

US delays Nepal arms

29/6
J. HEMANTH

ical skills." Tr 9

Kathmandu, June 28: Visiting US principal deputy assistant secretary for South Asian affairs Donald A. Camp today said the Bush administration will insist on restoration of democracy as a pre-condition for resuming arms supplies to the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA).

Speaking at the end of a three-day official visit to Nepal, Camp said the US was monitoring the situation in Nepal very closely.

"The entire world will find the return to a pre-1990 Nepal unacceptable. The king and the legitimate political forces will have to unite to deal with the Maoist insurgency successfully," he said.

Camp added that the US would continue to provide non-lethal aid to the RNA as it felt the Maoists were the most immediate threat to a peaceful, prosperous and democratic Nepal.

However, the US would hold back the next consignment of M-16 rifles till King Gyanendra restored civil liberties and multi-party democracy in the kingdom.

"The US recognises the difficulties the army faces in countering the insurgents. The US military assistance aims to make the Royal Nepalese Army professional and includes training in rules of engagement, investigating alleged human rights abuses and battlefield med-

ical skills." Tr 9
As for the Maoists, Camp said that they should realise they cannot win an armed struggle. "We call upon them to cease their systematic targeting of the Nepalese people, including schoolchildren and civilians, declare a ceasefire, lay down arms and come to peaceful negotiations", he said.

The American official said the Bush administration was being guided by inputs from New Delhi to structure its Nepal policy. However, he expressed concern over reports that the Maoists were meeting leaders from Indian political parties.

Camp also reiterated the US stand that King Gyanendra's February 1 takeover was a big step backward for democracy. He hoped that political parties would continue to cooperate with each other and force the King to restore democracy.



Donald A. Camp

মাওবাদী-সেনা সংঘর্ষ,

১২ জন হারতেনপালে

কাঠমাড়, ২৭ জুন: মাওবাদীদের সঙ্গে সংঘর্ষে অন্তত ১২ জন নিরাপত্তা রক্ষী প্রাণ হারান। কাঠমাড় থেকে ৪৫০ কিলোমিটার পশ্চিমে অর্ধখাচি জেলার খানা গ্রামে সেনাবাহিনীর সঙ্গে সংঘর্ষ বাধে মাওবাদীদের। সেনাদের গুলিতে কয়েক জন মাওবাদীও নিহত হন। তবে জঙ্গিরা তাদের দেহ সরিয়ে নিয়ে যায়। সেনা সূত্রের খবর, এর আগে শনিবারে গুলমি জেলার একটি স্কুল থেকে ৯০ ছাত্রছাত্রীকে অপহরণ করলেও পরে ছেড়ে দেয় মাওবাদীরা। কাঞ্চনপুরের একটি গ্রাম থেকে ২৫০ গ্রামবাসীকেও অপহরণ করে তারা। দুর্নীতি দমন শাখা প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী শের বাহাদুর দেউবাকে দুর্নীতির অভিযোগ থেকে মুক্ত করেছে। তবে তাকে পুলিশ হাজতে রাখা হবে। — রয়টার্স

28 JUN 2005

28 JUN 2005

28 JUN 2005

Deuba cleared of graft charges

Panel wanted to defame anti-royal politicians: ex-Premier

KATHMANDU: Nepal's powerful royal appointed anti-corruption commission on Monday cleared the former Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba, and six of his former Cabinet Ministers of illegally distributing Rs. 3.8 millions of state funds to party workers.

Mr. Deuba, sacked by King Gyanendra when he seized power earlier this year, would continue to remain in detention on charges of irregularity in awarding the Melamchi Drinking Water Project contract funded by the Asian Development Bank.

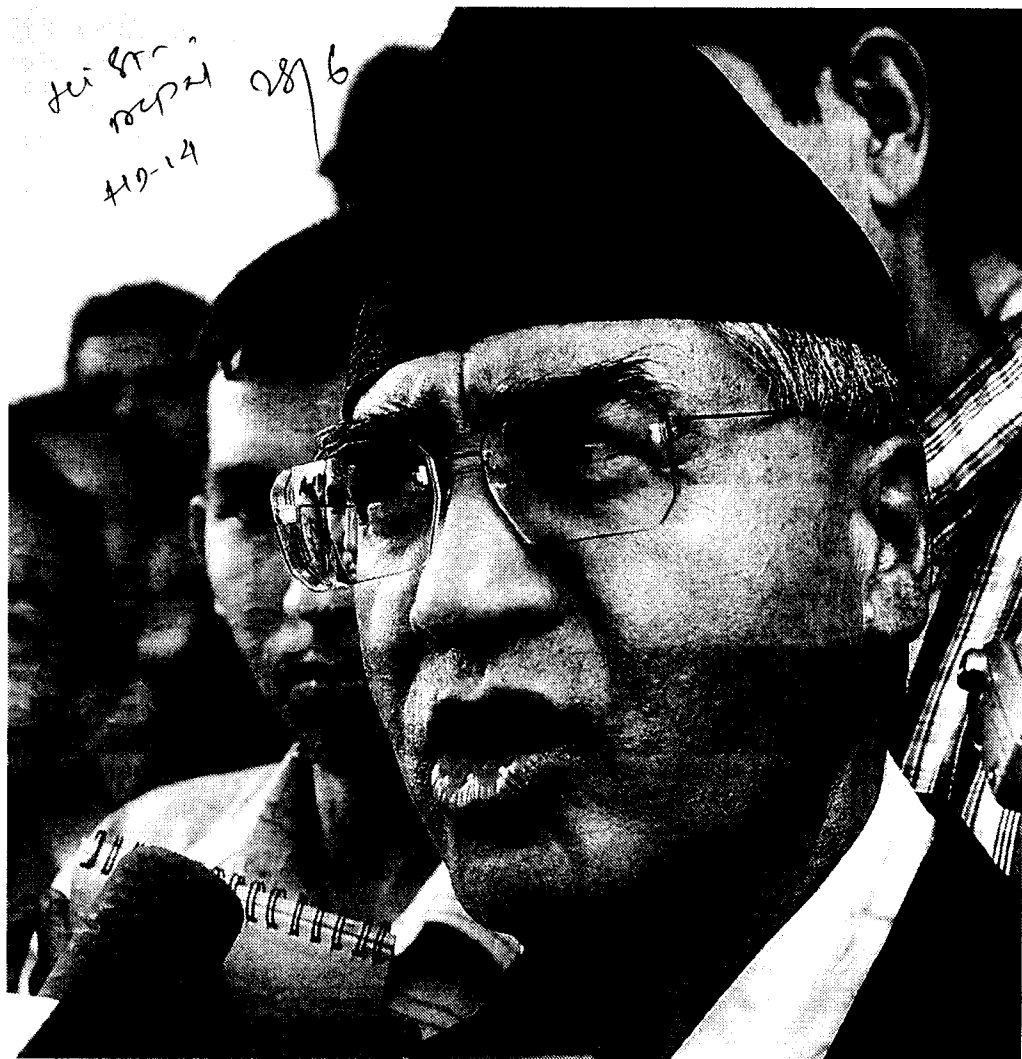
"Deuba and six other Ministers who were charged with distributing money from the Prime Minister's Fund during the Dasain festival last year has been given clean chit by the Royal Commission for Corruption Control," said the Commission spokesman Prem Raj Karki.

The Commission said though irregularities had been found in distributing the funds, the Prime Minister could not be convicted of corruption as he had the right to distribute the money.

The six Ministers who were acquitted of charges of misusing the Prime Minister's Fund are Jog Meher Shrestha, Purna Bahadur Khadka, Mohamad Mohasin, Badri Mandal, Yuvraj Gyawali and Homnath Dahal. The commission released them on condition that they would appear before it whenever required.

Mr. Deuba, who has refused to cooperate with the Commission terming it as illegal and unconstitutional, told reporters after the verdict that "the Commission's action was directed at defaming the political leaders who oppose the February 1 royal take-over."

A former Minister, Prakash Man Singh, is also in police custody in the drinking water contract embezzlement case. The



EMERGES CLEAN: The former Nepalese Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba, addresses the media in Kathmandu on Monday. — PHOTO: AFP

commission was set up by the King soon after he assumed absolute powers on February 1.

Students freed

Communist rebels have freed 90 high school students who were seized from their classrooms last week for indoctrination, officials said on Monday.

The students, who were kidnapped on Wednesday, were released over the weekend and have returned to their homes in Paudiamrai village, about 300 km west of Katmandu.

None had been harmed by the rebels and all were in good health, said an official.

Earlier, authorities said they

were alarmed because the students had been missing for five days, which was unusual because the rebels typically hold such abductees only for two or three days.

About 90 ninth- and 10th-grade students from Nepal Rastriya High School, were abducted, the military said. — PTI, AP

Maoist rebels free 90 abducted students in Nepal

Kathmandu: Communist rebels have freed 90 high school students who were seized from their classrooms last week for indoctrination, officials said on Monday.

The students, who were kidnapped on Wednesday, were released over



the weekend and have returned to their homes in Paudiamrai village, about 300 km west of Kathmandu.

None had been harmed by the rebels and all were in good health, said Durga Pokhrel, the chief administrative officer of Gulmi district. Other details were not immediately available.

Earlier, authorities said they were alarmed because the students had been miss-

Americans face 'threat'

Kathmandu: The US has renewed a warning to Americans to avoid travelling to Nepal. In a warning posted on its website over the weekend, the US state department urged its citizens to defer non-essential travel to Nepal.

"The embassy has received information that the Maoists (rebels) may attempt to attack or take actions specifically against US citizens as part of that contingency, particularly in regions of the country under Maoist control," the travel warning said. The warning adds concern about threats to tourists. AP

ing for five days.

Authorities sounded an alarm as it is unusual for the rebels to hold such abductees for more than two or three days. Rebels abduct students to teach them about their nine-year revolution, aimed at replacing the government with a communist regime.

Paudiamrai village is mostly controlled by Maoist insurgents. AP

Eight killed as Maoists devastate Nepal town

Sudeshna Sarkar in Kathmandu

June 20. — At least eight people were killed as the Maoist carried out one of their most audacious assaults on the headquarters of an eastern district on Sunday night, setting ablaze government offices and freeing 66 prisoners while the government sought to save face by claiming victory for security forces in repulsing the attack.

The hilly town Diktel in Nepal's eastern Khotang district, about 200 km from here, turned into a battlefield as the communist guerrillas struck around 11 p.m., attacking several government offices simultaneously, engaging even security forces in their barracks and triggering a

gun-battle that lasted for over five hours. The toll so far, the army headquarters in Kathmandu said, was eight, including three rebels whose bodies were found in the area. As reinforcements were rushed to the devastated town and a massive search operation was launched, it is feared that the casualties could go up.

Hundreds of guerrillas simultaneously attacked several government offices, including the district chief's office, district police office, district education office, district court and district prison, set fire to the offices and broke open the district prison, releasing 66 prisoners, including three minors who were staying with their parents.

They also looted medicines worth Rs

80,000 in Nepali currency from a medical shop, media reports said. It is suspected the medicines are for the treatment of their injured cadre.

The rebels were also reported to have captured several senior government officials and taken them away with them. *Kantipur TV*, a private television channel, put the number of abductees at eight. The state media sought to downplay the attack, saying it was a victory for the security forces who had repulsed the raid.

The state-run *Nepal Television* reported that the rebels had attacked some government offices but glossed over the havoc, saying further details were not available immediately. The attack came the same day the rebels' top leader,

Pushpa Kamal Dahal, who goes by his action name Prachanda, issuing a statement from underground, saying both the Maoist "People's Army" and "People's government" have decided not to attack unarmed people, even if they were criminals. The statement came in the wake of the intense outrage triggered against the Maoist after the bombing of a bus that killed 42 passengers earlier this month followed by the killing of six civilians. The rebels, however, denied their involvement in the murder of the six civilians.

The fresh attack comes as King Gyanendra is away in the UAE, defending the royal takeover as having been necessary to combat the Maoist insurgency. The King will return on Wednesday.

নেপালকে অস্ত্র দিচ্ছে চিন

কাঠমান্ডু, ১৮ জুন: ভারত বা সর্ববরাহ শুরু করেছে বলে খবর ব্রিটেন নয়, নেপালকে এখন অস্ত্র প্রকাশিত হয়েছে। নেপালি সর্ববরাহ করছে চিন। এ খবর দিয়েছে সেনাবাহিনীর এক মুখপাত্র অবশ্য স্থানীয় একটি সংবাদপত্র। তবে এ জানিয়েছেন, তাঁরা এ ব্যাপারে কিছুই জানেন না।

এ দিকে, দেশের সর্বোচ্চ আদালত নেপাল সরকারকে একটি নোটিস পাঠিয়েছে। বেসরকারি এফ এম রেডিও চ্যানেলগুলির উপরে খবর সম্প্রচার নিয়ে নিষেধাজ্ঞা জারি করে নেপাল সরকার। সেই প্রেক্ষিতেই তথ্য ও সম্প্রচার মন্ত্রককে নোটিস দেওয়া হয়েছে বলে নেপালি সাংবাদিকদের একটি সংগঠনের সূত্রে জানানো হয়েছে। এ সর্বের মধ্যেই নেপালে মাওবাদীদের তাগুব অব্যাহত। মাগদি জেলায় দু'টি বেসরকারি বিদ্যালয় উড়িয়ে দিয়েছে তারা। তবে এই ঘটনায় কেউ হতাহত হয়নি। — পি টি আই

19 June

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

Nepal Opp to boycott King's polls

KATHMANDU, June 18. — Nepal's major opposition parties today reiterated that they would boycott the municipal elections called by King Gyanendra even as the Maoist insurgents said they would be organising their own polls in their strongholds from Sunday.

An alliance of seven major parties that had captured over 90 percent of the parliamentary seats in the last elections said they would boycott the municipal polls the King has promised to hold by next April as

well as any other election to be announced by the monarch.

"We have decided to boycott any polls held by the regime headed by King Gyanendra since they will be anti-democratic," said Dr Minendra Rizal, spokesman of one of the coalition partners, the Nepali Congress (Democratic) party.

"We are also asking the Maoists to sink their differences, renounce violence and join our anti-king mass movement," Rizal said.

Sudeshna Sarkar

17 JUN 2006

THE STATESMAN

LEAP FORWARD-II

Draft Bhutanese Constitution An Ideal Document

By PARMANAND

His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo is the head of state and the "symbol of unity of the kingdom and of the people of Bhutan". The Chhoe-sid-nyi (dual system of religion and politics) of Bhutan shall be "unified in the person of the Druk Gyalpo" who, as a Buddhist, shall be the upholder of the dual system. Only a legitimate descendent of His Majesty Druk Gyalpo Ugyen Wangchuk (the first Wangchuk King between 1907-26) can become the King.

In the exercise of his royal prerogatives, the King may award titles and decorations in accordance with traditions and customs, grant citizenship, amnesty and command Bills and other measures in Parliament. He would appoint various officials, including the Chief Justices and Justices of the Supreme Court and the High Court, the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners and the Auditor-General.

Friendly ties

The Druk Gyalpo may promote goodwill and good relations with other countries by receiving state guests and undertaking state visits to other countries. The King shall protect and uphold "this Constitution in the best interest and welfare of the people of Bhutan".

The Druk Gyalpo, though, will himself have to abdicate the throne for wilful violations of the Constitution or for being permanent subject to mental disability on a motion passed by a joint session of the Kingdom's bicameral Parliament.

The executive power of the state shall be vested in the Lhengye Zhungtshog (Cabinet), which shall consist of the Prime Minister and other ministers. Interestingly, the number of ministers shall be determined by the number of ministries required to provide efficient and good governance and, significantly, ministries shall not be created for the purpose of appointing ministers. The Cabinet shall be responsible to the Druk Gyalpo and Parliament. The Prime Minister shall be an elected member of the National Assembly and natural born Bhutanese citizen. He will keep the Druk Gyalpo informed from time to time about the affairs of the state, including international affairs, and

shall submit such information and files as called by the King. Significantly, no person shall hold office as Prime Minister for more than two terms.

The Druk Gyalpo shall be an integral part of Parliament which now will be bicameral —



consisting of the National Council (the upper house) and the National Assembly (the lower house). Interestingly, both the houses shall be directly elected by the people, even if the Upper House contains five royal nominees. The total strength of the National Council shall be 25. Apart from the five royal nominees, it will have 20 other members — each dzongkha (district) electing one member. Importantly, National Council members shall not belong to any political party. On the other hand, the National Assembly (not having more than 75 members) shall be elected on the party basis. Bhutan will, thus, for the first time legitimise the existence of political parties even on the constitutional plane.

Age limit

Both houses shall have a duration of five years. The National Assembly, though, can be dissolved earlier also. No one can contest elections after attaining the age of 65.

It is not for nothing that the

famous political scientist and practitioner, Herold J Laski, said that a state is known by the rights it gives to citizens. The draft Bhutanese Constitution provides several rights to its citizens and they include the right to life, liberty and security of

sought to be accompanied by fundamental duties. Every person shall have the duty and responsibility to respect and abide by the provisions of this Constitution. Bhutanese citizens will be expected to preserve, protect and defend the sovereignty, integrity, security and unity of Bhutan and render national service, when called upon to do so. Preserving, protecting and respecting the culture and heritage of the nation will also be among the fundamental duties of Bhutanese citizens. Payment of taxes in accordance with the law will be another significant duty of the Bhutanese citizen.

Special facets

The Constitution-makers had been conscious of special facets of Bhutan's social life. The constitution draft attaches a special place to religion in the kingdom, but also stresses that religious institutions and personalities "shall remain above politics". The constitution-makers have obviously learnt from the ongoing events on religious front in Sri Lanka (a predominantly Buddhist state in South Asia). The office of the Je Khenpo (Dharma Raja or Sangha Raja) has been kept intact.

On the cultural plane, the state, under the draft constitution, pledges itself to endeavour to protect and promote the cultural heritage of the kingdom, including monuments, places and objects of artistic and historical interest. Besides, the Royal Government of Bhutan shall ensure a safe and healthy environment. The Royal Government has, significantly, also to ensure that a minimum of 60 per cent of Bhutan's total land "shall be maintained under forest cover for all time".

The Constitution's draft, as of now, appears to be an ideal document. Of course, it will become effective after being approved by the people — the likelihood of which is bright — in a national referendum. But it will be really known when its provisions are put to proper test. For all that, one has to wait and watch. But the constitution-makers under the leadership of King Jigme Singye Wangchuk have made great strides in making Bhutan's politics democratically institutionalised.

(Concluded)

Fundamental rights have been

Journalists in Nepal not to relent on democracy

KATHMANDU: Journalists demanding press freedom in Nepal held a protest demonstration for the second day on Tuesday even as the royal government released 50 mediapersons arrested on Monday for holding a rally.

An hour after 50 journalists arrested on Monday were freed, over 250 scribes demonstrated in front of the Chief District Administrator's Office here denouncing the Government's intervention in their peaceful demonstrations and demanding end to media restrictions.

Attacking the anti-media policy, Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ) General Secretary Mahendra Bista vowed to continue their struggle till full democracy is restored.

In a show of solidarity, professors, lawyers, human rights activists, doctors and labourers joined the demonstration. FNJ President Bishnu Nishthuri said after his release that the journalists would soon start the next phase of agitation to restore press freedom.

The Save Independent Radio Movement (SIRM) has turned down the Government's offer for dialogue, saying the talk offer was "not genuine" and was a "conspiracy" to foil their agitation.

E.U.'s call for talks

Eight security personnel and six rebels died in clashes even as the European Union condemned the use of "violence for political ends" and called for re-establishing the dialogue process.

Army sources said eight security personnel and six Maoist rebels were killed in a clash at Ghartichhap village in Kavrepalanchowk district, 75 km east of here, on Monday. — PTI

15 JUN 2005 THE HINDU

Nepal rebels kill baby

J. HEMANTH

Kathmandu, June 14: Sus-
pected Maoists have killed six

relatives, including an infant,
of security personnel in
Nepal, opening another ruth-
less flank in the guerrilla war

on the monarchy. Three of the
victims have been identified
as the wives of Armed Police
Force (APF) personnel. A one-
year-old baby is also among
those killed.

The APF is entrusted with
anti-insurgency operations.

The six were abducted last
night in western Nepal and
their bodies were found in a
forest today.

The news of the carnage
coincided with an announce-
ment by the Royal Nepalese
Army (RNA) that it has not re-
ceived any form of military
aid from India after suspen-
sion of the assistance in the
wake of the royal coup in Feb-
ruary.

Army spokesman
Brigadier General Dipak Gu-
rung said the RNA had not re-
ceived any military supplies
from India over the last four
months. He was responding to
questions on reports that sug-
gested India has decided to re-
sume military supplies that
were already in the pipeline.

Gurung said the RNA had
recently received "non-lethal"
military assistance from the
US. The US government was
also helping in providing
"human rights" training to
the RNA officials.

Gurung said that the RNA
would initiate action against
commanders under whose or-
ders soldiers have been found
to travel in public vehicles
with arms. The announce-
ment came in the wake of two
Maoist attacks on passenger
buses. As many as 39 people
died in one of the incidents.

99 JUN 2005 THE TELEGRAPH

Nepal lifts ban on Indian cable TV

Himalayan
Nepal
1876

Kathmandu: Nepal's royal government has allowed cable news channels from India to resume services here, five months after they were ordered to stop, officials and news reports said on Sunday.

King Gyanendra seized absolute power on February 1 and subsequently barred cable operators from offering Indian news channels.

The restriction was one of several imposed on the media since the royal takeover.

Criticism of the king, the government or security forces has been banned, along with any independent reporting on Nepal's communist insurgency. Journalists must get all information on security issues from the army or police.

Private radio stations may not air news programmes.

The cabinet decided last week to let cable operators resume offering Indian news channels, the Kantipur newspaper said on Sunday.

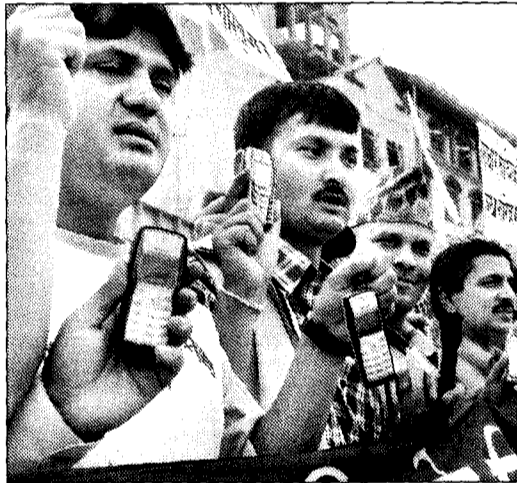
Information ministry officials confirmed that the ban had been lifted starting Saturday.

Indian officials requested the resumption when Gyanendra met with Indian prime minister Manmohan

Singh in Indonesia in April, the newspaper said.

No official reason was given for the Indian news ban, but Nepalese officials had accused Indian channels of exaggerating reports.

India was one of the first countries to condemn the king's takeover and the jailing of politicians.



Journalists hold dead mobile phones to protest restrictions placed on the media in Kathmandu

Other international news channels, including CNN, BBC and Japan's NHK, were not banned.

India suspended military aid to Nepal after the takeover, but recently announced it would ease the suspension after a state of emergency was lifted in April. Agencies

Breaking news on Nepal's streets

Kathmandu: Gagged Nepalese journalists seem to have found new ways to break free. In an innovative protest as part of their struggle against King Gyanendra's crack-down on free media, the journalists on Friday launched 'Street FM Radio' in many parts of the Himalayan Kingdom, "broadcasting" political news using loudspeakers.

Listeners crowded around the popular anchors at Nayabaneshwor here as they "aired" updates on political and current affairs and conducted interviews on the streets challenging the government's anti-media policies. "We will continue our struggle until the government guarantees complete press freedom and withdraws all the restrictions imposed on us after the February 1 takeover," said Mahendra Bista, general secretary of the Fed-



Journalists rally to demand press freedom in Kathmandu on Friday. Gagged scribes have launched Street FM Radio to disseminate news

eration of Nepalese Journalists, who organised the stir. Prior to this, some 250 scribes held a rally carrying placards reading "restore democratic rights", "lift ban on FM radios to broadcast news", "scrap restrictive press laws" and "guarantee right to information". Similar street FM radios and rallies were held in various places like Birgunj, Nepalgunj,

Biratnagar, Dhankuta and Pokhara. Sources said the Federation of Nepalese Journalists was planning to continue with the Street FM in Kathmandu.

Meanwhile, advocate Dinesh Tripathy has filed a writ petition in the supreme court challenging the government's prohibitory orders banning political rallies, sit-ins and mass meetings in various parts of the capital. PTI

Dozens of journalists held in Nepal

हि सं नेपाल १७-१६ १/६

Media groups condemn crackdown, "police brutality" and restriction on freedom

KATHMANDU: Police arrested 53 journalists on Wednesday as they protested press restrictions in this Himalayan kingdom.

The journalists, carrying banners and calling for press freedom, were arrested after they tried to march into the streets near the royal palace complex.

A scuffle broke out as the journalists tried to break through a line of police who were blocking them from leaving an exhibition centre, where they had been protesting.

Many of the streets near the palace complex and the main government offices in other parts of Kathmandu have become restricted areas since King Gyanendra seized absolute power Feb. 1 in Nepal. Demonstrations are not allowed in the restricted areas.

Media groups demanded the immediate release of all the journalists arrested. "We condemn police brutality and government restriction on our freedom," said Balram Baniya of the Federation of Nepalese Journalists, an umbrella body of the media rights groups in Nepal.

Mr. Baniya, who was among those arrested, said police dragged and injured some of the journalists before they were put into vans. A police official at the scene said they had orders not to allow any protests in the restricted area.

Biggest arrest

It was the biggest arrest of journalists since the royal government imposed restrictions on the media following the King's power grab. The federation has been protesting to pres-



YEARNING FOR FREEDOM: Journalists raise anti-government slogans while trying to break a police cordon in Kathmandu on Wednesday. — PHOTO: REUTERS

sure the Government to restore press freedoms and end harassment and arrests by security forces, but this was the first confrontation with the police.

Criticism of the King, the Government and security forces has been banned, along with any

independent reporting on the insurgency.

Dozens of reporters have been arrested since the King took power.

Order overturned

Nepal's Supreme Court has

overturned a government order to close a media centre in Kathmandu that supplies radio programming to community stations, the centre said on Wednesday.

The court found that the order served on the Communica-

tion Corner by the Ministry of Information and Communication was illegal, the centre's chairman Montessori Rajbhandari, told AFP.

The closure order was part of an ongoing media crackdown following the King's power grab. — AFP

At 8:30
10/21/05

Maoists abduct 1000 students, teachers in Nepal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KATHMANDU, JUNE 9

ARMED groups of Maoists abducted some 1,000 students and teachers from different schools in western Nepal for forceful indoctrination of rebel ideology, state-run media reported on Thursday.

Maoists abducted students mainly from class 9 and 10 and two teachers from each school in Jajarkot district, *The Rising Nepal* daily said. Maoists abducted 150 students and two teachers from Shankar Secondary School at Bahun Thana of Jajarkot district on Wednesday, the daily said quoting a teacher of the school.

The daily also reported that the south-eastern district of Chitwan has been enveloped by grief four days after the landmine blast triggered by Maoists killed 40 and wounded dozens in a bus.

Amnesty International's Nepal Chapter has asked the Maoists to probe the landmine blast and make public the full report of its internal investigation as well as action taken against the culprits, the daily said.

Hundreds queued up to

Nepal puts troops on high alert following wave of attacks

■ KATHMANDU: Nepal has put its troops on a nationwide high-alert following two attacks by Maoists on soldiers and civilians this week, that killed over 50 people, officials said on Thursday. The attacks have prompted the Army and police to boost security at both government and civilian installations, the officials said on condition of anonymity.

Recent attacks on civilians could indicate that the Maoist rebels have broadened their targets from military installations to civilians. However, rebel leader Prachanda said in a statement that Monday's bus bombing was a mistake and that Army troops were the intended target. —AP

cremate dead bodies at Reu Khola, the mass graveyard of victims of Monday's landmine blast in Chitwan, the *Kathmandu Post* reported.

09 JUN 2005

INDIAN EXPRESS

Hand of Maoists suspected in Nepal bus explosion

Hi Sr
report 7/6
HID-19

Women, children among victims; operation on to nab perpetrators

MADI (NEPAL): At least 53 persons were killed and 72 wounded in south-western Nepal when a powerful bomb ripped on Monday through a crowded passenger bus in one of the bloodiest attacks on civilians by suspected Maoist rebels since their revolt began nine years ago.

An army officer told AFP the bus was torn apart by the force of the blast and that the passengers were badly mutilated by shrapnel as well as by shards of metal and glass from the bus.

"(The bus) rose into the air ... quite high and came down and split into two," the officer said, quoting witnesses.

State radio and officials gave the death toll as 53 but warned it could rise.

The radio report, quoting police superintendent Surendra Bahadur Shah, said that 16 seriously injured persons had been transferred to hospitals in Kathmandu for treatment.

Mr. Shah said the attack was the work of "terrorists", a word which the police and military in Nepal use to describe Maoist rebels.

Officials said many of the victims were women and children,



FACE OF VIOLENCE: The wreckage of a passenger bus after a landmine exploded under it at Kalyanpur, 180 km southwest of Kathmandu on Monday. — PHOTO: AFP

and that three military personnel on their way home for vacation were among the dead.

The blast occurred at Madi village in the Maoist-controlled district of Chitwan, about 180 km southwest of Kathmandu, early on Monday morning.

The military has cordoned off the scene so that medics and family members could search for items that could prove helpful in

identifying some of the victims, officials said.

Search operations for the culprits were also under way throughout the district, they said.

Witnesses at the scene of the blast said the explosion left a hole in the dirt road five-feet across. The charred and twisted bus had been pulled into a nearby field.

An army officer in Chitwan district, who declined to be named, said that a home-made bomb planted in the road was used by the suspected rebels to blow up the bus.

"As the bus came near, the improvised explosive device was set off by remote control," he said.

"The bodies of the dead were badly mutilated or blown to pieces by the explosion," another officer told AFP.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility from the Maoists, who have been fighting to install a communist republic in Nepal since 1996. The insurgency has already claimed more than 11,000 lives.

The rebels are generally not known for launching indiscriminate bombings of civilian targets, although they have been accused by human rights groups of the torture and murder of villagers they believe to be collaborating with the armed forces.

The Maoists have stepped up their campaign through road blockades and attacks on troops since King Gyanendra sacked the coalition Government, imposed emergency. — AFP

THE HINDU

7 JUL 200

ONE OF THE WORST MAOIST ATTACKS ON CIVILIANS

53 killed in Nepal blast

Stateman News Service

KATHMANDU, June 6.

— In perhaps the biggest civilian casualty in the nine years of the Maoist insurgency, at least 53 people were killed as a landmine planted by the rebels blew a passenger bus southern Nepal today. Over 40 people were said to have been injured in the explosion.

Over 100 people were travelling in the private bus heading towards Bharatpur, headquarters of Chitwan district near the Indian border.

The mine ripped the bus apart in the morning when it was crossing a bridge over the Bandar Mude river in an area known as Mudekhola in Kalyanpur village, killing 36 people on the spot. Seventeen more of the critically injured died



Soldiers inspect the wreckage of the bus which hit a landmine at Kalyanpur in Nepal's Chitwan district on Monday. — AFP

on the way to hospital, the state-run Radio Nepal reported. Three of the victims were reported to be security personnel.

Local agencies reported an unspecified number of

The ambush comes even as the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights started monitoring the human rights situation in Nepal, recording human rights viola-

tions by both the government and the insurgents.

While the army has been trying to improve its rights record by announcing the court martial of security personnel found involved in extrajudicial killings and torture and also started undergoing training in human rights law by an American team sent by the US government, the Maoists have been losing out both on public sympathy and international tolerance by continued violence that has been taking its toll on civilians as well.

The bus tragedy occurred even as British bomb-disposal experts arrived here last week to train the Royal Nepalese Army and disposal of explosives and London decided to supply explosive disposal equipment to the RNA on humanitarian grounds.

Nepal journalists plan fresh agitation against crackdown

KATHMANDU: Nepalese journalists on Thursday announced a fresh two-week agitation against the Royal Government's continuous crackdown on free media following the assumption of absolute power by King Gyanendra on February one.

The Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ) is "forced" to launch a fresh agitation programme to end Government's crackdown on media, restore press freedom and reactivate the 1990 democratic constitution, the FNJ said in a statement.

It has asked the Government to stop "suppressing and harassing" journalists, end economic blockade on press and withdraw restrictive press laws.

The FNJ and all its branch offices and associate offices throughout the country will continue to display black flags and organise interaction programme on the theme "Democracy and Press Freedom". They will also organise nationwide protest rallies on June 5 as part of the agitation, said FNJ General Secretary Mahendra Bista.

Meanwhile, journalists dispatched a parcel containing a copy of the Constitution of Nepal and an old radio set to Communication and Information Minister Tanka Dhakal as a symbol of protest to the Government's anti-radio policies.

The radio journalists have been staging demonstrations in major areas in the country almost daily to oppose the Government's anti-media policies. The protest is being organised at the initiative of the Save the Independent Radio Movement. The Government banned FM radios since February 1. — PTI



FIGHT FOR RIGHTS: Student activists of Nepal Communist Party (United Marxist Leninist), protest against King Gyanendra in Kathmandu on Thursday. The protesters had themselves blindfolded and chained, symbolising the current situation in Nepal. — PHOTO: AP

Manisha defends king

J. HEMANTH

Kathmandu, May 31: A selfless king risks his crown to save his people from anarchy; a band of opportunists combine to thwart his plans.

That, according to Bollywood actor Manisha Koirala, is how the script has unfolded in her country over the past four months.

A week after her father was expelled from the Nepali Congress for supporting the royal takeover, the film star has lambasted the political parties for opposing King Gyanendra, saying he alone can restore peace and stability in the country.

In an interview to the state-owned news agency Rashtriya Samachar Samiti, Manisha has described her father Prakash Koirala as a "strong nationalist" and the "cleanest leader" among the current politicians, claiming he was targeted for dissent.

"It is unfortunate that those who preach democracy cannot tolerate anybody who differs with them," she said in the interview, which was front-paged today by the royal government's mouthpiece daily, *Rising Nepal*.

The interview takes on the dimensions of a family drama with the actor pointing fingers at her great-uncle and former Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, head of the Nepali Congress, which is spearheading the all-party anti-monarch agitation.

In the interview, done over email, Manisha claims King Gyanendra's February 1 "royal coup" was intended to stop anarchy.

"We have all seen how the situation had deteriorated after the royal massacre (the palace carnage four years ago). Some vested interests groups have created doubts and were trying to cash (in) on it. Our beloved and respected king had to take the step to stop an-



Manisha with Gyanendra in Kathmandu in 2003

archy," she said, adding that the king was a paragon of selflessness who put the monarchy at stake to stop the country from falling apart.

The political parties, she alleged, were to blame for Nepal's misfortunes. "In the name of fighting for people's rights, the political parties are actually fighting to be in power."

"If they are genuinely interested in people's welfare, they should jointly launch a movement against the Ma-

oists in the affected villages."

She cited how most politicians own huge properties, fancy cars and bank accounts in Nepal and abroad.

As for the Maoist insurgency, the film star felt it could be solved either through dialogue or army action. "The Maoists should give up violence and fight elections," she said.

Manisha said she would be happy to act in Nepali feature films. She was waiting for the right offer to come along.

01 JUN 2005 7:11

Nepal frees 18 political detenus

Seven-party alliance plans Kathmandu meeting to press for civil liberties

KATHMANDU: Nepal's royal Government on Thursday released 18 political prisoners, including Nepali Congress general secretary Shushil Koirala and former Parliament member of Nepali Congress Basudev Bhatta, who had been detained since the February 1 power grab by King Gyanendra. Eight persons including Mr. Koirala were released from prison in Banke district, according to Home Ministry spokesman Gopendra Bahadur Pandey.

Five political prisoners were released from Dadeldhura district, four from Saptari district and one from Kanchanpur district, Mr. Pandey said. The release came a day ahead of a protest meeting of the seven-party alliance scheduled to take place on Friday in the capital.

Languishing in jails

Nepali Congress President Girija Prasad Koirala and other prominent political leaders will address the public meeting to be held at Nayabaneshwor in Kathmandu as part of the seven-party agitation aimed at restoring democracy and civil liberties. Former Deputy Prime Minister and Nepali Congress leader Ramchandra Poudyal and hundreds of other political detenus are still languishing in different jails across the country. The Government last month extended their detention order by another three months despite their deteriorating health conditions.

Hundreds held

Hundreds of people were arrested after King Gyanendra sacked the elected Government, seized control of the country and imposed a state of emergency on



BANNER OF PROTEST: Activists of the Nepal Student Union raise anti-Government slogans in the streets of Kathmandu on Thursday, demanding the restoration of democracy in the country. - PHOTO: REUTERS

February 1. The King ordered the arrest of hundreds of politicians and activists in the weeks that followed. Although many of the political detenus were released after the emergency was lifted last

month, several key politicians remain in jail. The constitutional monarch has come under increasing international pressure to release them as a first step toward restoring democracy in this Hima-

layan kingdom. The United States has repeatedly asked Nepal's Government to reconcile with political parties. Fighting between communist rebels and Nepalese troops has claimed more than

11,500 lives. The rebels, who claim to be inspired by Chinese revolutionary Mao Zedong, have fought since 1996 to replace Nepal's constitutional monarchy with a communist state. - AP

27 MAY 2005

THE HINDU

নেপালে মাওবাদীরা কি ভোটের পথে, ইঙ্গিত ভট্টরাইয়ের

দীপেন্দ্র রায়চৌধুরী • নয়াদিহ্লি

২৫ মে: নেপালের মাওবাদীরা কি একশো আশি ডিগ্রি ঘুরে গিয়ে ভোটে লড়ার কথা ভাবছেন? তাঁদের অন্যতম শীর্ষ নেতা বাবুরাম ভট্টরাই কিন্তু সুস্পষ্ট ভাবে সেই ইঙ্গিতই দিচ্ছেন।

নেপালের মাওবাদীদের প্রকৃত মুখ দলের সাধারণ সম্পাদক 'কমরেড প্রচন্ড'; কিন্তু তাঁদের 'মুখোশ' হলেন বাইরের পৃথিবীর কাছে পরিচিত ও জওহরলাল বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের প্রাক্তন ছাত্র বাবুরাম ভট্টরাই। সম্প্রতি ভট্টরাইয়ের একটি নিবন্ধ মাওবাদীদের নিজস্ব ওয়েবসাইটে দেখা গিয়েছে। তাতে ভট্টরাই বলেছেন, নেপালের পরিস্থিতি এখন পাল্টে গিয়েছে ও দেশে 'প্রজাতান্ত্রিক গণতন্ত্র' প্রতিষ্ঠার সময় এসেছে। এই প্রজাতান্ত্রিক গণতন্ত্রের জন্য 'লড়াই করতে' ও তাতে যোগ দিতে তাঁরা রাজি।

অর্থাৎ রাজতন্ত্রের অবসান ঘটিয়ে পুরোদস্তুর গণতন্ত্র এলে তাঁরা সেই গণতন্ত্রের শরিক হতে রাজি।

ঠিক এই লক্ষ্যে এগনোর জন্য ভারতীয় নেতাদের সঙ্গে কথা বলতে ভট্টরাইকে ভারতীয় গোয়েন্দারা এ দেশে নিয়ে এসেছিলেন বলে সংবাদমাধ্যমে খবর প্রকাশিত হয়েছে। সে সময় সি পি এমের সাধারণ সম্পাদক প্রকাশ কারাট ও অন্য কয়েক জনের সঙ্গে তিনি কথা বলেছিলেন। কমিউনিস্টদের ব্যাপকতর অংশের সঙ্গে তিনি কথা বলতে চাইলেও নেপালের গণতন্ত্রী কমিউনিস্টদের নেতা মাধব নেপালের পরামর্শে অনেকেই তাঁর সঙ্গে কথা বলেননি। রাজনৈতিক সূত্রের খবর, মাধব নেপাল ভারতীয় কমিউনিস্টদের জানিয়েছেন, ভট্টরাইয়ের মতটাই মাওবাদীদের দলগত মত কি না তা স্পষ্ট নয়।

ভট্টরাই যা বলেছেন তার পরেও দুটি প্রশ্ন থেকে যায়। এক, তাঁর মত দলে গৃহীত হচ্ছে কি না। কিন্তু তাঁর পনেরো তারিখের লেখা এখন মাওবাদীদের ওয়েবসাইটে আসায় এই ইঙ্গিতই পাওয়া যাচ্ছে যে 'মুখ' ও 'মুখোশ'-এর মধ্যে দূরত্ব কমতে পারে। দ্বিতীয় প্রশ্নটি আরও মৌলিক। রাজতন্ত্র বাদ দিয়ে যে ভাবে নেপালে প্রজাতান্ত্রিক গণতন্ত্রের জন্য ভট্টরাই সওয়াল করছেন, সেটা কি প্রকৃতই হৃদয়ের পরিবর্তন, না নিছক কৌশলগত পদক্ষেপ? এই প্রশ্নের সঠিক উত্তর এখনও স্পষ্ট নয়।

ঠিক কী বলছেন ভট্টরাই?

নিবন্ধের 'গণতান্ত্রিক প্রজাতন্ত্রের

প্রশ্ন' শীর্ষক অংশে তিনি বলেছেন, রাজতান্ত্রিক অভ্যুত্থানের বিরুদ্ধে কার্যকর বিরোধিতা এখনও গড়ে তোলা যায়নি। তারপরেই তিনি লিখেছেন, "রাজতন্ত্রের সঙ্গে লড়াই করার জন্য বিপ্লবী গণমুক্তি বাহিনীর (মাওবাদী জঙ্গি) উপস্থিতি ও আগের তুলনায় অনেক বেশি সদর্থক আন্তর্জাতিক পরিস্থিতি... চিরতরে রাজতন্ত্র বিলোপের জন্য গণতান্ত্রিক রাজনৈতিক শক্তিগুলির ঐক্যবদ্ধ এক নতুন লড়াইয়ের জমি তৈরি করে দিয়েছে।"

এইভাবে জমি তৈরির পর তিনি বলেছেন, এই নতুন পরিস্থিতির জন্যই 'সংসদীয়' (রাজনৈতিক দলগুলি) ও 'বিপ্লবী' (মাওবাদী)—সব গণতান্ত্রিক শক্তির কাছে গ্রহণযোগ্য একটি ন্যূনতম কর্মসূচি ও স্লোগান তৈরির প্রশ্নটি এখন সামনে এসে গিয়েছে। এবং কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি অফ নেপাল (মাওয়িস্ট)—এর সুচিন্তিত মত, "এই উদ্দেশ্যে সব চেয়ে গ্রহণযোগ্য পথ হল একটি প্রতিনিধিত্বমূলক সংবিধান পরিষদের নির্বাচন ও প্রজাতন্ত্রী গণতন্ত্রের প্রতিষ্ঠা।" অর্থাৎ, রাজতন্ত্রের বিলোপ ঘটিয়ে ভারতের মতো প্রজাতান্ত্রিক গণতন্ত্র প্রতিষ্ঠা করতে তাঁরা ভোটে লড়তেও প্রস্তুত।

কিন্তু এখন যে রাজতন্ত্রী গণতন্ত্র রয়েছে তাতে তাঁরা যোগ দেবেন না বলেও ভট্টরাই স্পষ্ট করে দিয়েছেন। আর প্রজাতান্ত্রিক গণতন্ত্রের অংশগ্রহণ যে বিপ্লবী গণতন্ত্রের পরিপন্থী নয় তাও তিনি ব্যাখ্যা করেছেন। তাঁর কথায়, "সি পি এন (মাওবাদী) বারংবার নিজেদের নীতিগত অবস্থান স্পষ্ট করে দিয়েছে যে নেপালের বিশেষ পরিস্থিতিতে একটি প্রজাতন্ত্রী গণতন্ত্রের উপ-পর্যায়ের (সাবস্টেজ) মধ্যে দিয়ে যাওয়ার ঐতিহাসিক প্রয়োজন রয়েছে।" এর সমর্থনে ২০০৩ সালে সরকারের সঙ্গে আলোচনার সময়কার দস্তাবেজের উল্লেখ করেছেন তিনি।

শুধু তাই নয়, নিজেদের মতের সমর্থনে তিনি এক্সেলসের রচনাও (স্পেনের প্রসঙ্গে 'দ্য বাকুনিষ্টস অ্যাট ওয়ক') উদ্ধৃত করেছেন। তাঁর বক্তব্য, এ থেকেই বোঝা যায় কেন নেপালের মতো দেশে প্রলেতারিয়েতের পার্টিকেও একটি বিশেষ পরিস্থিতিতে 'বুর্জোয়া প্রজাতন্ত্র'কে তুলে ধরার প্রয়োজন হয়।

তবে কি দশ বছর ধরে 'জনযুদ্ধ' চালানোর পর এখন নেপালের মাওবাদীরাও বুঝেছেন যে তাঁদের পথ ভুল? এর উত্তর দিতে পারবে সময়।

24 MAY 2005

THE TELEGRAPH

King's army grapples with desertion

SUJAN DUTTA

New Delhi, May 23: India's resumption of military aid to Nepal at the insistence of defence headquarters last week has been made despite suspicions that the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) is manned by straw soldiers.

The king's army is grappling with desertions forced by threats from Maoist rebels. For any army in the middle of a war, desertions are a corrosive danger.

Although army headquarters in New Delhi, which closely monitors the military situation in the kingdom through its multiple channels in the RNA, does not publicly give vent to its assessment, it is co-

ncerned over the reports. The Indian Army is closely involved with training and equipping the RNA and has been advising it on its expansion.

Among the latest reports of desertions is an encounter that a retired Indian diplomat had with a former soldier of the RNA in Kathmandu earlier this week. Deb Mukarji, who has served as Indian ambassador in Kathmandu, recounted at a meeting here on Wednesday his conversation with an RNA deserter. Mukarji was reluctant to give details so as not to put the deserter at risk.

"He told me that he had quit the RNA because it did not pay him enough to meet the extortionate demands of

The former diplomat was chairing a session at the United Services Institution (USI).

Mukarji was in Kathmandu in connection with the release of a book and not on any official mission. As such, it was a chance encounter with the deserter.

But evidence from Nepal on the weakness of the RNA has been mounting. At the same session, Major General Ashok Mehta, a retired Gorkha Regiment officer and military analyst, gave a presentation on "Existing and emerging challenges of the RNA to meet the Maoist threat".

Mehta said he estimated the total number of desertions by RNA soldiers at "between

frequent visitor to Nepal, said he was not surprised by the figures that he had culled from his sources in Kathmandu on his last visit because "the insurgency has riven families".

The session was attended, among others, by representatives of diplomatic missions in New Delhi and from army headquarters.

Mehta estimated that the Maoists' army had a strength of 8,000 to 12,000 fighters but only 4,000 weapons. "They have the power of intimidation, the power to strike fear but very little fire-power." The RNA, he said, has 83,000 troops and is projected to increase its strength to 1 lakh by 2010. But some of its best and most im-

tioned inside the Naravanhiti compound in Kathmandu and are effectively a palace guard.

Since the February coup, violence in Nepal has escalated and the RNA has improved its defensive tactics but it is not taking the battle to the Maoists. The rebels have interpreted the current phase of their "people's war" as the "period of strategic offensive". Mehta said this is the context in which hundreds of thousands of families in Nepal are trapped.

The threat from the Maoists to the RNA was also being highlighted by the press despite the media censorship. In an editorial last week, the mainstream daily *Karhimandu Post* said: "Of late, the Maoists have targeted the fam-

ilies of Royal Nepal Army personnel. They have extorted money, locked up the houses and seized the property of RNA personnel. As a result, the families of RNA personnel have been impelled to flee their villages overnight to safer places. Thousands of people have been displaced following the Maoist atrocities since the February 1 royal move.

"The violence against the families of RNA personnel has increased especially in the insurgency-hit districts, though a large number of displaced families are yet to report to the RNA human rights cell. The RNA says altogether 292 families of RNA personnel have fled their villages since February 1 this year."

NEPAL OPPOSITION LAUNCHES ANTI-KING AGITATION

Party punishes Manisha's father

Statesman News Service

KATHMANDU, May 22. — Manisha Koirala's father Mr Prakash Koirala hit the headlines in Nepal today as seven Opposition parties flagged off a new "peaceful" war against King Gyanendra. Mr Prakash Koirala, nephew of four-time former Premier Mr Girija Prasad Koirala, was suspended from the Nepali Congress party for a year for his statements supporting the king's takeover of power on 1 February.

Ironically, the party announced Mr Koirala's suspension the same day it along with six parliamentary parties started a peaceful mass movement

aimed at the revival of parliament and forcing the king to hand over power to parliamentary parties.

Besides the Nepali Congress, that has been led by the Koirala family for years, the other parties in the Opposition front are the Nepali Congress (Democratic) of Mr Sher Bahadur Deuba, Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist, People's Front Nepal, Nepal Workers and Peasants Party, Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Anandi Devi), and United Left Front.

The current mass agitation aims to repeat the success of 1990 when a pro-democracy movement led by the political parties resulted in the clipping of royal powers and limiting

the king to a constitutional monarch. Mr Koirala's father Bishweshwor Prasad Koirala was at the forefront of the pro-democracy movement. Though he was the elected Prime Minister, in a move similar to the situation in February, the then King Mahendra, the present king's father, sacked his government and imprisoned Bishweshwor Prasad Koirala.

However, the late leader's son, though a member of his father's party, lacked the charisma of his elders and was never an important leader. Also ironically, both he and his actress daughter have been publicly expressing their support for King Gyanendra at a time the Nepali Congress has been agitat-

ing against the monarch.

Today's peaceful protest in Kathmandu, though watched by a large contingency of armed police personnel, was not cut short by the authorities. For the first time since the royal coup, an Opposition rally took place without any of the leaders being arrested.

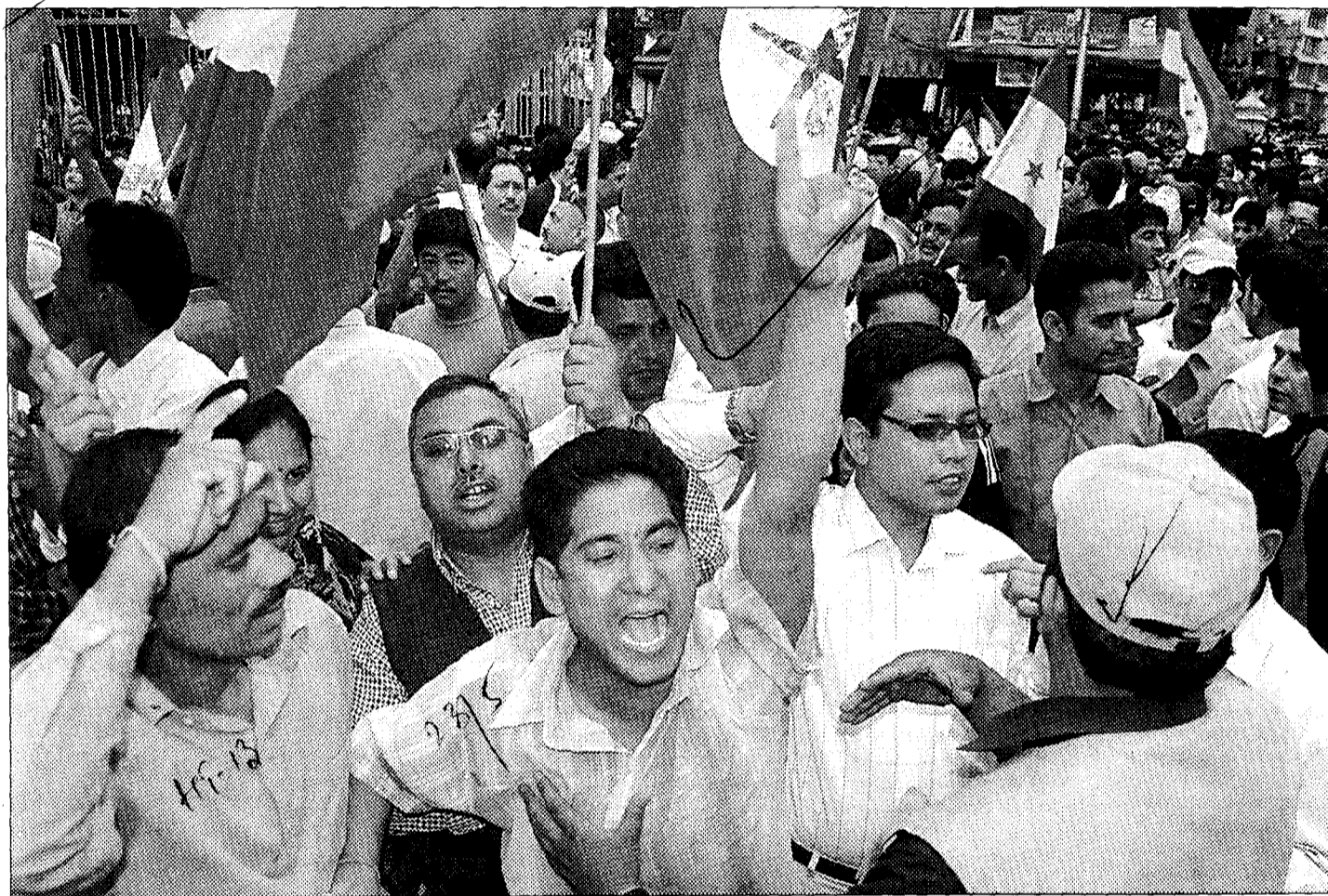
This is being regarded as due to the intense international pressure on the king to allow the political parties to function and to seek a rapprochement with them.

Nearly 2,000 people waving party flags gathered in the narrow market place, chanting slogans for the restoration of parliament and democracy.

Another report
on page 5

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THE STATESMAN



Activists of Nepal's major political parties demonstrate against King Gyanendra in Kathmandu on Sunday.

Nepal parties rally for democracy

KESHAV Pradhan
Kathmandu, May 22

NEPAL ON Sunday witnessed its biggest pro-democracy rally since the February 1 royal coup as hundreds of activists of seven mainstream parties took to the streets to press for the return of state powers to the people by King Gyanendra.

The demonstration marked the beginning of the parties' joint agitation for an end to the king's direct rule. Keeping in mind their pledge for a non-violent stir, democracy supporters confined their march to the old

city where political programmes are not banned. A huge number of police and army personnel ringed the areas all through the day.

Those who took part in the rally belonged to the Nepali Congress (NC), the Nepali Congress (Democratic), the Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist (UML), the Nepal Sadbhavana Party (Anandidevi), the United Left Front, the Jan Morcha and the Nepal Mazdoor Kisan Party (the last two are radical Left parties).

As the rally snaked through narrow lanes dotted with an-

cient temples and shops, the demonstrators shouted, "Down with autocratic rule" "Restore democracy and human rights," and "King, return power to people." Some of the demonstrators turned hysteric and chanted anti-king slogans as people cheered them on.

Impressed by the heavy turnout, a UML member of the deposed Deuba government said: "This shows how strongly the Nepalese people oppose the February 1 takeover." He claimed that similar demonstrations were also held in other major towns. Leading a large group of

vociferous demonstrators, Manhari Shrestha, a leader of the NC-run Nepal Students' Union, added: "We will defeat the enemies of democracy soon."

NC expels founder's son: The NC on Sunday expelled for a year central committee member and ex-MP Prakash Koirala, father of Bollywood star Manisha, for supporting the February 1 coup. Prakash is the eldest son of the late BP Koirala, Nepal's first elected Prime Minister and a founder of the NC. Lately, the state-run media has been highlighting Prakash's support for the king.

23 MAY 2002 THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

23 MAY 2005

THE STATESMAN

Maoists deny 'tape propaganda'

**Sudeshna Sarkar
in Kathmandu**

May 22. — Within a day of Nepal's army making public an audio tape said to be containing a statement by Nepal's top Maoist leader Prachanda, the underground guerrilla group issued a statement, denying the implications and calling it "witless propaganda".

In an extraordinary press briefing on Friday, presided by the Royal Nepalese Army's director general of military operations, the army had made public an

audio tape that they identified as containing a statement by Prachanda aka ²⁰¹⁵ *r*usipa Kamal Dahal, the supreme commander of the Maoist insurgents. The speaker in the tape claimed that the Indian government had asked him to come to India for a dialogue, but he had declined, asking Delhi to send representatives to his party's base in Nepal.

He also said that India had earlier planned to send back two senior Maoist leaders arrested in India — Mohan Vaidya aka Kiran and CP Gajurel

aka Gaurav — but had changed its mind after he fell out with his deputy, India-educated Dr Baburam Bhattarai.

Though the reference to the arrest of Gajurel and Gaurav seems to suggest that the tape was made over a year ago, the army implied that the tape could have been made around March-end or early April.

The incident created a furore with the Indian High Commission in Kathmandu issuing a counter-statement, calling the alle-

^{De Facto} gations baseless and expressing doubts about the authenticity of the tape. Today, Prachanda issued a statement admitting that it was his voice, but clarifying that it was an earlier tape and not relevant to the present times.

Calling it a conspiracy by the army, the underground leader said it was prompted by the support the party was garnering from democratic forces and showed a defeatist mentality on the part of the army which is waging an intense battle against the Maoists.

Nepal takes India, UK to task

Statesman News Service

KATHMANDU, May 21. — Nepal's government has rapped the Indian and British ambassadors on the knuckles for showing "excessive interest in Nepal's internal matters". The development came on the same day that Nepal's army expressed its displeasure with the Indian government by making public an audio tape purportedly of a Maoist leader's statement that New Delhi had invited him to hold talks.

Indian envoy Mr Shiv Shankar Mukherjee had sought a meeting with Nepal's foreign secretary Mr Madhu Raman Acharya yesterday to sound him on Kathmandu's position vis-a-vis India's effort to get permanent membership to the UNSC. The meeting, however, turned into the Nepalese side conveying its displeasure at India's "excessive interest" in Nepal's internal matters.



Mr Mukherjee: Under fire

Kathmandu was annoyed by the Indian foreign ministry's statement welcoming the united stand by Opposition parties on drawing a road map for Nepal's return to democracy. The Nepal government has alleged that New Delhi was supporting the parties

Media muzzled

KATHMANDU, May 21. — Despite the lifting of emergency, the Nepal government has enforced strict laws aimed at curbing media freedom, prohibiting any news that causes "hatred or disrespect" against King Gyanendra and his family members. The new Ordinance, passed by the Cabinet on Wednesday, also bans publishing items that "promote or help terrorism and destructive activities" and prohibits broadcasting news-based programmes by private FM radio stations. PTI

that have announced a united agitation against King Gyanendra.

Meanwhile, Nepal was reportedly unhappy with the EU because of the bloc's support for the unity among Opposition parties. It was because of this that the Nepal government made its displeasure known to British ambassador Mr Keith George Bloomfield since Britain currently holds the EU's chairmanship.

Musharraf backs King

Giving a tacit backing to King Gyanendra's assumption of absolute power, General Pervez Musharraf has said the monarch's action should be seen in the light of failure of the previous governments to contain the Maoist "menace", PTI adds from Islamabad. The Pakistani President said he has good relations with the King and declined to comment on how Nepal should handle the situation arising out of the Maoist insurgency.

Bar on "anti-royal" slogans

KATHMANDU: Nepal's Government on Saturday warned it would not tolerate anti-royal slogan-shouting or unruly behaviour as the kingdom's seven main political parties geared up for demonstrations on Sunday against King Gyanendra's seizure of power earlier this year.

"Nobody should resort to activities like shouting objectionable slogans, damaging private and public property, causing obstruction to the traffic," the Government said in a statement.

Under the laws, statements causing "hatred or disrespect against His Majesty and members of the royal family" are forbidden.

The King's February 1 decision to sack the elected government has drawn widespread condemnation both at home and abroad, with sporadic protests erupting in the kingdom before being quickly put down by security forces.

The Government warned it "would be compelled to take action ... and initiate security steps" if the parties disobeyed the order without specifying what action it would take. The king said he was forced to fire the Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba, and his government to end an increasingly bloody Maoist revolt in the impoverished kingdom. — AFP

22 MAY 2005

THE HINDU

Nepal claims Maoist-India link

Royal Army releases incriminating audiotape evidence

KESHAV Pradhan
Kathmandu, May 20

IN A development that could adversely affect Indo-Nepal ties, the Royal Nepalese Army on Friday made public an audiotape that, it claimed, contained disclosures by a top Maoist leader about his party's links with Indian authorities.

In a quick reaction, the Indian embassy said Nepalese authorities did not share the tape with their Indian counterparts before releasing it at a news conference. The embassy said, "The government of India is not aware of this tape or of its provenance and authenticity since the Nepalese authorities have not shared it with us. From what has been reported, it is quite evident

free politburo members Mohan Vaidya and C.P. Gajurel if we withdraw disciplinary action against Bhattarai". It also claimed that New Delhi had invited Maoist leaders for talks in India. "We told them you come to our base for dialogue... we will give you security," it said.

Observers described the RNA's action as a move to create a division among Maoists and defame India that has been pressing for restoration democracy in Nepal. Bhattarai, who earlier headed the Maoists' parallel government, was recently stripped of his responsibilities after he fell out with Dahal over ideological and organisational matters. Vaidya and Gajurel are currently imprisoned in Silliguri and Chennai respectively.

POINT-COUNTERPOINT

- Audiotape has Maoist chairman Pushpakamal Dahal's voice claiming that India had invited the rebel leaders for talks
- Indian embassy in Nepal dismisses the tape as a fake
- Political observers feel the RNA's move is to defame India because of its stand on the restoration of democracy in the kingdom

that the allegations against India are completely false, baseless and farfetched."

The embassy recalled how India had been assisting the RNA in various ways to deal with the challenges posed by the Maoist insurgency. Nepalese media personnel, who attended the conference, said the RNA identified the voice in the

tape as that of underground Maoist chairman Pushpakamal Dahal. However, it did not mention when and where Dahal's speech was recorded. The voice in the tape described how India put pressure on the Maoist leadership for reinstatement of Baburam Bhattarai in the party. It said, "India said it would

50 rebels, nine soldiers killed in Nepal clash

per 67 Nepal 40-16 1975

Maoist commander among the dead; militants attack television station

KATHMANDU: At least 50 Maoists and nine soldiers died in a battle in southeastern Nepal, state media reported on Wednesday, in the latest heavy outbreak of fighting since King Gyanendra seized power.

The battle, in which troops launched ground and air attacks, also marked the biggest reported loss of life for security forces since the King took control on February 1 in what he said was a move to end the increasingly deadly revolt.

Bodies of Maoist fighters littered the scene of the clash in and around Udayapur district, 280 km southeast of the capital, Kathmandu, state-run radio and newspapers said.

"At least 50 Maoists and nine security persons were killed in a clash in the Taple area of Udayapur district," the Nepali-language *Gorkhapatra* newspaper said, adding that more than 100 rebels and 17 soldiers were injured.

The clash lasted for several hours, according to state media, but the encounter which took place on Monday, was not reported until Wednesday due to the area's remote location and poor communications.

"Eight rebel bodies were found scattered at the battle site while over 40 bodies were recovered from the Gohari area adjoining the site," said state-run Radio Nepal.

There was no official comment available from the Maoists, who have been fighting since 1996 to install a Communist republic, but a source close to the rebels said only six guerrillas were killed in the fighting, including their eastern area commander.

Meanwhile, six Maoists were shot dead and a student injured in Chitwan district, 170 km southwest of Kathmandu, when rebels attacked security forces.

The conflict in the impoverished kingdom has cost over 11,000 lives since the Maoists took up arms nine years ago. In other violence, rebels attacked a state-run television station 250 km from Kathmandu, bombing a transmission tower and destroying equipment, but injuring no one. — AFP



SAVOURING FREEDOM: Bam Dev Gautam, former Deputy Prime Minister of Nepal and leader of the Communist Party-United Marxist, talks to the media after a court released him from detention in Kathmandu on Wednesday. — PHOTO: AFP

Deuba: Commission hears graft charges

GOPAL SHARMA

KATHMANDU, MAY 17

A POWERFUL anti-graft body in Nepal heard on Tuesday charges of corruption against former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba who was sacked from office by King Gyanendra more than three months ago.

The Royal Commission for Corruption Control, set up by the monarch, detained Deuba last month and charged him and a cabinet colleague of embezzling \$5.3 million state funds in a drinking water project.

Prosecutors have also accused Deuba and six former cabinet ministers of distributing \$54,000 from the prime minister's relief fund to party supporters during the festival of Dasain last October.

Deuba was not present when the charges were read, but an official said he would get a chance to defend himself. If found guilty, Deuba could be sentenced to up to 13 years in jail, legal experts said.

"He will get a full chance to reply and seek legal assistance," said Prem Raj Karki, Commission spokesman. —Reuters

18 MAY 2005

INDIAN EXPRESS

'Gyanendra has assured that democracy will return to Nepal'

Staff Reporter

PALAKKAD: The National Security Adviser, M. K. Narayanan, has said that India resumed military supplies to Nepal only after getting a "categorical assurance from King Gyanendra that democracy will be restored to Nepal."

In an exclusive interview to *The Hindu*, Mr. Narayanan, who was here on a private visit on Sunday, denied differences between the Foreign and Defence Ministries on the issue because the decision to resume military supplies was taken after the Union Government was convinced that democracy would be brought back in Nepal.

Once the Government took such a decision, there was no question of its Ministries opposing or supporting the move.

Asked if the decision to supply

arms to a country where democracy had been crushed would damage the reputation of India as a champion of democracy in the world, Mr. Narayanan said India was not acting as a big brother in the region and it was only going by the ground realities and the assurance given by the King of Nepal.

If Nepal went back on its promise, India could revise its stand on restoration of arms supply and other issues, he said.

On the talks on restoring peace to Nagaland and other North-Eastern States, Mr. Narayanan said some breakthrough was made on solving the Naga issue and the problems in the other States. But during the talks with the National Socialist Council of Nagaim (NSCN), the Government had made it clear that there was no question of the Centre agreeing to the forma-

tion of a bigger Nagaland unless all the neighbouring States were willing to give part of the areas now under them for the purpose.

He said that during the talks, the Centre had directed the NSCN to approach other States. There was no question of the Centre giving any direction to these States, he said.

He, however, said the Common Minimum Programme (CMP) of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Government at the Centre promised to set up a States Reorganisation Commission. The commission could look into specific regions and States on the reorganisation demand.

But New Delhi had made it clear that there was no question of accepting the demand of the NSCN for the integration of Naga-inhabited areas and the demand for sovereignty, Mr. Narayanan said.

(The NSCN chairman, Isak Swu, told the Naga Consultative Conference, which preceded the formal talks in New Delhi last week, that "unless the Nagas' aspiration for unification of all Naga-inhabited areas is fully realised, no negotiated settlement with the Government of India is possible.")

On the recent visit of the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, to Moscow to participate in the 60th anniversary of the victory of allied forces over Nazi Germany, Mr. Narayanan said the visit had further advanced Indo-Russian cooperation in the field of defence and energy.

He said the spirit of the historic Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation signed between the two countries in 1971 were carried forward despite the fall of the U.S.S.R.

12 injured, 18 arrested as students defy prohibitory order in Nepal

Demonstration demanding King Gyanendra to restore democracy

KATHMANDU: At least 18 Nepalese students were arrested and a dozen injured when police broke their demonstrations protesting the army shooting at a college and demanding King Gyanendra to restore democracy.

Police intervened when the All Nepal National Free Students Union (ANNFSU) took out anti-King demonstrations at Ratnapark in Kathmandu, the area declared prohibited by the Royal government.

As soon as some 500 students raised anti-King slogans marched in the restricted area, police indiscriminately baton-charged them, injuring at least a dozen students, five seriously, said ANNFSU President Khimal Bhattarai.

The ANNFSU central members Ananda K.C. and Gokul Gharti and women's wing chief Rame Ale were seriously injured in the police action, according to student sources.

The students were protesting against the army firing at a college in far west Nepal, seizure of ANNFSU Office by the security personnel, reactionary education policy of the Government and to oppose King Gyanendra's takeover of February 1.

All major student organisations expressed solidarity with the seven parties' demand for restoration of democracy and end to authoritarian rule, Mr. Bhattarai said. — PTI

Delegation absent

UNI reports from Islamabad: Absence of the Nepali Parliamentarians Delegation at a



A BLOW FOR DEMOCRACY: Riot police detain a student activist during a demonstration against King Gyanendra in Kathmandu on Sunday. — PHOTO: AP

South Asian meet here aimed at fostering regional cooperation robbed the sheen off the week-long conference.

The 10-member delegation to the South Asian Parliamentary Forum cancelled its participation after one of its constituents — United Peoples' Front-Nepal MP Navaraj Subedi — was arrested near Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport on Saturday.

The remaining delegation-members decided not to attend the conference, organised by the South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA), in order that

their protest at "the highhandedness" of the Government was highlighted at the international forum.

At the Inaugural Conference on Sunday, SAFMA-Nepal Chapter president Gopal Thapaliya read out a message from Delegation Leader Jhalanath Khanal, a Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxists-Leninists) MP and former Minister, urging that "the undemocratic and unconstitutional actions of the present ruling regime in Nepal" be exposed and pressure built upon King Gyanendra to restore Parliamentary Democ-

racy in the Hindu kingdom.

Described as "a major step" towards imparting an identity to South Asia, the conference has brought together nearly 100 MPs from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh to ponder over issues like Establishment of South Asian Parliament, South Asian Vision, Economic Cooperation, Cooperative Security, Conflict Resolution Mechanism, Human Rights Issues in the Region, Inter-State Water Issues, Energy-Related Matters and Evolution of South Asian Fraternity.

Nepal protests

Kathmandu, May 13 (PTI): Nepal's political parties protesting the royal takeover today announced a fresh agitation programme beginning Sunday to restore democracy in the Himalayan kingdom but rejected an offer from the Maoists for a joint alliance to challenge the king's rule.

"Our movement for restoration of complete democracy will be peaceful one and there is no possibility of having an alliance with the Maoists unless they denounce violent means," Communist Party of Nepal (UML) spokesperson Pradip Nepal said.

Maoists back Nepal parties

Kathmandu, May 12 (Reuters): Nepal's powerful Maoists will support the country's main political parties in their campaign to restore democracy after King Gyanendra seized power three months ago, a rebel statement said.

The monarch fired the government, suspended civil liberties and jailed politicians on February 1, saying the move was necessary to crush the Maoists who are fighting to topple the world's only Hindu ruler and install a single party communist republic.

On Sunday, seven Centrist and Leftist political parties who have often bickered in the past said they would launch a joint programme seeking restoration of democracy including the revival of parliament dissolved in 2002.

"It is a progressive step. Our party has decided to help the joint protest movement by the political groups," Maoist chief Prachanda, who uses only one name, said in a statement received by Reuters late yesterday.

The Maoist overture to the

politicians came as US assistant secretary of state for South Asia, Christina Rocca, ended a visit to Nepal yesterday.

She urged the king and the political parties to fight the Maoists jointly and said the revolt was a threat to regional stability.

Prachanda made a fresh appeal to the political parties to form an "extensive front" with his group to establish democracy in the impoverished nation perched in the central Himalayas between China and India.

There was no immediate comment from the political groups but they have turned

down such appeals in the past, asking the rebels to stop violence instead.

"Their hesitation to join us against the autocratic regime is due to their political weakness and limitations," said the rebel leader, who has not been seen in public since the revolt started in 1996.

In a move aimed at tracking down Maoist rebels, Nepal's royalist government asked Kathmandu residents today to provide their personal details to authorities.

Home (interior) ministry asked landlords of the hill-ringed Kathmandu valley, home to 1.5 million people, to provide details like their

name, contact address, telephone number, home address and the number of family members and tenants including their photographs by June 14 or face prosecution.

"This is required for maintaining security situation. Anyone who fails to provide the information will be punished according to law," a ministry official said, without giving details.

The rebels, who control large swathes of the rugged countryside, have carried out attacks on government troops and installations and have been periodically successful at paralysing much of the country by calling strikes.

Uniting politically against the King

Nepal's political parties have taken a big step that could mark a breakthrough in the fight for the restoration of democracy. The seven political parties that have arrived at an understanding for a "common agreement and commitment" include the three biggest in the country, namely, the two factions of the Nepali Congress, one led by Girija Prasad Koirala and the other by Sher Bahadur Deuba, and the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist). Their primary demand is the reinstatement of the Parliament dissolved in 2002. That single act of the King set in motion a chain of events that culminated in the February 1 reactionary coup. This saw him seize executive power, shelve the hard-won 1990 Constitution that prescribes no more than a symbolic role for him, and shut out elected politicians. It is a well-established axiom in modern Nepali politics that the King can only rule by dividing; when the various mass-based political parties unite on the question of democracy, an absolute monarchy becomes untenable. In 2004, a five party-alliance against the King, with assistance from the Maoists, was able to paralyse the functioning of the puppet royalist government with a six-month-long agitation. Just when the alliance seemed poised for success, it unravelled because the parties were unsure about how to proceed.

Sensibly, the new seven-party alliance has worked out a road map that should ensure a single-minded focus on the restoration of parliamentary democracy and related freedoms. Last time, the King made the offer of a multi-party government to end the agitation and the leaders squabbled over the prime ministership. Mr. Deuba eventually formed the government only to see it dismissed within a year. The new alliance aims to form a multi-party government and hold elections after restoring the dissolved Parliament. It has also expressed willingness to explore the possibility of a Constituent Assembly election, a key Maoist demand. Is this the beginning of a broad-based political realisation that absolute monarchy represents a greater threat to democracy than the Maoists? King Gyanendra has shown himself to be viciously autocratic as well as thoroughly undependable. He has gone back on various promises, particularly the one that he would restore the Constitution. Nepal seems headed for the bad old days of monarchical rule through the agency of a 'panchayati raj' system; Mr. Deuba and other key political leaders continue to be under arrest; and the movement of pro-democracy activists remains severely restricted. It is condemnable that under the circumstances, the United Progressive Alliance Government has decided to resume arms supplies to the Royal Nepali Army. It has done this against well-considered and principled advice from the Foreign Office. New Delhi must correct this damaging policy urgently and come out firmly on the side of the forces of democracy in the Himalayan kingdom.

12 MAY 2005

THE HINDU

Nepal's rebels storm two army camps

10-15 1215

King's own deadline to restore democracy expires today

KATHMANDU: Hundreds of Maoist rebels stormed two army bases in Nepal, sparking fierce fighting that killed at least 37 guerrillas, the army said on Tuesday, as a top U.S. envoy visited the nation to press King Gyanendra to restore democracy.

One soldier and three policemen were also killed, a senior army official said, making the fighting among the deadliest reported since Gyanendra seized power February 1 and imposed a state of emergency in what he said was a bid to end the bloody insurgency.

News of the clashes came on the first full day of a trip by U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Christina Rocca, the most senior American official to visit Kathmandu since Gyanendra sacked the government and suspended civil liberties.

Rocca holds talks

Ms. Rocca, who arrived late on Monday in the kingdom, held talks with Nepal's Foreign Minister Ramesh Nath Pandey. She had no comment on the meeting but Mr. Pandey told reporters her "visit has taken the U.S.-Nepal friendship to a new level."

Earlier, however, while opening a new U.S. library, Ms. Rocca stressed the need for access to information, calling it "critical, particularly in times of uncer-

tainty, of strife, of a possible threat to democratic institutions."

After sacking the government, King Gyanendra had told U.S. Ambassador to Nepal James Moriarty that he would "start the democratic process and restore fundamental rights" within 100 days of his power grab.

The 100 days end on Wednesday, which is when Ms. Rocca is set to leave.

Ms. Rocca's trip follows a statement by Mr. Moriarty that Washington would decide by the end of May on military aid to Nepal's army which is battling to crush the rebels who are fighting to set up a communist republic.

Washington has called for restoration of democracy and has been mulling a suspension of arms shipments.

In the latest fighting, Nepalese Major Shushil Dahal said the rebels "attacked two army battalions but our boys retaliated and they failed to overrun the army camps."

A senior army official, who did not wish to be named, said "so far we have recovered the bodies of 37 rebels and the search for more dead is continuing."

There was no comment from the Maoists on the army statements. The rebels, usually issue statements only after a few days of the incident. — AFP



DETERMINED RESISTANCE: Students belonging to the All Nepal National Free Students' Union grapple with police who attempt to evict them from their office in Kathmandu on Tuesday. The students are affiliated to Nepal Communist Party. — PHOTO: REUTERS

12 MAY 2015

THE HINDU

100 days ✓ after the 17/5 royal coup in Nepal 4/11-13

KESHAV Pradhan
Kathmandu, May 11

ON WEDNESDAY, the 100th day since the royal coup on February 1, Nepal's King Gyanendra met the US assistant secretary of state for South Asian affairs, Christina Rocca, in his capital. Incidentally, he had earlier asked Washington for as many days to initiate steps toward restoration of democracy in the kingdom.

After her talks with the monarch, Rocca described the April 29 withdrawal of emergency rule as a "good first step."

But she made it clear that Washington would not immediately resume military assistance to Nepal. She said: "It's under review. We are concerned about the democratic situation, civil liberties and release of prisoners."

Asked if the coordinated approach of India, Britain and the US on Nepal is still relevant after New Delhi's decision to resume military aid to Kathmandu, Rocca quipped: "Each country has its own perspective."

Rocca stressed the need for reconciliation between the palace and constitutional parties. She remarked: "They must pull together to face the Maoist threat." She insisted that the Maoist crisis be solved "politically." She met a number of top mainline politicians. Nepali Congress (Democratic) acting chief Gopalman Shrestha, who met Rocca, remarked: "We will talk to the king if he restores civil liberties and frees all political prisoners, including Sher Bahadur Deuba."

Maoist chief Pushpakamal Dahal made a fresh offer to help seven mainline parties in their fight against the king's direct rule. He appreciated their demand for a constituent assembly, which was hitherto raised by mainly his party.

The mood among monarchists was one of triumph and jubilation. They celebrated the day with fanfare. Rallies, prayers, sports and cultural programmes were held across Nepal.

State-run media described the softening of the international community as a "diplomatic triumph" achieved by the king during his recent visits to Indonesia and China.

MAOIST OFFENSIVE LEAVES 36 DEAD

Fresh violence erupts in Nepal

Statesman News Service

Gyanendra's 100 days of despotic rule

KATHMANDU, May 10. — At least 36 people, including four security-men, were killed when Maoists attacked security forces in eastern Siraha district near the Indian border, army officers said today. The attacks, which began yesterday and continued till this morning, were the first major offensive by the insurgents since emergency was lifted in Nepal last month.

The attacks came even as the US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs, Ms Christina Rocca, conveyed Washington's concern at the "brutal" Maoist insurgency and a senior official from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights set up office in Kathmandu to monitor human rights violations.

The rebels tried to storm a unified command base — comprising army, armed police and civil police — at Bandipur, considering it a soft target. As a diversion, they also simultaneously attacked two more unified command bases at Choharwa and Bhiman as well as the police post at Mirchaiya.

Hundreds of rebels blocked a highway connecting eastern Nepal with the west to prevent troop reinforcements and attacked around 10 a.m. yesterday, continuing the offensive till about 5 a.m. today. By that time, the army had rushed in reinforcements and night vision helicopters and started a counter attack, pursuing the fleeing guer-

KATHMANDU, May 10. — One hundred days after seizing absolute power, King Gyanendra is showing few signs he is preparing to restore democratic rule, and critics fear the Himalayan nation is sliding toward dictatorship.

The king insists his 1 February takeover was temporary, to help quell the festering communist rebellion, and that multi-party democracy would eventually be restored.

On 30 April, Gyanendra lifted a state of emergency he had imposed, but critics say he is making only token gestures toward democracy to ease international pressure and placate political parties at home.

"There are indications that the king is moving toward dictatorship," said former Prime Minister Mr Girija Prasad Koirala.

While security forces lost four men — a soldier and three policemen, the outlaws lost 26 of their cadre in Bandipur, including three women, the army headquarters said. Five more rebels were killed in Mirchaiya and one in Choharwa.

Meanwhile, the US Secretary who arrived in Kathmandu on a three-day visit today said: "The Maoists have made clear their intention to impose a one-party 'people's republic', collectivise agriculture, 'reeducate' so-called class enemies, and export



The Royal Nepalese Army's successes in recent clashes with anti-monarchy insurgents in the countryside have strengthened the monarch's grip on power. Since Gyanendra seized power, he has appointed a council of ministers to govern the country. Curbs on basic rights, including press censorship, remain in force and more than 200 protesters remain in jail. — AP

their revolution to neighbouring states." Ms Rocca added: "We feel that such a regime would almost certainly threaten stability in the region. Much if not all of the progress that the USA and others have helped Nepal accomplish in terms of both development and democratisation would be negated."

She, however, said the events of 1 February were a "serious setback" to Washington's desire to see Nepal as a "peaceful, prosperous and democratic country where civil and human rights are protected".

11 MAY 2005

THE STATESMAN

Maoists kill King's aide

KESHAV Pradhan
Kathmandu, May 9

EVEN AS King Gyanendra remained engaged in diplomatic activities, Maoists on Monday gunned down one of his representatives assigned to monitor the functioning of the government as well as political parties.

Coordinator of Chitwan district monitoring committee Bhagwan Das Shrestha was shot dead at Narayanghat, 160 km southeast of here. No one has so far claimed responsibility for the killing. In a significant development, the king had a 30-minute meeting on Monday with Indian ambassador to Nepal Shiv Shankar Mukherjee, who returned from New Delhi on Saturday. Diplomatic sources described this as indication of a possible rapprochement between New Delhi and Kathmandu.

On April 29, the monarch had publicly praised Prime Minister Manmohan Singh for his "statesmanship." India reciprocated it by welcoming his decision to withdraw the emergency even though he was yet to fully lift curbs on civil liberties.

Rocca arrives

As pressure mounted on King Gyanendra for restoration of full democracy, US assistant secretary of state for South Asia Christina Rocca on Monday began a 3-day visit to the Kingdom, the first by a top American official since his February 1 power grab.

Rocca's visit comes two days ahead of the expiry of Washington's 100-day deadline to the king to restore democracy and human rights. Rocca is also expected to meet King Gyanendra and other senior Nepalese officials, including vice-chairmen of council of ministers Kirtinidhi Bista and Tulasi Giri, foreign minister Ramesh Nath Pandey.

With Nepal under the international spotlight, issues such as the Himalayan Kingdom's fight against Maoist insurgency, peace and return to democracy are expected to figure high in her deliberations with the officials.



AFP

Christina Rocca addresses representatives of the media in Kathmandu on Monday.

She will also meet top political leaders and journalists, most of them critics of the King, to hear their views.

Officials here believe that her visit is significant and would help boost bilateral cooperation between Washington and Kathmandu.

Rebels' threat

Reports said the Maoist-run All-Nepal Trade Union Federation (Revolutionary) had threatened to close down Soaltee and Fishtail- two hotels run by members of the royal family in Kathmandu and Pokhara, respectively, for an indefinite period from May 15.

The All-Nepal National Students' Union (Revolutionary) asked students across the country to change the names of all educational institutions named after members of the royal family from May 24. Communist rebels accused two luxury hotels in Nepal of exploiting their employees.

The Soaltee Hotel in Kathmandu and Fishtail Lodge in the resort town of Pokhara have been ordered to cease operations by May 15, the rebels said in a statement.

10 MAY 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Democracy thrust

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, May 7: The democratic forces in Nepal appear to be making the first tentative moves to regain their lost ground from the king as well as the Maoist rebels.

In a joint statement issued by representatives of six major political parties in Delhi today, a categorical appeal has been made to the democratic forces in Nepal to join the struggle against King Gyanendra's autocratic rule and force the monarch to take serious steps to restore democracy.

But at the same time, the party leaders have also criticised the Maoists for continuing to indulge in "violent activities" against innocent civilians and unarmed people of Nepal. "We find such attacks regrettable, disturbing and shocking," the leaders said in their statement.

However, they did not miss the opportunity to make an appeal to the Maoists to stop their violent activities and join in creating a "reliable and conducive" atmosphere in which democratic forces can unite and launch their struggle against the king and for restoration of democracy.

The joint statement gathers special significance as it is part of a move whereby democratic forces are trying to come together setting aside their differences to isolate the king.

A draft plan of action and list of demands is already doing the rounds among the major political party leaders in Nepal.

Once it is agreed upon, the political parties may place it before Gyanendra and demand that he take steps to reinstate Parliament and set up a national government, which can then start the process to find a negotiated settlement

with the Maoists.

The fact that the democratic forces are making serious efforts to come together has also encouraged sections in the Indian establishment which are against Delhi's policy of trying to strengthen the king's hands to deal with the situation in Nepal in face of the threat from Maoist rebels.

Ban in air, take road

Nepali Times publisher and journalist Kanak Mani Dixit was stopped from boarding a Colombo-bound plane at Kathmandu on Friday.

But he hopped into his Nissan and headed for the Indian border by road. Today, he took a flight to Colombo from Delhi. Dixit was on his way to a conference in the Lankan capital.

"This incident is proof that the lifting of emergency is only cosmetic as the basic right to move around is being restricted," Dixit said.

08 MAY 2005

THE TELEGRAPH

Nepal's political parties draw up a common min agenda

Kathmandu: Nepal's political parties, which are fighting to restore full democracy in the kingdom, have drawn up a common minimum agenda which includes revival of the parliament and resolving the Maoist problem through dialogue.

"We have agreed on a common agenda to move ahead with our struggle for restoration of democracy. The draft agenda, which also includes revival of the house, will be published soon after the seven parties meet and formally endorse it," said Pradip Nepal, spokesman of the

Nepal Communist Party-UML.

The house of representative has been absent since May 2002, when former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba recommended to dissolve it after he had serious differences with the Nepali Congress (NC) president Girija Prasad Koirala, that led to a split in the largest democratic party. Interestingly, the Nepali Congress (Democratic), the split-away party headed by Deuba, on Thursday endorsed the idea of backing the demand for a revival of the house of representatives, the

concept Koirala has been advocating since the beginning. "It is impossible to activate the 1990 constitution in the absence of parliament," the party said in its statement.

The seven political parties including NC, NC (Democratic), CPN-UML, Nepal Sadbhavana Party (A), United Left Front, People's Front Nepal and Nepal Workers and Peasants Party, which held a series of meetings, endorsed the idea of reviving the parliament to resolve the present crisis, including the Maoist problem, Pradip Nepal said. PTI



Mourners pay their last respects to Nepalese Hindu priest Narayan Prasad Pokharel in Kathmandu on Friday

Hindu priest killed by suspected Maoists

Kathmandu: Suspected Maoist rebels on Friday shot dead a top Hindu priest and injured one of his aides in western Nepal while he was delivering a religious lecture.

Narayan Prasad Pokharel, chairman of the World Hindu Federation — Nepal, was gunned down around 0630 hrs at his residence in Ram Nagar near Butwal, 300 kms southwest of Kathmandu, while he was giving

a religious sermon, sources in the organisation said. One of his associates was also wounded in the attack, Prem Lashkary, secretary of the WHF International committee said. His body will be airlifted to Kathmandu for last rites, WHF sources stated. The organisation issued a statement condemning the killing of the top Hindu priest, saying it was a "deplorable act". It also demanded an investigation into the incident. PTI

Deuba charged with corruption

PTI & AP

Rocca to visit Nepal

KATHMANDU, May 5. — Nepal's powerful anti-corruption body today charged former Prime Minister Mr Sher Bahadur Deuba with misappropriation of government funds while in office and demanded from him a bail amount of Nepali Rs 38.68 lakh (Rs 25 lakh), which he refused to pay.

In another development, Nepal's government freed a top student leader and a former minister following orders from the Supreme Court today, but detained them minutes after they left the police station.

Meanwhile, a spokesman of the Royal Commission for Corruption Control (RCCC) said: "The commission has found out that Mr Deuba had misappropriated the PM's Relief Fund while in office,"

KATHMANDU, May 5. — US assistant secretary of state for South Asian affairs Ms Christina Rocca is arriving here early next week on a two-day visit, the US embassy spokesman said. Ms Rocca will be meeting representatives of the new government headed by King Gyanendra, as well as leaders of Nepal's political parties. The announcement of the visit comes after the US State Department said that while Washington welcomed the lifting of the state of emergency in Nepal, "more needs to be done". — SNS

The commission also asked for a bail amount of NRs 38.68 lakh from him, which is equivalent to the money distributed from the Prime Minister's fund to different people at the recommendation of the Cabinet last year. However, Mr Deuba refused to pay the sum questioning the constitutionality of the commission.

The former Prime Minister was again taken back to the police custody at the Police Training Centre in the capital after he refused to pay the bail amount.

Meanwhile, student leader

Mr Gagan Thapa, who was arrested last month after eluding police for weeks, walked out of the police station here before police seized him and drove away.

"I will protest this government action by fasting," Mr Thapa told reporters as police hustled him into a car.

The Supreme Court ruled that Mr Thapa and former minister Mr Jaya Prakash Guptawere being held without reason. Mr Gupta was also re-arrested immediately after being freed today.

06 MAY 2005

THE STATESMAN

King's men extend Deuba's detention

Associated Press

KATHMANDU, May 4. — Nepalese officials today extended the detention of former Prime Minister Mr Sher Bahadur Deuba for alleged financial irregularities despite the end of a state of emergency in the country.

The Royal Commission, for



Mr Sher Bahadur Deuba

Corruption Control posted a notice saying Mr Deuba will be held for another week for questioning on two separate cases including allegations that his administration distributed state money to party workers. It did not give further details.

Mr Deuba's government was sacked in February by King Gyanendra, who accused it of graft

and failing to crush a communist insurgency.

King Gyanendra had set up the commission to probe corruption by officials and politicians in the past. Although the emergency rule was lifted over the weekend, the king announced the commission would continue to function.

Mr Deuba is being held at a police academy here.

05 MAY 2005

1975

Nepal Maoists split over India strategy

KESHAV Pradhan
Kathmandu, May 4

NEPAL'S UNDERGROUND Maoist leadership has made public differences within the party over issues ranging from ideology to India-centric military tactics to the arrest of its leaders in various Indian states. This is the first such public admission by the rebels since they started a "people's war" to turn the impoverished kingdom into a republic in 1996.

Documents released by Maoist chairman Pushpakamal Dahal and his deputy, Baburam Bhattarai, confirm that the rift between them first arose over the formulation of "strategic counter-aggression against enemies both within and outside Nepal." Dahal also heads the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

To carry out counter-aggression, Dahal favours "centralisation of the leadership" of the party, the PLA and the United People's Revolutionary Council (UPRC). The UPRC is the rebels' parallel government set up under Bhattarai's leadership in 2001. Dahal heads both the party and the PLA.

But Bhattarai is against concentration of power in the hands of one individual. He wants people's increased vigil and control over the party, the PLA and the UPRC to make way for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Pro-Left analysts say the Maoists want to prepare for counter-aggression to resist "direct intervention by India." To support this argument, they refer to the digging of tunnels in many districts by Maoist fighters last autumn and Dahal's ear-

LEFT DIVIDE IN NEPAL - I



lier prediction that his party's final battle will be against the Indian army. The rebels regard India as an expansionist power.

The documents give clear hints about the party already taking disciplinary action against Bhattarai and stripping him of his responsibilities as a politburo member and as the head of the UPRC and the party's central division. An explanatory note issued by the party accuses Bhattarai of moving towards helping "imperialists, expansionists and feudal military fascists."

The arrest of about a dozen senior leaders in India has also added to the growing misunderstanding between the two sides.

Reports say Dahal had a narrow escape when two politburo members, Matrika Yadav and Suresh Ale, were arrested in New Delhi in February 2004.

Recently, the party has initiated a probe into the arrest of its leaders in Siliguri, Patna and New Delhi.

Bhattarai has asked the leadership not to link the arrests to internal ideological and organisational differences.

To be continued

05 MAY 2005 THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Nepal scribes press for freedom

Press Trust of India

Pak crackdown

KATHMANDU, May 3. — In a massive show of strength, over 1,500 journalists from across Nepal today marched through the streets of the capital, demanding immediate lifting of Press censorship, release of their detained colleagues and restoration of democracy and civil liberties.

Organised by the Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ) to mark its Golden Jubilee and the World Press Freedom Day, the

ISLAMABAD, May 3. — At least 40 Pakistani journalists were detained and several injured as police lathicharged two rallies organised by scribes demanding wageboard salaries in the capital and Lahore today, the World Press Freedom Day. The National Assembly has approved a resolution ordering an inquiry into the incident. — PTI

marchers carrying placards and banners shouted slogans like "End press censorship", "Restore democratic rights", "Guarantee

journalists' rights" and "Release all detained journalists".

They had a brief scuffle with police before converging at the Royal Nepal Academy hall here.

The FNJ said at least six journalists remained under detention and more than 2,000 have lost their jobs since the 1 February royal takeover.

Former Prime Minister and Nepali Congress president Mr Girija Prasad Koirala, inaugurating the 21st National Convention of the FNJ, told the gathering: "We can't imagine democracy without a free press."

Gyanendra plays game with Nepal

KESHAV Pradhan
Kathmandu, May 2

KING GYANENDRA played cat-and-mouse with Nepal on Sunday and Monday. First, he freed two politicians but extended the detention of 175 others. Then, he restored cellphone services, snapped in Kathmandu valley since the royal coup, but denied this facility to hundreds of journalists, human rights activists, politicians and professionals.

The king ordered the release of mainline, CPN-UML general secretary, Madhav Kumar Nepal and political bureau member Amrit Vohra, a couple of hours before their 90-day detention warrants expired. But he prolonged the imprisonment of the ailing Nepali Congress leader and ex-deputy Prime Minister, Ram Chandra Poudyal, by another six



REUTERS
Political activists from Nepal's Communist Party stage a torch rally in Kathmandu on Monday.

months. He also extended by three months the detention of NC central committee member Narhari Acharya and scores of leaders and activists from various parties. Like Poudyal, Acharya also strongly supports the demand for a constituent assembly. These leaders are in-

carcerated in various detention centres since February 1. The exact number of political prisoners is not yet known.

Nepal Telecommunications Ltd revived mobile phone services, whose suspension was causing it a daily loss of Rs 8 million.

Kathmandu, May 2

A DAY after he was freed from 90-day house arrest, Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) general secretary, Madhav Kumar Nepal, raised the demand for a constituent assembly that has always been a major issue of underground Maoists.

Nepal said, "We need to stop this kind of frequent violation of democracy by the king. We can do this only through a joint agitation." He alleged, "The king took advantage of our party's goodwill (when it agreed to join the

Constituent assembly demanded

now deposed Deuba government). He said the next round of struggle would focus on four basic issues: full democracy, formation of a constituent assembly, drafting a new constitution and reinstatement of Parliament that was dissolved in 2002.

He added, "We must make sure that the king returns all powers to the people. We will discuss our proposals with other parties." He ruled out the possibility of having talks with the king. Nepal thanked the international community for its support to the cause of democracy in the kingdom.

03 MAY 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Royal failure

WHILE WE welcome King Gyanendra's decision to lift the emergency in Nepal, we are also aware that this does not necessarily signify a change of the royal heart. For one thing, the existing Constitution, which the king has not yet dethroned, requires an emergency to be ratified by Parliament after a period of three months. Since the king is in no position to recall Parliament, nor overthrow the Constitution, his hand was in a sense forced by circumstances. But though the king has ostensibly acted in response to domestic and international pressure calling for the speedy restoration of democracy, few around the world have accepted his view that the emergency was an essential, if bitter, medicine to check the deteriorating law and order situation in the country. Most observers believe that suspending civil rights and cracking down on the mainstream political forces was not the best

way to fight the Maoist rebellion.

The emergency's imposition and its relatively swift withdrawal have made little difference to the fight against the Maoists. If anything, the reported split in the rebel ranks means more trouble for the king as the breakaway factions could join forces with political parties in a new bid to weaken the monarchy. The royal proclamation ending the emergency is disturbingly silent on the extraordinary powers still retained by the king and on the press censorship imposed after the royal takeover.

What this indicates is that King Gyanendra is not yet clear in his own mind as to the best way of dealing with the situation in his kingdom. Countries like India, which have a vital role to play in assisting Nepal, need to hedge their bets and continue to pressure the king to fully restore democracy and civil rights as a first stage in the process.

03 MAY 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

দ্বিধাশ্রিত পশ্চাদপসরণ

৩০/৪/৫৬

নেপালে জরুরি অবস্থা প্রত্যাহত হইয়াছে। এবং প্রত্যাহত হয় নাই। তিন মাস আগে সরকারকে বরখাস্ত করিয়া, পার্লামেন্ট ভাঙিয়া দিয়া রাজা জ্ঞানেন্দ্র দেশময় যে জরুরি অবস্থা জারি করেন, খাতায় কলমে তাহা প্রত্যাহত হইয়াছে বটে, তবে সেই সূত্রে রাজা নির্বাচিত সরকারের যে-সকল ক্ষমতা নিজের হাতে তুলিয়া লইয়াছিলেন, সে-সব আগের মতোই তাঁহার কুক্ষিগত। রাজনৈতিক বন্দিদের মুক্তি দেওয়া হয় নাই। কমিউনিস্ট পার্টির (সংযুক্ত মার্ক্সবাদী-লেনিনবাদী) প্রধান মাধব নেপাল ছাড়া আর কোনও দলের কোনও নেতাকে ছাড়া হয় নাই। মিছিল-বিক্ষোভে আগের মতোই নিষেধাজ্ঞা বহাল। নাগরিক অধিকার এখনও রদ হইয়া আছে। সংবাদপত্রের স্বাধীনতা ফিরাইয়া দেওয়া হয় নাই। স্বভাবতই প্রশ্ন উঠিয়াছে, তাহা হইলে জরুরি অবস্থা প্রত্যাহারের অর্থ কী হইল? সব নিষেধাজ্ঞাই যদি বহাল রহিল, সব রাজনৈতিক নেতা ও কর্মীই কারান্তরিন এবং সব রকম স্বাধীনতাই খর্ব, তবে ঘটা করিয়া রাজবাড়ি হইতে এই ঘোষণার কী দরকার ছিল? দরকার ছিল, কারণ নেপালের সংবিধান অনুযায়ী তিন মাসের বেশি জরুরি অবস্থা জারি রাখা যায় না, সেই তিন মাসের মেয়াদ ফুরাইয়া আসিয়াছিল। তা ছাড়া বিশ্বকে দেখানো দরকার ছিল যে রাজা জ্ঞানেন্দ্র গণতন্ত্র ফিরাইতে আগ্রহী।

হয়তো রাজার অভিপ্রায় অংশত সফলও হইয়াছে। ভারতীয় বিদেশ মন্ত্রক রাজকীয় ঘোষণাটির অসম্পূর্ণতা ও সীমাবদ্ধতার কথা মানিয়া লইয়াও যে ভাবে ইহাকে গণতন্ত্রের প্রত্যাবর্তনের পথে 'প্রথম পদক্ষেপ' রূপে বর্ণনা করিয়াছে, তাহাতে সে রকমই মনে হয়। বলা হইতেছে, ভারতের চাপের ফলে নেপালরাজের এই দ্বিধাশ্রিত পশ্চাদপসরণ। কিন্তু রাজা যদি সেই চাপের কাছেই নতিস্বীকার করিতেন, তবে তাহার পরেও শেরবাহাদুর দেউবা সহ শীর্ষস্থানীয় নেপালি নেতাদের গ্রেফতার করা হইত না। লক্ষণীয়, জরুরি অবস্থায় নেপাল যখন কার্যত একঘরে হইয়া পড়ে, তখন চিনা নেতৃত্ব স্বতঃপ্রণোদিত হইয়া নেপালরাজকে শংসাপত্র দেন, দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্ক নিবিড়তর করিবার প্রয়াস পান, লাসা-কাঠমান্ডু সড়ক যোগাযোগ স্থাপিত হয়। এ সবই নেপালরাজকে ভারতের উদ্বেগ উপেক্ষা করিতে সাহসী করিয়া থাকিবে। লোকদেখানো এই জরুরি অবস্থা প্রত্যাহারের ঘোষণাতেও ভারতকে কূটনৈতিক চালে রক্ষণাঙ্ক করিয়া দেওয়ার কৌশল থাকা সম্ভব।

নেপালে গণতন্ত্র শৈশবে। সাংবিধানিক রাজতন্ত্রের সমান্তরালে ও তাহার পরিপূরক হিসাবেই এখানে পরিষদীয় গণতন্ত্রের পরীক্ষা চলিয়াছে। পরীক্ষামূলক স্তরে নানা উত্থানপতন, অন্তর্ঘাত অস্বাভাবিক নয়। রাজতন্ত্র যেমন তাহার একচ্ছত্র ক্ষমতা পুনরুদ্ধার করিতে চাহিতে পারে, গণতান্ত্রিক দায়বদ্ধতা ও মূল্যবোধে অক্ষমতা রাদনীতিকরাও তেমনই দুর্নীতি, স্বজনপোষণের মতো অপকর্মে বিপ্লু হইয়া গণতন্ত্রকেই প্রশ্নকণ্টকিত করিয়া তুলিতে পারেন, কায়েমি স্বার্থবাদীরা যাহার সুযোগ লইতে উৎসুক। ভারত নেপালের গণতন্ত্রের আকাঙ্ক্ষা ও আন্দোলনে উৎসাহী সহযোগী ছিল, ইহার অন্তর্ঘাতে উদ্বিগ্ন হওয়া তাই স্বাভাবিক। মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র ও ব্রিটেনের মতো গুরুত্বপূর্ণ পাশ্চাত্য রাষ্ট্রগুলিও নেপালরাজকে প্রবল চাপ দিতেছে। দক্ষিণ এশিয়ারই অন্য রাষ্ট্র পাকিস্তানে একটি অ-নির্বাচিত ফৌজি জেনারেলের ক্ষমতাদখল এবং অনন্তকাল গণতন্ত্রের প্রত্যাবর্তন স্থগিত করার বিষয়টি মুক্ত দুনিয়ার কাছে আদৌ উৎকণ্ঠার না হইলেও নেপালে তিন মাসের জরুরি অবস্থাই তাহাদের অর্থনৈতিক নিষেধাজ্ঞা জারির পথে লইয়া যায়। জরুরি অবস্থা প্রত্যাহারের ঘোষণার পিছনে মার্কিন চাপের বিষয়টিও বাস্তব। তবে মার্কিন বা ব্রিটিশ স্বার্থের তুলনায় নেপালে ভারতের স্বার্থ অনেক বেশি। যে মাওবাদী হিংসা নেপালরাজকে জরুরি অবস্থার দিকে ঠেলিয়া দেয়, ভারতকেও তাহার মোকাবিলা করিতে হইতেছে। নয়াদিল্লিকে তাই সতর্কতার সঙ্গে পা ফেলিতে হইবে। গণতন্ত্রের পুনরুদ্ধারের জন্য রাজার উপর চাপ রাখিয়া যাওয়া যেমন জরুরি, তেমনই জরুরি এই প্রতিবেশী ও ভূসংলগ্ন রাষ্ট্রে স্থিতি বজায় রাখা। অস্থিরতা, অনিশ্চয়তা সন্ত্রাসবাদীদের সংহত হইতে যেমন সাহায্য করিবে, তেমনই নয়াদিল্লির বিমুখতা নেপালকে তাহার উত্তরের প্রতিবেশীর উপর নির্ভরশীল করিয়া তুলিতে পারে। ভারতের পক্ষে সেটা সুসমাচার নয়।

03 MAY 2005

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

Thousands rally in Nepal to demand democracy

Kathmandu: In the first huge anti-government rally since the february 1 power grab by Nepal King Gyanendra, some 15,000 trade union activists and labourers today marched in the capital to mark international labour day demanding trade union rights, democracy, press freedom and human rights, a day after royal government lifted emergency. The rally was held even as press censorship and ban on political activities were continuing in the Himalayan Kingdom despite yesterday's government announcement lifting the state of emergency. Organised by five federations including Nepal trade union congress affiliated to the Nepali congress and general federation of Nepalese trade unions (gfont), the march also saw participation from union activists from India, Japan, Belgium and Sweden. The demonstrators went round the city carrying placards and banners demanding democracy and trade union rights but remained outside the prohibited area in the capital avoiding direct clash with the heavily deployed police personnel. They converged into a public meeting at Nayabaneshwor, in front of the office of the King-appointed powerful royal corruption control commission (RCCC). "Our movement is aimed at restoring multiparty democracy, basic human rights, trade union rights and press freedom, said Achyut Raj Pandey, general secretary of NTUC affiliated to Nepali congress. "We extend solidarity to the movement for restoration of democracy being launched by the five major parties," he said.

President Mukunda Neupane said academic freedom and fundamental rights must be restored to end ex-



A woman worker and activists of the Peoples Front Nepal shout slogans at a May Day rally in Kathmandu on Sunday

ploitation of labourers. Among the prominent international representatives who took part in the rally were N Suzuki, general secretary of International Confederation of Free Trade Union-Asia and Pacific (ICFTU-APRO); Guman Singh, organising secretary of the Indian National Trade Union Congress and R A Mittal of Hind Majdur Sabha, India. Journalists, lawyers, school teachers, professors, human rights activists also took part in the rally to express solidarity. Meanwhile, representatives from 25 human rights groups in a joint statement condemned the government's acts of indiscriminate arrests and

blocking of political activities. "We strongly oppose last week's police intervention at the central office of Nepal Communist Party-uml; arrest of deposed Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba at midnight on corruption charges and indiscriminately arresting political activists by security personnel," said the statement. Subodh Pyakurel, President of informal sector service centre, human rights activists Gopal Siwakoti and Sobhakar Budhathoki, who signed the statement, also demanded the government to maintain rule of law, guarantee political freedom and respect international human rights declaration. PTI

2 Nepal Left leaders released

Statesman News Service

KATHMANDU, May 2. — Within 48 hours of the end of emergency in Nepal, the government released a top Communist leader, Mr Madhav Kumar Nepal, general-secretary of the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist, the largest Left party in the kingdom. Mobile telephones, dead since the royal coup on 1 February, too started coming to life.

Mr Nepal, who was former finance and home minister as well as Deputy Prime Minister, was freed from house arrest around 10 p.m. yesterday, after the international community, including India's insistence. Another senior leader from Mr Nepal's party, Mr Amrit Bohra was also released from arrest. However, in a see-saw movement, the government also issued an order extending the detention of several more Opposition leaders, including former ministers.

Indian Ambassador to Nepal Mr Shiv Shankar Mukherjee met Mr Nepal at the party office this afternoon. The 51-year-old Communist leader remained defiant, saying a joint agitation with all democratic forces was the only option to restore democracy in the country. He also said the lifting of emergency was in name only. Restrictions on political par-



Mr Madhav Kumar Nepal (left) and Mr Amrit Bohara who were released. In Kathmandu on Monday. — AFP

ties, human rights activities and the media still continued.

Mr Mukherjee, who also met another top Opposition leader, four-time former Prime Minister Mr Girija Prasad Koirala, is leaving for New Delhi tomorrow for consultations with the government. With foreign secretary Mr Shyam Saran too returning from Colombo tomorrow, the developments in Nepal since King Gyanendra's return and lifting of emergency will be discussed.

All eyes in Nepal will be on Mr Mukherjee when he returns to

gauge New Delhi's reaction to the new concessions, especially to guesstimate if India would resume military supplies to Nepal's army.

After a hiatus of three months, that cost the cash-strapped Nepal government billions, mobile telephone services were partially resumed today. However, of the nearly 240,000 lines, only about 35,000 were restored and that too, in Kathmandu valley. Subscribers outside the valley would have to wait longer for their turn due to security fears. As for pre-paid phone subscribers, they are still in the



ALL SMILES: A senior journalist talks on his mobile phone immediately after mobile phone services were restored on Monday. — AFP

dark about when their phones will start working. It is feared that a large number of such lines will be axed due to fears that they are being used by the Maoist guerrillas.

Not all bona fide mobile subscribers in Kathmandu had their connections restored today. Opposition leaders like Nepal, select rights activists and even some journalists, didn't get their phones working. When the services resumed in the morning, most people were caught off guard and didn't switch on their handsets. Some had forgotten their numbers due to the long disuse.

Disguised disdain

Who is Gyanendra fooling?

Nepal's three-month emergency was to expire on 1 May unless King Gyanendra extended it. By lifting it within hours of a return from the Afro-Asian summit in Jakarta and visits to China and Singapore, he has merely indicated his failure on the diplomatic front to persuade regional leaders to his point of view. The King must now revert to the status quo, when he assumed executive powers on 1 February. His failure to make a political compromise will amount to an emergency in disguise. The King's remark on returning to Kathmandu that "I have taken the views expressed by Dr Manmohan Singh seriously" gives hope even at this juncture, as Nepal sinks deeper into crisis, that he will not compound the misery. The release of CPN (Unified Marxist-Leninist) general secretary Madhav Kumar Nepal, is welcome since he was the only top political leader still in house detention. But the arrest of former Nepalese Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba is a recipe for turmoil. India's sharp reaction is to be expected, since Delhi considers this contrary to Gyanendra's assurance that he would initiate restoration of parliamentary democracy so that India resumes arms supplies. Delhi must now exercise greater caution.

Gyanendra may feel he has momentarily silenced critics by ending the emergency, but he has opened another can of worms by legalising the Royal Commission for Corruption Control under Article 127 of the Constitution. Set up in the aftermath of the royal takeover, the RCCC has wide powers to summon, try and punish anyone against whom information exists. That apart from Deuba, several other political leaders are already in its net, and many more are likely to attract attention, suggests the aim is to prevent them from taking part in political activities. Admittedly rampant corruption is Nepal's bane and senior officials are not spared the taint. What is the need for a special anti-graft panel, headed by inexperienced officials, when there is the statutory Commission for Investigations of Abuses of Authority and other agencies like the Revenue Investigation Department and the Special Police Department, specifically to check graft? The King must be aware of the demerits of overkill.

03 MAY 2005

THE STATESMAN

Nepal King lifts emergency

Press censorship, ban on political parties stay

KATHMANDU: Under increasing pressure from India and other countries, Nepal's King Gyanendra on Saturday lifted the state of emergency imposed after he grabbed power three months ago. But press censorship and the ban on political activities and Indian news channels continued.

"His Majesty, in accordance with the Constitution, has lifted the order of the state of emergency," a brief Royal Palace statement said, hours after the King's return from a three-nation tour where leaders pressed him for the restoration of democracy in the kingdom.

The King, who visited Indonesia, China and Singapore, had assured the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in Jakarta last week, on the sidelines of the Afro-Asian summit, that he would initiate steps for the early restoration of multi-party democra-

- **Parties not satisfied**
- **Political leaders still under arrest**
- **Koirala wants all-party government**

cy. Despite the King's assurance, the deposed Prime Minister, Sher Bahadur Deuba, was arrested on corruption charges on Wednesday. The Royal announcement did not make any mention of the restoration of press freedom and the removal of the ban on political activities.

Political parties welcomed the monarch's decision but said this was not enough as press censorship remained and hundreds of political activists continued in detention. They asked the King to restore the Constitution and

return all executive powers to people's representatives. Public meetings and demonstration will not be allowed in Kathmandu. The ban on the FM and private radio stations to broadcast news, views and information continued and Nepal's cable operators were still not allowed to air Indian news channels.

The Nepali Congress President, Girija Prasad Koirala, alleged that the lifting of emergency was a move to "deceive" the international community, which was exerting tremendous pressure for the revival of democracy.

Political prisoners were not released and press censorship had not been lifted, he told reporters. Mr. Koirala demanded the formation of an all-party government as well as the reinstatement of Parliament to resolve the current political stalemate. — PTI

0 1 MAY 2005

THE HINDU

Gyanendra move an eyewash, feel Nepalese



The emergency may be off but riot police are still patrolling Kathmandu.

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, April 30

MOST NEPALESE see King Gyanendra's midnight decision to withdraw the emergency more as an attempt to placate the international community than as a step towards the restoration of democracy in trouble-torn Nepal.

What made mainstream parties suspicious of the king's motive is his decision to retain the controversial Royal Commission for Corruption Control even after he ended emergency

rule. In fact, he invoked Article 127 of the Constitution (which he used while assuming the role of an absolute ruler on February 1) to allow the RCCC to function as usual. Set up after February 1, the RCCC, designed to keep democrats under pressure, can try and punish anyone on the basis of information provided by any individual.

The monarch was also silent on press censorship and continuing detention of hundreds of political leaders and activists.

Damannath Dhungana, an ar-

chitect of Nepal's Constitution, told HT: "Emergency or no emergency, it hardly matters to the people as long as they are under the king's direct rule. He bends the Constitution according to his requirement."

"Do we need the RCCC when we already have the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority granted by the Constitution? The king is more interested in fulfilling his obligations to the world community than in resolving the country's problems."

Nepali Congress chief G.P.

Koirala described the announcement as "an attempt to hoodwink the international community."

Nepali Congress (Democratic) leader Hornath Dahal remarked: "Instead of taking the international community for a ride, the king should make sincere efforts to win the hearts of the people and hold parliamentary elections."

Mainline Communist leaders said the monarch wanted to prolong his rule "by keeping India and other donor countries in good humour."

যথেষ্ট নয়, বলল দিল্লি

নেপালে শুধুই জরুরি অবস্থা তুললেন রাজা

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৩০ এপ্রিল: গণতন্ত্রে ফেরার 'রোড ম্যাপ' নয়, এপ্রিল মাসের শেষ দিনে শুধুই জরুরি অবস্থা প্রত্যাহার করলেন নেপালরাজ জ্ঞানেন্দ্র। তাঁর এই সিদ্ধান্তে ভারত রীতিমতো অশুশি। রায়পুরে খোদ প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ বলেছেন, রাজা যে ব্যবস্থা নিয়েছেন তা যথেষ্ট নয়।

ভারতের অসন্তুষ্ট হওয়ার কারণ আছে। জার্কর্তায় মনমোহনের সঙ্গে বৈঠকে জ্ঞানেন্দ্র কথা দিয়েছিলেন, চলতি মাসের মধ্যেই দেশে গণতন্ত্র ফেরানোর 'রোড ম্যাপ' ঘোষণা করবেন। বিনিময়ে ভারত জানিয়েছিল, সেই ঘোষণার দশ দিনের মধ্যে সামরিক সাহায্য ফের শুরু করার কথা বলা হবে। জ্ঞানেন্দ্র কার্যত প্রতিশ্রুতি ভঙ্গ করায় এখন সামরিক সাহায্যের বিষয়টি ঝুলিয়ে রাখার সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে দিল্লি। জ্ঞানেন্দ্রের সিদ্ধান্তকে 'ইতিবাচক' বললেও মনমোহন জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন, গণতন্ত্র ফেরানোর লক্ষ্যে নেপালের এখনও অনেক কিছু করা বাকি।

কাল রাতে জ্ঞানেন্দ্র চিন-ইন্দোনেশিয়া-সিঙ্গাপুর সফর সেরে দেশে ফেরার কয়েক ঘণ্টার মধ্যেই রাজপ্রাসাদ থেকে এক বিবৃতিতে জানানো হয়, ১ ফেব্রুয়ারি দেউবা সরকারকে বরখাস্ত করে যে জরুরি অবস্থা জারি হয়েছিল, তা তুলে নেওয়া হল। তবে কয়েক হাজার রাজনৈতিক বন্দির ভবিষ্যৎ সম্পর্কে কিছু বলা হয়নি। রাজধানীর বেশির ভাগ জায়গায় সভাসমাবেশ এখনও নিষিদ্ধ। ভারতীয় চ্যানেল দেখানোর অনুমতি পাননি কেবল অপারেটররা। খবর সম্প্রচারের অনুমতি পায়নি বেসরকারি রেডিও স্টেশনগুলি। ফলে প্রশ্ন উঠেছে, পুরোটাই লোক দেখানো কি না। ভারতে আশ্রয় নেওয়া নেপালের নেতাদের বক্তব্য, বিতর্কিত দুর্নীতি নিয়ন্ত্রণ কমিশনের মেয়াদ বাড়িয়ে দিয়ে দমনপীড়নের পথ খোলা রেখেছেন রাজা। এই কমিশনের সামনে হাজির না-হওয়ার 'অপরাধেই মঙ্গলবার মাঝ রাতে বাড়ির দরজা ভেঙে তুলে নিয়ে যাওয়া হয় শের বাহাদুর দেউবাকে। জার্কর্তায় গণতন্ত্র ফেরানোর কথা দিয়ে আসা জ্ঞানেন্দ্রের এই 'দুঃসাহসেই' ছিল অশনিসঙ্কেত।

গোটা ঘটনায় যথেষ্ট বিপাকে ভারত। রাজাকে কোণঠাসা করলে মাওবাদীদের শক্তিবৃদ্ধি হবে, এই দুশ্চিন্তা দিল্লির আছে। শুধু তা-ই নয়, ভারতের কাছ থেকে সাহায্য না পেলে চিন ও পাকিস্তানের দ্বারস্থ হতে পারেন জ্ঞানেন্দ্র। ভারতের কোলের দেশে প্রভাব বাড়তে তারা যে সাহায্যের হাত বাড়তে দ্বিধা করবে না তা বিদেশ মন্ত্রকের ভালই জানা আছে। ফলে মনমোহন সরকার এখন উভয় সঙ্কটে।

সেই দোলাচল থেকেই জ্ঞানেন্দ্রের সিদ্ধান্তকে আজ স্বাগত জানাতে হয়েছে বিদেশ মন্ত্রককে। জ্ঞানেন্দ্র ভাল কাজ করেছেন, কিন্তু সবটা করেননি— এটাই আপাতত দিল্লির অবস্থান। আর সবটুকু পাওয়ার জন্যই সামরিক সাহায্য নিয়ে মুখে কুলুপ এঁটে থাকতে চায় মনমোহন সরকার। নেপালের পরিস্থিতি ঠিক কী তা জানতে সেখানে নিযুক্ত ভারতের রাষ্ট্রদূত শিবশঙ্কর মুখোপাধ্যায়কে ডেকে পাঠানো হয়েছে। বিদেশ মন্ত্রক সূত্রের খবর, আলোচনার মধ্যে দিয়েই নেপালরাজকে গণতন্ত্রের পথে ফেরানোর চেষ্টা চালানো হবে। প্রয়োজনে নেপালের রাষ্ট্রদূতকে ডেকে পাঠিয়ে কথা বলবেন বিদেশ মন্ত্রকের কর্তারা। তাতে কাজের কাজ কতটা হবে তা নিয়ে অবশ্য সরকারি মহলেই সংশয় আছে। রাজা বীরেন্দ্রের আমলেও এক বার যাবতীয় ক্ষমতা দখলের চেষ্টা করেছিলেন রাজপ্রাসাদ। সেই ইঙ্গিত পাওয়া মাত্র দিল্লি কড়া কর্তা পাঠিয়ে জানায়, তাঁর পরিণাম মোটেই ভাল হবে না। চাপের মুখে আর এগোনোর সাহস দেখাননি কীরেন্দ্র। তাঁর ভাই কিন্তু ইতিমধ্যেই অনেক দূর এগিয়ে গিয়েছেন।

01 MAY 2005 ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

Emergency in Nepal lifted

SUDESHNA SARKAR
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KATHMANDU, April 30. — Five days after he had met Dr Manmohan Singh, King Gyanendra returned to Kathmandu and lifted the state of emergency in a dramatic announcement shortly before midnight on Friday. India's role became clearer when the monarch deviated from the tradition that precluded the King from interacting with the media and gave an extempore interview at the airport immediately after alighting from the aircraft, starting with his meeting with Dr Singh.

"We were very impressed with the Indian Prime Minister's statesmanship," King Gyanendra said. "And we have taken his words seriously."

Within hours of the tribute, he had held a meeting with his ministers at the palace and decided to lift the emergency, though it could have run on till Monday. Nepal's Opposition parties treated the announcement with disbelief.

The Asia-Africa Summit in Jakarta last week decidedly contributed to the decision. On the sidelines of the

A POSITIVE STEP, BUT...

NEW DELHI, April 30. — India has accorded a cautious welcome to the lifting of the emergency, describing it only as the "first step" towards democracy. "It is a positive step," the Prime Minister said in Raipur. "But Nepal still has a lot to do to return to the path of democracy."

An indication that the King's move may not change the political set-up was his order to extend the Royal Commission for Control of Corruption. The order was given following the lifting of the emergency. The commission was set up on 16 February with the powers of a special court to summon, prosecute and punish. — SNS

meet, the Nepalese foreign minister, Mr Ramesh Nath Pandey, met Mr Natwar Singh twice and Dr Singh's national security advisor, Mr MK Narayanan, after which came the tete-a-tete between the two heads of state on 23 April. The Prime Minister is said to have asked the King to lift the emergency and the latter complied even though faced with a united agitation by Opposition parties from tomorrow.

As an additional conciliatory gesture, King Gyanendra said he had also discussed at Jakarta with the Chinese President, Mr Hu Jintao, the issue of allowing Nepal to be used as a transit route for Sino-Indian trade.

New Delhi, alarmed at the

growing trade deficit with China, opened the Nathu La pass in Sikkim as an alternative route. However, its high altitude makes the pass unattractive while the Araniko Highway leading to China from Nepal would be a more viable route for traders in states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Kathmandu will work on a tripartite pact, an indication that King Gyanendra is trying to de-politicise his foreign policy and base it on mutually beneficial economic considerations.

An official said detainees would be released after the government had gauged the reaction to the lifting of the emergency and was convinced they would not pose a law-and-order problem.

Callow Kathmandu

FOURTH REPORT - 2014 2016
Could Gyanendra have a hidden agenda?

The arrest of former Nepalese Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba is not much of a surprise; the shabby manner in which he was treated certainly is. Reports suggest the police barged into his house in the wee hours after cutting off power and telephone lines and huddled him out like a common criminal. That he was the country's prime minister thrice counted for nothing. Rumours were rife that Deuba would be restrained by the Royal Commission for Corruption Control, empowered to punish anyone against whom reports and information exist but the reality was worse. Deuba's mistake was in defying the RCCC summons for irregularities in the Rs (Nc) 45.6-crore Melamchi drinking water project and in describing the commission's appointment as "unconstitutional and illegal".

Admittedly there was no need for such a special anti-corruption body when the country already has the Commission of the Investigation of Abuses of Authority. Possibly, the King thinks Deuba, related to the royal family by marriage, and who is freed from house arrest last month, is a fly in the ointment since he is the only potential leader, after GP Koirala, who were capable of running the country. Also implicated in the case is a former minister in the Deuba cabinet, Prakashman Singh, son of the late Nepali Congress supremo Ganeshman Singh. That about a dozen former ministers have also been summoned in another case is indicative of the King's intent to justify himself.

Of the corrupt leaders and officials, the most blatant are bureaucrats who run a "commission raj" which the Maoists want removed. Continued arrests of protesters, human rights activists and the recent raid on the CPN (Unified Marxist-Leninist) office is indicative of a King caught up in the throes of political narrow-mindedness. A gesture India will not take kindly since Prime Minister Manmohan Singh did not expect this when he reportedly assured the King in Jakarta that he might consider resumption of arms aid.

Things could get worse if the King has secured arms from China during his visit to that country last week.

30 APR 2005

THE STATESMAN

Deuba held in fresh Nepal crackdown

HT Correspondents

Kathmandu/New Delhi, April 27

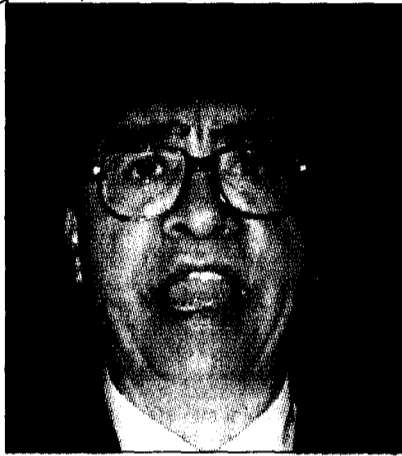
DAYS AFTER King Gyanendra promised to restore democracy in Nepal, his government arrested several top politicians, including deposed Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, in pre-dawn swoops today. The crackdown, which comes two days before the end of Gyanendra's 10-day foreign tour, drew sharp criticism from a "concerned" New Delhi, which said such acts were "contrary" to assurances given by Kathmandu.

Gyanendra had told Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in Jakarta last week that he would work towards restoring democracy and lifting emergency in a phased manner. Singh had promised to review the decision to stop arms supplies to Kathmandu keeping in mind the latest developments.

Today, after the news of Deuba's arrest broke, the external affairs ministry spokesman said no decision had been taken on resumption of arms supplies. "We are also concerned that the arrest and detention of political leaders, student leaders and workers of political parties continue, as do the restrictions on travel and movement of some academicians, human rights activists and students, contrary to assurances conveyed to us," he said.

Deuba, who spent 50 days in detention after the February 1 royal coup, was arrested around 2 am for questioning on certain financial deals struck during his tenure. Earlier, he had defied summons from the Royal Commission for Corruption Control, which he says has no constitutional validity. Set up after February 1, the RCCC can try and punish anyone on the basis of information provided by any individual. Most parties describe it as a move by the palace to keep the democrats under pressure.

Security personnel entered Deuba's home and cut off telephone and elec-



Sher Bahadur Deuba

tricity connections. They reportedly threatened to break open the door of the house when they were told to come in the morning.

Activists of Deuba's Nepali Congress (Democratic) shouted slogans when the police brought him to the RCCC office. He was sent to police custody after he refused to give any statement to the RCCC.

Earlier, Deuba had described as "political vendetta" the RCCC's move to summon him and his Cabinet colleague, Prakashman Singh, over a \$464-million contract as part of the Asian Development Bank-funded Melamchi water project. With the ADB having clarified that it had awarded the contract itself, the RCCC may implicate Deuba in another case, which relates to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund. It has already questioned six ex-ministers.

Later this evening, the police rounded up ex-ministers Ramsharan Mahat, Chakra Prasad Bastola, Dil Bahadur Gharti (all from Koirala's Nepali Congress), Raghuj Pant and Subhas Nembang (both from the CPN-UML).

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

20 APR 2005

Gyanendra reneges on Jakarta promise

503
27/4
The State
report

Statesman News Service

KATHMANDU, April 26. — Within days of King Gyanendra avowing “total and unflinching” support to multi-party democracy, human rights and rule of law at the Asia-Africa Summit in Jakarta, security forces in Nepal continued to arrest political leaders and ransacked the office of the largest communist party in the capital.

This afternoon, security forces arrested Mr Gagan Thapa, leader of the student wing of the Nepali Congress party, and two more student leaders, Mr Sandesh Adhikari and Mr Subodh Acharya. The three were arrested by plainclothes securitymen from Mr Adhikari’s residence and taken away forcibly without any arrest warrant.

The arrests come a day after masked security personnel stormed the office of the Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) here. The UML was holding a condolence meeting yesterday for the demise of Shadhana Adhikari, widow of Manmohan Adhikari, the first communist Prime Minister of Nepal, when securitymen entered the party office forcibly, arrested a member, intimidated others and vandalised the office.

The attack united Nepal’s Opposition parties, lawyers and human rights activists, who today condemned the incident. Among the parties flaying the state interference were former Prime Minister Mr Surya Bahadur Thapa, who recently floated his own Rastriya Janashakti Party, deposed Premier Mr Sher Bahadur Deuba’s Nepali Congress (Democratic) party, Mr Girija Prasad Koirala’s Nepali Congress party, Nepal Sadbhava Party (Anandi Devi) and People’s Front Nepal.

Nepal’s key political parties also said they would wait and watch for an official statement from India about its policy on renewing military assistance to King Gyanendra’s government instead of going by media reports.



CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE: Nepalese villagers forced out of their homes after heavy clashes between security forces and Maoists in Rolpa district, 350 km west of Kathmandu. — AFP

Last week, after King Gyanendra met Dr Manmohan Singh in Jakarta, where both had been invited to participate in the Asia-Africa Summit, a private Indian TV channel reported the monarch as saying that New Delhi had agreed to resume military assistance to Nepal.

“We would like to draw the attention of the people of India, its parliamentarians and the Indian government to the top stories in Nepalese media today,” UML spokesman Mr Pradip Nepal said. “On one hand we have a report saying India would resume suspended military assistance to Nepal unconditionally and on the other, another report describes how masked security men arrested a student leader from a condolence meeting, intimidated members and vandalised the party office. “This clearly indicates how India’s military aid would be used to repress democratic forces in Nepal.”

27 APR 2005

THE STATESMAN

Good neighbours

King report Welcome thaw in Indo-Nepal ties *cf. 6*

By agreeing to allow UN Commission observers to monitor human rights abuses, Nepal has spared itself the ignominy of being placed on Agenda 9 which implies a dire human rights crisis. At last month's UNHRC meeting, Nepal's foreign minister defended military action against Maoist rebels as necessary to protect democracy. When last year, Switzerland moved a resolution against Nepal, India voted against it but this year, it was still not among the anti-Nepal voters, which Kathmandu saw as a welcome gesture. There appear to be some signs of thaw in Indo-Nepalese ties after King Gyanendra gave the Indian envoy an audience after 54 days. At the Jakarta Asian-African Summit, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and King Gyanendra met on the sidelines. While India reportedly conveyed its concern over suspension of multiparty democracy, the King apparently sought to explain the events that led to current developments. The King's remark that he had an assurance on resumption of Indian military aid could have come only after he agreed to narrow down the rift between the palace and political parties.

The release of former Prime Ministers GP Koirala and Sher Bahadur Deuba from house arrest and of several hundred anti-palace protesters was evidence of the King's belated realisation that popular voices cannot be suppressed for long. But what is a little intriguing is the continued detention of CPN (Unified Marxist-Leninist) general secretary Madhav Nepal. Unless he is freed, the King's announcement to activate the democratic process will sound hollow. His decision to hold the municipal elections within a year is a pretext to delay the handing of power back to the people. It is naive to expect law and order to improve by then when every day there are reports of bloodshed. The crux of the problem is the Maoist rebellion. All parties should make efforts to bring them to the negotiating table again. The two best options remain the restoration of parliament as suggested by Koirala and the Maoists' demand for elections to a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution.

26 APR 2005

THE STATESMAN

China rolls out red carpet for king

JEHANGIR S. POCHA

Beijing, April 24: China assured King Gyanendra of its full "support" and "friendship" when the now absolute monarch of Nepal attended the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) conference in southern Hainan province.

"Sino-Nepalese ties have maintained a momentum of constant and sound development... despite the differences in each domestic situation," said Jia Qinglin, the chairman of National Committee of Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), China's top advisory body.

Jia added that China's support for the king, who sacked the elected government of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba on February 1, was "beneficial" for regional peace and stability.

The comments come a week before May 1, when the three-month state of Emergency clamped by Gyanendra after he sacked the government

will expire.

Under Nepal's constitution, the king needs parliamentary approval to extend the Emergency. Nepal has been running without a parliament since May 2002, when Deuba dissolved the Lower House for refusing to extend the Emergency he had imposed in November 2001.

Other than China, no other nation has voiced support for the king, whose suspension of civil liberties in Nepal has prompted severe international criticism. Several European nations and civil liberties groups have said the Royal Nepalese Army has illegally detained more than 600 people over the last three months.

China has declared the king's action as an "internal matter", and Chinese vice-foreign Minister Wu Dawei has said "the international community should respect the choice made by the Nepali people".

To back its support with actions,

China became the first nation to grant the king diplomatic legitimacy by sending its foreign minister Li Zhaoxing to Kathmandu on April 1, two months after the coup. China, backed by Pakistan and Russia, is also preventing the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva from proposing tough measures against Nepal for its deteriorating human rights situation.

Such unstinting support for Gyandendra stands in contrast to India, which has decried the sacking of Deuba's government and called for a return to democracy. But Beijing's growing clout on the world stage was evidenced when shortly after China's welcome of the king, India indicated that it would reconsider the arms embargo on Nepal.

Analysts say Delhi fears that taking too hard a line with the king would push him closer to Beijing. With China already enjoying close relations with Burma, Bangladesh, Pakistan,

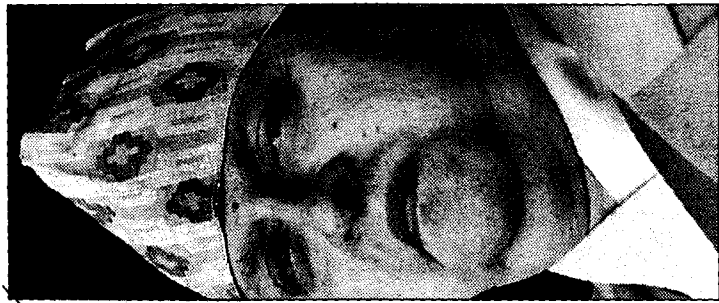
and Sri Lanka, India can ill afford to "lose" Nepal, the analysts added.

Already, Li's April 1 endorsement of Nepal has led several other nations to make reconciliatory gestures towards the king, despite India's continuing opposition.

Before flying to the Boao Forum, which China touts as the Asian equivalent of the World Economic Forum held in Davos, the king attended the Bandung Conference in Jakarta on the invitation of Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and South African President Thabo Mbeki.

The conference gave the king his first international opportunity to defend his actions.

His entourage, which included queen Komal, princess Prerana, vice-chairman of the council of ministers Kirti Nidhi Bista and foreign minister Ramesh Nath Pandey, privately lobbied for more understanding of what is happening in Nepal.



Gyanendra: Neighbour nods

Ex-minister's arrest a signal for Deuba?

Statesman News Service

KATHMANDU, April 21. — A former minister and son of one of Nepal's most popular heroes was arrested Thursday for defying the government's summons to appear for questioning in a graft probe.

Mr Prakash Man Singh, minister for physical planning and works in the deposed Sher Bahadur Deuba government, was arrested from his Kathmandu residence on Thursday morning in a move likely to eventually lead to the arrest of Deuba himself. After keeping vigil at his residence since Wednesday night, Singh was forcibly taken away by security personnel in plainclothes to appear for questioning before the Royal Commission for Corruption Control on a multi-million dollar drinking water project funded by the Asian Development Bank, World Bank and several foreign donor agencies. The commission was nominated by



Mr Singh being arrested in Kathmandu on Thursday. — AFP

King Gyanendra within a fortnight of his sacking the Deuba government on 1 February, assuming absolute power and imposing a state of emergency.

It triggered sharp criticism from the political parties, leading lawyers and even drafters of the present constitution of Nepal who have called it unconstitutional and an instrument of intimidation intended to silence the king's opponents. Last month, the commission swung into action, summoning six ministers

from the Deuba Cabinet for questioning. The ex-ministers have been charged with illegally disbursing money from the Prime Minister's Welfare Fund among party cadre and cronies. The fund is intended for the rehabilitation of victims of the communist insurgency and natural calamities.

Last week, the commission summoned Mr Singh over allegations that the \$464-million Melamchi drinking water project for Kathmandu had unduly favoured a Chinese firm.

22 APR 1990

THE STATESMAN

Gyanendra heads abroad

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, April 20

AMID GROWING resistance to his authority at home, King Gyanendra on Wednesday headed for the Bandung Conference in Indonesia and the Boao Forum for Asia meet in China where he is likely to lobby for international support over the next six days.

Ahead of his first foreign trip since the royal coup, the monarch, in a message to the Nepalese people, hoped that the twin meetings would consolidate understanding and coopera-

tion between Nepal and other countries. The state-run *Rising Nepal* described the institution of monarchy as "the crusader, protector and champion of democracy."

However, *Janadesh*, the mouthpiece of Maoists, said the king would "tell lies about democracy and human rights and beg support from reactionary countries to fight revolutionaries who control about 80 per cent of Nepal." This comes a day after rebel chief Pushpakamal Dahal ruled out talks with "a medieval, feudal dictator."

21 APR 2005 THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

King, Maobaadi and Democracy

WHEN King Gyanendra implemented his coup of February 1 and smashed Nepal's vibrant democracy, he did so citing the very Constitution of 1990 that was being trampled. The advances made by the open society of the last 15 years were negated by this return to autocratic rule made on the excuse of fighting insurgency. The fact that Nepal's socio-economic backwardness can largely be ascribed to the period of absolute monarchy under his father and brother seems to have escaped King Gyanendra, who remains opportunistically fixated on condemning political parties as the source of all evil.

The king told *Time* this week that he was 'disappointed' by the negative international reaction to the royal action, and well he might be. For the world community, including India, seems to recognise that political stability and peace cannot be achieved through a government chaired by the king. The Nepali people, having tasted freedom, are not about to accept the royal writ. They are bound to fight back, primarily through political parties, against a king who seems for the moment unbending but whose hold is precarious.

The response of the royal regime to worldwide disapproval has been to warn of a Maoist victory if support is not forthcoming. This attempt at blackmail, itself uncouth, betrays a lack of confidence in the Royal Nepali Army's (RNA's) ability to confront the Maoists. More importantly, the claim is incorrect. Knowledgeable analysts and army generals confirm the possibility of a rebel takeover is just not there. While it is true that Maoists have the run of the countryside because of mid-hill geography and their ability to instil fear among the peasantry, they do not control the landscape. They have not been able to develop so-called base areas, and not one of the 75 district headquarters of Nepal has fallen to them. An unprepared RNA, dragged out of the barracks on November '02 to battle them, has been guilty of widespread abuses and of perpetuating collateral damage. But specialised training and infusion of American and



India must stay the course in isolating the royal regime in Kathmandu

■ KANAK MANI DIXIT

Indian arms have improved its fighting ability, and the rebels' spectacular attacks on army/police garrisons seem now to be a thing of the past. Their response has been a shift to highway ambushes, blockades, school closures and disruption of commercial/industrial activity.

All this may well make Nepal ungovernable, but it will not lead to the collapse of the state when there is so little of the state out there beyond the urban centres. The Maoists have lost some of their best fighters over the last year. Recruitment is tough because large parts of rural Nepal have been emptied of young men fleeing conscription. The motley array of guns at the Maoists' command also casts doubt on their ability to succeed in conventional combat. Tighter controls by India have made it difficult for the rebels to use Indian territory as a

Nepal, bringing the military out, shattering the economy and retarding the development process. King Gyanendra's takeover, let it be said, has simply accelerated the downturn in each of these spheres.

The political parties have not yet been able to mount a spirited campaign against the coup. They are meant to function under parliamentary structures, but the absence of Parliament since '02 has made co-operation problematic, not to mention a palace working overtime to exploit inter-party differences. After February 1, they were left in disarray with the king jailing senior leaders in the name of 'saving democracy' (many remain in jail). Each of them has also been trying to tackle internal contradictions. Many party bosses were compromised for having joined earlier governments appointed by the king, and internal

then for the first time wrested political power from the Kathmandu Valley and distributed it among the districts. This explains why the parties are detested by a certain section. The reality is that the democratic interlude heralded rapid advance in social/economic indicators, and ushered the rise of ethnic and regional assertion against dominant elites, full media freedom, the doubling of the rural roads network, spread of telecommunications, and the opening up of overseas employment which has sustained the economy in these lean times. Nepalis became confident in challenging authority, and the flavour of freedom made Kathmandu an attractive meeting place for South Asians from all over.

The king prefers to confuse political parties with political pluralism, and the misdeeds of one are supposed to stain the other. His choice of fellow travellers are ultra-conservatives from the earliest Panchayat raj. It shows a yearning for a time when the king could claim to speak for the people. Having been maligned, misused and attacked by the king, the parties have taken their time but are beginning to regroup. Today, there is a dynamic process underway on how best to bring back democracy, and the distrust of the palace has become the unifying factor.

The international community, including India, has by its acts and statements acted as a bulwark for democracy and pluralism. This shows respect for the people of Nepal. At this crucial juncture, democratic governments must stay the course and not provide any support/succour to the king. Most important, they must not fall for the ruse that the rebels will win if the king is not allowed free reign. Nepal's king may not like political parties, but there is no need for others to fall in line. Nepal's politicians are the truest representatives of the people, more than the palace, the army, or civil society combines, and it is they who will have to deliver a negotiated peace to a wounded people while leading them back on the path to pluralism.

The writer edits 'Himal', a South Asian monthly, published from Kathmandu

The international community, including India, has by its acts and statements acted as a bulwark for democracy. This shows respect for the people of Nepal

staging ground, and there is credible information of division within the Maoist leadership on matters of strategy. Guerilla leaders would know that there is no winning this war and it is important to try and bring them to a 'safe landing' before they fracture into warlordism. There are even indications that the leaders seek such a landing, but a palace bent on victory would not even be willing to call their bluff.

Notwithstanding the romanticising of the Maoists by a few, there is no doubt that the rebels have pushed Nepal backward in the name of armed revolution. It was they who started raising arms against a democratic state, making India loom larger than ever over

power plays are in progress. There are also divisions between those who call for a fight-to-finish for a king-less republic, those who would like to see a ceremonial monarchy retained, and others who regard the army-backed royal palace as too powerful to confront.

The parties have been debilitated by years of propaganda about the supposed 'failure of democracy' since '90, and accusations of corruption. While Nepal's politicians are no exception when it comes to malfeasance on the job, one has to keep a little perspective on this. They do shine when compared to the monarchy's 30 years of misrule that was ended in '90. The fact is that the parliamentary exercise since

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Hi from Nepal

Maoists find a new class enemy: school

JHEMANTH

Kathmandu, April 18: Continuing their campaign for closure of all private schools in Nepal, Maoist rebels bombed two schools in western Nepal damaging buildings and causing serious injuries to three students.

The twin attacks came as educational institutions in the Kathmandu valley defied the Maoist closure demand and started a new academic year today.

The rebels detonated a powerful bomb at Jaya Bageshwori Boarding Higher Secondary School, the largest private school in the Nepalgunj area, late last night.

According to the school principal Bidhya Man Rajbhandari, a group of heavily-armed Maoists detonated the bomb at the school's computer centre causing serious damage to six rooms. Eighteen computers were destroyed. However, there were no casu-

alties. The Nepalgunj school is the best in western Nepal with more than 1000 students on its rolls.

In another incident, three students were severely injured when rebels hurled a bomb in the Bal Kalyan Primary School at Khara in Rukum district.

According to a report in a local Nepali daily, the Maoists entered the school premises and threw the bomb at students who were busy with their classes. The injured students are being treated at Bheri Zonal Hospital in Nepalgunj.

In Kathmandu, schools affiliated to the Private and Boarding School's Organisation of Nepal (PABSON) defied the threats issued by the Maoist students' wing and started new classes today.

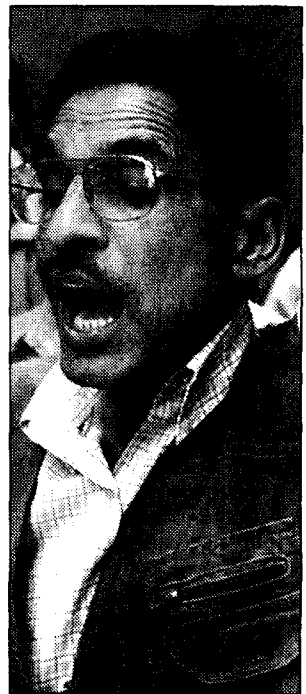
However, schools outside the valley, in Kavre, Nuwakot and Dhading districts, remained closed. "The schools in the western and far-western

region have been hit the most," a PABSON official said adding that a circular had been sent to all districts to open schools within the first week of the start of the new Nepali year.

There are over 9,000 private schools across Nepal which have more than 1.5 million students on their rolls. The Maoist-affiliated All Nepal National Independent Students Union (Revolutionary) had called for the closure of all private schools demanding free education up to high school.

No talks: Prachanda

Elusive Maoist rebel leader Prachanda has ruled out peace talks or a ceasefire with the government, predicting that the nine-year-old war would see the Maoists come to power soon. "Right now, we do not see any possibility of talks with these medieval and barbaric feudal autocrats," he said.



An Opposition activist at an anti-monarchy rally in Patan, Nepal. (Reuters)

1990

THE TELEGRAPH

Nepal leaders face call for change

IN KING'S KATHMANDU

BHARAT BHUSHAN

Kathmandu, April 16: The demand for leadership change in the political parties in Nepal is gaining ground even as they organise themselves to challenge the monarchy.

The leaders who are being criticised openly for their past behaviour belong to the three largest parties: Girija Prasad Koirala, president of the Nepali Congress, Sher Bahadur Deuba, president of the Nepali Congress (Democratic), and Madhav Nepal, general secretary of the Communist Party (United Marxist Leninist).

Koirala is accused of preventing the emergence of a second-generation leadership outside his family, Deuba of being weak and compromising with the monarchy, and Madhav of breaking the ranks of the democratic movement and allowing his party to join a government nominated by the king.

Narayan Khadka of Nepali Congress (Democratic) is forthright in his criticism of the



IN THE LINE OF FIRE: (From left) Deuba, Koirala and Nepal

political party leaders in Nepal. "Those who have led us over the last decade or so, have failed abysmally. Neither the party workers nor the people have any faith in these leaders. I hear these voices in the Nepali Congress led by Koirala. They are certainly very strong in my party and in the United Marxist Leninist," he said.

He suggested that Koirala should "play the role that Jayaprakash Narayan played during the Emergency in India — rising above partisan lines to

unite all the political parties for restoring democracy."

As for Deuba, he felt: "His leadership has proven to be very weak. He was unable to govern and did nothing to revitalise our party. Many now feel that he should step down to enable someone else to lead the party successfully against the king's regressive moves."

Pradeep Gayewali of the CPN (UML) was equally critical of the political leadership: "The political parties should accept that they were unable

around to the inevitability of leadership transition. "Given my age, I have to hand over the party to a younger leadership," he said even though he is believed to be pitching for a third term as the party president.

Will the Koirala family continue to play a dominant role in the affairs of the Nepali Congress even after him? "Leadership is not a family tradition. What I want or do not want is immaterial. The people will decide the leadership issue. They will choose," he argued. Many, however, suspect that he has been promoting his daughter and other family members in the party.

Nepali Congress leader Chakra Prasad Bastola, while refraining from any personal criticism of his party's leadership, felt the basic problem lay with the political parties not understanding the expectations of the people from democracy. "The people wanted to see a difference between the Ranas or the Shahs holding the seat of administration at Singha Durbar and the democrats occupying the same seat of power. But what they found was a continuity of approach," he claimed.

What this meant, according to Bastola, was that the po-

litical leadership was neither democratic in itself nor encouraged internal democracy in the party. "There is a need for political parties to upgrade their thinking, change their internal functioning and re-examine the relationship between the party and the leadership and the party and the people. This is the new frontier of democracy in Nepal," he argued.

Shankar Pokhrel of the UML said: "In 1990, we got democracy but we did not debate sufficiently about what kind of democracy we needed. The democracy practised by our leaders was a failure. Democracy became an emotional issue with us but remained institutionally weak."

The UML has already set in motion a process to review the party's performance in the last 14 years, especially its decision to join the last Deuba government nominated by the king.

The two factions of the Nepali Congress are yet to embark on such an exercise of introspection. But there can be no doubt about the fact that there is a realisation that mistakes have been made and that there must be accountability and a cost to pay for those responsible for the mistakes.

ing to Bastola, was that the po-

Nepal walks in Pakistan's steps

BHARAT BHUSHAN

Kathmandu, April 15: Sitting at the famous Rum Doodle Bar in Thamel, Laxman Basnet, president of the Nepal Trade Union Congress, had said to this correspondent on a particularly balmy evening in 2003 that to understand the Nepali state, India must first understand Pakistan.

Basnet's thesis was that there are far too many similarities in the way the Pakistanis and the Nepalese construct their nationhood in opposition to India. The ruling cliques in both countries are given to abusing or blaming India to legitimise themselves.

Both the countries, he took the analogy further, are donor dependent and western powers want a role in the functioning of their polity. Both are avowedly communal states and while extremist Hindus of India look wistfully towards Nepal as the only Hindu kingdom, Indian Muslims are often accused of looking towards Pakistan.

Both Pakistan and Nepal, Basnet argued, face problems arising from the exclusion of large communities and regio-

ns from power and the armed forces are a constant factor in their political life. Particular communities and ethnicities monopolise the top jobs in the armed forces in both countries. They constitute a small feudal elite whose writ runs in virtually all spheres of public life.

However, King Gyanendra, it would seem, has now taken the analogy with Pakistan to a higher level. After the royal coup of February 1, he has been following the footsteps of General Pervez Musharraf. Eminent Nepali political commentator C.K. Lal brought this point home when he claimed: "King Gyanendra's blueprint for Nepal is the same as Musharraf's for Pakistan."

Lal pointed out: "Both seized power forcibly claiming that the political class was incompetent and corrupt. Both asked for three years to restore democracy. Musharraf set up his National Accountability Bureau to fix the politicians, King Gyanendra set up the Royal Commission for Corruption Control. Musharraf promulgated the Legal Framework Order to govern, Gyanendra rules by ordinances.



Gyanendra and Musharraf: Two of a kind

Musharraf manipulated the Supreme Court, in Kathmandu, too, the Supreme Court is being manipulated. Musharraf talked of his fighting a war on terrorism and the king is also making similar claims."

Lal went on to draw further similarities: "Musharraf talked of 'enlightened moderation', King Gyanendra is talking of 'twenty-first century society and idealism', Musharraf promised democracy with the adjective 'real'; the king talks of '*sarhath prajantira*' or 'constructive democracy'. In short, Pakistan seems to

Musharraf's manual. Musharraf created a parallel structure of administration through district *nazims* elected on a non-party basis who reported directly to Islamabad. King Gyanendra has decided that he, too, does not trust the existing bureaucratic and administrative institutions. He has decided to nominate zonal and district commissioners and members of the village development committees.

Meanwhile, he has announced plans to hold elections within a year for 28 municipalities. The political parties have said they would boycott them. Unlike Musharraf, however, Gyanendra has not as yet announced pre-qualification norms for these elections, for example, that the elections would be without party affiliations or that only those with some minimum qualification can contest.

When these similarities between a "Hindu" king and a "Muslim" dictator, were put to Major General (ret'd) Bharat Keshar Simha, a staunch royalist and president of the World Hindu Federation, he said: "It seems uncanny that this should happen in parallel.

But necessity is the mother of invention. What was the alternative? The political parties forced the king's hand."

However, the king could run into some unforeseen trouble. Lal pointed out: "There are three major shortcomings of copying Musharraf. While Musharraf was fighting religious fundamentalism, there is a class war going on in Nepal. International support for fighting religious fanaticism is easier than for class war.

Jingoism in Pakistan based on 'Islam is in danger' is effective but is not comparable to saying 'Nepal is in danger'.

"The unflinching support that the US gives to Pakistan is not possible for King Gyanendra — in US foreign policy Pakistan is a counterpoise to India but the US sees Nepal as being in India's sphere of influence."

The Pakistanis say that their dictatorships have always had a tragic ending with the incumbent leaving office horizontally. King Gyanendra may need to do some original thinking to avoid the denouement of Pakistan's authoritarian regimes.

King Gyanendra set to visit China

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BEIJING, APRIL 14

NEPALESE King Gyanendra will visit China from April 23-26 to attend the annual conference of the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA), in the southern island province of Hainan, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang said on Thursday. Whether the King will proceed to Beijing is not known.

While the royal coup was condemned widely in the international community, China and Pakistan had called it an internal matter of Nepal.

China and Nepal are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties this year.

Meanwhile, in Kath-

mandu, Nepal's King Gyanendra announced that municipal elections would be held within a year to "activate the democratic process" in Nepal, more than two months after he seized power ousting the elected government.

"We have directed the election Commission to conduct municipal elections within this Nepali year or April 2006 to strengthen multi-party system based on election through adult franchise," he said.

On Thursday, Nepalese security forces recovered 18 more bodies of Maoist rebels from Khara in Rukum district, taking the death toll in last week's fierce clashes between rebels and army men in this western province of the Himalayan kingdom to 170.

15 APR 2005

INDIAN EXPRESS

King baiters grow bolder

BHARAT BHUSHAN

Kathmandu, April 12: A student leader evading arrest suddenly emerges at a street corner in a crowded Kathmandu locality and addresses an impromptu public meeting using a portable loudspeaker. He criticises King Gyanendra and demands the restoration of democracy. Both he and the crowd disperse before police reach the spot.

In the Nepalese capital, where people are believed to be apathetic, more than a hundred offered public arrest in Kathmandu on April 8, celebrated as Democracy Day — it was on this day that the late King Birendra agreed to the need for multi-party democracy in Nepal.

Nearly 1,000 people were arrested all over. They did not have to be pulled out of their homes by the police — they came out shouting pro-democracy slogans and challenged the security forces to arrest them.

A 70-year-old retired Gorkha soldier of the British army has voluntarily gone to jail thrice protesting against the king's actions since October 4, 2002. Each time he offers his arrest, police officials urge him not to do so at his age. He replies: "But I like it here. All my friends are here in jail, what will I do outside?"

When an octogenarian communist leader, suffering from high blood pressure offered his arrest, the deputy superintendent of police apologised to him, distancing himself from the distress that might be caused.

Nepalese newspapers are



Riot policemen arrest a student during an anti-king protest in Kathmandu in March. (AFP)

also getting bolder. There are editorials against the Supreme Court Chief Justice who went to Australia for an international conference and blamed the political parties for the present crisis.

Intellectuals, academics and politicians are challenging government orders restricting their movement. People sitting in restaurants and coffee shops criticise the king's actions without fear of being overheard. The Bar Association of Nepal is filing habeas corpus petitions free for those believed to be in illegal custody.

The struggle between the old feudal elite, reasserting itself through Gyanendra's regressive actions, and the emerging elite whose interests lie in free competition in public life is clearly intensifying.

A range of parliamentary political parties — from the Nepali Congress to the Nepal Communist Party (United Marxist-Leninist) — represents this emerging elite. Their

main source of support is the hinterland — among the people who were ruled — and not the rulers. Rarely are the leaders of the student unions in Kathmandu, for example, from the valley itself.

Given the unrelenting process of globalisation and its political concomitants of democracy and talent-based competition, this war — whose in-

IN KING'S KATHMANDU

dications are in the wind in Nepal — is not going in favour of the monarchy.

"The king's actions are already helping open up the space for dissidence because of inherent structural contradictions," says Hari Sharma, a young political scientist and director of social science, Baha.

"The king's rhetoric is about constitutionalism but his actions speak otherwise. His

attempt at creating a parallel administration of nominated zonal and district commissioners, and security committees does not sit well with the established constitutional order. The bureaucracy is not only afraid, it is also offended.

"The Supreme Court also feels miffed because the newly-appointed Royal Commission on Corruption Control is outside the judicial system. The commission itself has thrown up a case of corruption involving a member of royal family," he says.

Sharma points out that the army tried to monitor banking transactions after February 1 but the privatisation of banking and the confidentiality requirements of modern banking meant that the banks refused any such direct intervention. They pointed out this was the job not of the army but the Central Bank.

"Everyday, the Supreme Court judges are issuing notices to the government to explain its actions ranging from ba-

nnng mobile phone services, prohibiting intellectuals from travelling abroad to unlawfully restricting the movement of prominent people outside the Kathmandu Valley, etc."

C.K. Lal, a brave and prominent Nepali political commentator, offers one more layer of explanation. "In the last 15 years or so, a parallel aspiring class has emerged in the five traditional monarchical support groups — the military, the mandarins, the merchants, the mediators (comprising the professional classes and the media), and, what I call, the 'meddlers' from the international and domestic NGOs."

The interests of this "parallel aspiring class" do not lie with those steeped in promoting feudal patronage. They, Lal points out, comprise junior officers in the army, entry-level officers in the bureaucracy who have got in through open competition, independent and new entrepreneurs, newer professionals who have not yet found accommodation in the power structure and the grassroots-based community organisations.

This class was educated and politically acculturised in the period of relative openness following the 1980 referendum. Many of them have experienced only democracy. They yearn for the freedom they enjoyed during the democratic era.

"They want careers open to talent which is only possible in a democracy or else elite domination will never end. So, they are personally committed to democracy," claims Lal.

That there is new political mobilisation taking place even in Kathmandu is evident.

"Three things are happening simultaneously — the political parties are meeting together to decide on a united struggle; the press is creating national and international pressure on the monarchy despite censorship; and the civil society is uniting against the king," says Shyam Shreshtha, the editor of *Mulyankan*, currently evading arrest.

Date for Delhi envoy

J. HEMANTH

Kathmandu, April 12: Nepal's King Gyanendra has granted an audience to Indian ambassador Shiv Shankar Mukherjee almost two months after a formal request was made.

Sources said here today that the palace sent a formal communiqué to the ambassador yesterday inviting him for an "audience" on Friday, two days after the Himalayan kingdom rings in the Nepali New Year.

The development is significant, considering India has so far refused to budge from its stated position on the February 1 royal takeover.

Mukherjee, who has been summoned to Delhi twice since February 1 for consultations, is expected to formally convey India's stand and seek immediate restoration of multiparty democracy.

The denial of a formal appointment to the Indian envoy was being seen as a snub to Delhi for its rigid stand on the takeover.

Mukherjee has been openly interacting with political parties much to the chagrin of the royalists.

A royalist even issued a statement to Indian news agencies demanding the envoy's recall.

Political analysts in Nepal believe that the king had deliberately avoided a formal meeting because he did not want to make any commitments about restoration of fundamental rights and multiparty democracy.

Gyanendra has introduced several initiatives to restore the much maligned panchayat system of governance that saw the monarch enjoying absolute powers.

No compromise with palace on democracy, cries Nepal leader

Koirala spits fire and spews smoke

IN KING'S
KATHMANDU

BHARAT BHUSHAN

Kathmandu, April 11: Under a medium-sized print of Van Gogh's *The Caravans, Gypsy Camp near Arles* sat a man

whom the international donor community and even India tried to marginalise in Nepal politics to support King Gyanendra's machinations from October 2002 to early 2005. Today, they find they have no option but to make a beeline to his door. He was proven right about Gyanendra's intentions to subvert democracy.

At 82, Girija Prasad Koirala, the president of the Nepali Congress, is still defiant. For someone who took up smoking only at the age of 58 and went on to become a chain smoker, he is fit as a fiddle. Puffing at his Surya Tobacco (produced by a company once owned by Gyanendra) cigarette through an ebony holder, Koirala declares: "I will not compromise on democracy with anyone — forget about this king."

However, he says: "We will offer talks to the king after the democratic political parties come to a consensus among

themselves on how to restore the constitutional process. If he agrees with our demand, fine. Otherwise, he will be isolated and we will start an agitation against him."

Koirala has been a consistent opponent of an activist monarchy. In the 1960s, he took up arms to fight Gyanendra's father King Mahendra under his elder brother B.P. Koirala's leadership. After having been the Prime Minister of Nepal for the better part of the last 14 years of democracy, he has mellowed. But it is around Koirala that the political opposition to the executive monarchy is crystallising.

Unremittingly critical of Gyanendra, Koirala says that the monarchy is failing: "All the experiments of the king with nominated Prime Ministers since October 2002 have failed. Even when he has assumed charge himself, his failure is apparent."

By contrast, he claims, the political parties have not failed. "Today the international community says that the political parties should be united in their movement for democracy. But when our movement was at its peak in 2003, the international community did not help us."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7



Koirala: Defiant

Koirala ready to take on king

FROM PAGE 1

"The US and British ambassadors in fact told us categorically to pull back. We stopped two lakh people from coming to Kathmandu to encircle Narayanhitti Palace (the king's residence and office) because of their assurances," he says.

Apparently, the US and the British had assured the agitating political parties that they would be able to persuade the king to briefly revive Parliament for the sole purpose of forming an all-party government authorised to talk to the Maoists. The Parliament itself was to be adjourned after government formation.

"But that is history now. Had the international community supported us then, democracy would have been restored. Now they realise what this king is all about and so they are asking us to unite," says Koirala.

A veteran who spent nine years during the Rana and Shah regimes in jail, Koirala was under house arrest this time for over two months after the king took over. He was not even allowed to climb down from the one-room flat he occupies on the top floor of his nephew's house. His telephone lines are still disconnected and his visitors monitored. Yet his house in Maharajganj is where politicians of all hues are coming to discuss strategies to restore democracy over endless cups of tea. Those who are evading arrest and cannot come to his house, the octogenarian goes and meets in the city's hotels or at other convenient meeting points.

"My release from house arrest should not be seen as the king relaxing the emergency or restoring human rights. He wants to discredit me — because other political leaders are in jail. I cannot even visit them or evolve a common strategy with them. The king wants to tell the world — see, I released him and he can do nothing to challenge me."

Yet challenging the king's action is exactly what Koirala is doing. He is trying to unite the democratic political parties on a common agreed programme.

Koirala's solution to get out of the present crisis is to revive the Constitution by reinstating Parliament and form an all-party government, which would offer talks to the Maoists. This constitutional government could then either go for a referendum on whether or not Nepal needs a new Constituent Assembly or it could even decide to directly organise elections for a Constituent Assembly.

In a remarkable change from the past, showing flexibility, Koirala says this is not a formula written in stone. "Once political parties start discussions, some new and better formulations may emerge. I am completely open to that. Only on the basis of the consensus that emerges would we go and talk to the king," he claims.

However, he declares: "The longer the king resists the demands of the people for democracy, the more he will lose. His support is declining." Although he admits to the growing Republican sentiment among the youth, he feels: "In the current situation merely talking about republicanism will not make us a republic. But if the people want it, it will happen even without my saying so."

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Himalayan Blunder

He has often been a victim of Nepal's volatile politics; he's been sacked thrice as prime minister. This time around, King Gyanendra not only relieved him of his post but also put him under house arrest. But the suave and erudite former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba remains convinced that there can be no alternative to democracy. In an interview in Kathmandu, he spoke to Lalita Panicker about the way forward for the isolated Himalayan kingdom.

Did you foresee that the king might suspend democracy?

No, I was stunned. I never thought that he would crack down on democracy like this. It is an anti-human rights move. God knows what he was thinking. I was sacked even though I tried very hard to cooperate with him. There is no logic to his action. All I can say that it is such a severe blow to Nepal and Nepalis. It is a monumental setback for us. *What do you think will happen now?*

There is no choice, he has to restore democracy. This is the endgame. His move is extremely unpopular, no one approves of it, no one supports him, not one person. Nepal is being hurt from every side, the king and the Maoists. This was once a joyful place, now there is an air of fear. We had such high hopes for democracy, now it has all turned to ashes.

You called for all political parties to come together and work for a common agenda. What are the salient points of this?

The crucial one, of course, is the restoration of demo-

cracy, the restoration of the rights of all political leaders. Today, we have a situation where the only way we can counter insurgency is through democracy. Since the king's move, the Maoists' morale is very high. He has pitted himself against the political parties.

Given that all the political parties used to bicker in the past, who will lead this coalition of political parties?

I have no objections to anyone leading it. Democracy is far more important than petty rivalries. Let democracy come back first, we will fight for political space later. Why do you single out Nepali parties for fighting with each other? Dissension is a part of democracy. I think our democracy is far less dynastic than India's.

Has the king made any attempt to talk to you?

No, he has not.

Will you make common cause with the Maoists and if so whom will you speak to?

The problem is that they believe in violent means and we do not. There can be no militaristic solution. There is no consensus among the Maoists themselves. I hear from time to time that they have severe differences among themselves. But I guess when the time comes they will send the

right man. They want power-sharing, we are not averse to that but without violence. There are many genuine problems in Nepal, poverty, untouchability. These are the breeding grounds for terror.

Would you say that the rise of the Maoists has been because of the failure of the political parties?

We did not have enough time. Thirteen years is not a long time for democracy to mature. But democracy brought all the simmering problems to the surface. We achieved many things, education, private investment, liberalisation. But, you see, large parts of our terrain are inaccessible, it's difficult to spread development there. This has been ideal for the terrorists. But expectations were very high, people wanted more. Maybe we did not deliver enough.

What would you say to the idea of an external party mediation to solve the conflict?

We must resolve things internally, why bring in an outside party?

Is Pakistan fishing in troubled waters here by offering arms after India shut off the tap. Hasn't Nepal always played India off against Pakistan?

No, no. There is no anti-India feeling here. Pakistan will not meddle here. I haven't read about this Pakistani offer as

I have been under house arrest.

The Maoists have spoken about a constituent assembly. What do you feel?

What are they talking about. If their idea is to usher in a one-party communist rule, they can't have it. I wanted to discuss these issues openly

Q&A

Today, we have a situation where the only way we can counter insurgency is through democracy. Since the king's move, the Maoists' morale is very high. He has pitted himself against the political parties.



but then I was sacked.

Do you have any insight into what might have motivated the king to do this?

He claims he did it for the good of democracy but he has plunged the nation into a crisis. I was blamed for being close to him. There are many around him who enjoy power without accountability, many advisers. I don't know whom he listens to. India is a close neighbour, yet he has not talked to any of its leaders.

Do you envisage any role for the king in a future democratic set-up?

He can be a constitutional monarch. But first he has to evolve a common position with all the political parties. We are steadily going downhill economically. The NGOs are leaving, there is flight of capital, there is no tourism. We are in really deep trouble. Our people are suffering, we have fallen in international esteem. There has to be much greater international pressure.

Have the Indians been able to help in any way?

Not really, but I suppose the arms suspension does help. Manmohan Singh is a very fine person but there is not much he can do at present.

BATTLE KILLS 50 MAOISTS

Nepal rebels suffer losses

SNS & PTI

KATHMANDU, April 8. — At least 50 Maoists were killed as Nepalese security forces repulsed a major rebel attack on army headquarters in Rukum district, 550 km from Kathmandu.

Nearly 4,000 rebels attacked the army camp last evening, triggering a fierce gunbattle which lasted 12 hours, defence sources said today. Bodies of 50 Maoists were recovered and many more were believed to be dead, the sources said adding eight soldiers were also injured.

Thirty one guns, including one AK-47 and a few SLRs, were recovered from the rebels, they said. A massive search operation has been launched in the area after the incident.

Securitymen said they had received prior information about the attack from informers as well as sentries posted at the observation towers. Gunship helicopters were also kept ready as well as reinforcements from nearby bases. The

offensive lasted nearly 12 hours after which the rebels fled. This is the first major offensive launched by the rebels since the royal coup when they avowed to step up military campaigns against the army.

The raid comes on the sixth day of an 11-day strike called by them from 2 April. While the strike had no effect in Kathmandu due to the media ban on writing about the Maoists and the concentration of security forces in the valley, disruptions had been reported in the outer districts. The Khara repulse will boost the army's counter-insurgency efforts.

The incident comes even as 147 insurgents were said to have surrendered to the authorities among reports of a serious rift between the top two Maoist leaders.

Meanwhile, Kathmandu's spokesman Mr Tanka Dhakal said the government was establishing a rehabilitation fund that would loan money to Maoist guerrillas who surrendered and wanted to go abroad for employment.

09 APR 2005

THE STATESMAN

500 held at protest rallies

50 Maoists die in clash

Kathmandu, April 8 (Reuters): Nepali soldiers killed at least 50 Maoist rebels in a deadly overnight clash, the army said today, as around 500 political activists were reported arrested by police during pro-democracy rallies in the kingdom.

The Nepali army said its troops killed the rebels after the insurgents attacked their base overnight using rocket launchers and mortars in the west of the nation in one of the deadliest battles in the past two months.

An army statement said many more, possibly hundreds of Maoists, could have died in the fighting and soldiers had recovered 31 weapons, including AK-47 assault rifles.

"On the basis of the situation at the site of the clash and on the version of local people, it is understood that hundreds of terrorists have died," it said. "Only 50 bodies have been recovered so far."

These figures could not be independently verified and the Maoists have not commented on the latest fighting. The rebels frequently carry their casualties with them to keep their morale high.

Nine soldiers were wounded at the base in Khara in Rukum district, 550 km west of Kathmandu, three of them critically.

The latest assault by the Maoists — who want to overthrow the monarchy and es-

tablish a communist republic — comes after an attack five weeks ago in which the army said its forces had killed at least 50 rebels in the western Bardiya district. Four soldiers also died in that clash.

The new violence came as police in Kathmandu arrested about 50 political activists, including some former ministers, who were demonstrating against King Gyanendra's move on February 1 to declare emergency, sack the multi-party government and seize power.

"Down with the proclamation of emergency. Long live democracy," some protesters shouted before being dragged away by helmeted policemen.

Around 450 more activists were arrested in pro-democracy gatherings elsewhere in Nepal. In the eastern towns of Janakpur, Sarlahi and Mahottari, dozens of activists were injured after police used batons to break up protests.

In Kathmandu pro-democracy protesters were quickly arrested, bundled into iron-meshed vans by police and driven away.

09 APR 2005 THE TELEGRAPH

Nepal army coaches foreign envoys

Sudeshna Sarkar
in Kathmandu

April 7. — The Nepalese army today held a briefing for all foreign ambassadors, heads of missions and chiefs of donor agencies on the current security situation at a meeting called by the foreign minister, Mr Ramesh Nath Pandey.

The briefing comes after two demarches to the government in less than a week by the members of the European Union, that the government kept under wraps, and a string of allegations against the army of human rights abuses at the ongoing 61st session of the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva.

"It was extraordinary to see a constitutional army present such a strong political opinion so openly and in such strong support of an unconstitutional coup," a diplomat who attended the briefing said on condition of anonymity.

A Colonel of the Royal Nepalese Army made the presentation that projected the army's views on the nine-year-old Maoist insurgency, the political reasons behind its birth and growth, the current security situa-



Notwithstanding the regular detention of political workers, the Nepalese army claims that it's defending human rights. — AFP

'It was extraordinary to see a constitutional army present such a strong political opinion so openly and in such strong support of an unconstitutional coup'

tion and status of the 11-day strike called by the communist guerrillas since 2 April to protest against the royal takeover.

Squarely blaming the political parties for the armed insurgency that has killed over 11,000 people, the presentation said the security situation had vastly improved since King Gyanendra, the supreme commander of the army, ousted the Sher Bahadur

Deuba government on 1 February and assumed absolute power. It also claimed the strike had been foiled despite reports from outside Kathmandu that vehicles moved on highways only with army escorts and that soldiers were forcing shopkeepers to keep their shops open.

The presentation also defended the human rights record of the RNA, that has come under fire by

rights activists at the 61st session of the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva for mounting allegations of rights abuses.

The army said it's strongly defending rights, investigating allegations of abuse and punishing the guilty.

The briefing by the army comes a day after the chiefs of the EU missions in Nepal and the head of the Canadian consulate met with the foreign minister to express their concern at the continuation of the state of emergency in Nepal, curbs on media and civil liberties and reports of rights abuses. The demarche marks strong concern by the EU and the two other countries coming as it does within a week of another demarche last week. Last Friday, the Swiss ambassador to India and Nepal, Mr Dominic Dreuer, flew down from New Delhi and met Mr Pandey, along with the others, as another demarche.

Meanwhile, the US ambassador to Nepal, Mr James Francis Moriarty, has told King Gyanendra to release all political leaders and restore freedom of Press by 8 April, according to a New Delhi-based rights organisation.

08 APR 2005

THE STATESMAN

Koirala's right

Reinstate parliament, rescue Nepal

Having released Nepali Congress leader GP Koirala from house arrest, King Gyanendra now faces two waves of rebellion — Maoist and political. Koirala leaves little room for rapprochement when he calls the palace the biggest “destabilising force” in the country and vows to fight till the King has his back to the wall. Former Prime Minister and Nepali Congress (Democratic) leader Sher Bahadur Deuba was freed last month on the eve of the UN Human Rights Council session in Geneva where Nepal defended its military action against Maoists as being necessary to protect democracy. It is a matter of time before Nepal Communist Party (Unified Marxist-Leninist) general secretary Madhav Nepal is also freed. What, however, comes as a surprise is Koirala asking people not to give the Maoists too much prominence, and that his party will give them no concessions. But whether or not the Maoists have popular support, the fact remains they hold sway over most of Nepal's districts and everyone knows just how difficult it will be to conduct free and fair elections without their cooperation. The NC's failure to redress Maoist grievances prompted rebels to take up arms. For the record, they all along declined to talk to Koirala when he was Prime Minister. He even scuttled the high power committee appointed by KP Bhattarai and headed by Deuba to prepare grounds to meet the Maoist challenge.

For the aging NC leader to produce any result, all rightist, centrist and leftist parties must come under one umbrella as they did to restore multi-party democracy in 1990. If the King continues to dig in his heels by seeking fresh diplomatic support for his 1 February coup, he will further isolate himself. Perhaps the only sensible solution, suggested by Koirala, is to reinstate parliament. There is still hope for Nepal.

06 APR 2005

THE STATESMAN

Long overdue

Welcome whiff of democracy in Bhutan

It will be quite some time before Bhutan's King Jigme Singye Wangchuck hands over power to the people, but the way to democracy has already been paved with last week's unveiling of the draft constitution and the circulation of about 500,000 copies in 20 districts to elicit public opinion. When finally adopted, the King will lose absolute powers enjoyed since the first Wangchuck dynasty monarch was elected by village headmen and senior monks in 1907. The draft is guided by the Indian Constitution and envisages a bicameral system — a 75-member National Assembly and a 25-member National Council. The leap to democracy is not a sudden one. King Jigme's father set up the first National Assembly in 1952 and the Royal Advisory Council, set up in 1965, has been advising the King on all matters. Fundamental rights and duties are incorporated in the draft and parliament, significantly, has been empowered to impeach the King through a two-thirds majority. Another striking feature is the avoidance of a multiplicity of parties that has been the cause of instability in governments in India and elsewhere. In the primary round of elections, only two political parties will be chosen and these will contest elections to the National Assembly.

Unlike the Nepal draft constitution, which was mired in controversy following King Birendra's appointment of the Constitution Reforms Commission — later disbanded following protests by the people and political parties — the Bhutanese draft is the result of more than four years of effort by a 39-member committee under the Chief Justice. It is said to have consulted the constitutions of as many as 50 countries. King Jigme's role is critically important as he has to oversee the peaceful transition of power from autocracy to legitimisation of people's rule. Such reform, to say the least, was long overdue and is welcome.

05 APR 2005

THE STATESMAN



REUTERS

King Gyanendra speaks at the Royal Nepalese Military Academy in Kharipati, Nepal, on Monday.

King aide raps India

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, April 4

AN EX-NEPALESE general close to King Gyanendra has questioned the authority of Indian ambassador to Nepal Shiv Shanker Mukherjee to meet Nepalese politicians.

This comes close on the heels of a recent Note Verbale issued by the Nepalese foreign ministry to various diplomatic missions, asking them to abide by the Vienna Convention while dealing with politicians.

In a recent interview to the *Jandharana* weekly, Lt-Gen. (ret'd) Bharat Keshar Simha, also king's honorary ADC and president of the Vishva Hindu Mahasangh, said, "He (Mukherjee) has no right to gather politicians and instigate them against the king."

Quoting media reports, Simha, earlier Nepal's envoy to the UK, alleged, "The Indian ambassador has not only hosted dinners for politicians, but also offered to help them if they fight against the king." He sought Mukherjee's "expulsion, if the reports were correct."

Simha criticised the US and European nations for their opposition to the February 1 royal takeover. He said Nepal could survive without foreign assistance. In contrast, he lauded VHP president Ashoke Singhal for his support to the king.

Mukherjee meets Koirala

Mukherjee on Sunday met Nepali Congress president G.P. Koirala at the latter's residence to discuss the current situation in Nepal.

05 APR 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Maoist strike affects life in Nepal

BANDBHANGYANG (NEPAL), APRIL 3. A strike called by Maoist rebels brought business in most parts of Nepal to a standstill for a second day today as soldiers escorted vehicles to try to prevent guerilla attacks, officials and residents said.

The Maoists called the 11-day strike yesterday to protest against King Gyanendra's seizing of power two months ago and the subsequent arrests of political leaders and suspension of civil rights.

The King sacked the Government and siezed power, saying it was necessary to crush the Maoist revolt that has caused more than 11,000 deaths since 1996.

The impact of the strike was more visible in rural areas, where the Maoists regularly enforce strikes and blockades, officials said. "Soldiers are patrolling the streets...but the countryside is closed in response to the strike call," said a local journalist, Tanka Khanal, from Biratnagar in east Nepal.

Businesses shuttered their premises and cars stayed off the roads in Biratnagar, residents said.

Two children and two police officers were wounded when the rebels set off a roadside bomb in Chitaur in southern Nepal today police said. The Maoists have been fighting since 1996 to replace the mon-

archy with a communist republic.

Residents said the strike had disrupted life in the western town of Nepalgunj where a string of bomb blasts late on Friday killed one person and wounded 19 others. But life in Kathmandu, home to 1.5 million people, was normal.

"Travel during the strike is very risky. But we have no alternative. We have to go," said Chandra Ranabhatt, returning home in Gorkha district after a medical treatment in Kathmandu.

Hundreds of cars, buses, and trucks left Bandbhangyang, the main checkpost, near Kathmandu accompanied by army vehi-

cles after being stranded for day.

Editor dies of wounds

A newspaper editor in South-Eastern Nepal has died two weeks after being shot in the head, allegedly by Maoist rebels, family members said on Sunday.

Dharan Today editor Khagendra Shrestha was shot twice in the head on March 15 while working in his office. He died Thursday at a hospital in Siligudi, India.

Nepal's army blamed Maoist rebels for the attack on Mr. Shrestha (45), who supported King Gyanendra's February 1 takeover of the Government. — Reuters, AFP

04 APR 2005

THE HINDU

China FM in Nepal

HT Correspondent
Kathmandu, March 31

AS IT played host to Chinese foreign minister Li Zhaoxing, Nepal made it clear on Thursday that it would act tough with mainstream parties who oppose the February 1 royal coup.

Zhaoxing's visit has generated a lot of hope among pro-monarchists. On his arrival, he remarked, "My visit will enhance the friendship and mutual interests of two nations."

There is speculation that Kathmandu may seek Chi-

nese assistance to fight the Maoist insurgents.

Government-controlled media hailed China as "a true friend who has never betrayed Nepal." Royalists too are happy with Beijing description the coup as Nepal's "internal affair."

While China and Nepal were busy holding bilateral talks, information minister Tanka Prasad Dhakal ruled out the release of mainstream political leaders from custody till they voiced support for the king's move "to restore peace and democracy to the region".

03 APR 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Koirala says king is power-hungry

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, April 2

A DAY after his release from two months of house arrest, Nepali Congress president and ex-Prime Minister G.P. Koirala described the palace as a "destabilising factor" in Nepalese politics.

Koirala (82), who spent all his life fighting for democracy, remarked on Saturday, "Now we must strive for total democracy where the king will remain only as a constitutional head and where people do not have to struggle for democracy again and again."

Aware of the growing international concern about Nepal, he said, "It's a problem between the Nepalese people, the king and parties. Let's sort it out ourselves."

Koirala said he found King Gyanendra's method of grabbing power more autocratic than that of King Mahendra. He explained, "He (Gyanendra) usurped power directly while his father did it in a roundabout way in 1960."

He declared that talks with the king would be possible only if he frees political activists and lifts emergency rule. Koirala also demanded restoration of the dissolved parliament to reactivate the constitution. "The King can reinstate the parliament with same Article (127) of the Constitution that he used to seize power."

Koirala reiterated that he would not hold dialogue with the king's council of ministers describing the body as "illegitimate".

But Koirala also faced some embarrassment over his nephew and filmstar Manisha Koirala's father, Prakash's support to the coup. In his interviews published in Saturday's state-run Gorkhapatra and Rising Nepal, Prakash, a former Congress MP, asked the interna-



AFP

Koirala addresses the Press in Kathmandu on Saturday.

tional community to back the king. The senior Koirala said, "Our party will soon meet to discuss Prakash."

No Chinese arms

Chinese foreign minister Li Zhaoxing categorically said no discussions were held on providing military assistance to Nepal during his meetings with Nepalese leaders.

Before winding up his 24-hour Kathmandu visit, Zhaoxing said, "We did not discuss the subject (arms supply to Nepal)." Pressed for a more elaborate answer, he added, "I think you're thinking far beyond what we discussed."

Zhaoxing's statement put to rest talk of Beijing giving weapons to Kathmandu to fight the Maoists insurgency in the wake of the suspension of military assistance by India, Britain and the United States after the coup.

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GROSS NATIONAL DEMOCRACY

4587
Bhutan

JIGME SINGYE WANGCHUK, the King of Bhutan, once said his country's "gross national happiness" was more important to him than its gross national product. The kingdom's new draft Constitution made public recently is evidence that he will travel any length for Bhutan's GNH, even to the extent of giving up his substantive powers. If the country's half a million citizens accept the new Constitution at a year-end referendum, Bhutan will become a parliamentary democracy and King Jigme a constitutional monarch. In unilaterally proposing that he will give up his near-absolute powers to make way for a system of democratic governance, the King has demonstrated infinite wisdom. The present-day world provides few parallels. Monarchs are usually pushed out; they tend to hold on until the very last minute, when the people gathered outside cannot be prevented anymore from breaking down the palace doors. There is no such contingency in Thimpu. On the contrary, the monarch is a popular figure. But as the King said, for the very reason that the kingdom is enjoying "unprecedented peace and prosperity" at this juncture and is under no compulsion or pressure to change its form of governance, the present is the perfect time to make the transition to democracy. True, the King's decision is in part a response to Bhutan's nascent pro-democracy movement. But which other absolute ruler has had the good sense to see the writing on the wall, be it ever so faint?

The Constitution that Bhutan is now contemplating is the culmination of a process that began in the 1990s. Fourth in a dynasty that has ruled the tiny Himalayan kingdom of Druk from 1907, King Jigme set the ball rolling in 1998 when he turned over the running of government to his Council of Ministers, only stipulating that all Ministers should be elected. The same year he loosened his hold further by removing a ban

on television, and in the new millennium let in the Internet. The proposed new statute will empower the elected parliament to impeach the King with support from three-fourths of its members. A Prime Minister from the single largest party in Parliament, elected through universal franchise, will head the government. But evidently, the events in Nepal, where political instability has reigned ever since 1990 when the country became a multi-party democracy and where a reactionary King recently grabbed back absolute powers, have induced some fears of the chaos supposed to be inherent in democracy. This appears to be the main reason for the provision in the proposed Constitution limiting parliamentary elections to two political parties after eliminating the rest in a first round of voting.

The proposed changes are certain to have an impact on the contentious issue of citizenship in Bhutan. The country's southern districts bordering India are home to several thousands of people of Nepali origin to whom Bhutan — fiercely protective of its "indigenous" people and their culture — has denied citizenship, a black mark on the otherwise progressive record of the King. Thousands of them live in refugee camps in North-East India and in Nepal. It is disappointing that the proposed new Constitution has made no attempt to resolve this major human rights question. Considering that this was an important issue for the country's pro-democracy movements, it could prove to be one of the main challenges for the rulers of a democratic Bhutan. Except on this issue King Jigme, who ascended the Druk throne three decades ago, has been an enlightened leader. The bar is already high for those who will take over the reins of the country from him. The future leaders will need to demonstrate that good governance is not just possible in a democracy, it is synonymous with it — and is the only proven route to a high gross national happiness.

02 APR 2005

THE HINDU

Koirala freed

7/4
7/18-02/04
Statesman News Service

KATHMANDU, April 1. — Nepal's most outspoken critic of King Gyanendra, Mr Girija Prasad Koirala, was freed from house arrest this evening after two months' incarceration.

The former Prime Minister and president of the Nepali Congress party was under house arrest since 1 February, when Gyanendra sacked the Sher Bahadur Deuba government and assumed absolute power.

Mr Koirala's release comes on the eve of an 11-day countrywide shutdown called by the Maoists from tomorrow. The development is a step towards an initiative by the regime to reach an understanding with the political parties.

Indian ambassador to Nepal, Mr Shiv Shankar Mukherjee, who had tried to meet Mr Koirala during his detention but had been



Mr Girija Prasad Koirala

denied permission, was among the visitors meeting the leader.

India pleased

New Delhi today welcomed Mr Koirala's release and said it hoped that it would be followed by the release of other detained leaders and activists, especially UML general secretary, Mr Madhav Kumar Nepal. "We believe that this would pave the way for the beginning of a process of reconciliation between the constitutional forces leading to a restoration of multi-party democracy," a statement by the foreign ministry said.

02 APR 2005

THE STATESMAN