security establishment point out that even if equipment is airlifted to Kathmandu, much of it will have to be transported by road to the interiors.

India's suspension of military supplies to the RNA in the wake of the king's power grab is driven not only by political and diplomatic pressures but also by security compulsions. The Indian security establishment cannot articulate its assessment of the RNA's military ability because that would impinge on diplomatic relations and on itself. The Indian Army has been the RNA's strongest prop.

But, former military officers say there is adequate reason to fear that the rebels can attack supply lines. In the past too the rebels have raided or ambushed the RNA and looted weapons that have



Police personnel stand guard on a lorry in Kathmandu on Tuesday. (Reuters)

not been recovered. Indeed, guns, ammunition and war materiel looted from the army possibly make up a bulk of the Maoists' arsenal.

Securing supply lines for a military operation in an insurgency situation requires a large number of troops. "The RNA will have to raise its manpower to at least 1,50,000 before it can be confident of taking on the Maoists," wrote Major General (retired) Ashok K. Mehta in a journal of the United Services Institution. The RNA currently has about 78,000 troops and is in

the middle of an expansion programme.

During a three-day strike immediately after the king's proclamation on February 1, the rebels had felled trees and put up obstacles to block highways. Nepalese authorities have since claimed that the highways have been opened.

The royal army has launched air strikes in Nepal's western and mid-western regions signalling the renewal of an offensive against the rebels, using *Cheetah* and *Chetak* helicopters, supplied by India.

The RNA chief, General Pyar Jung Thapa, invited the Indian ambassador to Nepal, Shiv Shankar Mukherjee, to army headquarters in Kathmandu on Monday. The army chief requested India to continue with its military assistance. Kathmandu is also understood to have pointed out that its procurement of military equipment was based on an agreement that Nepal will source the hardware from any third country only if India fails.

"The rebels hold enormous firepower which is spread throughout the countryside. In addition to arms procured in the private market and robbed from households throughout the country, those snatched and looted from government forces comprise about 1,600 .303 rifles and a large number of magnum rifles, pistols, shotguns, sten guns, 7.62 rifles, SLRs, 9-mm SMGs, 7.62 LMGs, rocket launchers, mortar bombs, explosives, a huge quantity of ammunition and other accessories. Only a tiny fraction (about 15 per cent) of the arms looted from the security forces has been recovered so far," wrote Ram S. Mahat, a former finance minister and foreign minister of Nepal and member of the central committee of the Nepali Congress, in a publication on India-Nepal relations.



# Cloud over arms supplies to Nepal

SUJAN DUTTA

**New Delhi, Feb. 7:** The chief of Nepal's army today met the Indian ambassador in Kathmandu, Shiv Shankar Mukherjee, amid indications that a military offensive against the rebels in the countryside of Kathmandu, Pokhara and major towns had begun.

General Pyar Jung Thapa is understood to have requested for the meeting. There was no official word on what transpired but the circumstances in Nepal make it imperative

for the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) to seek assurances on supplies of military aid. But New Delhi has asked the Indian army chief, General J.J. Singh, to put off a visit to Kathmandu to take over as honorary chief of the RNA, signalling that there is a question mark over supplies of crucial weapons and protection systems.

An India-Nepal security group meeting slated for end-February is also likely to be deferred.

It is also understood that

the US ambassador to Nepal, Moriarty, met King Gyanendra today.

Indian military aid to the RNA comprises training programmes for its officers and troops and a steady supply of military hardware. Here is how India has been aiding the RNA:

■ In September-October last year, the Indian army dug into its own reserves and sent 24 mine protection vehicles; the RNA had asked for 40 in the short term and more in the longer term

■ The RNA's chief weapon is the 7.62 calibre upgraded INSAS rifle manufactured at the Ordnance Factory Board's Ichhapur Rifle Factory near Calcutta; among the supplies contracted late last year was a consignment of 20,000 INSAS rifles

■ Nepal had also asked for 5,000 machine guns, 1,000 mortars, 800B (troop carrying) vehicles, bulletproof jackets, bulletproof headgear and night vision devices

■ The Indian Army's directorate general of military

training has been involved in training RNA troops

■ At least seven companies of the RNA have been trained at the Counter Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School in Vairangte, south Mizoram

■ Defence public sector unit Hindustan Aeronautics has exported two Dhruv Advanced Light Helicopters to Nepal

Even as Nepal's army mounts offensives, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) is trying to make common cause with political outfits they had hitherto opposed.

In a statement dated February 4, the CPN(Maoist) chief, Prachanda, called for a united front against the palace.

The united front, Prachanda wrote, would be formed "by casting away mutual misunderstandings (sic)... We would also like to clarify to all those concerned that we are utterly ready for necessary sacrifice and flexibility from our side for this purpose".

The Maoists have called for a "blockade" from February 13 and urged people to stock up on essentials.

# King in Check

*India  
neighbour* **India should take up  
Nepal issue in UN** *9/17  
9/2*

New Delhi may consider Nepal to be in its 'strategic sphere of influence', but clearly King Gyanendra has other ideas. Why else would he cock a snook at India and effect such a dramatic coup d'etat? It is time for New Delhi to shed its customary ambiguity and address the problem head-on. But first we must get over our go-it-alone mindset. In today's globalising world, no one should consider geography crucial to its strategic influence. So, it would be in India's interest to internationalise the Nepal crisis and try to win over as many nations as possible to our point of view. It is imperative that India take the issue up at the UN and lobby to work out a consensus on the best way to restore democracy in Nepal. As we have seen, Beijing, Islamabad and Dhaka have been trying to fish in troubled waters by insisting that the king's abolition of democracy is an internal matter for Nepal. Bangladesh, ever eager to put India down, has added its voice to this chorus. If we were to bring up the issue at the UN, China, Pakistan and Bangladesh would be hard put to explain why they support a move inimical to democracy. It would also expose their own undemocratic systems of government as being the reason for their energetic espousal of King Gyanendra's action.

The British have already been unequivocal in their condemnation of the king's move and have even hinted at sanctions. Washington too has been critical of this suspension of democracy in the Himalayan kingdom. This makes New Delhi's task easier. The advantage of going to the UN is that any step taken to get the king to reverse his action acquires greater legitimacy. Our focus should be on getting King Gyanendra to revert to his position as a constitutional monarch since New Delhi accepts that the two pillars of governance in Nepal are the monarchy and the political parties. India should help enable the Nepali people to voice their opinion on what sort of political system they would like, and whether the monarchy has a valid role to play in it. Meanwhile, we should put pressure on the king by cutting off the arms supplies which we have so generously provided in the past. But under no circumstances should New Delhi be seen to do anything detrimental to the people of this desperately poor nation. Any verdict we are able to secure in the UN cannot be dismissed lightly by an already isolated king. This will ensure a speedy, and hopefully lasting, solution to the Kathmandu crisis.

# Nepal turmoil worries Buddha

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 7 FEBRUARY

THE recent turn of events in Nepal is a cause of worry for the West Bengal government. Apprehensive about an increased influx of Maoists from across the lengthy border the state shares with the neighbouring country, chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee on Monday asked Prime Minister Manmohan Singh for Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) deployment along the border.

This is not the first time the West Bengal chief minister has approached the Prime Minister with the request for ITBP deployment along the border in Darjeeling district. The 100-km Indo-Nepal corri-

ridor is a cause of concern for the state. The ethnic affinity of the people on both sides of the border in Darjeeling makes West Bengal a fertile ground for Maoists, who are not easily identifiable among the people of the region.

Under the Indo-Nepal treaty, people of both countries can travel to either side without a passport.

The chief minister raised another concern that was worrying his state — the 12th Finance Commission. He told the Prime Minister that the interest rate on small savings was high and this did not work in favour of West Bengal since it took maximum loan from it. He sought a decrease in the interest rate. Mr Bhattacharjee also demanded a special central assistance for North Bengal.

the child's mother, Bharti's birthday. I will never forget this day.

# Nepal leaders in India: reports

Statesman News Service

DEHRA DUN/ NEW DELHI, Feb. 6. — The imposition of emergency in Nepal has forced many of its political leaders to cross the border and take refuge in Uttaranchal, according to local news reports. Such leaders include former Nepal education minister Mr Dilendra Bood who has reportedly taken refuge in the bordering Banbaswa area of Champawat district of Uttaranchal since Saturday.

Another leader, Mr Vinay Dhvaj Chandra of Nepali Congress, has addressed a press meet at Champawat where he urged Delhi to help reinstate democracy in Nepal. Some Nepalese leaders have also reportedly entered Pithoragarh district of Uttaranchal. They include Nepali Congress leaders Mr Narendra Singh Bisht and Mr Vishu Dutt Joshi, and CPN leaders Mr Ishwari Kharel and Mr Nar Bahadur Dhimi.

Union home minister Mr Shivraj Patel refused to react on the matter when asked by The Statesman at Dehra Dun tonight. He said he was not aware about the arrival of Nepalese leaders. The Champawat DM, Mr GK Dwivedi, too denied any such influx and said the inflow of Nepalese in his district was "normal".

### Bengal, Bihar alerted

Central Intelligence agencies have alerted police of all states bordering Nepal about possible infiltration by Maoists from the



Pro-monarchy supporters drive through Kathmandu with portraits of the King and the Queen on Sunday. — AFP

Himalayan Kingdom. Copies of an "alert note" have been forwarded to West Bengal, Jharkhand, Assam, Uttaranchal and Bihar. The note cautioned that the rebels might strike in a big way in Nepal as the ninth anniversary of their struggle falls later this month.

Several Nepal Maoists have managed to sneak into India in the past week, said a Central Intelligence official. "Their exact number is not known, but we are sure hundreds have infiltrated into India. They have established contacts with Ulfa and their link with the CPI (Maoist) is not new," he added. India shares a 1,800-km border with Nepal.

More reports on page 2

# কথা বলছেন না রাজা, ঘোর অস্বস্তিতে দিল্লি

সৌভদ্র চট্টোপাধ্যায় • নয়াদিল্লি

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৭ ফেব্রুয়ারি: সরকার ফেলে দেওয়ার পাক্ষা এক সপ্তাহ বাদেও নয়াদিল্লির কাছে অধরা নেপাল রাজা জ্ঞানেন্দ্র। বহু চেষ্টা করেও নেপালের রাজার সঙ্গে সাক্ষাৎ করতে পারেননি কাঠমান্ডুতে ভারতীয় দূতাবাসের কর্তারা। শের বাহাদুর দেউবার সরকার বরখাস্ত করে জ্ঞানেন্দ্র যাবতীয় ক্ষমতা যে ভাবে নিজের কজায় নিয়েছেন, তার কড়া সমালোচনা করেছে মনমোহন সিংহের সরকার। তারই পাল্টা হিসাবে রাজা এখন নয়াদিল্লির সঙ্গে সরাসরি যোগাযোগ করছেন না।

জ্ঞানেন্দ্র দেউবা সরকারকে বরখাস্ত করার পরে টানা প্রায় ৪৮ ঘণ্টা নয়াদিল্লির সঙ্গে কাঠমান্ডুর সরকারি স্তরে কোনও যোগাযোগ ছিল না। বহু চেষ্টার পরে ভারতীয় রাষ্ট্রদূত শিবশঙ্কর মুখোপাধ্যায় নেপালের নতুন বিদেশমন্ত্রী রমেশনাথ পান্ডের সঙ্গে দেখা করেন। ভারতীয় দূতাবাসের ডিরেক্টর অ্যাটাশের সঙ্গে রয়্যাল নেপাল আর্মির প্রধানেরও একপ্রান্ত বৈঠক হয়েছে। কিন্তু রাজার সঙ্গে বৈঠক করতে চেয়ে কোনও লাভ হয়নি।

ইতিমধ্যে দেশে শঙ্করির অবস্থা জারি হওয়ার পরে গ্রেফতারি এড়াতে যে সব নেপালি রাজনৈতিক নেতা এ দেশে পালিয়ে এসেছেন কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার তাঁদের আশ্রয় দিয়েছেন বলে বিদেশমন্ত্রক সূত্রে খবর।

আজ নেপালের সেনাপ্রধান পেয়ার জং থাপা শিবশঙ্করের সঙ্গে দেখা করেন। বিদেশমন্ত্রক সূত্রে বলা হয়েছে, থাপাই রাষ্ট্রদূতের সঙ্গে দেখা করতে চেয়েছিলেন। দু'জনের মধ্যে মূলত অস্ত্রশস্ত্র সরবরাহ নিয়েই কথা হয়েছে বলে খবর। মাওবাদীদের অবরোধের ফলে গত পাঁচ দিন ধরে ভারত থেকে

কোনও সামরিক সাহায্য নেপালে ঢুকতে পারছে না। এই সাহায্য পাঠাতে নয়াদিল্লিও আগ্রহী।

নেপাল-রাজ দেখা করতে না চাওয়ায় যথেষ্ট অস্বস্তিতেই পড়েছে কেন্দ্র। কারণ, দু'দেশের সম্পর্কে যে শীতলতা এসেছে, তা মেটাতে রাজার সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ স্থাপন করা প্রয়োজন। নয়াদিল্লি চায়, নেপালে যথাসীম্র সম্ভব গণতান্ত্রিক প্রক্রিয়া ফিরে আসুক। কিন্তু এর জন্য জ্ঞানেন্দ্রের সঙ্গে দেখা করে তাঁকে বোঝানোটাই সবচেয়ে জরুরি। অথচ সে সুযোগ মিলছে না। তা ছাড়া, দ্বি-পাক্ষিক সম্পর্কের যাতে অবনতি না ঘটে, সে ব্যাপারেও কেন্দ্র সতর্ক।

নেপালের উপরে প্রভাব বাড়ানোর লড়াইতে ভারতের নিকটতম প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বী চিন। নয়াদিল্লি নেপাল-কাণ্ডের সমালোচনা করলেও চিন কিন্তু এ যাবৎ রাজাকে খুশি করার মতোই অবস্থান নিয়েছে। বেজিং গোটা বিষয়টিকে নেপালের 'অভ্যন্তরীণ বিষয়' বলে বর্ণনা করে নিজেদের সরিয়ে রেখেছে। আগামী মাসে কাঠমান্ডু থেকে লাসা পর্যন্ত বাস পরিষেবা শুরু হচ্ছে। এটাও ভারতের মাথাব্যথার কারণ।

দিল্লির জন্য রাজপ্রাসাদের দরজা বন্ধ থাকলেও নেপাল প্রশাসন অর্ধস্বাধীন দাবি করেছে, সাম্প্রতিক ঘটনাবলিতে দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্ক নষ্ট হবে না। ভারতে নিযুক্ত নেপালি রাষ্ট্রদূত কর্ণধ্বজ অধিকারীর কথায়, "একটি ক্ষমতাবান সার্বভৌম রাষ্ট্র হিসাবে নেপালের স্বীকৃতিই ভারতের সঙ্গে আমাদের সম্পর্কের মূল ভিত। সম্পর্কের পক্ষে ক্ষতিকারক উপাদান এখানে নেই।"

নেপালের বিরুদ্ধে কঠোর ব্যবস্থা না নিলেও তাকে চাপে রাখতে দ্বিপাক্ষিক নিরাপত্তা গোষ্ঠীর বৈঠক স্থগিতের সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে নয়াদিল্লি। এ মাসের শেষে কাঠমান্ডুতে এই বৈঠক নির্ধারিত ছিল।

## ROYAL COUP: THE FALLOUT

# Nepal Maoists dig bunkers along N Bengal border

Pramod Giri  
Siliguri, February 5

THE NEPAL Maoists are quietly but surely preparing for a major battle with the Royal Nepal Army. Reworking strategies after the royal coup in Kathmandu, Nepal Communist Party (Maoists) leaders have sent out urgent directives to their cadres to dig trenches all along the Indo-Nepal border in North Bengal. Security agencies on the Indian side are closely monitoring the developments across the border to prevent any spillover of trouble.

In fact, the Indian authorities have significantly increased the strength of the security forces that guard the highly porous Indo-Nepalese border along North Bengal. The state police, the SSB and the State Armed Police have all joined hands to plug the border holes. Commandos of the crack Indo-Tibetan Border Police will soon arrive to provide back-up support. The new inspector-general of police for North Bengal, K.L. Meena, told *Hindustan Times* that the situation is being monitored very closely.

What prompted the sudden flurry of activities are intelligence reports suggesting that the Maoists have already built bunkers at Tapleyjung in East Nepal. This entire area is a

stronghold of the Maoists. Similar bunkers have also come up in Nepal's Ilam district bordering the Darjeeling hills. According to the locals, NCP(M) cadres came to this place on Wednesday and told the people to prepare for battle.

And the Maoists have reason to rework strategies in the wake of the royal coup in Kathmandu. The new Cabinet has already declared that if the NCP(M) doesn't come to the negotiating table forthwith, the army will be dispatched to crush the rebels. On its part, the Maoists have made it clear that fighting the monarchy will now be its priority.

Indian intelligence sources say that once the going gets tough for the rebels, they are bound to take shelter on the Indian side. This has happened before and the smaller towns of the Darjeeling Hills and the Dooars area are known to provide shelter to the Maoists.

There is an additional headache for the Indian authorities. The Bhutan Maoists are believed to be providing logistics to their comrades in Nepal and the Siliguri corridor has become a hotbed of rebel activities. The Indo-Tibetan Border Police has been requisitioned to plug the Bhutan border.

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# নেপালে গণতন্ত্র ফেরাতে কেন্দ্রকে চাপ বামেদের

আজকালের প্রতিবেদন: দিল্লি, ৫ ফেব্রুয়ারি— নেপালে গণতন্ত্র কিরিয়ে আনতে চাপ দিচ্ছে ভারত। দুদেশের বোধ নিরাপত্তা কমিটির বৈঠক ছিল এমাসের শেষে। বৈঠক ব্যতিল করে দিল দিল্লি। কমিটির অস্তিত্ব নিয়েই এবার প্রশ্ন দেখা দিয়েছে। নেপালে গণতন্ত্র ফেরাতে কেন্দ্রকে সব ধরনের চেষ্টা করার আর্জি জানিয়েছে সি পি এম, সি পি আই, আর এস পি, ফরওয়ার্ড ব্লক, সি পি আই (এম এল) সহ বিভিন্ন দল। মাওবাদীরা উদ্যোগ নিলে তাদেরও নৈতিক সমর্থন জানাবে তারা। সি পি এম আয়োজিত একটি সভায় আজ অংশ নিয়েছিল তারা। এছাড়াও যোগ দিয়েছিলেন জাতীয়তাবাদী কংগ্রেস, আর জে ডি, সমাজবাদী পার্টি,

সমৃদ্ধ জনতা দল, সোসালিস্ট ফ্রন্ট ও সমাজবাদী জনতা পার্টির নেতারা। ২৪ ফেব্রুয়ারি দিল্লিতে অনুষ্ঠিত হবে একটি সেমিনার। সি পি এম পলিটবুরো সদস্য সীতারাম ইয়েচুরি সাংবাদিকদের বলেন, আমরা কেন্দ্রকে অনুরোধ জানাচ্ছি, রাজা জ্ঞানেন্দ্রের বনেন, আমরা কেন্দ্রকে অনুরোধ কোনওভাবেই স্বীকৃতি না দেয়। বরং কূটনৈতিক চাপসহ বিভিন্ন ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হোক। ১৯৯০ সালে নেপালে গণতন্ত্র প্রতিষ্ঠার আন্দোলনের সময় ভারতের দলগুলি একটি মঞ্চ গড়ে সমর্থন জানিয়েছিল। আজ সেই দলগুলিই ফের একজোট হয়ে এই দাবি তুলল। আজকের বৈঠকে উপস্থিত ছিলেন হরকিষেন সিং সুরজিৎ, সীতারাম ইয়েচুরি,

এ পি বর্ন, ডি রাজা, পল্লব সেনগুপ্ত, দেবব্রত বিশ্বাস, সি পি আই ইম এলের স্বপন মুখার্জি, সোসালিস্ট ফ্রন্টের অনিল মিশ্র প্রমুখ। কাঠমাণ্ডুর খবর, রাজা জ্ঞানেন্দ্রের ক্ষমতাস্বত্ব সব রাজনৈতিক দলকে এক মঞ্চে এনে দিয়েছে, গণতন্ত্র পুনরুদ্ধারের লড়াইয়ে। তাদের ভেদাভেদকে কাজে লাগিয়েই রাজারা এতদিন ক্ষমতা বজায় রেখেছেন। এদিকে বরখাস্ত সরকারের ৪ মন্ত্রীকে দুর্নীতির অভিযোগে গ্রেপ্তার করা হয়েছে। দুর্নীতির তদন্তে বিশেষ কমিশন গড়ার সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছেন জ্ঞানেন্দ্র। কাগজ, টিভি, টেলিফোন— সবত্র বসেছে নিষেধাজ্ঞা। টেলি-যোগাযোগ বিচ্ছিন্ন।

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2005

## NO ARMS FOR NEPAL

AT A TIME when the direction of foreign policy tends to be set by the strategic calculations of what passes for 'national interest' rather than the coordinates of a moral compass, it is commendable that India has chosen to take a clear stand against the *coup d'etat* staged by King Gyanendra of Nepal. By arrogating all power to himself, arresting the leaders of political parties who have never wavered in their commitment to a pluralist democracy despite grave provocation from Narayanhiti Palace, severing all communication links within and from the country, and imposing press censorship, the King has crossed a dangerous line. The takeover was timed with an eye to the Dhaka summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. King Gyanendra was counting on the February 6 event to provide him the oxygen of legitimacy. By denying him the resuscitating clasp of a handshake and the flash of a joint photo-op, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has acted in the best interest of India, Nepal, and the region — and, in the process, risen above other South Asian leaders. Postponing the SAARC summit will no doubt have other costs and implications. But enabling a collective South Asian legitimisation of the King's usurpation of power would have been deeply demoralising for the defenders of democracy in Nepal.

In order to step up pressure on the King, Indian policy now needs to go from the symbolic to the substantial — from the denial of a photo-op to the denial of arms and ammunition to the Royal Nepal Army (RNA). If New Delhi is serious when it says a political solution to the Maoist insurgency in Nepal must be found, it should consider the impact the ongoing weapons relationship has on the mindset of King Gyanendra and the RNA brass. India has supplied more than Rs.400 crore worth of *materiel* to the Nepalese

armed forces in the past three years. Until this week, it could at least argue it was helping the army of a democratic government. That fig leaf has been blown away. Shutting down this arms pipeline — even if, in consequence, the King turns to other suppliers — will strongly reinforce New Delhi's position that a military solution to the problem of insurgency is not possible. It will also send a clear signal to King, Army, and political courtiers that the reactionary coup of February 1 is, in a word, unacceptable where it counts most.

Part of the problem, however, is that India continues to look at the King, the RNA, and even the multi-party system in Nepal in a mainly instrumental fashion. This means decisions on whom to support at what time are taken primarily on the basis of assessing who will be most effective in crushing or modulating the Maoist insurgency. However, democracy in Nepal is a necessity in and of itself, even if it means the insurgents are sometimes able to take advantage of the often-chaotic nature of democratic governance and processes. In seeking a showdown with the Maoists, King Gyanendra has shown that his real target is the 1990 Constitution: it granted, in his view, too many prerogatives to the political parties and the people, especially Nepal's impoverished peasants and marginalised ethnic groups. The Maoists, on the other hand, say the 1990 Constitution did not go far enough in recognising people's rights; they demand a new Constituent Assembly to modernise Nepal's polity and system of governance. King Gyanendra has foolishly engineered a clash between these two visions of his country's future. The sordid drama he has staged will no doubt take many twists and turns before there is a *denouement*. But India would be wise to begin the process of imagining what was inconceivable a few years ago: Nepal without a King.

THE HINDU

05 FEB 2005



# নেপালে গণতন্ত্র ফেরাতে চাপ জারি রাখছে ভারত

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৩ ফেব্রুয়ারি: গোসা করে বসে না থেকে নেপালের রাজ-নিয়ন্ত্রিত প্রশাসনকে বোঝানোর কাজ শুরু করল নয়াদিল্লি। আজ সকালে কাঠমান্ডুতে ভারতীয় রাষ্ট্রদূত শিবশঙ্কর মুখোপাধ্যায় নতুন বিদেশমন্ত্রী রমেশ নাথ পাণ্ডের সঙ্গে দেখা করেন। দূতাবাসের ডিফেন্স অ্যাটাশের সঙ্গে রয়াল নেপাল ফৌজের প্রধানেরও একপ্রস্ত বৈঠক হয়েছে। ভারত মনে করে, মাওবাদীদের মোকাবিলার জন্য গণতান্ত্রিক প্রক্রিয়া থাকাটা অত্যন্ত জরুরি। এবং এই বিষয়ে নয়াদিল্লি নেপাল সরকারের উপরে চাপ বাড়াতে অন্য দেশের সঙ্গেও নিয়মিত যোগাযোগ বজায় রাখছে বলে জানিয়েছে বিদেশমন্ত্রক।

নেপালের দিক থেকেও অবশ্য দু দেশের সম্পর্ক প্রশমিত করার চেষ্টা শুরু হয়েছে। নয়াদিল্লিতে নিযুক্ত নেপালি রাষ্ট্রদূত কর্ণধ্বজ অধিকারী দাবি করেছেন, সাম্প্রতিক ঘটনাবলিতে দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্ক নষ্ট হবে না। তাঁর কথায়, “ভারত ও নেপালের সম্পর্কের ভিত দাঁড়িয়ে রয়েছে এই স্বীকৃতি থেকে যে নেপাল একটি ক্ষমতাবান সার্বভৌম রাষ্ট্র। সম্পর্কের পক্ষে ক্ষতিকারক কোনও উপাদান এখানে নেই।”

নেপালে সরকার ফেলে দেওয়ার পরে প্রায় ৪৮ ঘণ্টা নয়াদিল্লির সঙ্গে কোনও যোগাযোগ ছিল না রাজপ্রসাদের। প্রাসাদ-নিয়ন্ত্রিত নতুন সরকার গঠনের পরে আজ সকালে দুই দেশের মধ্যে বৈঠকদুটি হয়। বিদেশমন্ত্রক সূত্রে খবর, শিবশঙ্করবাবু পাণ্ডের সঙ্গে দেখা করে জানিয়েছেন, ভারত মনে করে নেপালে ‘গণতন্ত্রের বৃদ্ধি অবশ্যই দরকার’। নেপাল রাজার এই পদক্ষেপকে যে ‘গণতান্ত্রিক প্রক্রিয়ার বিপর্যয়’ হিসাবেই নয়াদিল্লি দেখছে, সেটাও স্পষ্ট ভাষায় জানিয়ে দেওয়া হয়েছে। বিদেশমন্ত্রকের মুখপাত্র নভতেজ সারনার কথায়, “আমাদের গতকালের যে বক্তব্য, সেটা আজ নেপাল প্রশাসনের কাছে পাঠিয়ে দেওয়া হয়েছে।” নেপালের রাষ্ট্রদূত অবশ্য পাল্টা জবাবে বলেছেন, “গণতন্ত্র যাতে সুনিশ্চিত হয়, তার জন্যই রাজার এই পদক্ষেপ।”

মন্ত্রক সূত্রে বলা হচ্ছে, নেপাল রাজার এই কাজে মাওবাদী মোকাবিলার প্রক্রিয়া ব্যাহত হবে বলেই ভারতের আশঙ্কা। কারণ, নেপাল রাজার কাছে মাওবাদীদের বিরুদ্ধে সামরিক পদক্ষেপ ছাড়া অন্য উপায় বিশেষ নেই। অথচ

মাওবাদী সমস্যাকে নিছক আইন-শৃঙ্খলার দৃষ্টিতে দেখে না কেন্দ্র। এর সঙ্গে জড়িয়ে সামাজিক উন্নয়নের প্রশ্ন, যা গণতান্ত্রিক পদ্ধতির মাধ্যমে সম্ভব। তা ছাড়া, মাওবাদীরা অনেক আগে থেকেই বলে আসছে রাজার সঙ্গে তারা কোনও আলোচনায় বসবে না। কেন্দ্রের পক্ষে আর একটি আশঙ্কা, মাওবাদীদের মোকাবিলায় নেপাল রাজা যদি মার্কিন বা ব্রিটিশ সাহায্য চেয়ে বসে। ভারতের মাথার উপরে মার্কিন সামরিক উপস্থিতি কোনওমতেই কাম্য নয় কেন্দ্রের কাছে। সাম্প্রতিক ঘটনাবলির ফলে মাওবাদী আন্দোলনের প্রভাব ভারতেও পড়বে, দিল্লির এমন আশঙ্কা অবশ্য নেপালের রাষ্ট্রদূত নাকচ করে দিয়েছেন। সংবাদমাধ্যমের উপরে নিবেদাঙ্কা আরোপের প্রক্ষে অধিকারীর জবাব, “কিছু সংবাদ মাওবাদীদের পক্ষে উৎসাহজনক। তাই বন্ধ রাখা হয়েছে।”

রাজার আচরণে ক্ষুব্ধ হলেও কেন্দ্র নেপালের সঙ্গে বিভিন্ন সহযোগিতার পথ বন্ধ করছে না। প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায় জানিয়েছেন, “প্রতিরক্ষা ক্ষেত্রে যে দ্বিপাক্ষিক সহযোগিতা চলছিল, তা বজায় থাকবে।” প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রকের ব্যাখ্যা: ভারত হাত গুটিয়ে নিলে সেই সুযোগে চীন বা পাকিস্তান নেপালে নিজেদের প্রভাব বাড়িয়ে নিতে পারে। সেই সুযোগ নয়াদিল্লি দিতে চায় না।

তবে প্রতিরক্ষাক্ষেত্র নিয়ে এই সাবধানতা অবলম্বন করলেও ভারত কিন্তু সার্বিকভাবে মনে করে নেপালকে নয়াদিল্লির উপরে নির্ভরশীলতা বজায় রাখতে হবে। অতীতে নেপালের রাজপরিবার ভারতকে চাপে রাখতে চিনকে বিস্তার সুযোগ সুবিধা করে দিলেও বর্তমান পরিস্থিতিতে বাণিজ্য ও অন্য ক্ষেত্রে পাহাড়ি দেশটি ভারতের উপরে অনেকটাই নির্ভরশীল। চীনের সঙ্গে নেপালের যা বাণিজ্য, তার তুলনায় ভারত-নেপাল বাণিজ্য কয়েকগুণ বেশি।

বিদেশমন্ত্রকের একটি সূত্রে বলা হচ্ছে, নেপাল রাজার আশা ছিল ব্রিটেন বা আমেরিকা তাঁর এই সিদ্ধান্তকে সমর্থন করবে। কিন্তু দুই দেশই উল্টে রাজার কাজকর্মে অসন্তোষ প্রকাশ করেছে। কূটনৈতিক মহলের কাছে এটা আপাতত এক বড় স্বস্তি। আবার অন্যদিকে যাকে নেপালের বিদেশমন্ত্রী করা হয়েছে, সেই রমেশ নাথ পাণ্ডে কটুর ভারত-বিরোধী হিসাবে পরিচিত। এটা নয়াদিল্লির কাছে দুশ্চিন্তার কারণ।

8 4 FEB 2005

# Delhi forges ties with King's Kathmandu...

**Devrupa Mitra** in New Delhi

After two days of silence since the King of Nepal declared emergency and dissolved parliament, India has managed to convey to Kathmandu its views on the dismissal of the democratically-elected government after establishing contact with the newly-appointed Nepali establishment.

The foreign ministry spokesperson said Indian ambassador Mr Shiv Shankar Mukherjee met the new foreign minister, Mr Ramesh Nath Pandey this morning. The defence attaché also contacted officers in the Royal Nepal Army.

"The import of our statements of yesterday and day-before-yesterday was conveyed by our ambassador," said the spokesperson. However, communication links continue to be disrupted, with the Indian embassy relying on a satellite phone for exchange of information with New Delhi.

In fact, the "latest news" on the popular Kathipur Online website ([www.kathipuronline](http://www.kathipuronline)) is a news report that King Gyanendra would be issuing a "royal announcement" at 10 on Tuesday morning.

The Nepalese King Gyanendra had established a ten-member council of ministers under his chairmanship on 1 February, curbing all fundamental rights and clamping press censorship. He had accused the government of Sher Bahadur Deuba of failing to bring the Maoist insurgents to the tables and not organising elections.

## No change in Gurkha intake

**NEW DELHI, Feb. 3.** — The troubles in Nepal have not come in the way of the recruitment of Gurkha troops for the Indian Army so far, defence sources said today.

While some Gurkhas are recruited from those settled in India, several thousand are recruited every year for the seven Gurkha regiments in the infantry and also, soldiers in the armoured corps, artillery and other areas of the army. The Army has a large contingent of Gurkhas with each of the seven regiments having six seven infantry battalions of about 1,000 soldiers. So far, the Maoist problem that has spread from three districts a few years ago to 69 of them, has not created a recruitment problem. — SNS

# Anxious wait for news

**Niraj Lama** in Darjeeling

Feb. 3. — With total communications blackout in Nepal, people with relatives in the kingdom and tour operators here are an anxious lot. "I have been constantly trying to call my family and office, although I know that phone services have been closed by the King," said a worried Mr Sushant Lama, a Kathmandu businessman who had come here to attend a wedding.

Police said that movement of people and vehicles across the border points of Pashupatinagar, 35 km from here, and Kakarvitta, about an hour's drive east from Siliguri, remain "smooth, albeit reduced."

Many people who are stranded here have tried to get information from TV, but it has been futile. The state-owned national channel today for the most part showed cultural programmes and wildlife documentaries. Channel Nepal, a private satellite channel, also telecast its usual fare of video pop songs. There was no news or visuals from Nepal. Even the online news sites are inaccessible.

Badly hit are some of the tour operators here who were expecting foreign travel groups via Nepal. "We had a couple of groups scheduled to arrive here through Nepal next week. Due to blocked communication links, we are at a loss: we don't know if they will come or not," complained Mr Prahlad Roka of Kanchenjunga Expeditions.

Statesman News Service

**NEW DELHI, Feb. 3.** — India today rejected Bangladesh's accusation that the decision to withdraw from the Saarc summit had been dictated by bilateral developments.

The foreign ministry spokesperson clarified that India had not sought the postponement of the 13th Saarc summit. "We have drawn attention to developments that have an impact on the entire region of South Asia, not just India. So, it is not correct to say that bilateral relations which are precluded by Charter have been cited by India."

India had yesterday announced that it would not attend the two-day 13th Saarc summit scheduled to start from 6 February, citing "recent developments in our neighbourhood". It had then stated that the security situation had deteriorated following the fatal attack on a senior Bangladeshi opposition leader.

It had been greeted by a strong condemnation by Bangladesh, who had termed it as "unwarranted and unacceptable". They had accused India of violating the Saarc charter by taking cogni-

# ...Refutes Dhaka's charges



A poster featuring portraits of Dr. Manmohan Singh in Dhaka. — AFP

sance of bilateral issues. The spokesperson, meanwhile, refuted the allegation that India has isolated itself by its stinging criticism on the deteriorating security situation in Bangladesh.

# Cloud over Indo-Nepal defence ties

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

*A/2*  
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*India*  
*neighbour*

**New Delhi:** A question mark now hangs over what was virtually a "blank cheque" issued by India to Nepal to step up supply of military hardware and software to the Himalayan kingdom, apart from further bolstering bilateral defence cooperation.

With Nepalese King Gyanendra clamping emergency in his country, Indian armed forces have decided to adopt a wait-and-watch policy about the turn the military-to-military ties will take in the coming days.

"Nepal has tried to play China against India in terms of defence cooperation and supply of military equipment in the past. So, it was in our interest that we had strong defence ties with Nepal. Now, we are waiting for the situation to unfold," said an officer.

Ever since the agreement on recruitment of Nepali Gorkhas in the Indian Army in 1949, the two countries have had strong military ties. The relationship became stronger when Maoist insurgency began gaining ground in Nepal around decade ago. India supplied "huge quantities" of automatic rifles, machine guns, mortars, mines and mine-protected vehicles at "concessional rates" since it viewed the Maoist insurgency as a "shared security challenge".

"Helicopters like Cheetahs and, recently, two Advanced Light Helicopters were



supplied to them. On his visit here in September, Nepalese Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba provided us with another list of weapons," said an officer.

The Indian Army has also trained the Royal Nepalese Army over the years at its institutions like the National Defence Academy, Indian Military Academy and Counter-Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School, among others. India was planning to launch a pilot project to modernise the

Nepalese police with special focus on counter-insurgency capabilities. "But everything is uncertain now," the officer said.

The army has seven Gorkha Rifles (1st, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 8th, 9th and 11th), with five to six battalions (800-1,000 soldiers) under each of these regiments. "Around 60% of soldiers in our Gorkha Rifles hail from Nepal, while the rest are Indian domicile Gorkhas," an officer informed.

## Maoists on the run could be bad news for India

By Mahendra Ved/TNN

**New Delhi:** Though Union home minister Shivraj Patil on Wednesday parried all questions on the internal security implications from the developments in Nepal, it is clear that India is preparing to meet any eventuality.

If King Gyanendra cracks down on the Maoists, India could face an attempted influx of militants. But if Nepal does not act to effectively contain the insurrection, in the long run, the 'Compact Revolutionary Zone' of Maoists—which stretches from Kathmandu, across Nepalese territory up to Kanyakumari and beyond, to the LTTE in Sri Lanka—could widen.

The government has for some time established a nexus among these organisations, including training and movement of arms.

Security experts note that the naxal movement in India, which got consolidated recently when the Peoples War and Maoist Communist Centre of India merged to form the Communist Party of India (Maoist), had last month issued a stern warning to the government of India against helping the Nepalese in combatting the Maoists, threatening "retaliatory action".

With much at stake in terms of internal security and political stability in its volatile sub-Himalayan region, especially in the north-east, India cannot play any direct role in Nepal. It would have to confine its efforts to training of Nepalese security forces, security analyst and former top cop K P S Gill told TOI.

## SSB on alert to foil rebels' influx

By Bisheshwar Mishra/TNN

**New Delhi:** The paramilitary Sashastra Seema Bal, which guards the 1,751-km border with Nepal, has been put on high alert to ensure that Maoist rebels from the Himalayan kingdom do not cross over into India.

Maoist rebels and major political leaders of Nepal appear to have gone underground following the sacking of prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and his government and imposition of emergency by King Gyanendra. "There has been no movement from across the border," SSB chief Himanshu Kumar said.



"Twenty-four hours after the imposition of emergency across the border, every thing seems tranquil. From where we are at the border, we can't see what's happen-

ing inside Nepal but there has been no movement. According to information reaching here, there has been no violence either. However, one can't say how long things will remain peaceful," Kumar said.

Maintaining that the SSB had taken all precautions, he said, "We have intensified our vigil and increased the patrolling. The number of border outposts have been increased to reduce the distance between them. This has been done to ensure that the regrouped Maoist rebels do not cross over to this side and take shelter among their sympathisers among the Naxalite groups operating in Bihar, UP and West Bengal."

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# India's Nepal stand driven by concern for Maoist danger

1/7

By Siddharth Varadarajan

**NEW DELHI:** The principal concern driving the Indian Government's policy towards King Gyanendra is not democracy but how his palace putsch is going to affect the Royal Nepal Army's counter-insurgency operations against Maoist rebels.

There is anxiety about the future of multi-party democracy there and even consternation over the fate of political leaders, but these are largely derivative — not ideological — concerns. What bothers New Delhi most of all is the likelihood that now that the King has cast aside the protective buffer the political parties provided him, the Maoists are likely to increase their influence.

For the Manmohan Singh Government, the Maoist challenge in Nepal is fast emerging as a key security concern. The National Security Adviser, M.K. Narayanan, for example, has said on several occasions in the past that the Naxalite movement — given the linkages between the Indian groups and the Nepalese Maoists — is the biggest threat confronting the Indian State. Though the Maoists in Bihar, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh and elsewhere have origins deeply rooted in the socio-economic realities of the impoverished countryside, New Delhi is anxious to deny them the boost any Maoist advance in Nepal would inevitably

provide. The only hitch is that as much as Nepal watchers here would like to believe King Gyanendra has a plan to make the Maoist insurgency go away, no one believes the strategy he has adopted has any chance of success.

The promise of a more determined and effective military campaign against the insurgents cuts no ice because the King himself controlled the RNA

## NEWS ANALYSIS

all along. Indeed, the Indian Government had hoped that the King would get the RNA to adopt a "pro-active policy" in dealing with the Maoists and had provided as much as Rs. 450 crores in military assistance to this end over the past three years. In particular, New Delhi wanted the Nepal Army to go out on aggressive patrolling in rural areas and secure the Biratnagar industrial zone and lines of communication so that the Nepalese economy was not subject to disruption by the Maoists. But this did not happen. And now that the King has put the squeeze on the parliamentary parties as well, the perception here is that the RNA personnel will increasingly be pressed into policing duties in Kathmandu. This will weaken the military drive against the rebels and help forge links between the Maoists and the other parties, especially at the grassroots level.

For the past three years, the scenario the Indian Government envisaged was one where both military and political pressure would force the Maoists to accept some kind of compromise, a "soft landing" within the ambit of Nepal's system of constitutional monarchy. That is why — unlikely though it was given King Gyanendra's resentment of the 1990 Constitution — New Delhi advocated a "united front" between the palace and the parties to deal with the political aspect of the problem, and greater coordination between the RNA and Indian security forces on the border to deal with the military aspect.

## Hope shattered

The King's coup has shattered the Indian hope for a political compromise and left only the military option on the table.

Despite its reservations about the King's strategy, however, it is clear that the Manmohan Singh Government is not going to terminate its military assistance to the RNA or exert other forms of overt pressure to force King Gyanendra to reverse course. The only change in the Indian stand has been to drop broad hints that by going down the path of open confrontation, the King is jeopardising the very institution of monarchy.

The Indian Government's statement on the coup paid obeisance to the "twin pillars of multi-party democracy and constitutional monarchy" but

in calling on him to rethink his strategy, New Delhi was signalling its belief that King Gyanendra was cutting the ground under his own feet. Officially — and unrealistically — India still believes there can be a soft landing for the Maoists within the constitutional monarchy, that there is no mutual exclusivity. But like most Nepalis, Indian officials know that if the King keeps moving in the same direction, he will make himself more and more irrelevant. For the past 50 years, support to the monarchy has been a cornerstone of India's policy towards Nepal. Today, however, New Delhi has begun to think about the possibility of a Nepal without a King.

For the moment, the key to Nepal's political future, at least as far as New Delhi is concerned, continues to lie in the ability of the King and the RNA to prosecute the war against the Maoists.

If King Gyanendra manages to demonstrate a greater effectiveness in running the counter-insurgency campaign than the Deuba Government did, India will be willing to go along with his three-year timetable for the restoration of multi-party democracy.

But if the Maoists make military advances — or their demand for a Constituent Assembly wins broad-based support — all bets are off as far as what the Indian strategy would be.

# India yet to decide on military aid

By Amit Baruah

**NEW DELHI, FEB. 2.** India is yet to make an assessment whether to suspend or not military assistance to Nepal, in the wake of King Gyanendra's action of taking over the reins.

The Foreign Secretary, Shyam Saran, said no contact had been possible with the new regime in Kathmandu and in the absence of information, an assessment could not be made on issues such as military assistance.

## No contact yet

According to him, the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu was making efforts to get in touch with the officials of the new regime but had not been successful so far.

Even the Indian Defence Adviser in Kathmandu had not been able to make contact with the authorities in the Royal Nepalese Army.

Mr. Saran told presspersons that it would be India's effort to engage Nepal on the present situation and what might happen in the future. The Foreign Sec-

retary made it clear that New Delhi had advised King Gyanendra on several occasions that he should not take power directly.

"These concerns have been expressed repeatedly to the King of Nepal, on numerous occasions...our constant refrain has been that the two pillars of political stability in Nepal are

constitutional monarchy and multiparty democracy.

"We have also advised him against taking the kind of step that he has taken, pointing out that this would only mean that monarchy will be in direct confrontation not only with the Maoist insurgency but also that political parties. I believe that

deciding not to attend the SAARC summit.

The sources maintained that this was an effort to send out a message to both Bangladesh and Nepal that conditions in both countries needed to be addressed.

They pointed out that the statements made by the United States and the United Kingdom were similar in tone and tenor to the remarks made by India on Nepal on Tuesday.

According to the sources, Bangladesh remained "in denial" as far as key issues such as the operations of insurgent groups and illegal migration were concerned.

On the SAARC summit itself, the sources said the Government feared that Bangladeshi forces might have used repressive tactics against Opposition protesters during the summit.

India, they said, did not want to be in a position where Opposition activists may have been killed or injured at the hands of Bangladeshi security personnel.

Such violence would have come as a severe embarrassment to Indian leaders.

the Maoists have issued a very strong statement condemning the move that has been made by the King. This only bears out the apprehension that we have had," the Foreign Secretary maintained.

## Denial

Asked what India wanted on Nepal, Mr. Saran said that India was looking for an amelioration of the situation.

He denied that New Delhi was seeking to set any "benchmark" that the Gyanendra regime had to meet.

On whether the Indian decision not to attend the SAARC summit had to do with the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, not wanting to share the stage with King Gyanendra, the Foreign Secretary said it had nothing to do with personalities. According to Mr. Saran, Indian leaders had shared the stage with leaders of varying persuasions at SAARC summits in the past.

Separately, well-placed South Block sources told this correspondent that India had responded "proactively" by

## Pakistan unhappy over Delhi move

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

**ISLAMABAD, FEB. 2.** Pakistan has expressed "dissatisfaction" over the decision of the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, not to attend SAARC summit, scheduled for February 6 and 7.

The Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman, Masood Khan, now in Dhaka in connection with the summit, said the Pakistan Prime Minister, Shaukat Aziz, while talking to the Bangladeshi Prime Minister, Begum Khalida Zia, over phone, expressed dissatisfaction over India's decision.

"Frequent postponements of the SAARC summit conference has raised doubts about the seriousness with which the agenda for regional cooperation is being pursued in South Asia," Mr. Khan said.

"On the sidelines, Mr. Aziz and Dr. Manmohan Singh were scheduled to meet on February 7. This high-level contact was important to give new impetus to the composite dialogue. Now we will have to see when this opportunity arises," he said.

# মাওবাদী জুজু, নেপালকে ফৌজি সাহায্য চালিয়ে যাবে ভারত

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২ ফেব্রুয়ারি: দেউবা সরকারকে বরখাস্ত করে নেপালের রাজা জ্ঞানেন্দ্র ভারতকে এমনই অস্বস্তিতে ফেলে দিয়েছেন যে প্রকাশ্যে ক্ষোভ ব্যক্ত করা ছাড়া আর কিছুই করতে পারছে না নয়াদিল্লি। মাওবাদীদের সশস্ত্র অভ্যুত্থান এখন নেপালকে এতটাই গ্রাস করে বসেছে যে তার বিরুদ্ধে নেপাল সরকারকে নিজের স্বার্থেই ভারত সাহায্য দিয়ে যেতে বাধ্য। কারণ, নেপালের মাওবাদীদের ছায়া পূর্ব ভারতেও পড়ার আশঙ্কা রয়েছে।

বিদেশ দফতরের কর্তারা বরং আড়ালে স্বীকার করছেন, নেপালের ঘটনা নিয়ে প্রকাশ্যে যতই ক্ষোভ প্রকাশ করা হোক না কেন, জ্ঞানেন্দ্রকে উপেক্ষা করা বা মাওবাদীদের মোকাবিলায় দিয়ে যাওয়া সামরিক ও অন্যান্য সাহায্য বন্ধ করার প্রসঙ্গই ওঠে না। কারণ, এক কথায়, জ্ঞানেন্দ্র এখন ভারতেরই আর এক প্রতিবেশী রাষ্ট্রের নেতা পারভেজ মুশারফের দৃষ্টান্ত

অনুসরণ করতে চলেছেন। নিজের দেশের অগ্নিগর্ভ পরিস্থিতিকে দেখিয়ে তিনি আন্তর্জাতিক দুনিয়াকে বোঝাবেন, তাঁকে সমর্থন করা হোক।

জ্ঞানেন্দ্র যে এ রকম একটা কিছু করতে চলেছেন সেই আশঙ্কা কিন্তু নয়াদিল্লির ছিল। মাস ছয়েক আগে মনমোহন সিংহ প্রধানমন্ত্রী হওয়ার পরে পরেই গোয়েন্দা কর্তারা এক রিপোর্টে জানান, দেউবা সরকারকে যে-কোনও সময়ে ক্ষমতাচ্যুত করতে পারেন জ্ঞানেন্দ্র। মাওবাদী কার্যকলাপের ছুতোয় এমন একটা 'ক্যু' হতে পারে কাঠমন্ডুতে। এর পর জ্ঞানেন্দ্রকে ভারত বারবার বোঝানোরও চেষ্টা করে, যাতে এমন কাজটি তিনি কিছুতেই না করেন। কারণ? দেউবা সরকারের গণতান্ত্রিক কাঠামোর সঙ্গে রাজতন্ত্রের বিরোধ হলে আখেরে লাভ মাওবাদীদের। তাই কূটনীতির নানা স্তরে এত দিন ভারত নেপালরাজকে নিরস্ত করারই চেষ্টা করেছিল। শুধু ভারতই নয়, আমেরিকা ও ব্রিটেনও

একই ভাবে মানা করেছিল রাজাকে। কারও নিষেধকেই তোয়াক্কা না করে ক্ষমতা দখল করেছেন রাজা।

কেন? এখনই সব তথ্য প্রকাশ্যে না এলেও ভারতীয় কূটনৈতিক মহলের কাছে এটা স্পষ্ট যে নিজের দেশকে গণতন্ত্রের খোলা হাওয়ায় ভাসিয়ে সাংবিধানিক রাজার মর্যাদায় ঠুঁটো হয়ে বসে থাকতে আগ্রহী ছিলেন না জ্ঞানেন্দ্র। ফলে, মাওবাদীদের সশস্ত্র অভ্যুত্থানের দোহাই দিয়ে নিজের হাতে ক্ষমতা নিতে দ্বিধা করেননি তিনি। প্রতিবেশী রাষ্ট্রগুলির কাছ থেকে স্বীকৃতি আদায়ের জন্যই দেশে জরুরি অবস্থা জারি করেই তিনি ঢাকায় সার্ক সম্মেলনেও যেতে আগ্রহী ছিলেন। ভারত সার্ক সম্মেলন বাতিল করিয়ে আপাতত বৈধতার প্রসঙ্গটি বুলিয়ে রাখতে পারল ঠিকই, কিন্তু এ ভাবে বেশি দিন ঠেকিয়ে রাখা যে সম্ভব নয়, তা বিদেশমন্ত্রকের অফিসাররাও ঘরোয়া আলোচনায় স্বীকার

এর পর ছয়ের পাতায়

## ফৌজি সাহায্য চালিয়ে যাবে

প্রথম পাতার পর করছেন। তাঁরা মনে করিয়ে দিচ্ছেন, পারভেজ যখন পাকিস্তানে ক্ষমতা দখল করেন, তখন ভারত প্রথমে সেই 'ক্যু'-কে 'অসাংবিধানিক' ও 'অবৈধ' আখ্যা দিলেও, পরে আগরা শীর্ষ বৈঠকে তাঁকেই আমন্ত্রণ জানায়। জ্ঞানেন্দ্রও জানতেন, প্রাথমিক প্রতিক্রিয়া যা-ই হোক, শেষ পর্যন্ত সকলকে এই নতুন ব্যবস্থা মেনে নিতে হবে। এবং মাওবাদী দমনে ভারত যে সামরিক সাহায্য কাঠমন্ডুকে দিচ্ছিল, তাও আচমকা বন্ধ করা সম্ভব নয়। কূটনৈতিক সম্পর্ক ছিন্ন করাও কাজের কথা নয়। প্রতিবেশী রাষ্ট্রগুলির মধ্যে পাকিস্তান ও সম্প্রতি বাংলাদেশের সঙ্গে যখন উত্তেজনার পায়দ যখন চড়া, তখন বন্ধুরাষ্ট্র নেপালের সঙ্গে সংঘাতে যাওয়াও কাজের কথা নয়।

আপাতত তাই ভারতের প্রথম

পদক্ষেপ অসন্তোষ ব্যক্ত করা, যেভাবে আমেরিকা বা ব্রিটেনও করেছে। সঙ্গে সঙ্গে ফের গণতান্ত্রিক ব্যবস্থা ফিরিয়ে আনতে চাপ সৃষ্টি। মাওবাদীদের নিয়ে নেপালরাজ এ বার কী করবেন, সেটার দিকেও নজর রাখছে ভারত। মনে করা হচ্ছে, নেপালের রাজা প্রথম সুযোগে মাওবাদীদের সঙ্গে আলোচনায় বসার চেষ্টা করবেন।

পাশাপাশি মাওবাদীদের কার্যকলাপ দমনে সেনা-দাওয়াইয়ের প্রয়োজন হলেও ভারতের সাহায্য প্রয়োজন হবে নেপালের। ভারতীয় গোয়েন্দারা বলছেন, রাজার সঙ্গে গণতান্ত্রিক ব্যবস্থার বিরোধ নতুন নয়। মাওবাদীরাও নানা ভাবে এই বিরোধ জিইয়ে রাখতে চায়। এ বার জরুরি অবস্থা জারি হওয়ার পর মাওবাদীরা রাজতন্ত্র সম্পর্কে ঠিক কী মনোভাব নেয়, সেই দিকে নজর রাখছে ভারত।

# A serious setback to democracy, says India

By Amit Baruah

**NEW DELHI, FEB. 1.** New Delhi today described the seizure of power by King Gyanendra in Nepal as a "serious setback" to the cause of democracy and said it "cannot but be a cause of grave concern to India" as a question mark hung over the February 6-7 South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit in Dhaka.

With Nepal remaining cut off from the rest of the world, there was no word about whether King Gyanendra would travel to Dhaka. The SAARC summit cannot take place, even if one head of government/state cannot attend.

India today also showed concern at the security situation in Dhaka by despatching a high-level official team to assess the conditions there. During the

summit, the Opposition Awami League has planned protests against the killing of one of its senior leaders.

The Cabinet Committee on Security met here today to review the developments in Nepal. Senior External Affairs Ministry officials were in touch with the Indian Ambassador to Nepal, S.S. Mukherjee.

In a formal statement, the External Affairs Ministry said it had received reports that several political leaders had been confined to their residences. "The safety and welfare of the political leaders must be ensured and political parties must be allowed to exercise all the rights enjoyed by them under the Constitution."

"India has consistently supported multi-party democracy

SAARC summit in doubt

and constitutional monarchy enshrined in Nepal's Constitution as the two pillars of political stability in Nepal. This principle has now been violated with the King forming a government under his chairmanship," it said.

Without naming the Maoists, the release said: "The latest developments in Nepal bring the monarchy and the mainstream political parties in direct confrontation with each other. This can only benefit the forces that not only wish to undermine democracy but the institution of monarchy as well."

"India has a longstanding and unique relationship with Nepal, with which it shares an open border, a history of strong cultural and spiritual values and wide-ranging economic and

commercial links.

"We will continue to support the restoration of political stability and economic prosperity in Nepal, a process which requires reliance on the forces of democracy and the support of

the people of Nepal," the statement added.

Interestingly, King Gyanendra, who was supposed to have travelled to India, had refrained from giving fresh dates for his

democracy and the support of

# Maoist threat

## real: King

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Jan. 28. — The Maoist insurgency in Nepal could become "much more serious than it is today," and this would have negative implications for both India and Bhutan, King Jigme Singye Wangchuk of Bhutan said today.

Calling the threat real, he said both India and Bhutan share a common border with Nepal and added that he sincerely hoped something good would happen and political parties in Nepal would take initiatives. Asked if a military solution — the way Bhutan dealt with insurgents living in southern Bhutan with help from the Indian Army — was the answer, he said it was up to the Nepalese to solve their problems. "We don't want the Maoist threat to go out of control. The situation is deteriorating day by day. The Maoists control 69 districts in Nepal," he said. Clearly concerned, the King added that sitting in Bhutan and watching, he has seen the problem growing. In 1996, he pointed out, only three districts were trouble-torn. Now, in many areas, the Maoists were in total control.

Replying to questions about a "border problem" with China, he said there was a small difference of views in a few areas. The King ruled out full-fledged diplomatic relations between China and Bhutan, saying his country had no ties with any of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. But he added that "even though we have no diplomatic relations with China, we have good relations with China". The China-Bhutan border is about 450 km long.



"I'm a smoker and I'm trying to give it up," said the King of Bhutan, where smoking is largely banned.

29 JAN 2005

THE STATESMAN



# Train to Bhutan on the anvil

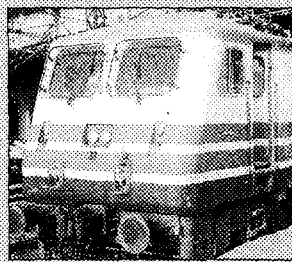
Indo-Asian News Service  
New Delhi, January 25

TRAVELLING TO Bhutan, often described as the "last Shangri-La", will become easier when the Himalayan kingdom is linked by a railway network under a landmark agreement signed with India Tuesday.

A memorandum of understanding to connect five border towns in Assam and West Bengal to as many major Bhutanese towns was signed following talks here between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and King Jigme Singye Wangchuk.

The king, who is on a six-day visit to India, will be the chief guest at the Republic Day celebrations Wednesday — a special gesture New Delhi extends to its close friends. In the case of

## PROPOSED RAIL LINKS



- Hasimara (Bengal) & Phuentsholing (18 km) and its bifurcation to Pasakha
- Banarhat (Bengal) & Samtse (16 km)
- Kokrajhar (Assam) & Gelephu (70 km)
- Pathsala (Assam) & Nanglam (40 km)
- Rangia (Assam) & Samdrup Jongkhar via Darrang (60 km)

Bhutan, it is India's way of saying "thank you" for the military crackdown it ordered in 2003 on anti-India rebels operating from the Buddhist kingdom of less than a million people.

Under Tuesday's agreement, the two sides are to un-

dertake feasibility studies for the extension of the Indian railway network to Bhutanese towns.

The proposed links are between Hashimara (West Bengal) and Phuentsholing by an 18-km rail line with bifurcation to Pasakha, between

Kokrajhar and Gelephu (70 km), Pathsala (Assam) and Nanglam (40 km), Rangia (Assam) and Samdrup Jongkhar via Darrang (60 km), and Banarhat (West Bengal) and Samtse (16 km).

The agreement is part of India's overall strategy to upgrade border infrastructure and connectivity with Bhutan and other neighbouring countries.

The two sides also signed a pact to prepare detailed project reports on two major hydroelectric projects in Bhutan — Punatsangchu (Stage II) and Mangdechhu, which together are estimated to generate 1,500 MW of electricity. "Cooperation in the power sector is one of the hallmarks of our mutually beneficial relationship with Bhutan," the Indian government said.

26 JAN 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

# India, Bhutan to explore railway link

By Our Diplomatic Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 25. Thimphu and New Delhi today agreed to conduct feasibility studies to extend the Indian railway network from West Bengal and Assam to Bhutan following talks between the King of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, and the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh.

Details of the agreement provided to presspersons said the feasibility studies would examine the following links: Hasimara (West Bengal) to Phuentsholing; Kokrajhar (Assam) to Gelephu; Pathsala (Assam) to Nanglam; Rangiya (Assam) to Samdrupjongkhar; and Banarhat (West Bengal) to Samtse.

The studies, to be conducted by Rail India Technical and Economic Services, will be funded

by a Government of India grant. A statement from the External Affairs Ministry said these studies would be completed within a year.

The two countries also signed an agreement on the preparation of detailed project reports for the 990 Megawatt Punatsangchhu (Stage-II) and the 670 Megawatt Mangdechhu hydroelectric projects. These reports are likely to be completed in two years.

"Cooperation in this sector represents a win-win situation for both countries. Bhutan receives a steady stream of revenue and India obtains cheap, clean energy to meet the growing requirements of its economy." A third agreement signed in the presence of the Prime Minister and the King of Bhutan relates to institutional cooperation in agriculture and allied

sectors.

In a related development, the King of Bhutan said: "Even as we rejoice in celebrating India's Republic Day, it is with a sense of deep sorrow that we recall the terrible destruction and loss of life caused by the tsunami last month in the Indian Ocean region."

"I wish to once again convey the deep sympathy of the Government and people of Bhutan to all the families in India affected by this unprecedented natural disaster."

Expressing satisfaction at the state of Indo-Bhutan relations, the monarch said, "Based on genuine goodwill, friendship and trust, it provides a shining example of good neighbourly relations and mutually beneficial cooperation between a large and powerful country and a small, landlocked neighbour."

For us in Bhutan, friendship with India has always been the cornerstone of our foreign policy. For her part, India has reciprocated with true friendship and generous assistance to our nation building process ...

"I wish to inform our Indian friends that the process of bringing about political changes in Bhutan has reached a very important stage with the drafting of a written constitution which has just been completed. I would like to express our deep appreciation for having received valuable advice and contributions from our friends in India. In drafting the constitution, we attached the highest importance to the establishment of a parliamentary democracy that will provide good governance and fulfil the aspirations of the people of Bhutan," the King said.

26 JAN 2005

THE HINDU

25 JAN 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

# Bhutan refugees seek CPM help

**Pramod Giri**  
*Siliguri, January 24.*

IN WHAT could be their last-ditch attempt to go back to their country, Bhutanese refugees of Nepali origin have appealed to the West Bengal government to use its influence in Delhi to have the issue raised with the King of Bhutan.

About 500 elderly refugees from camps in eastern Nepal marched to Mechi Bridge, close to West Bengal on the Indo-Nepalese border, and submitted a memorandum for Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee on Sunday. The document was handed over to a senior SSB official at a border outpost for being sent to the West Bengal CM. The march was organised by the Bhutanese Refugee Representative

**Repatriation Committee (BRRRC).**

The Bhutanese refugees and their political and human rights groups have pinned their hopes on the CPI(M) and the Left Front government to solve the 14-year-old imbroglio. They have requested the state to press the Centre to raise the issue before the Bhutanese King, Jigme Singhe Wangchuk, who will be New Delhi's chief guest during the Republic Day Celebrations. The refugees have been demanding India's intervention since the early 1990s, when the exodus, mostly from southern Bhutan, of Bhutanese of Nepali origin had begun.

Rajman Gurung of Refugee Affairs, BRRRC, said on Sunday that the committee would also send memorandums to the Indian

**Prime Minister.**

The march revived memories of the refugees' earlier efforts to enter Bhutan through Indian territory in 1996. That year, they were allowed to go up to Siliguri, where their progress was halted.

Refugee leaders say their people are exhausted after 14 years' of struggle and a grueling life in the camps. They fear that if a solution is not found fast enough, the refugees struggle might be taken over by the Maoists. The Bhutan Communist Party (Marxists-Leninist-Maoist) is reported to have registered its presence in 16 of the 20 districts in Bhutan.

The Maoists have already begun making moves to gain support among the refugees presently in camps inside Nepal.



SSB personnel maintain law and order at the protest venue. **NEELAM GHIMEERAY/HT**

## Bhutan King to be chief guest at Republic Day

By Our Diplomatic Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 24. King Jigme Singye Wangchuck of Bhutan arrived here today on a five-day State visit during which he will grace the Republic Day celebrations as chief guest. It is for the first time a King of Bhutan has been accorded this honour.

The External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, called on the King and welcomed him to India, the Ministry's spokesman told presspersons.

"He [Mr. Singh] expressed great satisfaction with the state of our bilateral cooperation which he said had brought immense benefit to our two countries."

"He thanked Bhutan for the exemplary action to flush out Indian insurgent groups that had established camps in southern and eastern Bhutan. It was agreed that cooperation on security issues would be further strengthened," the spokesman maintained.

In turn, the monarch thanked India for the support and assistance for Bhutan's development programmes. Mr. Singh reiterated India's commitment to support Bhutan's Ninth Plan and the projects in diverse sectors that included education, culture, agriculture, telecom and infrastructure development.

### Hydropower sector

The External Affairs Minister pointed out during the meeting that cooperation in the hydropower sector represented a win-win situation for both countries and was one of the main pillars of the India-Bhutan partnership.

During the visit, the King will hold talks with the President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, and the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh.

He is also scheduled to meet the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Chairperson, Sonia Gandhi, and the Leader of the Opposition, L.K. Advani.

25 JAN 2005

THE HINDU

# Now, Bhutan Maoists knock on state border

Pramod Giri  
Siliguri, January 21

THE STATE'S border districts in North Bengal appear to be facing a gradual encirclement by Maoist rebels active in neighbouring countries. First it was Nepal; now, it's Bhutan as well.

A sudden spurt in the activities of the three-and-a-half-year-old Communist Party of Bhutan (Marxist-Leninist-Maoist) is adding to the worries of intelligence agencies monitoring Maoist activities in Nepal, as the Bhutanese foothills had, till recently, provided a natural sanctuary to various Indian rebel groups. Sources say the situation could turn infinitely more complex, if the Indian rebels and the Bhutanese Maoists — who already have a working relationship with Nepal Maoists — arrive at an understanding.

The Maoists in Bhutan are not only demanding the "repatriation of the more than a lakh of Bhutanese refugees currently living in UN-HCR-sponsored camps in East Nepal" but also the establishment of democracy in the country. This was published in an article carried by a Gangtok-based monthly. The magazine interviewed a section of the BCP(MLM) leaders living in UN-HCR camps, who revealed many unknown facts about the party.



A file photograph the India-Bhutan border at Samdrup Jhonkar.

They claimed the BCP(MLM), formed on November 7, 2001, had a presence in 16 of Bhutan's 20 districts, including capital Thimpu.

Formed along the lines of the Nepal Communist Party (Maoists), the BCP(MLM), like its counterpart in Nepal fighting monarchy, aims at overthrowing the monarchy in Bhutan. The BCP(MLM), however, denies being directly backed by the NCP(M). The leaders also said that party's central committee was yet to be formed, leaving the party to be run by a 17-member organising committee, headed by general secretary Biklap.

So far, 200 Bhutanese youth have already undergone arms training

and the party has also formed its women, peasant and students' wings.

The BCP(MLM) believes that the ouster of more than one lakh people of Nepalese origin from Bhutan was not the effect of ethnic cleansing but the result of the ruling classes' dominance over the have-nots. One of the interviewed youths said people belonging to the Nalong and the Sarchop communities were as badly suppressed inside Bhutan as those of Nepalese origin. According to the magazine, "non-Nepalese Bhutanese are also members of the BCP(MLM)". "Right now the party is engaged in strengthening its base inside Bhutan and is fully equipped to face any retaliatory action from the Government," said one of the Maoists.

According to intelligence officials, the BCP(MLM) could become a cause for headache for the Bhutan government, as it has already joined hands with other Maoists organisations in South Asia in general and the Nepal Maoists in particular. It was only a matter of time, they said, before this new Maoist party disturbed the peace in the region.

Meanwhile, senior police officers said West Bengal was fully prepared to tackle the new menace and would ensure that the state was not used for any anti-Bhutan activities.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

22 JAN 2005

## India, Nepal resolve to fight terror

By Our Diplomatic Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 20. India and Nepal have exchanged views on strengthening cooperation in combating "terrorists", criminals and other elements engaged in activities inimical to the interests of both countries, a statement from the External Affairs Ministry said today.

Following two days of talks between the Home Secretary, Dharendra Singh, and his Nepalese counterpart, C.P. Shrestha, the statement said both sides discussed security-related issues of mutual interest.

"The Nepalese side thanked the Indian side for the continuous support provided ... in dealing with the challenges posed by the Maoist insurgency. In this context, a specific reference was made to the recent programme launched by the two Governments for modernisation of the Nepal police by providing high-quality training in counter-insurgency and equipment," the statement said.

Following the discussions, the texts of the Extradition Treaty and the Agreement on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters between Nepal and India were finalised and

initialled. "The two sides agree to expeditiously complete their internal procedures to enable early formalisation of these agreements. Once implemented, these instruments would significantly strengthen the legal framework for combating crime and terrorism." India and Nepal had also launched several projects for improving infrastructure along the border and better rail and road connectivity, the statement said. These projects would not only facilitate trade and transit but would contribute to better border management and enhanced security.

# Red alert along Nepal border

SC-2  
19/11  
Statesman News Service

GUWAHATI, Jan. 18. — The Indian government is planning to impose "certain restrictions" on Indians travelling to Nepal in the wake of the upsurge in Maoist violence in that country. On the other hand a red alert has been sounded along the entire Indo-Nepal border.

Talking to reporters here this afternoon, Union minister of state for home, Mr Sriprakash Jaiswal, informed that there might be restrictions on travel to Nepal from India even as vigil had been mounted along the entire 1,690 km long Indo-Nepal border.

"Governments of West Bengal, Sikkim, UP, Uttaranchal and Bihar, which have borders with Nepal, have been instructed to remain alert against possible 'adverse fall out' of Maoists upsurge in the neighbouring country. The number of Special Security Bureau battalions deployed along the Indo-Nepal border is being doubled to foil possible attempts by Maoist guerrillas to infiltrate into the country from Nepal," Mr Jaiswal said.

The Centre has also been tipped off by various agencies about attempts by the Maoist insurgents to strike a nexus with militant outfits

from north-east India including the banned Ulfa.

Regarding the government's persistent efforts to gain Dhaka's cooperation in evicting North-east insurgents getting shelter in Bangladesh, Mr Jaiswal informed that bilateral talks between the two governments on the issue had been "fruitful" and hoped Bangladesh would not provide shelter to militants on its soil.

He, however, praised the Myanmar government for its response to India's call to evict North-east Indian insurgents from its soil.

About the lack of progress in peace talks with the Bodo militant outfit, National Democratic Front of Bodoland, which declared unilateral ceasefire over three months back, the minister said the government was still "trying to fathom the sincerity of the outfit".

Terming the overall internal security scenario in the country as "by and large peaceful", Mr Jaiswal said all Naxalite-affected states have been assured all possible help from the Centre.

"We have asked them to accelerate the development process and tackle unemployment so that Naxalites find it tough to lure vulnerable youths into their ranks," the minister said.

# India-Nepal border in focus to stop Maoists

Rahul Karmakar  
Guwahati, January 18

INDIA WILL be doubling the SSB presence along the border with Nepal in order to thwart attempts by Maoist rebels in the Himalayan country to penetrate the terai belt.

New Delhi had carried out a similar experiment along the India-Bhutan border a couple of years ago. The deployment of extra SSB personnel along the border had netted an unprecedented number of Ulfa, NDFB and KLO rebels after Thimpu launched Operation All-Clear against the militants camping in southern Bhutan.

"There've been reports of Maoist rebels having infiltrated the states bordering Nepal", Union minister of state for home Sri Prakash Jaiswal said here on Tuesday. "Besides coordinating with Kathmandu, we are keen on increasing the SSB strength along the border to stop the subversive plans of the rebels".

Maintaining that the Maoists enjoyed a nexus with Northeast militant outfits like the Ulfa, Jaiswal did not rule out the possibility of the latter sheltering Nepalese rebels in the region, as well as neighbouring countries.

## Rebel chief's father ready for peace

Nepal's quest for peace has ultimately led it to the father of underground Maoist chief Pushpakamal Dahal, aka Comrade Prachand. The Human Rights Organisation of Nepal (Huron) claims that Prachand's 76-year-old father, Muktiram Dahal, is ready to lead its peace campaign scheduled to begin this spring.

On Monday, Huron president Sudip Pathak and media personnel met the senior Dahal in Bharatpur. Huron central committee member Bhimraj Adhikari said, "The senior Dahal said he was all for peace, but did not comment on the people's war spearheaded by his son."

HTC, Kathmandu

"These militants can go to any extent", he added. The Union minister regretted the breakdown of talks with another ultra-Left outfit,

the People's War Group of Andhra Pradesh.

The PWG had, on Monday, withdrawn from the peace talks with the Congress government led by YSR Reddy. "We want the peace process with the PWG to continue, but the Naxalites cannot take advantage of the ceasefire and indulge in violent activities", Jaiswal said.

The Union minister, however, maintained that the internal security scenario in the country was much better than before, with Jammu and Kashmir registering a rise in the tourist inflow. "There's been a significant drop in violence in J&K, and the tourist bookings augur well for the next season", he said. On the threat by the NDFB — it had declared a six-month ceasefire from mid-October last year — to take retaliatory action if the security forces did not cease operations against it, Jaiswal said the outfit should first abjure violence. "We need some time to ascertain if any outfit is really serious about shunning violence", he added.

Jaiswal was hopeful about the Ulfa coming for talks though he said no headway could be made in the dialogues between the outfit and Mamori Raisom Goswami.



# Bullets fly at India's Nepal mission, 2 die

19/1  
Keshav Pradhan  
Kathmandu, January 18

BLOOD WAS spilled at the Indian embassy in Kathmandu today, with one of the mission's Central Industrial Security Force guards gunning down two colleagues and injuring another.

The embassy scrambled to quell rumours of a Maoist attack, issuing a statement that the shooting stemmed from a quarrel between two CISF jawans last evening.

Preliminary reports said that around 5.30 am, CISF jawan Ravinder Rana fired at his colleagues at the barracks located on the embassy compound. The dead have been identified as T. Shankar and R. Kanan. The injured, Bidesh Dutta, who was shot in the thigh, is in hospital.

Though embassy officials did not explain how Rana was disarmed, they said he would be prosecuted under Indian laws. A team of three CBI and two CISF officials will fly to Kathmandu to probe the matter.

The CISF contingent has been stationed here to guard the embassy, supposedly India's biggest, since last year following the spurt in Maoist violence. There are past instances of CISF personnel shooting their colleagues. In May last year, CISF constable Namdeo killed a deputy commandant and held a group of colleagues hostage at a Mumbai airport.

# Gyanendra visit called off yet again

## Natwar off to Pak on Feb 15 for talks

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 14

**E**XTERNAL Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh has called India's Ambassador to Nepal, Shiv Shankar Mukherjee, for consultations on the situation there, particularly after Nepal King Gyanendra called off his visit to New Delhi that had been rescheduled for January 15.

It's learnt that while all was set for the visit to take place this time, Gyanendra suddenly cancelled his departure apparently to take care of some domestic concerns. Mukherjee is believed to have met the King after he called off the trip and would brief the Minister on his discussions. This is the third

there is speculation over what the Palace may do next.

India, for its part, has supported constitutional monarchy and strengthening of the multi-party system in the Himalayan Kingdom. Simultaneously, it has continued its assistance to the Royal Nepal Army in order to strengthen its capabilities in dealing with the Maoists. And has also backed Kathmandu in ensuring that level violence is kept under control by keeping the Maoists under constant military check.

Many of these issues were to be discussed with Gyanendra. He was also expected to visit in late December but that too had to be cancelled due to the death of former prime minister P.V. Narasimha Rao.



time that the King's visit to India has been called off since November.

According to official sources, the consultations will help review the state of bilateral relations, with Mukherjee expected to also provide an insight into the domestic situation in Nepal. Sources said the deadline for the Maoists to start talks has passed and

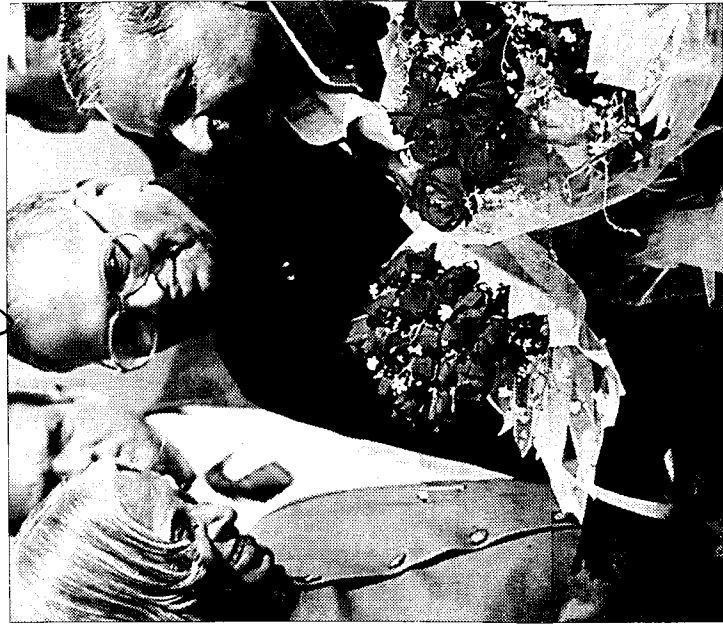
**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 14

**EXTERNAL Affairs** Minister K. Natwar Singh will undertake the first bilateral visit to Pakistan by an Indian Foreign Minister in more than a decade, starting February 15. But this will be preceded by a meeting of the two Prime Ministers at Dhaka on the margins of the SAARC summit which, sources said, is now likely to be on February 6-7.

It is learnt that the External Affairs Minister today held consultations with SAARC

leaders and foreign ministers for the summit to be rescheduled for February first week, after it was postponed in the wake of the tsunami disaster.

The bilateral meeting between the PMs will lay the ground for the two foreign ministers to carry-forward detailed discussions on the peace process which has now entered the second round of composite dialogue. This apart, discussions are being planned, which will include expert-level talks over holding flag meetings between sector commanders along the LoC.



**President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam with Uttar Pradesh Governor T.V. Rajeshwar Rao and Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav on his arrival at Lucknow airport on Friday. PTI**

# ROAD TO DEMOCRACY

## Bhutan Moving Towards A Constitutional Framework

By PARMANAND

**H**is Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck's visit to India in November was significant in many ways. The Crown Prince, Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, was with him. Significantly, the investiture ceremony of the 24-year-old Crown Prince as the Penlop (Governor) of Chhoetse was held on 1 November. Indeed, the royal institution of the Penlop of Chhoetse goes back 350 years. Subsequently, the future King would be made the Penlop of Trongsa as a convention. The first Wangchuck King, Ugyen Wangchuck (1907-26), had held this post before he was elected Druk Gyalpo (King) in 1907.

The King and Crown Prince met various Indian leaders, including President APJ Abul Kalam, Vice-President BS Shekhawat, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, external affairs minister K Natwar Singh, Congress president and UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi, and former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. They also met other people from various segments of Indian society.

### Guest of honour

The 49-year-old Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the fourth and the longest-serving King of Bhutan, will be the guest of honour on the occasion of Republic Day. This, indeed, would be the rare occasion for any head of state or government, for that would be the second such honour by India to its closest friend. The King had earlier been the guest of honour in the 1980s during the prime ministership of Indira Gandhi.

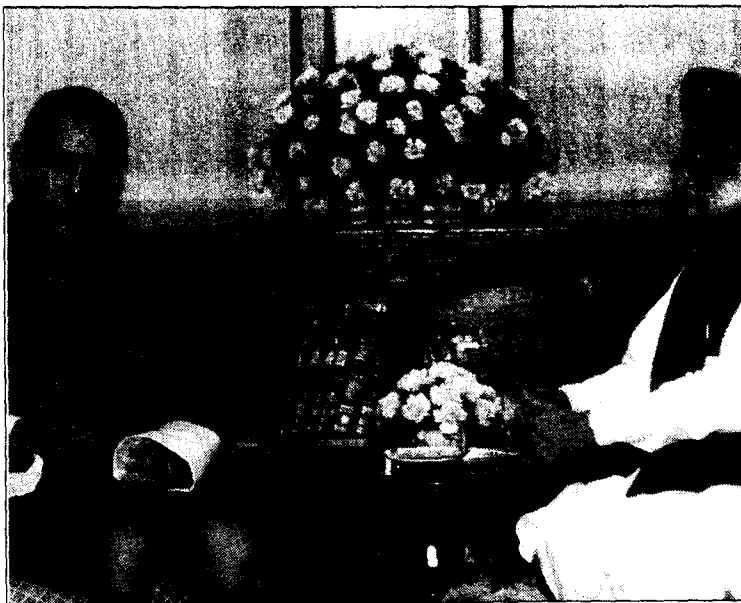
On his part, the King chose the occasion to meet leaders of the new UPA government. Whether privately or officially, King Jigme has been visiting India after the installation of almost every new government in New Delhi to show Druk-yul's (Bhutan's local name) closeness to Indian government and people. The Crown Prince, too, has been visiting Bhutan's southern, eastern and western neighbours rather frequently. Though unable to speak Hindi, he enjoys Indian cuisine, films and songs. In fact, he is planning to be associated with various Indian universities, having completed this education at Oxford University.

India's minister of state for external affairs, Rao Inderjit

to attend the ceremonies when the Crown Prince assumed the title of the Chhoetse Penlop. This occasion was also utilised to sign a bilateral agreement that would ensure smooth implementation of projects funded by India in Bhutan.

According to a press release of

since the days of the third Wangchuck King, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, Bhutan has been, under the existing milieu, witnessing a movement towards democracy under the monarchy. King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck introduced the representative institution of Tshogdu (National



the foreign ministry of Bhutan, the "Implementation Mechanism" signed by India and Bhutan in Thimphu on 20 October will replace individual MoUs for various projects under India's assistance. The press release also stated that the mechanism would provide a system where India-assisted projects could be reviewed and the implementation regularly monitored. Additionally, it would provide a system of auditing the project's expenditures.

The press release also stated that the project monitoring committee, comprising members from Bhutan and India, would monitor India's project-tied assistance to Bhutan. The committee will also see that the project's objectives are fulfilled and the funds are utilised properly.

### Hydro-electric project

During his four-day stay in Bhutan, Rao Inderjit Singh met the Bhutanese King and Prime Minister Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk. India's external affairs minister K Natwar Singh will visit Bhutan soon in connection with the inauguration of an India-aided Kurichu hydro-electric generating project.

people's representatives. Of course, it had to have experts of various hues. The committee under the chairmanship of the chief justice of the kingdom's High Court, Lyonpo Sonam Tobgye, had several rounds of intra-committee discussions. King Jigme, who ceased to be the head of government in 1998, remains undeterred by the criticism that he is moving very fast. Indeed, he wishes that the Bhutanese people get used to various norms and nuances of a written constitutional at the earliest.

### Parliamentary form

Should the proposed constitutional framework come into operation, which seems imminent, the landlocked kingdom would have a parliamentary form of government based on political parties. The constitution is said to envisage a bicameral legislature consisting of the National Assembly as the lower house and the National Advisory Council as the upper house. Elections would be held on the principle of the first past the post, as prevalent in India, the US and the UK. On the judicial front, there will be the Supreme Court. Below this will be the High Court, and at the lowest level, there will be district courts.

There would be various commissions — the judicial commission, the election commission, the anti-corruption commission and the audit commission — to deal with various problems and issues that would surface subsequently. On the other hand, there would be various parliamentary committees like the foreign affairs committee and the legal affairs committee to look after several relevant problems. The constitutional scheme is also determined to keep religion outside politics, even though Bhutan may become a Buddhist state technically. The clergy would not be able to dabble in politics.

King Jigme Singye Wangchuck insists: "We want the government to fulfil the aspirations of the people". The constitutional framework may go a long way in this direction. Of course, the political process and the political system continue to evolve. The King has been insisting that it is for the people of Bhutan to decide what they want. Thus, on the foreign front, Bhutan has

# Nepal Maoists pose threat to Assam, Bengal: Army

By Nirmalya Banerjee  
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Kolkata:** Links between Kamtapur Liberation Organisation, United Liberation Front of Assam and the Maoists of Nepal are posing a new dimension to the insurgency situation in Assam and north Bengal, eastern command GOC-in-C Arvind Sharma said in Kolkata on Monday.

Participating in a meet-the-press programme at Kolkata Press Club, he said the army was keeping a close watch on the growing nexus. It was in touch with the state governments concerned. "It certainly poses a new threat, if this continues".

Though KLO was reduced in number after the flush-out operations in Bhutan, it was getting shelter in Maoist camps in Nepal, along with its mentor Ulfa. The Maoists, too, had an interest in north Bengal and lower Assam, the disturbed south Bhutan being close to these places.

The army had suggested to the government that a standardised rehabilitation package be worked out for militants who would lay down arms. Currently, the packages in states like J&K, Assam and Manipur were different. All the states did not implement the packages with equal seriousness. If promises made to militants coming overground are not fulfilled, others would not be encouraged to lay down arms.

Even if the Centre formulated such a pack-

age, it would depend on the state governments concerned to implement them, he pointed out. And, all the states did not have equal financial muscle, some of them suffered from a serious resource crunch.

Some of the militants laying down arms could even be inducted into the Assam Rifles battalions being newly raised, there was nothing new in it. Earlier, militants coming overground in Nagaland had been inducted into the Border Security Force, even a Naga regiment had been raised with them. The new Assam Rifles battalions were being raised, however, with the concept of "one border one force" in mind, in accordance with the recommendation of a group of ministers.

Drawing a distinction between Bhutan operations and operations now being carried out along the Indo-Myanmar border, he said unlike in the previous operation there had been no joint planning between the Indian and the Myanmar armies. Also, the vast stretch of the Myanmar border extending from Arunachal Pradesh to Mizoram was adding to the problem.

The army was avoiding operations against the Isaac-Muivah and Khaplang factions of National Socialist Council of Nagaland, because of the ceasefire agreements with them. But, Khaplang activists were often intermingled with other militant outfits on the Myanmar border. It was difficult to distinguish them.

# India's policy failure in Nepal

The twin-pillars of India's Nepal policy have collapsed. India's Nepal policy is based on promoting "multi-party democracy" and "constitutional monarchy". Since June 2002, when King Gyanendra ascended the throne in Kathmandu, India has had little success in promoting its twin aims.

King Gyanendra subverted multi-party democracy within months of becoming the king and appears to be in pursuit of an executive monarchy. The political parties in Nepal today are divided among those who have become lackeys of the palace and those who are agitating in the streets for the restoration of democracy.

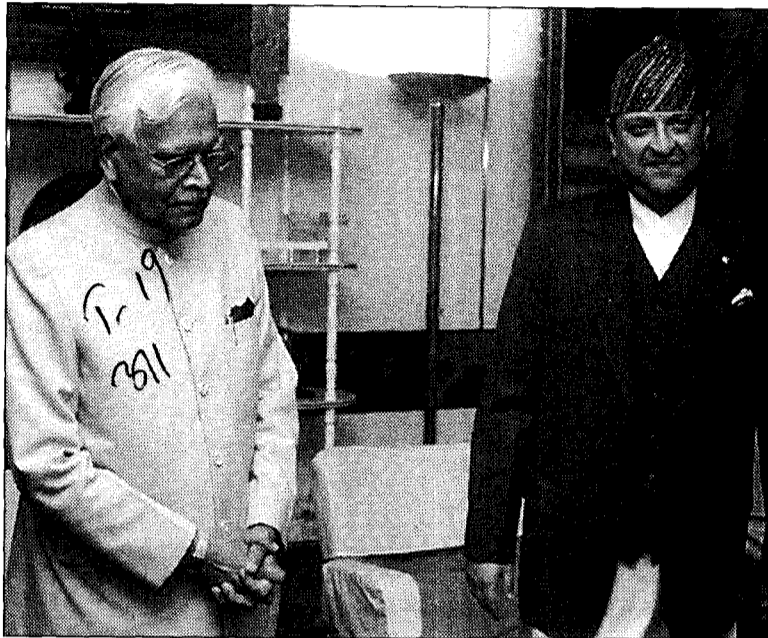
India has not been able to do anything as yet to help restore multi-party democracy in Nepal. Indian policy-makers seem to suffer from the delusion that if only an "all-party" government could be installed in Kathmandu, multi-party democracy would be re-established. However, democracy thrives on political differences mediated through institutional mechanisms.

In a democracy, consensus has to evolve. The Nepalese political parties have been unable to do that because it is difficult to bring about consensus through the streets. Institutional mechanisms for doing so like the Nepalese parliament, however, stands dissolved by the king. India somehow wants to force that consensus. The result is that India has gone along with every lame duck government that King Gyanendra has appointed.

The last two years have seen a constitutional monarchy trying to transform itself into an executive monarchy. The successive prime ministers appointed by King Gyanendra, ostensibly with India's blessings, have only taken Nepal further down that road. In addition, while mouthing support for constitutional monarchy, New Delhi has in fact ended up strengthening the monarchy by supplying modern weapons to the Royal Nepal Army. The RNA is staunchly royalist and reports directly to the monarch. One could argue that a peculiar constellation of circumstances has forced India to support the king and the army. However, the fact remains that the Indian policy towards Nepal has not worked.

India's policy failure also lies in its inability to guide Nepal in handling the Maoist crisis. There is recognition in India that the social and economic issues being raised by Maoists reflect the popular sentiment of the people. Yet the king has been increasingly able to push New Delhi to help him deal with the Maoists militarily. About a year ago, there was a serious concern in India about not doing anything to increase the "lethality" of the conflict in Nepal by monitoring the weapons being sup-

TWENTY-TWENTY  
BHARAT BHUSHAN



Talking of interests

plied to the RNA. However, today weapons are flowing into Nepal from a variety of non-Indian sources — the United States of America, Belgium and South Africa, among others. The aircraft carrying the weapons are often routed through China to avoid Indian scrutiny.

The "lethality" of the conflict with the Maoists has gone up also because the Nepalese army has shown little concern for collateral damage to civilians. Such wanton disregard for non-combatants can only alienate the people further. Moreover, providing lethal weapons to the RNA in effect means modernizing the armoury of the Maoists as they loot the same weapons and use them against the army.

There are several powerful opinion-makers in this country who take pleasure each time the Nepalese army claims a major strike against the Maoists. However, without a clear-cut objective, such victories are meaningless.

India has not been able to persuade King Gyanendra to show the requisite amount of transparency in

dealing with the problem — he has neither done so in his weapons acquisition from abroad nor even in revealing his mind *vis-à-vis* the political parties and the Maoists. He produces one joker after another from the pack and appoints him the

prime minister. India not only accepts them but also gets pro-active in supporting individual candidates. Somebody in New Delhi needs to say loudly enough that the primary criterion for the choice of these successive prime ministers has not been whether they would do India's bidding but for effectively pushing Gyanendra's agenda.

On the other hand, King Gyanendra still seems to be playing with the idea that if Nepal's relations with the international community are enhanced, India's weight in Nepalese affairs can be reduced. This strategy may have seemed eminently smart in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 but its inefficacy and impracticality are becoming increasingly evident. In fact, the international community today would like India to play a more active role in stemming the instability in Nepal.

However, India has not been able to encourage greater collaboration between the monarchy and the political parties. Nor has India opened an effective channel of communication with the Maoists. They are not anti-

India, they are staunchly nationalist and are unlikely to export their revolution across the border — the objective conditions in India are different and Maoists are not internationalists. They are without doubt a powerful political force and the crisis in Nepal can-

not be resolved without their involvement. There is a need for India to open a dialogue with them (and this cannot be done officially) to understand them better.

King Gyanendra has effectively enjoyed full executive powers over the last two years and that has only made matters worse. Gyanendra himself is not exactly popular with the people and many believe that given his violent temper, Crown Prince Paras may be in serious need of psychiatric help. We may in fact be witnessing the last throes of the Shah dynasty.

Meanwhile, India needs to seriously rethink its Nepal policy. The longer this process is delayed, the more would be the manoeuvrability of an obdurate king who lacks wisdom. Although G.P. Koirala was ridiculed initially for his demand to restore parliament, today there is a gradual realization that there is no other alternative. Using the same provision of the constitution (article 127) that he used to dissolve parliament, the king should be encouraged to revive it. The political parties need to be persuaded to withdraw the legal cases before the supreme court to facilitate this process.

Sher Bahadur Deuba, although he is incompetent, can continue as prime minister (he held that position when parliament was dissolved) and facilitate a consensus in parliament on a dialogue with the Maoists. This may even pave the way for the unity of the two factions of the Nepali Congress that could then re-emerge as the most important parliamentary political party. Old man Girija Prasad Koirala with all his faults has already indicated this.

The monarchy's principal contradiction lies with the Maoists who are essentially republicans. The political parties are Gyanendra's last hope if he wants to be a symbolic monarch under the constitution. The restored parliament can, if it so decides, amend the constitution to take on board the socio-economic demands of the Maoists.

If the king does not listen to this advice, then the political parties will get further alienated. If they opt for a constituent assembly, it will be advantageous for the Maoists. Republicanism will be firmly on the agenda, the future of the monarchy will be uncertain and the Maoists would have managed to demonstrate that the gains of democracy over the last decade are irrelevant now. The political parties must not be pushed to opt for revolutionary change. Nepalese democracy must instead be put on the path of evolution. The Maoists will be mainstreamed not by handing over power to them but by bringing them on the road to effective multi-party democracy.

**King Gyanendra thinks that if Nepal's relations with the international community can be enhanced, India's weight in Nepalese affairs can be reduced**